

Using Transformative Evaluation (TE) in a Higher Education context: reflecting on the use of TE through the evaluation of the Student Colleagues scheme

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Elpida Acharidou

Professor Jennie Winter

TASO

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Executive summary

Background

In July 2022, Plymouth Marjon University (PMU) was funded by the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) What Works Centre to evaluate the impact of the Student Colleagues (SC) scheme, an employability programme for students offered by the university, focusing on the scheme's outcomes. The evaluation was conducted as part of TASO's pilot on the use of impact evaluation methodologies for assessing initiatives with small cohorts of students, often referred to as 'small *n*' evaluations. As a result, a 'small *n*' methodology was needed to carry out the evaluation. We chose Transformative Evaluation (TE).

Aims

The study aims to:

- a) Use a 'small *n*' methodology, in this case TE, focusing on under-represented groups in higher education (HE), and reflect on its use for the purposes of impact evaluation in a HE context.
- b) Evaluate the impact of the SC scheme on SCs from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 and/or SCs with self-reported disability(ies).

The Student Colleagues scheme

The SC scheme was developed in 2019 in the context of PMU's Access and Participation Plan (APP) which identified gaps in student employability outcomes for students when analysed by POLAR4 and/or disability.

The scheme posits that having high quality employment experiences to draw on can benefit graduate prospects for all, yet also acknowledges that students' access to quality employability experiences can be limited, particularly in cases of disadvantage or disability. The scheme therefore offers a range of university based, paid graduate level employment opportunities open to student applications. This is underpinned with a local skills framework designed to support students' professional development and ultimately improve their employability skills, self-efficacy and career decision-making and decisiveness. Since 2019 over 300 students have participated in the scheme.

Study design

This qualitative study was conducted between July 2022 and March 2023. The study design included:

- **The development of the SC scheme's logic model** - though a brief desk review, interviews and/or written feedback from members of the SC scheme's strategy group (SCSG).
- **The implementation of TE** - the generation of 17 SC stories, the write up and analysis of these stories, a meeting with the SC stakeholder group and a meta-analysis meeting with evaluators to reflect as a group on the use of the methodology.
- **Interviews with SCs, interviews/written feedback from evaluators and a focus group**

with the SC stakeholder group - focusing on challenges, barriers and solutions of the scheme and of TE.

- **The development of the scheme's Theory of Change (ToC)**, which took into account feedback from SCs themselves.

The impact of the SC scheme on SCs from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 and/or self-reported disability(ies)

Key findings

From the data analysed we can conclude that:

- The scheme is successful in providing employment experiences and supporting these through mentoring; and that this has supported skills development and improved self-efficacy for the SCs who took part in this study.
- The SC skills framework was not well utilised across the sample and did not feature in the language SCs used to describe their experiences.
- There are plausible tensions between the intended design of the scheme, which is to improve employability outcomes for all students but specifically for students with a disability and from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 and limitations in reasonable adjustments as an equity mechanism to achieve this response. Reasonable adjustments tend to be created in response to a disability, whereas the evidence from this study suggests that designing in mitigation for deprivation and anxiety to recruitment and line management will support these groups.
- No evidence was found in the SC stories on the mechanisms which underpin the development of SC roles, promotion of the scheme and job opportunities, student motivation to work and recruitment to advertised roles.

These conclusions suggest that when compared to the intended design of the scheme, some aspects are functioning better than others and there is potential to better align the scheme's aims and operations.

Key recommendations

SC scheme design

- The reasonable adjustment process goes some way to mitigate for the challenges students with APP characteristics have when accessing and carrying out a SC role. However, more could be done to deliberately design in mitigation for deprivation and anxiety as these were commonly experienced, and sat outside of reasonable adjustment provision. Emphasising the Futures offer to support application and interviews is an important aspect of this, as is building in how to manage deprivation and anxiety in the workplace as a future feature of the framework.
- Safeguarding emerged as an important feature in the SC employment experience yet was not universally understood in terms of line managing SCs. Better articulation and training of how to safeguard SCs may be beneficial.

SC skills development and self-efficacy

- Self-efficacy is developed through familiarisation in, and reflection on skills domains within the SC employment. Certain skills domains feature more commonly in this than others and that 'self-awareness and resilience', 'communication and influencing' and 'teamworking and

leadership' are critical to SC roles. There may be utility in the scheme for line managers through mentoring and use of the framework, specifically teasing out how the SCs engage with and articulate the other skills domains (delivering excellent service, decision making and using initiative, digital knowledge and confidence, analysis and problem solving, and creative and fluent thinking).

- Activities which promote combined skills sets appear to be productive in fostering the conditions for self-efficacy.
- SCs producing an artefact (giving a talk, developing a system or structure, contributing to a document or publication) which potentially has permanence, contributes greatly to the development of the professional self; these activities could be encouraged.
- Building in opportunities for SCs to lead other SCs through buddy or shadowing activities are powerful experiences that underpin the development of self-efficacy and the professional self.

SC scheme skills framework

- Consider evaluating the use of the skills framework; there is currently no understanding of how it is used by line managers or by SCs.
- Aligning the design of the framework with the SC experience over time to reflect the reported distance travelled/educational gain could be beneficial. There is currently no starting or end point in the framework design. Creating a scalable instrument based on the skills domains which can evidence development will also be helpful.
- Consider exit interviews for SCs which provide opportunity for them to articulate their experience in given skills domains in the style of a graduate job interview. This can also serve as an evaluative exercise which could even encompass a Most Significant Change (MSC) based question.
- Consider articulating more clearly where, when, and how reflection on practice takes place. At present this should take place through interaction with the framework and through discussion with line managers. The former might not take place at all times and there is no guidance for managers which potentially makes reflection vulnerable.
- Consider developing greater clarification and communication of what activities constitute each skills domain. There are examples of this in the framework workbook, but this is only useful if actively used by the SC *and* the manager.

SC scheme guidance for managers

- Consider developing line manager guidance on:
 - How to use the skills framework in the line management of SCs.
 - How to mentor for anxiety and deprivation.
 - The importance of mentorship in the line management of SCs and the gradual introduction of empowering positive constructive criticism into the relationship.

Creating future SC roles

- There is potential to enhance the scheme's value for SCs by creating stronger links to academics and the academy. For example, greater awareness and understanding of the scheme by academics can potentially create more SC roles in high impact activities such as research, plus can foster opportunities for links between the study SCs are engaged with and their SC experiences.

Continued evaluation

- Line manager voice is also required before a comprehensive final ToC is completed for the SC scheme. After a final version of a ToC is completed, the scheme could consider how a continued, embedded monitoring and evaluation which considers all contributing actors and factors is created. For example, developing accurate data streams on student characteristics of applicants; number of applications versus job awards; referral and take up of Futures career service support for application and interview plus success rate; use, value and impact of the skills framework; targeted evaluation of skills development in named skills domains; exit interviews with integrated MSC questions; and evaluation of line managers experiences of mentoring SCs to be designed with stakeholders.

Reflect on the use of TE as a methodology for assessing impact in HE context

Key findings

Our experience suggests that TE can have a place in impact evaluation, amongst other methods. In this study, TE has:

- Solidified parts of the scheme's logic model and ToC by improving the relevance and accuracy of some of the SC scheme's outcomes and by revealing mechanisms of change and logic chains.
- Enabled the identification of outcomes participants believed they had achieved.
- Indicated whether some of the intended outcomes have been achieved.
- Provided powerful accounts of impact of under-represented groups in HE through the use of stories written in their own words.
- Through its use, highlighted the potential to:
 - Improve the scheme through participation, reflection and recommendations made by different stakeholders, empowering them to be part not only in the evaluation of the scheme but also of its future direction.
 - Improve stakeholder understanding of the scheme and enable a more strategic approach to achieving its outcomes.
 - Built local capacity to critically reflect.
- Encouraged collaboration and cross-fertilisation between staff that may not usually interact with each within the organisation.
- Engaged stakeholders in meaningful conversations.
- Allowed for adaptations to take place so that the methodology fits to the context and needs of the impact evaluation carried out.

The purpose of the impact evaluation, the HE context and the nature of the scheme should guide the selection of the methodology and methods to be used. In this case, TE was well suited to:

- Explore the use of the methodology as part on a wider group of ‘small *n*’ methodologies for the purpose of impact evaluation.
- Support the identification of SC outcomes, which were yet to be firmly defined.
- Bring to the fore the voices of SCs from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 and/or SCs with self-reported disability(ies), who are underrepresented in HE.
- Enable Marjon staff from academic and professional roles to become evaluators and support their professional development through hands-on experience and reflective practice.
- Provide helpful evidence as part of the scheme’s overall monitoring and evaluation system.

To fulfil the above purposes and outcomes, stakeholders will have to embrace TE’s subjectivity, context specificity, commit to staff professional development through reflection and to iteratively implementing improvements as well as plan carefully resources and find TE expertise or grow it over time for effective implementation.

Key recommendations

The SC scheme is part of PMU’s APP and its evaluation is a key requirement of the university’s accountability responsibilities. To support providers with the evaluation of their interventions, the Office for Students (OfS) has commissioned the Access and Participation Standards of Evidence report, which discusses the different types of claims associated to different types of evidence.

TE was originally developed to evaluate youth work programmes, bring to the fore the voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups, and empower and support the professional development of youth work practitioners who act as evaluators. It was not developed to serve accountability purposes or for the HE context.

Further studies are needed to understand the use of TE in an HE context, what methods need to be used alongside it and how adaptations to the methodology may support and/or inhibit impact evaluation for accountability purposes. This means that working with TE in this context may need facilitators and evaluators to balance ideology with standard of evidence and strength of claims as well as with ethical aspects relevant to HE.

Introduction

In July 2022, Plymouth Marjon University (PMU) was funded by the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) What Works Centre to evaluate the impact of the Student Colleagues (SC) scheme, an employability programme for students offered by the university, focusing on the scheme's outcomes.

The evaluation was part of TASO's pilot on the use of impact evaluation methodologies for assessing initiatives with small cohorts of students; often referred to as 'small *n*' evaluations. This meant in practice that:

- a) Higher education (HE) providers participating in the TASO study were required to use a 'small *n*' methodology to evaluate one of the programmes offered in their university, focusing on under-represented groups in HE. HE providers were to reflect on the use of the methodology for the purposes of impact evaluation to inform TASO's guidance on 'small *n*' evaluations. We chose to use Transformative Evaluation.
- b) HE providers were to report the findings of their evaluation.

To conduct the evaluation of the SC scheme, PMU is using Transformative Evaluation (TE), a methodology based in the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique (Davies, 1996). TE was developed in 2012 by Professor Sue Cooper at PMU to evaluate youth work programmes and support the professional development of youth work practitioners. It has since been employed in projects in different educational settings and beyond, including at PMU in a project funded by the Office for Students (OfS) to develop student-led knowledge exchange practice and theory.

Given that the implementation of TE requires the embedding of meta-evaluation activities during which participants reflect on the use of the methodology, meant that TE was supportive of TASO's aim to understand the robustness and implementation of 'small *n*' methodologies for impact evaluation. However, to enhance understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of using TE in this context, it was decided to increase the data collection activities that involved reflection on the TE process.

Structure of this report

- **Section 1** describes the SC scheme and its Theory of Change (ToC).
- **Section 2** outlines the methodology used in this study.
- **Section 3** presents the findings of the impact of the SC scheme on participants, including mechanisms of change and other processes supporting or inhibiting the achievement of outcomes. Conclusions and recommendations for future delivery are offered at the end of this section.
- **Section 4** provides reflections on the use of TE in this study, also detailing TE's original requirements and adaptations made to those to suit the HE, PMU, SC and study contexts/needs. Section 4 ends by offering conclusions and recommendations on the use of TE for impact evaluation in a HE Access and Participation Plan (APP) context.

Section 1 - Student Colleagues Theory of Change (ToC)

The Student Colleagues (SC) scheme was developed in 2019 in the context of PMU's APP which identified gaps in student employability outcomes for students when analysed by POLAR4 and/or disability. The scheme posits that having high quality employment experiences to draw on can benefit graduate level prospects for all, yet also acknowledges that student access to quality employability experiences can be limited, particularly in cases of disadvantage or disability. The scheme therefore offers a range of university based, paid graduate level employment opportunities open to student applications.

The SC scheme's long term outcomes centre on improving SCs graduate level skills, what York and Bennett (1998) called capability, which is strongly correlated with employability outcomes (Caricati, 2016) of employability programmes that combine 'hard' and 'soft' skills, similarly to the SC scheme. To achieve this, SCs need opportunities to apply and practice different skills. Increasing SCs' employability skills is closely tied to the scheme's two other long-term outcomes: self-efficacy and career decisiveness/SCs making better career decisions (Langher, Nannini and Caputo, 2018). To achieve the latter two outcomes, SCs need to receive feedback on their performance from their line manager, who also acts as their mentor.

For SCs to achieve the scheme's long-term outcomes, it is crucial for them to have a positive working experience/engage with the SC scheme, which depends on their relationship with their line manager/mentor. This relationship should be based on trust. SCs also need their work-related needs to be met irrespective of background and disability through appropriate reasonable adjustments if needed, and to understand what is expected of them through effective induction via their line manager.

As regards to the scheme's short-term outcomes, these include SCs' commitment to apply for a SC role and accept it, if it is offered to them, contingent to the recruitment process being fair. They also have to believe that the recruitment process is fair, access the SC schemes' adverts easily and find them 'enabling', which require SC roles and their corresponding adverts to be created thoughtfully and inclusively, having *all* SC needs in mind. However, SCs may never join the SC scheme if they lack the motivation to work and study, or if they are not aware of the scheme's existence. To address this, inclusive promotional marketing materials are needed to attract SCs who are motivated by instrumental or integrative goals.

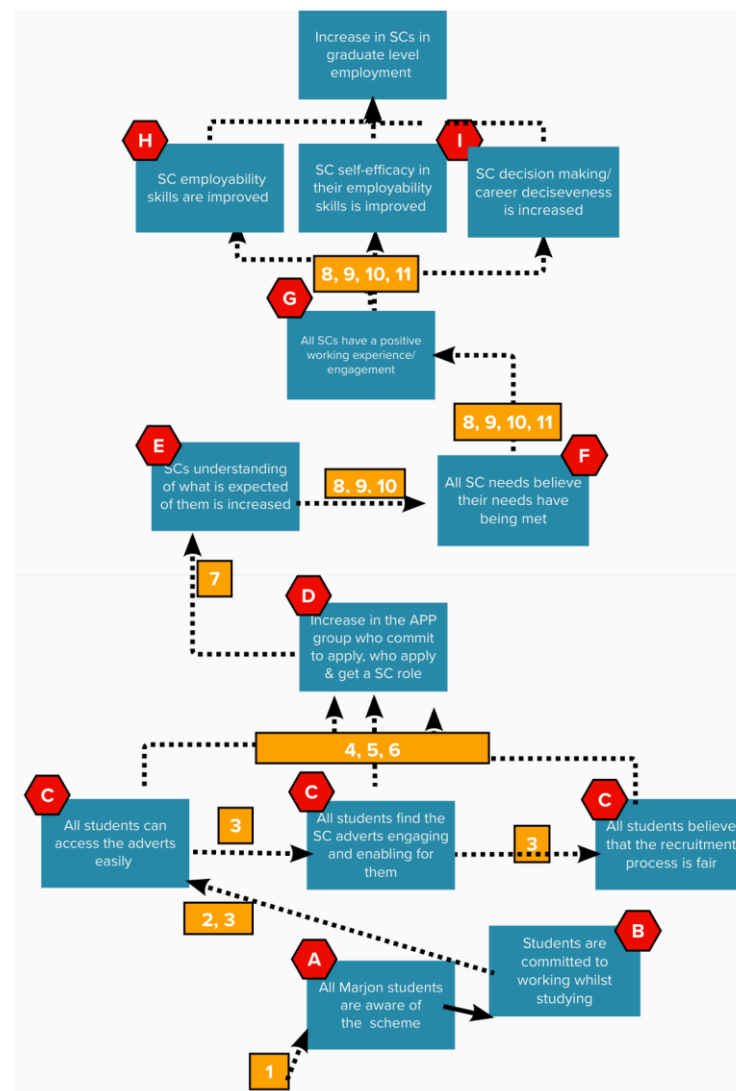
Figure 1 provides a summary of the SC scheme's ToC. For more details on the scheme's implementation see Appendix 1. In the ToC figure below, the blue boxes indicate the SC outcomes whilst the orange numbers the activities of the scheme and the red letters mechanisms of change.

NOTE: Please note that this ToC is a draft and needs revising so that a final version is created once line manager viewpoints are collected and a review by the SC strategy group and further stakeholder discussions take place. This was not possible within the scope of the SC evaluation study. (There are indications for example that SC attendance to work needs considering as part of the ToC.)

Figure 1. Student Colleagues ToC and change mechanisms

Activities	
1	Promotion/marketing of the SC scheme
2	SC roles created & approved
3	SC roles advertised
4	PMU Futures (career and employability service) offers support with application & interview
5	Candidates shortlisted
6	SCs are interviewed
7	SCs are inducted
8	SC resources are available for SCs to use
9	Staff CPD opportunities are available to SCs
10	Skills framework workshops conducted
11	SCs interact with mentor

Mechanisms of change	
A	Promotional/marketing materials target the intended APP group effectively
B	Students have an instrumental or integrative motivation to work whilst studying
C	SC roles created and advertised taking into account all students' needs
D	The recruitment process is fair
E	SCs are inducted as intended
F	Work adjustments made are suitable for all SCs
G	SC and mentor relationship is one of trust/positive
H	SCs have opportunities to apply different skills
I	SCs get feedback on their practice from their mentors



Section 2 - Methodology

In this section the study aims, design and sample are presented. As part of the study design, we also provide a description of the development of the scheme's ToC, details of TE's implementation and adaptations when they occurred, as well as how the collection and analysis of interviews and written feedback from SCs, stakeholders, and evaluators was conducted.

Study Aims

The study aims to:

- a) Use a 'small *n*' methodology, in this case TE, focusing on underrepresented groups in HE, and reflect on its use for the purposes of impact evaluation in a HE context.
- b) Evaluate the impact of the SC scheme on SCs from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 and/or SCs with self-reported disability(ies).

Study design

This qualitative study was conducted between July 2022 and March 2023. The study requirements necessitated the adoption of a 'small *n*' methodology. We chose TE. But, as TE is not to be used as a standalone, the study design comprised:

- **The development of the SC's scheme logic model and of a ToC** - though a brief desk review, interviews and/or written feedback from members of the SC scheme's strategy group (SCSG).
- **The implementation of TE** - the generation of 17 SC stories, the write up and analysis of these stories, a meeting with the SC stakeholder group and a meta-analysis meeting with evaluators to reflect as a group on the use of the methodology.
- **Interviews with SCs, interviews/written feedback from evaluators and a focus group with the SC stakeholder group** - focusing on challenges, barriers and solutions of the scheme and of TE.

Table 1 presents the organisation of the study.

Table 1. Organisation of the study

What (and by when)	How	Who
<p>Phase 1 – Set-up <i>July - October 2022</i></p>	<p>Logic model of the SC scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review; SCSG one-to-one interviews; written feedback on SC scheme’s draft logic model <p>Preparation for delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruited SC line managers to become part of the evaluator team • Recruited SCs in POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 and/or who have a self-declared disability • Trained evaluators in TE • Developed evaluation instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCSG • Lead evaluators
<p>Phase 2 – Data collection & analysis Round 1 <i>October - early November 2022</i></p>	<p>TE Cycle 1 – Story generation and analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generated eight SC stories • Analysed and categorised stories into domains • Identify the most significant story per domain <p>Round 1 - Semi-structured interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted eight semi-structured interviews with SCs • Conducted four semi-structured interviews with evaluators/ collected written feedback based on a pre-determined framework • Analysed interviews/written feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCs • Evaluators • Facilitator
<p>Phase 3 – Data collection & analysis Round 2 <i>Mid November - December 2022</i></p>	<p>Repeat of Phase 2 – TE Cycle 2 & Round 2 semi-structured interviews - nine SCs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCs • Evaluators
<p>Phase 4 – Data collection and analysis Round 3 <i>January 2023</i></p>	<p>TE Stakeholder meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated the SCSG meeting • SCSG identified the MSC story to represent the SC scheme <p>TE Evaluator meta-evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated evaluator meeting/written feedback on a predetermined framework on the use of TE <p>Stakeholder group focus group and evaluator semi-structured interviews/written feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted 17 interviews with the SCSG, four interviews/written feedback from evaluators and the scheme’s strategy group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCSG • Evaluators • Facilitator
<p>Phase 5 – Final analysis & reporting <i>February – March 2023</i></p>	<p>Final analysis & reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysed and synthesised data collected • Reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead evaluators

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Sample

Study delivery team

A facilitator and an evaluation team of five delivered the study. In more detail:

- *Two lead evaluators, experienced in evaluation but novices in TE* - responsible for the smooth running of the study and for ensuring the quality of the outputs, data collection and analysis, and reporting.
- *Three evaluators, TE novices* – generated TE related data and conducted interviews with SCs.
- *An expert TE facilitator¹* – provided TE training to evaluators on story generation and training to both evaluators and the stakeholder group on how to analyse the stories. They also facilitated the first cycle of evaluators’ story analysis and the stakeholder group meeting.

All but one of the evaluators were SC line managers. Involving SC line managers was important so that TE’s requirement, part of its participatory principles to redistribute power dynamics in evaluation processes by empowering practitioners in this case SC line managers to participate in the evaluation and reflect on their own practice², was fulfilled. While it is not typical to involve experienced evaluators, or a practitioner not working on the evaluated scheme in youth work studies using TE (the methodology’s original context), we decided it was important to do so. This decision was based on the different context (HE), internal capacity, and the requirements of this evaluation.

Two of the evaluators led the evaluation. To recruit three more evaluators, we initially sought approval from senior management to contact line managers working under them. We then contacted 16 SC line managers who have managed SCs in the past two years. Out of four line managers who came forward, we selected three to ensure a balance of professional and academic staff.

Student Colleagues

A two-tiered approach to sampling was used.

- **Firstly**, purposive sampling was used to select SCs from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 populations and/or had self-reported a disability.
- **Subsequently**, convenience sampling was employed within this selected sample.

As seen in Table 3, there were 110 SCs fitting our targeted underrepresented in HE APP group who had commenced their employment in academic year 2021/2022 and so had some

¹ The TE facilitator is also the developer of TE, thus, one of the most, if not the most experienced theoretically and practically individual in TE.

² Encouraging more PMU staff to take part in research activities is also part of the University’s Research and Knowledge Exchange strategy.

experiences to draw upon to generate the SC stories. At the time of data collection 61 SCs were still in employment whilst 49 had completed their work as SCs. Furthermore, to reduce sampling bias we decided to include SCs who volunteered to take part in the study rather than those with a ‘story to tell’ (Cooper in Ord et al, 2018). (TE sampling is purposive and intentionally biased choosing participants with a positive story to tell. See Section 4 – Reflecting on the use of TE for more details.) The recruitment of SCs involved:

- *TE cycle one* - 16 SC line managers were provided with all the relevant study information and were asked to make SCs they were working with aware of the study. Having considered the information, line managers invited SCs who they felt were appropriate for the project and asked the evaluation team to contact them directly. In this round 10 SCs agreed to take part in the study, of whom one withdrew, making the total for cycle one nine SCs.
- *TE cycle two* - since all ‘active’ SCs had already been contacted in round one, we emailed individuals who were no longer working in SC roles but were working or studying in other capacities at the university or locally. As PMU students can access their emails for a given time period after their studies are concluded we used student emails to approach other possible SCs and via this route, an email and two reminders were sent over a four-week period, resulting in the recruitment of another nine individuals. We once again had one withdrawal, making the total sample for cycle two eight SCs.

Table 2. Summary of the SC targeted APP originally available sample

Characteristic	Available sample
1 SCs from POLAR4 quintile 1	21
2 SCs from POLAR4 quintile 2	29
3 SCs from POLAR4 quintile 1 with disability	14
4 SCs from POLAR4 quintile 2 with disability	10
5 SC with disability not in POLAR4 POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2	36
Total	110

The final sample comprised 17 SCs, of which nine were active, meaning in employment at the time of interview. We refrain from providing any sample characteristics to support anonymity.

ToC development

At the time of conducting this study, the SC scheme’s implementation was in flux; efforts to improve the scheme meant that revisions, changes and additional activities were either in progress or were planned. Further, not all stakeholders had inputted into its logic model/ToC. As a result, the SC’s logic model and ToC had not been fully articulated in writing yet.

The academic summer break posed a challenge for consulting all stakeholders or conducting workshops with more than two stakeholders at a time during the development of the scheme’s logic model and ToC. For this reason, through an iterative process, we carried out the following activities:

- A desk review of the scheme’s documentation and resources and an initial interview with the leader of the SCSG, resulting in a draft logic model, which was shared with the other members of the SCSG.

- Online one-to-one interviews with four members of the SCSG. Feedback from each interview was incorporated into the next ‘version’ of the logic model. The revised logic model was then discussed with the next interviewee.
- Written feedback by members of the SCSG on the final draft of the SCs’ logic model and narrative. We made the draft available to all SCSG members on the PMU shared drive and invited them to share their comments. Some members responded to the invitation.
- A brief desk research of relevant literature with a focus on meta-analysis studies.

After completing the data collection and analysis, we developed a more solidified ToC for the scheme based on the findings, although still a draft one.

Transformative Evaluation

TE origins

TE is a qualitative evaluation method that examines practice in its natural settings to make sense of the outcomes and process in terms of the meanings people bring to it (Cooper, 2017). It is based on the MSC technique developed by Davies in 1996.

The MSC technique (Dart & Davies, 2005: 5) “*involves the collection of significant change (SC) stories emanating from the field level, and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff*”. Many adaptations have been made to the original MSC technique, and TE is one of these.

Dart and Davies (2005) provide a comprehensive overview of what a ‘full’ implementation of MSC looks like, offering a 10-step process model presented in the Table below.

Table 3. 10 steps model (from Davies & Dart, 2005)

Steps	Activity
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to start and raise interest - introducing a range of stakeholders to MSC and fostering interest and commitment to participate
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defining the domains of change - identifying broad domains (e.g.,) ‘changes in people’s lives ’that are deliberately loose to be defined by the actual users
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defining the reporting period – deciding how frequently to monitor changes taking place in these domains
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collecting SC stories - SC stories are collected from those most directly involved, such as participants and field staff. The stories are collected by asking a simple question such as: ‘Looking back over the last month, what do you think was the most significant change in [particular domain of change]?’
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selecting the most significant of the stories - SC stories are analysed and filtered up through the levels of authority typically found within an organisation or program. Each level of the hierarchy reviews a series of stories sent to them by the level below and selects the single most significant account of change within each of the domains
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feeding back the results of the selection process - Every time stories are selected, the criteria used to select them are recorded and fed back to all interested stakeholders
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Verification of stories - In some contexts, verification can be very useful, e.g., in large organisations with multiple delivery sites. When most of the people

	selecting the stories have background knowledge of the events described in the stories, it may be sufficient to accept their 'vetting' as verification
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantification - MSC places a strong emphasis on qualitative reporting of change however, there is also a place for quantification of changes
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary analysis and meta-monitoring - refers to an additional level of analysis that complements the participatory selection of SC stories. Both techniques involve analysing a complete set of SC stories including those that were not selected at higher levels
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revising the system - Meta-evaluations of the use of MSC

Of these 10 steps, Davies and Dart (2005) consider that Steps 4-6 fundamentally define the MSC process. These steps are integral to TE as seen in Table 4.

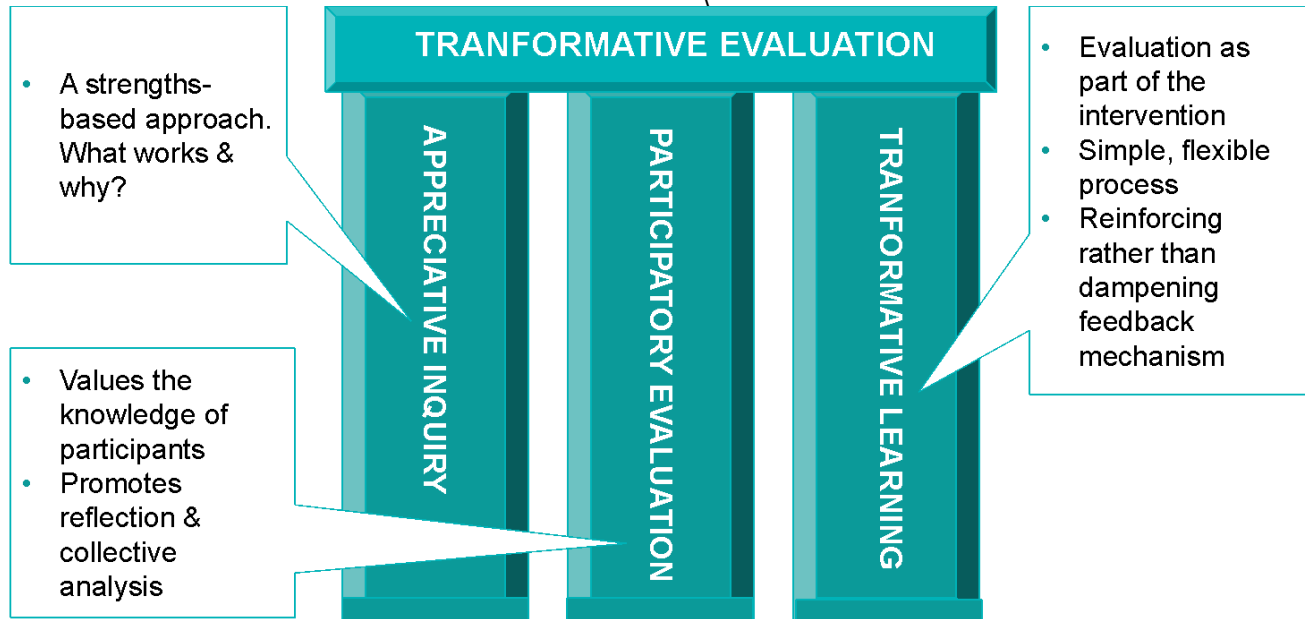
Table 4. Adapting TE from the MSC technique

Transformative evaluation		MSC Technique	
Stage 1	Story generation	Step 4	Collection of SC stories
Stage 2	Step 3: Selection. The evaluators group reaches consensus on the most significant story of change for each domain	Step 5	Selection of the most significant of these stories by at least one group of stakeholders
Stage 2	Step 3: Selection. The reason for selection is added to each story and these contextualised stories are then presented to the Stakeholders Group	Step 6	Feedback to relevant stakeholders concerning which SC stories were selected and why they were selected
Stage 3	The Project Stakeholder group select a single story to represent the value of changes brought about by the Student Colleagues Scheme	Step 5	Selection of the most significant of these stories by at least one group of stakeholders
	The reason for selection is added to the overall MSC story and this is shared with all participants	Step 6	Feedback to relevant stakeholders concerning which SC stories were selected and why they were selected
Stage 4	Meta-evaluation	Step 10	Meta-evaluation of the use of MSC

TE pillars and process

TE offers an alternative critical approach to more common post positivist, constructivist, and pragmatic evaluation models (Fox et al., 2016; Potter, 2006) by synthesising aspects of appreciative inquiry, participatory evaluation, and transformative learning to create a story-based evaluation methodology (Davies 2005) that engages the whole organisation in evaluating impact (see Figure 4). These features are advocated in the literature as necessary conditions for generating alternative evaluation processes and outcomes in HE (Cooper, 2016; Winter et al, 2017).

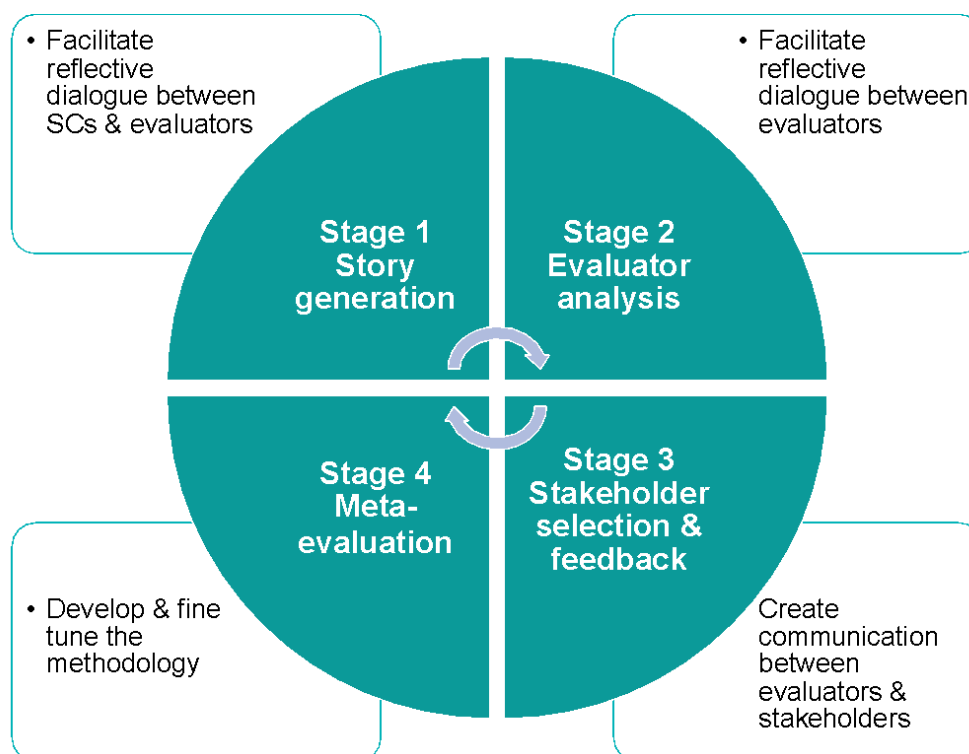
Figure 2. Transformative Evaluation pillars



TE employs a four-stage process which is meant to be repeated every three to four months, including:

- **Stage 1 – Story Generation;** evaluators elicit significant change stories through a reflective discussion with participants, focusing on positive changes. Evaluators are practitioners who work on the programme/scheme evaluated and participants the recipients of the programme/scheme, in this case SC line managers and SCs respectively.
- **Stage 2 – Evaluator Analysis;** evaluators select and analyse ‘Contextualised Significant Change Stories’ generated through Stage 1, and categorise these stories into thematic domains. They then select the most significant story for each domain and explain their rationale for selecting it. Co-construction of stories also takes place, meaning that practitioners also add their reflection and experiences of working with the storyteller.
- **Stage 3 - Stakeholder Selection and Feedback;** the programme/scheme’s stakeholder group, meets to discuss and elect a single story from across the domains as the most significant one, thus the one the group believes represents the SC scheme experience the best. They also have to explain the reason why the particular story was chosen.
- **Stage 4 - Meta-evaluation;** evaluators meet to reflect on their experience of using TE and identify potential improvements for the next round of its implementation.

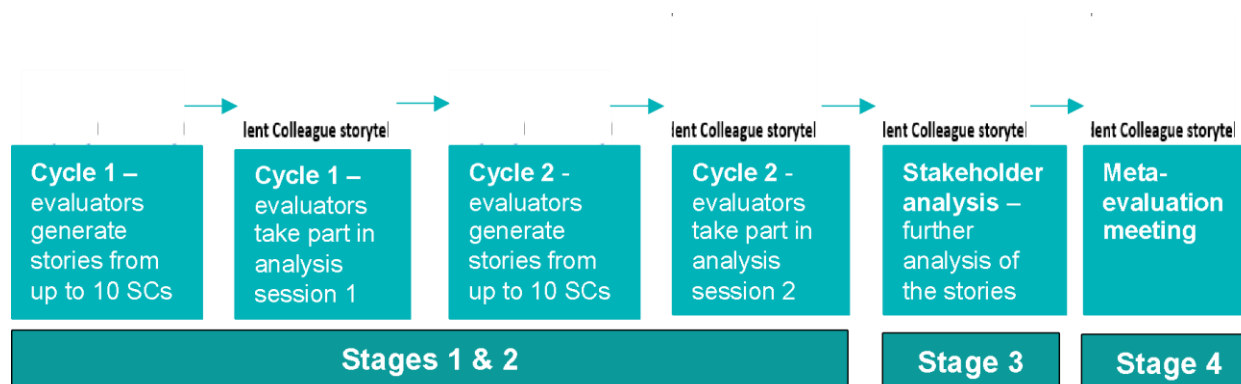
Figure 3. The Transformative Evaluation Process (Cooper, 2014)



TE process used in this study

A summary of the TE process followed in this study is provided in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Summary of the TE process for this study



Step 1 – Story generation

Two story generation cycles took place, with four weeks between them. This was atypical – TE requires two to three months between cycles - but necessary in order to meet the study’s timeframe. To generate the stories:

Preparation for the conversation

- Evaluators scheduled one-to-one conversations with SCs, lasting 30 minutes. Conversations were face-to-face and took place at a mutually decided location on the PMU campus during usual working hours. Based on TE, reflective conversations are easier to facilitate in person. A few SCs however, on their own accord, asked to be interviewed online.
- No SC was paired with their own line manager for a conversation.
- Evaluators attended training on TE provided by Professor Sue Cooper, the developer of the TE methodology.

During the conversation

- Evaluators began the conversation with the following opening question: *“Looking back, what do you think is different about you because of participating in the Student Colleagues scheme?”*
- Acknowledging that evaluators were novices in TE, a conversation schedule was created to support them and the consistency of the data to be collected. Story generation discussions are not meant to be scripted. To strike a balance between supporting line managers in conducting the conversations and facilitating a natural flow, one of the experienced evaluators led the development of the conversation schedule, which was then reviewed by the developer of TE.
- Evaluators wrote SCs’ stories by hand and did not tape record them. In TE, the conversation is the key focus and, thus any feeling of discomfort or potential distractions, such as typing whilst discussing or using a tape recorder, are to be minimised.
- Evaluators wrote SCs stories to support time efficiency. (This approach is not strictly necessary when TE is used, i.e., SCs can write their own story if they wish to.) Evaluators wrote the stories in SCs own words.
- Evaluators read back the handwritten story to SCs to check that it accurately reflected the essence of their story and made revisions, when needed.
- Evaluators re-confirmed consent after the story was read back.

After the conversation

- Evaluators anonymised the stories and removed potential identifiers.
- Evaluators uploaded the story to PMU’s secure drive and in the secure project folder, accessible only by the evaluation team.
- The Principal Investigator (PI) consulted evaluators about any challenges faced during the story generation and provided appropriate support.
- The lead evaluators read the first set of stories generated as part of PMU’s routine internal quality control processes.

Step 2 – Evaluator analysis

To analyse the SC stories, evaluators:

- Created domains and allocated stories to each domain.
- Constructed stories.
- Selected SCs’ significant change stories for each domain.

Domain creation and story allocation

Before analysing the stories, evaluators were provided one hour training by an experienced TE facilitator, who also led the analysis sessions, also lasting an hour.

During the analysis session, evaluators analysed SCs' MSC stories by allocating them into thematic domains based on their content and agreed on a title for each domain. The domains were broad, categorising the changes taking place as described by SCs inductively through the data and were agreed upon collectively. To create the domains, the following process were followed during the first cycle:

- Each evaluator read aloud their generated stories. Stories were read as they are written and agreed with the SCs, without any comment or editing from the evaluator.
- Evaluators discussed and agreed on domain names/titles that best described the content of the stories.
- The stories were read out loud again and each one was placed in the most relevant domain.

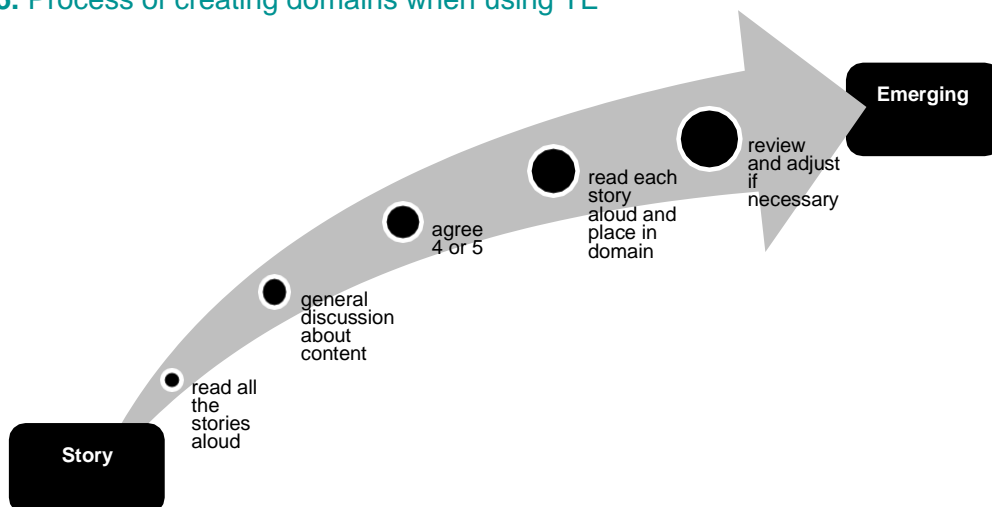
The second story generation cycle was led by one of the evaluators. During this cycle, instead of creating one domain for each story, evaluators created multiple domains for each story (see Section 4 – Reflecting on the use of TE for more details).

Domains created included both the domain name and a description. A few examples from our analysis are:

- *Domain name and description* - 'improved employment'; taking part in the scheme provided skills and opportunities that ultimately led to the SC gaining meaningful employment.
- *Domain name and description* - 'interpersonal relationships'; the act of working with another SC or staff member and the influence this has for the individual.
- *Domain name and description* – 'environment'; the structured and scaffolded support and activities and mentoring that the SC is provided with by PMU.

Figure 5 summarises the process of creating domains.

Figure 5. Process of creating domains when using TE



Construction of stories

Typically, in TE, co-construction of stories would take place, meaning the story generator would also add their interpretation of the storyteller's journey based on their experience of their ongoing working relationship, making the co-author of the story. We decided to omit this step to further support the robustness of the findings. After the MSC stories were assigned to domains, the evaluator who generated each story read the story out loud again, but did not provide their professional insights to the SC's story. Instead, each evaluator gave context to the group about the SC's characteristics, the location and duration of their work as an SC, and other factual details and at times also offered their own professional experiences as a line manager.

Selection of MSCs for each domain

Evaluators selected the MSC story to represent each domain by reaching a consensus and documented the reasons for their choice. By the end of the analysis session each MSC story had been written using the SC's own words, it was contextualised and included the evaluators' justification for choosing it. All stories were then submitted to the stakeholder group for them to select one to represent the entire scheme.

To support the robustness of the analysis, we made the following adjustments/added the mitigating measures outlined below.

Table 5. Measures to support the robustness of the analysis

Challenge	Standard TE requirement	TE requirement in this study
<p>Line managers as evaluators - TE promotes practitioner professional growth by offering a fair and democratic path to becoming an evaluator for all. This could affect the rigor and quality of the outcomes, given that some practitioners may have limited or no evaluation experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluators are practitioners working for the scheme being evaluated and should work and have a relationship with the participants with whom they generate stories from. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A combination of evaluation expertise was utilised; three experienced evaluators/researchers and two practitioners. Experienced evaluators did not have any vested interest in the scheme being evaluated, with one not being a line manager or having any other connection to the scheme. Only experienced evaluators conducted the meta-level analysis on the stories and on the data collected through the interviews (a TE standard requirement).
<p>Confirmation biases in the story and stakeholder analysis activities - studies have noted limitations associated with power relationships. For example, charismatic storytellers may dominate, and because story selection processes are subjective, unconscious bias may result in minority voices being excluded (Lennie, 2011).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above. Stories are co-constructed; the participant's narrative and the evaluator's narrative constitute the story. The training provided to the practitioners addresses the issue of subjectivity and bias raising awareness of the risk, and the collective nature of the process goes some way to reduce the risk of confirmation bias. TE should not be relied upon as the sole evaluation method and should be combined with other evaluation methods. TE is underpinned by appreciative inquiry; it therefore focuses on the positive aspects of change and does not include the negative. This intentional emphasis on the positive helps to identify and articulate "what works" and improve morale. The continuous story generation and analysis cycles allow for further ongoing upskilling/skills development. A few months gap between cycles offers a suitable period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluators and participants did not have a working relationship. Although there is a degree of co-construction when the evaluators' group added their collective reasoning for story selection to the selected stories, these were not co-constructed. Training on TE addressed the topics of bias and power dynamics within the group for discussion and heightened awareness. The developer of TE led the training and facilitated the first analysis session. TE was complemented by interviews with SCs. Only experienced evaluators conducted a meta level analysis of the stories and data collected through interviews. Due to the limited time frame for the study, two cycles of story generation and analysis were feasible, with a gap of one month between them.

	for reflection.	
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Step 3 – Stakeholder analysis and feedback

Four SCSG members attended the stakeholder meeting out of possible six. A SCSG scheduled regular face-to-face meeting at PMU was used, instead of a separate meeting specifically for the evaluation, to reduce burden. The meeting was facilitated by Professor Sue Cooper. The initial 30 minutes of the two and a half hours meeting were used to deliver training to undertake the selection process of SCs' MSC stories. The remaining one hour was used to analyse and select one story as the 'best' example of impact, by following the process below:

- Read each story aloud.
- Discussed each story in turn.
- Offered, individually, their opinion as to which story reflected the most significant change for the scheme.
- Reached a consensus on the MSC story.
- Explained why the particular story was selected.
- Recorded their reason for selection and returned this to the evaluator team.

Step 4 – Meta-evaluation meeting

All evaluators attended the meta-evaluation meeting. The meeting lasted one hour, it was conducted online and recorded and auto transcribed using Teams. It was led by one of the lead evaluators using a semi-structured interview schedule and focused on evaluator experiences using the TE methodology. Given that this meeting was the last scheduled data collection activity and evaluators had already completed two rounds of story generation and analysis, their perspectives were summative, allowing them also to reflect on the data they had already provided on TE until that point.

Interviews with SCs, evaluators and the stakeholder group

TE is not sufficient on its own for evaluation purposes and should be complemented by other methods. For this reason, we added to the design a series of semi-structured interviews with SCs, evaluators and a focus group with the SCSG. Given that TE focuses on positive aspects of the scheme, interviews were used to elicit barriers, challenges and solutions as well as reflect on SC, evaluator and stakeholder experiences of using TE.

Interviews with SCs

After each story generation cycle, evaluators were to spend 30 minutes interviewing SCs. In practice interviews lasted far less, with the large majority no longer than 10-15 minutes. This was due to the story generation taking longer than originally anticipated. This meant that interview data was relatively limited. Interviews were audio recorded, or recorded and auto-transcribed using Teams and included questions such as:

- **SC scheme** – What have been the challenges you have faced by being part of the SC scheme, if any? What have been the barriers, if any? What do you think might be the solutions to these challenges and barriers?
- **Use of TE** – How did you feel whilst sharing your story? If you repeated this activity, would you have shared the same story? What else would you share, if anything? Has taking part been a useful professional development activity?

Interviews/written feedback for evaluators

After the first story generation cycle, each evaluator was interviewed by one of the lead evaluators. The interviews lasted 30 minutes. Due to time constraints, after the second story generation cycle and after each of the analysis sessions, evaluators were provided with a questionnaire containing open-ended questions in Word. They were asked to respond to the questions individually and send their responses to the PI. This approach reduced burden. Similar to the SCs interviews, the evaluator questionnaire and interviews focused on the:

- **SC scheme** - What have you learnt about the SC scheme? In what ways might have participating students benefited? What have we learnt about barriers and drivers to engagement with the SC scheme for different participant roles? What do you think are the biggest challenges that SCs with a disability(ies) are faced whilst on the programme? What about SCs with mental health challenges? What do you think are the employability skills that students gain as part of the scheme? What about when they are employed for short timeframes? What recommendations do you have for the SC scheme? Is there anything that the SC scheme needs to consider after SCs complete their employment?
- **Use of TE** – How did you feel whilst eliciting the MSC stories from SCs? What was challenging about eliciting the stories? How easy / difficult was it to find an acceptable 'change' domain label during the analysis session? Did / how did you reach consensus? What influenced decisions? How do the agreed domains represent your view of your work as a SC line manager and PMU's aims and objectives? What worked well / was challenging about linking your own professional experiences and the SC stories? How do you feel about reflecting on the use of TE?

Focus group with the stakeholder group/written feedback

The last 30 minutes of the stakeholder group meeting were used to interview SCSG members as part of a focus group, with an emphasis on system-level and structural challenges and solutions, as well as on the use of TE. The evaluator team provided a questionnaire with open-ended questions to SCSG members, which they couldn't answer during the conversations due to time constraints. Members completed and returned the questionnaire to the evaluators. Table 6 below provides the questions used.

Table 6. Stakeholder meeting; focus group questions

Topic area	Focus group questions
SC scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the stories you read, what do you think is the impact of the scheme on SCs? • What do you think are the organisational systems and processes currently in place that contribute to the SC scheme's positive impact? • What are the structural or process related barriers to engagement with the scheme for students with a disability? For students with mental health problems? What could be the solutions? • Based on your understanding of the SC scheme, what changes would you make to further improve the impact of the scheme, especially related to systems and structures? How should these be implemented? • Have any of the changes you have mentioned been prompted by your participation to this meeting? Any changes that you may consider implementing based on this meeting?
Stakeholder meta-evaluation on the use of TE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you find the process of analysing MSC stories? • Was the guidance provided on how to analyse the stories sufficient? What was helpful / missing? • In what ways, if any, has this activity added value to stakeholder group understanding of the SC scheme? • How did you reach consensus on the MSC story? What influenced your decision? • What are the learnings / value added of this activity to the SCSG, if any? • What other information / extant databases would be useful to use going forwards beyond the data collected for this study?

Analysis of all qualitative data

Evaluators used Saldana's (2016) analysis methods to analyse the qualitative data collected. In this case, coding is a form of content analysis and is interpretive in nature rather than, as Saldana himself puts in, 'a precise science'. Thus, the analysis is not objective, allowing evaluator 'biases' to influence the process. To support the robustness of the findings only the lead evaluators were involved in data analysis; as much as possible, they stayed, 'true' to the voice of SCs and of the other participants, and remained reflexive revealing any potential biases they brought to each other, thus reducing individual biases that could influence the analysis.

NOTE: For a comprehensive account of adaptations made to the TE methodology as part of this study and reflections on the use of the methodology, see Section 4.

Ethical considerations

The study obtained ethical approval by the university's Research Ethics committee – reference number EP184. Below some of the key ethical considerations relating to the study, additional to those outlined in Table 5.

- **Financial reimbursement for cover:** SCs attended the story generating conversations in usual working time and their department was compensated directly at the normal hourly rate for their role. This financial re-imbusement was supportive of participation in that it covered SC/departmental costs. It did not provide a financial incentive to take part in the study.
- **Power relations between SCs and evaluators:** TE aims to shift the locus of control by empowering SCs to tell their stories. However, there were power dynamics at play which could influence the authenticity of the stories: a) SCs converse with SC line managers; and b) SCs who are also students converse with SC line managers who are lecturers, or professional staff working at the university. To address this, the evaluator training raised awareness, the SCs' information sheets included explicit information on how their stories will be generated and used, and informed consent was sought. SCs were assured that: a) they were not obligated to participate in the study; b) they could withdraw at any point during the data collection process up to the reporting stage; and c) their choice to participate would not impact on their SC employment or studies.
- **Informed consent:** All participants were provided with detailed information sheets, followed by one-to-one discussions, when requested. SCs who volunteered to take part in the study were asked to confirm their consent before the story generation conversations started as well as after their story was written. All stories were anonymised and any potential identifiers were removed.

Section 3 – The impact of the Student Colleagues scheme

In Section 3, we outline the impact of the SC scheme from data collected from 17 SCs through a story generation conversation, part of the TE methodology. Given that TE is to be used alongside a wider set of methods, and within the constraints of the scope of this study, we decided to use interviews with SCs and evaluators, and a focus group with the stakeholder group – see Section 2 Methodology for more details. The interviews and the focus group focused on extant challenges and barriers at a system, local and individual levels.

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that structural characteristics of the SC skills framework and methodological characteristics of TE have influenced the comprehensiveness and standard of evidence achieved in terms of impact findings. Given the scope of this study, interviews were used alongside TE, but further data is needed to more comprehensively understand the scheme's ToC and its impact as well as to respond to the stakeholder group's accountability responsibilities, which may require a higher standard of evidence to be achieved.

At the time of the study most of the skills that made up the SC skills framework had multiple components to them, for example, communication *and* influencing or teamwork *and* leadership, and, in this, they lacked specificity which made evidencing each component challenging. Further, each skill did not seem to be 'explicitly' defined at all times. Compounding these, and as the findings will demonstrate, the skills framework was not well utilised across the sample and did not feature in the language SCs used to describe their experiences. Work that attempts to measure skills development is challenging, and we want to acknowledge that in this case it made evidencing professional development in named skills domains difficult.

SCs contributions focused on significant change which did not 'measure' the achievement of named skills domains and tended to favour certain experiences and points in the SC journey over others. Given that TE is more inductive than deductive in nature, it was challenging to systematically discuss outcomes beyond those offered by SCs themselves, i.e. outcomes identified by the SC strategy group and those found in the literature. However, given the stage of development of the scheme's ToC and the lack of input by SCs in a more robust way at the time, TE was helpful in informing those outcomes as well as provided valuable information on some of the processes SCs believed enabled them to develop professionally.

There are further implications for the validity and reliability of findings, in that we know what underpinned significant change, but nothing else; and that this excludes many hundreds of hours of employment experiences that may be worthy of knowing more about, evaluating, and responding to. Additionally, findings are contextualised to the PMU context and cannot be generalised – see Section 5 Reflections on the use of Transformative Evaluation for more details.

In this section, findings on the MSCs SCs identified in their stories are structured using the scheme's ToC, starting from the long-term outcomes to be achieved, moving to the medium and short term. Change mechanisms that enable outcomes to be achieved and the scheme's activities are also outlined. Lastly, we provide findings from the challenges and barriers discussed during the interviews and focus groups before we outline conclusions and recommendations.

SC scheme impact on SC outcomes

The impact of the scheme on SC outcomes is presented below. Outcomes include SC improved decision making / career decisiveness, self-efficacy and employability skills; having a positive working experience, and their professional needs met, understanding what is expected for the role of a SC; commitment to apply for a SC post and acceptance of the role if offered; belief that the recruitment process is fair; finding role adverts engaging and 'enabling', as well being able to easily access the SC scheme marketing/adverts; committing to working whilst studying and being aware of the scheme.

Increased decision making/career decisiveness

The stories generated limited data relevant to this outcome.

Mechanism of change	SCs get feedback on their practice from their mentors
Activities	SC resources available for SC to use
	Staff CPD opportunities available to SCs
	Skills framework workshops conducted
	SC interacts with mentor

Three SCs explicitly stated how the SC experience had contributed to their career decisiveness.

- *Doing jobs within Sport and then mainly within the lab, I got more comfortable within the lab. And then, from this, I completed some of my placement within the lab and found the passion that I have now for it. I think I wouldn't have this job now within the lab if it wasn't for that (SC3).*
- *The SC just confirmed my love for research...(SC10).*
- *In a way, the job has simply re-affirmed what I want to do in terms of becoming a psychotherapist, and even doing a PhD in this area which would give me more recognition (SC14).*

Improved self-efficacy

The stories generated data on SCs receiving feedback on their practice from their mentors and activity 11. No data was offered for activities 8, 9 or 10.

Mechanism of change	SCs get feedback on their practice from their mentors
Activities	SC resources available for SC to use
	Staff CPD opportunities available to SCs

	Skills framework workshops conducted
	SC interacts with mentor

There was some evidence that through skills development, SC self-efficacy was improved. SCs described how over time they were better able to articulate their own competence in relation to given skills domains and commonly described this as growth in 'confidence', which contributed to their sense of professional self and how they applied themselves to other situations. SCs spoke about confidence as a key enabler of significant change, 12/16 SCs identified an increase in confidence as central to their significant change story and this aligned with the skill domain 'self-awareness and resilience', which was the most cited skill domain across the sample. What was striking and perhaps relevant to the sample's characteristics, were the very low levels of confidence and high levels of anxiety participants reported having when they started studying at the University. These reflections contextualise the importance of distance travelled for SCs with the target characteristics and the extent to which the scheme enables this.

- *For me there is a link between the reduction in anxiety and increase in confidence. When I first came to uni my anxiety levels were so bad, I could not go to the shop by myself. But then, by almost forcing myself to take the SC role, it allowed me to put myself in uncomfortable positions and it enabled me to reduce my anxiety by increasing confidence. It's about my... self-esteem, my ability to do things without doubting myself (SC1).*
- *In the past I have found that a lack in confidence was self-limiting in a way. Being able to demonstrate my abilities in this project have made me more aware of that and this has had an impact, for example, on how I have tackled the final year. Everything feels easier (SC4).*

SCs conception of confidence can be conceptualised as relevant to self-efficacy, where because of engagement with the scheme the SC perceives they are more confident that they can/cannot perform a particular skills/ behaviour/ outcome.

- *During the first few campus tours, that's when I noticed a difference in my confidence and I felt could really lead something (SC3).*
- *The greatest change for me was the growth in self-efficacy and confidence (SC4).*
- *The most significant change for me whilst working as a SC was building my confidence talking to senior members of staff (SC9).*

It can also be conceptualised as changes to the perceived professional self, in which SCs described how increased confidence [sic] has changed their thoughts and feelings about their professional self, transcending skill domains. External validation such as co-authoring a journal article and the SC role leading to other employment were factors in this and four SCs described how the scheme had helped confirm professional ambitions.

- *If someone was to ask me to get on stage with a microphone and speak in front of 300 people, I would have laughed and turned away, but now I wouldn't give it a second*

thought and probably say yes and go with the flow a bit more. I now enjoy the different roles (SC1).

- *On the confidence side it built up that I can still do it – it's not too late. I still have attributes at my age. I thought I wouldn't as I had been out of employment for so long (SC12).*
- *I keep coming back to confidence, but it is a big confidence boost. At the start of the undergrad, I certainly wouldn't be the person I am now, and having a piece of work published (SC10).*

A small majority of SCs (9/16) specifically mentioned their relationship with mentors and the role of mentor feedback as contributing to growing confidence, self-efficacy, and the professional self. In all cases the feedback mentioned was positive and confirming of the SC development in the role.

- *The briefings at the end of a very busy day were good. They gathered us together and we had a breather and they don't stop praising us no matter what has happened or how rubbish it was (S2).*
- *It enabled me to feel more confident about presenting data, which my manager has recently commented on. I would say I developed my time management skills through regular meetings with my project lead as we were able to discuss managing expectations and setting realistic goals (S16).*

Improved employability skills

The stories generated data relevant to SCs having the opportunity to apply their skills and reflect on their practice as well as for activity 11. No data was offered for activities 8, 9 or 10.

Mechanism of change	SCs have opportunities to apply different skills
Activities	SC resources available for SC to use
	Staff CPD opportunities available to SCs
	Skills framework workshops conducted
	SC interacts with mentor

All participating SCs claimed improvement in employability skills through engagement in the scheme. The extent to which each SC framework skill domain was developed was difficult to ascertain as SCs did not always use the language of the framework to describe their significant change stories, and stories differed depending on the SCs previous personal and professional experiences, their motivation to seek and maintain employment, the professional expectations of the SC role and the amount of hours/ length of time employed in the role. Overall, nearly all SCs claimed experiences in their change stories which aligned with the enhancement of 'self-awareness and resilience' and 'communication and influencing' with other skills domains featuring less often; an overview is presented in Table 8.

Sc Identifier	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total	
Self-awareness and resilience	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	17
Communication and influencing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X		15
Teamworking and leadership	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X						X				9
Delivering excellent service	X	X			X	X						X							5
Decision making and using initiative		X		X			X	X											4
Digital knowledge and confidence	X										X					X			3
Analysis and problem solving																			0
Creative and fluent thinking																			0

Table 7. Frequencies of skills domain in the SC MSC stories

The skills that featured most prominently were (i) ‘self-awareness and resilience’, (ii) ‘communication and influencing’, and (iii) ‘teamworking and leadership’. Focusing on these features of significant change, across the sample there was evidence that professional interaction with others and mentoring or leading others, underpinned by reflective practice formed the basis for most significant change experiences.

Nearly all SCs (14/16) described how professional interaction with others enabled them to practice verbal communication in professional settings as significant in their change stories and

that this in turn increased their social sphere and networks. Interactions did not have to be part of a formal professional team and were often significant because the 'other' was from a social grouping not usual to the SC, so for example students from another course, or staff members from across the institution. Those SCs who worked in customer facing roles described these interactions as fostering a strong sense of institutional belonging. Referring to the SC skills framework suggests this may evidence an intersect of 'communication and influence' and 'self-awareness and resilience'.

Several SCs (9/16) described mentoring others or leading an activity as significant in their change story. Referring to the SC skills framework suggests this may evidence an intersection of '*teamworking and leadership*', '*decision making and using initiative*', '*communicating and influencing*' and '*self-awareness and resilience*'. Cumulative, ipsative opportunities within similar employment environments supported by mentoring provided SCs with the possibility to master, and in cases then lead in their employability context. Within leadership roles SCs mentored peers, led group and project activities and enacted changes to local processes.

- *I noticed a difference in my confidence and I felt could really lead something. I didn't need my script or any prompts. I could just do it on my own, lead, and was more comfortable making jokes (SC3).*
- *The project gave me the opportunity to take leadership and responsibility and this worked. I was able to demonstrate some creativity in attracting research participants for example. Being able to do this successfully and have this recognised by the project lead really boosted my confidence (SC4)*

The articulation of skills development and its values was underpinned by SCs engaging with reflective practice. SC development in reflective practice was explicitly (4/16 SCs) and implicitly (16/16) evident across the sample and relates to the SC skills framework 'Self-awareness and resilience'. Active reflection enabled SCs to recognise and articulate their own sense of worth (self-esteem), and to accept that limitations across skills domains are normal which enabled positive framings of perceived failure and realistic and healthy formulations of self-efficacy.

- *The two SC roles allowed me to ... make decisions, which carried possible negative consequences. These consequences enabled me to develop myself through reflection, enabling me to develop myself holistically into a better person and allow me to refine my decision making to know what can work and what cannot (SC7).*
- *I'm far more self-aware. I've got better boundaries and I'm more comfortable in what I want to do. I can advocate for myself and it's a good thing to do..... I don't need to prove I can do everything. We can come together with our capabilities and do everything together (SC8).*

Despite all participating SCs having opportunities to apply existing and practice new employability skills within their SC roles, they did not always use the language of the SC skills framework to describe their experiences. This can be attributed to the low levels of awareness of the framework across the SC sample, and only limited awareness within the line manager sample. Line managers' awareness correlated with their role as either professional services or academic, with considerably less awareness in the academic manager sample. However, even where the framework was being built into the SC experience more explicitly, for example in the Student Ambassador Colleagues role, at the time of the research none of the SCs were using it as a reflective developmental tool as intended.

Positive working experience

The stories generated data relevant to SC and mentor relationships, whether SCs feel an affiliation to their workplace and about SC interactions with their mentor. No data was offered for activities 8, 9 or 10.

Mechanism of change	SC and mentor relationship is positive and based on trust
Activities	SC resources available for SC to use

	Staff CPD opportunities available to SCs
	Skills framework workshops conducted
	SC interacts with mentor

There was strong evidence that participants felt supported in their role with 9/16 SCs specifically including the relationship with their mentor as critical to their professional development. Trust is central to this relationship and orchestrated through access to ‘wrap-around’ mentoring before, during and after time in the job, acknowledging mentees’ strengths and areas for improvement, and the explicit articulation of safeguarding. The small size of PMU means that power hierarchies are not as pronounced as in some HEIs, and it is possible for SCs to work with and be mentored by middle and senior management and the professoriate. Regardless of the mentor’s professional role, the PMU values informed line manager practice so mentoring techniques were likely to be inclusive and student-centred.

- *Within the SC role, we had mentoring. My mentor said to me not long ago: ‘Look at where you started. You would have taken on everything and not had time for yourself. You’re now able to speak for yourself and say no to people’. I’m able to go to my mentor for a meeting and take up their time. I’m able to take up space and that’s something I’m allowed to do (SC8).*
- *Throughout my project I felt supported and listened to [by the scheme’s senior management staff] ... [who managed] the power balance across the scheme, telling us we were the experts of our projects. I also felt (names senior managers at PMU) offered experience and professionalism whilst acting as a soundboard for my research which helped move it forward (SC9).*

The SC roles and positive, trusting mentorship received supported SCs to develop affiliation with the teams they were part of, but also the wider university contributing to their sense of belonging.

- *People come up to me when they see me on campus and say ‘oh you work on the desk’ which is a good way to start a conversation. For me knowing more people makes me feel included (SC5).*
- *The most significant change for me is really the sense of belonging that the role brought for me. As I grew in the role, it gave me a sense of belonging as I got to know the other staff and the people from different departments it developed my belonging and started feeling like a home (SC6).*

Professional needs are met

The stories generated data relevant to reasonable adjustments but did not generate data about the usefulness of SC materials or for any of the activities that contribute towards the outcome of SC professional needs are met.

Mechanism of change	Reasonable adjustments suitable for all SC needs
Activities	SC resources available for SC to use
	Staff CPD opportunities available to SCs
	Skills framework workshops conducted

There was evidence of managers implementing individualised reasonable adjustments for SCs where they were required, and that these had value for the SC recipient who was then able to continue with the role.

- *It seems that the managers are really conscientious that we don't take on too much and there is always a great atmosphere of teamwork (SC1).*
- *In August, I drove in and had a panic attack in the car and couldn't make it in. I had emails from three staff members who were really supportive and asked if I was okay. All of them asked if there was anything they could do to support me in the future. And then I had a 1:1 with [name of line manager]. Again, I had a chat with [them] about what we could do going forwards and shadowing someone was one of the things that was suggested (SC11).*

Additionally, the findings highlight how the design of the scheme and quality of mentoring were positive enablers which served to support SCs regardless of whether reasonable adjustments were in place. This is because the most reported challenge for SCs was anxiety (Section b) which was often focused on uncertainty of what might happen in the role. The design of the scheme is that all SC employment is part time and offered sustained, longitudinal exposure to professional activities and environments. This iterative and low stakes exposure to professional experiences enabled SCs to develop familiarity and self-efficacy in skills gradually with time between work activities to reflect which helped to manage expectation and reduce uncertainty. This combined with the positive and trusting relationships that managers developed with SCs mitigated many anxiety issues.

Understanding of role expectations

The stories generated limited data relevant to this outcome. Induction *per se* was not mentioned as part of the significant change stories.

Mechanism of change	SCs are inducted as intended
Activities	SCs are inducted

The role of mentors in providing sustained feedback/forward was significant for SCs knowing what they were expected to do, as was shadowing which was mentioned by two SCs.

- *I got to watch others do the job and to shadow and gradually get involved doing things for myself. I go to watch staff and other SCs deal with situations. I was glad I was in and see how they did it (SC2).*

Commitment to apply for a SC post and acceptance of the role if offered

The stories did not generate data relevant to this outcome.

Mechanism of change	Recruitment process is fair
Activities	SC roles advertised

Belief that the recruitment process is fair

The stories did not generate data relevant to this outcome.

Mechanism of change	There are SC roles created targeting the intended APP group effectively
Activities	SC roles advertised

Role adverts are engaging and 'enabling' for all

The stories did not generate data relevant to this outcome.

Mechanism of change	There are SC roles created targeting the intended APP group effectively
Activities	SC roles advertised

SC scheme marketing/adverts are easily accessible to all

The stories did not generate data relevant to this outcome.

Mechanism of change	There are SC roles created targeting the intended APP group effectively
Activities	Roles are created and approved
	SC roles advertised

Students are ready to commit to working whilst studying

The stories generated limited data relevant to this outcome

Mechanism of change	Students have an instrumental or integrative motivation to work whilst studying
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What evidence was included was about financial recompense as motivation.

- *A degree and a job and knowing it was all within five minutes walk from my campus home was appealing, as I would not have petrol costs and the role paid a hefty hourly rate (SC2).*
- *The Student Ambassador role was just about making money (SC12).*

All students are aware of the scheme

The stories generated limited data relevant to this outcome.

Mechanism of change	Marketing / promotion materials target the intended APP group effectively
Activities	Promotion/marketing of the SC scheme

The two SCs who did mention how they were made aware of the scheme reported this as outside of marketing/promotion and instead through personal encounters.

- *At the open day my group was led by a Student Ambassador, and she was phenomenal. There were no questions she could not answer, and she made me feel so at home and inspired me to become a SC (SC2).*
- *I wanted to do the SC job after I saw my flat mate got it (SC3).*

Challenges

Findings related to the scheme's challenges are outlined below and include those related to recruitment, reasonable adjustments, the SC skills framework, the relationship between SCs and mentor and the finally the scheme's identity.

Recruitment

The stories highlighted the low levels of confidence and high levels of anxiety that characterise the starting point of students when they seek a SC opportunity. Applying for and being shortlisted for interview for a SC post is therefore often to be a highly stressful experience for students. Although PMU build in opportunities for applicants to seek support from Futures career office, it is possible, even likely, that applicants who do not have in their arsenal existing

social capital/self-efficacy will not seek out support, or ask the 'right' questions. This is exacerbated in the case of students who experience disadvantage. For example, whilst disability could be self-reported on application forms and could be mitigated for at recruitment/induction via reasonable adjustments, disadvantage is less tangible, and more likely to manifest in less confident applications which are less likely to be successful.

This suggests that the current process which directs students to contact Futures could be more embedded for all students to increase exposure to those categorised as disadvantaged. This is evidenced through the lack of awareness of the Futures offer across SCs and line managers and the input from the Futures team who report that the take up of support for application and interview is low (although there is no data pertaining to this). Despite this, the majority of SCs in the sample were successful in their first application (14/16; 87.5%) with two (12.5%) successful in their second application.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments were often put in place at the point of job offer and with the input of the People Team. Adjustments were based on reported disability. Reasonable adjustments to support students struggling with disadvantage are more challenging to articulate and need further investigation.

There was evidence that anxiety was a persistent issue for nearly all the SCs who participated, which raises issues about how to manage this in a way that transcends the mechanism of reasonable adjustments and build anxiety awareness into the scheme's design, delivery, and support mechanisms.

There may be issues with physical access to some workspaces where for example the building is older and has limited physical access, or in cases where lifts are temporarily not functioning. These occurrences can potentially impede reasonable adjustments where they are in place.

SC skills framework and professional development

There was very little mention of the skills framework across the sample. No SC mentioned it without being prompted and none had used it. Of the participating line managers, the two professional services managers were aware of, and had used it to induct and monitor SC progress. In the case of the Student Ambassador role the framework had recently been embedded into the recruitment process so that when Student Ambassadors apply for an employment activity online the application presents which skills they will develop during the activity. The two academic managers were not aware of and did not use the framework in their management or mentoring of SCs.

The interviews also raised questions about the framework's accessibility, suggesting that its format is text heavy, making participation by dyslexic colleagues challenging.

Additionally, there was no required Performance Developmental Review (PDR) for SC roles through which the framework could be a permanent fixture. The meta-evaluation highlighted the possibility of a PDR or an abridged version of it as an opportunity to formalise the use of the framework and encourage continued iterative critical reflection on professional development.

The stakeholder group and in particular the Futures team see the framework as a way for SCs to articulate accrued professional experiences in graduate level job interviews which can enhance employment prospects. However, there is currently no explicit provision for communicating this to SCs, or for practice i.e., through the form of a mock interview.

Relationship with their mentor/line manager

Four SCs reported challenges with line managers who were mentors during their employment which impacted on trust and their sense of belonging in that role, including:

- Perceived lack of feedback related to areas of improvement provided by mentor, suggesting it was difficult to reflect and improve if the only feedback was positive.
- Experiencing communication difficulties with line managers, for example about being prepared for the role and managing expectations.
- The academic line managers were less aware of the anxiety challenges commonly reported by participating SCs, or how to mitigate them in their management practices.
- Line managers not making SC aware of or being supportive of access to staff CPD opportunities.

SC scheme identity

Participating SCs identified as the role they were employed as, for example a Student Ambassador or Welcome Desk Assistant, but did not necessarily see themselves as part of a wider SC scheme. This was also evident of the participating line managers where there was no evidence of cohesiveness across the line manager group; they had not worked together before and there was no pre-existing shared understanding of the scheme or guidance for managing SCs as employees.

Conclusions and recommendations

From the data analysed we can conclude that:

- The scheme is successful in providing employment experiences and supporting these through mentoring; and that this has supported skills development and improved self-efficacy for the SCs who took part in this study.
- The Student College skills framework was not well utilised across the sample and did not feature in the language SCs used to describe their experiences.
- There are plausible tensions between the intended design of the scheme, which is to improve employability outcomes for all students but specifically so for students with a disability and from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2, and limitations in reasonable adjustments as an equity mechanism to achieve this response. Reasonable adjustments tend to be created in response to a disability, whereas the evidence here suggest that designing in mitigation for deprivation and anxiety to recruitment and line – management will support these groups.
- No evidence was found in the SC stories on the mechanisms which underpin the development of SC roles, promotion of the scheme and job opportunities, student motivation to work and recruitment to advertised roles.

These conclusions suggest that when compared to the intended design of the scheme, some aspects are functioning better than others and there is potential to better align the scheme's aims and operations. Therefore, based on the results from the study, we propose considering the following recommendations.

SC scheme design

- The reasonable adjustment process goes some way to mitigate for the challenges students with APP characteristics have when accessing and carrying out a SC role. However, more could be done to deliberately design in mitigation for deprivation and anxiety as these were commonly experienced, and sat outside of reasonable adjustment provision. Emphasising the Futures offer to support application and interviews is an important aspect of this, as is building in how to manage deprivation and anxiety in the workplace as a future feature of the framework.
- Safeguarding emerged as an important feature in the SC employment experience yet was not universally understood in terms of line managing SCs. Better articulation and training of how to safeguard SCs may be beneficial.

SC skills development and self-efficacy

- Self-efficacy is developed through familiarisation in, and reflection on skills domains within the SC employment. Certain skills domains feature more commonly in this than others and that 'self-awareness and resilience', 'communication and influencing' and 'teamworking and leadership' are critical to SC roles. There may be utility in the scheme for line managers through mentoring and use of the framework, specifically teasing out how the SCs engage with and articulate the other skills domains (delivering excellent service, decision making and using initiative, digital knowledge and confidence, analysis and problem solving, and creative and fluent thinking).
- Activities which promote combined skills sets appear to be productive in fostering the conditions for self-efficacy.
- SCs producing an artefact (giving a talk, developing a system or structure, contributing to a document or publication) which potentially has permanence, contributes greatly to the development of the professional self; these activities could be encouraged.
- Building in opportunities for SCs to lead other SCs through buddy or shadowing activities are powerful experiences that underpin the development of self-efficacy and the professional self.

SC scheme skills framework

- Consider evaluating the use of the skills framework; there is currently no understanding of how it is used by line managers or by SCs.
- Aligning the design of the framework with the SC experience over time to reflect the reported distance travelled/educational gain could be beneficial. There is currently no starting or end point in the framework design. Creating a scalable instrument based on the skills domains which can evidence development will also be helpful.
- Consider exit interviews for SCs which provide opportunity for them to articulate their experience in given skills domains in the style of a graduate job interview. This can also serve as an evaluative exercise which could even encompass a Most Significant Change (MSC) based question.
- Consider articulating more clearly where, when, and how reflection on practice takes place. At present this should take place through interaction with the framework and through discussion with line managers. The former might not take place at all times and there is no guidance for managers which potentially makes reflection vulnerable.

- Consider developing greater clarification and communication of what activities constitute each skills domain. There are examples of this in the framework workbook, but this is only useful if actively used by the SC *and* the manager.

SC scheme guidance for managers

- Consider developing line manager guidance on:
 - How to use the skills framework in the line management of SCs.
 - How to mentor for anxiety and deprivation.
 - The importance of mentorship in the line management of SCs and the gradual introduction of empowering positive constructive criticism into the relationship.

Creating future SC roles

- There is potential to enhance the scheme's value for SCs by creating stronger links to academics and the academy. For example, greater awareness and understanding of the scheme by academics can potentially create more SC roles in high impact activities such as research, plus can foster opportunities for links between the study SCs are engaged with and their SC experiences.

Continued evaluation

- Line manager voice is also required before a comprehensive final ToC is completed for the SC scheme. After a final version of a ToC is completed, the scheme could consider how a continued, embedded monitoring and evaluation which considers all contributing actors and factors is created. For example, developing accurate data streams on student characteristics of applicants; number of applications versus job awards; referral and take up of Futures career service support for application and interview plus success rate; use, value and impact of the skills framework; targeted evaluation of skills development in named skills domains; exit interviews with integrated MSC questions; and evaluation of line managers experiences of mentoring SCs to be designed with stakeholders.

Section 5 - Reflections on the use of Transformative Evaluation

In this section we provide reflections on the use of TE collected from different actors in the study; SCs, evaluators, stakeholders and the facilitator of the TE training and analysis session of the first cycle.

Reflections derive data from: (For more details, see Section 2 – Methodology.)

- SCs – through interviews conducted after TE stories were generated.
- *Evaluators* – through one-to-one interviews, the meta-evaluation meeting conducted as part of the TE methodology and written responses to a questionnaire provided by the PI. The questionnaire consisted mainly of open-ended questions they were asked to fill after the TE story generation (Step 1 of TE) and the evaluator analysis (Step 2 of TE).
- SCCG – through a focus group discussion which took place immediately after the TE stakeholder meeting (Step 3 of TE) and through a similar questionnaire provided to evaluators.
- *Informal observations* of TE evaluator cycles and of the stakeholder meeting.

To provide reflections we have structured Chapter 4 based on TE's steps:

- **Step 1 - Story generation;** including the selection of the sample, power dynamics at play, how the story generation conversations were operationalised and the verification of the stories.
- **Steps 2 & 3 - Evaluator analysis and Stakeholder selection and feedback;** involving creating domains, whether stories were co-constructed and how consensus was reached.
- **Step 4 - Meta-evaluation;** comprising reflections on the use of TE by different study stakeholders and for impact evaluation.
- **Conclusions and recommendations.**

In each Step we present key themes using the following structure:

- *TE requirements* - the implementation required by the TE methodology as prescribed for its original setting of youth work.
- *Adaptations for this study* - the adaptations we made, if any, to the implementation required by TE to suit the distinct context of HE, of the scheme and of this study.
- *Reflections* - the synthesis of the findings from data collected as part of the study.

Step 1 - Story generation

Sample selection

Key reflections

- Experienced evaluators supported the quality of outputs and the smooth running of the study.
- TE required a relatively high level of skill to implement and facilitate effectively, which was challenging for novice TE evaluators/facilitators to achieve quickly.
- To support robustness, we used opportunistic sampling, which helped identify SC outcomes and understand impact, without, in this case, detracting from TE's intended positive sampling bias.
- Using evaluators with no working relationship with SCs may have reduced the potential negative impacts of the power dynamics at play between SCs and evaluators, alongside creating a safe place for participants to share their stories.

- **TE requirements:** The TE sample should consist of participants (the storytellers) and evaluators (the story generators). TE activities are to be led by a skilled facilitator(s).
 - **Participants** - sampling is purposive and intentionally biased so that morale is built, focusing on storytellers who have 'a story to tell', thus those with a positive experience. To identify the sample, youth workers decide on who should be selected as a storyteller based on their knowledge of the young people they work with.
 - **Evaluators** - should be practitioners working for the scheme being evaluated and should have a working relationship with the participants from whom they generate stories. Evaluators (youth workers) are either selected or invited to participate in the evaluation by their organisation.

Adaptations for this study: The following adaptations took place.

- **Participants** - we did not use line managers' knowledge of 'SCs who had a positive story to tell' as a sampling criterion to avoid bias. Purposive sampling was used to identify SCs from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 and/or with a disability followed by opportunistic sampling.
- **Evaluators** - all evaluators bar one were SC line managers. Evaluators comprised a mix of academic and professional staff and experienced and inexperienced colleagues in research/evaluation, with all evaluators novices in TE. Given the change in context and this study's requirements, the decision to include experienced researchers/evaluators was due to concerns about the quality and rigor of the outputs to be produced by an entirely inexperienced team in evaluation and in TE. The evaluator who was not a SC line manager had extensive experience in various evaluation methodologies and was assumed less personally invested in the scheme. This counterbalanced viewpoints that derived from direct involvement in the scheme (insider/outsider perspective).
- Lastly, lead evaluators were also responsible for the management and administration of the study. Further, one of the evaluators facilitated the:
 - *Second analysis cycle* – implementing TE was part of the professional development of staff and testing the skills and challenges involved in facilitating the session after observing/taking part in the first cycle facilitated by an expert TE facilitator.
 - *Meta-evaluation session* – given the power dynamics at play, there were concerns about how comfortable evaluators would feel discussing their experiences of TE in a session led by the TE developer.

Reflections: To support the robustness of the findings, opportunistic sampling was used. Despite its own limitations, it was useful in identifying SC outcomes without, in this case, detracting from the positivity TE's purposive positive sampling aims to achieve. We also believe that the inclusion of experienced researchers/evaluators as part of the evaluation team was supportive of the quality of outputs and of the smooth running of the study; using TE as part of this externally funded study required intensive ongoing project management and administration. TE also seemed to require a relatively high level of skill to implement and facilitate effectively, which, although can be gained through experience, was challenging for novice TE evaluators/facilitators to achieve quickly, despite their training and one cycle of practical experience.

Power dynamics - Relationship between story generator and the storyteller

Key reflections

- There is no indication that having pre-existing working relationships with SCs produces a more or less honest conversation and story to having no prior working relationship.
- The story generation conversations seem to have contributed to building more positive relationships and promoted meaningful conversations between SCs and line managers, professional staff and lecturers, potentially resulting to generating more relevant and impactful outcomes for the scheme.

- **Implementation required by TE:** The relationship between the storyteller and the story generator is a fundamental element of TE, specifically in the context where it originated, which involves the working dynamic between a young person and their youth worker. The premise is that this established working relationship facilitates open and honest dialogue, particularly because building a positive, trustworthy relationship is critical to reflection and to improvements taking place.

Adaptation for this study: SC line managers did not have a working relationship with the SC they generated a story from in this study. This approach was considered to be a mitigating mechanism to the existing power dynamics as well as one that allowed for more evaluator objectivity. The key power dynamics considered took account of the dual roles of both SCs and line managers; SCs discussing the scheme with line managers who were also academic staff teaching SCs, and line managers discussing the scheme with SCs who were university staff as well as students. In this context, it was believed that possibly, pairing SCs and line managers who did not have a working relationship could encourage more open discussions, posing less of a risk for the conversations to be contrived than if SCs were conversing with their own line manager or lecturer.

Reflections: There is no indication that having pre-existing working relationships with SCs produces a more or less honest conversation and story to having no prior working relationship. The stories were similar in content and, as one storyteller suggested, the evaluator's ability to create a safe place was key to sharing difficult details of their life with evaluators despite not 'knowing' them. When SCs were acquainted with evaluators as part of the wider university community, evaluators suggested that their relationship with the SCs was more positive after the story generation conversation.

Operationalisation of story generation

Key reflections

- The flexibility offered by TE is helpful in adapting the methodology to better suit the idiosyncrasies of the context and of the study within which it is used.
- The process of making adaptations on how to operationalise the story generation conversations was relatively unsystematic, reactive and subjective, varied in thoroughness and sometimes was influenced by power relations between evaluators that either supported or constrained discussions.
- The conversation schedule devised supported the consistency of the data included in the stories and provided some re-assurance to novice TE evaluators.
- There are no indications that a face-to-face story generation conversation *only* approach produces higher quality stories. It can however exclude some story generators and storytellers based on their personal circumstances. A multi-approach could promote inclusivity as well as prove more time-efficient and cost-effective, especially when technology is employed.
- The TE requirement to write stories within the time allocated for the story generation conversation is time and cost-efficient. There are however drawbacks, including concerns about the depth of data captured in the stories compared to the data elicited as a whole and the ethical implications of this, as well as the impact this may have on the overall quality of the study.
- The lack of a recording/transcription from the conversation limits internal quality checking, but minimises the potentially negative impact a recording might have on participants and supports efficiency in data collection and analysis.
- There have been some unintended deviations from the intended TE implementation, highlighting the relatively high level of skill required by evaluators and facilitators in particular.

Process of making adaptations to operationalise story generation

- **Implementation expected by TE:** TE's operationalisation is relatively flexible so that it accommodates and adapts to contextual needs.

Adaptations for this study: Operational adaptations were discussed and agreed during the evaluator's training, or between the lead evaluators and the TE trainer/facilitator.

Reflections: The flexibility offered by TE was helpful - it allowed the idiosyncrasies of this study to be considered and relevant changes to be implemented. Overall, operational adaptations were a product of discussions that: a) were mainly iterative rather than planned, sometimes without enough time for debate or without necessarily involving all relevant stakeholders; b) varied in thoroughness; and c) sometimes were influenced by power relations that either supported or constrained discussions.

Evaluator conversation schedule for story generation

- **Implementation expected by TE:** TE asks evaluators to start conversations using the following question: *Looking back, what do you think was the most significant change that occurred for you because of [title of scheme]...?* Beyond the evaluator training, usually, no further guidance/aid is provided to evaluators. In each evaluation, multiple rounds of TE are

utilized to help evaluators acquire expertise by learning through practical experience and reflecting during meta-evaluation sessions that occur after each TE phase.

Adaptation for this study: During the evaluators' training, the MSC question was revised to "*Looking back, what do you think was different for you as a result of your participation in the Student Colleagues scheme?*" This subtle revision aimed to simplify the original question and aid participants' understanding.

In addition, a conversation schedule was created. Given that the study scope allowed for only two cycles of implementation of the methodology rather than several, as per the TE requirement, learning through reflection of 'doing' the evaluation was limited. For this reason, the conversation schedule included prompts and reminders on what the stories must cover in terms of content in order to:

- a) Support and re-assure evaluators with collecting data using an approach they had no previous experience in.
- b) Support consistency of the data collected across different evaluators.
- c) Ensure that high quality, useful stories for the study were generated.

The developer of TE reviewed the conversation schedule to ensure that it allowed conversations to flourish, rather than turning them into an interview, which is not in line with the methodology's requirements.

Reflections: The revised MSC question seemed to work well; there are no accounts of participants asking for clarifications or providing responses that failed to address what was asked the first time round. The conversation schedule was deemed helpful in striking a balance between providing consistent content for the stories and avoiding a prescriptive approach that would turn the conversation into an interview. Evaluators also found it a helpful guide on how to generate the stories, especially during the first cycle when they were generating stories for the first time. As a result of their prior experience, in the second cycle, evaluators felt more confident in producing the stories and consequently, attached less significance to the schedule. Although evaluators may not place high value on the conversation schedule as they gain experience in creating stories, there are indications that the schedule's prompts may have been beneficial for SCs too. Some SCs had already finished their employment before the discussions occurred and initially found it challenging to recall much from their employment. They suggested that the probes used by evaluators made it easier to remember what had happened. We do not have recordings to determine whether the prompts used from the schedule and/or probing questions spontaneously developed by evaluators led to better memory recall for SCs. Nonetheless, looking at the quality of the 17 stories and their data, our overall reflection is that for inexperienced in TE evaluators, the conversation schedule was helpful in producing useful and high-quality stories and in ensuring consistency in the data collected.

Place of TE story generation

- **Implementation expected by TE:** TE strongly recommends that story generation conversations are face-to-face. In a youth work setting, it seems that face-to-face interactions are key to building positive relationships between youth workers and the young people they are assisting, reflecting upon one's practice/approach and providing effective support and change. This also means that, in that context, a TE conversation between the story generator (a youth worker) and the storyteller (a young person working with the youth worker) can maybe easily take place face-to-face as part of their scheduled meetings.

Adaptation for this study: No adaptations were to take place.

Reflections: Most of the story generation conversations took place face-to-face on the PMU campus – the campus was identified as the most accessible and cost-effective meeting place for both evaluators and SCs. A few storytellers however requested an online discussion as they were unable or preferred not to travel into campus - some had already completed their studies/work at PMU. Further, one evaluator, who worked remotely, was excluded from the data collection phase during the planning phase.

Although one evaluator felt that face-to-face conversations were more effective in building rapport, the remaining evaluators did not hold this view. All evaluators agreed however that the quality of both face-to-face and online conversations was the same and that online conversations would have been more time-saving for both evaluators and SCs. Since the evaluators were PMU staff members who had to travel to the campus for other responsibilities, conducting face-to-face conversation for this study did not result in any additional costs.

Note-taking and recording the stories

- **Implementation expected by TE:** TE discourages audio recording story generation conversations on the premise that this will: a) enable evaluators and participants to concentrate on the stories and avoid any distractions or discomfort that could compromise the authenticity and honesty of the conversation; and b) increase the data collected. Brief note taking is allowed to help with the story construction once the conversation has reached that point.

Adaptation for this study: No adaptations were to take place.

Reflections: Data suggests that during the story generation, some evaluators took notes while others believed they were not allowed to. Those that took notes suggested that they felt more confident to generate the story, especially during the first cycle. As regards the lack of recordings, some evaluators, especially those with prior experience of conducting research/evaluations, expressed concerns. They were worried about:

- Losing data offered by participants but not captured in their stories and the ethical implications of 'collecting' data that were not going to be used.
- The depth and richness of the data collected to that of the data used – all data collected Vs the story data.
- The difficulty in verifying the accuracy of the data.
- The lack of opportunity to quality check the approach used to generating the stories by other team members.

Despite these concerns, the lack of recording was seen as time-efficient, allowing evaluators to write their stories within the allotted data collection time without the need for additional time spent on the data, i.e., to listen to a recording after the conversations or transcribe the data.

Time allocated for the stories to be generated

- **Implementation expected by TE:** Each story is to be written within 20-30 minutes by either the story generator or the storyteller in the words of the storyteller and agreed by them. Stories are usually around a paragraph long, approximately four to five sentences, and not too short to miss crucial details or too long that the main message/MS is lost.

Adaptation for this study: One adaptation took place; during the training it was decided that story generators only were to write the stories.

Reflections: All evaluators found it challenging to generate the stories within 20-30 minutes, with most lasting between 40 and 55 minutes. This was the case for both TE story generation cycles, indicating that more experience in implementing TE is required for the desired 20-30 minutes to be achieved. The length of most stories was consistent with the guidance of a paragraph of four to five lines, but a few were much longer, up to a page of A4.

Story verification

Key reflections

- The lack of actively verifying the stories externally poses a relatively low risk to the accuracy of the data collected in this study.

- **Implementation expected by TE:** External verification of stories is not a requirement of TE. Internal verification occurs during the story generation stage (between the participant and the evaluator) as both will have experience/knowledge of the change. It also occurs at the analysis stage when the evaluators consider, review and examine the generated stories.

Adaptation for this study: We did not actively verify the stories.

Reflections: Although we did not actively verify SC stories, it is relatively plausible to suggest the following:

- Data proportionality verifies the stories; the stories align with the context of the scheme and PMU, and the MSC change stories have consistent outcomes.
- The participants' disclosures reference the target APP group being evaluated and their challenges, which adds credibility to the stories.
- Team members in both evaluator and stakeholder groups who had prior knowledge or experience with some of the SCs participating in the evaluation were able to verify their stories.
- Verifying the stories during the analysis stage was not a complex process as the scope and content of the stories was relatively limited, requiring minimal content to be verified.

Steps 2 & 3 - Evaluator analysis and stakeholder selection and feedback

Creating domains

Key reflections

- The experience of the TE facilitator was supportive in reassuring and guiding inexperienced evaluators, who felt nervous in implementing the TE analysis process the first time round.
- Facilitating the TE analysis process requires relatively high level of skill, evidence from the second round of analysis facilitated by an evaluator suggests; unintentional deviations from TE's intended implementation inhibited evaluators from allocating stories to domains with ease and complete the process in a timely manner.
- Longer stories, lack of familiarisation with the data prior to the analysis meeting, the perceived high number of stories analysed at once leading to difficulties with memory recall and comprehension of the stories also seem to have inhibited evaluators from allocating stories to domains with ease.
- The perceived reductionist approach to data was a recurring challenge noted in some evaluator and SC feedback.

- **Implementation expected by TE:** Deriving domain is a structured process through which evaluators start by reading aloud the stories they have generated and agreed with SCs. Then, they create domains based on the content of the stories and, after reading aloud each story for a second time, they assign them to a domain. Domains may change from one round to the next due to the inductive nature of the process and the number of stories may vary per domain. If a domain is found to have more than 50%-60% of the total number of stories, evaluators need to re-evaluate the domain to determine if it is too broad.

Adaptation for this study: No adaptations were to take place.

Reflections: All evaluators were new to TE and expressed their nervousness during the first implementation cycle in conducting the analysis. The biggest challenges they faced were becoming familiar with the data they had to work with and feeling confident in implementing the process. Having the TE developer facilitate the first cycle of analysis was helpful in guiding evaluators through the process, which was followed as prescribed by the methodology - bar the co-construction of stories which was a deliberate omission and which is discussed later in this report.

During the second analysis cycle, one of the lead evaluators facilitated the process – we thought that experience in how to conduct the analysis had been built. During the second analysis round however, the process of creating domains deviated from TE's intended implementation; the team found itself creating multiple domains for each story and started allocating multiple stories to multiple domains. Due to this deviation, the process was seen as harder this time round and despite having two hours to complete the analysis compared to one hour during the first analysis cycle, relatively rushed decisions were made at the end of the two hours in order to complete the task. It was also suggested that the longer stories distracted from the MSC, making the process more challenging because they could easily fit into more than one domain.

Furthermore, evaluators faced the following difficulties when creating domains:

- *Memory recall and comprehension* - some evaluators struggled to recall and comprehend each story even after the second read. The number of stories – eight in the

first round and nine in the second – were seen to contribute to this problem for some, as did the length of the longer stories. Two evaluators suggested that familiarising themselves with the stories before the analysis meeting would have been beneficial to them.

- *Interpreting stories* - experienced researchers/evaluators used to analysing data in a more systematic and objective manner, felt uneasy or intrusive with the perceived need to delve deeper and interpret SCs' stories in a more subjective way. Stakeholders did not seem to experience this challenge, with more overt subjectivity in their discussions of the stories observed.
- *Data richness and TE efficiency* - a recurring challenge noted in some evaluator and SC feedback was TE's perceived reductionist approach to data. While it was agreed that the methodology capture impact stories and the factors contributing to impact in a unique and powerful way compared to other methodologies, it appeared to neglect additional data on impacts and processes that were offered during the story generation discussions, raising questions about time and cost efficiencies and ethical issues regarding 'collected' but unused data.

Co-construction of stories

Key reflections

- Omitting the co-construction step in the TE process increased the robustness of the analysis and reduced evaluator workload.
 - Despite not having a working relationship with SCs who they generated stories from, engaging with the stories inadvertently encouraged evaluators to reflect on their own practice.
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- **Implementation expected by TE:** As part of their working relationship, evaluators are expected to write their own interpretation of a participant's stories, which is influenced by their experience of the participant's journey, and reflect on their role/practice as part of it. Both stories, that of the participant and of the evaluator, become 'the story'.

Adaptation for this study: Stories were not co-constructed. Evaluators were to contextualise the stories by providing some background offered during the conversations, such as the SCs circumstances and the post they held.

Reflections: Given the lack of a working relationship between evaluators and SCs, co-construction was disabled, reducing confirmation bias and increasing the robustness of the analysis process. However, on occasion, evaluators were acquainted with the SCs they interviewed or identified them through their stories and shared their views on these SCs' experiences with the other evaluators. Further, the evaluators were inadvertently encouraged to share and contemplate some of their personal experiences as SC line managers while engaging with the stories, even though these stories were not produced by their own staff members. Lastly, omitting the co-construction of stories step also meant that part of the workload subscribed to the role of the evaluators was lifted.

Reaching consensus

Key reflections

- Evaluators reached a consensus relatively easily due to positive group dynamics, but raised concerns about the potential risks associated with different group dynamics and the potential biases team members could bring to the discussions.
 - The stakeholder group faced difficulties in achieving a consensus, which can be attributed in part to the lack of cohesion among the group regarding the scheme's outcomes. This lack of cohesion was not adequately recognised or addressed before or during the session, potentially resulting in a less effective facilitation of the stakeholder discussion.
 - The analysis process enabled cross-fertilisation amongst professional and academic staff within PMU, which would not ordinarily happen in similar projects and was welcomed by all involved.
- **Implementation expected by TE:** TE asks evaluators to come to a consensus regarding the MSC story for each domain created and stakeholders for the entire scheme. TE permits only consensus building as a type of collaborative decision-making - it is assumed that engaging in further discussions, even those involving conflict, can foster deeper reflection and enhance the quality of professional development opportunities for all involved parties.

Adaptation for this study: No adaptations took place.

Reflections: Reaching consensus was relatively unproblematic for the evaluators, highlighting the positive group dynamics of the group as the key factor. They also noted that the process of reaching a consensus helped them understand perspectives and experiences of the scheme through the eyes of SCs and of their fellow evaluators, especially those who held different roles and with whom they may not normally interact with in this way. The 'bringing together' of different PMU staff roles, enabled by TE, was most welcomed by all.

Evaluators however, did raise more general concerns about TE and group dynamics. They suggested that, while the dynamics worked well in this case, they could envisage a scenario where certain 'voices' could dominate and suppress others. They also noted the possibility of a bias, either conscious or subconscious (confirmation biases), towards favouring the stories they generated over those produced by others or by SCs who they felt an affinity to (affinity bias). They stressed the importance of evaluators being aware of this potential risk from the outset and the need to remain open to changing one's views.

In contrast to the evaluators, the stakeholder group encountered several deadlocks in reaching a consensus. Resolving their differences through a relatively unstructured discussion did not produce the desired results, so the stakeholder group opted to use a process of elimination to arrive at one MSC to represent the scheme. This approach, while it possibly reduced the richness of earlier discussions, did resolve the impasses faced by the group. One could argue that some of the difficulties in reaching a consensus were partly due to a lack of clarity of the SC scheme's outcomes, resulting in varying perspectives on what constituted success for the scheme amongst the group. Neither the facilitator nor the lead evaluators fully appreciated the diversity in understandings of the scheme's outcomes before hand – they assumed that the stakeholders' participation in creating a logic model for

the scheme in the earlier stages of the study had enabled a more cohesive view amongst them. This potentially resulted in the facilitation of the stakeholder discussion to be less effective.

Step 4 - Meta-evaluation

Reflections on the use of TE

Key reflections

- The most highly appreciated aspect of TE was the opportunity to reflect.
- Participants reported a sense of achievement and pride through sharing their stories.
- Evaluators reported a number of benefits to taking part in TE including: a) upskilling their evaluation skills; b) cross-functional collaboration and cross-fertilisation as well as giving the opportunity to take part and an equal voice to staff irrespective of role and level as part of an evaluation project; c) increased empathy towards students and their challenges.
- TE assumes that TE participants possess critical thinking and problem-solving skills, necessary for reflection/reflexivity and/or that facilitators will have the necessary skills to enable them to emerge and/or develop.
- Stakeholder feedback indicate improved morale and increased motivation to work even harder on the scheme.

SC, evaluator and stakeholder feedback suggests that the TE process had a positive impact on all the participants in this study, with the reflective component of the process highly valued by all. Although the timeframe typical of the methodology needed to be shortened to fit the project time scales - only two TE cycles were conducted and one stakeholder group meeting - this does not seem to have influenced the quality of the findings of the evaluation itself, but it is possible that learning for evaluators and stakeholders and possibly improvements to the SC scheme were reduced.

- **Participants:** all SCs found reflecting on their SC experience rewarding and worthwhile, even those who reported some discomfort revisiting difficult aspects of their lives and how they overcame them as part of the conversations. In particular, reflecting on the scheme's impact on them, SCs felt a sense of accomplishment and pride. A few SCs even gained a relatively newfound sense of self-awareness, realising skills they had developed through the scheme that they had not previously considered and others realised they had achieved more than they had previously thought. In other cases, the story generation conversations did not uncover anything new to SCs previous reflections whilst in the scheme, but they still found reflecting once again on their experiences helpful and enjoyable.
- **Evaluators:** feedback suggests that implementing TE was beneficial to evaluators in different ways, including:
 - *Upskilling* – evaluators reported a deeper theoretical and practical understanding of TE and considered using it in other studies.
 - *Cross-functional collaboration* – academic and professional staff reported having few opportunities to work together. TE allowed staff from different functions to collaborate as equals in an unorthodox way and project, and establish relationships that probably would not have been formed before, enabling the exchange of knowledge and cross-fertilisation between the two groups.

- *Changes to practice/line management of SCs* – evaluators noted an increased level of awareness regarding the challenges faced by students, leading to a greater sense of empathy towards them, which they wished to apply to their work going forward. The reflection/reflexivity levels identified in this study could be deemed limited compared to those anticipated by TE and could be attributed to the lack of an ongoing working relationship between the evaluators and SCs. Further, although not a challenge in our case, it was pointed out that reflection/reflexivity require critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which TE assumes are possessed by evaluators or that the facilitator has the skills to enable them to emerge and/or develop.
- **Stakeholders:** reported that taking part in the stakeholder meeting and reading the SCs’ stories validated their decisions to date and motivated them to work even harder on the scheme.

Reflections on the use of TE for impact evaluation

Key reflections

- TE has been supportive in identifying SC outcomes and eliciting the achievement of the SC scheme on SCs who took part in the study. It has also solidified the scheme’s outcomes and provided powerful accounts of underrepresented students in HE to be heard in their own words.
- There are methodological challenges for impact evaluation when using TE relating to validity, reliability, measurability and generalisability.
- To ensure a scheme’s accountability objectives are met, it might be helpful to consider additional methods that can complement TE and/or to explore any possible adaptations that can be made to the methodology.

The table below outlines our reflections on the benefits of TE for impact evaluation in this study.

Table 8. Benefits of TE for impact evaluation – reflections

	Reflection on TE use for impact evaluation	TE aspects supporting impact and evidence of impact to be elicited
ToC, outcomes & mechanisms of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Helpful in identifying outcomes and change mechanisms of the SC scheme. ● Useful in informing and solidifying the scheme’s logic model and ToC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Conversation schedule</i> - the opening question used - ‘<i>Looking back, what do you think is different about you because of participating in the Student Colleagues scheme?</i>’, proved effective, as did the guidance/prompts in the conversation schedule, i.e.,

Evidence of impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported the elicitation of evidence on the impact of the scheme on SCs who took part in the story generation cycles. • Allowed voices of underrepresented in HE be heard through powerful accounts in the form of stories written in their own words. 	<p>reminding evaluators of the content required for each story.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Evaluator training</i> – emphasis during the evaluator training on the purpose of the study – to elicit impact – was helpful. • <i>Adaptations to the methodology</i> - to align with the HE context, ethical standards and the requirements of this study have supported the validity of impact findings.
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Although TE has been supportive in identifying SC outcomes and eliciting the impact of the SC scheme on SCs who took part in the study, several challenges remain, including:

- **Validity and reliability:** TE’s focus on processes and reflection and action may result in outcomes and impacts to be overlooked. Emphasising the purpose of the study during the TE training and the conversation schedule enabled impact to be elicited. Nevertheless, outcomes are confined to the storytellers, leaving other potential or intended outcomes of the scheme as well as some reported in the literature unidentified or untested. In addition, opportunistic sampling within the targeted APP sample population meant that there is still a possibility of bias within our sample. Lastly, TE is an individualised model and can miss aspects such as system and structural challenges, and/or other key stakeholder voices which may influence ‘the system’, i.e., those external to the organisation. It is assumed that the stakeholder group discussion can reveal system and structural challenges, but this was not evident in our study.
- **Measurability:** the qualitative nature of the methodology makes outcomes harder to measure, i.e., self-efficacy or self-concept. These outcomes could have been measured through other methods if the scope of this study had allowed. The iterative nature of the methodology and the continuous improvements that may be implemented through the process mean that the scheme’s implementation might also be in constant flux, resulting in conclusions about the impact of the scheme harder to make.
- **Generalisability:** generalisability is limited to PMU, where the scheme is implemented and to the SCs who took part in the study.
- **Accountability:** TE is not designed for accountability purposes. Despite stakeholders being impressed with what they perceived powerful accounts of the scheme's impact, one stakeholder expressed disappointment that the impact claims resulting from the methodology might not necessarily fulfil their accountability responsibilities.

Conclusions and recommendations

Our experience from this study suggests that TE can have a place in impact evaluation, amongst other methods. In this study, TE has:

- Solidified parts of the scheme's logic model and ToC by improving the relevance and accuracy of some of the SC scheme's outcomes and by revealing mechanisms of change and logic chains.
- Enabled the identification of outcomes participants believed they had achieved.
- Indicated whether some of the intended outcomes have been achieved.
- Provided powerful accounts of impact of underrepresented groups in HE through the use of stories written in their own words.
- Through its use, highlighted the potential to:
 - Improve the scheme through participation, reflection and recommendations made by different stakeholders, empowering them to be part not only in the evaluation of the scheme but also of its future direction.
 - Improve stakeholder understanding of the scheme and enable a more strategic approach to achieving its outcomes.
 - Built local capacity to critically reflect.
- Encouraged collaboration and cross-fertilisation between staff that may not usually interact with each within the organisation.
- Engaged stakeholders in meaningful conversations.
- Allowed for adaptations to take place so that the methodology fits to the context and needs of the impact evaluation carried out.

The purpose of the impact evaluation, the HE context and the nature of the scheme should guide the selection of the methodology and methods to be used. In this case, TE was well suited to:

- Explore the use of the methodology as part on a wider group of 'small *n*' methodologies for the purpose of impact evaluation.
- Support the identification of SC outcomes, which were yet to be firmly defined.
- Bring to the fore the voices of SCs from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 and/or SCs with self-reported disability(ies), who are underrepresented in HE.
- Enable Marjon staff from academic and professional roles to become evaluators and support their professional development through hands-on experience and reflective practice.
- Provide helpful evidence as part of the scheme's overall monitoring and evaluation system.

To fulfil the above purposes and outcomes, stakeholders will have to embrace TE's subjectivity, context specificity, commit to staff professional development through reflection and to iteratively implementing improvements as well as plan carefully resources and find TE expertise or grow it over time for effective implementation.

The SC scheme is part of PMU's APP and its evaluation is a key requirement of the university's accountability responsibilities. To support providers with the evaluation of their interventions, the Office for Students (OfS) has commissioned the Access and Participation Standards of Evidence report, which discusses the different types of claims associated to different types of evidence.

TE was originally developed to evaluate youth work programmes, bring to the fore the voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups, and empower and support the professional

development of youth work practitioners who act as evaluators. It was not developed to serve accountability purposes or for the HE context.

Further studies are needed to understand the use of TE in an HE context, what methods need to be used alongside it and how adaptations to the methodology may support and/or inhibit impact evaluation for accountability purposes. This means that working with TE in this context may need facilitators and evaluators to balance ideology with standard of evidence and strength of claims as well as with ethical aspects relevant to HE – some adaptations to the methodology have been attempted in this study with this in mind.

Below we provide a few thoughts/reflections. They are certainly not a product of a systematic approach to evaluating the methodology empirically or theoretically - this was out of scope -, but could start a conversation and become a reference point when thinking of future studies that examine the most effective implementation of TE within a HE context.

Table 9. Considerations for future studies using TE in a HE context

Topic area	Consideration	Strength	Weakness
Facilitation and Evaluator team			
Facilitator training / evaluator team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider providing training for evaluators to also act as facilitators. Consider adding details relating to the operationalisation of the story generation and analysis sessions to the training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could develop TE facilitator skills within the organisation quicker and reduce the need for additional internal or external resources. Could support consistency in implementation and could further reassure novice to TE evaluators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could lead to less effective implementation of TE, at least to start with.
Evaluator team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering the HE context, contemplate whether pairing evaluators and participants who have a working relationship is appropriate. Consider including a cross section of staff as part of the evaluator team, including staff generating stories that are experienced in evaluation and are not programme/scheme practitioners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce power dynamics and supports ethical standards. Could support the smooth running of a study. Could increase robustness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce opportunities for reflection. Could reduce opportunities for participation of more staff who have a working relationship with the study participants.
Design			
Number of implementation cycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider testing the impact of using longer than two to three month periods between implementation cycles, possibly in cases where a scheme's logic model and ToC are considered more 'solidified'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could allow for parts of implementation to 'settle' and causal links between implementation and outcomes to be 'more' definitive. Could reduce workload / time commitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce opportunities for learning through reflection and cross-fertilisation.
Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider using different types of sampling to purposive/selecting participants with positive experiences only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce bias. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce positive bias, a key principle of appreciative inquiry.

Topic area	Consideration	Strength	Weakness
Story generation			
Embedding story generation into the monitoring and evaluation system of the scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider generating stories online or embed them as part of the scheme, i.e., SC electronically input their stories at the end of their SC work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could provide continuous evidence of impact and support continuous improvement. Could decrease staff workload. Could potentially increase the volume and representativeness of evidence; reduce positive bias through non positive stories. Could decrease costs (i.e., travel). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs careful planning so that stories are of high quality. Needs consideration so that the process is inclusive. Assumes no working relationship between the story generator and the storyteller. Reduces reflection points.
Supporting aids for evaluators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider providing a conversation aid to support novice evaluators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could improve data consistency. Could provide psychological support to novice evaluators. Could support eliciting the stories - this process requires using good questioning skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could imbed conversations to flourish and turn them into an interview, if not done well.
Evaluator analysis			
Story data familiarisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider providing evaluators with the stories so that they familiarise themselves with the data before the analysis session. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could improve memory recall and understanding. Could be more reassuring for some evaluators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce capturing the 'essence' rather than all that the storyteller offers.
Co-construction of stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider removing the co-construction step of TE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could increase objectivity in decision making. Could increase the quality of the data by reducing confirmation bias. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces practitioner learning.
Decision making for adaptations			
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions to adapt aspects of the methodology need time. Consider recording, monitoring and evaluating adaptations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could allow for adaptations to be inclusive to all stakeholders involved and could overtly addresses power dynamics between decision makers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases workload.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluability of the methodology is increased. 	
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Topic area	Consideration	Strength	Weakness
Stakeholder meeting			
ToC & structural changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider asking stakeholders to revisit the scheme's logic model/ToC in advance of the stakeholder group session taking place, especially in cases where the ToC is still in flux/yet to be solidified. Consider how the facilitation can ensure that conversations are grounded to the outcomes of the scheme/stories. Explicitly refer to structural challenges, if those do not arise naturally through the conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce overly subjective interpretations. Could support a more cohesive approach to choosing a story to represent the scheme. Could capture data on structural and external influences that are less likely to arise through participant stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce the fluidity of the conversations.
Reaching consensus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider alternative voting approaches to consensus building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce the skill required by the facilitator to manage the power dynamics. Could be more inclusive to those that might not be as 'vocal'. In situations where time is limited, allowing the group to independently come up with a solution to overcome a deadlock could increase the likelihood of the process being negatively affected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce the richness of the conversations and reflection points.
Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider explicitly including the improvements needed for the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could ensure that improvements are considered in the context of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is not necessarily an aim of TE.

	scheme as part of TE discussions.	the stories and data they generate.	
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – SC scheme context and logic model

Context of the Student Colleagues scheme

Since the 1997 Dearing Report which advocated for embedding employability skills throughout higher education, employability has been a key agenda in higher education. This has led to a plethora of different conceptualisations and approaches to employability across the sector (Blackmore et al., 2016). However, despite almost 25 years of efforts to enhance employability in the graduate population, there remain abstruse issues with graduate employability which underpin the genesis for the Student Colleagues scheme. For example, there is evidence of a discord between higher education efforts to enhance students' employability, students' employment prospects, and employer expectations (DCMS, 2021; Sarin, 2019) suggesting there is more universities can do to enhance employability skills and career readiness for all students. This is further contextualised by the Office for Students' (OfS) mission to promote equal opportunities and outcomes for all students. This includes for graduate employment for which there are significant extant differences for students from underrepresented groups including those from low participation areas and those with a reported disability (OfS, 2022).

The OfS uses APPs as a regulatory mechanism with which to intervene and promote equal opportunity at the institutional level. APPs set out how each institution will improve equality of opportunity for under-represented groups to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education. The OfS provides each institution with context data to assist them in pursuing equality in their offer. These data are used to inform APPs, which sets out the provider's ambition for change, what it plans to do to achieve that change, the targets it sets, and the investment it will make to deliver the APP. If institutions want to charge higher level tuition fees, their plans must be approved by the OfS's Director for Fair Access and Participation.

PMU like other higher education institutions has developed an APP (2020-25) to respond to equality challenges. Improving employability outcomes for all students is a feature of the APP, with additional specific foci on outcomes for students from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2, as well as those who have a disability diagnosis. These foci not only reflect the ambition of the OfS but also the geosocial context of PMU, which has significantly higher than average numbers of students from these groups.

To operationalise this the PMU education offer provides embedded employment opportunities for all students. Professional development, employability skills and career readiness are present within all degree programmes as a 'thread'; meaning that students will be exposed to skills development in their field of study, and that these skills are to mimic the skill sets utilised in related employment fields.

PMU recognises however that high quality extracurricular employment experiences are also valuable contributors to graduate employment but that the trends evident in graduate outcome data (where underrepresented groups are disadvantaged) are also relevant to students seeking supplementary employment. Providing these students with opportunities for paid employment in an authentic environment is advantageous as it could support the levelling up of their employment prospects (Artfield et al., 2021). To mitigate this and increase the number of students who can access authentic employment experiences outside the core curriculum, the Student College Scheme and supporting skills framework was developed.

The intervention

The scheme design is underpinned by local and institutional theories of change. Locally, the theory posits that scheme employed students experience high-quality employment which equips them for future careers better than if they had not participated. Impact will be evidenced by SCs reporting higher levels of graduate employment than non-SCs in the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey. This in turn is situated within the wider institutional ToC for success and progression, built around a twin solution to addressing key challenges, 'supporting attainment-raising for access; inclusivity for success and progression, and enhancing belonging, awareness, and familiarisation at all stages of the student life cycle' (PMU, 2021-25:13).

The scheme has been developed by a cross institutional team, the 'Student Colleagues Project Group', consisting of the:

- Director of People and Organisational Development
- Head of Student Recruitment
- Student Engagement Officer
- Head of Employability
- Head of Transformation
- Teo Student Colleagues.

The scheme recruits students to university vacancies since 2020. During this time the number and type of roles available has increased³ and the scheme has been embedded into other institutional strategy for example The People Strategy (PMU, 2020-25), and inputted into local business plans.

Until 2022 evaluation of the scheme was limited. In house evaluation (Smith, 2020) explored SC satisfaction with aspects of the scheme. Satisfaction was high (90%+) for 'recruitment', 'readiness to do job', and 'gaining skills'. Satisfaction was lower (<89%) for 'communication with managers', 'feedback from managers', 'belonging', 'communication with the People and Organisational Development unit', and 'feeling valued'. There has yet been no evaluation of the intended outcomes, and the lag between participation and the Graduate Outcomes survey means that data is unavailable.

Student Colleagues scheme Logic Model

NOTE: Below are details of the scheme's logic model. The logic model was developed before this study was completed – TE was used as a way to test the logic model from the perspective of SCs, who were yet to be consulted. A revision of this original logic model is needed as well as the perspective of managers in order for a final logic model and ToC to be developed.

³ In the academic year 2022-2023, amongst other, roles include SC Student Ambassadors, SCs supporting IT, the Welcome Desk and the PMU library, Laboratory Assistance and Sports Lab assistants, SCs working in research roles

Inputs

Delivery of the SC scheme requires the following inputs:

- **PMU staff time and resources**, including:
 - *The SCSG*, which leads the SC strategy and uses university resources to develop materials for promoting and implementing the scheme.
 - *The People Team*, who produce human resources related policies specifically for the SC scheme and sit on recruitment panels for SC roles.
 - *Line managers*, who support student employees and upskill themselves to implement the PMU Colleagues skills framework. Members of the SCSG provide training to line managers on the skills framework, who, in turn, mentor the SCs they supervise.
 - *Futures, the PMU career service*, which provides support for students in developing applications and if shortlisted, with their interviews.
 - *An array of PMU staff employed by the university*, who engage with the SC scheme and SCs at different times, either in an ad hoc or ongoing basis, such as payroll staff and the student ambassador officer.
- **Budget allocation** for SCs by the PMU department the SCs will be employed by.

Activities and outputs

The above inputs are intended to deliver the following activities:

SC promotion and marketing

- *Development of SC promotional and operational material for managers and students:*
 - Promotion of the SC scheme to PMU managers aims to raise awareness and encourage them to consider hiring a SC for >Grade 2 roles. This is achieved by cascading information to the PMG and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office (RKEO), as well as providing managers with access to the Student Colleagues internal PMU webpages, where all the information related to the SC scheme are held.
 - Promotion and 'marketing' to raise awareness of the scheme to students. A multi-method approach is used to promote the scheme. This process begins prior to students joining PMU and includes promoting the scheme in the PMU undergraduate prospectus, in school recruitment fairs and open days, as well as highlighting it on the PMU website and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Once students have enrolled to study, internal communications such as the PMU website, email, and student-facing webpages are used to continue promoting the scheme and encourage them to apply for SC positions.

Role creation

- *Identification of need for a SC role and recruitment process.* Creating a SC role involves PMU managers identifying a need for a role that could be filled by a SC.
- *Managers fill in the relevant business case form* and send it to the People Team.
- *People Team SC recruitment policy is in place.* The recruitment policy advises PMU managers to assess whether a role is appropriate for a SC candidate before initiating an open recruitment process. All new business case proposals are evaluated by the People Team, and if a SC candidate is not proposed, but could be appropriate, the team contacts the manager to discuss the possibility of advertising the position as a SC role. If the decision is made to proceed, the SC recruitment process begins.

Role recruitment

- *Development of recruitment materials.* Once the role moves to the recruitment phase, managers refine the job specification and prepare any other documentation required.
- *Approval of role by the Senior Management Team (SMT) Workforce Development Committee (WDC), based on People Team SC recruitment policy.* Once all recruitment materials are in place, the post is discussed by the SMT WDC, responsible for approving any new post. The group operates a high level of support for SC roles, and these are encouraged wherever possible.
- *Advertisement of role.* Once approval for the role is given by the WDC, the SC role is advertised through student focused channels, inviting student only applicants. Because PMUs student profile includes higher than average state sector POLAR 4 quintile 1 and 2, and disability admissions (PMU, 2021-24), student only applications help to mitigate the biases and structural barriers which inhibit these groups in gaining and thriving in (graduate) employment (Bathmaker et al., 2013; Byrne, 2022; DWP, 2022).
- *When the role is advertised, the advert explicitly advises applicants to liaise with Futures, the PMU careers service.* Futures offers support for students with their application and if shortlisted with their interview. Career service interventions are increasingly recognised as essential in supporting the transition from HE to employment. Spokane and Nguyen's (2016) meta-analysis indicate that students that are subject to a career intervention are better off than those who are not and Whiston (1999) reports that 1-1 interventions have the most positive effect. Further, research suggests that career conversations are effective when career staff discuss the possible application, ensure that the discussion is a) supportive about the suitability of the application; and b) enables the matching of previous experiences to the role requirements (Dacre-Pool and Sewell, 2007; Dacre-Pool, 2020).
- *Shortlisting, interviews, and position offered.* After shortlisting and interviewing candidates, the position is offered. When an offer of employment is made, the applicant is asked to complete a pre-employment health questionnaire to help PMU identify any potential adjustments needed.
- PMU identifies reasonable adjustments or support that would assist the individual in undertaking the duties of their employment, including:
 - Any health problems or disabilities that may make the proposed post difficult or unsafe for them or others.
 - Whether any adjustments need to be made to the job to enable them to work if they have health issues or a disability.

If the applicant answers yes, to any of the above questions, they are sent a further questionnaire from the occupational health services. Depending on the result of this, Occupational Development may request an appointment with the SC to discuss how PMU can appropriately support them in their new role. In these cases, recommendations are sent to the People Team who can work with individual managers to develop bespoke plans to support the SC.

SC induction and employment, and the use of SC specific resources and support, including:

- *The SC skills framework and the SC workbook* are intended to be used by SCs and their line managers. The SC skills framework enables SCs to identify, label, differentiate, and articulate their experiences in the skills included in it. Skills part of the framework include:
 - Communicating and influencing.

- Delivering excellent service.
- Team working and leadership.
- Decision making and using initiative.
- Analysis and problem solving.
- Creative and fluent thinking.
- Self-awareness and resilience.
- Digital knowledge and confidence.

The workbook provides a reflective template structured on the framework which is intended to be used by the SC to benchmark previous experience, undertake a skills audit and identify skills sets for development, and record progress. Together, these documents provide the basis for discussing SCs professional experiences, recording achievements and planning future skills development.⁴

Line managers introduce SCs to the framework and the SC workbook as part of the usual PMU employee induction so that they independently use it going forwards. To further support SCs' independent engagement with these resources, in the academic year 2022/23, three workshops will be offered for the first time to all SCs. These will focus on the framework and the workbook as SC centred resources.

Using the framework and the workbook in a SC led process of skills reflection and development is rooted in literature that perceives adults being self-directed in their learning (Mezirow, 1985; Knowles, 1975). It also has the potential (recognised by the SCSG) to facilitate scalability, and enhance the sustainability of the scheme by reducing the managerial workload involved in this activity. Literature suggests however, that students differ in their capacity to self-direct learning. Tekkol and Demirel, (2018) used the 'Self Directed Learning Skills Scale' (Askin, 2015) to find that students self-directed learning skills did not vary by university attended or year of study, but that gender, field of study, university entry score, academic success and motivation to study had significant impact on self-directed learning scores.

When SCs are in post, line managers are to act in the role of a mentor, sharing their knowledge, skills and/or experiences with SCs. Such conversations are initiated by line manager or SC. To mentor SCs effectively, line managers will need to create positive relationships with SCs based on trust, creating a safe environment in which constructive conversations can take place and employ good mentoring skills, which involves multiple complementary skills (Masango, 2011:3). Regular mentoring events throughout the duration of the employment is a good foundation for perceived psychosocial support which is an important factor when working with the identified groups (Eby et al, 2013).

Line managers who employ good mentoring skills can contribute to how well SCs navigate the complex technical, social, and personal conditions they encounter (Hamilton and Hamilton, 2014) and can positively influence aspects of skills development. For example, Jeske and Linehan's (2020) study of undergraduate placement internships found that

⁴ The SC framework was designed to be reflective of the Plymouth PMU context and representative of good practice as featured in the literature; it consists of skills advocated by the World Economic Forum (2020) and reported as highly valued by employers (Blackmore et al., 2016). Elements of these skills are commonly embedded into graduate attribute or employability graduate frameworks (Barrie, 2013; Nisha and Rajasekaran, 2018), which in turn are rooted in literature which advocates aligned experience and reflection as underpinning undergraduates' professional development (Blackmore et al., 2016). The PMU SC framework aligns skills development experience with reflection using structured reflection captured in the SC workbook.

managerial mentoring increased interns reported skill development, particularly in relation to their communication skills and their ability to think strategically about problems. Good mentoring then should support students to stay engaged with the skills framework, encouraging reflection ‘on’ and ‘in’ action (Schon, 1991). Shaw and Ogilvie (2013) note the importance of continued reflection on professional development to achieving intrinsic and extrinsic employability benefits, which Tennant, Murray, Gilmour, and Brown, (2018), and Thompson (2017) claim can scaffold deep learning experiences even in shorter placements.

- *The Career Pulse survey*. Line managers ask SCs to complete the Career Pulse survey when they start (and when they finish) their role. In the survey, students rate their confidence in eight core employability areas⁵, providing SCs with a record of development in named employability domains. It is currently unclear how results from the Career Pulse survey are used by SCs and individual line managers to support skills development.
- *SC employee Professional Development (PD) opportunities (in plans)*. SCs will be able to access PD opportunities similarly to any other PMU staff in the future. This will be a key change in further embedding the scheme structurally and potentially further enhancing SC skills.

SC graduates

- *Developing a support network for SCs (in discussion, tbc)*. Going forward, the SCSG is considering the creation of a social network for SC graduates, most possibly using LinkedIn. Several publications are recognising that employability is a “lifelong process” (Cole and Tibby, 2013:5; Dey and Cruzvergara, 2014), and as such are recommending that institutions consider and engage alumni networks within their employability frameworks. It is common for UK HEIs to advocate students’ using LinkedIn to showcase their CV and professional activity, and LinkedIn is particularly useful for demonstrating skills that transcend qualifications (Komljenovic, 2018). Aligning the SC experience with LinkedIn could enable SC to articulate the experiences and skills development accrued as part of the SC and other life wide experiences (Jackson, 2011) whilst engaging with and becoming proficient in using the LinkedIn platform, potentially capitalising on its purported benefits for employability.

Monitoring and evaluation

Part of the scheme is its monitoring and evaluation. SCSG members reported that feedback from relevant completed activities has been incorporated into the scheme, including.

- *Change Maker survey (Hunter, 2020)*: analysis involved responses from 37 SCs. Results showed:
 - SCs satisfaction to be above 85% for recruitment, readiness to do the job, gaining skills communication with managers, feedback from managers, belonging, and slightly less for communicating with the People and Organisational Development unit, and feeling valued.

⁵ From 1 - not confident at all to 10 exceptionally confident. The employability areas are self-awareness, workplace skills, career possibilities, job hunting, CVs and applications, interviews and offers, preparing for work and career wellbeing.

- Representing PMU, earning money from employment, being part of the PMU community, developing employability skills, and meeting new people as key benefits of being a SC.
- *Informal ad-hoc feedback from line managers:* feeding into PMG and SCSG discussions. The SCSG aims to standardise and systematise feedback from SC line managers in the future.
- *Exit survey from the scheme:* sent when SCs leave the university.

An evaluation of the scheme was included in its original proposal in the APP and this study will form part of that evidence.

Outputs

The activities outlined in the previous section, are expected to produce the following **outputs**:

SC promotion and marketing

- Promotional and marketing materials developed.
- Marketing campaign is delivered to different stakeholders.

Role creation

- People Team policy.
- # of SC business forms submitted.
- # of varied SC roles offered by different university departments.

Recruitment

- Recruitment materials developed.
- # of SC roles advertised.
- # of applications submitted by students.
- 300 SC roles filled by 22-23.
- # of SC roles offered and taken up by candidates/APP group candidates.
- # of roles that include a varied employment activities to support a range of skills development.

SC in post

- SC and manager resources/workshops produced and communicated.
- # of hours worked out of the total SC role hours/absences/sickness/lateness.
- # of SCs introduced to and use the SC skills framework and workbook.
- # of SC skills framework workshops delivered.
- # of SCs attending the SC skills framework workshops.
- # of PD opportunities offered to SCs.
- # SCs attending/taking up PD opportunities.

SC graduates (in plans)

- Indicative - LinkedIn alumni group created.

Outcomes

Inputs, activities, and outputs inform the SC scheme's short, medium, and long-term outcomes.

Short term

- All PMU students are aware of the SC scheme.
- All PMU students understand the SC scheme.
- All students who apply for a SC role, irrespectively of background and/or disability, find the SC recruitment and appointment process accessible and fair (i.e., they can identify roles that are diverse and relevant to them and believe are inclusive to their characteristics).
- All students' professional needs, irrespectively of background and/or disability, are being met in the workplace.

Medium term

- All SCs have a positive experience in the workplace (i.e., they enjoy their role).
- All SCs have the opportunity to apply and improve a variety of skills in the workplace.
- All SCs reflection skills related to their employment skills and future employability are improved.

Long term outcomes

- SCs graduate level skills are improved - what York and Bennett, 1998 called capability, which is strongly correlated with employability outcomes (Caricati, 2016) of employability programmes that combine 'hard' and 'soft' skills similarly to the SC scheme.
- Increase in SCs self-concept related to their employability and belief in gaining a graduate level employment. (Increase in SCs confidence, self-efficacy and gaining a graduate-level job due to the scheme (perceived employability) (Mantz Yorke 2006; Jackson and Wilton, 2017; Langher, Nannini and Caputo (2018)).
- SCs career decision making and career 'decisiveness' is increased. Langher, Nannini and Caputo (2018) undertook a meta-analysis of career intervention studies and found that interventions of any kind mainly influence career decision-making, self-efficacy and career indecision.

Impacts

- Increase in PMU SC graduates gaining graduate-level employment as measured by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Graduate Outcomes data.
- Eliminate the gap in PMU graduate employment for students from lower-participation backgrounds by 2029-30 and reduce it to 2 percentage points (three year rolling average) by 2024-25 through HESA GO and institutional data.
- Eliminate the gap in PMU graduate employment for students with disabilities by 2029-30 and reduce it to 1 percentage points by 2024-25 evidenced through HESA GO and institutional data.
- Enhancement of PMU reputation amongst students and parents as an employability focused university.

Moderating factors

The moderating factors for the SC scheme are:

- Student motivation to work and improve their employability skills whilst studying.
- Student characteristics: gender, age, POLAR4, disability.
- Nature/type of role and university department it 'belongs' to

- SC role duration.

Assumptions

- Sufficient allocation of resources.
- All managers and HR colleagues understand the importance of the scheme, are willing to implement it and believe that it can support students in gaining graduate-level employment.
- Job specifications are written impartially and are advertised fairly.
- Futures, the PMU careers office support is effective.
- Alignment of the SC scheme's needs with the PMU's Talent scheme, which supports staff PD, is appropriate.
- SC materials and resources to line managers and SCs are delivered as intended and are effective.
- Line manager training is effective.
- Line manager training / facilitation is effective in how they support SCs who have declared a disability or have other self-reported needs.
- Managers and SCs are motivated to and use the skills framework and track SC progress.
- SCs reflect on their skills and know what they need to do to improve them.

Figure 1. SC scheme logic model

