

## A knowledge curriculum for higher education outreach

Aspire to HE recognises that improving young people's knowledge of higher education (HE) is a key component of facilitating their access to HE. Aspire to HE is currently carrying out an in-depth evaluation of their outreach activities, measuring impact on student knowledge alongside five other outcomes: attitudes; aspirations; attainment; soft skills including independence, curiosity, interpersonal skills and risk taking, and progression. Impact on each outcome is being measured with baseline, endpoint and perceived impact surveys as well as qualitative research with a subset of pupils and observations of some of Aspire to HE's activities. Currently, the evaluation uses self-assessment measures at different points in the programme to assess any impact on pupils' knowledge.

Self-assessment through confidence ratings of knowledge have long been recognised as a useful way of predicting performance, such as knowledge<sup>1, 2</sup>. However, there are also considerable limitations to the accuracy of people's self-assessments. Studies find that people 'routinely' overestimate their capabilities and knowledge, especially if their actual ability or knowledge is low<sup>3</sup>. Examinations which compare people's self-assessments to their performance on factual knowledge tests find weak or medium correlations between the two<sup>4</sup>.

Therefore, in order to improve the quality of their evaluation activities and to avoid the limitations of self-assessing knowledge, Aspire to HE, with the support of LKMco, has created a knowledge curriculum which will underpin a knowledge testing survey tool.

The curriculum has been created in close consultation with Aspire to HE's stakeholders and will allow practitioners involved in the programme to ensure that all pupils they work with are equipped with the key knowledge they need to make confident and informed transitions to HE. While the curriculum highlights the key elements of knowledge that young people need, Aspire to HE acknowledge that it is not an exhaustive list and that this knowledge can be taught in a variety of ways.

Aspire to HE recognises that parents are key influencers in their children's decision making (Philips and Newton, 2014), and that informing and upskilling parents in relation to HE therefore forms a key part of their work. However, this is a knowledge curriculum for students, and the framework we have developed here is not intended to capture the knowledge that parents need in order to support their children's progression through HE. However, we do make reference to the knowledge that parents require, and it remains the case that an effective widening participation programme will aim to build parental knowledge and facilitate conversations between parents and young people as they navigate their choices.

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<sup>1</sup> Bandura A. 1977. Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychol. Rev.*; 84:191–215. See also, Bowers, N., Brandon, M., & Hill, C. D. (2005). The use of a knowledge survey as an indicator of student learning in an introductory biology course. *Cell biology education*, 4(4), 311-322.

<sup>2</sup> Nuhfer E.B, Knipp D. 2003. The knowledge survey: a tool for all reasons. *To Improve the Academy*. ;21:50–78.

<sup>3</sup> Kruger, J., & Dunning, D. 1999. Unskilled and unaware of it: How difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77: 1121–1134.

<sup>4</sup> Witt, P. L., & Wheelless, L. R. 2001. An experimental study of teachers' verbal and nonverbal immediacy and students' affective and cognitive learning. *Communication Education*, 50: 327–342.

Chesebro, J. L., & McCroskey, J. C. 2000. The relationship between students' reports of learning and their actual recall of lecture material: A validity test. *Communication Education*, 49: 297–301

## Stakeholder consultation

Aspire to HE consulted groups of their key stakeholders to identify the key elements of knowledge which young people need in order to progress to HE. These stakeholders included:

- The central Aspire to HE programme team
- Programme Leads and Delivery Practitioners from the 7 Aspire college partners
- Key Stage 3 and 4 NCOP pupils from a local target school
- Current undergraduates at the University of Wolverhampton

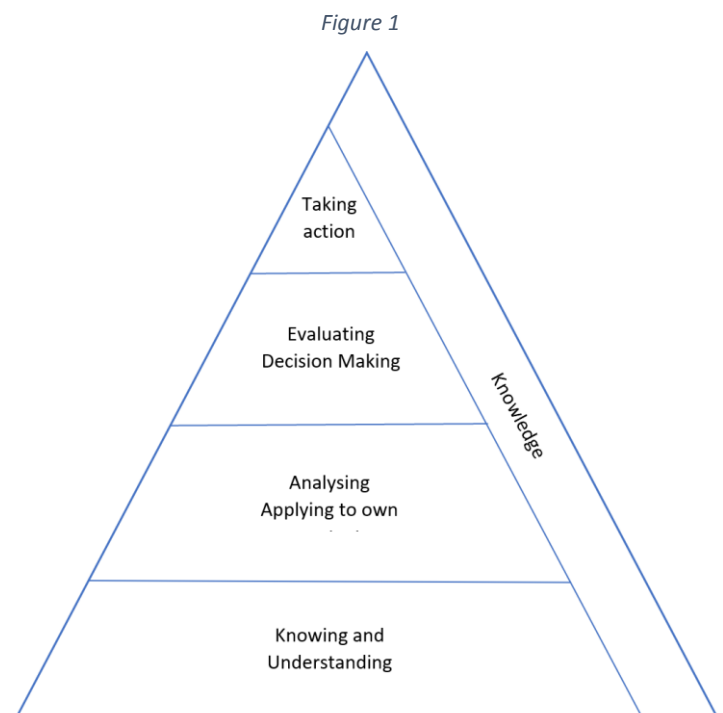
The consultation workshops with these groups were designed to identify the body of knowledge a young person needs to make informed decisions about HE, and group this into themes. Themes were then refined by combining or revising as necessary. In a follow up consultation, key stakeholders considered each theme and its sub themes in detail and identified how knowledge within each theme builds from Key Stage 3, to Key Stage 4 and into Year 12 and Year 13.

This report explores each of the main themes identified through the consultation and considers the justification for including these themes in an HE knowledge curriculum, appealing to insights gathered from stakeholders and the existing evidence base. There are two accompanying curriculum documents: A Progression Framework for all outcomes, including knowledge, and the Knowledge Curriculum.

The Progression Framework includes Aspire to HE's five main outcomes and details the 'top level' outcomes for each phase of a learner's journey through the Aspire to HE programme. The knowledge section of the Progression Framework therefore includes top level outcomes for each of the main knowledge curriculum themes identified in the consultation, and explored in this report. The accompanying knowledge curriculum document provides further detail on the specific elements of knowledge underpinning each of the 'top level' outcomes.

The top level knowledge outcomes in The Progression Framework highlight the different types of knowledge a learner needs to make a successful transition to higher education (see figure 1), including:

- 'Understanding': facts and information that young people need to be aware of, understand and able to recall
- 'Analysing' and 'Applying': young people must be able to consider or weigh up different options using the facts they 'know' and apply this to their own circumstances and preferences.
- 'Evaluating': students need to apply their knowledge to their own circumstances and draw conclusions to inform their decisions.



During our consultation stakeholders discussed that while these can be considered ‘types’ or ‘levels’ of knowledge, each is informed by a foundation of knowledge as young people cannot ‘analyse’ information and apply it to their own context, evaluate and make decisions if they do not have a knowledge base. This is reflected in figure 1. ‘Taking action’ is also a type of knowledge as young people have to know *how* to enact their decisions. This is represented at the top of the model as the final stage in the learning process that a young person on the Aspire to HE programme might take.

The Progression Framework reflects this progression through different ‘types’ of knowledge. On the whole, as pupils move through the key stages, they need to build a bank of knowledge and understand information relating to higher education and are then required to apply their knowledge to their own circumstances and make decisions. However, this progression is not always uniform or straightforward; learning is not a linear process and the knowledge curriculum allows for this as different ‘types’ of knowledge are distributed across the year groups.

## The curriculum themes

The higher education knowledge curriculum includes five main themes or areas of knowledge:

- **What is HE?:** this covers understanding of different options available at HE as well as HE-specific language pupils should know.
- **Finance:** knowledge of the HE finance system including costs, funding, the graduate earning premium and apprenticeship wages.
- **Experience:** knowledge of what being in HE is like in terms of available support, social life, living arrangements, extra-curricular opportunities and the learning experience.
- **Outcomes, progression and careers:** knowledge of how decisions and outcomes at each stage of education affect the next stage and those beyond, alongside knowledge of career options and pathways to access these options.
- **Processes:** knowledge of how to navigate the range of processes required in order to access HE, from choosing GCSE options, to making an application via UCAS, to applying for accommodation.

Each of these themes are explored in more detail below.

### What is HE?

The theme ‘What is HE?’ includes the foundational knowledge necessary for young people to set more specific information from other themes, such as ‘Finance’ or ‘Experience’, in context. This theme primarily includes knowledge about different HE options, including what these options consist of and the difference between vocational and academic routes, as well as more detail on the subjects or courses available to pursue in HE. It forms the ‘first step’ for pupils to begin thinking about their options following compulsory education, as stakeholders explained:

*“This theme is important because it is at the core. It’s the foundational knowledge of the Aspire to HE programme and outlines the information that students need to make informed decisions. It raises awareness of the range of options and provides a first step which could define which direction students decide to take.”*

If young people are not aware of the range of options available to them in HE or indeed are not sufficiently informed about each option, they are unlikely to be able to make a free, well informed choice. Research with young people aged 14 to 16 about their educational pathways found that young people valued having ‘sufficient time to make choices’ and that they needed ‘detailed, clear and impartial information on courses and pathways so that they could make informed choices.’ (p. ii, Department for Education and Skills, 2006). Thus, stakeholders considered the importance of starting to inform pupils about their options from early Key Stage 3, to allow them adequate time to make decisions, and included in the curriculum information on different options, courses and pathways throughout the theme ‘What is HE?’. Greater detail on how decisions and pathways link together is also covered in the theme ‘Progression’.

Research suggests young people are particularly underinformed about apprenticeships: a 2016 survey<sup>5</sup> found that the most common reason young people did not consider degree apprenticeships in their decision making was because ‘they don’t know enough about them’. Over half of young people did not know what degree or higher apprenticeships were and 82% did not know the difference between these options. Our consultation with pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 reflected this: pupils frequently highlighted ‘Which gives you a better education, university or apprenticeships?’ as a key question. However, pupils lacked knowledge about apprenticeships and therefore felt unable to weigh up which was the ‘best’ option for them. Similarly, Aspire to HE and LKMco’s 2018 research on barriers to HE access in the Black Country found college staff felt that young people needed to be more broadly informed about different HE options and that students should not be pushed towards university as the ‘only’ option.

The same research also highlighted an overall lack of knowledge about what university is as a potential barrier to access, in particular for students who do not have family members who have attended HE. Parents who have attended university are better placed to inform their children about this option (Philips and Newton, 2014; Reay et al., 2001; Bowes et al. 2015), leaving young people whose parents did not at a disadvantage if schools, colleges and other support services cannot fill this gap.

Again, this could be a particular barrier to apprenticeship access. A lack of knowledge about apprenticeships among parents, family members and even educators is potentially more widespread due to the recent changes to the apprenticeships system, including the introduction of higher apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships in 2010 and 2015, respectively, along with the 2017 introduction of the apprenticeship levy. These changes have altered the system and the opportunities available to young people considerably and therefore parents and practitioners are unlikely to be able to draw on relevant personal experience to inform young people. Additionally, apprenticeships have a historical stigma as being for the ‘less academic’ student and therefore attitudes held by family members could also become a barrier. This is compounded by the relatively short supply of higher apprenticeships, and the predominance of apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3. This highlights the importance of the inclusion of information about apprenticeships within the curriculum and the need for educators to ensure they understand the new apprenticeship system and can provide accurate information on this option when discussing HE.

Thus, the theme ‘What is HE?’ includes equal focus on the variety of pathways available through HE, from the Key Stage 3 curriculum through to the Year 13 curriculum. It also considers the need to highlight the benefits and costs of each from an early stage then building on this knowledge to tailor information to each student’s specific needs. Additionally, in Year 12 and 13, knowledge around the

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<sup>5</sup> The Interserve Society Report (2016). Apprenticeships: The path to success? Accessed at: <https://learning-employment.com/lack-awareness-main-barrier-modern-apprenticeships/?pdf=8473> on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019

language used in HE such as ‘degree apprenticeships’, ‘higher apprenticeships’, ‘BA’ and ‘BSc’ are included in the curriculum to ensure that young people, especially those whose families do not have experience of HE and are therefore not familiar with this language, are equipped with the knowledge they need to be able to navigate conversations and decisions about HE.

***In summary, the theme ‘What is HE?’ focuses on the foundational knowledge of different HE options, with equal focus on apprenticeships and university, and in later Key Stages includes further detail on HE specific language to allow pupils to navigate conversations and decisions relating to HE. It is especially important to build young people’s understanding of apprenticeships as previous research and our consultation consistently reveals a lack of knowledge in this area in particular. Building knowledge of the different HE options and available courses, and how academic and vocational studies in school and college relate to these pathways, should allow students to better weigh up decisions based on their current studies and their plans for the future.***

## Finance

If young people are not well informed about HE finance, this can present a considerable barrier to accessing HE: misconceptions can flourish and young people may find themselves unable or even unwilling to navigate student finance systems. Our consultation and existing research identify that young people may lack knowledge of HE finance in terms of: the cost of HE fees; the cost of living whilst studying; the availability of and their eligibility for financial support, and whether they will gain a return on their ‘investment’.

The cost of HE in terms of fees, living costs and lost earnings during studying is proportionally greater for lower income families (Baars et al., 2016) and thus any barriers arising from lack of knowledge around finance are likely to affect this group in particular. Aspire to HE and LKMco’s 2018 report on barriers to HE access experienced by Black Country pupils found that school and college staff highlighted a lack of knowledge around the cost of HE as a particular challenge for their pupils. They also felt that misconceptions could be exacerbated by the media, making the need for information, advice and guidance to counteract incorrect claims especially vital. During the design of this curriculum, stakeholders echoed these points when making the case for ‘finance’ as a main theme:

*“Having finance as a theme is important because we are trying to act against a broader narrative that creates fear and misconceptions around higher education finance, for example, that debt is ‘bad’. There is a fundamental mismatch between the benefits of the current finance system for university and the perceptions young people hold about it”.*

Thus, this curriculum highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of HE finance which ensures that:

- Key Stage 3 pupils know that HE costs money but that funding is available to cover this and no upfront costs are paid.
- Key Stage 4 pupils know more detail about the cost and the funding available e.g. where the loan comes from, who is eligible, and when and how it will be paid back
- Key Stage 5 pupils have built an in-depth understanding of HE which therefore allows them to apply this knowledge to their own circumstances and choices.

However, to make well informed decisions about HE, knowledge of HE finance must go beyond knowledge of fees and funding: young people also need an understanding of the likely return on

[info@lkmco.org](mailto:info@lkmco.org) - [www.lkmco.org.uk](http://www.lkmco.org.uk) - @LKMco - +44(0)7793 370459

*“Society should ensure that all young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood”*

investment that HE study can bring. Research finds that underrepresented groups such as white working class boys, of which there are a high proportion in Aspire to HE's target cohort, hold greater concerns about whether or not they will see a 'return on their investment' than they do about the immediate cost of HE (Bowes et al., 2015). This group are also more likely to believe that 'the best jobs do not necessarily go to university graduates' compared to their advantaged peers and their ethnic minority counterparts (Bowes et al., 2015). These findings suggest that young people, particularly those from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, need to be informed about the earnings premium that some graduates experience and how HE may allow them to access a range of careers they are interested in. Given that the DfE (2017) predicts that by 2022, 44% of the demand for employment in the Black Country will be at graduate level, this is relevant for Aspire to HE. Therefore, the content on earnings in the 'Finance' theme is complemented by the 'Outcomes' theme which illustrates pathways from Key Stage 3, to HE, to different career sectors.

Parents are also likely to hold concerns and misconceptions about HE finance. A 2014 survey found that 58% of parents believe that degrees are not worth their cost. More recently, a national YouGov survey of parents conducted for LKMco identified that the amount of debt their children will leave university with, and whether attending university will improve their children's future employment/earning prospects, were the most common concerns around HE held by parents (Mulcahy et al., 2018). The same study found that parents commonly held misconceptions regarding:

- whether fees must be paid up front;
- when repayments of loans begin;
- the impact of student debt on mortgage eligibility, and
- the impact of student loans on family members' eligibility for benefits (p. 49. Mulcahy et al., 2018).

Thus, if widening participation outreach with parents can address misconceptions around the financial considerations attached to HE study, and ensure that parents and young people have a better understanding of the technicalities of student finances, this is likely to mitigate some of the concerns around finance which can form a barrier to accessing HE. Therefore, the finance theme of the curriculum highlights the need for parental engagement and IAG in relation to HE finance.

The finance theme could be considered more fine-grained in comparison to wider themes such as 'What is HE?' However, stakeholders highlighted the fact that finance is a much-discussed issue and a lack of knowledge in this area is a persistent and stubborn barrier for young people, and it should therefore be the focus of a knowledge curriculum or framework.

*"This is a highly politicised issue which puts it at the forefront of young people's and parents' minds. Therefore it is essential that we make sure we are providing knowledge and guidance on higher education finance to inform and reassure young people and their families throughout the decision making process."*

***In summary, a lack of knowledge about HE finance can present a considerable barrier to entry, and misconceptions in this area – amongst both young people and their parents – are common.***

***'Finance' therefore forms a core theme of the curriculum and covers knowledge about the cost of HE, the cost of living, available funding and the 'return on investment' that HE can deliver. Young people from underrepresented groups and their parents may be more likely to be concerned about the 'return on investment' than the upfront cost of HE so this area of knowledge is particularly important and should, where possible, target parents.***



## Experience

This theme builds on the ‘What is HE?’ theme to consider young people’s knowledge and understanding of the typical day-to-day experience of different pathways through HE. The ‘experience’ theme includes knowledge of:

- what learning will be like in different forms of HE;
- what ‘life’ is like in HE, including what social and extracurricular activities are available;
- what support is available, and
- where and how young people will live.

This theme targets the knowledge that young people need in order to imagine themselves in HE and consider their affective orientations towards it. Indeed, the ‘experience’ theme links closely to young people’s attitudes and perceptions of whether ‘HE is for me’. These attitudes form key outcomes of Aspire to HE’s programme and many other widening participation activities. Stakeholders who designed this theme explained:

*“This theme is important because young people need to understand and experience what it would be like to go in to Higher Education. They can visualise themselves there and it can help remove individual misconceptions about what life in higher education is like.”*

Previous research has shown that some young people, in particular those from low participation backgrounds, hold a relatively narrow conception of what day-to-day life in HE is like – particularly the learning environment, with a tendency to associate university life with ‘long lectures’, ‘lots of reading’ and ‘school work’ (Raven, 2008). Lectures are particularly negatively regarded (Shaw et al., 2018). For this reason, one of the main subthemes within this theme is ‘the experience of learning’. A HE knowledge curriculum should focus on building young people’s understanding that while HE involves lectures and study similar to school work, it differs from school in a range of ways, such as the autonomy afforded to students to focus on subjects which interest them, and the opportunities for interdisciplinary study. It should also build awareness that not all HE study is delivered in a uniform way and the variety of institutions, courses and modules available means young people can pursue an option with content, and a mode of delivery, which is suited to them.

For some young people, especially younger pupils, the prospect of independent, less directed study may seem off putting: LKMco’s research with NECOP<sup>6</sup> found that younger students were concerned that lectures would be boring and would not allow them to access the support they need. Therefore, it is also key to emphasise the support available in HE and this is covered in another sub theme within ‘experience’. As young people move into year 12 and 13, they should be supported to consider the modules and modes of delivery and study available in different courses and should be informed about how to access this information. Understanding available courses and honing preferences is a key component of the knowledge specified in the ‘experience’ theme at Key Stage 5.

It is also key that this sub theme includes knowledge about what studying as part of an apprenticeship looks like: while young people often understand that apprenticeships involve work-based training, many have little knowledge of the studying which also forms part of this pathway.

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<sup>6</sup> The North East Collaborative Outreach Programme

In addition to the experience of HE study, this theme also highlights the need for young people to develop knowledge of the wider experience of life at university or on an apprenticeship. Research suggests that young people who intend to progress to HE emphasise the opportunity to ‘experience a new social context’ as a key factor in their decision. Though research suggests that in general young people are aware that university offers fun, social opportunities<sup>7</sup>, it is nonetheless a positive worth highlighting so that all young people are able to consider the benefit of this side of HE. Conversely, the same report found that *‘there is no clear narrative around lifestyle for apprenticeships’* and *‘little has been done to make the lifestyle of an apprentice appealing’*. Therefore, equal effort should be afforded to building a good knowledge of how the lifestyle of an apprentice and a university student is similar or different so that young people can effectively weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each choice.

Finally, given that an increasing number of young people are choosing to live at home while studying and living away is an option disproportionately taken up by more advantaged young people, the ‘experience’ theme includes knowledge about accommodation options and studying from home so that young people can make informed decisions about what is right for them, without limiting their available options.

***In summary, building young people’s knowledge of what life in HE is like in terms of their learning, social lives and living situation is key to helping them envision progressing to HE and feeling that it is something that is ‘for them’. The ‘Experience’ theme has three subthemes which focus on learning in HE, life in HE (including the social experience, extracurricular opportunities and living arrangements) and support in HE. Research shows that some young people have narrow perceptions of what learning in HE is like and therefore their knowledge needs to be broadened so they understand the range of courses and modes of study available to them. Additionally, young people tend to lack a clear narrative around the social experience of apprenticeships, so the ‘life in HE’ subtheme of the curriculum affords equal emphasis to building knowledge of the apprenticeship experience.***

## **Outcomes: progression and careers**

The ‘Outcomes’ theme refers both to the immediate outcomes of decision making at each stage from Key Stage 3 to HE entry, and to career outcomes. Thus it can be thought of within two main subthemes:

- Progression: which centres on young people’s knowledge of how each decision affects the options they can access at the next stage of education and thus how they can progress towards an end goal.
- Careers: which focuses on building knowledge around career options and sectors, what different jobs involve and crucially which skills and qualifications are needed to access different career options.

There is some overlap between these subthemes, as the end goal which students have in mind when they make decisions about HE will likely be career-related. Thus, these important pieces of knowledge are included within this single overall Outcomes theme. Knowledge on other ‘outcomes’ (often benefits) of HE, aside from careers, are included across all themes, where appropriate, for

<sup>7</sup> Partnership for Young London (2017). Young people’s perceptions of their post 16 options.



example the impact on earnings is covered in ‘finance’ and the potential social benefits are included in ‘experience’.

A key element of this theme is the need to emphasise how decision making at an early stage, for example, during GCSE subject choices, can have an important impact on the choices available when applying for HE, and beyond. The curriculum emphasises how each stage of decision making affects the options available at later stages. Research<sup>8</sup> has found that many young people fail to make the link between the decisions they make, especially in Key Stage 3, and the information they receive about careers and education beyond school. Echoing this, the undergraduates involved in our consultation highlighted the need to impress upon younger pupils that GCSE grades, especially in English and Maths, are important beyond the next stage of education as they affect HE applications, and are valued by employers.

The ‘progression’ subtheme therefore captures young people’s knowledge of how decisions made at each stage of their education are interlinked, and impact on later options and the overall importance of early decisions and grades on later outcomes. As stakeholders highlighted during the creation of the knowledge curriculum themes:

*“Progression, within Outcomes, is an important [sub]theme because each step a pupil takes may rule out pathways for later in life without the student realising. Therefore, they must be informed from an early stage how each decision feeds into the next to avoid them unintentionally closing any doors.”*

Research<sup>9</sup> highlights that though young people tend to have considered their career preferences they are more likely to be focused on the immediate next step, do not consider how this would affect later choices, and do not consider the availability of their preferred career or how to work towards it. This again suggests that the link between subject and course choices at GCSE and post-16 level and career pathways needs to be made more explicit in schools at an early stage as well as throughout post-16 education.

As well as demonstrating the need for the knowledge captured by the ‘progression’ subtheme, this also highlights that young people need an awareness of careers, the availability of careers and how their current choices affect their career options. Stakeholders emphasised that in order to understand the goal or future career they are working towards and making decisions about, young people need a broad knowledge of the variety of careers available and a good understanding of the different careers open to them. It is not possible for young people to know about all potential careers, but they should be exposed to a broad range of different options and equipped with the knowledge of how to find out more independently. The careers subtheme within ‘Outcomes’ complements the progression subtheme and emphasises the importance of broadening young people’s knowledge and experience of careers through the Key Stages.

Furthermore, young people need to be explicitly informed of how gaining HE qualifications, in particular, affects the availability of career opportunities. As discussed in relation to the ‘finance’ theme, some young people may eschew the idea of progressing to HE due to the perception that they do not need a degree in order to get ‘the best jobs’ (Bowes et al., 2015) or to enter the careers they are interested in. Some may be concerned that they will not see a ‘return on their investment’ and will be unable to secure a graduate role. However, projections suggest that there will continue to be an undersupply of graduates across all sectors of the labour market: in the Black Country specifically, it is estimated that 44% of job roles will be at graduate level in 2022<sup>10</sup>. It seems that

<sup>8</sup> DfES. (2006). Blenkinsop et al. How Do Young People Make Choices at 14 and 16?

<sup>9</sup> DfES. (2006). Blenkinsop et al. How Do Young People Make Choices at 14 and 16?

<sup>10</sup> Department for Education (2017). *Black Country Area Review*. [Online]. Available from:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/582028/Black\\_](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582028/Black_)

mostly, young people' concerns about a lack of graduate opportunities are misplaced, at least in relation to labour demand in particular sectors and industries. However, not all young people will be interested in progressing to a graduate career, and all pupils therefore need a broad knowledge of the career opportunities available to them and the qualifications that different pathways will require in order to make a well-informed decision about what is 'right for them', and to avoid the risk of misconceptions resulting in young people making decisions which limit them in the future.

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are in particular need of support to gain this knowledge: disadvantaged young people are more likely to see HE in terms of 'loss' rather than 'gain'. Previous research<sup>11</sup> comparing young people who do and do not progress to HE found that those who entered employment, rather than post-16 education or HE, often 'lacked clarity' about the opportunities available and the potential benefits of HE. The same research found that young people who did not choose to go to university knew that it was an option but were not 'convinced' of the benefits. They reported that the 'convincing argument' they wanted would be centred on employment and career prospects, rather than social or experiential benefits. Thus, while the knowledge outlined in the 'experience' theme ensures that young people have knowledge of the social experience of HE, the 'outcomes' theme ensures that the employment and career-based benefits are emphasised from an early stage.

***In summary, the 'Outcomes' theme includes two subthemes: 'progression', which focuses on young people's understanding of how decisions at each stage of education affect options in later stages, and 'careers', which involves broadening young people's awareness of careers and ensuring they understand which opportunities require HE level qualifications. Research highlights that young people typically do not make the link between decisions in Key Stage 3 and 4 and their HE and career options, and stakeholders in the consultation highlighted that this needed to be made explicit to avoid young people unintentionally shutting down options. Alongside this, young people must build a broad knowledge of career options and what different careers entail. Disadvantaged young people may be in particular need of this knowledge as research suggests they are more likely to feel they do not need HE qualifications to get 'the best jobs' and need to be informed to ensure they are able to access the opportunities that interest them.***

## Processes

This theme incorporates knowledge of *how* to make decisions and carry out tasks which young people must complete to access HE. In Key Stage 3 and 4 this includes making informed decisions around GCSEs and post 16 options and applications, which should be heavily informed by knowledge gained through the 'Progression' theme. In Key Stage 5, the focus is on equipping young people with the knowledge they need to navigate a range of applications and systems, from UCAS to HE finance to apprenticeship applications and interviews. Stakeholders explained why they saw this theme as a crucial component of the curriculum:

*"Processes is an important theme because it gives student practical knowledge about 'how' to get to HE. It includes important step by step guides to support the progression of students, inform parents and help with a smooth transition."*

Country\_AR\_-\_Report\_-\_Final.pdf. [Accessed: 12th February 2019].

<sup>11</sup> Bowes, L., Evans, J., Nathwani, T., Birkin, G., Boyd, A., Holmes, C., ... & Jones, S. (2015). Understanding progression into higher education for disadvantaged and under-represented groups. Accessed at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/474269/BIS-15-462-understanding-progression-into-higher-education-final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474269/BIS-15-462-understanding-progression-into-higher-education-final.pdf)

We can think of the Outcomes theme and the ‘Processes’ theme as complementary and intertwined. While the Outcomes theme gives students the knowledge about *which* decisions they should make and *why*, the ‘Processes’ theme gives the knowledge of *how* to carry out these decisions once they have been made. For example, if a student wants to be an architect the ‘Progression’ theme first gives them knowledge of how to find out more about that career path and then informs them that they will need to take Maths or Science and Art A-levels or Science or Engineering based vocational qualifications and seek work experience in a related field. In tandem, the ‘Processes’ theme captures the knowledge they will need in relation to how to apply for the relevant post-16 options in Key Stage 4, how to arrange work experience, and then, in Key Stage 5, how to compare Architecture HE courses in different institutions and complete a UCAS application.

While the ‘Processes’ theme is mainly comprised of the need to support pupils making decisions at each stage and completing core applications through UCAS or to apprenticeship providers, it also includes detail on a variety of other applications including DSA, student accommodation and travel allowance. Consultation with undergraduates revealed that an inability to navigate these application processes and a lack of available support had caused stress and delays during their progression to HE.

Crucially, the ‘Processes’ theme also includes information about how to navigate options and applications if things don’t go to plan or if a young person changes their mind, including deferred entry applications and processes for ‘clearing’. This is informed both by research and our consultation with undergraduates, some of whom reported that when their plans had changed or they didn’t get their expected grades they were unable to rethink their options or navigate clearing. Similarly, research shows that while it is common for young people’s choices to *‘fluctuate over time’*, some young people do not cope well when faced with *‘unanticipated change to their plan and had not thought of alternatives’* (DfES, 2006). Therefore, the ‘Processes’ theme acknowledges the need to support young people to plan for alternatives should things not go as expected, and includes knowledge related to some of the most common routes through which young people can execute ‘Plan B’.

Research also finds that parents and family members’ experiences of HE, or lack thereof, affects the likelihood that young people feel able to navigate the decision making and application processes. A report from the DBIS (Bowes et al., 2015) discusses that some working-class parents, whose children are less likely to access HE, *‘lack the knowledge and experience, or the cultural capital, necessary to guide their children through the practical process’*. Therefore, the curriculum includes the need to include parents in IAG on processes so that young people and their families are better able to navigate HE systems.

***In summary, the ‘Processes’ theme focuses on building young people’s knowledge of how to make decisions about HE and to navigate systems and applications. Thus, there are two subthemes: ‘support with decisions’ and ‘application processes’. While other themes capture the knowledge required to support young people’s decisions to progress to HE, this theme captures the knowledge required to put that decision into action. Students who are the first in their family to go to HE could require particular support to gain solid knowledge of the processes involved in accessing HE, as may their parents.***

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