Career focused Reflection and Personal Development in Higher Education: a longitudinal Investigation into Internship Blog Writing

By Sarah Silva-Banks

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

Department of Applied Linguistics
University of Warwick
May 2022
Table of Contents

Career focused Reflection and Personal Development in Higher Education: a longitudinal Investigation into Internship Blog Writing ........................................... 1

Table of Contents ........................................................................................................ 2

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. 7

List of Figures .................................................................................................................. 8

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ 9

Declaration ....................................................................................................................... 10

Abstract ........................................................................................................................... 11

Abbreviations .................................................................................................................. 12

1 Chapter One: Introduction and Context .................................................................... 13

1.1 Overview of the project ......................................................................................... 13

1.2 Research Questions ............................................................................................... 14

1.3 Layout of the paper ............................................................................................... 15

1.4 Context of the project ........................................................................................... 16

1.4.1 History of Careers and Skills departments ....................................................... 17

1.4.2 Career theory and Guidance theory ................................................................. 18

1.4.3 Development opportunities and Personal Development Planning ............... 19

1.4.3.1 Personal Transferable Skills ........................................................................ 22

1.4.3.2 Employability ............................................................................................... 23

1.4.3.3 Extra-Curricular Activities and Articulation of Skills ................................ 25

1.5 Overview of the data set ....................................................................................... 26

1.5.1 Internship data set ........................................................................................... 26

1.5.1.1 Internship Reflective Blog ........................................................................ 27

1.6 The researcher’s position in the project ................................................................ 28

1.6.1 My role ............................................................................................................. 28

1.6.2 My position and approach .............................................................................. 30

1.6.3 My stance: Reflective Practice and PDP ......................................................... 32

2 Chapter Two: Literature Review ............................................................................... 34

2.1 Reflective Practice ................................................................................................. 34

2.1.1 What is Reflection? .......................................................................................... 34
2.1.2 The role of Reflective Practice in HE ................................................................. 37
2.1.3 What Reflective Writing looks like ................................................................. 39
2.1.4 Linguistic markers of Reflective Writing ....................................................... 43
2.1.5 Reflection in the public and private space ...................................................... 47
2.1.6 Introduction of Technology ............................................................................. 52
2.1.7 Use of Web 2.0 Technologies .......................................................................... 55
2.1.8 Facilitating Reflection ..................................................................................... 57

2.2 Reflection and Learner Autonomy .................................................................... 60
   2.2.1 Learner Autonomy in Higher Education ....................................................... 60
   2.2.2 Learner Autonomy and Web 2.0 Technologies ............................................ 62

2.3 Concept of Genre ............................................................................................. 65
   2.3.1 Relationships between genres: genre networks; genre families ............... 66
   2.3.2 Genre of Reflective Practice through blogs ................................................. 67

3 Chapter Three: Methodology Part 1: Research Stance and Data Collection .......... 69
   3.1 Identifying my Epistemology .......................................................................... 69
      3.1.1 What is Constructivism? ........................................................................... 70
      3.1.2 Reflexivity ................................................................................................. 71
      3.1.3 Research methods .................................................................................... 71
      3.1.4 Presentation of data ................................................................................ 72
      3.1.5 Everyone is a Constructivist .................................................................... 73
   3.2 What is the data set .......................................................................................... 74
      3.2.1 Participants ................................................................................................ 75
      3.2.2 Learning and Development Plan ............................................................... 75
      3.2.3 Induction Training .................................................................................... 78
      3.2.4 Platforms used for writing the blog ......................................................... 79
   3.3 Obtaining access to the data .......................................................................... 82
      3.3.1 Procedures for data collection: Negotiating Access ............................. 82
      3.3.2 Procedures for data collection: Ethical Approval ..................................... 83
         3.3.2.1 Ethical Approval for accessing the data set .................................... 83
         3.3.2.2 Changes to Consent Form: 2016 Iteration ..................................... 84
      3.3.3 Technical Issues with gaining access ....................................................... 85
   3.4 Collecting data: Reflective Blog ..................................................................... 85
   3.5 Collecting data: Observations and Interviews .............................................. 86
      3.5.1 Observations ............................................................................................. 86
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2</td>
<td>Informal discussion</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.3</td>
<td>Online Interviews: 2015 Iteration</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.4</td>
<td>Interviews: 2016 Iteration</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Preparation of data for analysis</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.1</td>
<td>Maintaining anonymity</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Structuring data set</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.1</td>
<td>Structuring data set for analysis: 2016 and 2017 Iterations</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chapter Four: Methodology Part 2: The Analytical Process</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Research Methods: Genre Analysis</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1</td>
<td>The three traditions of Genre Analysis</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1.1</td>
<td>Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) – Sydney School</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1.2</td>
<td>English for Specific Purposes (ESP)</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1.3</td>
<td>New Rhetoric (NR)</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2</td>
<td>How I used Genre Analysis in this study</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3</td>
<td>Evolution of Genre</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.4</td>
<td>Genre Analysis: Summary</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Research Methods: Qualitative Content Analysis</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Approaching the Qualitative Content Analysis: using NVivo</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Qualitative Content Analysis: Methodology</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2.1</td>
<td>Methodology stage 1: Immersion in the data</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2.2</td>
<td>Methodology stage 2: Coding the data</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2.3</td>
<td>Methodology stages 3 and 4: Creation and Revision of Categories</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2.4</td>
<td>Methodology stage 4: Comparison of Categories</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>How the Methods of Analysis combine</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chapter Five: Results of Analysis</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Categories Overview</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Categories indicating the overall genre of Reflective Writing</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.1</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP: Future</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.2</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP: Learning points</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.3</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP: Change in opinion and Realisation nodes</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.4</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP: Dealing with problems and Challenges</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.1</td>
<td>Structure: Following guidelines</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Categories indicative of this context .......................................................... 138
  5.3.1 Career .................................................................................................. 138
  5.3.2 Skills .................................................................................................. 141

5.4 Categories indicative of the sub-genre of the Internship Blog ............... 145
  5.4.1 Blogging ............................................................................................. 145
  5.4.2 Dialogic .............................................................................................. 146
    5.4.2.1 Dialogic category: Addressing the reader node .......................... 148
    5.4.2.2 Dialogic category: Use of comments ........................................ 149
    5.4.2.3 Dialogic category: Rhetorical questions node ......................... 154
    5.4.2.4 Dialogic category: Asides node .............................................. 155
  5.4.3 Interactive features: Multi-modal .................................................... 156
    5.4.3.1 Multi-modal: External links and attachments ............................. 157
    5.4.3.2 Multi-modal: Emoticons node .............................................. 158
  5.4.4 The Role of others ........................................................................... 160
  5.4.5 Time .................................................................................................. 165
  5.4.6 Adapting to work life routine ......................................................... 166

5.5 Facilitation of Career-Focused Reflection ............................................. 169

5.6 Interview data, Informal Discussions and Observations .................... 172
  5.6.1 Useful process ................................................................................. 172
  5.6.2 Selection of candidates ................................................................. 173

5.7 How the iterations of the data set changed year on year ..................... 174
  5.7.1 Change in Blogging Prompts ......................................................... 175
  5.7.2 Changes in Technology from 2016 to 2017 .................................... 180
  5.7.3 Multi-modal nature of the blogs in 2015 Iteration ......................... 183

6 Chapter Six: Discussion ............................................................................ 185
  6.1 How Reflection and PDP are portrayed and how this shows Career-Focused
      Reflection ............................................................................................... 185
    6.1.1 Language and Structure ............................................................... 187
    6.1.2 Framework: Learning and Development Plan ............................... 189
    6.1.3 Facilitating Collaborative Reflection: Role of Others .................. 191
    6.1.4 Facilitation of Career-Focused Reflection: Element of Time .......... 193
    6.1.5 How the Technology Platform facilitated Reflection and PDP ........ 194
    6.1.6 The role of Learner Autonomy in facilitating Reflection and PDP .... 196

  6.2 Summary: how Reflection and PDP is portrayed and what this suggests about
      Career-Focused Reflection .................................................................... 197
6.3 The Evolution of Genre from one Iteration to another .......................... 200
6.3.1 Summary: Genre of this Internship Blog and how it Evolved .............. 205

7 Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Implications ..................................... 208
  7.1 What happens next ............................................................................. 211

8 Chapter Eight: My own Reflections .................................................... 214
  8.1 Influence on my own practice ............................................................. 214
  8.2 My contribution ................................................................................. 214
     8.2.1 Making comments on the blogs................................................. 215
  8.3 The influence of the Covid-19 pandemic ........................................... 217
  8.4 Longitudinal nature of this project .................................................. 217

9 Chapter Nine: References .................................................................... 219

Appendix A Ethical Approval Form .............................................................. 238
Appendix B Internship Information and Consent Form 2015 ................. 243
Appendix C Internship Information and Consent Form 2016 ................. 244
Appendix D Internship Information and Consent Form 2017 .................. 245
Appendix E Example of email sent to 2015 interns inviting them to interview .... 246
Appendix F Blog to Reflect 2015 .............................................................. 247
Appendix G Blog to Reflect 2016 .............................................................. 249
Appendix H Blog to Reflect 2017 .............................................................. 252
Appendix I Example of annotations .......................................................... 255
Appendix J Example of NVivo Coding ...................................................... 256
List of Tables

Table 3.1 Basic information on Internship blog data sets ........................................ 75
Table 3.2 Training provided for interns ........................................................................ 78
Table 3.3 Summary of how the Internship changed over the course of the study .......... 81
Table 3.4 Summary of what interviews and observations were carried out ............... 89
Table 3.5 Internship data set and file name ............................................................... 95
Table 4.1 Language and discourse features as a basis for coding reflective writing .......................................................................................................................... 105
Table 4.3 Time: main nodes ......................................................................................... 117
Table 5.1 Categories across all iterations of the data set ............................................. 120
Table 5.2 Indicators of PDP category: main nodes .................................................... 122
Table 5.3 Future node across all data sets ................................................................. 124
Table 5.4 Learning node across all iterations ............................................................. 125
Table 5.5 Language Category Feelings node ............................................................ 131
Table 5.6 Structure category: main nodes ................................................................. 134
Table 5.7 Structure category: format node ............................................................... 135
Table 5.8 Career Category: main nodes ................................................................. 139
Table 5.9 Skills: main nodes ..................................................................................... 142
Table 5.10 Blogging category: main nodes .............................................................. 145
Table 5.11 Dialogic category: main nodes ............................................................... 147
Table 5.12 Node list for “Multi-modal features” in 2015 ........................................... 157
Table 5.13 Role of others: main nodes ................................................................. 161
Table 5.14 Time: main nodes .................................................................................. 166
Table 5.15 Changes from “Taking Stock” from 2015 to 2016 .............................. 179
List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Summary of relationship between AL and CS ........................................... 29
Figure 2.1 Personal Development Cycle as based on Harré, 1983: Personal Being
................................................................................................................................. 50
Figure 3.1 Mahara dashboard ..................................................................................... 79
Figure 3.2 Creating blog post in Moodle .................................................................... 80
Figure 3.3 Creating blog post in Moodle: Where you are & Where you want to be ................................................................................................................................. 81
Figure 3.4 Example of Hyperlink .................................................................................. 93
Figure 4.1 Example of words, phrases and sentences being coded as a unit of
analysis. Taken from Internship 2016 ................................................................. 108
Figure 4.2 Example of paragraphs being used as unit of analysis. Taken from
Internship 2015 ............................................................................................................. 109
Figure 4.3 Example of “Code In Vivo”, automatic naming system in NVivo. Taken
from Internship 2015 .............................................................................................. 110
Figure 4.4 Example of naming nodes in NVivo. Taken from Internship 2015 ..110
Figure 4.5 Example of coding being used for administrative purposes. Taken
from Internship 2017 .................................................................................................. 111
Figure 4.6 Internship 2015: future reference ............................................................. 113
Figure 4.7 Parent and child node report across all iterations of Internship
starting at 2015 ........................................................................................................... 115
Figure 4.8 Example of “real life” node from 2015 iteration ...................................... 116
Figure 4.9 Qualitative Content Analysis Framework ............................................... 118
Figure 5.1 Mahara: My Portfolio 2016 ................................................................. 180
Figure 5.2 Moodle home page for 2017 iteration ....................................................... 181
Acknowledgements

I’m dedicating this work to my little family: to Jacob and Benjamin and Edgardo. Thank you for letting mummy do her work, even though it’s meant some missed bed times and some missed days out. I’m very grateful to you all for keeping me going.

I wish to thank the ESRC for their sponsorship and the careers department for allowing me to do this research. To all of the students who gave up their time to talk with me and allow me access to their writing, I am very grateful, thank you for providing an insight into this complex context and for being an inspiration with your incredible learning ethics. To Laileng, for providing me with so many fruitful, engaging and supportive conversations and for being incredibly positive about my involvement.

I am grateful to Steve for his comments on my research, and for his discussions. You’ve always provided a different viewpoint, and I’m very appreciative.

My dear friends Kelley and Jen, who support me every step of the way, and to Stephen for providing me with the “lightbulb moment”.

To my dear mum, who reads everything I write and is always ready to help. To my dad, who is always ready to listen and debate the world, and to my “inlaw” family who provide support to me in their own unique and very special way.

Most of all I must say “thank you” to Sue. The level of understanding you have provided to me has been incredible. Then to muster up the level of support you have given me has been truly phenomenal. The amount of setbacks that I have come up against along the way, from adapting to part time PhD life post-babies, the distance from university, my technical issues, my poorly family and of course, Covid-19! You have always been incredibly supportive of me, always encouraging me that I was writing well, that I was making progress. I am incredibly appreciative and truly grateful. If it weren’t for your support and guidance I wouldn’t be writing these acknowledgments!
Declaration

I declare that the present thesis is my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made. I also confirm that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation, assignment, or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma, or any other qualifications.

Sarah Silva-Banks
Abstract

This study focused on a summer Internship programme operated by the Careers and Skills department in a university. The main data set was the interns’ reflective blogs written with the guidance of a learning and development plan over the duration of their participation in the Internship. The data set covered three iterations over a three year period. Through the use of genre analysis, qualitative content analysis and online email interviews it has explored the following research questions:

1. How are reflection and personal development portrayed through the process of participation in an Internship programme within a higher education careers setting?
2. How does the reflective writing produced for a higher education Internship evolve through this research project and how does the technology affect this?
3. What do the above two questions tell us about career-focused reflection as a genre?

This research highlighted how the employability agenda in HEIs and the focus on what skills a graduate must possess (Cook, 2006), has become the centre point of reflective writing in this careers context. Students are being guided to focus on skills and strengths they are developing and how these transfer to the workplace (Bridgestock 2009; Small, Shacklock and Marchant, 2018; Fotiadou, 2020). They are being encouraged to use reflective writing to do so, so that they will be successful in articulating these traits to prospective employers.

The key findings were that through the provision of frameworks, features of reflective writing and Personal Development Planning in an HE careers context were seen in the data set. Analysis showed that socially constructed reflection is possible if the appropriate framework is put in place. This included time to reflect and document those reflections, paired with time to consider this face to face with a careers mentor. This scaffolding ensured that the interns engaged with the process of reflection, rather than the production of a final product. Furthermore, the use of ePortfolios and Virtual Learning Environments allowed for a very dialogical type of reflection, something that is unique to using web 2.0 technologies for this purpose.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>Applied Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Careers and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECAs</td>
<td>Extra-curricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEA</td>
<td>Higher Education Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEIs</td>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDP</td>
<td>Personal Development Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QAA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCA</td>
<td>Qualitative Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Chapter One: Introduction and Context

In this chapter I give an overview of the project, followed by an outline of the research questions. I then explain the layout of the paper. I finish by contextualising the study and then detailing my own stance and approach.

1.1 Overview of the project

This research looked at how taking part in an Internship programme run by a careers department helped higher education students to participate in reflection and get ready for employment. It particularly focused on how virtual learning environments, primarily blogs, were being used for reflective writing and how the genre of these evolved over the course of the research project.

For this study I focused on a development programme offered by a university’s Careers and Skills department. It gave the student an opportunity to participate in an Internship organised within the higher education setting and with that, follow a learning and development programme, which included mentoring sessions and the writing of a reflective blog.

This investigation took place over a number of years and in full covered three cycles of students. The data from the blog posts written for the Internship was collated and then scrutinised using genre analysis and qualitative content analysis. For the data set I built up a picture of the context in which the data was constructed including the training and guidance that students were given in order to produce the data, as well as, holding interviews and informal discussions with interns and staff members. This was analysed to see how the context and the content analysis interplayed to provide insight into the results. I participated in this development programme over the three-year period, as both researcher and reflective writing expert making comments on the blogs.
The reason for studying this phenomena was to investigate how reflective practice happens through the use of interactive technologies and the provision of frameworks, as well as, how HEIs are relying on this to prepare students for the working world. It considers how personal development planning (PDP) and reflection work together and how one exists with the other, even though it is primarily reflection which is considered to open doors and be a fundamental part of higher education (Rogers, 2001; Entwistle, 2009; Spiro, 2011; Beveridge, Fruchter, Sanmartin, and deLottinville, 2014). Furthermore, I wanted to understand the link between this kind of career focused development programme and employability. This promise of better employability on completion of an HE course, all part of the employability agenda, has been one of the most significant developments in HE over the last decade (Small, Shacklock and Marchant, 2018) and even forms part of HEI rankings (Christie, 2017).

1.2 Research Questions

This project allowed me the possibility to investigate reflection over various different phases of data collection. I have been able to analyse the data collected and discuss how reflection and personal development (PDP) are present in the writing, thus the first question answered in this investigation is:

**Research Question 1:**

How are reflection and personal development portrayed through the process of participation in an Internship programme within a higher education careers setting?

Due to this research project happening over a long period of time the circumstances provided me with the opportunity to analyse how the writing evolved. The second research question therefore concentrated on this aspect:
Research Question 2:
How does the reflective writing produced for a higher education Internship evolve through this research project and how does the technology affect this?

Finally, the aim of this investigation was to understand how reflection was being used in the careers department and as such the third question focuses on this genre:

Research Question 3:
What do the above two questions tell us about career-focused reflection as a genre?

1.3 Layout of the paper
The introduction and context chapter gives an overview of the project along with background information about the context in question. I contextualise my study by giving some history of careers departments and how they came into existence within the higher education setting as well as explaining their current function, which, predominantly relies on development programmes being put in place, as well as an emphasis on extra-curricular activities for personal development. I then move on to talk more specifically about development programmes and with that the emphasis on recognising personal transferable skills, employability and the articulation of such skills. I then give an overview of the data set and the context in which it was created and finish by discussing my role and my approach to the project.

The literature review chapter uses research in the areas my study is involved in to frame my project and explain its aims. I discuss the role that reflective practice has, looking at what it is and its role in HE and how it is being facilitated particularly through the use of technology. I also consider the part learner autonomy plays in reflective practice. I finish by discussing the concept of
genre, looking at how the genre of reflective practice can be identified within the blogs and how its evolution through the project can be considered.

In the **research stance and data collection** chapter I talk about the research paradigm in which I positioned myself as well as further information about the data. I describe the process I followed to gain access to the data along with any ethical issues. I end by discussing how I prepared and structured the data whilst maintaining participant anonymity.

In the **analytical process** chapter, I detail how I used genre analysis and qualitative content analysis to investigate the data set. I discuss the framework I used and how I worked inductively to analyse the data, considering how this changed from one iteration of the data set to the other.

The following chapter then focuses on the **results of analysis**. I describe findings from the content analysis and how these demonstrate the genres of reflection and personal development as well as more focused sub-genres present in the data. I also consider the data from interviews and informal discussions and how that supports the analysis. I move on to talk about the evolution of the genre through this research project and the role technology and the researcher has played in that.

I finish by theorising and drawing conclusions in the **discussion** chapter. Then I look at what **implications** have come out of this study whilst also discussing **my own reflections**.

### 1.4 Context of the project

In order to contextualise this study I have provided information on the Careers and Skills departments within higher education. The following sub-sections therefore detail how these departments came into existence, as well as the
career theory, which supported their expansion. I then look at development opportunities within the Careers and Skills departments and what these entail.

1.4.1 History of Careers and Skills departments

Students in Britain have tended to study away from their homes meaning support structures were needed to “help students with their vocational as well as their personal and educational problems” (Watts, 1996, p. 127). This has meant that there has been a lot of focus on assisting students in all aspects of their studies and career. In 1964 the University Grants Committee published the Heyworth report which put forward the following recommendations with regard to careers:

- The advisory side needed to be strengthened.
- There needed to be a space where conversations could not be overheard.
- Central services unit should be created (Watts, 1996, p. 128).

This was the groundwork for the creation of careers departments.

With the growth of universities in the 1960s and the adaptation of colleges to universities, more and more students from varying social backgrounds entered into higher education. This required further adaption of the services being provided, changing slowly into what is known today as ‘careers services’ (Watts, 1996). This, paired with the growth of the counselling movement, as influenced by the USA, started to change the way in which these departments operated in higher education. By the 1980s an “open-access” (Watts, 1996, p. 131) approach was adopted providing students with a library of resources for them to browse at their leisure and trained staff available should they require further advice. The development of technological resources led to further improvement with better access for students to resources available. Consequently, this led to the creation of development programmes and a focus on skills that university graduates should have. I will expand on these development programmes in the following sections but first I will concentrate on the theories that have emerged with the growth of careers services.
1.4.2 Career theory and Guidance theory

There are two main theoretical backgrounds which have developed separately within the field of career theory: careers education and guidance (sometimes referred to as guidance and counselling). Careers education tends to focus on the individual and their surroundings for making a decision about their career whereas guidance is focused on what advice is given to the person and how this helps them achieve their goals. Career education, however, as explained by Killeen (1996), is concerned with agent, environment and action. The agent being “the person who ‘acts’ – that is, who has intentions which are in some way reflected in what he or she does” (Killeen, 1996, p. 29). The environment is quite literally the environment in which careers are made. Finally, action is some type of conception of what the agent does. Within career theory this concept of action focuses on that of “decision making...regarding this as the key behaviour” (Killeen, 1996, p. 29). Guidance theory, however, is more concerned with the outcomes of guidance. These are often measured as learning or economic outcomes with learning outcomes seen as the most appropriate measure in terms of professional practice (Killeen, 1996).

Guidance theory evolved in the UK after the “counselling movement” took force in the 1960s (Watts, 1996, p. 129). It was treated as a separate service until the 1970s when universities adopted the model used at Keele where it had been combined with the careers service. Following this, careers education caught on. It focused on careers theory, concerned with providing programmes of intervention where specialist vocabulary, experiences and skills could be taught. Since then, the theories have been developed separately, however, are combined together to provide career guidance. As defined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD hereon in) (2004, p. 10):

Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make
educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers.

In the following section I will look at how careers departments have endeavoured to achieve this advice as set out by the OECD by focusing on what development opportunities were put in place.

1.4.3 Development opportunities and Personal Development Planning

Due to the expansion of Higher Education in the early 1990s a wider range of courses began to appear at university level. As well as this, students from many different backgrounds were now entering higher education. Careers departments, therefore, had to adapt their advice to become more non-vocational. There were now courses that didn’t provide such a clear step into the workplace and students needed more concrete advice and guidance on how to gain employment upon completing their HE course. This, therefore, had to be less vocational than it had previously been as the HE graduates could apply for a vast amount of jobs but needed to learn how to adapt what they had learnt to different possibilities. As such, the careers department had to ensure that students were able to adapt their skills and behaviour to that considered desirable of a graduate (Cook, 2006). I.e. what skills employers would consider that a graduate should have.

Nunan, in his 1999 debate of the “massification of Higher Education” (Nunan, 1999) claimed that in the late 1990s universities started to contemplate how to help graduates on their path to employment as it was soon realised that the number of graduates being ‘produced’ far outweighed the number of positions available. Universities started to consider what skills the graduate was acquiring, instead of outlining just the academics of the course offered. It became an important talent for graduates to identify their skills to be able to sell themselves to employers.
This recognition of skills is often considered part of a student’s personal development. Personal development tasks were integrated into university activities following recommendations from the Dearing report of 1997. These would change the way students participated in personal development activities at university level.

- Recommendation 20 required institutions of higher education to develop a “Progress File”. This was to include an academic transcript as well as “a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development” (The Dearing Report, 1997).

- Recommendation 21 required a clear programme specification outlining the knowledge, understanding and key skills, that students would have upon completion of the course, as well as skills for learning to learn (The Dearing report, 1997).

Following on from these recommendations the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA from hereon in) in May 2001 published a “Policy statement on a progress file for Higher Education” along with “Guidelines for HE Progress Files” (QAA, 2001). These guidelines provided deadlines for introduction of the files and expected students to be engaged with the Personal Development Planning (PDP) process by 2005 / 06. The PDP has been in development since then and the existing definition of PDP in the QAA document on Personal Development Planning focuses on “… plan for their personal, educational and career development” (QAA, 2009). The Dearing Report appeared to be primarily concerned with skills acquired through academic study whereas the 2009 QAA definition took into account the personal and career development. The Higher Education Academy (HEA) is a little more open in its definition making reference to “individual’s goals and intentions” but not stipulating whether this encroaches on career aims:

PDP embraces a range of approaches to learning that connect planning (an individual’s goals and intentions for learning or achievement), doing (aligning actions to intentions), recording (thoughts, ideas, experiences,
in order to understand and evidence the process and results of learning) and reflection (reviewing and evaluating experiences and the results of learning)” (HEA, accessed February 2014).

Following the implementation of the above there has been a shift in the focus to the students “developing” themselves rather than just focusing on the academia, on what is being taught. This is further exacerbated by research showing that a ‘job for life’ no longer exists and instead “prosperity lies in the capacity of individuals to take initiative, continuously update and improve their knowledge and skills, and be flexible and adaptable” (Small, Shacklock and Marchant, 2018, p. 152).

Skills like reflection have been brought to the foreground along with that of recording and evidencing learning as shown in both of the above definitions. The introduction of personal development planning (PDP) and the evolution of departments solely dedicated to Careers and Skills meant that PDP became a separate component to the discipline studied, even though the degree course might require the student to participate in some elements of the PDP process. Jackson and Ward (2004) identified that UK universities were attempting to encourage students to reflect and document their own learning experiences outside of the academic subject. HEIs in the UK have now come to accept that employability is their responsibility (Fotiadou, 2020). It could be argued that it is a natural progression for careers departments to focus on employability, in preparing students for the workplace: “[U]niversities are encouraged to collaborate with businesses and organisations to make sure that their graduates meet the employers’ needs” (Fotiadou, 2020, p. 261). Careers departments have therefore put in place programmes which use PDP for the student to engage with employability activities.

PDP may have previously been seen as falling into different models: the professional model, the employment model and the academic model (Clegg and Bradley, 2006). However, as Careers departments have taken on more
responsibility for the PDP process the models have evolved depending on the academic year of the student and the perception by the university staff and department of the benefits of the process (Clegg and Bradley, 2006; Quinton and Smallbone, 2008). The focus in the first years being on what skills the students are using and identifying their own learning processes, following this, they then look at identifying what skills are transferable to the workplace, then in the final years, on how to articulate these skills and differentiate from other potential candidates. This connection to time was also present in Clegg and Bufton’s discussion on the construction of self in their paper considering student support for personal development planning. The student is quite relaxed in the first year of their studies, whereas, the realisation comes in the second and third years that they have to start thinking about the future and so must consider what they have learnt at university and how they can take this forward with them once they finish (Clegg and Bufton, 2008). In the following sub-section I will look at how these skills are recognised.

1.4.3.1 Personal Transferable Skills

This notion of personal transferable skills relates again to the work of the careers services. They must identify what skills employers are looking for and then find ways in which students can achieve these skills prior to graduation, as well as teaching students how to articulate them. In part, this stems from the recommendation in The Dearing Report that academic courses had to outline what skills a student would achieve upon completion of a course, however it is also due to the amount of competition for jobs as the number of university graduates increases. Bridgstock, in her discussion of what attributes a graduate must possess, claims universities are engaging in some kind of “graduate employability agenda” saying that there is a focus on “fostering generic skills in students that might make them appealing to multiple employers across multiple work contexts and disciplines” (Bridgstock, 2009, pp. 31-32). Furthermore, these skills are not only necessary for the transition from university to workplace, but from one role to another within the workplace (Edwards, 1997).
Therefore, the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are looking to add more on top of the degree and it is this need that career departments are responding to.

This need for universities to produce graduates in possession of such skills also ties in to the idea of ‘graduateness’ (Steur, Jansen and Hofman, 2012), whereby graduates must acquire the skills desirable of a graduate (Cook, 2006) even though there doesn’t seem to be, nor indeed could there be, a clear cut definition of what that is. The concept of graduateness has links with the idea of universities being able to evidence the skills the student is learning, as well as providing excellent teaching in the academic discipline. This accountability is being placed on universities not only as an indicator of quality (Small, Shacklock and Marchant, 2018) but also because of the competition for funding. HEIs must prove that students are achieving the learning outcomes as set out in their course profile and graduating with the skill set necessary to succeed in the workplace. Bridgstock (2009) discusses how public funding for higher education has become dependent (in the UK, Australia and Canada) on student graduates being ready for work once they leave the university. As Fotiadou (2020, p. 263) states: “universities have taken up the task of preparing students to enter the job market”. There is now a very clear link between HE, students and employers (Fotiadou, 2020), which is furthermore enhanced because of the current ranking system. The employability ranking is used as a key measure for producing the league tables of HEIs with prospective students and their parents/guardians being encouraged to think about what future career options may be on offer (Christie, 2017). This focus on employability forms the basis of the following sub-section.

1.4.3.2 Employability

Much of the previous section on skills is related to employability, which has now become a key element of university careers services and part of the discourse at HE level. The Higher Education Academy provides advice on how the concept should be embedded into the system of careers services, stemming from
recommendations made in the Dearing Report in 1997 where better connections between higher education and the workplace were encouraged. However, as discussed by Yorke and Knight, employability to some degree has always existed within higher education even though it wasn’t termed as such. There have always been many courses within higher education that were directly relevant to certain employment types, law or medicine, for example (Yorke and Knight, 2006). Indeed, the expectation has often been that studying an HEI course is a direct link to finding a career, as recognised by Rich (2015, p. 15):

Many higher education applicants, particularly those who have had limited advice, imagine that the relationship between a course of study and a career is mechanistic, that higher education is about direct preparation or training for a job.

However, that was not always the way and, as discussed previously, there was a need for more non-vocational careers advice to appear at university level and it is this, which has focused on skills and employability in recent years:

Much that has taken place in higher education over the years has supported the promotion of employability – and this is a continuing feature of the higher education landscape (Yorke and Knight, 2006, p. 4).

McCash in his 2008 handbook of career studies recognised employability as one of the core topics within career studies demonstrating its growing importance and why it has come to be considered part of the framework used by Careers and Skills departments. The following is a working definition of employability by Yorke and Knight (2006, p. 3):

a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.
There is a focus on skills but with a pairing of personal attributes and understandings. Employability could also be argued to be much more than that of becoming employable after completing an HE course and could very much be dependent on the amount of jobs available and an individual’s social capital (Christie, 2017). Furthermore, it has been argued that employability is about knowing how to present knowledge and skills to employers (Small, Shacklock and Marchant, 2018) as well as being able to be independent within the job market and move from one job to another (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). However, HEIs are driven by league tables and with relation to employability this refers to graduates obtaining employment within six months of leaving higher education (Christie, 2017).

Whilst there is much to debate about what employability is and the role the employability agenda has in HE, the focus in this study is on how the careers department was attempting to achieve employability through the use of reflection and PDP, in line with educational policy, not on the broader discussion of what employability is. It concentrates on how students are shown to present their skills and knowledge to employers. In order for students to obtain these skills deemed necessary to become more employable, careers departments have had to look outside of the discipline studied. A lot of the programmes in place encourage students to draw on activities they take part in outside of academic studies, for example a sport they might play, voluntary activities they participate in, or perhaps a part-time job. These so called extra-curricular activities are now considered a vital source for students to draw upon when discussing their skills and employability. These are discussed further in the following sub-section.

1.4.3.3 Extra-Curricular Activities and Articulation of Skills

Extra-curricular activities would have once been the leisure pursuits and hobbies that students took part in in their free time; something that they could enjoy and use to disconnect from studies. More recently, however, extra-
curricular activities have become an integral part of HE, being seen as something that students can use to develop their skills, and can include part time jobs and work experience opportunities. In a study by Clark, Marsden, Whyatt, Thompson and Walker they found that employers were interested in the generic skills that students picked up from participating in extra-curricular activities, such as personal motivation (Clark, Marsden, Whyatt, Thompson and Walker, 2015). Also essential, according to results of this study, was how the graduate was able to articulate this to a potential employer. Recruiters said that the choice of extra-curricular activity wasn’t important, rather how the student then communicated what they had gained from the activity and also how they had reflected on it (Clark, Marsden, Whyatt, Thompson and Walker, 2015). This also relates to literature seen previously related to employability where presentation of knowledge and skills was equally as important as possessing such knowledge and skills (Small, Shacklock and Marchant, 2018). The way in which this has been presented to students is through the use of reflective practice, which I will explore in further detail in the literature review in Chapter Two.

1.5 Overview of the data set

1.5.1 Internship data set

This data set was made up of three iterations of an Internship programme offered by the Careers and Skills department (CS from hereon in). The Internship was offered by CS and took place during the summer months. It was aimed at students in their penultimate year of undergraduate studies, enabling them to get some work experience before their final year of study. The aim of the programme was to help the students recognise their skills as well as to get them thinking about what they would like to do after university.

The main principles that underpinned the Internship were that it be project-based; that it helped students with their personal development; and that it was primarily centred on administration within HE. That is to say that the
Internships were all internal, for example in 2016 there were four interns who worked for the department responsible for sustainability within the university. Departments within the university could submit their job specification for what they required of the intern and CS decided on whether it was suitable for this Internship programme. Potential interns then had to follow the application and interview process to gain a place on an internship. If successful, the interns were required to attend an induction-training day on the first day of the Internship. It was there where they learnt about how to approach the Internship and what was expected of them.

The aim of participating in the Internship was for students to gain work experience whilst at the same time develop themselves personally. This personal development was achieved through a “Learning and Development Plan” (to be explained in more detail in 3.2). One of the main requirements of the plan was for interns to write a reflective blog and it is this blog which forms the main data set for this investigation.

1.5.1.1 Internship Reflective Blog

The data set of this investigation was based primarily on the reflective blog produced by interns participating in the Internship programme. Interns were provided with a Blog to Reflect Guide (Appendices F, G and H) and this covered the following topics:

- Where You Are & Where You Want to Be
- Working Effectively
- Taking Stock
- Networking & Marketing Yourself
- Sum it! Reflecting & Moving Forward

The investigation looks at how the interns responded to these prompts, and to the Learning and Development Plan as a whole, and how this fits into the genre of reflection.
I also held interviews with a number of interns as well as informal discussions and observations. I will discuss these further along with how the data was collected in Chapter Three: Methodology Part 1: Research Stance and Data Collection.

1.6 The researcher’s position in the project

1.6.1 My role

My role in this project was a researcher of reflective writing. I was however involved in a previous project between the Careers Department and the Applied Linguistics Department. This allowed my research for this project to build on an existing relationship between our departments. I was offered the opportunity to make comments on the blogs that the interns kept during their internship in the 2016 and 2017 iterations, in the capacity as “reflective writing expert”. This was the title given to me by the careers department. All interns were made aware of my role as researcher and commentator prior to embarking on their internship and they decided whether to allow me access. The interns were given the information below about my role within the Internship:

In addition to your mentors from Student Careers & Skills who will provide feedback to your blog, the programme also has access to guidance from Sarah Banks, a postgraduate researcher on reflective writing with the Centre for Applied Linguistics. If you choose to give Sarah access to your blog, she will be able to help you deepen your reflections and improve your ability to express reflection through language. Sarah can be contacted on XXXX should you have further enquiries.

(Taken from Blog to Reflect 2016 provided as Appendix G).

I was very aware of my involvement in and construction of the data set that I was also investigating. I discuss this further in section 3.1.2 where I talk about the role of reflexivity in this research project. I kept a research diary throughout
the project and ensured I spoke with tutors if I ever had any concerns about my involvement. I have provided reflections on this in Chapter Eight.

Below I have included a table summarising the relationship between the two departments:

*Figure 1.1 Summary of relationship between AL and CS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CS asked for AL’s participation in an Internship programme run by CS. This programme moved away from producing a final reflective statement and instead put in place a continuous blog for students to document their personal development and reflect on the Internship programme (as per previous feedback on previous studies).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Mahara “My Portfolio” platform was used for students to participate in the Learning and Development Plan following the Blog to Reflect guide.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A member of AL had the opportunity to suggest changes to the Blog to Reflect guidance and also to comment on the blogs kept by the interns during the course of their Internship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The researcher was not involved in the programme directly but later had access to the reflective blogs kept by students in order to carry out analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After the programme finished:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL made suggestions on how Blog to Reflect guide could be adapted for students to achieve more effective reflective practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• CS continued to use the Mahara “My Portfolio” platform for interns to write their continuous blog.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Blog to Reflect guide was used incorporating changes suggested by AL the previous year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Four-week interns trialled for the first time working for the estates department and focusing on sustainability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The researcher attended the information day prior to application and interviews.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The researcher participated in the Induction Day and also in the Celebration Event once the Internship had finished.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The researcher played a more integrated role in the blogs, making comments on all of them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After the programme finished:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Taking over the role of main researcher and contact for this project, I made suggestions on how Blog to Reflect guide could be changed to help interns achieve a more enhanced reflective practice. We also discussed the platform used and how it didn’t seem to be very user-friendly. It was very difficult for interns to find the information documents they needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• CS changed the blogging platform to Moodle and as such changed the Blog to Reflect guide and the general layout of the Learning and Development Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The length of the Internships was changed to 6 weeks. This meant there were less blog posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The researcher participated in the Induction Day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The researcher made comments on all of the blogs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**After the programme finished:**
I discussed ways in which the Blog to Reflect guide had worked. I also suggested that the timing needed to be reconsidered as some interns felt quite a lot of pressure to produce a lot in a small period of time.

The above table shows how the researcher was invited to provide suggestions on how the Blog to Reflect guide could be improved. This was based on initial research from the Internship blogs of the previous year. It also provided a very rich way to be immersed in the data, as per the analytical process described in Chapter Four: Methodology Part 2: The Analytical Process.

### 1.6.2 My position and approach

In the following section I give an outline of my position and approach when considering how to research the phenomena under investigation. Details of how the analysis was carried out are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

I considered this data set part of the reflective writing genre because of the way it had been used by the careers department, however, when I started to investigate it further I realised that it was also part of the personal development process as well as being a stepping stone into the employability agenda. I
wanted to understand it further because of the focus placed on it in the careers department and also because of how it was using technology to assist in a person’s reflection. A previous study carried out between our departments had highlighted how limiting a one off piece of reflective writing could be and so the opportunity to investigate a person’s reflective writing and with that their personal development, over a period of time was very interesting. (I will come back to the overlap between reflective writing, reflective practice and personal development in the subsequent section.)

I approached the study by considering whether there was a presence of reflective writing within the texts. I did this by carrying out Qualitative Content Analysis (to be discussed in section 4.2) and comparing it with what the literature demonstrates reflective writing to be (to be discussed in section 2.1.3.) I also looked to see what else was interesting or indicative of how these texts were behaving and what influence the context had on this. This can be related to the New Rhetoric (NR) stance on genre analysis; that the context in which the texts are being constructed is also important. Studies in this area are likely to provide much more of a description of the context of the situation explaining what actions the texts perform instead of only using linguistic information (Hyon, 1996). I, therefore, focused on how the interns were responding to the tasks they had been set by the careers department and within that, I also considered the role the other activities on the Learning and Development Plan had in the interns’ response to the task they were set, for example, sessions with their mentor. I contemplated how this was part of the reflective process and how the development of the Learning and Development Plan changed this process between each iteration. I describe these as part of the genre of this data set. Furthermore, when considering the genre the medium in which it was taking place also formed part. I was fortunate to have access to this Internship programme over three years meaning the study has a longitudinal feel to it. Therefore, I was able to look at how different interns’ responses, and the medium in which it happened, changed over the three years I was researching the Internship programme. This is how I discuss the
evolution of the genre, by considering what changes happened to the reflective process and how this was dependent on the development of the Learning and Development Plan.

1.6.3 My stance: Reflective Practice and PDP

There is a lot of overlap between these concepts and as such I use this section to define my stance regarding their use. Reflection is a practice that has been aspired to in many professions including teaching and health and social care (I will explore its definition further in the subsequent chapter). The way in which it has been measured and assessed has often been through the use of reflective writing through diaries and journals. By looking for certain features and processes in a student or trainee’s writing an assessor will often consider whether they have been successful in participating in reflective practice (RP). This is however changing and there has been a move to provide more evidence and data of what reflection can look like (Farrell 2016; Mann and Walsh 2017). Indeed, Mann and Walsh (2017) provide many lenses in which to view RP with multiple authors contributing evidence to its construction in different ways (speaking, online forums, collaborative process.) This is where I approach this investigation. My aim was to understand how reflection was being framed in this context of a careers department in an HE setting, as well as how it was being used as part of the student development process. My experience with reflective practice came from a teaching perspective and so when I was first offered a similar opportunity within the HE setting I was curious to understand more about how it was being used within this environment. As soon as I started to investigate its use it was clear that reflection was being used as part of the PDP process with the aim of making students more employable upon completing a development opportunity with the careers department. This was seen in the discussion in section 1.4.3 where I explored the use of PDP within HE as part of the employability agenda.
Even though both Reflective Practice and PDP are very much interconnected and sometimes feel like they are used interchangeably it is important to note their differences. I consider that reflective writing can be an output used to demonstrate how one is participating in reflective practice, but that it may not demonstrate the whole practice of reflection. In turn, this practice can form part of the PDP process. By reflecting on a situation and questioning it a person can consider what aspects they would like to develop about themselves and how. PDP focuses on skills that a person has and how they can use those for their own personal, educational and professional development (QAA, 2009), with a focus on planning, doing, recording and reflection (HEA, accessed February 2014). The HEA uses the practice of reflection in its definition considering it as a way of “reviewing and evaluating experiences and the results of learning[]” (HEA, accessed February 2014). Hence, this investigation considers how reflection is happening as a part of the PDP process.
2 Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter explores the literature that I have considered relevant to this investigation. I start my debating what is meant by reflective practice and the role it has in Higher Education. I then consider what reflective writing is including what linguistic markers might be indicative of it. I move on to discuss the process of reflection as it moves from public to private space including how technology is involved in this process. I then finish that section by discussing how reflection is facilitated. In the following section I look at the role learner autonomy has in reflection, specifically in the HE context. I finish the chapter by discussing how I view genre and the role it has had in this study.

2.1 Reflective Practice

In the previous chapter relating the context of this study I mentioned the need for students to articulate and evidence what skills they had learnt from participating in extra-curricular activities because it would enhance their employability and contribute to their personal development. Clark, Marsden, Whyatt, Thompson, Walker (2015) stated that employers wanted students to be able to reflect on what they had done and then be able to communicate this. This notion of reflection is now widely used in higher education because of guidance given by the HEA and QAA, which emphasised the need to record and evidence learning whilst utilising the skill of reflection to do so (as seen in Chapter One). The following section will therefore focus on what is meant by reflection in this context and what the current situation is in higher education.

2.1.1 What is Reflection?

The first references of reflection tend to be attributed to Dewey in the early 1900s. It was Dewey that identified the three attributes “reflective individuals” should possess, those of “open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness” (in Farrell, 2007, p. 2). Dewey (1910) discussed how we think and proposed the idea of “reflective thought” relying on various sub-processes, that we may look to evidence around us or to previous experiences.
to solve the situation in front of us. Each of the steps we then take is linked to the previous one through consideration of what we know or believe. However, Dewey does describe that we might first find ourselves in a moment of hesitation and then look to see if we might “corroborate or nullify” (Dewey, 1910, p. 9) what has happened. This would not seem to be intuition rather some kind of fact-finding mission which may or may not solve the problem (Dewey, 1910), in an attempt to use reflection to try and move forward.

Schön has also been very influential in the discussion of reflective practice. He put forward two main ideas, that of reflection-in-action which occurs whilst we are experiencing whichever phenomenon that requires our attention, and relies on some kind of intuition for what should happen next. This could be related back to what Dewey described as looking around us to solve the problem in front of us (Dewey, 1910). Schön described this as some kind of intuition for reflection-in-action: that we have a feel for what we are doing which implies some kind of implicit knowing (Schön, 1983, pp. 49-50). He made a case for reflection-in-action as a way for professionals to hold themselves accountable in his discussion of reflection-in-action as epistemology of practice. He considered how reflection was equally as important as having the knowledge for any profession or practice, hence, why it should be recognized as a way of knowing (Schön, 1983). He stated that so called experts were sometimes afraid to take part in a “reflective conversation” as it might show their weakness at a time when they were supposed to have all the knowledge necessary to deal with the situation. What he noticed was that some practitioners had some kind of intuition for how to deal with any “surprising” or “spontaneous” issues (as Schön described them) and he described this as “reflection-in-action” discussing it “as a way of letting something surface, then criticise it and perhaps come up with a new theory” (Schön, 1983, p. 63).

Schön also discussed the idea of reflection-on-action, which allows for more time between the event and the time to reflect. In essence, it happens after the
experience and potentially gives more time for deeper reflection to happen, rather than reflection-in-action which is more time-bound (Schön, 1983). The way to differentiate between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action would seem to be considering the prior as synchronous (happening at the same time as the event) and the latter as asynchronous (happening after the event) (Mann and Walsh, 2017, p. 8). However, Schön explains that the time in which reflection-in-action can happen will vary depending on the situation: “The action-present (the period of time in which we remain in the “same situations”) varies greatly from case to case, and in many cases there is time to think what we are doing” (Schön, 1983, p. 278). Hence, there is almost a blur between the two. This was criticised by Moon (1999) who considered that reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action might actually exist on the same continuum, with the prior happening quickly during the course of the action and the latter occurring “more slowly and probably more consciously” (Moon 1999, p. 44).

When one considers Farrell’s work on a framework for reflection for teachers of a second language he considers that “teachers must engage in reflection-in-action (thinking on their feet) as well as reflection-on-action (after the class) and these should be documented in some manner so that they can also help teachers to reflect-for-action” (Farrell, 2015, p. 5). This viewpoint concludes that the reflection-in-action is one event and is how the participant reacts to that event, whereas reflection-on-action is then the purposeful act that takes place afterwards to consider and evaluate what happened.

There has been a lot of debate about how to define reflective practice (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Moon, 1999). Collin, Karsenti and Komis (2013) in their critical review of initial teacher training depicted a picture of the theory, terminology and methodology behind reflective practice and reported on it as being a rather “fuzzy concept” with “a lack of clarity and consensus” (Collin, Karsenti and Komis, 2013, p. 109). Indeed, there have been a lot of studies focusing on frameworks to follow in order to participate in reflective practice and also for identifying it in student writing, discussed in section 2.1.3. There has also been a move in recent years, as mentioned previously, for more data led examples of
reflective practice (Farrell 2016; Mann and Walsh 2017.) What this allows is for a better understanding of how the practice exists across different subjects and the different ways in which it can be carried out.

Reflective practice has become highly regarded in many disciplines. “The concept of reflective practice has proliferated over the last decade in many professions such as medicine, law, business and education” (Farrell, 2016, p. 223). In recent years it has become a key concept in the world of higher education. Spiro states that ‘reflection’ as concept, practice and criteria for excellence has entered the rhetoric of higher education. In 2009, 55 subject disciplines in the UK Higher Education sector referred to ‘reflection’, or synonyms of reflection (Spiro, 2011, p. 2). It has become an expectation that higher education students need to become reflective individuals before they even enter their chosen profession, regardless of what that may be.

2.1.2 The role of Reflective Practice in HE

Reflective practice is widely perceived to increase student learning with many programmes including training and techniques intended to foster reflective practice. Beveridge, Fruchter, Sanmartin, and deLottinville (2014) confirmed, in their study of reflective practice in an undergraduate course, that reflective practice continues to be a desired achievement in education even though there is no clear model:

Despite the variations that exist within the many models of reflection, the belief that reflective practice has the potential to facilitate extraordinary learning and personal growth is a widely held notion (Beveridge, Fruchter, Sanmartin, and deLottinville, 2014, p. 59). This belief that reflective practice can be responsible for such growth and learning is the reason for why there is such an emphasis on how reflection can and should be put into place within higher education; it is now considered an essential part of how students develop. Indeed, this was found by Farr and
Riordan (2012, p. 130), in their study of Reflective Practice in the context of TESOL teacher education:

Given that higher education in many contexts places a very high value on critical, independent and analytical thought, and promotes the inclusion of social and ethical dimensions in the process, it is unsurprising that reflective learning is commonly implemented in this area.

Rogers (2001) criticised the situation in higher education claiming that “[T]his scrutiny of the concept of reflection leaves one with the impression that the concept is well understood in educational circles. Closer examination, however, reveals that this is hardly the case” (Rogers, 2001, p. 37). This lack of understanding of the concept of reflection is a common discussion and something which Entwistle (2009) looked at. He observed the many ways in which ‘reflection’ had been used in different subject disciplines by different academics and said that some saw it as a way of linking learning with real-life situations whereas others saw it as more critical and analytical. Even with this confused model of how reflection should look it is still included in many degree assessments although many might consider it a voluntary activity (Nesi and Gardner, 2012, p. 229). These conflicting viewpoints were evident in earlier studies on student learning. Entwistle, Velda and Walker (2001) questioned how educational developers and student advisers could bring together student experience with such conceptual frameworks and with that engage “with experience in ways which promote reflection” (Entwistle, Velda and Walker, 2001, p. 103).

This notion of assessment of reflection is also widely debated; with questions being asked as to how something that is supposedly free and for personal use can be evaluated. As Mann and Walsh state “... there are clearly tensions in assessing a process which is intended to be formative and enhance professional development” (Mann and Walsh, 2017, p.19). Furthermore, when reflective writing is done for assessment, the author tends to write for the assessment and produce a piece of writing that will pass. This often means it includes
certain textual features as desired by the assessor, such as “putting forward a polished self-representation” (Wharton, 2017, p. 568) when the aim is for the student to be undergoing some process of introspection and articulating that process. However, Hargreaves’ argument when discussing reflection in the nursing context was that it would be extremely difficult to design a curriculum which relies on reflection as a core element but without assessing it (Hargreaves, 2010). The key is to understand what it is that is being assessed, and essential to that is understanding what reflective writing looks like, something which this study aims to contribute to and will be discussed in the following section.

2.1.3 What Reflective Writing looks like

In the following section, I focus on what processes, language and linguistic markers might be indicative of this genre of reflective writing. I use this to help identify reflective writing in the data sets in this investigation as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

In order to find evidence of reflective practice, analysis is often carried out on written text, as is the case in this investigation, however, it is not often clear how a student is to undertake reflective writing. I.e. students in HE are often guided on what the final product should look like but are not guided on the process of how to get to that product. Often, the presence of certain textual features will determine whether a piece of writing does indeed show reflection and so therefore a student can learn what needs to be present in their reflective writing to pass an assessment, but without going through the reflective process. This possibility was confirmed in a study by Farr and Riordan (2012) where they investigated conversations held by two groups of HE students for online reflective journal discussions. They questioned whether the language present could be considered evidence of reflection or whether the students had simply learnt to “talk the talk of reflection” (Farr and Riordan, 2012, p. 144).
Reflective practice can be carried out in a number of ways – in teacher development teachers are encouraged to write journals, either alone or collaboratively, get involved in observations, develop critical friendships, participate in teacher development groups, carry out action research. Journal writing is however often employed for initial teacher training due to its nature as a record of what happened in class and because it often helps teachers gain an insight into class events (Richards and Farrell, 2005, p. 69).

There has been considerable research on how to recognise reflective writing and particularly how to teach it so that teacher trainees may become reflective practitioners. Farrell proposed a weak form and a strong form of reflection (Farrell, 2007.) The strong form would encourage teachers to be more systematic and critical in their reflection whereas the weak form might be considered as being more limited to a thoughtful practice where teachers evaluate themselves more informally (Farrell, 2007). Jay and Johnson proposed a typology detailing the various dimensions of reflection: descriptive, comparative and critical (Jay and Johnson, 2002). This typology was aimed at helping pre-service teachers understand more about reflection and how they might be able to carry it out. Bruster and Peterson (2013, p. 5) also used “phases of reflection” when analysing reflective writing centred on a critical incident (Tripp, 1993), which had happened each week. They described five phases: descriptive; inquisitive; investigative; interdependent and global.

What is significant about the previously mentioned studies, even though one is analysing reflective writing and the other is introducing a typology, is that both introduce a descriptive aspect of reflection first. Bruster and Peterson (2013, p. 2) make it clear that whilst a teacher trainee is able to describe what has happened within the classroom, they do not “know how to reflect analytically or critically”. Chien (2013, p. 140), in her study of a teacher’s reflective journal writing for professional development, recognises a similar situation “the writing of the narratives by teachers is only the first step in the learning process: reading and reflecting on them is the next.” This was further corroborated by
Hayden, Moore-Russo and Marino (2013), who in their study of systematic reflection made the observation that for real teacher development, descriptive reflection must move to become comparative and critical reflection. The move then should be for a more holistic type of reflective practice. This is what Farrell argued for. He put forward a framework that included: “Philosophy, Principles, Theory, Practice, and Beyond Practice” (Farrell, 2015, p. 22), stating that all these levels of reflection are connected, that they build on each other, but that they do not to be carried out in any particular order.

There are certain text structures that might be followed in order for a piece of text to be considered reflective writing. The following are some of the typical features that researchers have identified. Chien (2013), as mentioned previously, claimed that there would tend to be description within a person’s reflections, indicating that they might use a narrative style of writing. Bolton (2006) looked at the form of reflective practice and reflexivity through writing stories and poems and advocated for a form of narrative reflection to take place through such expressive writing. She said that this encouraged a non-analytical approach, which instead helped the writer to gain insight and understanding. Bleakley (2000) also looked at creative writing, and categorised the genre of reflective writing as “personal-confessional” due to its introspective nature (Bleakley, 2000, p. 13), which he says allows for a “deconstruction leading to a reconstruction” (Bleakley, 2000, p. 22). Farr, Farrell and Riordan (2019, p. 130) also support this, in their discussion of Reflective Practice in language teacher education, saying that “…for teachers to reflect, they need to think back on experiences and tell their stories, and the language of narration is key in doing this.”

There might also be the expectation to see the presence of Hoey’s (2001, p. 123) “problem-solution pattern” within written extracts as students are guided to think of a problem and how they are able to get past it. Furthermore, some writers may include a description of a problem. This description of a problem could provide a trigger (Hoey, 2001, p. 124), or a critical incident (Tripp, 1993),
which will then invite a response and subsequently a solution, leading to a more comparative or critical type of reflection. However, as Tripp discusses, most incidents will be routine and part of everyday practice, it is the context and / or the analysis which makes them critical (Tripp, 2012). Critical reflection is supported by Nesi and Gardner (2012) who refer to reflective writing in the academic world. They consider how higher education students may find it difficult to include personal reflection in their writing and therefore take a more critical stance. They liken reflective writing to that sought after in PDPs and in job applications, inferring reflective writing as an ideal product of higher education.

Beauchamp (2006), in an attempt to understand the concept of reflection in teaching, carried out an analysis of the many definitions of reflection within literature focused on reflection in teaching. When she looked at the processes (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) present she divided the occurrences into six categories. It is worth noting here that processes are part of Halliday’s transitivity framework. As Wharton (2012, p. 492) explains “[i]t uses the terms process and participant to categorise ways in which people and their actions, thoughts etc. are represented in text”. Beauchamp defined the processes and how they were evident in the writing as:

• examine (looking, seeing what is there and focusing)
• think and understand (reflecting, considering, thinking and interpreting, making sense of or giving meaning to practice)
• problem-solve (dealing with problems, finding solutions)
• analyse (processes which involve critical analysis)
• evaluate (questioning and evaluating)
• construct, develop and transform (constructing or structuring, developing, transforming one thing into another.)

(Beauchamp, 2006, pp. 69-70).

These processes were similar to those seen in the work done by Farr, Farrell and Riordan (2019, p. 130) where they say that “as part of RP, teachers are
encouraged to offer opinions, reactions and thoughts while making evaluations, with the aim of revising their thinking and, in turn, future actions.”

Through understanding these processes as indicative of reflective writing they can help to identify and characterise reflective writing.

2.1.4 Linguistic markers of Reflective Writing

In the previous section it was shown that certain processes or features should be evident in a piece of reflective writing. How these are shown is through the linguistic markers used. It can be expected that because reflective writing is inherently written from a personal point of view, there will be the use of personal pronouns and perhaps more informal language. According to Rice and Pinnegar (2012, p. 824) “[R]eflections, after all, are always in the personal voice.” This was supported by the work done by Nesi and Gardner (2012). By looking at a sub-corpus of PDP writing and comparing the word frequencies with the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus, they analysed positive keywords to give them an idea of the main themes of PDP writing. These included an emphasis on the first person and on affective and cognitive mental processes, examples of which included think, learn and feel (Nesi and Gardner, 2012, pp. 239-240). These linguistic markers are given further weight in a study carried out by Rogers (2010). When reviewing students’ reflective work she looked for “passages that bore the imprint of the writer’s self (e.g. use of “I” and “my” rather than “the teacher” or “you” or the impersonal “we”), and conveyed some kind of emotional heft” (Rogers, 2010, p. 52).

Nesi and Gardner also found that some writers wrote for an audience using second person pronouns and that there was a tendency for “narrative recounts” where the author would “...work hard to create writer-reader dialogues, foregrounding interpersonal meaning” (Nesi and Gardner, 2012, p. 237.) They also noted that “science student’s progress was measured by their ability to make their own “voice” heard. They were encouraged to use the first person to
express their feelings” (Nesi and Gardner, 2012, p. 228), thus explaining why there was a high usage of personal pronouns.

The linguistic markers presented by Nesi and Gardner would seem to be a starting point for trying to recognise reflective writing. However, the linguistic choices they touch upon appear to be geared towards the specific genre of writing for a personal development plan. Although this can be considered a form of reflective writing, it is not always written for one’s personal use, rather to exhibit one’s knowledge, experience and qualifications. As Nesi and Gardner (2012, p. 249) show “the emotions writers attribute to themselves tend to be positive ones, suggestive of willingness and enthusiasm”. The aim of the writer being to show themself in a positive light; “[N]egative judgement often being used for the role of others, not the writer” (Nesi and Gardner, 2012, p. 250).

This is similar to findings in Wharton’s study on the representation of self within academic reflective writing based on a group project: participants tended to attribute any negative comments to the group practice rather than to themselves individually (Wharton, 2012). Furthermore, this concurs with the argument made by Hobbs (2007) about representing oneself with a positive image rather than being genuine reflection. Hobbs’ study focused on trainee teachers on a short course aiming to achieve a TESOL (‘Teachers of English to speakers of other languages’) certificate. As part of the assessment the trainees were required to complete a teaching practice (TP) journal following guidelines as set out by the company. What was found was that the trainees “expressed a negative attitude towards the TP journal” (Hobbs, 2007, p. 412) and experienced teachers resented reflecting on their teaching. Hobbs explains that the reasons behind this could be due to the structure of the journal, “namely, its leading and repetitive writing prompts” (Hobbs, 2007, p. 409). Specific questions were set and were predominantly teacher centred, asking them to summarise what they had learnt or talk about what they were happy with. Their negative attitude was also attributed to the reflective writing which formed part of the assessment process. It was seen that the trainee teachers thought “less about genuine reflection and more about pleasing the tutors or
completing the assignment” (Hobbs, 2007, p. 414). Hobbs does not state what was considered genuine reflection however she infers “teachers and teachers-in-training, in particular, must voice, confront and evaluate these beliefs in the light of alternative models of teaching” (Hobbs, 2007, p. 406.) A couple of key observations can be drawn from Hobbs’ study: that how the prompts were written could be responsible for teacher negativity and, that, by assessing the reflective journals teachers were less genuine in their reflection.

Warman in her investigation into how recently graduated veterinary surgeons engaged in reflective practice found that some resented reflective writing, seeing it as a chore, competing with other professional activities, such as patient care. However, it was seen that this resentment could be overcome once “individuals realise its value” (Warman, 2020, p. 12). She also found that the graduates relied on different communities to support them through their reflective practice. This included trusted colleagues but also friends who didn’t work in the field and family, all of whom provided different perspectives on the challenges the graduates faced. “Externally-directed activities, such as talk and writing, can help convert worry into purposeful reflection, but require engagement from others in the community and a shared understanding of the purpose of reflection” (Warman, 2020, p. 11). It was also stated that time to complete their Professional Development Record was essential for positive engagement in the process.

The idea of collaboration being important for reflective practice was described by Mann and Walsh (2017) where they argue for its significance in establishing reflective practice as more than just an individual pursuit. Indeed, they claim that if peers and colleagues can help to support and scaffold each other they might see that “belonging to networks and communities of practice as viable and essential to their development” (Mann and Walsh, 2017, p. 178). This was further argued by Farr, Farrell and Riordan where they advocated for more face to face interactions to be included with written modes, “that are guided and structured to varying degrees” (Farr, Farrell and Riordan, 2019, p. 29).
It can be seen that reflective writing has become an integral part of student development and a component of many courses. This includes the Careers and Skills departments who often use reflective writing within PDP and as a way to mark students’ work when they write for extra-curricular awards. Indeed, there are a number of studies which highlight the use of extra-curricular activities (ECAs) to promote reflective learning. Díaz-Iso, Eizaguirre and García-Olalla in their 2019 paper discussing ECAs and reflective learning for sustainability mention the growing interest worldwide in using these activities (see: Díaz-Iso, Eizaguirre, García-Olalla, 2019 for further discussion) principally because they create a space where skills not learned on the curriculum can be acquired and put into practice. This allows students the ideal space and situation to develop themselves. Nuijten, Poell and Alfes (2017) also found in their study of what employment opportunities participating in ECAs presented to students was that those who took the initiative to participate in these activities and that were able to explain the skills they had learned were much more valued by recruiters than those that hadn’t. This places additional value on both participating in an extra-curricular activity but also being able to engage in deeper reflective learning to be able to articulate what they had learnt.

This level of emphasis now being placed on reflection means that we now recognise it as a highly valued asset within HE. It can be seen as a skill, an approach, as how knowledge is acquired and even as an outcome. Due to the dependency on it within many subject areas and within personal development it can even be considered as the better way for a person to gain knowledge about themselves. Furthermore, if it is undertaken and facilitated well the promised outcome is that it will allow for much deeper learning to take place. It has become an integral part of higher education.

HEIs are centres of learning and knowledge acquisition, but in the last decade it could be argued that there has been a move away from reproducing knowledge to a student construction of knowledge (Bryan and Clegg, 2006). Hence, why
tools such as reflection have come to the foreground, to allow the student to be more critical and potentially more engaged in the process. There are, however, questions on how it should be done to achieve the desired result. Furthermore, because of the popularity of its use, there is a danger of reflection becoming a routine task and perhaps a tick box activity instead of being considered as part of how we come to know something. That being said, research shows that even if students do not make the most out of a reflective writing activity they still gain something from the process of participating in it (Beveridge, Fruchter, Sanmartin, and deLottinville, 2014). Even with minimal commitment, something is achieved. Finlayson (2015) demonstrated this in his work describing how reflective practice happens in the public and private space. I consider this further in the following section.

2.1.5 Reflection in the public and private space

Finlayson attempted to define the epistemology of reflective practice by looking at varying definitions of reflective practice and fitting them into models using the “Vygotsky Space” (Finlayson, 2015, p. 718), Socio-cultural Theory as per work done by White (2010 in Finlayson, 2015) and Temporality as based on ideas by Harré and Van Langenhove (2008). Briefly, he described the Socio-cultural Theory as being focused on where the individual learns, i.e. from the community or from oneself (Finlayson, 2015). The notion of the combined learning with a community and oneself could shed light on how reflective practice can contribute to learning in this way. This is potentially interesting for considering how reflection happens in this data set, as the context particularly relies on the support provided by the mini-community that is formed in the work experience programme.

Vygotsky discussed us being in a sea of language and as such the language we choose from that sea becomes part of our own conventions, he said that the community around us influences the language we use and in turn how we think. Furthermore, the beliefs and values that surround us will have an effect on how
we think. Therefore, how we think and the language we use combine to give us our conventions to fit into our context. This is possibly how we come to know something, hence, if we use reflective practice to come to know something and it becomes part of our conventions, it will influence how we know it and how that knowledge is used and continues in a cyclical way (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky also discussed the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). He discussed how learning and development were connected and that with assistance the ZPD was the potential development that a person may have.

It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

This touches on the role of the community, mentioned previously, and how important that can be in a person’s reflective practice.

Vygotsky’s ZPD is often referred to when discussing scaffolding because it is considered an ideal way to help a student reach their potential development (Verenikina, 2003). Scaffolding is a well-used teaching technique to help students’ understanding, but its use is also transferable to professional contexts. Mann and Walsh acknowledge it as a way of “helping promote understanding, develop critically and assist professionals as they gain ownership of new concepts” (Mann & Walsh, 2017, p. 14).

Finalyson also used Harré’s phases of personal development (1983) basing this on work done by Harré and Van Langenhove (2008) regarding ideas of temporality between the public and private contextual settings. Harré described the dichotomy of the private and the public contexts by creating a table of four different quadrants which included appropriation; transformation; publication; conventionalization (Harré, 1983). He showed how they
overlapped to create different phases of development which transitioned from one to another (Harré, 1983).

Harré discussed the quadrants as a development cycle moving from appropriation, the “reflections of linguistic forms and social practices” (Harré, 1983, p. 256), through transformation, where the individual starts to transform what they have observed either about their own practice or the practice of others. These two parts of the cycle appear to happen in the private context. Whereas the next step, that of publication, where the individual shares with an audience his or her thoughts and ideas, happens in the public sphere. This idea of sharing with an audience could be key for the reflections to become meaningful and an example of Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of the ZPD where reflective practice might move from private to public with the guidance of others. Furthermore, in Harré’s cycle this is then followed by conventionalisation where those ideas are accepted and become ideas in their own right for others (or even the individual themselves) to draw upon, thus starting the appropriation part of the development cycle again. This is demonstrated in the diagram below:
Finlayson used Harré and Van Langenhove’s (2008) ideas of the public and private contextual settings to situate the four different phases as shown above. He goes on to discuss how the paradigms of reflective practice shifted from their early roots with a focus on appropriation, when we learnt through observation of others, to having a bigger emphasis on publication in the 1980s where knowledge had to be more formally considered and recorded. There are then multiple shifts after that with many paradigms of reflective practice being described as “mixed paradigms” (Finlayson, 2015, p. 728). This, the author claims is due to how varied the interpretations of how to carry out reflective practice were and as such were dependent on how the individual was guided to what was required of them and, therefore, was more likely to be influenced by their own learning style rather than reflective practice on its own. This is demonstrated by Finlayson’s discussion of Kolb’s (1984) learning styles and how
models of reflection became cyclical, focusing on a need to combine theory and practice to be able to ‘finish’ one’s own reflection, representing a mix of paradigms and with it a continuous cycle through the private and public contexts.

The representation of reflection then moved in the direction of publication because of the need to contextualise one’s own observations and also learn from the observations of others (Finlayson, 2015, p. 727). What followed in the 2000s, was a bigger focus on conventionalism which Finlayson claims is because of the introduction of mentors, meaning reflective experiences were to be captured more formally, and, I would argue, accepted by the audience. It is also likely that this shift is because of the introduction and wider use of technology. I will return to the use of technology in the following sub-section.

With this shift in emphasis to conventionalization it could be questioned whether conventionalization is always a part of reflection or whether this is more of a formality of reflection, and indeed because of the value now placed on reflection by many HEIs. It may stand that reflection only happens in the first two phases, in a private setting, and doesn’t move into the publication phase. This is perhaps more to do with how genuine a person’s reflection is or how much they would like to learn from reflecting as to whether they get to the publication phase. It could be posited, therefore, that for reflection to become effective reflective learning it needs to move through all of these four phases of development, or, we might consider that reflective learning allows for knowledge to go between the appropriation and transformation phases various times before it gets to the publication phase. It might even move through the publication phase several times before it gets to the conventionalization phase. This is perhaps the key to understanding this model of reflection as described here; that it is cyclical but has the potential to move through the first two or three phases without arriving at the fourth phase every time. This was also supported by Farrell’s 2015 model of reflection where all stages were connected and were supported by each other. Finlayson (2015) demonstrated
this by layering different definitions of reflective practice on these paradigms. He showed that reflection is a personal choice and as such the adaptability of such a practice demonstrates that it is not just a skill to be learnt, but also, a way of doing something.

2.1.6 Introduction of Technology

In the previous section I talked about the move to conventionalism as part of reflective practice, as described by Finlayson (2015), and how this may have been influenced by the introduction of technology. The following sub-section concentrates on the influence of technology and how this has been incorporated into reflective practice.

Technology has been used as a way to capture and record student reflection and in turn has been beneficial to students. However, the use of technology has provided new ways to measure outcomes for when students use reflective practice and has, therefore, made it easier to require departments to become more accountable. This is valuable because of reflection becoming a desirable trait of a graduate (see 1.4.3 for further discussion.) It means HEIs are able to publish how students are achieving these traits. If technology is therefore required to record a student’s reflection the question is whether the technology then changes the reflection that it is supposed to be recording. For example, if the student must write up their reflection within the parameters of the technology, that, might potentially limit what they will write about. If they are guided to consider very specific details of their practice, this could mean that they miss other ones, which were potentially more important to them. Equally, someone who finds it hard to consider and reconsider what they have done and how, might rely on specific prompts in order to participate in the reflective process.

The notion that the way in which a person reflects will help them to learn in a different way is also key when considering the role of technology within that.
For example, a passive learner might be at home reading and considering the facts whereas a more active learner might be writing or discussing what they have learnt in order to engage with the facts and relate to them and is potentially using technology to do so. It is important to understand that both styles exist and are valid, and are not mutually exclusive. This is the role that reflection can take to help to make better learners as it encourages them to be autonomous in their approach to education and not only rely on what they are being taught. In an article discussing the roles of knowledge and knowing in higher education Hauke considers the need for students to not accept the facts put in front of them but question them, ponder them and form an opinion about them as well as where they come from, with the idea that this creates better scientists who might then perform “revolutionary science or true innovation” (Hauke, 2019, p. 391).

This flexible way of learning and coming to know is even more important as the technology we live, work and study with, changes daily and requires us to constantly renew our understanding and knowledge of it. This is supported by a study by Benade who carried out interviews with teachers and ex school leaders to discuss their experiences using reflective practice. Perhaps, most relevant here, is Benade’s discussion of how the focus has moved from educating, to learning, with the emphasis being placed on employability and lifelong learning (Benade, 2015). He notes that this is because “[T]he World Wide Web (WWW) and Internet have brought accessible resources to users, encouraging shared learning; but simultaneously also loosened the grip of schools and universities on knowledge and content” (Benade, 2015, p. 43). This seems pertinent here as it goes some way in explaining why reflective practice has become so important in HE and how it is key for acquiring knowledge and personal development. As students become more autonomous, and are able to access more information than ever before and on a much easier scale, it is imperative they are able to take time to consider it, think about what to do with it, how to use it, how it relates to previous experience and thus what they are learning from it. This is encompassed within what is desired of a reflective practitioner. It might
therefore be called a “skill” but the way in which the individual carries out this practice will have a large effect on how they form the knowledge based on the information they have been given or read. Reflective practice has a much bigger role to play in how the input becomes knowledge; how an individual comes to know something. There is an expectation of relating the information to experience or evidence.

Tan in a 2014 paper based on a case study of reflective thinking for analysts of intelligence analysis (i.e. those working for a secret intelligence agency) argued that fundamental epistemological questions should be asked when analysts are presented with evidence. That it is only when thinking reflectively they are able to see the information before them clearly and avoid discounting other information to support their own mind-set (Tan, 2014, p. 230). The paper discussed the gap that existed in this field; that intelligence analysts were not being taught how to think reflectively, that is to recognise the information that was useful and reject that which was wrong or misleading, and this was leading to analytical errors being made. The argument that Tan made was that analysts should be asking essential well-grounded questions in order to really know the information they had in front of them. She lays down how students should relate the concepts of being “open-minded, whole-hearted and intellectually responsible” (Dewey 1933 in Tan, 2014, p. 220) to consider the evidence and “to actively, persistently and carefully consider any claims by probing and predicting through in-depth and inference-based analysis” (Tan, 2014, p. 220). It is only then she says that analysts will “avoid the ‘confirmation bias’” (Tan, 2014, p. 230) and produce their own “well-grounded conclusions” (Tan, 2014, p. 229).

One could dispute that what Tan argues for here is more about being critical of the data presented, however, it is the reflective thinking that allows the individual to engage with the information to see implications, potential inconsistencies and to relate it to previously held experience, knowledge or
evidence and either know what it means or make a resolve on how to find out more.

2.1.7 Use of Web 2.0 Technologies

One of the particular ways in which technology has been used for reflective practice is through the implementation of Web 2.0 technologies. This refers to the use of technology to interact with someone, as it allows for an exchange of information (O’Connell and Dyment, 2016). The use of social media is because of the advancement of web 2.0 technologies, and one of the particular ways in which education has used this is through the implementation of blogs. Their use has grown over the last two decades, becoming an inherent part of academic study, particularly in the field of reflective practice. As O’Connell and Dyment state:

Lately, as information technology, social media and the Internet have become staples in higher education, educators and researchers have turned their attention to how Web 2.0 technologies can be used to enhance the development of higher order and critical thinking skills through reflective practice (O’Connell & Dyment, 2016, p. 393).

Their use has become popular because they are interactive. The author can include links to photos, videos and other web pages and readers are able to comment on the content. As Schmidt explains in her following definition in her paper on developing an analytical framework for blogging practices:

Weblogs, or “blogs,” are frequently updated websites where content (text, pictures, sound files, etc.) is posted on a regular basis and displayed in reverse chronological order (Schmidt, 2007, p. 1409).

Blogs also provide what Alm (2009) referred to as “personal space” where she claimed that students felt “less vulnerable and as a consequence more open in expressing themselves” (Alm, 2009 p. 22). She also described them as a “communal space” and a “conversational space” which corroborates what
Nardi, Schirano and Gumbrecht (2004) found that writing a blog is as much about who is reading it, as is writing it. Blogs are produced to be read, meaning the writer makes decisions about what to include and leave out, considering what the reader would like to see (Nardi, Schirano, Gumbrecht and Swartz, 2004). This presents quite different views of what blogs are and how they are used. Within the genre of blogging, there are various sub-genres of types of blogs. The overriding principle to come out of the literature, however, is that when the blog is an educational one, it will have a very specific purpose and it is the blog’s creator (in the case of this study, the coordinator) who will decide what that purpose is (Alm 2009).

A study carried out by Sherry and de Haan (2012) between two sport management departments, one based in Australia and the other in the UK, brings in a couple of other elements. The focus was on journal writing via a blog. The research showed the language used to be informal, with the use of “aaaahhhh” and “*sigh*” and that the blog provided “a safe forum to communicate our thoughts, reflections and feelings in our own time, as needed” (Sherry and de Haan, 2012, p. 817.) It is noteworthy that informal language was used and that the participants felt that a safe environment was created by using a blog. This meant that teachers were able to write in their own time and did not feel the pressure to present a positive image, instead they felt that their reflections were more meaningful and genuine. This idea of a safe environment promoting reflection was also an essential part of guidelines put forward by Fernsten and Fernsten (2005) to promote student responsibility for their own learning through portfolios. “One of the first things that is crucial to honest, effective reflection is the creation of a safe and supportive environment, one that fosters trust as well as growth” (Fernsten and Fernsten, 2005, p. 304.)

In this investigation the platform used for the participants to write their blogs changed between the different iterations of the Internship programme. However, the platform that was primarily used is known as an ePortfolio. These
were considered as way to help with the implementation of PDP (Bryan & Clegg, 2006). Drawing on the traditional paper copies of portfolios, ePortfolios have now taken their place because of an increase in capability (Ciesielkiewicz, 2019). EPortfolios allow for the collection of different artefacts that can be assessed, reflected on or used for employability with the aim being for them “to foster independent learning skills and provide students with experience similar to that which they will face during their professional careers for processes such as appraisals, assessments and revalidation” (Cotterill, Bradley & Hammond, 2006, p. 196).

EPortfolios often exist within what is known as a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or an Online Learning Environment, sometimes also referred to as a Personal Learning Environment. These are explained as being more learner centred, than the more academically focused Learning Manage System (LMS) (Mahara accessed March 2022). Essentially, what these environments aim to achieve is an online space where students are able to access resources whilst also create their own area with their own thoughts and responses. The online environment is created by a tutor or a teacher, who will then manage it. Students will be invited to participate and this is the online space in which that tutor and student can interact. Pegrum and Oakley argue for a move towards these “personal learning environments (PLEs) where students can engage in more individualised, autonomous learning practices” (Pegrum & Oakley, 2017, p. 23). The use of this technology has allowed for the facilitation of reflection because HEIs have been able to provide a space for students to reflect.

2.1.8 Facilitating Reflection

Reflection has been through many different definitions and it has been related to different spatial and temporal contexts. Furthermore, it is still a widely held notion that reflective practice has the potential to “facilitate extraordinary learning and personal growth...” (Beveridge, Fruchter, Sanmartin, and deLottinville, 2014, p. 59). Reflection has been scrutinised because of the
flexibility in approach and the lack of a clear process for how to do it, instead, being considered as something that is innate (Schön, 1983) and that can be carried out if you have the right qualities to do so. For example, Dewey’s proposed qualities of open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness were considered key for successful reflection (Dewey, 1933). What is suggested here is that by doing reflective practice using certain qualities then you will have the necessary tools to do it well. However, what is evident is that reflective practice is a combination of factors such as: what is being reflected on; who is doing the reflecting; what the purpose of the reflection is; how the reflection is being carried out and how engaged the individual doing the practice is. Depending on what those factors are and how they interact together will influence what knowledge the practitioner gains. Hence, why it is important to recognise how reflection can be adapted to each individual and enables us with ways of processing knowledge, which would not otherwise be accessible without it. It is therefore vital for the HEI to understand the factors that need to be put into place to facilitate reflection.

In Kottkamp’s 1990 “How to” article he describes the way in which others might provide the structure to assist the individual in their reflective journey:

Reflection on action is accomplished “offline” at a time when full attention can be given to analysis and planning for the future without the imperative for immediate action. Further, though reflection is always self-analytical, when the focus is on a past event the actor may be aided by others who provide a facilitative structure... (Kottkamp, 1990, p. 183)

This resonates with the programme under study here since the Learning and Development Plan is put into place using mentors, peers and line managers, but it is the intern who is ultimately responsible for carrying out the reflection. The others are able to assist with support and providing a structure in which to reflect, but the responsibility for reflection is up to the individual. I.e. it should be “instigated by the individual” (Mann, 2005, p. 104).
The effect of this is also that the agency lies with the individual. They decide what appears in their reflective journal and in essence what they allow the reader to see, regardless of whether this is an online journal or a paper one. They make decisions about what to write and that is all the reader has access to in order to make a decision about the level of reflection being carried out. Sykes and Dean (2013) looked at reflective journals and e-logs carried out by students during a work placement and they made comment on this notion when they discussed recognising reflection in one of the journals:

Here we suggest that she attempted to innovate but, due to our inability to observe her unarticulated actions we are left to speculate on the in-the-moment dispersed practices of reflection as she tries to make sense of the situation (Sykes and Dean, 2013, p. 188).

Sykes and Dean also touch on structures which should be in place in order for students to become reflective in the moment. For example, they discuss the need for a workshop before the placement starts, informal discussions to take place with a supervisor on a purely developmental level and for assessment to be carried out on an evidence basis through the use of the e-logs and in keeping with each programme and course (Sykes and Dean, 2013). All of these factors are present in the Internship data set and so the discussion section will argue whether these helped the interns to engage in a deeper level of reflection.

The above goes some way into explaining the place of reflective practice within HE. It has become a highly coveted and valued asset within HE. HE as an institution is responsible for providing a space for students to gain knowledge and as such needs to provide the skills required for such an obligation. As discussed previously the educational context is changing and with that there is less reliance on the teacher to impart knowledge and instead provide the necessary skills for students to come to know something. This is why reflective practice is being used widely as it is considered as key for students to learn and ingest new knowledge about their academic field and about themselves.
2.2 Reflection and Learner Autonomy

The previous section focused on reflection and its role in higher education. I discussed agency as part of the argument in being able to achieve a deeper level of reflection, regardless of where and how the reflection is to be carried out. What is clear is that for a person to achieve this deeper level of reflection the more effort they would need to put in. In essence, their participation would need to be predominantly self-initiated. This may cause a potential conflict because not everybody wants to take part in this self-initiated process and rather prefers for someone to tell them what they need to do to improve, or what their strengths are. This idea of reflection being self-initiated has led me to consider the link between reflection and learner autonomy, specifically among HE students and young adults with a focus on tertiary education. The following section explores this further to see what arguments are relevant to this data set and research.

2.2.1 Learner Autonomy in Higher Education

Learner autonomy is concerned with encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. Boud describes it as to “assist students to learn more effectively without the constant presence or intervention of a teacher” (Boud, 1988, p. 7). Ting (2015) also uses the term responsibility to discuss learner autonomy, he says: “in higher education autonomy has been associated with freedom, choice, decision-making and with the idea that students should assume responsibility for their own learning” (Ting, 2015, p. 26). He discusses it as particularly essential considering the amount of information channels and sources available to learners.

Garrigan, when discussing learner autonomy in HE in 1997, discussed the need for support for students in trying to achieve learner autonomy. The study discussed two different areas, one of undergraduates learning to become more autonomous in their learning and the other of post-graduate students learning
self-evaluation. Garrigan highlights that the focus was on using reflection within self-assessment in order to achieve learner autonomy. He showed how the tutors’ behaviour for both sets of students affected the students’ ability to become autonomous learners. The criteria they set, the way they managed the class all had a different impact on the level or autonomy achieved by the students. He concluded his paper by setting out a number of conditions for self-assessment to achieve its goals; some of the more pertinent ones are listed below:

- Whether the learner had the linguistic facility to describe his or her learning;
- for the purpose of each assignment to be explicit, as well the expectations;
- support from tutors;
- the ability of the learner to articulate what they hoped to learn and for this to be real rather than rehearsed;
- a record of achievement which was both appropriate and user friendly. (Garrigan, 1997, p. 181).

The above points are all pretty well established in HEI programmes nowadays and specifically the record of achievement, one could argue, has become a lot more user friendly. It is now available as an online resource both accessible to teacher and student and flexible for both to review.

Another key point that Garrigan made was that if students were shown how to be autonomous in the first year of their studies they were much more likely to carry on with this practice throughout their higher education. However, if they weren’t, then they were much more apprehensive about being shown how to become autonomous in their learning (Garrigan, 1997). These sentiments were echoed by Fazey and Fazey in their 2001 paper. They focused on first-year students and finding out how many came to university with “autonomous characteristics”. The discussion focused on the need for teachers to create opportunities for students to build upon autonomy in their first year and help
them practice skills and strategies which would encourage more autonomous learning. That there is a need to nurture autonomy:

Teachers need to be aware of the potential for autonomy in first-year undergraduates as demonstrated in this study, so that this can be nurtured rather than discouraged. The provision, for beginning students, of opportunities to enhance their perceptions of competence, exercise control over the outcomes of their study and continue to be motivated to know and to achieve, will support the positive, autonomy-related profiles that exist at first-year registration.

(Fazey & Fazey, 2001, p. 359)

2.2.2 Learner Autonomy and Web 2.0 Technologies

Web 2.0 technologies can be very useful in encouraging learner autonomy. However, there is a consensus that there needs to be flexibility with the implementation of web 2.0 technologies. Students ideally can help in the construction of them so that they feel some kind of ownership and control. However, McLoughlin and Lee in their 2010 paper on self-regulated learning using web 2.0 technology argue that there is still the need for scaffolding which could be in the form of feedback or follow up on a face to face basis, for the learning process to become meaningful (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). This echoes the conditions set out by Garrigan, that “the learner needs to feel involved in the negotiation and recording of his or her own learning” (Garrigan, 1997, p. 181). One of the advantages of implementing web 2.0 technology is that it often allows for peer interaction, for example through the use of forums, something which Ting comments on in her findings:

This finding supports the students' self-reports in which they acknowledged their appreciation for help from strangers on the Web forum for solving questions they raised. As learner autonomy involves students' functioning in conjunction with others and optimizing the
learning process by making efficient and appropriate use of the
resources of others (Confessore and Park, 2004; Ng et al., 2011), the
results demonstrated that the proposed learning design seemed to
foster students' autonomy in terms of peer interaction.

(Ting, 2015, p. 29).

Ting discussed implementing negotiated learning in HE with the aim of
promoting more autonomous learning. It raised interesting points about how
to recognise and measure autonomous learning. With regard to technology,
students had the motivation to learn certain ICT skills to benefit their lives
socially. However, some of the skills they might need for educational purposes
would be slightly different and they weren’t always so eager to learn. Further
still, technology is a medium in which a subject is taught or learnt, it is in
addition to the subject matter. Students might need to learn how to use a
computer or the Internet to participate (Ting, 2015).

Learner autonomy seems to be essential for learners to take part in self-
initiated tasks. Indeed, student initiated learning is considered an approach to
developing learner autonomy (Boud, 1988). What the literature has shown is
that for students to become autonomous they should be introduced to this
concept in the first year of study otherwise they are more likely to be
apprehensive about being autonomous in their learning at a later stage. One
could, therefore, posit that those students who were not shown how to be
autonomous in their use of web 2.0 technologies in the early period of their
studies are less likely to participate willingly in tasks which require them to be
so at a later stage. Unfortunately, I am unable to corroborate this viewpoint in
my current study but it should be a key consideration for any development
programmes being implemented at a higher education level (as per findings by
Fazey & Fazey, 2001.) This is supported by literature on distance learning, that
learner autonomy is essential, but without the learner being autonomous and
wanting to learn how to use the technology or make the most of it, it is unlikely
they will be able to take full advantage of virtual learning environments. This
relates back to the discussion of time being part of the PDP process, as mentioned in section 1.4.3. That the way a student engages with these programmes changes over the course of their studies and can depend on when they have been introduced to them.

A final point to be considered regarding the strategies encouraged for learner autonomy is that for a learner to become autonomous they may need to rely on reflection, and for reflection, a learner may need to be more autonomous. It would, therefore, seem to be a cyclical process and all part of what HEIs are trying to achieve: to educate students about things, but in order to assist this the students need to be shown how to learn and acquire knowledge independently.
2.3 Concept of Genre

In the previous section on reflective practice I discussed what reflective writing looked like and how it could be identified in the text. Genre has been fundamental in understanding this data set and in considering the presence of reflective practice, reflective writing and PDP. On the surface genre may seem to be a straightforward topic – as simple as identifying a genre of a film and thus knowing what type of characters will appear and what type of storyline to expect (Jones, 2012, p. 8). However, it is not such a simple process. Genre analysis demands a more complex look at the text; identifying the structure and the features within it. It also requires analysis of the context and the situation in which the text will be used and indeed who will use it as well as how it has been produced.

Genres can often come with associated expectations which when not adhered to may cause unexpected consequences. As Devitt (1993, p. 577) notes:

Knowing the genre, therefore, means knowing such things as appropriate subject matter, level of detail, tone, and approach as well as the usual layout and organization. Knowing the genre means knowing not only, or even most of all, how to conform to generic conventions but also how to respond appropriately to a given situation. Consequently, it would seem that ‘knowing’ the genre would lead to agreement on what texts belong to which genre. However, this is not always the case, as what may seem like an instance of one genre to one person may appear to be an instance of another to a different person. As Paltridge explains: “[n]ot every instance of a particular genre will have exactly the same discourse structure (nor indeed the same communicative purpose)” (Paltridge, 2012, p. 67).

Here it can be seen quite clearly that identifying a genre is not a straightforward process. Not only are there different ways to identify a genre (as will be discussed in the Research Methods: Genre Analysis Chapter) but there are also overlaps between genres. Indeed, in this study I consider that the data set
belongs to an overarching genre of reflective writing, based on the context in which it happens, however, within that, there are other sub-genres present. These are sometimes known as “genre networks or “genre families”. I discuss this further in the following sub-section.

2.3.1 Relationships between genres: genre networks; genre families

Genres are not treated as exclusive and there are many studies that look at how genres form ‘families’ or ‘networks’ (Swales, 1990; Tardy, 2003; Nesi & Gardner, 2012). Swales (1990, p. 50) discussed the “family resemblance” and the existence of “inter-relationships” to be able to explain what group a text might belong to and whilst this is not looking at relationships between genres it did look at the many ways to connect factors within a genre and similarities that exist across genres.

Tardy’s 2003 study on grant writing discussed how writers needed knowledge of genre networks to be able to negotiate their way through the application for a grant. That the knowledge of the application on its own was not enough, instead applicants needed to have an awareness of the whole process – as indicated by the New Rhetoric definition of genre. In the case of this data set, the interns needed to be aware of what was expected of them to write a reflective piece of work as well as being able to negotiate the blog page and everything that entailed. This relates to Bazerman’s (1994) comment on the “systems of genre” as based on typified actions, claiming that “[t]hrough an understanding of the genres available to us at any time we can understand the roles and relationships open to us” Bazerman (1994, p. 83). In this case, one might consider that there are enough similarities between the texts to connect them as an overarching genre. However, there are other interesting differences, potentially less central to the text, which change them and make them different, indicating sub-genres.
2.3.2 Genre of Reflective Writing through blogs

In the previous section discussing reflective practice I considered how to identify reflective practice by looking at processes, features and other linguistic markers that might be present. (See section 2.1.3). Blogs can be considered a genre in their own right; moreover, they can be split into several sub-genres by the type of blog they are, for example, political, journalistic, personal. I have based my consideration of the blogging genre on Schmidt’s 2007 framework. She states that blogs follow three elements: rules, relations and code. Rules refer to the framework and medium in which the blog fits and how it is intended to fulfil its communicative purpose. For example, something that usually distinguishes blog posts from other writing is that they appear in reverse order, starting with the most recent post first. Relations are concerned with the hypertextual relations that might exist, i.e. hyperlinks to web pages, as well as the social ones, so those that exist outside of the blog post perhaps through face to face or email interaction. The third element she considers is that of code, which is based on the software itself. The code is usually in place and as such provides the parameters in which the blog works.

When Cirocki and Farrell discuss the use of blogs for teacher reflective practice they explain:

They extend the one-way written discourse found in journals to interactive exchanges among blog writers. Additionally, blog posts can be labelled and classified according to previously established categories. Teachers can also include video clips in blog posts, for example, recorded parts of lessons that may serve as a springboard for collaborative reflection or professional discussions around topics of shared interest. (Cirocki and Farrell, 2017, p. 10)

What Cirocki and Farrell discuss here is what is expected of a teacher reflective practice blog but it does highlight certain expectations of opting to use a blog, for example, the use of multimedia to come back to for later discussion and the
ability for writers to use the blog to interact with each other. The focus in this project is on academic blogs and how they are used as part of the Learning and Development Plan in the Internship. They do not use blogging software rather an ePortfolio system and as such there are likely to be different ways that the blog is used. However, the aforementioned framework proposed by Schmidt (2007) is helpful in identifying what is present within the genre of blogging in this study.
3 Chapter Three: Methodology Part 1: Research Stance and Data Collection

In this chapter I start by detailing the epistemology with which I best identify and the implications that had on choosing appropriate research methods for this project. I then talk about how I gained access to the data along with any ethical considerations. Following that, I explain how I prepared and structured the data ready for analysis.

3.1 Identifying my Epistemology

Identifying one’s own epistemology is important as it helps researchers to understand their own values and beliefs, as well as how they might influence research design and outcome. This section looks to summarise the epistemology behind my work, looking at its strengths and limitations, before reviewing the main points and concluding what aspects I needed to be particularly aware of when approaching my research.

When considering what issues we wish to emphasise through our research, defining one’s epistemology is justifiably described by Richards as part of our “intellectual responsibility” (Richards, 2003, p. 41). I think the concept of “worldview” as described by Creswell as “a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds” (Creswell, 2009, p. 6) makes thinking about one’s own philosophical view a little more graspable. For me it was through reading Crotty (1998) that I realised that I started as he described: thinking about a matter for answering and, with that, planning my research in terms of this matter. I started to look for a strategy that would provide the answers to what I was looking for, whilst also deciding on my aims and objectives.

I approached the study using various different strands of analysis focusing on qualitative analysis. My aim was primarily exploratory intending to understand how something worked and how it helped students to improve and develop. I
came into this research from a constructivist approach. Looking to understand how something functioned but even more importantly to perceive the multiple realities existing around the phenomenon under investigation.

3.1.1 What is Constructivism?
Constructivism is argued to have blended with postmodernism, structuralism, feminism, and hermeneutics (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). Schwandt describes it as sharing similar goals to interpretivism, with its overriding aim being to understand “the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). He goes on to say that researchers attempt to “elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). Therefore, it could be said that the researcher is attempting to find out how meaning is constructed by participants in the study, whilst being aware that this meaning is still being constructed through participation in the study and conversation with the researcher and even through the use of technology. Consequently, Robson (2002) describes the task that constructivist researchers face as “to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge” saying that “participants are viewed as helping to construct the ‘reality’ with the researchers” (Robson, 2002, p. 27).

Constructivism claims that knowledge is socially and individually created, compared to the critical viewpoint that knowledge is the product of our social and historical situation or even the scientific tradition point of view that we can know the world as it really is. This research looked at real situations and how they were experienced and so, therefore, constructivism allowed for flexibility when progressing through the research. The methods could be adapted and re-thought along the way. This allowed for reflexivity within the project and meant knowledge could be constructed and reconstructed through interaction and experience.
3.1.2 Reflexivity

Reflection, in the context of empirical research, can be defined as the interpretation of interpretation and the launching of critical self-exploration of one’s own interpretations of empirical material (including its construction). Reflection can mean that we consistently consider various basic dimensions behind and in the work of interpretation, by means of which this can be qualified (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 6). What I discuss here is making my methodology reflexive. Alvesson and Sköldberg advocate this kind of approach arguing for reflexivity to become an integral part of any research methodology (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000).

Edge (2010) discusses reflexivity in qualitative research as being about seeing influences then “accepting them, exploring them and making them a part of the research” (Edge, 2010, p.36). He sees it as a part of reflective practice, which has underpinned this research, both in the nature of the study and in how I have carried it out. He discusses reflexivity as a way to consider how the research project has affected the researcher and how the researcher has affected the research, in a “mutually-shaping relationship” (Edge, 2010, p. 35). Hence, I have been self-critical and thought about how my role and identity had an impact on the research and vice-versa, particularly when exploring my own interpretations. This was not an easy task, however, one that I felt essential. I tried to understand how the participants used the tools available to them and how it benefited them, as well as how we, in some way, constructed the results together, key to understanding any of the aforementioned mutual relationship. I have tried to be flexible in my approach and have kept a research diary throughout this investigation, discussing anything that concerned me with my research supervisors. I discuss my reflections further in Chapter Eight.

3.1.3 Research methods

Creswell states that the goal of constructivist research “is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (Creswell,
Consequently, the constructivist approach is often associated with qualitative research methods, such as interviews, observation and ethnography. In this case the data was collected through interviews, participation and text collection. The data was then analysed using qualitative methods of analysis: Qualitative Content Analysis and Genre Analysis. Constructivism does not look for one specific result or one perceived reality, it allows the researcher to present multiple realities, even more importantly it encourages this outcome. Constructivism looks for multiple perspectives on the issue for research and henceforth allows for different methodological approaches. My research has allowed for the use of different approaches particularly because I have been able to access different data sources across a three-year period. Using multiple perspectives and tools of qualitative research is inherently messy and as such can make data presentation and even analysis difficult, as I further explain below.

3.1.4 Presentation of data
The presentation of data can be problematic, as Eisner (1992, p. 12) states, “the form of representation we choose to use is constitutive of the understanding we acquire: the medium is a part of the message.” In some respects, it is inevitable that I will drive the results with my own viewpoints, and my presentation of them. However, my goal was that these be constructed with the respondents along the way, and would not build on my previous assumptions but rather be reconstructed using both the data and discussions with participants.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) advocate that it is very important within the constructive approach for the researcher to be involved in all aspects of the study. It was therefore vital, as discussed previously, to be aware of my positioning and involvement. I took this stance in this project and made sure to reflect on how my viewpoints guided the study, including the analysis and results and the presentation of them.
The data for this research is primarily text based, meaning I had to be aware of the language used to present the data, as well the role language played within the data. Language is an inherent part of social constructionism: “the collective generation of meaning as shaped by conventions of language and other social processes” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 128). As Alvesson and Sköldberg demonstrate there are three aspects taken to do this:

First, people create accounts based on previous linguistic knowledge.

Second, people are involved in selecting words and meanings and rejecting others.

Third, People choose a mode of expression which influences further ideas, responses, etc. (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 205)

I was very aware that my comments were guiding the interns whilst they were still participating in the research project and that this would later be subject to analysis carried out by me. I was involved in the co-construction of the texts as well as the analysis. This is why I took steps in the analysis to code the comments separately, but to also consider them as part of how the interns formulated their blog posts.

These considerations therefore played an essential role in considering how to present the data as well as how to approach the analysis. It has been paramount to try and understand the preconceived ideas and experience that the participant already had to make sense of their interpretations. Accordingly, this has contributed towards producing an adequate analysis of the participants’ answers and with that, appropriate conclusions.

3.1.5 Everyone is a Constructivist

Much of the criticism received by constructivism is due to its very nature as constructivist. It has been argued that everyone is a constructivist so why would this exist as an approach - we are all actively constructing knowledge on
a daily basis. As Crotty (1998, p. 55) says “...understanding that all meaningful reality, precisely as meaningful reality, is socially constructed.” Or as Guba and Lincoln describe it (1989, p. 137) “Social reality ... exists only as a series of mental and social constructions derived via social interaction”. However, the key point is to understand that even though we all have the knowledge and power to construct reality, what constructivism means is that multiple realities and perspectives can be presented and we must consider how we account for and represent these realities.

The researcher must be careful to consider the context, the language, the social environment, the values and the beliefs as well as any other things that become apparent during the course of the study. One of the dominant aspects of debating my own epistemology is my reliance on reflexivity when approaching the research as a constructivist. I believe this to be very important and my own self-criticality has played a large role in how the participants’ realities have been constructed, and subsequently, represented.

3.2 What is the data set

As described in Chapter One this data set focuses on an Internship run by the Careers and Skills (CS) department in an HE setting. The Internship ran during the summer months and ran for either 4, 6 or 8 weeks (depending on the year) and was on a Monday to Friday, full time basis. Different departments within the setting put forward possible internship placements, which once approved by the CS department were then opened up to an application process amongst students in their penultimate year of study. Students then applied and if successful were invited to interview. Those that were then chosen after interview were offered an Internship placement. They then had to decide whether to accept it or not, much like a job application process. Student were paid for the Internship and were required to attend induction training as well as
participate in the Learning and Development programme created by the CS department.

### 3.2.1 Participants

The data set covered three iterations of the Internship, which covered three different years of the programme (2015, 2016 and 2017), each with three different cohorts of interns. This data set is made up of each interns’ entire reflective blog written during the course of each Internship. It is divided up by intern and by blog post. The table below gives basic information about the data sets. The sample size is similar for each year however the number of sources reduces over the years. This is due to changes in the Learning and Development Plan, which had an impact on the duration of the Internship, and the amount of blog posts required. Neither the academic background nor any other demographical information of the intern was recorded for this investigation.

**Table 3.1 Basic information on Internship blog data sets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of participant blogs</th>
<th>Number of blog posts</th>
<th>Duration of Internship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8 weeks and 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2.2 Learning and Development Plan

The learning and development plan was put in place so that students were guided on how to work on their personal development whilst at the same time gain valuable work experience through the Internship. The plan broke down what would happen week by week during the Internship. It specified which
blogging topics would happen (through the Blog to Reflect guide) as well as when mentoring sessions would happen and what these should cover. Each intern had a personal mentor, as well as a line manager.

The blogging topics were specified in the Blog to Reflect Guide (included as appendices F, G and H). These focused on what points the interns should cover in their reflective blog. Interns were required to participate in the blogging but this was not assessed, it was designed as a way to support the intern’s personal development during their Internship experience. The blogs were the interns’ own individual writing, although this was supported by meetings with their mentor and/or line managers. These meetings formed another key part of the Learning and Development Plan. Interns would usually have either a mentor meeting or a blog post to write each week. Interns could decide who to share their blog with, this often included other interns, their mentors, line managers and the researcher (in their role as reflective writing expert). However, the blog was not publicly accessible outside of the CS department.

The plan also focused on skills and strengths and how to identify these. This often happened in the Induction Training offered to all interns through a Skills Audit or Strengths Analysis. As well as this it listed when Induction Training would be and what other training would take place. For example, interns in 2015 took part in IT Induction training, in 2016 they had a Project Management training session and in 2017 there was also a Team Bonding Barista Experience. Finally, interns were required to participate in group forums to discuss certain issues, this wasn’t outlined in the Learning and Development Plan for the 2015 and 2016 Internships but became a requirement in the 2017 Learning and Development Plan. These forums have not formed part of this investigation.

The below screen shot from the welcome message for Interns on the 2015 iteration shows how the Learning and Development Plan was highlighted as a key part of the experience from the outset.
When the interns were welcomed onto the Internship a lot of emphasis was put on the Learning and Development Plan because this was considered a key element of this Internship programme. This was seen again in the welcome for the 2017 programme (highlighted in yellow):

... being on WUIP is not just about your Internship work, as it also includes a full programme of learning & development support comprising of forum sharing, blogging and mentoring. Your commitment will ensure that you gain the most from your WUIP experience.

(Taken from Moodle 2017 Welcome Page accessed March 2018)

There are three main elements highlighted here as key to the Learning and Development: forum sharing, blogging and mentoring. It is the blogging part that has formed the main data set for this research. Although, I have also used data from interviews held with interns and staff members as well as from observations and informal discussions to help contextualise the results of the analysis. How this data was collected will be discussed in 3.5 Collecting data: Observations and Interviews.
3.2.3 Induction Training

The Induction Training took place on the first day of the Internship. The intern was provided guidance as shown in the following table:

Table 3.2 Training provided for interns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Induction Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This was a pre-requisite and was held on the first day of the Internship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A networking session and guidance on how to construct and deliver an *elevator pitch*.
- An activity to help interns identify their strengths and recognise what their realised and unrealised strengths were. They were also encouraged to do a “skills audit”.
- Guidance on how to make the most of this work experience opportunity, thinking about the following:
  - How to act professionally
  - What they wanted to achieve
  - How the Internship could help them achieve goals they had set themselves.
  - The concept of “SMART” was introduced here for interns to think about how they could be “SMART” about their goals. SMART stands for: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound.

- How to approach the Learning and Development Plan
  - How to blog (through the provision of a “Blog to Reflect” guide).
  - How to prepare for the mentoring sessions.
  - In 2016 and 2017 the interns could meet the researcher and discuss the aims of reflection in the Learning and Development Plan
- Previous interns were also invited to share their experience and give any advice on how to approach the Internship.

The above training happened across the three iterations of the data set and had an influence on how the interns responded to the Learning and Development Plan and with that, the Blog to Reflect Guide. A lot of emphasis was placed on
the use of certain frameworks (such as CARE or SMART) to produce the writing required. Networking was also considered very important and was given space on the Blog to Reflect Guides in 2015 and 2016. Any impact of the Induction Training will be considered in the Discussion Chapter.

3.2.4 Platforms used for writing the blog

I have considered technology as a fundamental part of the genre of this data set. The blogs were carried out using different technological platforms and I give more detail about those platforms here. Mahara was used in the 2015 and 2016 iterations of the Internship. The description of this platform is: “[F]ully-featured web application to build your electronic portfolio” (Mahara accessed March 2022). The “My Portfolio” function was used here. This had the title of the Internship and then included various “group pages” which had information about the different aspects of the Internship including the Learning and Development Plan. By using the “create” tab, as shown in the picture below, the interns were able to create their own journal where they would write their blog posts. This would then follow the typical blog format as described in 2.3.2 Genre of Reflective Writing through blogs.

Figure 3.1 Mahara dashboard

In the 2017 iteration of the Internship the interns used a different platform to write their blog posts. Moodle was used instead. “Moodle is a learning platform designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a single robust, secure and integrated system to create personalised learning environments.” (Moodle accessed March 2022). Moodle is similar to Mahara in that it also
comes under this branch of online learning environment as discussed in section 2.1.7. However, it has a different layout to Mahara and is often used for academic assignments where the teacher can also mark and give feedback to students. Indeed, Moodle and Mahara are often used together to complement each other:

Mahara’s architecture is inspired by the modular, extensible architecture of Moodle. The Mahara team has also been heavily involved in the Moodle community, with recent work mostly focused on Moodle Networks. Similarly, Mahara systems can be networked together as well having single sign-on from Moodle 1.9 upwards. In a sense, we see Mahara as a ‘sister’ application although the two systems are not required to go together.

(Mahara accessed March 2022)

For the 2017 iteration interns used the Moodle platform instead of the Mahara one to write their blogs. Once they clicked on “week 1” of the course’s dashboard, they would be taken to what was required of them for week 1. Here, as seen below, they would be able to click on the link “Blog to Reflect”.

*Figure 3.2 Creating blog post in Moodle*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date: Sunday 9 July</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access the <a href="#">Blog to Reflect</a> link &amp; write a blog on the topic: Where you are &amp; Where you want to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing self-awareness will help you to assess your skills, discover your strengths and what motivates you, and help you to explore your options.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This took them to the following screen (shown above) where they would then be able to write their blog post. The blogs written in Moodle followed a different format to those in Mahara. They were created as separate blog posts and so did not have the continuous form as seen in the 2015 and 2016 Internship data. How the differences in the platforms used for writing the blogs affected the reflective writing produced will be discussed further in the Results Chapter. Similarly, there were other changes to the Internship which happened over the course of this three year investigation and these are listed in the table below. The effects of these changes will be considered further in the Results Chapter.

Table 3.3 Summary of how the Internship changed over the course of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes to the Internship over the period of investigation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The platform used for students to write their blog posts changed from Mahara to Moodle in the last year of the investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The duration of the programme varied over the three years. In 2015 it lasted for 8 weeks, in 2016 there was the option of either 4 or 8-week programmes and in 2017 there were only 6-week programmes available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Learning and Development Plan and within that, the Blog to Reflect guide, changed each year. This was mainly as a direct result of the researcher’s role and involvement in the Internship and suggestions made based on analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Obtaining access to the data

In the following section I explain how access to the data sets was negotiated along with ethical issues that needed consideration and approval.

3.3.1 Procedures for data collection: Negotiating Access

It was essential to give careful consideration to how to achieve access to the desired data sets. Contact was made with various members of staff in the CS department but I did not make progress in gaining access to study the development programmes I was interested in. Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland talk about the necessity of connections and to “identify key gatekeepers” (in Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 397). As Richards, Ross and Seedhouse (2012, p. 72) explain: “Gatekeepers are people who are in a position to refuse or allow access...” In order to try and meet these gatekeepers I attended various workshops in my capacity as a student and attempted to build up relationships with the staff in the relevant department. However, it was through my research supervisor that we finally managed to set up a meeting between the AL department and two members of staff from CS.

Following a positive meeting both members of staff from CS were keen to set up a study in order to research the programmes being offered by their department. They were happy to give the Applied Linguistics department access to the development programmes being offered citing that more in-depth investigation was needed, as they were concerned about student uptake and whether they were fulfilling the desired purpose as well as the needs of the student. We didn’t explore why there was a concern about student uptake but instead focused on what programmes we might be able to start investigating.

After discussing what was on offer we decided to carry out an initial study on an award that was focusing on students’ reflective practice. Furthermore, CS needed markers outside of their department to help mark applications for this award. I considered this an excellent way to build bridges with the department
and understand the data set. For further comment on this data set see Wharton 2017. Due to my research on that award and our agreement that AL could have access to development programmes being offered by CS, I was granted access to the Internship programme for the following three years and it is this which forms the main data set of this investigation. It was understood that I was accessing the programme as a researcher of reflective writing. Within that I was permitted to make comments on the interns blogs and guide the interns on how to write reflectively. Interns were informed by the Internship convenor that I would be reading the blogs and making comments due to my position as researcher of reflective writing. I will give more details about gaining ethical approval from those involved in the programme in the following section.

3.3.2 Procedures for data collection: Ethical Approval

The Applied Linguistics Department has a protocol in place to gain ethical approval for all research projects. An ethical approval form (Appendix A) must be filled out and approved by the Department’s ethics committee prior to the student embarking on their research project. Similar to all HEIs this university is constantly developing and updating their ethical requirements. All the procedures and processes I refer to throughout this thesis were those in use at the time of data collection. I didn’t foresee any potential risks to participants in any phase of the study. My main concern was with maintaining student anonymity especially when using online blog data. This is discussed further in 3.6.1 Maintaining anonymity. In the following sections I discuss how I dealt with ethical approval.

3.3.2.1 Ethical Approval for accessing the data set

I was not present at the time of the Internship in the first year of study, 2015, but I was able to access the data afterwards, as my department had consent to use for it for research purposes. The consent form gave some background information about the project, what participation would mean for the intern,
what it would involve, and any risks or benefits of participation. Further information was available by contacting the named researcher at the bottom of the form. It also highlighted that the research project was jointly organised by CS and the Applied Linguistics department. The 2015 Research Information and Consent Form is included as Appendix B.

3.3.2.2 Changes to Consent Form: 2016 Iteration

Moving into 2016 the interns were already informed that I would be reading the blogs and making comments due to my position as researcher of reflective writing. I attended the Induction Day and explained my role and my research interests a little further, inviting any questions, and then asked all the interns if they would participate. It meant the interns were able to put a face to the name and we were able to establish a relationship before they had even embarked on their Internship. This meant the interns knew exactly who was commenting on their blog and felt able to respond to any of my comments. All of the students filled out and signed the consent forms and some even asked me for further information. I did, however, make a slight adjustment to the form.

Instead of having students say “I would like to participate in this project”, I amended it to “I am happy to participate...”(as highlighted in 2016 Research Information and Consent Form included as Appendix C). I felt like this made the decision feel a little further from them. However, as I wasn’t contacting students through email, gaining access was much easier. I was available for interns to ask any questions face to face. Most of the interns asked me about reflective writing and told me about their experience of what it had been in the past. They seemed to feel happy knowing who I was and who to come to if they needed advice.
The consent form was kept the same for 2017 and all students participating in the 2017 Internship allowed me access to their online blogs. Internship Consent Form 2017 is included as Appendix D.

It is important to state that the CS department requested that the AL department carry out this research on the development programmes being offered to students. The internship convenor acted as the gatekeeper (Richards, Ross and Seedhouse, 2012) here as they told the interns that the researcher would be able to make comments on the blog in order to assist their reflective writing. However, all interns were able to decide whether to give access to their blog or not, without any ramifications, as stated in 3.3.3. I had no part to play in whether interns were considered to be successful or not in the Internship programme, my role was purely part of the developmental process.

### 3.3.3 Technical Issues with gaining access

I had a couple of issues with access to interns’ blogs on the Mahara platform. Due to the default privacy settings interns had to change the settings to allow me access, this meant that I had to contact interns and ask them to approve my access to their blog. There were two interns in 2016 who had previously consented to their blog forming part of my research project but then didn’t allow me access. The consent form did however allow for any participant to withdraw from the project at any time without any repercussions as per advice in the literature, “...that person should be excused from participation and given assurance that there will be no repercussions now or later because of the lack of participation” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 44).

### 3.4 Collecting data: Reflective Blog

In this section I explain how I collected the data. In the first year of data collection, 2015, I accessed the interns’ blogs on the online platform and copied the data and pasted it into word processing software. I copied the blog post,
including the title, as well as any comments that had been made. I then saved them as described in section 3.7 below.

In the following years I collected the Internship data a little differently. I had already obtained permission to access the interns’ blogs prior to them embarking on their Internship. I was also participating in the project by making comments on the blog posts. Consequently, the process of collecting data happened much more systematically: as I made comments on the blog post I would copy the blog post along with any comments made into a text document. I would then save the documents individually as described in section 3.7.

3.5 Collecting data: Observations and Interviews

3.5.1 Observations

I used informal observation to gain some insight into what was being offered so that I could understand the sources better. The reason I call them informal observations is because:

1) Even though I made sure that all were happy for me to be there and observe I did not record the observation.

This corroborates with Robson and McCartan’s view where they consider informal participant observations to be relatively free from structure “… and allow the observer considerable freedom in what information is gathered and how it is recorded” (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 322). Through attending an Information Day on the Internship programme I was able to gain insight into what was being offered and expected of students but in a very informal way. All of this contributed to my understanding of the genre.

3.5.2 Informal discussion

Informal discussion was another way of getting more contextual information. Everybody involved was aware of my role as a researcher because my department had already gained consent as detailed in 3.3.2. The reason for carrying out the informal observations and discussions was to help give context
to the data sets. It enabled me to understand how the staff viewed the Internship programme, as well as seeing how students reacted to what they were getting involved in. It thus enabled me to think about the genre in which the data was situated. Any data used within this thesis has been approved as per the ethical procedure explained in section 3.3.2.

3.5.3 Online Interviews: 2015 Iteration

I was only able to interview interns from the 2015 iteration and the 2016 iteration of the Internship data set. Whilst I didn’t have access to the 2015 Internship cohort at the time they participated in the Internship I was able to reach out to these interns in the spring of 2016. As outlined in section 3.3.2 my department had already obtained permission for departmental research and so I was permitted to do so. I personalised the emails and framed them as a way to have a chat about their blogging experience rather than a formal interview (included as Appendix E). Being that a significant period of time had passed I wanted to make it as simple as I could for any of the interns to agree to interview.

Two of the interns agreed to answer my questions, although it all had to happen via email. This method was in keeping with recent trends with online interviews becoming more and more popular in social sciences (O’Connor & Madge, 2017). I emailed my questions to the interns and they answered when they were able to. I considered them online interviews rather than surveys as they were an interactive email conversation that had been pre-agreed, rather than a questionnaire link emailed to various potential participants. One of the differences of carrying out interviews online via email compared to face to face is that of spontaneity which O’Connor, Madge, Shaw and Wellens (2008) highlight in their table comparing characteristics of online and offline interviews. Whilst spontaneity can be a great tool when interviewing because it can pave the way for deeper discussion of interesting topics to surface in the respondent’s answers, carrying out the interviews via email allowed the intern
more time to consider their answers. This was potentially a much kinder way to interview considering the amount of time that had passed (6 months) since the intern had participated in the Internship programme. It allowed them time to consider the questions and possibly answer more fully than they would have done by being interviewed face to face, an advantage of this way of interviewing suggested by O’Connor and Madge (2017). Indeed, both interns answered all of the questions and added a final note to their response too to express their overall opinion of the Internship, something which I hadn’t asked for, and, potentially shows the reflective nature permitted in this way of interviewing.

3.5.4 Interviews: 2016 Iteration

I was able to invite to interview all eleven interns from the 2016 cohort that participated in the Internship programme. I received a response from four of them of which two were able to attend. The invite was issued by email and the replies were received in the same medium. Due to my familiarity with the 2016 interns it was a much easier process to contact them and set up interviews with those who were available. Overall, the difficulty with interviewing interns from this Internship programme was that they were entering their final year of studies and so had a lot less availability to meet up.

I had already had a lot of contact with the interns through commenting on their blogs and by being present at the Induction Day and Celebration Event, meaning they felt comfortable talking to me about their experience. I was aware that this might have had an influence on the interview and make it seem informal and so I was keen to find the balance between making the interview as professional as possible without it being too much so, as Richards (2003) advises. This is why I was eager to have face to face interviews rather than online ones as I had already been able to talk to most of the interns about their experience and so wanted to explore their involvement in the Internship a little deeper.
The interviews took place in a meeting room located in my university department. I obtained permission from the participants prior to going ahead with any recording and I recorded the interview on two different mediums and saved them in three different locations. I prepared a loose set of questions and followed a semi-structured type of pattern. I approached my interviews from a co-constructive viewpoint. Creswell advocates that to do so “the more open-ended the questioning, the better” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Therefore, the questions were based on some of my analysis of the data, meaning I was able to focus the questions on the information I intended to elicit but left them open enough to encourage the interviewee to talk. I kept in mind the need to be an active listener and react to the interviewee’s answers rather than following a structured set of questions, as advised by Richards, Ross and Seedhouse (2012). For example, I asked about whether the intern wrote about their problems and any difficulties on the blog, this then gave way to further conversation about these difficulties, and what specifically focused them to think about this. As mentioned previously the interns did already know me, and had got used to my comments on their blogs. This meant that they were quite comfortable talking to me about their experience.

Table 3.4 Summary of what interviews and observations were carried out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iteration</th>
<th>What was carried out and how</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Email interview with Student 2 2015</td>
<td>March 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Email interview with Student 4 2015</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Information Day observation</td>
<td>April 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Induction Day informal discussion</td>
<td>July 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Celebration Event (end of internship) informal discussion with</td>
<td>August 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interns and staff members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>In person interview with student 3 2016</td>
<td>December 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>In person interview with student 4</td>
<td>December 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Induction Day informal discussion</td>
<td>July 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>In person interview with coordinator</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6 Preparation of data for analysis

There were two main issues I took into consideration when preparing the data for analysis. The first element was to make sure the texts were formatted correctly for the analysis software to read it accurately. The second element was that of anonymity and how to maintain it, this is explained in the following sub-section 3.6.1.

The Internship data set had been copied from a blogging platform on a website, this meant it had format from the web page which needed removing. This included hyperlinks and time and date information. Hence, for the analysis software to read only the text for analysis, this all needed to be erased. The text had to be cleared of the interns’ names and of any identifying features. It was then saved as a text file and given a letter and a number so that the texts could be organised. The bigger obstacle here was that there were a lot of references to colleagues’ names and to university departments. This made me question how well I would be able to anonymise the texts to ensure the participant could not be identified, as claimed on the participant information sheet. This will be given further attention in the following sub-section. When it came to the interview data, I transcribed this into textual data and analysed it considering how it supported or contradicted the themes I found in the blog data. Again, I followed the rules of anonymity as outlined below. With regard to the observation and informal discussions, these notes were used for providing contextual information to the study.
3.6.1 Maintaining anonymity

In the initial stage I removed identifiable names and resaved the texts with a letter and a number. However, what was more challenging was the issue of how to deal with references to proper names, such as people the intern worked with or particular departments. I questioned how to maintain participant anonymity and whether indeed it was possible to promise complete anonymity. Confidentiality and privacy are essential to think about when considering how to treat somebody’s personal information however I wasn’t sure how I was going to achieve this as I considered the examples given above. My information and consent forms were drafted prior to GDPR coming into law in 2018, however, in writing this thesis and presenting my findings I am aware that I have a responsibility to adhere to GDPR principles as much as possible. Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 45) suggest that a good rule of thumb is that “if the researcher doesn’t think he or she would like it, then participants probably won’t like it either”. This didn’t however guide me too well when considering how to tackle these instances.

Walford recognises this difficulty concerning anonymity and whilst his 2018 paper deals mainly with ethnography it brings relevant arguments regarding the subject to the foreground. He claims that by simply entering three words from another research paper’s blurb into Google he was able to identify the research site and thus the participants (Walford, 2018, p. 519). This was the concern I had regarding my data set; that just by having a few proper names in the text that the author would be identifiable. In order to counter this I chose examples in my analysis section where I believe they demonstrate the concept but they do not give too much away about the research participant, as well as removing confidential information as indicated previously. I was also particularly unsure whether to leave references to the university and the Internship, even though, I considered it apparent which university the study was taking place in as well as the Internship programme being researched. I removed references to the name of the Internship and to the dates that it took place in order to try and anonymise the data in the best possible way.
When grappling with how to deal with these occurrences I considered Walford’s argument; he questioned why we are still attempting to maintain such anonymity when participants will often name themselves through some kind of online review or social media site relating to the research. He argued that by being open about the research site it could lead to more openness and better presentation of research, as researchers wouldn’t be so worried about upholding such vague descriptions of the data sources and the participants. In my experience it wasn’t only about providing vague descriptions of the data source but also the willingness of the participants to be named and to name themselves and others they worked with. It was important to take into account that there will be exceptions to the rule on anonymity as Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 45) describe: “Some participants specifically request to have their name used...” I therefore decided what information should be removed and replaced with a pseudonym, and what information needed to be left in order to maintain context. In accordance with current practice I also used “they” when referring to any participant in the research to avoid any gender bias, although recognise that its use is not entirely unproblematic.

There were lots of identifiable names in the blog posts that needed removal. Blog posts automatically come up with the phrase “Posted by” followed by the author’s name and the date and time the blog was published. The title of the blog was usually the student’s name followed by the word “journal”. Further to my discussion regarding anonymity I decided that to ensure the student couldn’t be recognised I replaced the student’s name with XXXX. This didn’t solve the whole aspect of anonymity, as there were still recognisable characteristics of the author, however it went some way in achieving a certain amount of protection for the data and its author. It also enabled easier analysis as it meant XXXX always referred to the name of the author (Robson, 2011). Often, authors only worry about the data that appears in the research report or any academic publishing, but I preferred to tackle the anonymity aspects first so
that the use of names would not skew my analysis of the text, or accidentally be left in.

The use of hyperlinks also caused an issue when attempting to anonymise the texts. Hyperlinks are links which enable the reader to click on the highlighted text and be taken to a web page. These are usually in blue, an example can be seen below:

*Figure 3.4 Example of Hyperlink*

```
2015 Student 3 in Networking & Marketing Myself includes the link to their LinkedIn profile to encourage the reader to have a look>“Take a look here: https://www.linkedin.com/in/XXXX”.
```

The blogs were centred on the student, their reflections, their skills and ultimately their career goals; there is a great deal of personal information. This becomes particularly problematic where the student provides a hyperlink to their LinkedIn profile (as in the above example) or to their Employability Development Profile (EDP) (as required by the Learning and Development Plan). The student’s name is embedded into the hyperlink itself meaning using this data as an example of multimedia or how the author interacts with the reader makes it quite clear who the student is. When using any of this data I have done similarly as above and replaced the name with XXXX. Additionally, even though I used analysis software, I still had to prepare the texts manually by going through them and looking for any such identifying features.

### 3.7 Structuring data set

The data was made up of various blog posts written by several interns, and contained comments by their mentor, line manager and the researcher. This required a lot of decisions regarding how to structure the data to make it clear who said what.
The texts were divided up by blog posts, in order to make comparisons week on week within the same student’s blog posts but also to look at the language and structure used across all iterations of the Internship. A difficulty encountered was how to name the texts and also how to divide the blogs if the intern had written more than one blog post. As mentioned in section 1.5.1.1 the interns were given a type of guide to follow labelled as “Blog to Reflect”. This was located on the Internship group pages on the My Portfolio platform. It included a list of the blogging topics for the specific weeks mentioned. It was very specific in stating:

The listed issues/questions under each topic are there to provoke your thoughts, and are not meant to restrict your reflection in any way. You don’t have to answer the questions directly.

*(Taken from Blog to Reflect 2015 provided as Appendix F)*

Consequently there was a lack of continuity between the blogs. What was “Week 1 Blog” for one student was “Where am I going to? (another suitcase in another hall)” for another student. Therefore, in order to be able to make comparisons between the blogs I grouped them according to how the intern responded to the Blog to Reflect guide. I made the decision when saving the blog posts to name them using the word “student” plus a number and the blog post title. This only caused a problem when trying to compare between different student blog posts as it sometimes became unclear which ones corresponded to which week.

### 3.7.1 Structuring data set for analysis: 2016 and 2017 Iterations

The same process of anonymising and formatting carried out on the 2015 blog posts, was repeated for the 2016 and 2017 blog posts. However, consideration had to be given as to how to label the blog posts so that they could be differentiated from one year to the other. This needed to be done without repeating student numbers, so that it was clear that they were not the same
students participating in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The year was added as a prefix to the file followed by “student” followed by a number and the name of the blog post. This meant comparisons could be made across the different iterations of the data set whilst also making it clear which year it referred to.

Table 3.5 Internship data set and file name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data set</th>
<th>File name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015 data set</td>
<td>Student 1 – 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 data set</td>
<td>2016 Student 1 – 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017 data set</td>
<td>2017 Student 1 – 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A separate analysis was done for each year so that I could preserve some level of inductiveness. I decided not to impose any labels that had been derived from the previous year of data collection onto the later ones. A potential problem of labelling the texts in this way was that it didn’t maintain the chronological order. This was particularly true for some blogs where the student name appeared and it was replaced with “XXXX” and so it went to the bottom / end of the list. This didn’t pose any problems for this analysis because I didn’t compare the blogs in a chronological way, rather just in their response to the blog prompt.
4 Chapter Four: Methodology Part 2: The Analytical Process

In this chapter I explain the process followed to analyse the data. I describe the methods of analysis used, including relevant literature, followed by a summary of my approach at the end of the chapter.

4.1 Research Methods: Genre Analysis

In the literature review in Chapter Two I discussed how I used genre to investigate this data set. In the following section I detail varying views on genre analysis and what approach I took.

Bhatia Flowerdew and Jones offer up a rather open view of what genre analysis does. Instead of providing a definition they offer the following for consideration:

Genre analysis offers a grounded description and explanation of language use in academic and professional contexts in an attempt to answer the question: ‘why do professionals use the language the way they do?’ (Bhatia, Flowerdew & Jones, 2008, p. 163)

Furthermore, they go on to say that to answer the above question it is necessary to look further than pure linguistic descriptions; that there are also factors both internal and external to the text which need to be investigated, that context is as important as textual analysis (Bhatia, Flowerdew & Jones, 2008).

When considering the open view of genre analysis, it is perhaps of no surprise that approaches to genre analysis have taken on various forms, with three different ‘traditions’ emerging. The three schools of thought, as separated by Hyon in her 1996 paper are: the Sydney School, based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics work of Halliday; English for Specific Purposes (ESP) whose main driver was John Swales with his work on ‘moves’ in the introductions of research articles (Swales, 1990); and The New Rhetoric (NR) where genre has been considered as a social action, as something embedded
within the context of the writer and the audience (Johns, Bawarshi, Coe, Hyland, Paltridge, Reiff & Tardy, 2006).

4.1.1  The three traditions of Genre Analysis

4.1.1.1  Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) – Sydney School

The work of the Sydney school was to look at the structure of texts with a focus on the implications on the teaching of reading and writing in primary and secondary schools. Its concentration was on grammar and how it behaved in relation to genre. Martin, in his paper “Grammar Meets Genre” presented at his inaugural lecture at the university of Sydney, said that genres were interpreted “from a semantic perspective as patterns of meaning” (Martin, 2000, p. 53). This was based within the System Functional Linguistics theory as introduced by Halliday. Through using this system, linguists in the Sydney school used labelling to interpret small scale clause functions and saw how they were combined together to create much larger meanings, known as genre (Martin, 2000, p. 70).

A definition proposed by Martin, and largely used to describe the Sydney School’s approach to genre analysis is as “staged goal-oriented social processes” (2000, p. 53). Martin further explains:

i) staged, because it usually takes us more than one phase of meaning to work through a genre, (ii) goal-oriented, because unfolding phases are designed to accomplish something and we feel a sense of frustration or incompleteness if we’re stopped, and (iii) social, because we engage in genres interactively with others. (Martin, 2000, p. 53)

The Sydney School is therefore less concerned with the contextual features of genre and instead places more emphasis on textual features, looking at these on both a sentence level and global level (Hyon, 1996).
4.1.1.2 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Genre analysis within this approach is more focused on the use of genre analysis as a tool for teaching English to “non-native speakers”. It was Swales’ 1990 work that shaped the ESP approach to genre analysis. Through looking at ‘moves’ in the introductions to research articles Swales looked at the structure of the discourse. He established ‘steps’ that were taken through the introductions of the articles to show how they followed a similar structure. The ‘moves’ expressed micro communicative purposes as such Swales stated that texts could only belong to a particular genre if they had the same ‘communicative purpose’ offering the following explanation: “[a] genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share the same set of communicative purposes” (Swales, 1990, p. 58). This focus on communicative purpose is what formed the basis for analysis with ESP. As Hyon (1996, p. 695) summarises:

ESP Scholars have paid particular attention to detailing the formal characteristics of genres while focusing less on the specialized functions of texts and their surrounding social contexts.

Swales later discussed his view of communicative purpose in an article with Askehave. In this article they claimed that that there might be multiple communicative purposes to a text, which in turn contribute to the overall purpose. Moreover, they recognised that overall purpose may not be enough in itself to identify a genre but could be a useful first step along with analysis that may be linguistic or context driven (Askehave & Swales, 2001).

Bhatia has also contributed much to ESP genre analysis – using this approach to look particularly at professional contexts. Discussing the purpose as a “motivation... to use the findings for the teaching and learning of English for Specific Purposes” (Bhatia, Flowerdew & Jones, 2008, p. 10). Furthermore, Bhatia, in recent years, has started to explore what he refers to as “social space” (Bhatia, 2004, p. 21) to discuss how genres are constructed and what
socio-cognitive aspects will affect them. This move forward from the ESP approach might be considered to be encompassing aspects from the New Rhetoric approach which will be explained below.

4.1.1.3 New Rhetoric (NR)

New Rhetoric (NR) focuses much less on the linguistic level of texts and more on social processes. The drive for this approach comes from a concern of teaching English as a first language rather than as a foreign or second language as was seen in the ESP approach. NR claims that the way knowledge about reality and the world is made is through recurrent social processes and that “[w]hat is particularly important about rhetorical situations for a theory of genres is that they recur” (Miller, 1984, p. 156). Miller also claimed that a genre becomes “a point of connection between intention and effect, an aspect of social action” (Miller, 1984, p. 153). It is then through this social action that we know how to respond and contribute to the construction of social contexts and that leads further still to the “socialization of individuals” (Paltridge, 2012, p. 65). Miller in the conclusion of her paper suggested that instead of learning how to achieve our social ends when learning a genre we in fact learn “what ends we may have” (Miller, 1984, p. 165). Meaning that we learn how to behave in certain ways within certain situations. This falls into the notion of ‘typification’ as conceived by Miller (1984) on which Paltridge makes further comment:

... there are typical forms a genre might take as well as typical content and typical action that the genre performs, all of which we recognize and draw on as we engage with the use of genres (Paltridge, 2012, p. 64).

Due to the nature of the NR approach, methods used to study genre this way will often be a lot more ethnographical than say the SFL approach.

4.1.2 How I used Genre Analysis in this study

I tended to follow the trend of recent times and draw on more than one approach to carry out my genre analysis, as Tardy and Swales recognise: genre
analysis has become “a set of methods for understanding genres... different methodological approaches shed light on different generic patterns and features” (Tardy & Swales, 2014, p. 183).

The Sydney School approach influenced my work because I looked at language on a micro level by using Qualitative Content Analysis (to be explained in the subsequent section). I considered how the language behaved together to create a larger meaning and what bearing this held on the genre, however, I did not analyse it from an SFL viewpoint. Similarly, I used the ESP approach when looking at similarities in the structure of the texts and how they coincided as well as whether they had a similar communicative purpose. The NR approach, however, played a dominant role in how I approached the genre analysis. I was very conscious of the typification concept (Miller 1984) and how that can help to understand a genre.

For the data set I have given details about the context in which it was situated. I have explained how the participants were prepared, for example, by providing information about workshops and training as well as online information that they had access to (see section 3.2). I have considered the medium in which this data set was constructed and how that contributes to the genre. I have aimed to do this from a bottom up perspective, by observing what was present and what it portrayed.

Through investigating the context as part of the genre it enabled me to consider the various genre networks (Tardy, 2003) and how there was a presence of various sub-genres. I considered the relationships that existed between the different categories identified in the analysis and how this showed the connection between the sub-genres. In doing this I considered what factors became “typical” of the genre (Miller, 1984; Paltridge, 2012) and therefore contributed to the overarching genre of reflective writing in a HE careers context, allowing me to understand the function of the texts and how they were constructed.
My intention, however, has not been to set preconditions on what makes this an overall genre but rather consider how the different “micro” genres come together to create an opportunity for reflection and in turn contribute to a person’s personal development. Furthermore, I intended to show how this could change year on year because of different factors, as explained below.

4.1.3 Evolution of Genre
When analysing this data set I considered how the genre evolved over the duration of this study. I considered the changes that happened from one iteration to another and how one cohort responded to the Internship programme compared to another. I identified the role that external factors played in the changes that happened and how that contributed to this evolution. It is important to take this evolution into consideration. There were changes in how the project was presented over the different iterations and so this had some implications on how interns responded to these changes. Even if they didn’t affect the interns’ response I still considered it essential to capture these changes as they demonstrated how the medium in which the data set was situated changed over the period of investigation.

4.1.4 Genre Analysis: Summary
It is important to recognise that genres can and do evolve. What might be indicative of reflective writing in one medium will be slightly different in another. Particularly when discussing how it is presented and the context in which it has been constructed. This investigation hasn’t intended to define the genre of reflective writing rather contribute to the understanding of how reflective writing is being used in a careers context particularly through the use of a blog. Previous studies have been explored to help understand the presence of reflective writing and PDP in the data set, as discussed in the previous chapters. The aim of this study has been to understand this further in order to help shape future programmes of a similar nature.
4.2 Research Methods: Qualitative Content Analysis

In keeping with the constructivist approach I used Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA from hereon in) to be able to break down the texts and look for insights into how they were constructed. QCA is a research method used to analyse physical data, usually textual data. According to Kohlbacher (2006) content analysis was predominantly used as a quantitative research method: “classical content analysis is essentially a quantitative method with the core and central tool being its system of categories” (Kohlbacher, 2006, p. 11). However, whether these categories were prescribed or developed is unclear. Kohlbacher explains that there was a shift in orientation after the 1950s. He cited Kracauer’s 1952 article which criticised the quantitative orientation claiming that it did not focus enough on the “quality of texts” or on “different possibilities of interpretation of “multiple connotations”” (Kohlbacher, 2006, p. 11.) Kohlbacher considered how various authors started to criticise the lack of scrutiny given to content and context surrounding the data and categories. There was a concentration on counting frequency of words rather than looking at the words themselves and the patterns in which they existed. Thus qualitative methods started to appear and QCA as a form of methodology came about. Since then it has become a popular method of analysis. It has been applied throughout the field of social sciences although can vary by name depending on the discipline and the type of analysis to be employed.

QCA is sometimes criticised because of its open approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). It is, however, this flexibility which enables it to capture the various facets of inductive qualitative analysis. Braun and Clarke in their 2006 paper focused their argument on developing a framework for carrying out Thematic Analysis in psychology. This paper is also very useful in understanding how to carry out QCA because of the crossover between the two methods. Indeed, both methods require the researcher to look through the texts looking for patterns and then code these looking for categories, or themes (Vaismoradi, Turunen, Bondas, 2013). Many of the key authors who have
written about these methodologies make mention of the importance of explaining the methodology undertaken so that it may be scrutinised and understood. In turn, this supports the reliability of any subsequent conclusions of the data (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). I have used QCA as the main research methodology to analyse all of the data sets investigated in this study, but I have drawn on advice from Braun and Clarke on how to present the data. I have included a framework for my analysis on page 118 which shows the individual stages of analysis. I didn’t use any other raters to check reliability within this study, because it wasn’t within the scope of this research project. Before I detail the QCA approach I used, I explain how I used technology to carry it out.

4.2.1 Approaching the Qualitative Content Analysis: using NVivo

I had access to all of the data online therefore I decided to use qualitative data analysis software for my analysis of the Internship data. Using electronic software made the process of presentation of data quicker and easier because it was available in electronic format. “Speed coding means that text can be rapidly coded as it is read on the screen, and this enables new concepts or themes to be easily captured and coded and stored for later consideration” (Gerbic & Stacey, 2005, p. 48). Due to the training and support offered by the university and the ease of use I opted for NVivo, a product sold by QSR International (NVivo 2022). I used QSR NVivo Versions 10, 11 and 12 for Windows. Certainly, as Gerbic and Stacey (2005, p. 48) state “…the further developed NVivo can be used to make content analysis more manageable and ordered, and may facilitate new levels of analysis.”

4.2.2 Qualitative Content Analysis: Methodology

As mentioned previously, the methodology to be adopted for QCA varies and this changes depending on whether the analysis is being done inductively or deductively (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). When following a deductive style of analysis it is implied that the study is theory testing; that there are existing prescribed
categories that the researcher must use. However, when following a more inductive style the researcher creates these categories when reading through and analysing the data. Kohlbacher comments that within the deductive approach we might consider these categories more as “concepts”, whereas, they are usually called categories in the inductive approach (Kohlbacher, 2006). The latter was the approach used here.

4.2.2.1 Methodology stage 1: Immersion in the data

Elo and Kyngäs, in their 2008 paper where they describe the process to be followed when doing content analysis, advise that the researcher should be completely immersed within the data when doing a first read through. They say that without doing so it would be difficult for the researcher to produce any real insights as they would not know the data well enough to produce the categories. My immersion in the data differed slightly between the iterations of the Internship data. For the 2015 iteration, I had access to the texts after the Internship happened, whereas, for the 2016 Internship cohort I was very much involved. I had discussed the Learning and Development Plan with the coordinator and I had attended the Induction Day and met all of the interns. I, then, had access to their blogs to make comments as a ‘reflective writing expert’. This was similar for the 2017 iteration where I was involved in very much the same way as the previous year. Hence, I felt like I knew the data well and the aims behind it when I came back to analyse it.

4.2.2.2 Methodology stage 2: Coding the data

My first step when approaching the analysis was to go through the data looking for inferences, patterns or anything interesting that would indicate what themes were present. I began to open code (Kohlbacher, 2006; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) the data to allow me to understand what was going on.
I also considered the presence of linguistic markers and different styles of writing and structure that might help constitute both the overarching genre of reflective writing and any sub-genres present in this data set. The below table sets out the features that other studies have considered indicative of reflective writing (as discussed in Chapter Two). This assisted in interpreting the genre of this data set.

Table 4.1 Language and discourse features as a basis for coding reflective writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal voice: presence of personal pronouns and perhaps more informal language.</td>
<td>(Rice and Pinnegar 2012, p. 824)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of first person plus affective and cognitive mental processes, such as think, learn and feel.</td>
<td>(Nesi and Gardner, 2012, pp. 239-240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of the writer’s self (I and my)</td>
<td>(Rogers, 2010, p. 52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description, narrative style of writing</td>
<td>(Chien, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative reflection through stories or poems</td>
<td>(Bolton, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introspective nature</td>
<td>(Bleakley, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solution pattern</td>
<td>(Hoey, 2001, p. 123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger or a critical incident inviting a response and possibly a solution</td>
<td>(Hoey, 2001, p.124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Examine (looking, seeing what is there and focusing)</td>
<td>(Tripp, 1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• think and understand (reflecting, considering, thinking and interpreting, making sense of or giving meaning to practice)</td>
<td>(Beauchamp, 2006, pp. 69-70).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• problem-solve (dealing with problems, finding solutions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• analyse (processes which involve critical analysis)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evaluate (questioning and evaluating)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• construct, develop and transform (constructing or structuring, developing, transforming one thing into another.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I created nodes, as they are called in NVivo. By using the software I was able to create an infinite number of labels, both a freeing and slightly daunting notion. Freeing because anything interesting could be coded, daunting, because these would then need to be edited in order to make sense of them. This meant I had to be aware of nodes already created and edit them if the same idea was being repeated.

The use of annotations was a useful tool in NVivo because it allowed me to make comment on anything I found interesting in the data sets. This was used in a general way, for example: for something overriding that seemed to be happening in the text. It allowed me to make my own observations about a general idea rather than a specific point of analysis. This assisted with my concerns of being involved in the construction of the data and provided a way to be reflexive. Appendix I shows how I used this tool to make comments about the structure of the text. In this case, what I thought were features that were becoming indicative of the genre of this data set. For example, annotation 2 comments on how the intern was encouraged to write more than just the blogging prompts, demonstrating how the interns were being supported by the mentor to think further than the prompts they were given.

Furthermore, when going through the data and creating codes it can become very easy to code based on what one would like to find in the data, not just as an observation of what is in the text. It was therefore important to heed advice from Downe-Wamboldt (1992, p. 314) who said “content analysis is more than a counting game; it is concerned with meanings, intentions, consequences, and context.” It was therefore vital to do an analysis based on single word units or phrases and code these, but to also remember the text as a whole and the context in which it was operating to help identify the main themes and code appropriately. I, therefore, had to consider the codes that I developed in terms of what I knew about the function of the genre.

Kohlbacher provided further valuable guidance when employing QCA:
Subject-reference instead of technique: instead of merely being a set of techniques for text analysis, the connection to the concrete subject of analysis is a very important point for qualitative content analysis. This implies that the procedures of content analysis cannot be fixed but have to be adapted depending on the subject and its context (Kohlbacher, 2006, p. 15).

It was, therefore, important to be adaptable with the methodology of content analysis, remembering that the aim was to create codes that represented the data, not that fit into the research questions. I achieved this by coding what was happening in the data set. An example of this can be seen in the sub-section: 4.2.2.2.2 Coding the data: Naming the Nodes.

### 4.2.2.2.1 Coding the data: deciding on Unit of Analysis

When creating codes, it was important to think about what text was included in the code. This is usually defined as the unit of analysis. Researchers will often decide this before going through the data. According to Downe-Wamboldt (1992) the researcher should first choose the unit of analysis, this being one of the most important decisions the researcher must make. She says that this will often be guided by the research question and as such we might consider these as prescribed, even though she does state that the creation of categories will also depend on the data and literature. Downe-Wamboldt considers that a unit of analysis would most frequently include:

- words, sentences, phrases, paragraphs, or whole text such as interviews, diaries, or books; themes (entire ideas or thoughts); and the amount of space and time given to a topic (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 315).

Graneheim and Lundman (2004) debate the various ‘concepts’ as referred to within content analysis and settle on the following definition of unit of analysis: whole interviews or observational protocols that are large enough to be considered a whole and small enough to be possible to keep in mind as a context for the meaning unit, during the analysis process.

(Graneheim and Lundman, 2004, p. 106)
There is further debate surrounding various ideas of what might be considered a meaning unit, but Graneheim and Lundman define it as: “[w]e consider a meaning unit as words, sentences or paragraphs containing aspects related to each other through their content and context” (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004, p. 106).

Therefore, the choice of a unit of analysis will often be guided by the research question(s) as these may shape the categories to be used. However, in practice the choice of unit of analysis is not a simple decision. As shown above, there is a wide range of possibilities recommended and this does not help the novice researcher when using this analysis approach. I had to be very flexible in selecting the unit of analysis and allowed this to cover “words, sentences, phrases…” as Downe-Wamboldt (1992, p. 315) suggested. I was also guided by the principle of “condensed meaning units” (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004, p. 105) and so selected the text depending on the meaning being portrayed. For example, I highlighted phrases or words to show what the participant was achieving with their use of language, as shown in figure 4.1.

*Figure 4.1 Example of words, phrases and sentences being coded as a unit of analysis. Taken from Internship 2016*
However, when I looked more closely at how reflective writing was being achieved I focused much more on longer sentences and even paragraphs as shown in the example below.

*Figure 4.2 Example of paragraphs being used as unit of analysis. Taken from Internship 2015.*

Consequently, the unit of analysis was adapted depending on what I thought was being demonstrated in the data, as previously discussed. (See Kohlbacher, 2006).

### 4.2.2.2 Coding the data: Naming the Nodes

After considering what was a unit of analysis and how to code it, this code had to be given a name. This is a key difference when coding using data analysis software. One doesn’t need to name all of the codes when doing so manually, whereas it is part of the automatic process when using software. NVivo has an automatic system where it can name the node after the text within it. For example:
However, this doesn’t always help to show what the researcher sees as happening in the coded text. Hence, I decided that the name given to the node should be indicative of what I thought was happening in the text. This then influenced how I would analyse the data and the categories I would subsequently create. For example, this student was having a problem and wrote about how they solved it, so it was labelled it as “resolving problem”:

The importance of how to name nodes (and codes) and, consequently, categories is discussed in the literature. Downe-Wamboldt recognised how complicated it can be to get the naming right so that there won’t be ambiguity but also so that it describes the attributes of that particular code or category (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). Whereas Graneheim and Lundman (2004) described how a code is named as a way to think of the data in “new and different ways” (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004, p. 107). I considered the way the nodes were
named as the outward feature of my analysis and the basis for creating categories, thus they needed to explain what was happening but in a succinct clear way. Hence, the way they were named depended very much on the content of the meaning unit being coded (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) as seen in the previous example.

Occasionally, these were also used for administrative purposes. For example, where I had commented on the blog I coded it as “researcher comment”. This allowed me to find this data more easily whilst also keeping it in context with the blog post. The figure below shows how it worked.

*Figure 4.5 Example of coding being used for administrative purposes. Taken from Internship 2017.*

4.2.2.3 Methodology stages 3 and 4: Creation and Revision of Categories

Once the data had been coded, the following step was to start categorising the codes. Creating categories is generally considered central to the process of QCA. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) described it as the “core feature” whilst Downe-Wamboldt (1992) said categories are used to generate knowledge and understand a particular phenomenon. Therefore, the following stage was to draw the codes together under categories and start looking for themes (Braun
& Clarke, 2006). Within Braun and Clarke’s approach they state that the researcher will go through the data looking for themes, which they see as some sort of “patterned response or meaning” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Elo and Kyngäs (2008) suggest writing headings to draw together under initial categories and go back to check categories already created. Whereas, Graneheim and Lundman opt for the use of grouping under ‘sub-themes’, which will eventually lead to themes. Gerbic and Stacey (2005) called this stage of the analysis an “iterative process” because “initial categories were developed, then applied to the data, and then refined as new categories arose” (Gerbic & Stacey, 2005, p. 50). Indeed, this follows Kohlbacher’s (2006) suggestion of using feedback loops to check and recheck categories and then revise categories and even the creation of main categories.

The aim at this stage was to try and categorise the data so conclusions could be made about what it was showing. However, it is not always possible to fit all data into a category and as Braun and Clarke stated: “inductive analysis is ... a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic preconceptions” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). This was important to remember at this stage of the analysis.

4.2.2.3.1 Creation of Categories: 2015 Iteration
As per stage three of my framework I started to group similar codes together, looking to see what they had in common. These were then pulled together under categories, checking and rechecking how and whether they belonged together. For example in the 2015 Internship data there were various nodes that seemed to indicate something about the future (“to change in future practice”, “resolution”, “hope”...) These were brought together under a category (parent node) of “future reference”:
It was difficult here to decide whether to add planning into this category as well. I decided to keep them separate and kept “planning” for fixed plans explained in the text. It was then on the next stage of analysis that I decided whether future reference would remain as a category on its own or whether it should be contained within a bigger overarching category. I will come back to this in the following sub-section: 4.2.2.4 Methodology stage 4: Comparison of Categories.

On a practical note once a category had been created it became difficult to find it again, I therefore added the code A1, A2, A3 and so on. This meant all categories (or parent nodes as they are termed in NVivo) went to the top of the list and made them easy to find. This was particularly important to do at this stage; otherwise there would have been a similar amount of categories as nodes. Similarly, after reading advice from Bazeley and Jackson (2013) any child nodes were “aggregated” to parent nodes so that all the nodes that were within them then belonged to the parent node. This was important to do because new categories were being created in which to house the nodes and these would have remained empty otherwise. Included, as Appendix J, is a fully coded blog post. This gives a visual on how the data was coded and also how these nodes were then categorised. This example shows how the intern addresses the
reader directly, and uses asides to make the post more conversational, something very distinguishing about this medium. It also touches on the intern’s discussion with their mentor, and how useful that was, which is again very indicative of this data set. There are also examples of where the intern considers their strengths and weaker skills, all indications of personal development taking place.

4.2.2.3.2 Creation of Categories: 2016 and 2017 Iterations
Pre-existing nodes from the first iteration of the data set were not used to analyse the 2016 and 2017 data as I considered it important to be immersed in the data again and code it from scratch. That is not to say that my analysis wasn’t influenced from the previous year but it did mean I wasn’t looking for the same category of information from the outset. Through not pre-imposing existing labels on the new iterations meant new features would become apparent in the analysis. I, therefore, uploaded the new set of data to NVivo and saved it as a new project. The same process of analysis as discussed above and illustrated in the framework: Figure 4.9 Qualitative Content Analysis Framework was followed.

4.2.2.4 Methodology stage 4: Comparison of Categories
The next phase (stage four) of analysis was to compare the categories across all three iterations of the Internship data set to look for commonalities as well as anything that was recurring in all three, or, that only existed in one of the iterations. This was done by producing a report from NVivo that listed all of the nodes for each iteration of data. In the report all “children” assigned to the node were included, as well as number of data sources coded and number of coding references (how often something had been coded under the node). The report was then reordered by “parent node name”. This meant that all of the nodes that didn’t have a parent node would be at the top of the list. They were the main categories created and were renamed as such. Once this was done
the report was reordered by “parent node name” and then “number of children” to be able to better compare the main categories across the iterations. The below diagram shows how I was able to compare the reports in this way:

Figure 4.7 Parent and child node report across all iterations of Internship starting at 2015

I first looked at the categories (highlighted in green) created within the iterations of the Internship data sets to see if there were any obvious themes and to see if there were any overarching categories that appeared in all sets of data. “Indicators of PDP” figured in all three reports and had the highest number of Coding References. There were other parent nodes within the “Indicators of PDP” category (highlighted in yellow) indicating that there were a lot of nodes assigned to this category. When looking through to see what nodes had been coded here it was apparent that there were nodes evidencing the presence of PDP and also, potentially, the genre of the data set. For example, the nodes “goals”, “strengths”, “planning” and “realisation” were all coded within this category.

I carried on in this way looking at the categories and comparing the nodes that were coded within them. The aim was to see if the categories were covering similar phenomena in each of the iterations. The categories were renamed so
that they were the same across all of the iterations of the Internship data. This allowed a better analysis and to show more clearly how the categories present were indicative of both the overarching genre of reflective writing but also the sub-genres specific to this data set.

Even though not all the data would fit into a category (as discussed in the previous sub-section), all categories were checked to see what themes they were covering. For example, in the 2015 iteration the categories “real examples” and “beneficial” existed (highlighted in pink in Figure 4.7 above). I questioned whether these should be main categories or whether they should exist within a main category as it didn’t seem like a particularly dominant theme. When looking at the 3 nodes coded within the node “real example” it was clear that it should sit under the category “language”. This was because it was essentially an example of how the language was being used, rather than showing any other concept as can be seen in the screenshot below:

*Figure 4.8 Example of “real life” node from 2015 iteration*

Similarly, checks were made to see if there were any nodes that had been missed that should have been a category. “Time” existed as a category in the 2015 and 2017 iterations but not in the 2016 one. When checking the nodes that existed concerning time (as shown in the table below) it was decided that this should also be considered a category in the 2016 iteration, even though it was only one node to be categorised. This allowed for better analysis across all
iterations and to be able to theorise on what this category meant for this data set as a whole.

Table 4.2 Time: main nodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015 iteration</th>
<th>2016 iteration</th>
<th>2017 iteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counting down the time</td>
<td>Time goes quickly</td>
<td>Time constraint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disbelief</td>
<td>Time went quickly</td>
<td>Busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The time frame -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Getting used to office hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following stage was to analyse the categories, and the data they contained. It was already clear that there was some evidence of reflective writing and PDP in the data, and so the analysis looked at what elements could be considered key to identifying these elements. When analysing the data set I also took into account nodes and annotations and how they helped to construct this overall genre. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five: Results of Analysis. The framework below illustrates the analytical process described above.
Figure 4.9 Qualitative Content Analysis Framework
4.3 How the Methods of Analysis combine

I was conscious of remembering to treat the data sets as a whole and of following Downe-Wamboldt’s (1992, p. 314) advice: “content analysis is more than a counting game; it is concerned with meanings, intentions, consequences, and context.” This is why this project relied heavily on genre analysis and QCA as this allowed me to look at the text on a micro level enabling me to consider the genre at hand but also because it permitted me to analyse the texts as a whole and within the context.

Literature on content analysis warns against treating the data sets as decontextualised units and instead remembering that any nodes or lexis units exist within a bigger text (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Widdowson, 2000; Tribble, 2002; Bhatia, Flowerdew & Jones, 2008; Paltridge, 2012.) That is why I believed it imperative to construct a picture of the genre of the data set by looking at contextual features. This, combined with the textual features identified in both sets of data, were key in establishing whether there were any particularly identifiable features of this style of writing which were thus indicative of its genre. This allowed a better understanding of its role in the field of reflective writing and within this context of personal development in an HE careers setting. Moreover, the interviews and observations assisted in considering how the Internship and specifically the blog were able to facilitate the practice of reflective writing and PDP. Whilst there weren’t a significant number of interviews, both the interviews held, and observations, assisted in giving context to the study and understanding some of the participants’ viewpoints. They assisted in better understanding the concepts to arise in the genre analysis and QCA.
5 Chapter Five: Results of Analysis

In this chapter I present the results of the content and genre analysis described in the Analytical Process Chapter. I start by giving an overview of the categories, I then move on to provide further details of how they show the overarching genre of Reflective Writing as well as the sub genres indicative of this context and of the Internship Blog. Where necessary I have explored the nodes within a category to provide further evidence and supported it with evidence from the Interview data. In the subsequent sections I discuss the results of the Interview and Observations data and then look at how the iterations of the data set changed from year to year.

5.1 Categories Overview

The table below lays out the categories in all iterations. It is ordered by the number of references coded in that iteration of the data set under that category. This encompasses all nodes coded within that category too, the number of which is also indicated in the table. All of the categories allow analysis of the genre, however, those highlighted in the table below were key in establishing the sub genres present in this data set, these will be discussed in further detail in section 5.4: Categories indicative of the sub-genre of the Internship Blog.

Table 5.1 Categories across all iterations of the data set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories in 2015 Iteration</th>
<th>Number of nodes</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
<th>Categories in 2016 Iteration</th>
<th>Number of nodes</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
<th>Categories in 2017 Iteration</th>
<th>Number of nodes</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>Dialogic</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>Dialogic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogic</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>Blogging</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Commercial awareness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Role of others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Blogging</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Role of others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Focus on Higher Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Categories across all iterations of the data set
The main category in all three iterations of the data set is “Indicators of PDP”. This category had the most coding references in all of the iterations of the data set as well as the highest number of nodes, except for the 2015 iteration, where it had the second highest number of nodes. This indicates the overarching genre of this data set and when looking a little closer at what nodes are included within it: “Goals”, “Learning points”, “Future”, this ties in with genre expectations as per the discussion of the literature. This will be further discussed in section 5.2: Categories indicating the overall genre of Reflective Writing.

Language and Structure also figure quite highly across all three iterations. These are general categories which highlight something specific in the language or the structure of the data. Both categories helped to demonstrate the overall genre of the data set but they also allowed me to see specifics of how these particular texts were being composed. For example, by indicating structure, in this case the node “SMART objectives” in the content analysis I was able to see how the text was being constructed using the frameworks provided. This will be further explored in sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3.

Those categories highlighted in Table 5.1 above were all very specific in establishing the sub genres present in this data set with all except two of them existing in all three iterations. There was a certain expectation that a category focusing on “Career” and another focused on “Skills” would be present due to the context in which these reflective writing tasks were being performed as described in section 3.2. Similarly, the presence of “Blogging” as a category was to be anticipated due to the technology being employed, however, it was mainly used in the 2015 iteration where the interns discussed how they felt about the blogging task. The categories “Commercial Awareness” in the 2016 iteration and “Focus on Higher Education” in the 2017 iteration were very unique to the data set. That is because of the nature of the Internships all taking place in the HE setting and as such interns were directed to think about
this area of employment. More surprising were the categories “Dialogic”, “Role of others” and “Time” which indicated how the interns were following the prompts on the Learning and Development Plan and who and / or what was involved. These categories centring on the sub-genres present will be explored in the subsequent section 5.4.

Finally, the category of “Admin” was created in the 2015 and 2016 iterations and included such nodes as “Notes for researcher” and “Not anonymous”. These served an admin role for the researcher and were part of the analysis process and presentation of data, but are not be subject to more in depth content analysis.

5.2  Categories indicating the overall genre of Reflective Writing

5.2.1  Indicators of PDP

As mentioned above this category featured heavily in the content analysis of the data set and had the most coding references assigned to it across all of the iterations. These encompassed various nodes as detailed in the table below:

Table 5.2 Indicators of PDP category: main nodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parent Node Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number Of Children</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Beneficial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Beneficial experience</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Change in opinion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Change in opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Empowered</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Future reference</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Giving examples</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Giving examples</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Goals and Objectives</td>
<td>How intern is achieving goals</td>
<td>How intern is achieving something</td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appears in all iterations</th>
<th>Appears in two iterations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Those that existed in all iterations of the data set included:

- Future and planning
- Goals and objectives
- Learning
- Realisation.

All of these were seen in the literature as topics to be covered within personal development writing (QAA, 2001; Jackson & Ward, 2004; Clegg & Bufton, 2008). Moreover, the HEA definition of PDP discussed in Chapter One, makes mention of an element of planning where individuals talk about their goals and how they intend to achieve them. As well as, recording experiences and learning points that arise from said experience and even how they might transfer to the workplace. Finally, it makes reference to reflection, indicating there should be
an element of evaluation (HEA, accessed February 2014). What is therefore interesting from the above table is the presence of the two nodes referring to the “Future” and to “Learning” / “Learning points” in all three iterations of the data set. Consequently, contributing to our understanding of the overall genre of these texts. I will discuss these two nodes in more detail in the following subsections.

5.2.1.1 Indicators of PDP: Future

The table below shows how the node for future was coded across the data sets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parent Node Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number Of Children</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Future reference</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was quite usual for the reference to the future to feature in the final blogs where the intern was making plans for the future:

“I feel like this Internship has given me lots of skills and experiences that I can take forward and apply to my final year at university as well as my future career” (2016 Student 8 4W Final Blog)

“I am planning to start looking for graduate schemes as soon as possible, and surprisingly I am extremely excited about that.” (2017 Student 2_Final reflection)

The interns also discussed what they would change in their future practice, following the Blog to Reflect Guide where it included the bullet point in the final blog: “How the experience has influenced your career path/plan” (taken from Blog to Reflect 2015, Appendix F, and 2016, Appendix G). This is shown in the below examples where the interns are applying what they have learnt to their final year at university:
“In the coming year, I will need to use these skills to find the balance between work and study.” (2015 Student 2 Reflecting and Moving Forward)

“This has resulted in me becoming a lot more organised and efficient, and is something I intend to take forward with my academic work for next year.” (2016 Student 1 Week 7)

References to the future also appeared in the first blog posts in all iterations as a way for the intern to discuss what they were looking forward to in their Internship and what they hoped to achieve by the end of it.

“I'm looking forward to next week as...” (2015 Student 6 Week 1 Journal)

“...looking forward to put all my ideas into action.” (2016 Student 2 Bring on Week 2)

5.2.1.2 Indicators of PDP: Learning points

When looking at the position of nodes referring to learning or learning points in the number of coding references per category they are quite high up the list. Therefore, could be considered as an important node within this category, especially seeing that learning or learning point appears in all of the iterations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parent Node Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number Of Children</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Learning point</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Indicators of PDP</td>
<td>Learning point</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning is often seen at the end of a blog but mid way through the Internship where the intern is discussing what they have learnt thus far but what they would like to do to make the most of the rest of the Internship. This is
sometimes very specific and ties in with the “halfway” blog where interns were asked to “reflect on their experience to date” (taken from Blog to Reflect 2017, Appendix H):

“I need to learn how to change my mind set away from a student mind set to a working adult’s mind set, being able to debate and talk and accepting that your idea can be challenged and may be wrong. In theory, this sounds ideal but in reality, it is hard to feel rejected. For the remaining time left, I would like to optimize my time well by learning from the mistakes made so far. It may be a short amount of time left, but I will do my best.” (2017 Student 12_W3 blog).

These examples of learning also tie into the node of “future” discussed previously where the participant talks about learning that needs to continue after the Internship, which is often expressed as a desire to continue learning:

“I can't really find the words to express my thoughts on this one. Yes, I have learned a lot about XXXX, but I also feel like I have barely skimmed the surface. I now know the basic practices, and why it's so important to me, but I still want to learn more.” (2015 Student 2 Reflecting and Moving Forward).

The data provides examples where the learning seems to be more of a reflective learning point as it focuses on the difficulties the participant has had and what they have learnt so far from those difficulties. The below examples emphasise how the blogs are used by the interns for this PDP process. They have encountered a difficulty and identified what they have learnt from it:

“However, I have learned even from just a few initial experiences, that this is not always going to come so easily when trying to communicate with people who are not so willing to do so. I think I'm learning that in a
business environment, sometimes it is necessary to just be to the point and assertive so that you make the best use of someone’s time and get the information you need from them.” (2016 Student 4 Week 1 reflection)

“When I first started I felt a little uncomfortable giving my opinion on people's work as I still had the student mentality of thinking these are my professors, I can't speak badly of their work! But now I've realised anything I'm looking at is a work in progress, so you need to give your opinion and it is wanted, otherwise things can't be improved.” (2015 Student 6 Week 4 Journal)

The following example also shows how this reflective learning point will help the intern in future career choices:

“I now know that I definitely need to work in a dynamic environment to feel motivated, teamwork to feel driven, and that I really enjoy challenges and problem solving tasks.” (2015 Student 10 Sum it!)

The above examples of categories that exist in all iterations seem crucial in understanding how PDP and reflection are being achieved in these texts. By existing in all iterations it becomes very indicative of this particular genre, moreover, they tie in with the definitions given by the HEA and also guidelines given by the CS department to participants ahead of participation. Hence they fit in with what I would expect to see here.

In the following section I focus on nodes within the “Indicators of PDP” category that existed in two or more iterations of the data set. These were highlighted in Table 5.2 on page 122.

5.2.1.3 Indicators of PDP: Change in opinion and Realisation nodes

The node labelled “Change in opinion” appears in the 2016 and 2017 iterations of the Internship data. It is used in the 2016 iteration to focus on career ideas,
where the intern talks about their ideas prior to the Internship and how these ideas have become more focused or even changed during this experience. For example, the intern can be seen discussing a particular interest that they have discovered during the course of the Internship:

“While before the Internship I was unsure about which aspects of marketing I found most appealing I have now found that I have a particular interest in social media as a very important marketing tool.”

(2016 Student 5 Week 3_Networking and Marketing Yourself)

Likewise other interns discuss how their ideas have changed and how they have become “enlightened” (2016 Student 4 Sum It) during the experience, discussing their observations of different personal and professional relationships. Similar to this node, Indicators of PDP also has the node: “Realisation”. This is quite indicative of the amount of time the intern had available to consider what they were doing and how to overcome it. Differing to set pieces of reflective writing where the applicant is considering what they have learnt and writing it up as one piece of work. It appears in blog posts along the course of the Internship and it varies from focusing on:

- Skills
- The working environment
- Likes and dislikes
- Being an employee
- Choice of career
- The role of the mentor
- Making the most of the Internship

These indicate the concepts of the intern not only recording their ideas but reflecting on them in line with the requirements of the PDP process.
5.2.1.4 Indicators of PDP: Dealing with problems and Challenges

Another key component of the PDP process is the discussion of problems and how they have been overcome. This was present as a node within the category of “Indicators of PDP”. There was even evidence of Hoey’s (2001) problem and response and result framework in the 2016 iteration of the Internship, something which was considered part of the genre of reflective writing, as discussed in Chapter Two.

| Problem: | “Part of the task involved having to put together information on professional ethics. I found myself stuck as I could not find enough information on either topic and I was unsure how to present it.” |
| Response: | “Instead of fretting on what to do, I decided to just turn my attention to another part of the project.” |
| Result: | “When I returned, the task didn’t seem as daunting and I was able to complete it and was actually applauded by my line manager for the work I put in.” (2016 Student 1 Week 4) |

Again, discussion of problems could be considered typical of this genre considering the Blog to Reflect guide included a question regarding difficulties: “What difficulties are you encountering so far?” (Taken from Taking Stock blog post from Blog to Reflect guide, appendices F, G and H). All three iterations of the Internship data show a discussion of problems:

“...had to work with XXXX to create the bespoke templates for the webpages and there were severe delays on their part due to their high work load. This meant that while I had the designs ready to go, we were unable to implement the changes and create the new website for a week, which meant that my schedule was delayed. This was initially very frustrating but team encouragement and past funny XXXX
stories made me feel better.” (2017 Student 3_Final reflection).

“There is not a consensus about what to do to improve it. Other than the most obvious ideas, departments disagree about what they want to gain by reading students’ free-text comments, how they want to read it and what central administration should do to process the text before they get it.” (2016 Student 3 Week 3)

“Since my projects do not have a lot to do with what everyone else does here. It is quite hard to break the ice. Also, colleagues here go the XXXX XXXX campus in the XXXX quite often and a lot of them are on leave in different days, which makes it more difficult to build and develop relationships.” (2015 Student 1 Week 4 Taking Stock)

What is of importance here is what problems the participants decided to highlight in both data sets, they were all part of what was happening in the Internship context. During the Internship the interns were able to write about their problems without the expectation that they would show how they would solve them in the same blog post, as per the question from the Taking Stock blog post: “What difficulties are you encountering so far?” Interns were able to describe problems they were encountering and then potentially have comments written by their mentor to follow up on them in a blog post, or in a mentoring session. This presence of the discussion of challenges and problems was also present in the category concerning structure. I will give this further attention in the section 5.2.3.

5.2.2 Language

The “Language” and “Structure” categories helped to demonstrate both the overall genre and the sub-genres within this data set. The language category allowed me to not only recognise linguistic markers considered indicative of
reflective writing but also highlight more surprising lexical choices within the texts. For example, the use of idioms in the 2015 and 2016 iterations, and the use of a poem in the 2016 iteration, this however, does concur with Bolton (2006) whose research encouraged a more creative approach to reflective writing.

Feeling was another linguistic marker noted in the literature review in Chapter Two. Nesi and Gardner (2012, pp. 239-240) discussed affective and cognitive mental processes, examples of which included think, learn and feel. As already seen in the “Indicators of PDP” category there were plenty examples of how the interns discussed what they were learning but what can be seen clearly in the “Language” category is how much the interns talked about their feelings:

Table 5.5 Language Category Feelings node

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parent Node Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Daunting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Disappointing - potentially</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Disappointing but understandable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Draining</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Eager to continue with internship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Enjoying internship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Enjoying new lifestyle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling - appreciative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling - enjoy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling - excited</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling - pride</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling - satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling - stress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling - worried</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling = hope</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling a little disappointed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling anxious</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling comfortable</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling confident</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling confident</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling daunted</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling eager</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling engaged</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling excited</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling frightened</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling frustrated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Language\Feelings</td>
<td>Feeling fulfilled</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Count1</td>
<td>Count2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling glad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling glad and or happy</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling good but also feeling scared of letting people down</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling happy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling inspired</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling involved</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling nervous</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling nervous</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling proud</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling sad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Feeling tired</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Glad to have been a part of something</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>It has been a pleasure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>It has been good though</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>It’s been fun</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Mix of feelings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Mixed feelings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Panic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Something became easier and enjoyable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Unexpected</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Work independently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Worry about completing tasks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the above table shows there were feelings of uncertainty, worry, stress and nerves. But also present were feelings of pride, happiness, excitement, confidence, fulfilment and appreciation.

These are exemplified below where in the first example there is a sense of pride that the intern feels about having anticipated potential problems:

“In a moment I’m quite proud of, I anticipated some of my two line managers; concerns regarding two matters on the checklist: first that an 11 point check list was quite an awkward number, and second, that two points were a bit indistinct. I’d prepared a solution to these two problems before hand, which I could then present them with when they queried the issue”. (2015 Student 8 Week 6).
In the following example the intern uses the blog to show their feelings towards the internship vary depending on the day. There are days when they feel excited and others where they feel powerless:

Feeling powerless while other days I feel extremely excited at the prospect of contributing positively to sustainability on campus.”  
(2016 Student 10 4W Mentoring Session on Friday.)

In the final reflection post shown below the intern uses their blog post to express how they felt at the beginning of the programme to how they felt at the end. Again, demonstrating the affective process present in this data set.

“Thinking of the time when I was writing the application for the internship I remember how frightened I was of the selection process... The uncertainty the fact that I didn’t know what to expect was making me feel nervous. Now that I am on the verge of finishing XXXX I can definitely say that the whole process was hugely enjoyable and much less scary than I thought.”  
(2017 Student 2_Final reflection.)

5.2.3 Structure

The “Structure” category gave more clues as to how the text had been constructed and how it had followed the Blog to Reflect guide.
Table 5.6 Structure category: main nodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-modal features</td>
<td>Description, recounting</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Format</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encountering difficulties</td>
<td>Personal comment</td>
<td>Summarising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Summarising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem reporting</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive comment</td>
<td>Documenting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is less detail here for the 2016 and 2017 list of nodes within structure, but that is because these are categories within the overarching category, which highlights my familiarity with the process of coding within NVivo for these iterations. For example, description in 2016 had 81 coding references within it, and in 2017, description contained 94 references. This highlighted the need to consider nodes within the category, as well as the category itself, to see how they compared to the other iterations. One node that was present in all three iterations was that of “Format” (highlighted in yellow above), signifying something specific about how the text was being constructed. The table below shows the sub-nodes that were labelled under the format node:
The table shows there were nodes referring to frameworks, including the “CARE framework”, the “guidelines”, and the “SMART objectives”. These frameworks were often used by the CS department to guide students on how to structure their writing. The SMART framework was introduced in the Induction Day training and was also included in the Blog to Reflect guides (appendices F, G and H). The CARE framework was only on the 2016 and 2017 Blog to Reflect Guides, and as shown above was only present as a node in the 2016 and 2017
iterations. In the following sub-section I show how the SMART objectives, in particular, were followed in the data set.

5.2.3.1 Structure: Following guidelines

Interns were asked to follow the SMART objectives in their first post, in the 2015 iteration of the Internship data four out of nine of the interns talked about their objectives in the first post, and one mentioned the “SMART” framework, however, none of them followed the framework by discussing how they would achieve the objective, hence there is no data coded as such in the 2015 iteration. The following example shows how one intern mentioned the SMART targets but just said what they aimed to achieve without following the framework:

“My SMART targets in relation to these obstacles are (drum roll please)
Making sure I log every single meeting or valuable experience on my CPDs”
(2015 Student 5 Another SMART target in another hall)

This differed slightly in the 2016 iteration where four out of ten of the interns, discussed their objectives in the first post with two of them following the framework to make them “SMART”:

Specific  Measurable  Attainable  Relevant  Time-bound

“I have set myself out a couple of SMART goals. The first one is that I want to develop my social media expertise in a professional environment by the end of my internship, achieving this by carrying out personal research and seeking the expertise of individuals such as XXXX, who runs the Universities’ social media presence. I will measure my success in achieving this objective by examining the performance of social media platforms I will be setting up during my internship and utilising analytics to determine how successful I have been in engaging SLS alumni through social media.”

(2016 Student 5 Week 1 Where you are and where you want to be)
“As such, one of my SMART objectives for this Internships is:

1) **(Specific)** To become more effective in gathering and handling data

2) **(Measurable)** To successfully incorporate data and research into the user guide I will be drafting for the Benefactors building. Create a successful presentation on it that will need to be given at the end of the Internship.

3) **(Achievable)** Recognize the obstacle that I haven’t done much in the way of creativity and presentation before, and approach this learning curve with an open mind

4) **(Realistic)** Concentrate on the Benefactors building only with regards to research (but compare with other uni buildings)

5) **(Time frame)** Aim to get all the initial research done first, and then start the analyzing only when I have got it all together. Also aim to get the research done within the first/first two weeks of the Internship, so as to give me enough time to construct the user guide properly. Will probably start constructing the user guide as I’m doing the research to some limited degree, just to keep track of research.”

*(2016 Student 9 4W Where you are and where you want to be)*

In the 2017 iteration all of the 12 interns set out some objectives in the first blog post, of those **three** of them used the SMART framework.

“Currently, I am in a position where, despite the WUIP intern induction day, networking is a relatively new concept to me; the development of this vital skill is essential for the success of my future career, and is necessary for any working environment. On the other hand, I do have experience in demonstrating my presentation skills, yet I feel like these skills could be enhanced for a more professional environment, seeing as my experience is primarily in a more relaxed, teaching-based atmosphere. These two goals were the SMART objectives that I set with my manager; both attainable goals would be measured by feedback from my manager and colleagues, with the end aim being to have improved these by the end of my six-week Internship, as they are crucial for the future. This goals could additionally be implemented by using my strengths profile, specifically my unrealised strengths. In terms of networking, two of my unrealised strengths were humour and curiosity; using these two could potentially enable me to become more confident with networking, as I will be able to use humour to provide a more relaxed and comfortable conversation, along with curiosity to ensure the conversation flows well - through this I will be able to energise myself.”

*(2017 Student 7_W1 blog)*
Even though interns were not obliged to follow the blog prompts provided these kinds of frameworks seem to be an indicator of something sought after in this genre. They were very readily available and interns were encouraged to use them. Interview 2 in 2015 highlighted the importance of this structure:

“\textit{I think so yes and I think it’s important to have that structure otherwise it could become just a exercise in just writing rather than reflecting} about your experience as an intern” (Interview 2 2015)

The Blog to Reflect guide can be argued to be a framework and as shown above was an important factor in the construction of the genre in the Internship data set.

5.3 Categories indicative of this context

5.3.1 Career

“Career” as a category existed in all of the iterations of this data set. This category is very specific to the nature of the genre of this writing, explained not least because it was the careers department who ran the Internship programmes. It contains nodes which demonstrate how the intern was giving due consideration to their career options as well as how the activity in which the intern was participating was affecting that. These can be seen highlighted in yellow in the table below. There was also evidence of the intern reconsidering their career choices (highlighted in blue) in both the 2015 and 2016 iterations. Finally, “networking” (highlighted in pink) was identified in both the 2015 and 2016 iterations and had a higher number of coding references compared to the other nodes. This was introduced in the Induction Day as something necessary in helping one to advance in their career.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parent Node Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number Of Children</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Clearer idea</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Current situation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Re-thinking career choices</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Actively pursue career</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Adding value to career</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Applying for competition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Assured opinion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Career objective</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Career options</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Career preferences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Changes in career ideas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Elevator pitch</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Elevator pitch - change in tense</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Encouraged to look for more work experience</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Identifying working style</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Internship encourage intern to think about career and future</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Recognition of preferences in a job</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Recognition of self as a member of staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Use WCS to help figure out career options</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>What employers are looking for</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Career options</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Enjoyed learning new skill</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Good experience for career</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>How will intern cope in the real world</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Making the most out of this opportunity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Thinking about career options</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Career</td>
<td>Useful for future career options</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of how the interns addressed their career options can be seen below. In the following extract the intern is discussing how their experience relates to their career aims. This can often be very specific and focused:

“My objective is to move into a professional career in marketing and social media once I graduate, preferably in XXXX.” (2016 Student 5 Sumit_Reflecting and moving forward)

This discussion of how the intern’s career choice is being influenced by their participation in the Internship can be shown in different ways. The intern sometimes discusses an activity in which they have been involved and how this has incited them to think about their career choices. The interns also talk about the Careers and Skills department and how they will use that department to help them to make decisions about their future (in node “Use Careers and Skills to help figure out career options” in 2016):

“I am hoping that my meeting with XXXX will help me pinpoint down my chosen career path and therefore allow me to look for jobs in that sector. I hope that I will be able to further use the Careers and Skills service after this Internship has finished as I feel this is something I have not taken advantage of enough.” (2016 Student 8 4W Final Blog)

In the Internship there were examples of how the intern was even re-considering their career choice because of their involvement in the Internship. Here is a clear example from the 2015 iteration:

“Working in the department has definitely altered my career path.” (2015 Student 3 Working Effectively)
These examples show how the intern was enabled to consider different aspects of the Internship process and how this could impact on their career choices. The Learning and Development Plan provided this structure for the interns to be able to consider their career in this way, as the Blog to Reflect prompts guided them on what to think about. For example, the following sentence was included in the final blog prompt, which was pushing the intern to consider how their experience and skills would help them to find work:

“The learning experience and skills gained when effectively articulated will provide evidence for convincing employers in applications and interviews.”

(Taken from Blog to Reflect 2016, Appendix G)

This was very much different to how a set piece of reflective writing might be constructed where the general aim is for the student to consider what skills they had developed to be transferable to the workplace and how external activities to their studies had made them more employable. Instead, what the Internship data shows is how one of the main focuses was on students to develop the skills necessary to be considered more employable and how to articulate this to employers.

5.3.2 Skills

The role of skills can be seen across all iterations, where the participants talked about “Consolidating skills” (highlighted in orange in the table below), “Learning new skills” and “Identifying skills” (highlighted in yellow), having the “Opportunity to practice skills” (highlighted in green), “Developing skills for future employability” (highlighted in blue) and “Transferable skills” (highlighted in purple.)
Learning in relation to skills is only seen in the 2016 and 2017 iterations of Internship and is a discussion of skills that the intern had learnt during the Internship, for example:
“He also helped me to see the different ways of approaching and reflecting on situations **in order to enhance the learning experiences and skills gained from them.**” (2016 Student 6 Week 7 blogging)

“Confidence has also been **one of the skills built during this Internship.**” (2017 Student 12_Final reflection)

There is less focus on the learning of skills in the 2015 iteration, whereas nodes that take into account the concept of learning new skills are fairly dominant in the 2017 iteration. Development in relation to skills is also less apparent in the 2015 iteration of the Internship, but it does exist. It is much more prevalent in the 2016 and 2017 iterations where interns discuss skills that they have built upon and improved as well as consolidated during the course of the Internship. This type of language used to describe the skills is unique to the Internship data set because of the nature of the programme. Through the use of “Consolidation” and “Improvement” it can be seen how the Internship is helping / has helped the intern to progress. They show how they feel more confident in those areas:

| “I have also **consolidated my data organising skills, data analytics skills, econometrics skills** as well as **report writing skills.**” (2015 Student 1 Week 7) |
| “I think I’ve **consolidated the skills of research and playing the devil’s advocate**, but that I’ve learnt to **think a bit more creatively.**” (2016 Student 9 4W Final blog entry) |
| “I definitely think that my **communication skills have significantly improved.**” (2017 Student 2_Final reflection) |

This again was guided by the Learning and Development Plan with the final Blog to Reflect blog including the prompt:

“**New skills you have learned and existing skills you have consolidated**”  
*(Taken from Blog to Reflect 2015 and 2016, appendices F and G).*
The “Careers” and “Skills” categories have both shown the focus of the Internship and the HE context in which it is situated. The interns are being asked to consider their skills and how to develop them to progress further and hopefully reach their career goals post HE. The Interviews held supported this focus on careers and skills by commenting on how the blog provided a useful written record for applying for jobs in the future. When asked if they would look back at their blog, all four interns from the 2015 and 2016 iterations responded commenting on the usefulness of it in relation to looking for work:

“I will look at it to remind me of what I did pick up what I can pull out of it to put into a CV blurb ... I’ll pull off anything of value, and put it into a Word document, that I can then refer to forever..” (Interview 3 2016)

“I feel like looking back it helps me because I pick things out of it that I have learnt, I can even put it job applications to say "I've got this skill from it because most of the jobs I'm applying for are skill set based. So I feel like it keeps a good track of what you've done over the time.”

“It just really helps me to pick things out from it and apply it ... especially with job applications now, I can say "I did this" and it's just all written down.”

(Interview 4 2016)

“I initially looked back upon finishing the internship in order to update my CV and LinkedIn profile. I also regularly use the experience and things that I gained from it in interview and application scenarios.”

(Interview 4 2015)

“I imagine if I was writing a job application, or if I was preparing for an interview and needed to remind myself, then I would look back.”

(Interview 2 2015)
5.4 Categories indicative of the sub-genre of the Internship Blog

The following categories demonstrate what sub-genres were present in the data set and why they might be unique to the Internship Blog. I start by discussing the category and then give examples from the data to show how the categories existed across all iterations.

5.4.1 Blogging

The category regarding “Blogging” was useful to gain some insight into this medium (highlighted in yellow in the table below). In the 2017 iteration, however, most of the nodes served an admin role to find each blog, rather than giving too many insights about the interns’ thoughts on blogging. In the 2016 iteration however, it was interesting to note the nodes that where interns said the “Blogging was difficult” or that they “Hated reflecting” (highlighted in green).

Table 5.10 Blogging category: main nodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number Of Children</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>300 word summary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Blog prompt</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Blogging difficult</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Good to share information with others through blog and forum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Hate reflecting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Induction day</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Recognise benefit even though didn't like something</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Sum it! Final reflection</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Taking Stock</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Trying out the blogging platform</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Useful to log all the information</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Want to do something but also don't want to</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Where you are &amp; Where you want to be~</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging</td>
<td>Write down for future use</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging\induction day</td>
<td>Most interesting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Blogging\induction day</td>
<td>Useful tasks and sessions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there weren’t many interns that said this in their blogs it is important to note that some did feel this way towards writing a blog and even wrote it down in a blog post.

5.4.2 Dialogic

“Dialogic” is very specific to the Internship blog and helped me to understand what was happening in this data set that was different to other development programmes. It helped to show what differentiates reflective writing through a blog to that of producing a set piece of reflective writing. It is one of the ways the interactive features of the blogs can be seen. It exists in all three iterations of the Internship and is in the top three categories when considering the number of coding references.

Mann and Walsh in their 2013 paper argued for the notion that reflection should be more dialogic (specifically in the field of Applied Linguistics). They considered a collaborative approach to reflection to be more beneficial than just an individual approach, as it encourages a better understanding of what has happened. Hence, the interactions shown in the examples below, of the use of comments and addressing the reader, potentially show an interaction with the reader and a deeper engagement with the reflection process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number Of Children</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Addressing oneself</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Considering the audience</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Addressing other interns</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Asides</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Best wishes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Blog comments</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Exceed expectations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Face saving</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>How intern is using blog</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Intern experience</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Next few weeks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Personal comment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Rhetorical</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Rhetorical question</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Rhetorical questions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Rhetorical questions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Thank yous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Unknown to reader</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Use of humour</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Dialogic</td>
<td>Using resources</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2015 iteration has a lot more codes centred on the writer, for example: “Addressing oneself” and “Considering the audience”, whereas the 2016 and 2017 iterations of the Internship data set show the role of the comments made by others. Those nodes highlighted in the table above existed in more than one iteration of the data set and will be explored in more detail in the following subsections.
5.4.2.1 Dialogic category: Addressing the reader node

“Addressing the reader” features in all three iterations and is also in the top two nodes of 2015 and 2016 when considering all coding references within this category. This seems to encompass the interactive nature of this format. The blogs were written for a specific readership, yet still the audience took on various identities: mentor, Careers and Skills staff, line managers, fellow intern, researcher, reflective writing expert. In the 2016 and 2017 iterations the interns didn’t seem to address any of those readers specifically by name but did seem to be writing with the idea that someone else was reading their blog. This can be seen in the examples below. Here the blogger is directly addressing the reader:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“So <strong>look forward</strong> to that next week!” (2015 Student 3 Mid-Internship Evaluation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I hope that <strong>everyone is enjoying their time as much as I am</strong>, even with the challenges of learning new IT systems quickly!” (2016 Student 7 Where you are and Where you want to be)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interactional nature of the blog posts can be seen very clearly in the following posts. The blogger reaches out to the reader in a conversation-like way as a technique to build a relationship with the reader. The following examples show how the blogger says “thank you” and “goodbye” in their posts. There is even an example of the blogger directly addressing the reader and apologising at the beginning of the post. This really demonstrates the conversational nature of this format as well as the time constraints in which the blog posts must be written and published.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“<strong>(Sorry</strong> for the delay!)” (2015 Student 4 Week 6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Well <strong>that is it from me</strong> but I look forward to an even busier week next week.” (2016 Student 5 Week 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“<strong>Until next time.</strong>” (2016 Student 8 4W XXXX WUIP Journal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|“**Thanks awfully** for reading.” (2015 Student 11 'Sum it! Reflecting &
“Moving Forward’

“I thank XXXX, XXXX and XXXX for the support and chance to have had this amazing experience.” (2016 Student 7 Sum it)

“Thanks Internship!” (2017 Student 5 Final reflection)

Another concept which happens, is that of the blogger directly reaching out to the reader to ask for advice, as can be seen in this example from the 2015 iteration. The intern is asking for advice and it is likely that the mentor would have followed up on this, it would have likely formed part of their agenda for their following meeting.

“However I am hesitant to take the plunge – any advice?” (2015 Student 4 300 word reflection)

5.4.2.2 Dialogic category: Use of comments

This conversation between intern and mentor is very much present in all of the iterations of the Internship data set. Even though the 2017 iteration has a much lower percentage of nodes coded under “Addressing the reader” it has a lot more coding references under “Researcher”, “Mentoring” and “Personal comment”. This can be explained because of the change in format that happened that year meaning the text was coded differently and the conversation between the blogger, mentor and researcher can be seen more clearly. There are examples of the mentor taking note of the researcher comment to make it a more interactive conversation (highlighted in yellow):

Comment:
Hi XXXX

Thank you for sharing your final reflection and I agree with the points that XXXX (researcher) has made and I hope that this provides useful context and examples to take forward in your final Careers Mentoring discussion.
All the best this week and I look forward to hearing your presentation on Friday.

Kind regards

XXXX (mentor)

Hi XXXX,

It sounds like you have had a really good experience and that the Internship has really helped you develop and build on your personal skills. Don’t forget to make a note of any particular challenging situations or setbacks that you might be able to use in job applications or interviews as examples of your skills as you have detailed in your reflection.

I hope your last week goes well, best of luck with it all.

XXXX (researcher)

(2017 Student 11_Final reflection)

Equally it can be seen how the researcher takes note of the mentor’s comment to maintain some kind of continuity (highlighted in yellow):

Hi XXXX

It was a pleasure to catch up with you during the mentoring session.

You appear to be settling well into the Internship. To help manage your workload over the short deadline, think about chunking your work and giving specific deadlines when requesting for information, explaining that you only have limited duration to complete the work.

Please try and integrate some of your personal development needs (based on your skills audit and strengths profile) into your Internship objectives.

With regards to managing stress, please consider seeking support from XXXX. XXXX also offers Student workshops although as you are going to be in XXXX, you won’t be able to access these services until your final year. There’s a regular Relaxation and Meditation session by XXXX which runs every XXXX which is open to both staff and students at XXXX per session. I also found a ‘Mindful’ website which you may find helpful, in particular 9 Ways Mindfulness Reduces Stress.

You can also consider using your unrealised strengths to compensate the weaknesses and learned behaviours. This will help to relieve stress in general. Please bring along your strengths profile if you want a further discussion about it at our next meeting.

Please feel free to send me lunch invitations or other mentoring sessions. I look forward to our next meeting (please take a look at my diary and invite me).

Kind regards, XXXX (mentor)

17-7-17
Hi XXXX,

Thank you for sharing your blog. It looks like you had a very busy and productive first week. I hope the second week has gone really well for you too. Similar to XXXX’s (mentor) comment it would be great to see more of how your realised and unrealised strengths are coming into play in your Internship. Likewise, whether you feel there are any specific skills you need to develop to be able to achieve your Internship goals. How have you been getting on with the obstacles that you foresaw in the first week?

Thank you again for sharing and I look forward to reading more this week.

XXXX (researcher)

(2017 Student 3_W1 blog)

In the 2016 Student 6 Networking and marketing yourself, the mentor makes a comment on the intern’s post and so does the researcher. The intern then thanks both and follows up on their comments (highlighted in yellow):

Mentor comment

It's great that you're getting to work on tasks that really compliment your skill set. I'm also really pleased that you're getting the chance to broaden your skills and take the initiative in an area of work that is so important to the university.

Researcher comment

Hi XXXX,

That's great that you're able to use so many skills from other workplace settings in your current Internship. Have you had any feedback on the videos you have prepared yet? Will you get to find out if they increase student involvement in surveys?

It sounds like things are going well. I just wondered if you have made many new contacts during the course of your Internship that you think you might keep in touch with after your Internship finishes?

Best regards,

XXXX (researcher)

Intern comment

Thank you very much XXXX (mentor) and XXXX (researcher).

In a meeting yesterday with the Rankings Task Force, we presented this video and they liked it. They also gave recommendations in terms of further increasing the content of the video and the possibility of making more videos for specific rankings.

My line manager arranged meetings for me with various people from different departments within the
business school. I have of course made contacts within the rankings team with the people I work with. I was also very interested in the finance department after meeting with the CFO of the business school and with the marketing and corporate relations departments after meeting with their director.

Researcher comment

That's excellent XXXX, I'm glad you got some positive feedback and recommendations for how you can improve the video. It sounds like you have been doing really well at making contact with various people in different departments too. That's great news and I'm sure very useful for you as you go into your final year. Best,

XXXX (researcher)

(2016 Student 6 Networking and marketing yourself)

The above examples show that the comments allow the participant, the mentor and the researcher to acknowledge each other. What the below example shows is how the researcher was able to propose a way in which the intern could work on one of their objectives and, furthermore, the response of the intern to this suggestion. (All shown in yellow.)

Researcher comment

Hi XXXX,

It's great to see how systematic you've been in setting yourself objectives and looking at the details you need to overcome to achieve them. I'm sure you've had a great mentoring session with XXXX (mentor) but I just wanted to add a couple of comments on your blog.

I think you're particularly wise to say that you will start little and often and begin small when working on your feedback objective. You say you rarely reflect on feedback so perhaps it might be an idea to write feedback down as and when you receive it so that you are able to look back on it and consider how you can take it forward with you. This could be in note form or just in emails to yourself but just a way for you to make a record of it. Likewise, with awareness, perhaps look at this on a smaller scale too, by just going back over conversations or interactions you've had throughout the day and consider the other person's opinion and attitude. This might help build up your awareness and carry it forward into your work.

I hope these comments are useful to you.

XXXX (researcher)

Intern comment

Thanks for your comments XXXX (researcher), I like this idea of writing it down, particularly if I can keep it all in one place and refer back to it

(2016 Student 9 4W Where you are and where you want to be)
Similarly in the comment below it can be seen how the mentor recognises the work the intern has done to put together their objectives and how the mentor is offering follow up in order to foment the intern’s ideas, as well as recognising what skills they were working on:

Mentor comment:

\textit{Well done on the SMART objectives XXXX}. That will certainly help with time management - happy to talk about this when I see you if that helps. Talking to colleagues will also be useful as you say. They'll have the experience of managing multiple projects within a short and defined time period.

Having experience of different working environments will set you up well for the future too. \textit{It's good to show you can thrive} in a variety of situations.

XXX (mentor)
(2017 Student 1_W1 blog)

Sykes and Dean (2013) argued for there to be informal discussions between supervisors and students for reflection to happen and it can be seen here how the comments on the blogs were allowing for this. Together, they were taking part in some kind of collaborative reflection (Mann & Walsh, 2013), which was being socially constructed. This allowed any new experience to go through the process of publication and conventionalization as per Harré’s (1983) Personal Being cycle (see sub-section 2.1.5 Reflection in the public and private space.)

This interactive nature is very much a feature of the Internship data set because of the platform used for the reflective writing tasks. The ePortfolio system where the blog took place is claimed to be dynamic and good for learners and educators to share in learning (Ciesielkiewicz, 2019) and this was shown here through the use of the comments function.

There are further examples of the dialogic nature of the blog posts with the use of rhetorical questions and asides. “Rhetorical” or “Rhetorical questions” and
“asides” are included under “Dialogic” as the concept of asides and rhetorical questions seemed to be a way of the intern trying to find their voice but perhaps not directly “talking” to the reader as was seen in the previous section.

5.4.2.3 Dialogic category: Rhetorical questions node

Rhetorical questions were used more frequently in the 2015 data set but there were examples of them in the 2016 and 2017 data sets. The use of these types of questions could be considered as a way in which the intern communicates with the reader on a more personal or informal level, without directly asking a question, and / or perhaps even with themselves.

Below are examples of what I have considered a rhetorical question:

| “What do they want highlighted? What is the newsletter for in terms of content?” (2015 Student 6 Week 4 Journal) |
| “Should I apply? Will I stand a chance?” (2016 Student 7 Sum It) |
| “my role is simply just to ‘improve the timetable’, isn’t it?” (2017 Student 12 W1 blog) |

The following extract from 2015 shows the intern having a conversation with themself through the use of rhetorical questions:

“When I was making my LinkedIn profile, I put as little information on there as possible. That sounds silly, doesn’t it? Surely people would want to know about everything I have to offer? I realised that most people don’t. Is a recruiter really going to care that I was form captain in Year 7? No, but they will care that I’ve had work experience in a certain field.” (2015 Student 2 in Networking and Marketing Myself)

The use of rhetorical questions is very indicative of the blogging genre because it allows the intern to open up the conversation with the reader without questioning the reader directly. It allows the reader to see that the intern is potentially worried or is unsure about something and so is able to follow up on
that. As was seen previously in the sub-section: 5.4.2.2 Dialogic category: Use of comments, the mentor and researcher were both able to follow up with the intern by making comments on their blog post. Similarly the mentor would be able to bring up any topics of concern, as mentioned in a blog post, in a mentor meeting.

5.4.2.4 Dialogic category: Asides node

The use of “Asides” was another way in which the intern could create a more informal relationship with the reader. Brackets were often used to create this concept. This style of writing was more present in the 2015 iteration than it was in the 2016 iteration and there aren’t any examples in the 2017 iteration. It does, however, seem to play an important role in how the blogger makes contact with the reader.

In the following example, the aside seems to be for clarification and perhaps to show personal opinion:

“doing a bit of this and that (which is really unproductive and I tend to do it a lot...)” (2015 Student 6 Week 2 Mentoring Session)

As well as to express their opinion, interns used the aside to show personal feelings. It seems to be as a way to talk about how they were feeling but without what they were feeling becoming the main content of the blog post:

“we went backstage to meet them (super, super exciting one of the highlights of my weekend and perhaps this Internship so far).” (2015 Student 6 Post-WOMAD)

It is interesting to see how the intern used the aside when they realised themselves that they had gone off topic but instead of deleting it, like the technology permits, they kept it as part of the blog conversation:

“It’s quite ironic that since talking about this, I have been trying to do too many things, and as a consequence, am behind on my blogging.”
The use of asides is a really interesting feature of this genre. On the one hand the interns were writing a blog post to produce a piece of work that their mentor, line manager and Internship coordinator had access to and so it needed to be professional, to some degree. On the other hand, they were using the blog to express how they were feeling and what was happening and so the blog took on a personal feel. This juxtaposition of the genre of the blog can be complicated for HEI students and was recognised by Nesi and Gardner (2012) as such, with students trying to negotiate how to demonstrate their knowledge but also show their identity. This is what can be seen here, that the use of asides assists this conflict because it allows the intern to capture their feelings but without it being in the main content of the blog post. It also demonstrates how the personal and public space interact as per Figure 2.1 Personal Development Cycle as based on Harré, 1983: Personal Being.

The nodes detailed above that exist within the dialogic category all show how the intern was able to exploit the platform available to them to interact with their reader. The literature points to this being the main advantage of using a blog: to be able to interact with the reader, as debated by Ross (2012) where she considers comments and participation from tutors to be considered as “one of the key benefits of blogging for learning” (Ross, 2012, p. 65). This will be further discussed in section 5.4.4 The Role of others.

This interactive nature was also achieved through the format used in the data sets, more specifically in the 2015 Internship where “Multi-modal” as a node exists. The following sub-section explores this node in more detail.

5.4.3 Interactive features: Multi-modal

“Multi-modal” exists as a node within the “Structure” category. It is only present in the 2015 iteration of the Internship data set. It is coded in 59 places
encompassing 4 other nodes. These nodes show an engagement with the reader and follow on from the dialogic nature discussed previously. The table below shows the nodes that exist under “Multi-modal”:

Table 5.12 Node list for “Multi-modal features” in 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parent Node Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Structure\Multi-modal features</td>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Structure\Multi-modal features</td>
<td>Emoticon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Structure\Multi-modal features</td>
<td>External link</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Structure\Multi-modal features</td>
<td>Tags</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Tags” as a node has an admin function because it relates to how the student decided to categorise their blog post for search enquiries.

5.4.3.1 Multi-modal: External links and attachments

The “Attachment” node is primarily used by students to fulfil a requirement as per the blog prompt in week 1 of 2015 where they had to complete the EDP (Employability Development Profile). For example, student 4 in the 2015 iteration prefaced an attachment by saying “Please find attached” as if they were writing an email and speaking directly to the reader.

The majority of students used the external link to link to their LinkedIn profile. There are, however, a couple of interns who used the external links to support themes within their blog posts. Student 5 from the 2015 iteration made use of pictures in three of their posts and had links to YouTube in two of them. They are all to provide either visual or aural support to films or songs that they had mentioned in their post:

“The title refers to this classic tune from Evita. More songs to follow with subsequent journals.

https://www.youtube.com/watchXXX

(Student 5 Where am I going to (another suitcase in another hall)
Both Student 8 and Student 10 shared links in order to share information that they had found in relation to the content of their blog post, which might be reading that they had done or even as a way to support what they were saying in their blog:

| “In my research on how to make a good LinkedIn profile, I have found a few useful links that I will share with you, maybe you will find them helpful too: Networking and developing your online brand by XXXX: [http://www.XXXX/improve-yourself/networking-and-developing-your-online-brand/](http://www.XXXX/improve-yourself/networking-and-developing-your-online-brand/) Building a great student profile by LinkedIn: [https://XXXX/content/dam/university/global/en_US/site/pdf/TipSheet_BuildingaGreatProfile.pdf](https://XXXX/content/dam/university/global/en_US/site/pdf/TipSheet_BuildingaGreatProfile.pdf)” (Student 10 Networking and marketing yourself) | “What's amazing is how similar it is to life at uni now-- if you don't believe me, just take a look... [http://www.XXXX/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/filmvideo/oncampus/](http://www.XXXX/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/filmvideo/oncampus/)” (Student 8 Week 5) |

These interns took advantage of the multimedia platform available to them and used its tools to support their blog posts. They made their posts interactive and not only addressed the reader but also invited the reader to interact with them, by giving them the chance to click on a link and read what they had provided.

5.4.3.2 Multi-modal: Emoticons node

I have considered “Emoticons” as part of “Multi-modal” as they are a different form of presenting the language. They are also an alternative way of interacting with the reader and can also be considered dialogic. They were used in some of the initial blogs of the 2015 data but not in any subsequent iteration.
In the following extract the emoticon appeared with an aside showing a touch of informality, and, as mentioned previously, a bit of the personality of the blogger without it becoming the main content of the blog:

“(much like most of my work so far! 😊).” (2015 Student 2 days and days)

The following example shows the emoticon as a way of supporting the excitement the intern felt:

“I am very excited to get started! 😊” (2015 Student 4 induction)

The use of multi-modal features might seem quite an innovative way to support writing in an academic setting. However, this use of embedding pictures and linking to YouTube would be considered quite standard when writing blog posts, as seen in section 2.1.7 Use of Web 2.0 Technologies where the interactive nature of blogs was discussed as the very reason they are used (Schimdt, 2007). What is perhaps extraordinary is that out of all the Internship blogs analysed, this is the only one to make use of such multimedia. One could, therefore, question why a blog is being used if students are not going to take advantage of the audio and visual tools available to support their writing. In 2016 one intern did try and play with the format of the blog to display it differently in the dashboard but they didn’t make use of any extra multimedia items. This could be for a number of reasons, including that the participants weren’t interested in doing more than the reflective writing task, or even perhaps that they didn’t have the knowledge to be able to (O’Connell & Dyment, 2016). That being said the results of the content analysis did show that some interns did make use of other features to make their blog posts interactive:

- Rhetorical questions
- Asides
- Emoticons
- Attachments
- External links
This is potentially one of the main differences within the genre of writing a blog. When the blog is academic it takes on a different format compared to a fashion blog, or political blog, for example. It aims to fit in within the guidelines given, the genre framework perhaps, and the prompts provided. The author appears to have less freedom to play around with the format and multimedia resources available, or are not encouraged to do so, or, do not want to do so. When the blogs moved to the Moodle platform in 2017 the guidelines and prompts became a lot more visual with more videos and images available in order to support the guidelines and blogging prompts in the Learning and Development Plan (see section 5.7.2). However, the interns played a lot less with the format in this iteration than any other. They used tools such as asides and rhetorical questions to interact with the reader but did not attempt to use any other format. This potential confusion with how to use the technology was also highlighted in Interview 4 2016. It wasn’t clear that they understood that the focus of the blog was reflective writing but rather considered it “blogging”:

“I'm quite interested in blogs because a lot of people my age now especially because of social media are ... a lot of my friends have blogs. And obviously I forget that I've written one, ... I'm not sure what on yet, I can't really specify but I would, I'm into writing and blogs really helps. And it is such a current thing to do as all my friends are doing it. Everyone's doing it. Just about the news or something. I really like reading my friends' blogs and think "Oh my gosh I did that". I'm not sure what on exactly but yeah. Definitely.” (Interview 4 2016).

5.4.4 The Role of others

Although this category is lower in the list of coding references it was fundamental in understanding how important the role of ‘others’ was for the reflective practice of these participants and how the data set was constructed. The interns received one on one support both from a line manager and also
from their mentor. They also received constant guidance on their blog posts as well as comments once the blog post had been submitted. “Support” (highlighted in yellow) came up in all three iterations of the Internship and will later be discussed as an essential element of why the Internship was successful at helping the interns achieve personal development through reflective writing.

Table 5.13 Role of others: main nodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parent Node Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number Of Children</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>Good to feel supported</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>Nice to have support</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>Not alone</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>Making friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>Aware of the support on offer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>Support of others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>New relationships</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>The University as an organisation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others</td>
<td>Staff (colleagues)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others \New relationships</td>
<td>Meeting colleagues</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others \New relationships</td>
<td>Make friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others \New relationships</td>
<td>A6 Staff and colleagues</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others \New relationships \A6 Staff and colleagues</td>
<td>Becoming part of the team</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others \New relationships \A6 Staff and colleagues</td>
<td>How relationships can develop</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others \New relationships \A6 Staff and colleagues</td>
<td>Importance of building relationships</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others \New relationships \A6 Staff and colleagues</td>
<td>Treated as a staff member</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others \Staff (colleagues)</td>
<td>Commenting on what staff are like</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of others \Staff (colleagues)</td>
<td>Everyone was friendly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes \Role of</td>
<td>Staff caring about</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In all three iterations of the Internship data set there was mention of the staff with whom the interns are working (highlighted in green in the table above). The interns generally spoke about them in a positive way, mentioning how they had helped them during the Internship, for example, by being supportive and being friendly and by helping them realise their strengths:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Role of others</th>
<th>Staff (colleagues)</th>
<th>Student experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Role of others\Staff (colleagues)</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodels\Role of others\Staff (colleagues)</td>
<td>Get advice from co-workers</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodels\Role of others\Staff (colleagues)</td>
<td>Reliant on other members of staff</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodels\Role of others\Staff (colleagues)</td>
<td>Staff supportive</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodels\Role of others\Staff (colleagues)</td>
<td>Staff were friendly</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Role of others\Support</td>
<td>Staff member helping</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Role of others\Support</td>
<td>Staff tips</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"What I hadn't considered before talking to my mentor was that this move is a very strong one and can really help me show strength in myself." (2015 Student 3 My First Mentor Meeting)

"In parallel with my work, I am trying to figure out what career I want to pursue further, and my mentor has been really helpful with that." (2017 Student 2_W3 blog)

Many interns also commented on how they felt like a staff member rather than a student and how they felt like they were part of the team. They also realised the importance of professional relationships and maintaining them.

"I believe that is the skill that can only be picked up with real experience of work and being treated as colleague rather than a intern." (2015 Student 11 'Sum it! Reflecting & Moving Forward)

"Learning to be natural with colleagues and pushing my boundaries to approach them and introduce myself first in a new professional environment like this one has been challenging, but also very rewarding.” (2017 Student 6_W3 blog)
In 2016 and 2017 iterations the interns commented on being friends (highlighted in purple in the table above) with the other interns and how reassuring it was to have that support network.

“The easiest thing I have found is **getting on with the other sustainability interns**. We’ve been able to **work together very easily** and bounce ideas off each other **whilst also making friends and socializing** outside of work.” (2016 Student 9 4W Final blog entry)

Finally, there was mention of the careers support staff and in particular, the mentors. Interns discussed how they helped them think about their career choices and also how they supported them during the course of the Internship:

“One thing I enjoyed the most from the Internship are the catch ups and mentoring sessions done with my line manager, buddy and careers mentor... Having these **weekly sessions helps shape me into perspective, reflecting on the work that I am doing and ensuring that I am heading in the right direction.**” (2017 Student 12_Final reflection)

In Interview 4 2016 they mentioned how they initially thought they had to answer all of the bullet points precisely in the blog posts, but it was the mentor who reassured them and helped them to see this as a guide. Reiterating how important the mentor was to this process in the Internship.
“My only thing was at the beginning which my other mentor helped me with. I thought you had to fill it in and answer every bullet point to the fullest and she was like "no, it's just a guide".”

(Interview 4 2016)

It can be seen how the participant was reliant on others to progress through the Internship and to produce their reflective writing. The interns had to work together with other interns to complete certain activities, they had to interact with their line manager and any other staff during their Internship, they also had to meet with their careers mentor and any other staff from the Careers and Skills department. They were encouraged through the Learning and Development Plan to set goals with their line managers and were given prompts for discussion with their mentors. Hence they were being guided to have interaction with other people in order to progress through the Learning and Development Plan and this is seen in the blog posts. This interaction with others was also highlighted in Sykes and Dean (2013) where they advise informal discussions to happen between a student and their supervisor whilst on a work placement. They also advocate that this happens over several meetings during an Internship for both to discuss the student’s development. This ties into the idea of scaffolding and making the reflection more collaborative, as discussed in the literature. It is exemplified in the dialogic category: use of comments, where the mentor and researcher make comments on the interns’ blog to help them reflect.

What is interesting to note is that when asked in interview who the intern felt they were writing for they said that:

"when you're talking to somebody then it's for yourself as well. You might come to a realisation at the end of it” (Interview 3 2016).
“After a while, it felt like I was writing to the future me, and that’s who my blog became aimed towards.” (Interview 2 2015)

“I more felt like I was writing a personal journal for myself to look back and reflect on and to see where I was mentally at that point. I was aware that these entries were accessible by all, but I am a very open person and didn’t mind letting others glimpse in to my thoughts!” (Interview 4 2015)

Even though the textual data showed the intern addressing “somebody” they felt that they were also writing for themselves. It is argued that talking with others can be key to the reflective process because it allows the individual to question themself and understand their reflections (Mann & Walsh, 2017). Hence, this could be considered part of the reflective practice in which the intern was participating.

5.4.5 Time

“Time” as a category existed in all of the Internship iterations. It included the following nodes which were mainly focused on getting used to keeping to office hours (highlighted in green in the table below) and how quickly time goes (highlighted in yellow). This was something quite specific to this data set because the blogging process allowed for the intern to comment on this concept. This category is less about the PDP process related to becoming more employable but more about the intern’s experience of working life. This will be discussed further in the following sub-section.

| “After a while, it felt like I was writing to the future me, and that’s who my blog became aimed towards.” (Interview 2 2015) |
| “I more felt like I was writing a personal journal for myself to look back and reflect on and to see where I was mentally at that point. I was aware that these entries were accessible by all, but I am a very open person and didn’t mind letting others glimpse in to my thoughts!” (Interview 4 2015) |
Table 5.14 Time: main nodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parent Node Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Time</td>
<td>Busy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Time</td>
<td>Counting down the time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Nodes\Time</td>
<td>Disbelief</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Time</td>
<td>Getting used to office hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Time</td>
<td>The time frame -</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Time</td>
<td>Time constraint</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nodes\Time</td>
<td>Time goes quickly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Time</td>
<td>Time reference</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nodes\Time</td>
<td>Time went quickly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.6 Adapting to work life routine

An aspect very particular to the Internship was this notion of the intern adapting to a work life routine. Whilst it wasn’t the most prominent part of the analysis there were elements from all of the iterations of the Internship data set which showed how the intern was adapting to this new life style and getting the opportunity to see what life would be like post university. As was seen in the “Time” category in the 2017 iteration the intern discussed getting used to office hours:

> Although I believe I have made significant progress on my project so far, **getting all the necessary work done in the office has been a challenge**. Even though I usually get in before 8 and don’t leave before 5.30pm, I **have often found that I need to do bits of work outside of office hours**.

(2017 Student 9_W3 blog)

> I would say my ability to **make the most out of an 8 hour work day has bettered significantly**.

(2017 Student 4_W3 blog)

This was also present in the 2016 iteration where the intern discussed in the blog the need to be professional and on time, and how this responsibility was on the worker not on the employer:
But I learned that it was an important aspect of being a professional to be on time, to be consistent in coming to work and to be conscientious. Because of the fact that the office has flexi hours, the onus is on the employee to manage their time how they see fit, and that means they start to take responsibility for themselves. It can either cause irregularities, but I am glad that it had the opposite effect for me. (2016 Student 10 4W Final Blog Week 4)

Within this discussion of hours the interns also made comment on how nice it was to have weekends free, something they were not used to as students and were enjoying making the most of:

It has been fantastic to experience working in a 9-5 job and all of the things that come with is. Indeed, one of the strangest aspects of the programme was actually having free weekends which is something that seldom seems to happen while a student. (2016 Student 5 Sum it_Reflecting and moving forward)

Along with commenting on having the weekend free, the interns discussed how they needed to use this time to ensure they were relaxed and ready for work the following week:

To my surprise, I started to enjoy this lifestyle and found myself trying to be as efficient as I can in the office, so that when I get home I have time for myself, relax and do the things I love. (2017 Student 2_W3 blog)

Alongside, working to improve my efficiency at work I have also learnt about the importance of giving yourself proper time to relax and recharge. Finding methods to switch off after work have been crucial in me being able to turn up to work next day and work to the best of my ability. (2016 Student 5 Sum it_Reflecting and moving forward)
These all show how the intern was considering the work life balance and how they could be at their best.

Another topic to come up within this element of adapting to a work life routine was that of the office culture. Some interns compared their perceptions of what they thought working in an office would be like to how it actually was. Similarly, there were a few interns who talked about being treated as a member of the team, with them sometimes seeming surprised at being valued in this way:

I had a very different image of the working world in general. I imagined every workplace was like it was on TV; 9 to 5, business suits, watercooler gatherings, the typical working environment. Imagining an IT department specifically also brings up mental images from shows like the IT Crowd, where they work in a windowless basement, sullenly tending to complaints from the people upstairs.

To my relief, work is nothing like my preconceptions, in the best way.

The office feels open (despite the amount of people) and there is a focused atmosphere. All around, there are people working, quietly tapping away on keyboards and clicking with mice, but you can also hear people casually chatting. (Student 2 2015 Working Effectively)

I am starting to feel like a valued member of the team. (Student 3 2015 Where I am and where I want to be)

I have really loved doing my internship here so far. It’s been an absolute pleasure and I can’t say how grateful I am to be treated by XXXX (co-workers) as an important voice, with something real to contribute. (2016 Student 10 4W Mentoring Session on Friday)

The final aspect to focus on here was very much a secondary feature of participating in the Internship and was concerning the intern living alone. As shown in the below post this experience was very new to most of the interns, it was perhaps the first time they would have had an office job and at the same
time would be living alone, as most of their flatmates would have left campus for the summer holidays.

It is those two months when you are working like an adult, while still trying to decide what to do with your life after next year and more urgently, where to apply next month and why. It is those two months living alone, with too much time to think about who you want to be, but not enough to figure it out just yet. It is a big step forward, on a journey that will not only be my XXXX Journey, but one that I will keep exploring after. (2016 Student 2 Final reflections before my next steps)

All of the above shows the learning curve the interns would have experienced during this time. They would have learnt how to manage their time, their routine, how to do a new job and perhaps even dealt with loneliness. Demonstrating the importance of the supportive framework in place in order to assist and guide interns whilst they were on such a demanding personal and professional journey.

5.5 Facilitation of Career-Focused Reflection

The interns were given an opportunity to write about their experience along with other external factors and receive feedback on them to become “more reflective” during the course of the Internship as shown by the “Role of others” and “Dialogic” categories.

The “Careers” and “Skills” categories showed how the interns were able to identify their strengths at the beginning of the programme and then develop them over the course of the Internship. The blog prompts encouraged the intern to talk about this through their blog posts and as such it is seen in the data. The below examples show how the interns were given the opportunity to practice these skills they were learning:
“I will be attending a networking event on Wednesday, which I believe is a great opportunity for me to actually learn how to network and make small talk.” (2017 Student 2_W3 blog)

“For the remaining five weeks, I shall try to apply the skills I have developed on my first project to the second. This time, I shall be more proactive in project management, as well as arranging meetings and appointments with Outlook.” (2016 Student 3 Week 4)

“I have got opportunities to practice my communication skills and time management.” (2015 Student 1 Week 4 Taking Stock)

The below data extract details this opportunity to work on an identified area of weakness. The intern had identified that they wanted to work on networking at the beginning of the Internship and how, during the course of the Internship, they then had to network whilst at the same time, learn how to. They recognised that being forced into the situation made them feel more comfortable and confident with doing this:

“Another aspect I wanted to develop in terms of my personal development was at networking. By simply doing this Internship, I have constantly had to network whilst learning how to get better at it at the same time. I have been introduced to various individuals such as lecturers, careers consultants and other law students. Having to liaise with all these people help me with my project on professional etiquette and ethics forced me to network. This has improved my confidence at networking every time. I now feel I am in a better and more comfortable position to talk to people, and more importantly, everyone I have talked to have been directly useful in helping me whether with module choices or career paths. Looking back, I feel I could still develop my networking by being more confident and outgoing, but I’m so happy that I have begun to improve.” (2016 Student 1 Week 7)
The Internship allowed the intern time to consider what they would like to work on and the possibility to work on it.

This final extract demonstrates how the interns were able to change their practices over the course of the Internship. This intern had carried out a strengths analysis and through reflecting on that was able to identify why they were having problems in the Internship. The intern was then able to have a conversation with one of the staff members at one of the training events organised on the Learning and Development Plan and was able to find a way in which they could work past this.

Having identified myself as partly a “completer/finisher” according to Belbin’s team roles grid, I have considerably high expectations of the quality of my end results, which at times would make me delve too deep into a single detail, while losing sight of the bigger picture. During Week 1 and somewhat during the beginning of Week 3 this tendency of mine was creating a block of communication between my line manager and myself leading to me getting overwhelmed, stressed and confused as to how to arrange my projects timeline, where to begin with, what tools to use, etc. I assumed after my first meeting with XXXX (co-worker) that the work I needed to complete was of a much bigger scope than it actually is, but at the same I would not ask any clarifying questions, lead by the belief that the information I needed to start my “independent” work has all been given to me already. I was happy to talk to XXXX (Internship staff member) at the Barista Training experience on Friday Week 1, when she explained to me the concept of managing upwards, largely summarized by as: “When you are not sure about an aspect of your job, ask questions.” Simple as it sounds, this was a challenge for me in the beginning, but hopefully I managed to resolve it after writing down all of the questions I had regarding my projects and asking XXXX (co-worker) on Monday Week 2. This conversation was significantly impactful for my progress with my Internship objectives afterwards, for which the support
This blog post was then followed up with a comment by the mentor confirming their meeting the following week in order for them to discuss the above points and any other issues, revealing the scaffolding, in the form of follow up, available to the interns. Furthermore, this extract could be considered an example of the Personal Development Cycle as based on Harré, 1983: Personal Being. It demonstrates how the intern observed something about their practice through appropriation (that there was a block in communication) and then transformed it by considering what was happening and thinking through it (own expectation of the end results). They then moved on to the publication phase of Harré’s cycle where the intern discussed with a staff member their concerns and then upon understanding this was able to find a way to move forward. The CS staff member helped the intern to move through the conventionalism phase to accept what was happening and why, and then, work out a way forward. This shows how the interns were able to concentrate on their skills and strengths and what they wanted to work on and how the internship gave them the time and support to do so. This all forms part of what can be described as career-focused reflection.

5.6 Interview data, Informal Discussions and Observations

The interview data is relatively limited compared to the amount of blog data I was able to access, however, it is useful to draw upon when considering how the interns viewed the Internship and the Learning and Development Plan that went with it.

5.6.1 Useful process

Interviews 3 and 4 from 2016 both remarked on how useful the blog was to have. Informal conversations with interns also brought up how most of them learnt a lot about themselves during the process.
“Again, I’ve never done anything like it, so at first I was bit like "am I meant to write anything in a specific way?" But I found the blog to really help. I found as the weeks went on it became easy to just write and go into detail with it.” (Interview 4 2016)

There was comment however on the sense of relief that the blogs weren’t going to be marked. In Interview 3 2016 they commented on how writing reflectively for a blog “felt okay”. They mentioned that if it had been for an essay it would have “felt strange” but knowing that this was for their personal development and was not being marked made it okay. This relates back to the discussion on assessing reflective writing and demonstrates that the intern felt more engaged with the blog, because it wasn’t being used for assessment.

5.6.2 Selection of candidates

In the interviews held, both Interview 3 and Interview 4 from 2016 enjoyed participating in the blogging process and found it useful, as did Student 4 from 2015:

“I enjoyed the blogging. I found it fun. I really did.” (Interview 4 2016)

“Yes but it was thinking about having to be reflective and being positive in your reflection and not just saying that you had a really bad week. It was useful.” (Interview 3 2016)

“The blog style is definitely more colloquial than formal writing, which I found enjoyable.” (Interview 4 2015)

But, Interview 2 from 2015 mentioned how exhausting the process was but still showed signs of engaging with it. The following excerpt shows how they found
it be a pressure to write but in response to the following question regarding overcoming problems they stated how it was nice to be able to talk openly about those problems:

“It was a pressure to write so regularly, but it did help me to articulate what I wanted to say. Reading other people's blogs was also refreshing.”

Do you feel that by writing about difficulties or problems that you had that this helped you to overcome them?

“Yeah, I do. It was nice to be able to talk openly about what I was finding difficult.” (Interview 2 2015)

This points to two topics that came out of the literature. The first was that because of the selection of candidates it is likely that they would engage with reflection regardless (Farr and Riordan, 2015). The second being, that, even with little participation, the participant still takes something away from the experience (Beveridge, Fruchter, Sanmartin, and deLottinville, 2014). The intern’s answer does indicate that this is likely to be somewhat to do with the structure provided and how that guided them to think about certain topics and / or issues. Through being supported by what to focus on, and knowing that they could look at the other interns’ blogs for encouragement, this particular intern was able to articulate something about their practice and as such reflect on what they had done.

5.7 How the iterations of the data set changed year on year

There were consistent features which remained in place across all three iterations of the data set, all contributing to the overarching genre. The Learning and Development Plan was always present and included blogging and mentor sessions. These were treated as essential to the programme for the interns to achieve their personal development. Furthermore, the frameworks
to be followed remained the same. Interns were guided to use the SMART model for developing objectives in all three iterations. The CARE framework was introduced in the 2016 Blog to Reflect and was kept in for the 2017 iteration.

The way in which changes were introduced was often because of feedback and research. The CS department relied on feedback and research to improve the Internship programme and as such made changes as per recommendations. These all formed part of the context in which this data set was situated and shows how it evolved over the three iterations. Context can be very malleable and mean something different for each person within it, as Edge (2010, p. 32) expresses: “It is the relationship between the person and the context that defines what the context is for that person.” Hence, the importance of considering what remained in place and what changed over the course of this investigation. The main changes seen were the amendments to the blogging prompts and the order in which they were introduced as well as the change in format. There were a number of factors that contributed to the various changes and these included:

- The involvement of the researcher
- The coordinator’s openness to feedback and improvement of the programme (changing blogging prompts, altering the schedule in the plan)
- The availability of the technology
- The participants from year on year

### 5.7.1 Change in Blogging Prompts

The blogging prompts were rephrased from 2015 to 2016. It was discussed with the Internship coordinator the type of questions used and whether they were aimed at getting students to think reflectively and consider critical points in their Internship or whether they were more for the benefit of CS. Particularly strange was a question on the Blog to Reflect guide about the university as an
When analysing the blog posts from this prompt, most interns seemed unengaged with it and there was little trace of reflection or PDP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The University as an organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What do you know about the external factors that have an impact on XXXX?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do you think that XXXX’s position within research, education and commercial markets influences its behaviour as an organisation? How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does the organisational behaviour of your own department fit with what you would expect from the university as a whole? In what ways?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Taken from Blog to Reflect 2015, Appendix F)

When discussing it with the staff members through informal discussions, it was clarified that the idea was to get students thinking about commercial awareness. This had very little to do with the concept of reflection but was more about preparing the intern for applying for jobs after university and so it can be seen how a task which supposedly had as its main aim that of reflection and personal development, was also aiming to prepare the student for work post university. This potentially fulfilled the career-focused aims of reflection within PDP and fitted into this agenda of employability and even graduateness (Steur, Jansen & Hofman, 2012) as discussed in Chapter One. It was agreed that the question did seem out of place in its current form and that it was something that would need review for the following year in order so that it flowed with the topics being covered.

Consequently, “The University as an organisation” was removed from that week’s blog and was included as a blog prompt in its own right. It was changed to “Working Effectively in the HE Sector” in order to make interns think more about commercial awareness. It gave a clear explanation of what was expected from the blog post, why, and what issues the coordinator wanted the interns to consider.

There was also an external link to explain “employability skills”.
**Working Effectively in the HE Sector**

Employers cite commercial awareness as one of the **employability skills** which will facilitate graduate’s success in the world of work. Commercial awareness is about developing an understanding of the business, the environment that it operates, and how your role fits in the bigger picture.

Blog about commercial awareness, thinking about the following issues:

- Your views of the University as an organisation operating in the wider world, along with its competitors. What are the key drivers for its success?
- What do you know about the external factors that have an impact on XXXX? Include the importance of innovation and taking calculated risks, and the need to provide customer satisfaction.
- Do you think that XXXX’s position within research, education and commercial markets influences its behaviour as an organisation? How?
- Does the organisational behaviour of your own department fit with what you would expect from the university as a whole? In what ways?
- Have you observed any ‘unwritten rules’ about how people work in your department?
- Can you see anything that effective workers in your department have in common?
- In what ways is your department similar to, or different from, other organizations that you have worked with or know about?
- Have your observations about your department influenced how you work and your career plans? How? Why?

* (Taken from Blog to Reflect 2016, Appendix G)*

The focus here was very much on commercial awareness but it was getting the intern to really consider where they were working (in Higher Education) and think about it in a new light. It was not just the place where they studied, but for this period of time, where they were working. A lot of the interns made comment on never having considered a career in HE before and how the Internship had opened their eyes to the many job possibilities within HE, but outside of teaching. This was seen in section 5.3.1 where several interns were reconsidering their career path because of their experience in the Internship.

With this change in title and how it was explained, it was noticeable how interns engaged more with this post compared to the previous year. It made more sense to them to consider working in HE rather than the university as an organisation, as that was what they were experiencing.
Interns from the 2015 programme spoke about how the blogging sometimes felt like writing an essay; that they were too guided by the questions and were more concerned about producing something of notable length than journaling about their day. Interview 2 from 2015 made reference to this in an online interview saying:

"I found writing a blog post every week exhausting... Some days we would be asked to write a lot of content about difficult questions and it no longer felt like a diary more like an essay” (Interview 2 2015).

Accordingly, it was suggested that the prompts be written less as questions and more as bullet points for interns to consider in order to help them to be a little freer in their blogging rather than following a question and answer format. For example under the main title of the week 3 blog post “Networking and Marketing Yourself” a subtitle was included which said “complete a blog, thinking about the following issues”. There were still questions underneath but the aim was to have the interns think about the issues rather than answer every question. Similarly in the week 4 “Taking Stock” blog post an explanation of what the post was aiming to achieve was included, along with issues to think about whilst completing it (highlighted in yellow in the table below). This meant that interns knew what was expected from this blog post and why they were being asked to do it. This differed to the previous year where no explanation was given for the aim of the post and instead a list of questions followed the subtitle “The Internship and your development”.

"I found writing a blog post every week exhausting... Some days we would be asked to write a lot of content about difficult questions and it no longer felt like a diary more like an essay” (Interview 2 2015).
Table 5.15 Changes from “Taking Stock” from 2015 to 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog to Reflect 2015</th>
<th>Blog to Reflect 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taking Stock</strong></td>
<td><strong>Taking Stock</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Internship and your development</strong></td>
<td><strong>This reflection exercise at the half-way point of the Internship will help you evaluate where you are in terms of achieving your personal development and Internship objectives.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Which skills and experiences are you gaining so far?</td>
<td>You may want to consider using the CARE model in your blog, reflecting on the following issues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What difficulties are you encountering so far?</td>
<td>• Which skills have you gained or improved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• At this point, how would you evaluate your progress against your objectives?</td>
<td>• What have you achieved in terms of personal development and Internship objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are you planning to do to progress your objectives for the rest of the Internship?</td>
<td>• Any experiences that have made an impression on you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are the potential risks, difficulties or stress in the coming weeks e.g. deadlines, conflicts, fears?</td>
<td>• Are there any difficulties that you have encountered or are encountering?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do you need in terms of support, from the department, peers and mentor?</td>
<td>• At this point, how would you evaluate your progress against your personal development and Internship objectives?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above changes demonstrate the openness to feedback of the Internship coordinator, and department. They were willing to take on the results of the research and make changes with the aim of encouraging more reflection.
amongst the interns. This allowed for an evolution of the genre on a micro-level. By looking at the language used and the intentions behind the blogging prompts, the Learning and Development Plan could be used to its full potential.

5.7.2 Changes in Technology from 2016 to 2017

One of the real underlying issues from the 2015 iteration was that of the technology that underpinned the Learning and Development Plan for the Internship. My Portfolio, powered by Mahara, was the platform used in both 2015 and 2016 for the Learning and Development Plan and was where the interns wrote up their blog posts. Following both years’ Internships programmes there were discussions about how limiting the platform seemed. The format became long-winded and it was hard for students to find information. To be able to find information, interns had to find the menu and then click one by one on the page they wanted to look at (as shown below).

Figure 5.1 Mahara: My Portfolio 2016

In 2016, I was much more involved with the Internship in the role of “reflective writing expert” and I was able to have informal conversations with interns where they highlighted their frustration with using the Mahara platform. This was even highlighted in the interviews I held where Student 3 described the platform as “very archaic” (Interview 3 2016). Both interviewees felt like they would have liked more interaction between the interns but that the technology didn’t permit this (Interview 3 2016 and Interview 4 2016).
In 2017 the Learning and Development Plan was moved to Moodle. Moodle was chosen because it was intended to provide a more structured, interactive, reflective learning space, which showed interns a framework of scheduled learning and development tasks including forum engagement and blogging over the course of the Internship. It had a clearer layout with images for each week for the intern to click on and a separate image for “resources” (as shown below):

*Figure 5.2 Moodle home page for 2017 iteration*

The layout enabled the interns to find information more easily but it also allowed the coordinator to facilitate ownership and responsibility of learning to the interns, the coordinator was able to specify by which date a blog post needed to be uploaded and also stipulate that a previous blog post needed to be completed before the following one could be submitted. This reduced the need for constant follow up on interns to complete their weekly learning and development tasks.

In the 2017 iteration it was also highlighted that interns needed to follow the schedule:
Note: **It is essential that you adhere strictly to the schedule** - certain activities like mentoring are based on a blogging exercise the week before. In addition, the activities for the following week will not be available until you have completed all the ones from the previous week.

(Moodle accessed March 2018)

This differs from the previous years and perhaps highlighted a problem with interns not following the plan as closely as CS wanted them to. There were some interns that didn’t complete their blog posts on time or engage with the blog at all, and by stipulating this, the hope was that there would be better engagement.

Even though Moodle itself appeared a lot more interactive than the previous platform, there were teething problems. This was particularly in regards to commenting. Its main function was for assignment submission, not for blogging, meaning that to make comments on the blog we had to be careful not to override each other’s comments. This slight nuance in what the technology permitted, and what it was generally used for, had the potential to affect how the interns approached the blogging task. By seeing it more as a platform for submitting assignments, it was conceivable that the interns were less likely to interact with the reader and explore the ways in which they could format and structure their blog. When discussing the genre of blogs in 2.3.2 one part of the blogging framework that Schmidt discussed was that of code (2007). This is what can be seen here, that the code represents the frame in which the blog is situated and thus by changing the code slightly, it can possibly change the type of blog that gets written. However, being that the blog still focused on a similar Blog to Reflect guide as the previous year it still encouraged the interns to be engaged with the process.
5.7.3 Multi-modal nature of the blogs in 2015 Iteration

This is perhaps the most surprising way in which this genre evolved. One intern from the 2015 iteration used multimedia to support their writing. Yet in the later iterations this wasn’t present. One intern did write a poem for their final blog post, (as commented on in section 5.2.2), but this didn’t make use of any multimedia, rather it was a different way of approaching the writing task.

Similarly, the presence of emoticons and hyperlinks was only in the 2015 iteration. It might therefore be a question of formality but considering the presence of rhetorical questions in the 2016 and 2017 iterations and of the intern addressing the reader this doesn’t seem to be the case. Overall, the interns stuck to the Learning and Development Plan and followed that. If it had asked for pictures, or links or given interns the “permission” to do so, then the interns would have included them, but as it didn’t, they didn’t put them in. This not only shows how the genre evolved, but, is perhaps one of the most indicative features of this genre within this context. Due to the nature of it existing in an academic setting and because a very clear framework was provided, the interns followed that. They were still students enrolled at the university where they were carrying out their Internship and so followed what they had been given. They probably felt they still had to adhere to the rules, even though they may have been afforded some flexibility within their Internship position. Indeed, there were comments on how they were treated as a colleague and by simply pointing this out can demonstrate that the intern may have been having a struggle with the different identities they were now taking on.

There was a degree of flexibility within the Blog to Reflect guide with interns being encouraged to “take your reflections as far as it will go” (taken from Blog to Reflect 2015, 2016, and 2017, appendices F, G and H) but the option to play around more with the blog was not encouraged. Instead there was a specific purpose to the blog (Alm 2009) and the interns were keen to fulfil that. Furthermore, the interns had conversations with their mentors between writing
blog posts and so these conversations potentially influenced how they would approach the blog writing.
6 Chapter Six: Discussion

There are three questions this research has set out to answer:

Research Question 1:
How are reflection and personal development portrayed through the process of participation in an Internship programme within a higher education careers setting?

Research Question 2:
How does the reflective writing produced for a higher education Internship evolve through this research project and how does the technology affect this?

Research Question 3:
What do the above two questions tell us about career-focused reflection as a genre?

In order to answer these I have analysed textual data from blog posts written by interns whilst participating in an Internship both run by and set in an HE setting. I have used interviews with the interns and staff members, as well as, informal discussions and observations to give background and to support any findings from the content analysis carried out on the blog posts.

I discuss how reflection and PDP are portrayed in this setting and how they come together to construct the genre of career-focused reflection. I then move on to discuss how participation in such reflection was facilitated and finally I consider if and how this and other sub-genres in the data set have evolved from one iteration to another over the period of this investigation.

6.1 How Reflection and PDP are portrayed and how this shows Career-Focused Reflection

One of the significant findings from this study is that the way reflection is being implemented in this careers setting context is in fact part of the PDP process and in turn part of the employability agenda (Bridgstock, 2009).
The interns in this data set were asked to identify their strengths and / or their skills with relation to their career and job search. They were given guidelines on how to reflect on and articulate these strengths and skills in order to be successful in this development programme. This all forms part of the PDP process: “PDP can be understood as part of the broader policy agenda across higher education, which focuses on employability and the acquisition of generic and transferable skills” Clegg (2004, p. 289).

This development programme focused on students’ participation in an Internship, which enabled them to gain work experience, as well as identify new skills and develop existing ones, and then how to articulate these. Extra Curricular Activities (ECAs), such as work experience, are often used for reflection because they create a space where skills not learned on the curriculum can be acquired and put into practice (Clark, Marsden, Whyatt, Thompson, Walker, 2015; Díaz-Isa, Eizaguirre, García-Olalla, 2019). This places additional value on both participating in an ECA, but also being able to engage in deeper reflective learning to be able to articulate what has been learnt through participation. This was something that Clark Marsden, Whyatt, Thompson, Walker (2015) found to be very important to potential employers.

This investigation has shown that PDP and reflection work together: in order to be successful in the PDP process a student should be using reflection to really come to know and articulate something about themself. This highlights what Pérez Cavana and Lowe (2018, p. 8) call an “inclusive process” which they describe as being related “to the QAA’s (2009) definition of PDP as a process undertaken by students to reflect on their own learning and to plan for their personal, educational and career development” (Pérez Cavana & Lowe, 2018, p. 8). It also demonstrates how these two facets, along with a focus on skills and strengths whilst participating in an ECA, come together to construct career-focused reflection in this data set.
6.1.1 Language and Structure

The content analysis showed how different feelings such as nervousness, pride, joy and gladness were used in the blog posts. This focus on feelings was to be expected from the genre of reflective writing as shown in the literature (Nesi and Gardner, 2012). Section 5.2.3 also showed the presence of the nodes “description” and “recounting” demonstrating the presence of some kind of narration also found by Chien (2013). Furthermore, the category of “Indicators of PDP” (section 5.2.1) contained the node “Dealing with problems and challenges” which demonstrated Hoey’s (2001) problem – solution pattern. It also included “Learning points” and “Change in opinion” and “Realisation” showing how interns reacted to critical incidents (Tripp, 1993). These were also present in the processes identified by Beauchamp (2006) and explained further in section 2.1 as indicators of reflective writing.

The literature on personal transferable skills touched on the concept of HEIs having to evidence the skills that students are learning. Section 5.3.2 showed how the interns discussed their skills across all three iterations of the data set. It was a key part of the reflective writing genre in this career-focused context: being able to demonstrate skills learnt and those that needed further development. The Internship encouraged the intern to consider their unrealised and realised strengths in order for them to really consider what career path was best suited towards them, as well as, the skills they had acquired and what could be improved upon during the Internship. What was seen was the expectation of a discussion of skills for the workplace. The intern considered what skills they had and what they needed to work on and how this could help with their chosen career or whether they should be re-considering their career path, demonstrating how there was a focus on career in this genre. Furthermore, in the content analysis it was seen in the Indicators of PDP section that through the interns discussing what they had learnt, how they had changed opinion, how they had overcome limitations and how they had come to realise different aspects of their practice, this, all formed part of the reflective process needed to develop themselves personally and professionally. The use of this
terminology and the focus here is particularly key in showing how the PDP was portrayed because it was focusing on career development and, arguably, personal development too. Both considered essential factors for PDP as indicated by the QAA (2009).

It might be questioned as to why there is such a big focus on evidencing skills and whether it served as evidence of what the department had put in place, and a potential box-ticking exercise. Perhaps even to “achieve institutional goals rather than … provide insights into the nature of professional knowledge and practice” (Clegg, 2004, p. 292). However, evidence from the Internship data set confirmed that the interns found it a very useful process and that most learnt a lot about themselves, and so in this case in particular it would seem that the processes in place gave opportunity for “professional knowledge and practice” (Clegg, 2004, p. 292). Indeed, the CS department being investigated here wanted to participate in the research; they were keen to see how reflective writing was being achieved, without necessarily considering it part of a bigger process. Moreover, they were keen to know the results of the research and have some empirical data on whether they were achieving their desired outcomes. They took on feedback to ensure they were achieving what they wanted to and so it would seem more than just a tick box exercise, instead the aim was for students to really engage with the process and benefit from it.

Interviews 3 and 4 from 2016 both remarked on how useful the blog was to have, as it provided them with a written record to come back to when applying for jobs. Indeed this idea of the student recording and having evidence of their reflective process to take with them draws on the notion of the PDP becoming “self-sustaining” (QAA, 2009, p. 5). Furthermore, the notion that writing up and evidencing skills is in keeping with this genre of career-focused reflection. As Devitt highlighted in her 2015 paper on genre performances and rhetorical-linguistic genre studies the notion that one needs to learn to:

write genres, like learning to write generally... performing rhetorical moves in unique ways to fulfil unique tasks in unique (discourse)
communities; getting feedback on how well that performance worked; reflecting on that performance and feedback; and performing again.
(Devitt, 2015, p. 10)

The outcome of these development programmes is to better prepare the participants to negotiate applications and interviews with future employers, hence they will need to know how to communicate their skills both written and orally. The emphasis on writing up or recording an event occasionally seems to receive more emphasis than the doing of the activity, but this is all in keeping with the genre of reflective writing. The intern, for example, needed to make a choice of what to record from what could have been a very rich relationship between intern and line manager and / or intern and mentor. However, the blog posts may not show these relationships. It was the decision of the intern to decide what got published in a blog post, and this all contributed to how they decided to evidence what they had learnt and what was transferable to their future plans. They used reflective writing and the PDP process to participate in a reflection that focused very much on their career.

6.1.2 Framework: Learning and Development Plan

When it is considered how reflection is being achieved on a very basic level, the interns followed a framework to produce the blog posts within the Learning and Development Plan. This framework was part of the construction of this genre and the sub genres within it. Even though interns had some freedom in how to respond to the posts, they were still guided on what they should write and when they should write it. Different structures within this framework, such as the SMART and CARE frameworks, were also used to articulate reflection as shown in 5.2.3.1.

Interns followed the Blog to Reflect prompts, but they had flexibility to choose what they wanted to answer from them. This freedom was afforded because of how the reflective writing component was implemented in the Internship
programme, which mirrored the way reflective practice has been implemented in other contexts. The contexts of teacher training and health and social care provide many rich sources of investigations into reflective practice, often centring on a reflective journal carried out whilst participating in practical experience relevant to their career choice. Just considering the field of TESOL, Farrell describes the challenge of coherently presenting the vast amount of literature between 2009 and 2014, as “formidable” (Farrell, 2016, p. 224). Hence, a lot of how to facilitate the process of reflection can be transferred from one context to another. When looking at the description of reflection within teacher training it can be seen that the fundamental aspects of how to carry it out are similar:

Novice teachers reflect on what they have experienced and then generate their previous knowledge to make informed decisions and subsequent changes to their own teaching... Another aspect of reflective practice is that the teacher educator coaches the student teacher or initiates peer coaching (Farr & Riordan, 2012, p. 131)

This is what the interns have had the possibility of doing. The CS department was able to ensure then that the Learning and Development Plan employed in the Internship programme was structured with plenty of opportunities for the interns to engage in career-focused reflection. They reflected on their experience and compared it with their previous knowledge to then make decisions about any changes they needed to make. (As demonstrated in section 5.5.) This longitudinal approach therefore afforded the intern ample possibilities to discuss problems and how they overcame them, learning points, realisations and opinions. All of which were identified as indicators of PDP in the content analysis and featuring in all iterations. Furthermore, as was seen in the Chapter Five these prompts were analysed after each iteration of the Internship and changed and / or moved accordingly to ensure interns were able to get as much from the Learning and Development Plan as they could.
This focus on framework and structure is in line with the Swalesian approach to genre which looks at move analysis and how this helps to form the communicative purpose (Swales, 1990). This analysis focused on patterns within the text and from there creating “move categories” (Tardy & Swales, 2014, p. 168). It was upon seeing which moves seemed to be mandatory across the different texts that the genre was categorised. This focus on moves, combined with the language, as per the Sydney School approach, and the context, as per the New Rhetoric approach, helps to identify the communicative purpose of the text and from there assign genre (Askehave & Swales, 2001). This is what the Learning and Development Plan demonstrates. The interns must attempt to follow the Blog to Reflect guide and provide some kind of reflective writing to show what they were learning and, because it had a focus on careers, how they were becoming more employable. The Interns were given the SMART framework to follow which some did, as evidenced in section 5.2.3.1. However, others simply followed the prompts on the Blog to Reflect guide. By considering that the communicative purpose is being constructed through the use of the frameworks and language, this helps to identify how the genre of reflective writing for personal development in an HE careers setting is being constructed.

6.1.3 Facilitating Collaborative Reflection: Role of Others

The blog posts were not marked; instead there were comments and discussions with the mentor to help the intern reflect along the way. The Interview 2 in 2015 highlighted the importance of this structure as seen in the Results Chapter. The CS department provided the opportunity one week for the intern to write a blog post on issues that might potentially arise and then follow up on this in a conversation with a mentor the following week. Indeed, through discussions with their mentor, or comments on their blog posts, the interns were able to consider how to react the next time a problem or issue occurred during their Internship. Although, Moir argues that such a framework could be detrimental to a students learning experience:
The danger with such prescriptive approaches is that PDP may come to be seen as an imposition rather than something that is integral to the higher education experience. Moreover, it can be viewed as an end in itself rather than as a means to a genuine engagement with the provisional nature of knowledge (Moir, 2021, p. 8).

However, this research has shown that it was the framework which allowed for a one to one conversation with someone trained in careers. The comments made by the mentor can be considered as scaffolding. The mentor uses it to help the intern understand what they are learning and how to overcome any problems to reach their potential. This use of scaffolding helps to make the process more dialogical, something which was apparent through the content analysis, when discussing the interactive features present in the Internship data set (see section 5.4.) The Internship allowed for a more interactive nature to the participants’ personal development and the CS department put the structure in place for scaffolding to happen and potentially a very engaging reflective journey. It can be seen that by making it an interactive process, reflection was becoming a socially constructed process proving beneficial for the participant and potentially a more effective way to engage with the PDP process and acquire knowledge. The conversation would have potentially not happened if time were not made on the framework allowing for a meeting with the mentor or for a blog post to be written. This is how reflection was facilitated. For example, in Interview 4 they said that without the mentor guiding them on how to write the blog they would have followed the bullet points precisely, rather than thinking about it more broadly.

This notion of reflection becoming a socially constructed process was highlighted in the analysis. It showed how important the role of others was for the interns. The training given to the interns was vital to make sure they understood what was expected from them, both from a work point of view but also for the Learning and Development Plan. This forms part of the guidelines provided by Garrigan (1997) to assist students in working autonomously. The
role of others was further evidenced by the content analysis and how interns mentioned staff members and their mentors in an appreciative and positive way.

The support of others is an integral part of the PDP process, and is only something which becomes less so as the student becomes more able (QAA, 2009). Similarly, it is argued that talking with others can be key to the reflective process because it allows the individual to question themself and understand their reflections (Mann & Walsh, 2017).

There was a constant support process available for the interns, with the provision of mentors and line managers and also the researcher to comment on their blogs. The interns always had somebody to talk to and to read their blog posts and this could be argued as the support network needed for both the reflection and PDP to become significant. They were provided with scaffolding throughout the programme and to a degree, relied on others to construct their reflections with them and thus engage with the PDP process. It meant that if they didn’t enjoy a blogging task, or couldn’t engage with it, they still had the support of their mentor, to assist with their reflective practice. This all fulfils the feedback and / or follow up that McLoughlin and Lee (2010) argue for so that any work done through web 2.0 technologies becomes meaningful.

6.1.4 Facilitation of Career-Focused Reflection: Element of Time
The element of time is also necessary to consider here. The Internship was aimed at students in their penultimate year of study, as it intended to prepare those students as they finished up their studies the following academic year. Hence, the student in their penultimate year was in some sense being pushed towards a programme that would require a higher level of engagement on their part; it was potentially more “temporally and contextually appropriate and relevant to personal projects” (Clegg & Bufton, 2008, p. 445) and therefore of more benefit to them because they were closer to looking for employment.
Time was also an important consideration for working on the blog posts. Interns had time set aside each week for blog posts or mentor sessions, as part of their Learning and Development Plan. One might question if having an allotted time for reflecting allows for a person to truly reflect, as there is pressure for them to do so, but as Warman states in her discussion of graduates participating in PDP: “Where time was protected for completing the PDR [Professional Development Record], it was much appreciated and led to more positive engagement in the PDR process” (Warman, 2020, p. 8). This is arguably what allowed the interns to engage with their reflective writing and the PDP process, because they were set aside the time to do so; they were being given the opportunity to focus on this part of their Internship. This was part of the Learning and Development Plan framework, demonstrating that this structure was essential for the interns to engage with the reflective tasks and the PDP process and therefore use reflection to really focus on their career aims.

6.1.5 How the Technology Platform facilitated Reflection and PDP

All iterations of the Internship used some sort of VLE (virtual learning environment). There is a general understanding that VLEs, such as ePortfolios, are a useful tool for PDP; that they are key in supporting the processes involved: recording, reflection and planning (Pérez Cavana & Lowe, 2018, p. 4). Both Mahara and Moodle are considered online learning environments with both providing the space for students to blog. However, (as discussed previously) it was recognised that the blog in Mahara was not perhaps the best space for the interns to engage with the Learning and Development Plan. Moodle was therefore used in the third iteration. The tools within Moodle allowed for a more time bound activity. Moodle had the facility for students to use a blogging platform but rather the Learning and Development Plan was built as a “quiz” within this environment. This technology furthers the argument of a framework being key in providing opportunities for reflection and PDP. By being able to set blogging prompts that had a deadline to be completed, the
interns were more likely to engage with the process. The coordinator was able to “manage” the blog. This was seen as indicative of the educational blog genre; that whoever had created the blog was the person in charge of its purpose (Alm, 2009). The depth to which interns engaged in the 2017 iteration could be questioned as they may have considered the lack of flexibility of when they could complete the blog as a time constraint. This would mean only focusing on answering the prompt, and therefore becoming more of a tick box exercise as described in other studies (see Warman, 2020). However, the results didn’t show this; similar content categories existed in 2017 as 2016 and 2015.

The focus on technology highlighted a misconception to arise from this study; the concept of what a blog is and what the interns considered blogging to be. This was evidenced by Interview 4 2016. It wasn’t clear that they understood that the focus of the blog was reflective writing but rather considered it “blogging” (Interview 4 2016). Their focus appeared to be on the blog and not on their learning and development that they were following. It seemed they didn’t fully understand that the goal of carrying out the blogs was PDP based. This highlights a potential confusion over what was desired from the Learning and Development Plan in the data set, where the focus was possibly more on the tasks being blogging tasks rather than PDP tasks. There was a danger that the emphasis concentrated more on the medium than the goal of the writing, demonstrating how the different sub-genres can cause confusion. This is a consideration of implementing any PDP or reflection tasks within an online learning environment. How it becomes known will dominate what it gets used for. Even though the “Blog to Reflect” prompts included the word “reflect”, the blog was possibly considered more important than the aim of doing it. As seen in the literature review, Sykes and Dean (2013) discuss the benefits of using e–logs to record learning, but emphasise the need to make sure the blogs are focused on the Internship programme, in order to become valuable. In Interview 3 2016 they commented on how writing reflectively for a blog “felt okay”, that knowing that this was for their personal development and was
being marked made it okay. Hence, it can be seen that where one intern didn’t fully understand the purpose of the blog, another did, demonstrating the role that student agency played.

6.1.6 The role of Learner Autonomy in facilitating Reflection and PDP

In the literature there was a focus on learner autonomy playing a part in the reflective process. For an HE student to engage with this process the responsibility lies with them. For example, the different responses to the blog prompts demonstrated that it was the intern that decided what they would get out of this activity. There were interns that went through prompt by prompt copying it into their blog and answering the question, following the directions meticulously, something which Student 4 2016 said they had done at the start of the Internship. Whereas others seemed to have read the line “you do not have to follow the prompts” and that was sufficient for them not to engage with the prompts. This is possibly because they struggled to fit in with the prompt, that they couldn’t see how it represented them and their experience. They would then either chose to subvert it, as may have been the case with Student 5 2015, who relied on a lot of videos and song links to support their blog, or not complete the blog post. There were interns that didn’t enjoy writing blog posts, as shown in sub-section 5.4.1 where there were nodes in the 2016 iteration referring to “Hate reflecting” and “Blogging difficult”. Hence, it was clear that some interns took the blog as a way to seriously think about what they were learning and what they could improve whereas others seemed to see it as an administrative task to talk about their day and were not engaged with it.

These development programmes seem to be assisting the student in becoming more autonomous by giving them this skill set as a by-product of the Learning and Development Plan. Whilst this framework was in place for the interns’ PDP it also provided the opportunity for them to become more autonomous. It was a framework in which to operate but the intern had to take responsibility for responding to it and engaging with it. Essentially they became responsible for
their own learning and development. This, however, was supported by mentors, line managers and the researcher, meaning there was a time period in which to help the interns become more autonomous.

Furthermore, this allowed for the secondary benefit of the programme: the intern going through a process of adaptation to work life. The interns were provided with an opportunity to feel what life would be like post university, as seen in sub-section 5.4.6. Through having to worry about being on time, completing their work in office hours, having weekends free and living alone, as was the case for some interns, they were getting a ‘real-life’ experience. As mentioned previously this was reinforced by the framework in place; by having the support of their line managers and mentors, the interns always had someone they could talk to. Hence, they were able to use this experience to become more autonomous, but also knew that they had guidance and support if they needed it.

6.2 Summary: how Reflection and PDP is portrayed and what this suggests about Career-Focused Reflection

Whilst learner autonomy is an important aspect to come out of participation in this development programme, what is also interesting is the notion of socially constructed reflection and PDP. This combined learning between this community and the intern seems a particularly important finding from this investigation. When one considers how reflection happens in the Internship, it relies on the support provided by the mini-community (Finlayson, 2015) that is created in the work experience programme. Even though learner autonomy theorises that self initiated tasks are important to demonstrate that the participant wants to engage in the process, for them to achieve deeper reflection, this study has shown that they depend on the support of the community and perhaps, should not be fully autonomous. Indeed, Dohn (2011) discussed the idea of “communicative reflection” for others to give their perspectives on the situation, “to have [your] representations and
reconstructions of practice challenged by others” (Dohn, 2011, p. 677). This is what is potentially happening here, although challenge might not be the appropriate way to describe the process, rather having an audience, someone who also has an insight into the process and is able to guide and support the intern. Indeed, as was seen in the techniques of “Asides” and “Addressing the reader” in the content analysis, having an audience was important.

In this context reflection goes through the four phases of appropriation, transformation, publication, and conventionalization, in order to become complete (see 2.1.5). This also demonstrates how reflection and PDP work together. Reflective writing can happen and move through the four phases, although it might not always be necessary for it to go through the publication and conventionalization phase. However, for PDP to be successful it needs to move through these two public phases because the individual needs to be able to record and articulate what they have come to learn. An example of how the Internship enabled this to happen was shown in the Internship data in 5.5. The intern observed something about themselves and then considered why it was happening, then through conversations with a staff member was able to understand and conventionalise their observations.

It might be that the individual had become successful in their reflective writing because of what they had written in their blog, or, it may have been the conversations with the mentor that really helped them to produce this meaningful piece of reflective writing. The sharing and partaking in the writing and / or the conversation can be considered as part of Harré’s (1983) publication phase for the individual to reach acceptance needed for the conventionalization phase. Once again it can be seen that it is the framework as a whole which allows all of these other individual processes to happen. By giving the intern an opportunity to comment on certain aspects they were able to reflect. Furthermore, by then following this up with a conversation with a mentor the intern was being given the opportunity to foment their ideas and consider how they wanted to move forward. They were able to consider and
reconsider their ideas whilst still participating in the Internship, giving them the opportunity to try things differently if they wished. Williams and Ryan (2006) argued that reflection and personal development had to be nurtured by support staff and it can be seen in this study how that was being offered to interns.

By facilitating reflection the Internship programme allowed for the PDP process to happen as a progression, in what could be referred to as “progressional reflective writing”. When I say progressional I refer to how the reflective writing happened over a period of time. During that period of time the interns were being shown how to participate in reflective practice and progress. It could be seen from the data that some even took part in reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983) because they had the opportunity to work on responding to problems they were facing at the time that they were happening. Interns were provided time to consider the strengths and skills they already had at the beginning of the Internship but then they were given the opportunity to practice those skills and improve on them, whilst at the same time reflect on them both on a personal level and with others. All key in recognising this as a kind of career-focused reflection. They were developing their skills and strengths whilst also taking part in the process. They were able to both reflect-in-action and reflect-on-action (Schön, 1983).

The Learning and Development Plan provided the guidance and space for the intern to consider and reconsider their personal development whilst relying on others to help them do so. They were afforded a very unique experience, in that they could get comments on their blog post, go back and think about it, and then even discuss it with a mentor and with colleagues. A lot of reflective writing produced in HEI is just writing a text, which is sometimes assessed, but this iterative process in this programme demonstrates how the influence of being able to have a dialogue with somebody else helped the intern make realisations about what they had learnt and progress further. They were able to really focus on those aspects considered necessary for their career and participate in reflection and PDP to consider them.
The blogging space allowed for the intern to be dialogic without actually talking to anyone, a source of dialogic reflection as referred to by Hatton and Smith (1995), where the form of discourse happens with oneself. At the same time, this intertextuality helped the interns to participate in the Learning and Development Plan providing the opportunity for interns to talk about their reflections with a mentor without having to write anything, highlighting the space for “collaborative discussion” as recommended by Mann and Walsh (2013, p. 303). Reflection could be socially constructed and, in turn, allowed the interns to engage with the reflective process as part of their PDP and as careers-focused reflection. Indeed as Farr and Riordan (2015, p. 111) claim: “online communication is an effective method of promoting professional development, without time and space restrictions.”

All of the above demonstrates not only how reflection and PDP are shown to be happening in the data set but also what might be more specific to the genre of career-focused reflection. This might be considered as being given the opportunity to participate in some kind of extra-curricular activity (including work experience) and at the same time following a learning and development plan. This plan provides the framework in which to reflect on and consider and reconsider learning and experience and how these are contributing to skills and strengths which can be transferred to the work place making one more employable, whilst also counting on the support of specially trained mentors for guidance.

6.3 The Evolution of Genre from one Iteration to another

In the Results of Analysis Chapter it was seen that there were a number of contributing factors, which affected how the genre of reflective writing evolved over the course of this research project. Ultimately it was the career department’s staff that had the biggest influence on how the overarching framework for this genre evolved. The researcher provided feedback for the CS department staff, but they made the decisions on what was changed from
programme to programme based on intern feedback and research. It was their decisions that ensured the evolution of this genre of reflective writing within the careers department and perhaps more importantly, it was their openness to feedback that ensured the success of the development programmes. However, it was not solely the decisions made by the CS department that guaranteed success of these programmes. The participants were key to how these programmes changed and consequently how the genre evolved. They made the choice to participate and decided how they would do so, i.e. they decided what to write and whether they wanted to engage with the process. As Devitt (2015, pp. 10-11) states “[e]ach specific text necessarily differs from others in words, sentences, and content... However, [p]hilosophically, rhetorically, and linguistically, no two instances of a genre can be identical, but they can still share a genre”. It was the student’s agency that allowed for this. As discussed in the literature review, it was the individual’s agency that dictated how much they decided to engage with the process. Hence, what has been described here, the feedback provided helped to guide the responses to the frameworks in place but it was the participants who decided how much they wanted to engage with the process, as per previous discussions regarding Learner Autonomy (section 2.2).

A due consideration, when discussing the participants’ involvement and desire to engage, is that, all of the interns were selected through interview for the Internship and only those that had successful interviews with the CS department and the line manager were offered an Internship place. Indeed, in the interview held with the coordinator of the Internship it was said that only the best were selected. This means that the feedback and changes made were based on candidates that were more likely to engage with the development programme. Farr and Riordan underlined this in their 2015 study by looking at reflective practices in online modes; one of the comments made by a participant was that “those who fully participated might be those who reflect more anyway” (Farr & Riordan, 2015, p. 111). This can be true in any investigation and why it is important to consider as many viewpoints as possible
to draw conclusions on what is happening. In the interviews held, both student 3 and student 4 from 2016 enjoyed participating in the blogging process and found it useful, as did student 4 from 2015. But, student 2 from 2015 mentioned how exhausting the process was but still showed signs of engaging with it. Reaffirming this position that because of the selection of candidates it is likely that they would engage with reflection regardless.

The technology used had a meaningful influence on how the genre evolved. It was the technology that allowed for the participant to engage in the programme as they did. One intern in the 2015 iteration played around with the multimedia available and uploaded videos and images to their blog posts. I mentioned in Results Chapter that this was a surprising aspect; a lack of engagement with the multimedia available to the interns in the Internship data set, particularly in the last two iterations of the Internship where no intern used multimedia to support their blog posts. Surprising, because it didn’t conform to the genre expectation (Devitt, 1993) and typical forms (Paltridge, 2012) that one thought the blog would take as described in section 2.3.2. Instead of this being a surprising factor it could very well mean that the interns understood the nature of this career focused reflective blog and had knowledge of the genre networks (Tardy, 2003) around it and so were therefore able to negotiate it. It is, therefore, conceivable that the one intern who made use of multimedia misunderstood how these various genre networks came together. Alternatively, they may have understood perfectly well what was expected from this genre and instead chose to do something a little different, coming back to this concept of participant agency as discussed previously. Furthermore, it might be an overestimation of the students’ skills in this area and that they didn’t know how to do more with the technology, similar to findings by O’Connell and Dyment (2016, p. 404): “students report not having the technological know-how or aspiration to use Web 2.0 technologies in their studies to any great extent.”

In the first two iterations of the Internship the interns used a journal within an ePortfolio system to produce their blog posts, this differed to the last year
where Moodle (an online personalised learning environment) was used instead. In the 2015 and 2016 iterations the interns were able to move between tasks without having to complete the previous one. Some went back to do it afterwards whereas others left it incomplete. On the Moodle platform used in the 2017 iteration, the blog posts were created as “quizzes” and so the interns had a certain amount of time to complete each one, and could only move on to the next task if the previous one had been completed. This could have potentially affected the level of reflection that the intern was able to achieve but the content analysis showed that “Indicators of PDP” was still the top category in the 2017 iteration. Even though the number of nodes under “Learning points” and “Future references” was less for the 2017 iteration than the 2015 and 2016 iterations which potentially indicates a move away from the PDP process.

The blog posts no longer followed the traditional structure of following on from the previous one, this made it less like a journal and more like individual reflective pieces of writing, potentially hindering the interns with their final reflections. Before writing their final blog the interns were advised to review their previous blog posts to reflect on their experience. Hence, what can be seen here is the technology potentially became more limiting in the way in which the participant could review their previous reflections and potentially consolidate any new knowledge. This highlights a difference in structure between the blogging platform and the ePortfolio. With the ePortfolio being a collection of different artefacts and the blog typically being shown in chronological order, like a journal (Ross, 2012). This move away from a journal, narrative style of writing as usually seen in blogs may have hindered how interns engaged with reflective writing as these were both considered indicative of reflective writing (see 2.1.3). However, because the interns relied on the framework and blogging prompts, they were guided on what they needed to write about and whether they should review previous blog posts. For example, at the halfway point interns were instructed: “At this point, how would you evaluate your progress against your personal development and Internship
objectives?” (Taken from Appendix G, Blog to Reflect 2016). This encouraged the intern to review the objectives set at the beginning. They were then told to look back at their objectives when they wrote up the final post. Hence, it can be seen that even though the format may have moved away from a chronological journal style writing, this didn’t seem to affect the writing because the prompts were there to guide the intern on what they should review to write their blog post and allotted them the timeframe to do so.

In the 2015 and 2016 iterations of the Internship, the interns had blogging prompts to follow and a structured Learning and Development Plan however they had freedom within the technology as to when they uploaded the blog posts. This changed for the 2017 iteration when this flexibility was taken away. Instead the technology became more rigid, allowing more flexibility for what was written with regard to the content of the writing but not for how it was presented or submitted with regards to the technology. This shows the changes in how the writing was formatted and submitted from one iteration of the Internship to the next. It was potentially moving from product to process.

The Internship participants had to follow the framework enforced by the technology and therefore demonstrated the process they went through to reflect on their Internship. In the first iteration there was some deviation away from the standard format assumed by the rest of the cohort meanwhile in the following iterations, the format was followed in pretty much the same way. This could be seen as a shift in emphasis to the processes taken to produce the reflective writing, as opposed to concentrating on the final product, and what is written, as the most important. As Farr and Riordan (2012, p. 144) found:

> whether the language which would seem to evidence reflection is an indicator of good, critical reflection, or if it simply indicates that the students have become part of a discourse community and have linguistically mastered this genre. In other words, are they actually doing good reflection, or do they just know how to talk the talk of reflection?
6.3.1 Summary: Genre of this Internship Blog and how it Evolved

The blogging framework presented in research by Schmidt (2007) can show how the genre of this data set evolved over the duration of this investigation. She discussed the three elements of blogging: rules, relations and code. The rules were the blogging prompts that the intern had to follow and were obliged to carry out in order to engage with their reflective writing. I have discussed already how these were updated and changed from year to year. The Relations were any multimedia links as well as any social ones, which included any face to face contact, in this case the discussions with the mentor of any blog posts and even any conversation through the blog. The face to face conversations with the mentor remained a constant during all three iterations whereas the conversational nature of the blogs was very apparent in the data sets with the interns using asides and rhetorical questions in the 2015 iteration to address the reader whereas more comments were seen in the 2017 iteration. This also links into the following element: “code” which was the platform where the blogging was happening. This develops and changes throughout the duration of these three iterations of the Internship data set depending on the technology used. Hence, how these three aspects of rules, relations and code were used in the construction of this genre and how that has evolved over the course of these three iterations can be seen quite clearly.

When one considers the overall genre of this blog it might be considered that this type of writing is academic because it happened within an academic institution. However, it was run by the CS department and as such was guided by the student considering their employability and how what they were learning related to their future career. Furthermore, this was considered a reflective piece of writing. Similarly, the interns were introduced to a Learning and Development Plan and so the genre of PDP was introduced. As well as this, the technology affected how the writing was carried out. The interns had to follow the framework and write within that. Finally, students were under pressure to
consider the following, even though it was not deemed an academic piece of writing for the institution:

Students have to somehow demonstrate knowledge and understanding, show that they can perform in ways approved by the discipline, and yet also sustain and develop their own identity so that they can make an original contribution to topics and issues deemed relevant to the course of study.


This shows the many sub-genres present here, how they changed during the course of this project, and with that how they sometimes contradicted each other. For example, for a student to write about their personal development whilst working, and being paid, on an Internship within the academic setting provides quite a few paradoxes. There was a potential that when they spoke to their mentor, they may have been a colleague to someone they were working with. Hence, it could be considered that it might have been difficult for an intern to display any dislike of the situation or the people with whom they were working. Arguably, it would be hard for the intern to reflect on a very deep level because they were still in the same setting where they were studying. They may have felt unable to open up and discuss their role and department for fear of repercussions. However, this research showed that the interns would often discuss how they felt by using the blog as a way to show their feelings and interact with the reader, especially when discussing problems or limitations. Indeed it might be the very nature of the blogging genre that enabled these different sub-genres to exist together: “[B]log posts have multiple audiences and may be written for more than one purpose, something for writers to consider when writing their reflective commentaries” (Mann & Walsh, 2017, p. 126). This is further corroborated by Alm (2009) who stated that students used the blogs as a “personal space” and a “conversational space”. By using this technology the coordinator was able to establish the purpose of using it, but
also allow for freedom on the part of the student in how they responded. This is very unique to using a blog for this kind of career-focused reflection.
Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Implications

This investigation into this data set has shown how careers reflection can be achieved. The interns were given the space, time and guidance to consider their realised and unrealised strengths and then were given further opportunity to work on these and consider how they were developing in an intertextual way. They were provided with a comprehensive Learning and Development Plan which encouraged them to take part in reflective writing and collaborative reflection through mentoring sessions and support of fellow interns and colleagues, which also meant that they could participate in both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön 1983), all the while considering their own personal development.

As seen when discussing how the genre evolved, the Internship coordinator was keen for the interns to learn about the process they were going through whilst participating in work experience, not to just produce a final piece of work. This allowed them to go through a meaningful reflective practice, whilst also learning a lot about themselves, all part of the Personal Development Plan. Whilst employability was the main driver of this development programme, students had the opportunity to learn how to be reflective and how to consider their PDP. Furthermore, the interns were given the possibility of considering life post university and a lot of the circumstances that arise when one starts working.

Even though the Internship held reflection as one of its main aims, this was a process participants were encouraged to go through in order to come to know something about themselves and what they had learnt from their previous experience and/or current work experience. Once the participants had gone through this process of coming to recognise their skills, they learnt how to articulate them, often through PDP, in order to show themselves as “employable”. This aspect of employability was one of the key features of this genre of career-focused reflection. The participants were continuously
considering what they were learning and what could be transferred to future employment. Arguably, this made the reflection task here a particularly high stakes one, as it was being tied into being ready for a career, which is furthered still by the connection to university rankings that employability has (Christie 2017).

The frameworks were essential in facilitating reflection and PDP. By providing a support structure for reflective writing (through a blog) and then having the opportunity to talk this through enabled the interns to engage with the process. It provided alternative communication methods in which the participants could participate and in this way they were able to socially construct their reflections. This allowed for participants to become more autonomous, whilst at the same time, work within the mini community in which they found themselves in order to advance through their work experience and work in this cyclical nature where new events were considered and reconsidered to see how they interacted with previous events or knowledge.

This research has shown that any activity, aiming for participants to engage with the reflective process, should endeavour to include a clear structure of what the purpose of the project is, along with general ideas of how the participant can achieve them, i.e. through the use of prompts. This should then be scaffolded through follow up, either face to face or via video call, to ensure the participant feels they are involved in a meaningful process and are able to question and consolidate new knowledge. For this to be effective the mentor needs to be involved in the process and have the training to help the participant with their personal development, so that it becomes a socially constructed process. This is similar to findings by Sykes and Dean (2013) (as seen in the literature review) where they focused on the need for reflective journals to receive purely developmental feedback. Equally, if a blog is to be used, comments should be made in order for it to become a dialogical process so that the reflections can become meaningful (McLoughlin and Lee, 2010) and move through the Personal Development Cycle as based on Harré (1983).
It is therefore essential to recognise that this development programme was implemented with much consideration given to how best to facilitate reflection and PDP. It relied on a lot of resources in order for the student to gain as much as they could from participating. The Internship programme and the Learning and Development Plan that accompanied it were very labour and resource intensive. Due care was given to which Internships would be offered, ensuring support was in place, similarly the Learning and Development Plan was carefully arranged ensuring it gave the intern the appropriate time and opportunity to concentrate on their reflection and personal development. Consideration was given to the need to provide support in the form of mentors who were available to listen and guide the interns as they progressed in their Internship. Allowing them space to verbalise their thoughts and mind-sets.

Unfortunately, this kind of framework for development programmes of a bigger cohort would be very difficult to maintain. The success of the Internship programme was reliant on the resources used to run it. Potentially by changing it in order to enable better access, this could change the very thing that students are trying to access. Indeed the year after this last cohort the Internship programme was developed and changed again. The CS department created an online Learning and Development Plan for anyone participating in an Internship or some kind of work experience or extra-curricular award. This was similar to the Learning and Development Plan designed for the Internship programme but was designed to be more flexible so that any student enrolled at the HEI was able to use it as they saw fit. They could follow it as a course or they could instead use and participate in only the parts they thought were relevant to them. The researcher provided feedback on the layout and language used in the plan but this is not being investigated here. However, by broadening access to the programme, it may mean that the programme doesn’t allow for the same level of reflection and / or PDP to be achieved.
This question of access is a general issue at HE level, by broadening access so that something is less unequal and available to more students, it can actually mean that the students get less from it. However one of the goals of the iCeGS (International Centre for Guidance Studies) was “extending access to opportunities” (Watts, 2014, p. 10). Furthermore, it could be argued that the role of the careers department in HEI is to overcome this hurdle, “because the concept of career is inclusive, accessible to everyone” (Watts, 2014, p. 10). When one bears in mind that employability has become such an integral part of the HE experience, it would seem like a natural progression for careers departments to focus on employability, in preparing students for the workplace. “Universities are encouraged to collaborate with businesses and organisations to make sure that their graduates meet the employers’ needs” (Fotiadou, 2020, p. 261). Moreover, HEIs in the UK have now come to accept that employability is their responsibility (Fotiadou, 2020) and as Rich (2015, p. 36) states “many universities sideline employability into careers advice”. However, PDP as part of the employability agenda needs to be recognised as a key element of a student’s HE education and given equal measure as academic performance, if indeed employability is to be given such a high status by future employers and the Higher Education Institution.

7.1 What happens next
This investigation has centred on findings from the Dearing Report (1997) as well as recommendations from the HEA and the QAA. The Dearing Report was published over twenty years ago, with recommendations for the following twenty years. There are currently questions being asked around access to HE because of the number of graduates ending up in low skilled positions and of graduate underemployment (Small, Shacklock and Marchant, 2018). I believe it is therefore necessary for HEIs to consider implementing a holistic PDP process across the institution so that all students are encouraged to take responsibility for this process, along with the support from trained careers staff and academic mentors. The PDP would integrate the academic, experience (extra-curricular activities, for example) and personal facets of the PDP process in one place, so
that this could come together as a portfolio for students to take with them upon leaving Higher Education.

One could argue that this was why the Higher Education Academic Reports (HEAR) reports were introduced (Advance HE, accessed March 2022). These however, are a way to record students learning gains and to show what they have done during their HE experience to make them employable but it doesn’t necessarily follow that they are supported with the reflective process to come to realise their achievements to record here as well as what skills they have developed. One could argue this should be a key part of the university education as reflective writing seems to be held in such high regard and should be a product of HE, as inferred by Nesi and Gardner (2012) and seen in section 2.1.2 The role of Reflective Practice in HE.

The careers departments are under pressure to ensure students are employable once leaving higher education. However, the type of programme that really achieves this in a meaningful way in this investigation requires a lot of resources and is only available to a few students. The careers department in this study has attempted to broaden access to these development programmes so that more students can engage with the PDP process and make it more accessible, as per Watts’ (2014) observation. However, further research would be necessary to gauge its success and to see if an appropriate balance between access and usefulness can be achieved.

Furthermore, the responsibility for who monitors this PDP process and reflective practice modules would need scrutiny. Currently, the Careers and Skills departments are arguably viewed as peripheral to the HE experience but if they are to continue to take responsibility for such a high stakes issue then their role would need to be increased so that what they provide is available to all and is of a high quality. How this could work is questionable considering their role as student support. A general reflective practice module that incorporates different disciplines’ approach to the subject of reflection, could be beneficial,
providing students a much needed way of approaching many tasks within their academic studies and outside of them. This could potentially be very careers-focused, ensuring graduate employability upon leaving HE, but equally it is evident that many disciplines rely on reflection and there is much that can be learnt and combined to facilitate reflection within HE by taking on a multidisciplinary approach to it. Hence, if there were a closer integration between academic departments and the CS department this could potentially create a very real and engaging reflective process for students.
8 Chapter Eight: My own Reflections

Due to the nature of this research project and my reliance on being reflective throughout it, as discussed in section 3.1, I felt it appropriate to finish with some of my own reflections to demonstrate the role they had through this project.

8.1 Influence on my own practice

Findings from this study affected my own reflective practice. After reading many studies centred on reflection and after starting to analyse the data, I learnt to make time at the end of any study session to write my thoughts, what I was learning and what I wanted to achieve next. By giving myself time I allowed myself to reconsider what I had learnt and what I wanted to take forward in the project. It also provided a much needed way to be able to dip in and out of my studies, essential for a part time student.

8.2 My contribution

My contribution to the Internship resulted in changes being made to the Learning and Development Plan and as such my role potentially affected my research and the outcome of the student and intern experience. However, the constructivist nature of the research design allowed for this. My contribution was part of what the Careers and Skills department desired; they wanted me to participate in order to provide feedback and research into their development programmes. However, because this turned into a longitudinal project it meant I was able to see the results of feedback as I progressed through the investigation and this influenced the role I had. This relates back to the role of reflexivity as discussed in section 3.1.2 and the two-way relationship between the research and the researcher.
8.2.1  Making comments on the blogs

I checked the blogs every week and made comments within 1 or 2 days. I sometimes found it challenging to make comments because I found it hard to define my role and what students should expect from my comments (as shown in the excerpt below).

The difficult part is saying something that becomes useful to them though. Thinking specifically about their reflective practice rather than the problem they are having specifically. It’s remembering that my role is not a mentor, but someone to support their reflective practice and reflective writing.

(Excerpt from research diary)

The interns had mentors and line managers who all had access to their blogs and were there to help the interns with their development. I, however, was introduced as an expert in reflective writing so therefore had to focus on this aspect and find ways to encourage students to be reflective in their writing. My role was mostly about their personal development from a linguistic point of view. I found it hard to focus only on the language used and wanted to make comments on the specific problems or issues that students were talking about in their blogs as well. I therefore tried to address how students were writing about their problems rather than what the problems were. Below it can be seen how I tried to concentrate on how the intern could use reflective writing to move forward:
You mentioned that you wanted to take time after meetings this week to record the main points and draw conclusions perhaps you could do something similar for advice on organising information? **Make a note of what you think is important and relevant** and perhaps use different aspects depending on the information you have. I hope you’re **able to take the time to write down some of the important points** even if it is in a quick word doc. google docs or something similar **as I think this can be a really beneficial part of the reflection process.** Just by writing down it can help consolidate ideas.

(Researcher comment on 2016 Student 4 Week 1 reflection)

An advantage was that I was able to ask specific questions about how interns were finding using the blog and the questions / prompts / etc. For example I was able to ask student 8 from the 2016 cohort the following: “do you find it easier to write when you have specific questions to follow rather than just free writing about what you have done and learnt?” (2016 Student 8 4W Taking Stock Part 1). Through the comments the intern then replied and I responded back too.

A further debate I had was about whether to keep comments public, so that anyone with access to the blog could see them, or private, so it was just between the intern and myself. This was optional on the Mahara platform but not on the Moodle one, so was only a consideration for the 2016 iteration. It sometimes felt that the comments should be transparent and therefore public. Whereas at other times I felt that they were quite personal and so should stay private. I was also keen to forge a relationship with the interns and so didn’t want to make public comments that might embarrass them. I therefore adapted to the nature of the blog post.

Another difficulty I faced was with regard to notifications from MyPortfolio. I was notified of new activity and this contained the intern’s name. I was very much involved with the interns when they were blogging and so that was a
challenge to disentangle myself from using their names and identities. This was why I was very keen to remove names and identifiable features from the texts, as explained in Chapter Three so that I could distance myself from the texts and the interns when analysing the data.

There were times when I felt more would have been achieved; indeed potentially a better reflection would have been achieved, if I could have spoken with the intern. For example, I wanted to ask an intern if they had seen anything that could be improved or done within the department as they felt they didn’t have enough tasks. However, it felt like a one on one conversation to have not one to be publicly discussed on the blog post. It also seemed to me that I would need a better relationship with the intern in order to be able to have this conversation. I therefore had to step back and consider that this was what the mentor’s role was. This might not have been the same for another person commenting on the blog and as such may have had more to do with my unfamiliarity of using a blog in this way.

8.3 The influence of the Covid-19 pandemic

During the Covid-19 pandemic the whole environment of learning online shifted dramatically, with students at most, if not all, HEIs within the UK participating in online lectures and seminars. It would be very interesting to understand how this has affected PDP and reflective writing being carried out through this medium. Without any face to face contact, students and HEIs have had to use web 2.0 technologies in a different way and this will have affected how knowledge has been constructed both on an academic level and on a personal level and perhaps more importantly how the careers context within HE has changed.

8.4 Longitudinal nature of this project

Due to my personal circumstances I changed from researching this PhD project in a full time capacity to a part time capacity, and at a distance. This meant that
I had the fortune of being able to access more data but with that came the task of analysing more data and making sense of it. I have identified the genre and I have seen how reflection can be part of the PDP process and how it can exist in varying forms, particularly within the careers context. However, I was unable to analyse how the interns’ blog posts and writing developed from the beginning of the Internship compared to the end. This would be an interesting facet to consider for any future research.
9 Chapter Nine: References

https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/hear-higher-education-achievement-report


https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/en/publications/4af08ee8-cb24-44f8-bf85-bc4494f6f3ac


DOI: 10.1080/19463014.2012.716622

DOI: 10.1017/S0958344014000299


Higher Education Academy (HEA)

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/pdp/pdp (accessed February 2014 but no longer working.)


[https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124590022002005](https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124590022002005)


[https://doi.org/10.1145/1031607.1031643](https://doi.org/10.1145/1031607.1031643)


Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives. 13(6), 805-819.


https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315838069


Appendix A Ethical Approval Form

A Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of student:</th>
<th>Sarah Banks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of registration:</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project title:</td>
<td>An investigation into reflective practice and personal development planning through university offered extra-curricular awards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor:</td>
<td>Sue Wharton and Steve Mann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRB Clearance:</td>
<td>No. (Not necessary.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B Texts

If your research does not include any textual data, please confirm this below and go to Section C.

If all or some of your texts are not in the public domain, please explain what steps you have taken to obtain relevant permission for their collection and use. Please also complete any relevant parts of Sections C and D.

If some or all of your texts are in the public domain, give details of this and explain what steps you have taken to obtain any relevant permissions. When these permission have been obtained, please pass a copy to the Research Secretary to be added to your file. (You may not need to complete Sections C and D.)

I will be using texts produced by students. Permission to use these for analysis will be gained from students prior to doing so using the information sheet and consent emails attached.

C Participants

Details

Please describe the participants in the research including ages of children and young people where appropriate. Also specify if any participants are vulnerable e.g. as a result of learning disability.

Participants will be students attending the university of Warwick and potentially alumni from the university. There is also the possibility that staff members will also participate in the study. All participants will be over the age of 18 and it is not an expectation that vulnerable people will form a part of the study, however, should there be any participants with
special needs this will be discussed with the participant and any due care necessary will be given.

**Respect for participants’ rights and dignity**

*How will the fundamental rights and dignity of participants be respected, e.g. confidentiality, respect of cultural and religious values?*

The research will not focus so much on content rather on processes. Any material that might be considered confidential or that might imply any disrespect towards cultural or religious beliefs would be discussed with supervisors and the participants if it were to be used. If participants preferred such material not to appear in a published report, this would be respected.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

*How will confidentiality be assured? Please address all aspects of research including protection of data records, thesis, reports/papers that might arise from the study.*

Any papers pertaining to the study will be contained within a non-marked folder, carried on the researcher or filed at the researcher’s home. Any electronic material will be kept on the researcher’s laptop along with back ups on the university of Warwick’s shared drive and the researcher’s back up hard drive. All folders will be pass worded. Confidentiality will not be broken, unless there is an infringement of law. Any data used within the thesis, conference or article publications will be anonymised, only using the name of the Higher Education institution. General patterns of numerical data, such as year of entry of student or gender, will be reported but not on an individual basis.

**D Consent**

*Will prior informed consent be obtained?*

— from participants **YES/NO**

— from others **YES/NO**

*Explain how this will be obtained. Provide details of the relevant procedures and any issues associated with them.*

Participants will be contacted by email, or approached in person when attending workshops run by the Careers and Skills department in the university. They will be provided with information about the purpose of the study, both as part of a PhD thesis and a Centre of Applied Linguistics research project. Participants will be allowed to ask questions and given time to consider their participation in the project. Once they are happy, consent will be asked for by means of a “consent email”.

There are three types of emails – two for student participants and one for staff participants. For student participants there is one email asking for use of the student’s written application, and the other asking for use of the student’s written application along with setting up an interview. The staff participant consent email only refers to setting up an interview with them.

Dates and times for interviews will then be set up and agreed upon by both parties.
If verbal rather than written consent is to be obtained, give reasons for this. Not applicable.

If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reasons for this. If the research involves observation where consent will not be obtained, specify situations to be observed and how cultural/religious sensitivities and individual privacy will be respected. Not applicable.

Will participants be explicitly informed of the student’s role/status? If not, give reasons for this.
Participants will understand the researching team’s roles in the research project. There will be an aim for transparency but maintaining impartiality. The researcher will attempt to not show their point of view or any initial conclusions drawn on the research.

Will deception be used? If so, provide a clear justification for this and details of the method of debriefing. No.

Will participants be informed of the use to which data will be put? Participants will have it explained to them to which end the data will be used and the aims of the project in general.
Will participants be told they have the option to withdraw from the study without penalty?
Yes. Participants will have the option to withdraw should they wish.

Attach a copy of all consent forms to be used in the study.

E Security and protection

Data storage

Where will data be stored and what measures will be taken to ensure security?
Data will be anonymised and stored on the researcher’s laptop along with back ups on a separate hard drive and the university shared drive. The laptop and folders will be pass-worded.

For how long after the completion will the data be stored? (All data must be kept at least until the examination process is complete.)
As per the Centre of Applied Linguistics guidelines data will be kept for ten years.

F Protection

Describe the nature and degree of any risk (psychological as well as physical) to participants and the steps that will be taken to deal with this.
It is not foreseen that there will be any psychological or physical risks as a result of this research. However, as some participants may be interviewed more than once there might be a development of trust between researcher and participant. This relationship will be treated in confidence and if anything should arise that the researcher feels could be a psychological or physical risk, this will be reported to the supervisors. It is thought that the only potential risk of this study is the influence on participants to think differently about their participation in or applications
for particular awards. However, this should not have a detrimental effect on their academic life.

**Identify any potential risks to the researcher and the procedures that will be in place for dealing with these.**
The researcher will maintain regular contact with the supervisors to ensure that anything that might be viewed as a potential risk is discussed and action taken.

**How will participants’ well-being be considered in the study?**
Interviews will be carried out in locations that should prove comfortable to participants, where they will not be overheard.

**How will you ensure that your research and its reporting are honest, fair and respectful to others?**
As a researcher I will maintain an awareness of keeping my research honest, fair and respectful through daily writing in my own journal. This should flag up anything that I find I need to discuss further with supervisors. However, my research will also be proofread to look for any dishonesty, disrespect or unfairness. It is therefore hoped that this would be picked up prior to publishing.

**How will you ensure that the research and the evidence resulting from it are not misused?**
To try and ensure that the research and any evidence resulting from it are not misused the following points will be put into action:

- Nobody else will have direct access to research.
- Research will be reported anonymously ensuring individuals cannot be identified from the reports.
- Due care will be taken not to make any unwarranted claims from the evidence.
- The research will be reported through channels making its academic status clear.

**G Ethical dilemmas**

**How will you address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in your research? Please give details of the protocol agreed with your supervisor for reporting and action.**
Through writing a daily journal I hope to be self-aware enough to spot any ethical dilemmas arising. As I see these, I will discuss with either one or both of my supervisors. Should I feel dissatisfied with their answer, or if we are unsure how to move forward I / we will seek the support of the Director of Postgraduate studies or representative on the faculty’s ethics committee. Any doubts will be documented and filed through the department’s secretary in the records of my supervision.

**H Authorship**

**Have you and your supervisor discussed and agreed the basis for determining authorship of published work other than your thesis? Give brief details of this.**
Our agreement is the following:
Should any joint published work arise out of this project, authors will be listed in alphabetical order. I, however, as the main researcher, can also publish independently and submit as sole author.
I  Other issues

Please specify other issues not discussed above, if any, and how you will address them.
My research involves collaboration with another part of the university, Warwick Careers and Skills. It is therefore the aim to maintain a professional relationship with this department and discuss any issues that may arise that are deemed relevant to them. The existence of this collaboration is made apparent to students through the participant information sheet.

J  Signatures

Research student  Date

Supervisor  Date

K  Action

Action taken

☐ Approved
☐ Approved with modification or conditions – see Notes below
☐ Action deferred – see Notes below
☐ [Where applicable] CRB clearance reported to HSSREC

Name  Date

Signature

Notes of Action

Date of Approval by Graduate Progress Committee
# Appendix B Internship Information and Consent Form 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>XXXX 2015: RESEARCH INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Title of Research Project:** Developing Reflective Writing on an Internship Programme

**Background**

As an intern on XXXX 2015, you are invited to participate in a research project jointly organized by XXXX Careers and Skills and the Centre for Applied Linguistics. Its purpose is to help interns improve their ability to reflect on their experiences and to effectively express those reflections in writing.

**What your participation would involve**

If you choose to participate, a member of the Centre for Applied Linguistics will be able to see your blog entries and will comment on your blog. The comments will be intended to enhance the quality of your reflection in future entries.

At the end of the internship, the blogs of all interns who chose to participate in this research project will be collected together and a member of the Centre for Applied Linguistics will conduct an analysis of the styles of reflective writing which interns tended to use. This analysis will form the basis of one or more research reports. No intern will be personally identified in any research report.

**Risks and benefits to you**

We do not believe that participation would carry any risk to you. We believe that participation would benefit you by helping you to develop as a reflective individual.

**Feedback to you**

At the completion of the study, the research report provided by CAL to XXXX will be made available to all participating interns.

**Implications of giving or withholding consent**

Your decision on whether or not to participate in this project will be kept confidential and will in no way affect any other aspect of your relationship with the University of XXXX.

**Further information**

If you would like any further information to help you to decide whether or not to participate in this project, please contact the lead researcher, XXXX at the Centre for Applied Linguistics: XXXX@warwick.ac.uk

**Signature**

I would like to participate in this project

**Name (please print) ..........................................................**

**Signature..................................................**

**Date: ..................................................**
Appendix C Internship Information and Consent Form 2016

**XXX 2016: RESEARCH INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Research Project:** Developing Reflective Writing on an Internship Programme

**Background**

As an intern on XXXX 2016, you are invited to participate in a research project jointly organized by XXXX Careers and Skills and the Centre for Applied Linguistics. Its purpose is to help interns improve their ability to reflect on their experiences and to effectively express those reflections in writing.

**What your participation would involve**

If you choose to participate, a member of the Centre for Applied Linguistics will be able to see your blog entries and forum entries and will comment on your blog. The comments will be intended to enhance the quality of your reflection in future entries.

At the end of the internship, the blogs of all interns who chose to participate in this research project will be collected together and a member of the Centre for Applied Linguistics will conduct an analysis of the styles of reflective writing which interns tended to use. This analysis will form the basis of one or more research reports. No intern will be personally identified in any research report.

**Risks and benefits to you**

We do not believe that participation would carry any risk to you. We believe that participation would benefit you by helping you to develop as a reflective individual.

**Feedback to you**

At the completion of the study, the research report provided by CAL to XXXX will be made available to all participating interns.

**Implications of giving or withholding consent**

Your decision on whether or not to participate in this project will be kept confidential and will in no way affect any other aspect of your relationship with the University of XXXX.

**Further information**

If you would like any further information to help you to decide whether or not to participate in this project, please contact the lead researcher, Sarah Banks at the Centre for Applied Linguistics: XXXX@warwick.ac.uk

**Signature**

I am happy to participate in this project

Name (please print)  ....................................................................................................................................................

Signature  ............................................................................................................................................................

Date:  .............................................................................................................................................................
Appendix D Internship Information and Consent Form 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>XXXX 2017: RESEARCH INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title of Research Project: Developing Reflective Writing on an Internship Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an intern on XXXX 2017, you are invited to participate in a research project jointly organized by XXXX Careers and Skills and the Centre for Applied Linguistics. Its purpose is to help interns improve their ability to reflect on their experiences and to effectively express those reflections in writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What your participation would involve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you choose to participate, a member of the Centre for Applied Linguistics will be able to see your blog entries and forum entries and will comment on your blog. The comments will be intended to enhance the quality of your reflection in future entries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the end of the internship, the blogs of all interns who chose to participate in this research project will be collected together and a member of the Centre for Applied Linguistics will conduct an analysis of the styles of reflective writing which interns tended to use. This analysis will form the basis of one or more research reports. No intern will be personally identified in any research report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks and benefits to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do not believe that participation would carry any risk to you. We believe that participation would benefit you by helping you to develop as a reflective individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the completion of the study, the research report provided by CAL to XXXX will be made available to all participating interns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of giving or withholding consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your decision on whether or not to participate in this project will be kept confidential and will in no way affect any other aspect of your relationship with the University of XXXX.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you would like any further information to help you to decide whether or not to participate in this project, please contact the lead researcher, Sarah Banks, at the Centre for Applied Linguistics: <a href="mailto:XXXX@warwick.ac.uk">XXXX@warwick.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy to participate in this project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name (please print) ..................................................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature ..................................................................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date: ....................................................................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E Example of email sent to 2015 interns inviting them to interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hi XXXX,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I hope you don't mind me contacting you. My name is Sarah and I am a PhD researcher in the Centre of Applied Linguistics at Warwick. I’m getting in touch because I have been looking at your blog as part of my research into reflective writing and I was really interested to see how you used your blog to really detail your personal growth. I wondered if you would mind answering a few questions for me about your experience blogging? I’d be happy to chat either over email or in person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you for your help,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F Blog to Reflect 2015

https://myportfolio.warwick.ac.uk/view/view.php?id=38648

Below is a list of the blogging topics for the specific weeks mentioned. The aim of blogging is to help you extract the learning and skills gained from your Internship which will also help you to prepare for the mentoring session with your mentor and mid-Internship evaluation with the department that you are working with. The sharing of experiences with your fellow interns will facilitate peer mentoring among yourselves, eliciting support and encouragement for each other on your XXXX journey. The listed issues/questions under each topic are there to provoke your thoughts, and are not meant to restrict your reflection in any way. You don’t have to answer the questions directly – they are just to give you ideas about how to approach the topic. Keeping to the topic, please feel free to take your reflection as far as it will go.

The other weeks in between blogging are dedicated to mentoring sessions. Please arrange the mentoring appointments with your mentor if they have not contacted you by the first week of your Internship. As the Internship is happening during the summer holidays, your mentor may sometimes need to rearrange the appointments to accommodate their holidays. However, they will try and stick as closely as possible to the schedule.

In addition to your mentors from XXXX Careers & Skills who will provide their feedback to your blog, the programme also has access to guidance from members of the Centre for Applied Linguistics who does research into reflective writing. If you choose to give them access to your blog, they will be able to help you to deepen your reflections and improve your ability to express reflection through language. The project leader for this is XXXX and her contact details are XXXX

(Adding some newlines within HTML comments to improve formatting without adding rendered whitespace) Blog to Reflect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internship</th>
<th>Blogging Topic &amp; Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 1 commencing | **Where You Are & Where You Want to Be**
Completion of your Employability Development Profile (EDP) will give you an idea of your current level of skills, highlighting your development strengths and gaps.
Based on this and what you know about yourself, in terms of employability, write a blog about:
  A. Where are you now? Where do you want to be?
  B. Are you aware of any obstacles to getting there?
  C. Develop 3 objectives that you would like to achieve during your Internship using the SMART model
This will form the basis of your first mentoring session with SCS mentor. |
| Week 3 commencing | **Working Effectively**
Referring to the ‘Business Etiquette & Networking’ session that you have attended on Induction Day:
  1. Have you observed any ‘unwritten rules’ about how people work in your department?
  2. Can you see anything that effective workers in your department have in common?
  3. In what ways is your department similar to, or different from, other organizations that you have worked with or know about?
  4. Have your observations about your department influenced how you work and your career plans? How? Why?
  5. What other lessons have you learnt? |
| Week 4 commencing | **Taking Stock**
The Internship and your development
  • Which skills and experiences are you gaining so far? |
### Week 6 commencing

#### Networking & Marketing Yourself
- What are you doing to build and record a network?
- Are you experiencing any difficulties with this?
- What have you done to market yourself and to influence how others see you?
- Write an 'elevator pitch' to introduce yourself at a new business networking event. Describe the reasons for your pitch.
- Join & upload profile on LinkedIn. What did you think about when constructing your profile?

---

### Week 7 commencing

#### Sum it! Reflecting & Moving Forward
Your unique University Journey will help you to convince employers during applications and interviews. Tell your Story in MyPortfolio.

Write the final blog about your Internship experience, reflecting on:
- The extent to which you have moved towards your objectives
- Whether any of your objectives changed along the way, and why
- New skills you have learned, and existing skills you have consolidated
- What you found easy and difficult
- Any ways in which your ideas have changed
- How the experience has influenced your career path/plan
- Support required for the final year and career ahead
- Anything that XXXX Careers & Skills or your department could have done to support you better

This will inform your final mentoring session with a Senior Careers Consultant and prepare you for the Department Exit Interview in Week 8.

Based on your reflection, summarise your Internship experience in 300 words.

This summary will be played on a presentation loop during Internship Celebration Event.

---

### The University as an organisation
- What do you know about the external factors that have an impact on the university?
- Do you think that the university's position within research, education and commercial markets influences its behaviour as an organisation? How?
- Does the organisational behaviour of your own department fit with what you would expect from the university as a whole? In what ways?

This will form the basis of your mid-Internship evaluation with your SCS mentor and department.

---

### Questions
- What difficulties are you encountering so far?
- At this point, how would you evaluate your progress against your objectives?
- What are you planning to do to progress your objectives for the rest of the Internship?
- What are the potential risks, difficulties or stress in the coming weeks e.g. deadlines, conflicts, fears?
- What do you need in terms of support, from the department, peers and mentor?
Appendix G Blog to Reflect 2016

https://myportfolio.warwick.ac.uk/view/view.php?id=69745

Below is a list of the blogging topics for the specific weeks mentioned. The aim of blogging is to help you extract the learning and skills gained from your Internship which will prepare you for the mentoring sessions with your mentor, final careers guidance session with a careers consultant and Internship evaluations with the department that you are working with. The sharing of experiences with your fellow interns will facilitate peer mentoring among yourselves, eliciting support and encouragement for each other on your XXXX journey.

The listed issues/ questions under each topic are there to provoke your thoughts, and are not meant to restrict your reflection in any way. You do not have to answer the questions directly – they are there to give you ideas about how to approach the topic. Keeping to the topic, please feel free to take your reflection as far as it will go. Take a look at Tell your Story in MyPortfolio to develop your use of MyPortfolio.

Mentoring sessions will be held in weeks 2, 4 and 6 and the final careers guidance session in week 8. Please arrange the mentoring appointments with your mentor if they have not contacted you by the first week of your Internship. As the Internship happens during the summer holidays, your mentor may sometimes need to rearrange the appointments to accommodate their holiday plans. They will however, try and stick as closely as possible to the schedule. You will be advised on your allocated careers consultant nearer the time for you to arrange the final careers guidance appointment.

In addition to your mentors from XXXX Careers & Skills who will provide feedback to your blog, the programme also has access to guidance from Sarah Banks, a postgraduate researcher on reflective writing with the Centre for Applied Linguistics. If you choose to give Sarah access to your blog, she will be able to help you deepen your reflections and improve your ability to express reflection through positive language. Sarah can be contacted on XXXX@warwick.ac.uk should you have further enquiries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internship</th>
<th>Blogging Topic &amp; Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 1 commencing | Where You Are & Where You Want to Be  
The Strengths Analysis completed during induction would have highlighted your realised and unrealised strengths, learned skills and areas for improvement, increasing your awareness of what motivates and energises you and helping you to explore your options.  
Think about what you want to achieve in terms of personal development? How can you maximise the use of your strengths while minimising the use of learned skills to overcome your weaker areas, to facilitate your personal development and Internship objectives? Identify any potential areas requiring extra support.  
Have a discussion with your line manager(s) on their expectations of you and the possibility of aligning some of your personal development goals with the objectives of the Internship and department. Develop SMART objectives and schedule regular review meetings and final exit interview in the week commencing XXXX with your line manager(s).  
Write a blog, taking into consideration the following issues:  
• Where are you now?  
• Where do you want to be at the end of the Internship?  
• Any obstacles? If so, what are they and how do you plan to overcome them? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3 commencing</th>
<th>Networking &amp; Marketing Yourself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete a blog, thinking about the following issues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is the image that you trying to convey about yourself to colleagues and potential employers? What are you going to do to influence how others see you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How are you planning to market yourself? What are your plans for building a network?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are you experiencing any difficulties? If so, what are your plans for overcoming them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Write an <em>elevator pitch</em> (refer back to the plenary session at Induction Day) to introduce yourself at a new business networking event. Describe the reasons for your pitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Join &amp; upload your profile on LinkedIn – a professional networking site. What was your thoughts when constructing your profile?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4 commencing</th>
<th>Taking Stock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This reflection exercise at the half-way point of the Internship will help you evaluate where you are in terms of achieving your personal development and Internship objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You may want to consider using the <strong>CARE model</strong> in your blog, reflecting on the following issues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Which skills have you gained or improved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What have you achieved in terms of personal development and Internship objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Any experiences that have made an impression on you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are there any difficulties that you have encountered or are encountering?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• At this point, how would you evaluate your progress against your personal development and Internship objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What are the potential risks, difficulties or stress in the coming weeks e.g. deadlines, conflicts, fears?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What are you planning to do to progress your objectives for the rest of the Internship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What do you need in terms of support from the department, peers and mentor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>This will form the basis of your mid-Internship evaluation with your SCS mentor this week, and the department next week - commencing XXXX.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 5 commencing</th>
<th>Working Effectively in the HE Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employers cite commercial awareness as one of the <strong>employability skills</strong> which will facilitate graduate’s success in the world of work. Commercial awareness is about developing an understanding of the business, the environment that it operates, and how your role fits in the bigger picture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blog about commercial awareness, thinking about the following issues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Your views of the University as an organisation operating in the wider world, along with its competitors. What are the key drivers for its success?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What do you know about the external factors that have an impact on the university? Include the importance of innovation and taking calculated risks, and the need to provide customer satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you think that the university’s position within research, education and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
commercial markets influences its behaviour as an organisation? How?

• Does the organisational behaviour of your own department fit with what you would expect from the university as a whole? In what ways?
• Have you observed any ‘unwritten rules’ about how people work in your department?
• Can you see anything that effective workers in your department have in common?
• In what ways is your department similar to, or different from, other organizations that you have worked with or know about?
• Have your observations about your department influenced how you work and your career plans? How? Why?

This will form the basis of your mentoring session with your SCS mentor in the week commencing XXXX.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 7 commencing</th>
<th>Sum it! Reflecting &amp; Moving Forward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Internship experience will be one of the many experiences that contribute to your unique University Journey. The learning, experience and skills gained when effectively articulated will provide evidence for convincing employers in applications and interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write a final blog about your Internship experience, reflecting on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The progress on your personal development and Internship objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Whether any of your objectives changed along the way, and why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• New skills you have learned, and existing skills that you have consolidated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What you have found easy and difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Any ways in which your ideas have changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How the experience has influenced your career path/plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support required for the final year and career ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Anything that XXXX Careers &amp; Skills or your department could have done to support you better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This will inform your final mentoring session with a Senior Careers Consultant and prepare you for the Department Exit Interview in Week 8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on your reflection, summarise your Internship experience in 300 words. This summary will be played on a presentation loop during Internship Celebration Event.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H Blog to Reflect 2017

Blog to Reflect
The aim of blogging is to help you extract the learning and skills gained from your Internship which will prepare you for the mentoring sessions with your mentor, final exit mentoring session with a careers consultant and Internship evaluations with the department that you are working with. The listed issues/questions under each topic are there to provoke your thoughts, and are not meant to restrict your reflection in any way. You do not have to answer the questions directly – they are there to give you ideas about how to approach the topic. Keeping to the topic, please feel free to take your reflection as far as it will go. Take a look at Reflecting on Internship Experience for guidance of reflective writing. You may also want to consider using the CARE model which is very useful in answering questions in applications and interviews.

Due: Sunday XXXX
Access the Blog to Reflect link & write a blog on the topic: Where you are & Where you want to be
Developing self-awareness will help you to assess your skills, discover your strengths and what motivates you, and help you to explore your options.
The Strengths Profiling exercise completed during Internship Induction Day would have highlighted your realised and unrealised strengths, learned skills and areas for improvement, increasing your awareness of what motivates and energises you and helping you to explore your options. You may also want to carry out a Skills Audit to further identify your strong skills & areas for Improvement. Think about what you want to achieve in terms of personal development. How can you maximise the use of your strengths while minimising the use of learned skills to overcome your weaker areas, to facilitate your personal development and Internship objectives? Identify any potential areas requiring extra support.
Have a discussion with your line manager(s) on their expectations of you and develop SMART objectives, with the possibility of aligning some of your personal development goals with the objectives of the Internship and department. Using the blog, reflect taking into consideration the following issues:
• Where are you now?
• Where do you want to be at the end of the Internship?
• Any obstacles? If so, what are they and how do you plan to overcome them?
• What are the SMART objectives that you have set with your line manager(s)?
You may want to consider using the CARE model of reflection, which is very useful in application and interview processes. This blog will form the basis of your first mentoring session with your careers mentor in the week commencing XXXX.

Blog to Reflect
It is nearly half way through your Internship, time to reflect on your experience to date.
Due: Wednesday XXXX
Access the Blog to Reflect link & write a blog on the topic: Taking Stock
This reflection exercise at the half-way point of the XXXX Internship will help you evaluate where you are in terms of achieving the Internship objectives and your personal development. Consider the following issues:

A. Which skills have you gained or improved?
B. What have you achieved in terms of personal development and Internship objectives?
C. Have you had any experiences that made an impression on you?
D. Are there any difficulties that you have encountered or are encountering?
E. At this point, how would you evaluate your progress against your personal development and Internship objectives?
F. What are the potential risks, difficulties or stress in the coming weeks e.g. deadlines, conflicts, fears?
G. What are you planning to do to progress your objectives for the rest of the Internship?
H. What do you need in terms of support from the department, peers and mentor?

You may want to consider using the CARE model of reflection, which is very useful in application and interview processes.

This will form the basis of your mid-internship evaluation with your line manager later this week and your careers mentor in the week commencing XXXX.

Department Mid-Internship Evaluation
An evaluation at this mid-way point will help to ensure that the Internship is progressing smoothly.

Due: Friday XXXX
Focus: Mid-Internship Review
This is the opportunity for you and your line manager to review your progress against personal and Internship objectives set. Using your reflective blog on taking stock, discuss what’s going well, any potential risks, stress or difficulties, and how to continue progressing the objectives. Identify and agree with your line manager on departmental support that you require for the rest of the Internship.

Blog to Reflect
This will be your final blog for the Internship so it is recommended that you leave this task until the end of this week, ensuring that you capture and reflect as much as possible about your internship journey.

Due: Sunday XXXX
Access the Blog to Reflect link & write a blog on the topic: Final Blog: Sum it! Reflect & Move Forward
Look back at your Internship journey starting from when you submitted your application, through to the induction day, to your first day within the Department, and to your mentoring and blogging sessions.
Consider your role and the projects you have worked on to date. Use the CARE model as the basis for reflection if you feel it is appropriate.
Using this final reflection, summarise your Internship experience in 150-200 words and submit the summary to XXXX by Sunday XXXX The summary will be played on a presentation loop during the Internship Celebration Event.
This reflection will help to inform your exit mentoring session with a Senior Careers Consultant and prepare you for the Department Exit Interview with your line manager (& department) in the last week of your Internship, commencing XXXX.
Appendix I Example of annotations

Taken from Student 3 2015 mid-internship evaluation

Mid - Internship Evaluation
Posted by XXXX XXXX on XXXX, 9:50 AM

So the half-way point has come (and gone already). It is a point in the internship that I initially thought was very far away. Well it's not anymore.

This week brought my 2nd (and final?!!) meeting with XXXX, my mentor, and I feel it was brilliantly useful. XXXX is very good at picking up on little things I have written (that I didn’t really think too much into) and reading between the lines.

We evaluated how I was getting on with my objectives and what more I can do to achieve them. Although I had originally thought I wasn’t getting very far with my self-promotion objective but in fact I was, unknowingly. My increased contribution at team and project meetings is indeed self-promotion. I value my ideas and believe more so that others will too. Initially I saw my objectives as three very distinct aims, but in fact they tie up very nicely together.

We looked over my EDP (Employability Development Profile). Although my objectives were developed from my weaker skills, I had not really looked into the skills I graded myself as being strong in. Problem solving, Numeracy, IT skills and creativity are all things I am naturally very strong in so didn’t really think much more about them. Being strong in skills is as important as improving less strong skills. I am quite apprehensive about creating my LinkedIn profile and writing my elevator pitch, but XXXX suggested I discuss these strong skills (and give examples) as well as talking about skill development.

We discussed that I should start blogging slightly more; writing about what I achieve in the week and not just the blogging topics. This will give me something more detailed to look back on after the internship ends.

XXXX also mentioned the idea of writing a résumé in twitter style (140 characters). Although this initially sounds challenging, once I have created my LinkedIn profile and written my elevator pitch, I shall do this. So look forward to that next week!

I also had my weekly meeting with my Line Manager which we extended slightly to include the mid internship evaluation.

Overall, we both feel my project is going well. I am doing an awful lot of other tasks on top of it that relate to other people’s projects within the department and we both feel this is also going well. My project relies a lot on the speed of response from academics and technicians within the XXXX faculty, so we discussed ways in which this can be hurried slightly. We discussed how I was fitting in well with the team and getting involved with as much as I can. We also discussed the idea of further paid work after the internship finished, as well as during the next academic year. I am very hesitant about this as my studies are quite time consuming and I am also a very active member of the XXXX, regularly representing the University, as well as being on the exec. Overall XXXX is very happy with my work and my contribution to the team. As neither of us were experiencing any difficulties relating to my internship, nothing more was necessary to discuss.

Upon reflection of both of these meetings, I feel I am doing well with my internship. When applying and going through the interview process, although I thought the project would be interesting I didn’t realise quite how well suited to it I would be.

Annotations
1 Focus on achieving objectives.
2 Encouraged to write about more than just the blogging prompts.
3 Nothing more to discuss...
Appendix J Example of NVivo Coding

Taken from Student 3 2015 mid-internship evaluation

I also had my weekly meeting with my line manager which we discussed the projects which we continued to the next week. Overall, we both feel that the project is going well. I am doing a good job of utilizing the resources. The role of the participant on top of the research and the progress with the department and use both have been going well. I think they were quite satisfied with the progress. I have been working on the project and have made some progress. I have a few suggestions that I would like to discuss with the team. I think we should consider the following:

1. We should review the existing data and consider the implications of the findings. This will help us to better understand the context of the research.
2. We should consider the limitations of the study and how these may impact the conclusions. This will help us to be more cautious in interpreting the results.
3. We should look for ways to replicate the study and see if the findings are consistent. This will help us to be more confident in the conclusions.

In conclusion, I think the project is going well and we should continue to focus on the goals set for the project.