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An Institutional Ethnographic Inquiry into the Everyday Work of Course Leaders for College-Based Higher Education

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education

Durham University

2025

Abstract

This research focuses on understanding the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education within a further education college. The position of course leader for college-based higher education is seen as someone who is responsible for the daily operational running of the course including teaching and administrative duties. Taking an institutional ethnographic approach, the overall aim is to understand and make visible how their work is socially organised in The College Group. Adopting the standpoint of the course leaders for college-based higher education and drawing on the problematic that they find their everyday work challenging, interviews were conducted with course leaders. Following this, interviews were conducted with other informants in The College Group with a strategic role in college-based higher education. In addition, texts which organised the work of the course leaders were analysed, observations of course leaders carrying out their everyday work were conducted and finally, observations of senior management meetings which discussed college-based higher education were also carried out.

The findings of this research illuminate the complexities course leaders for college-based higher education face in going about their everyday work. My findings show that texts do not offer sufficient information to allow course leaders for college-based higher education to know about their everyday work. It also became evident that the employment structures in The College Group are not sufficient to offer support to the course leaders for college-based higher education, leading to course leaders needing to seek support from outside sources. The findings also show that course leaders for college-based higher education struggle with time to complete their everyday work. It was found that course leaders for college-based higher education are subjected to a

range of surveillance techniques, which are often aligned to the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted), but not always relevant measures for higher education. Yet overall, the findings show that the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education is socially organised by The College Group through its implementation of New Public Management and the drive for efficiency, economy and effectiveness.

Based on the findings of this research it is recommended that line managers develop a more detailed understanding of the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education to allow for effective support mechanisms to be available to the course leaders for college-based higher education. I argue that this deeper understanding will lead to a reduction in the feelings of isolation and the sense of not belonging. A further recommendation is for line managers and college leaders to have a greater understanding of the workload of course leaders for college-based higher education. This will allow for the development of an effective timetable that can be managed within the limits of a typical working week.

Contents page

Publications from this research

Sutton, C. (2023) 'An institutional ethnographic investigation into the pastoral work of course leaders for college-based higher education', *Research in Post Compulsory Education*, 28(4) pp.1-17.

Sutton, C. (2025) 'Time: The Hidden Challenge for Course Leaders for College-Based Higher Education', in Scattergood, K. and Jones, S. (eds) *Exploring Practitioner Research in Further Education,* London: Routledge, pp.67-76

List of tables, figures and appendices

Tables

Figures

Appendices

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	In full	Explanation
BP	Business Planning	A meeting between SMT and HoDs/ GHHE in The College group.
CBHE	College-Based Higher Education	Qualifications studied at level four or above, which are delivered in the further education college.
DfE	Department for Education	A government department for England and Wales who are responsible for teaching and learning.
FE	Further Education	Qualifications from entry level to level three. These can include vocational and academic courses in addition to apprenticeships.
GHHE	Group Head of Higher Education	A position in the staffing structure of The College Group. Aligned with the position of HoD, however the GHHE has a cross-college role.
HE	Higher Education	Qualifications at level four and above. For example, degrees, and foundation degrees, higher degrees and higher apprenticeships.
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council England	Now covered by the UK Research and Innovation and Office for Students, this agency distributed public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges from 1992 until 2018.

HEI	Higher Education Institution	An institution such as a university which delivers higher education courses. This is distinct from an FE college which delivers higher education.
HoD	Head of Department	A position in the staffing structure of The College Group. Positioned above PALs, HoDs have a larger curriculum area to oversee.
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education	A government organisation that inspects the quality of education in schools, colleges and training providers in England.
PAL	Programme Area Leader	A position in the staffing structure in The College Group. PAL is responsible for sub-curriculum areas and oversees the courses; they are a line manager to all staff who work on these courses.
PR	Performance Review	A meeting between SMT and the HoDs/ GHHE. The purpose is to discuss the ongoing provision of courses in relation to staffing, budgets and financial viability.
QA	Quality Assurance	Processes which take place to monitor the quality of the provision and to ensure that academic regulations are followed.
SED	Self-Evaluation Document	A document produced in The College Group which critically reviews the performance of a

		curriculum area and set targets for improvement.
SMT	Senior Management Team	A position in the staffing structure of The College Group. These positions are cross-college roles with strategic areas of focus.
TTR	Teaching and Training Review	A process in The College Group for monitoring and observing curriculum staff in delivering their taught sessions.

Glossary of theoretical concepts

Below I have outlined some key terms used in my thesis drawn from institutional ethnography. These concepts will be further developed as they enter discussion in each chapter.

Actualities - Smith (2005) refers to these as the world outside of texts. It is the real-life lived experiences and activities of an individual. Actualities are a subject position and a person's everyday activities and experiences. They are not an object of study in themselves.

Discourse – Smith (2005) defined discourse as an active process, and one found in talk and texts. She argued that discourse coordinates and as such is part of the social organisation and ruling relations.

Ideology - Using a Marxist conceptualisation of ideology, this is a set of beliefs which are passed down from the dominant class and purported as reality.

Informant – An informant is the person who is participating in the research.

Institutional capture – Institutional capture is where the researcher becomes heavily embedded in the institutional processes being studied that they begin to use the institutional discourse rather than studying and unpacking it. As such institutional capture results in the ruling relations becoming hidden.

Institutional discourse Institutional discourse is the language and terminology used by the institution. Institutional discourses contain ruling relations. They are concepts, categories and frames. The institutional ethnographer is required to analyse institutional discourses in order to understand how the ruling relations perform their role.

Local/ extra-local/ trans-local - Local is the standpoint adopted in the research. Extra local refers to the people and processes which organise the work at a local level. Trans-local refers to processes beyond the organisation which influence the extra-local processes.

Mapping - Mapping is the way in which the institutional ethnographer makes sense of the organisational processes they are investigating. Mapping allows connections to be seen between different texts, processes and work knowledges.

Problematic – The problematic is the driving force of the inquiry. It is founded in the actualities of people's lives from a given standpoint. Institutional ethnographic researchers use the problematic as the route into the inquiry rather than being driven by literature.

Ruling relations - Ruling will be taken from Smith's (2005) understanding of Marx's class theory. Ruling therefore is a form of power which is exerted in a top-down fashion from those in the dominant class to those who are subordinate.

Social organisation – Social organisation is the way in which people's work is coordinated. The social organisation of an institution often confers the ruling relations. This thesis is looking for the social organisation of the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education.

Standpoint – Drawing on Harding's Standpoint Theory, the standpoint seeks to provide a voice and position for women. Smith developed this further to mean the point of entry into the inquiry and not just from a female perspective.

Text – Texts are replicable documents (or images). They are not to be viewed as objects for analysis but as 'in-action' they disclose processes or social organisation and ruling relations. When the informant engages with the text, they enter a text-reader-conversation which forms a work-text-work relationship.

Work - For Smith (2005) work is used as a generous definition which refers to any activities undertaken that require time and effort. The term work does not refer to either paid or unpaid employment.

Work knowledge – Work knowledge is the experiences of the informant. This incorporates how they do their work and how they think and feel about their work.

Declaration/ statement of copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my husband, Phil Sutton and my boys, Andrew and Joe Sutton for being my cheerleaders and supporting me in completing this thesis over the last six years. Despite none of you having the slightest idea what my research is about, you have still managed to be there for me. Without your encouragement I am not sure I would have had the confidence to even start on this journey, never mind making it to the end; for that I will be eternally grateful. I hope I have made you all proud of me.

To my superb supervisors Rille Raaper and Jonathan Tummons. I could not have asked for better supervisors. You have been an inspiration to me and have always been there when I needed you. You have pushed me to be the best I can and encouraged me to push beyond my comfort zone; even when I did not have the confidence to do so! Your unwavering support and feedback have made this an amazing journey. I will always be grateful for your generosity in all aspects of your supervisory role.

To The College Group, thank you so much for allowing me to conduct my research in your institution and for providing some financial support to help me along the way. Thank you to all who took the time out of their busy day to take part in my research. Your openness and honesty have allowed me to represent the course leaders for CBHE in a true light and show how work your is influenced by factors beyond what is always visible. I will be forever grateful to you all.

Thank you to my current employer. Your support with my course fees has been very much appreciated.

My final acknowledgement and thanks go to coffee and chocolate. You have been my constant companion and helped me through the hours and hours of reading, data analysis, writing, and redrafting. Your contribution to the completion of this thesis has been immeasurable!

Chapter One: Introduction and overview of thesis

1:1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview and rationale of my thesis. The chapter starts with a discussion of college-based higher education (CBHE) and the role of a course leader. Moving on, this chapter sets out the context in which the research has been conducted. It is here that I discuss the structure and positioning of the further education (FE) college group at the centre of this research and where course leaders for CBHE are positioned within this structure. Following on from the structure and positioning of course leaders for CBHE, I discuss how I made the decision to use institutional ethnography as a theoretical underpinning for this research. I explain that it is within institutional ethnography that I found a framework that enabled me to explore the work of the course leaders for CBHE starting from their position. In addition, institutional ethnography allows me to move beyond the position of the course leaders for CBHE into the policies and processes in The College Group to develop an understanding of their everyday work. Discussion around the theoretical underpinnings then leads to an introduction and explanation of my research question and how, though the collection and initial analysis of my data, I formulated four sub-questions to allow my research question to be answered and to structure the findings. This chapter then provides a brief introduction of how institutional ethnography has been used as a methodology, outlining details of the data collection methods used in this research. Finally in this chapter, I discuss my positionality and why this research is important to me based on my experiences as a course leader for CBHE and how this research aims to address some of the issues with the scarcity of literature on course leaders for CBHE. The final section of this chapter outlines the structure of this thesis by providing an outline of each of the chapters to follow.

1:2 College-based higher education

CBHE can be seen under different terms within literature: terms such as higher education in further education (HE in FE) or college higher education (CHE). More recently, the term college-based higher education (CBHE) has been popularised in academic and policy discourses (Kadi-Hanifi and Keegan, 2020; QAA, 2022; Taylor and Bullock, 2024). This thesis aligns with this discursive shift and adopts CBHE as the most up-to-date terminology to capture HE provision in FE college settings. CBHE in England is the delivery of level 4 qualifications and above in the FE college. According to Advance HE (2020), CBHE is complex, and it can take several forms. Typically, CBHE is classified as non-prescribed[1] (higher level qualifications written and awarded by bodies that are not universities) or prescribed[2] (higher level qualifications written and awarded by universities and institutions with degree or foundation degree awarding powers) (Kadi-Hanifi and Keenan, 2016). In today's CBHE market, prescribed HE also includes higher apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications (Augar, 2019). While CBHE can take multiple forms, there is a general agreement that the core purpose of CBHE is centered on addressing

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[1] Non-prescribed higher education – higher education that is made up of professional awards by vocational awarding bodies. These also include higher technical qualifications.

[2] Prescribed higher education – higher education where the funding is given directly to the further education colleges or via the franchising university. Prescribed higher education is overseen by the Office for Students. These include foundation degrees, degrees and post graduate degrees.

the widening participation agenda by offering a unique place for students. The uniqueness arises from colleges offering a local and flexible alternative for HE study in a familiar environment. The overall aim of the unique place is to encourage those students coming from low participations areas, and for those students who are mature, first generation, part-time, from ethnic minority backgrounds, with disabilities or on low incomes (QAA, 2022; Trotman, 2023). In addition to addressing the widening participation agenda, CBHE has become an increasingly important medium for developing higher level skills in local economies by offering vocationally relevant qualifications which address local needs (Education and Training Foundation, 2016; QAA, 2022).

The most recent data states that there are 218 colleges in England, with 157 of these being general FE colleges (Association of Colleges, 2024). The Association of Colleges (2024) further proposed that there are 1.6 million students studying in colleges, 100,000 of which are studying CBHE. 100,000 CBHE students make up approximately 10% of the HE students in England (Association of Colleges, 2023).

1:3 Research context

My research focuses on the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE within the context of a recently established college group in England – The College Group. As a single FE college, the original college – Dormand College[3] started out as a technical college but became an FE college in the early 2000s. Dormand College took over a local sixth form college, Christchurch Sixth Form and technical training provider in 2015, and a skills centre in 2016. Most recently, and as a consequence

[3] All names of colleges, universities and informants have been anonymised, and pseudonyms have been used throughout.

of the Conservative Government's Post-16 Area Review (starting in 2015), the college merged with another FE college, Oakview College in 2018 under the framework of a type B merger[4] (AoC, n.d). The type B merger resulted in Oakview College as a corporation to dissolve its assets and liabilities and to transfer these to Dormand College. The FE colleges within The College Group have delivered HE for over 20 years. Both Dormand and Oakview colleges have both delivered their HE provision within a franchise arrangement with Waterside University. This arrangement has continued through the merger into The College Group. Currently, The College Group delivers HE on three of the five sites: Dormand College, Oakview College and Christchurch Sixth Form (however, data was only gathered in the two FE colleges: Dormand and Oakview colleges (discussed further in Chapter Four). Despite each college having its own curriculum and managers, I have chosen to focus on The College Group as one entity. I rationalise this through my knowledge that despite the different campuses within The College Group, there is one governing body, one senior management team, who have cross-college roles and one set of institutional policies which apply to all campuses, additionally, the Group Head of Higher Education's role is across all campuses. In having the Group Head of HE and a Principal with the strategic lead for HE working across all campuses, it can be taken that the management of processes and the implementation of policies has consistency. Therefore, I argue that for this research, considering The College Group as a whole is the best course of action. This research focused on the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE across The College Group. In The College Group, each HE course has a course leader which is a requirement of Waterside University (discussed further in Chapter Five).

[4] "Type B merger takes place where one corporation continues and the others are dissolved with the staff, assets and liabilities transferring into it (a single dissolution)" (AoC, n.d.)

In The College Group, each course is situated within a curriculum area in the college at each site. For example, Performing Arts is located in the original college site within the Department of Creative Industries, whereas Engineering is within the Construction Department and is on the site of the new merged college, Oakview College. In addition, there is overlap across the provision in terms of Health, Education and Childcare HE courses where these are delivered at both Dormand and Oakview college sites. Each course on each site has a course leader. The course leaders are line managed within the FE college structure. This can be seen in Figure 1 which shows the hierarchy of roles within The College Group. As Figure 1 shows, course leaders (for all levels) are line managed by programme area leaders.

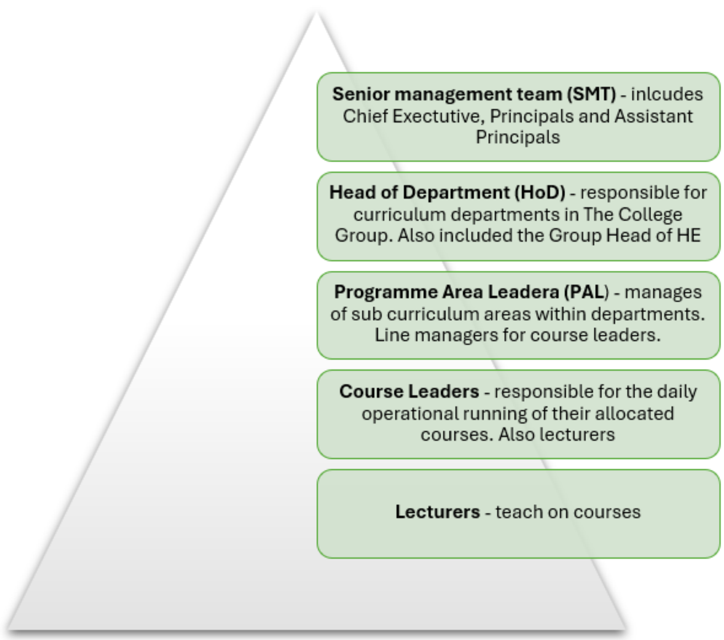

Figure 1: Hierarchy of Roles in The College Group

1:4 Course leaders

At the heart of my research is the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. To provide clarity, this thesis focuses on course leaders for non-prescribed CBHE. Course leaders are nominated members of an academic team whose role is to ensure the smooth running of the course or courses (Paterson, 1999; Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020; Murphy and Curtis, 2013). The work of a course leader, whether in an FE or HE setting is demanding, varied and complex. It is a role that encompasses managing course paperwork, marketing, recruitment, course development, quality assurance, managing a team, student satisfaction, pastoral work and academic duties such as teaching and learning (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020; Cahill *et al*., 2015; Paterson, 1999). Cahill *et al*. (2015) refers to a course leader role as the nominated person for students and course related issues, where the course leader needs to have many skills for effective management including the ability to advise, interpret, oversee, inform, counsel, organise, reprimand, sell, chair, guide and enforce rules. The everyday work of course leaders is discussed further in Chapter Two.

1:5 Why institutional ethnography?

In setting out on my research journey I was unsure where to start. I knew what I wanted to know in everyday terms: what drives The College Group to do things in the way they do in relation to course leaders for CBHE? Yet I was unsure how to go about finding it out. A discussion at one of my supervision meetings introduced me to institutional ethnography – something I had not come across until this point. Intrigued, I immediately bought two books by Dorothy E. Smith, *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (2005) and *Institutional Ethnography as Practice* (2006). On reading these books, I knew I had found the framework for my research. Institutional ethnography allows me to start at the position of course leaders for CBHE; to take up a standpoint. It allows the informants to share their work knowledge; I can listen, question, check my understanding and reflect. I can then set out on a journey of discovery to find out how the course leaders' work is organised in the way that they experience it. This means moving beyond the local position of course leaders into the extra local work of the line managers, heads of department, senior managers and beyond, in addition to exploring textual artefacts to find out what is organising their work in that particular way. Through institutional ethnography, I found a way of making the social organisation of The College Group visible. Further, I was able to map the social organisation in a way that can be shared with course leaders to help them to see how their work is organised. As Smith (2005) argues, institutional ethnography is ideally positioned for practitioner researchers who experience their lives as problematic. Institutional ethnography offers an opportunity for marginalised groups, to understand how their work is marginalised by the dominating forces of the institution. A more detailed, critical discussion of institutional ethnography can be found in Chapter Three.

1:6 Research questions

In institutional ethnography, I found a framework that takes the standpoint of course leaders for CBHE and followed through lines of inquiry to find out how things happened in the way they did. The framework also offered me the language and tools to formulate my core research question:

How is the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education socially organised in The College Group?

Institutional ethnography is an iterative process, therefore as I collected my data, I had to go back and forth in understanding it. Whilst I had an idea about the everyday work of course leaders from my experience as a course leader for CBHE and as an insider researcher, it was not until I began to analyse the data that I formulated my sub-questions. For each question asked, I followed the lines of inquiry to understand not only how the organisation of The College Group influences the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE but also how The College Group is organised in the way that it is.

- **How do course leaders come to understand their everyday work?**

This sub-question was important as it allowed the presentation and further analysis of my data to capture the beginning of the journey for course leader for CBHE in The College Group. This question enabled me to understand how a person becomes a course leader, how they learn about their everyday work and how their everyday work is organised through timetables.

Therefore, this question is aimed at setting the context for the course leaders for CBHE and provides an orientation into their everyday work, whilst grounding the standpoint from where this research progresses. Within institutional ethnography, standpoint is as an entry point into the social organisation of the institution, orientating the researcher to the actualities of the everyday/night experiences of the individual or groups with whom the study is focused on (DeVault and McCoy, 2006; Smith, 1987).

- **How is the everyday work of course leaders situated within working with others?**

This sub-question offers an insight into the work of course leaders for CBHE through the lens of working with others. Central to the positioning of the course leaders for CBHE in The College Group is their positioning and their everyday work in relation to others. Course leaders work with the franchising university, with the other partner colleges and within the curriculum teams in The College Group. I wanted to understand how this positioning led to the organisation of the course leaders' everyday work.

- **What is the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE?**

The aim of this sub-question was to understand how course leaders shared their knowledge of their everyday work with me. Using this work knowledge and the tools of institutional ethnography I delve further into how their work was organised. Paying attention to the course leaders' talk ensured that I remained rooted in their standpoint.

Work knowledge entails a person's experiences and knowledge of their work. The concept of work knowledge includes what they do, how they do it, how their work aligns and coordinates with others and how they feel about their work (Tummons, 2018; Smith, 2005). It was vital that I heard the work knowledge of the informants in my research, especially the course leaders as it is through listening to their work knowledge that I will discover lines of inquiry to follow up on whether that be through texts of talking with other people. However, in listening for work knowledge, I needed to be mindful of avoiding institutional capture, where I as researcher become too embedded in the research context and the institutional discourses rather than being the one who unpacks them. I needed to be mindful of this due to my familiarity of the research field from an insider perspective (Smith, 2005).

- **How do The College Group's surveillance and accountability processes impact on the everyday work of course leaders?**

My role in The College Group gave me access to privileged information that led to me asking this sub-question. I was aware that The College Group routinely observed and monitored the work of the academic staff. Therefore, I wanted to understand what the driving force for monitoring the everyday work of course leaders were and how the drive for accountability organised the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE.

Within post-incorporation FE colleges, the increase in the overall surveillance of staff soared as the drive for accountability increased (Donovan, 2019). The rise of the audit culture is intimately connected with what is known as New Public Management (Randle and Brady 1987; Strathern, 2000). New Public Management in FE colleges ushered in economic discourses and practices in the drive for transparency, effectiveness, efficiencies, measurable output, performance and accountability (Randle and Brady, 1997a; Leatherwood, 2000). One of the advantages of institutional ethnography is that it allows the researcher to move beyond the local level of their standpoint into the social organisation of the institution to explore ‘how things happen’ and to reveal ruling relations (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). Therefore, this question drives the inquiry into the understanding how surveillance and accountability organise the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE.

1:7 Institutional ethnography as a method for inquiry

Institutional ethnography offers not only a theoretical framework from which to position the research but also a methodological framework to work within. This method of inquiry is built upon the concept of work; what people are doing as they participate in institutional processes (DeVault and McCoy, 2012; Smith, 2005). Yet, an institutional ethnographic inquiry does not stop at the level of the work being investigated. It aims to delve deeper into the work processes, policies and the people involved in those work processes. This helped me to understand how the course leaders for CBHE came to know and experience their work. With institutional ethnography being inquiry-based, it permits a framework for using a range of data collection methods. Overall, my research has focused on using interview data, observational data, textual artefacts and reflections and notes from my researcher diary.

The findings from this research are drawn from interview data from sixteen informants, including nine course leaders and seven informants who are members of staff in The College Group and have a role linked to the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE. The informants were recruited using a purposive sampling method as all informants needed to be either a course leader for CBHE or have a role in The College Groups that impacts the work of the course leaders for CBHE. I have drawn on the observations of four course leaders carrying out their everyday work, plus four observations of senior leader meetings. Furthermore, the findings draw on data from textual artefacts from both within The College Group and from Waterside University (a detailed discussion of the methodology can be found in Chapter Four). Through making sense of the data, I have organised my findings and discussion chapters into themes drawing on this complex dataset. An overview of the chapters can be seen in section 1.9 of this chapter.

1:8 Why is this research important to me?

I began working as a course leader for CBHE for a Foundation Degree in Supporting Teaching and Learning in 2014. This was at Pinewood College (not used in this research) where I was employed. I had not taught on HE courses or been a course leader prior to this appointment. However, due to having a primary school teaching qualification, I was the only person in the college with an appropriate background to run the course. Upon being assigned my first course leadership role, I was lost. I turned to the Head of Department (HoD) in which the course was positioned and asked for help, to no avail. She said she did not know the course or the processes for running it. She gave me the e-mail address for the course link tutor at Waterside University. Upon emailing the link tutor, I found he was friendly, welcoming, and as helpful as he could be. However, he could not tell me anything about how to lead the course in a college. He advised that I speak with one of the course leaders in another partner college. He put me in touch with Elizabeth, a course leader at Oakview College (now part of The College Group). Elizabeth was so helpful and supportive; she could answer the questions nobody else could. Through Elizabeth, the link tutor and the course leaders at the other partner colleges, I learned how to be a course leader. In 2015, I made the move to Dormand College (now part of The College Group), taking on the same course leadership as in my previous college. Again, I found those in the curriculum department and the HoD unable to offer any further support beyond the modules they taught on. Therefore, I continued with support from the course leaders in the partner colleges and my Waterside University link tutor. Subsequently, I took on two other course leadership roles for a Foundation Degree in Early Years and a BA (hons) in Education and Training (top-up).

As the HE provision increased in The College Group, I found that new course leaders for other CBHE courses would come to me for support and to answer their questions on academic regulations and processes. Therefore, they too found it difficult to gain support from their line managers and HoDs. The more I got to understand CBHE, the more I began to question the processes in The College Group. I found myself frustrated with many aspects of my work. This was due to a lack of understanding of CBHE from those in The College Group who wrote the policies and the procedures. At times course leaders for CBHE completed paperwork on their course for The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) processes, paperwork that would never be seen or used as the courses were not inspected by Ofsted[5]. At other times, course leaders found themselves duplicating information on paperwork: one for Waterside University and other another to satisfy the requirements of The College Group. Not being one to passively accept the processes I did not understand the logic for, I questioned those who wrote the policies, only to be told that the policies and procedures apply to all in The College Group. Therefore, despite the perceived irrelevance, duplication or whatever it was, course leaders for CBHE had to continue with these tasks.

Speaking with other course leaders in The College Group and partner colleges, I was not alone in my experiences and frustrations. I began to reflect on the course leaders' work for CBHE and sought out published literature. With a scarcity of literature, I wondered why the work of course leaders for CBHE was not visible. At this point I turned to my own research. I feel it is vital that the voices of the course leaders are represented and heard. I want course leaders for CBHE's work to be seen within a FE college setting and for the FE college managers and

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[5] Ofsted is the agency who conducts inspections on specified educational establishments and is further discussed in Chapter Two.

policymakers to be mindful that not all courses are the same. It is here that I position my research. My aim was to address the gap in literature by researching and developing and understanding of the everyday work of the course leader for CBHE, and thereby making their work visible and providing clarity on how their everyday work is organised.

1:9 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is organised into nine further chapters. Chapter Two provides a review of the published literature on course leaders, CBHE and policies relating to the higher and FE sectors. Following on from the literature review is Chapter Three. The focus of Chapter Three is on critically discussing the chosen theoretical framework of institutional ethnography and how this underpins and guides this research. Chapter Four provides a methodological framework for my research where I have discussed the profile of informants, my methods of data collection and the complexities of data analysis. Chapters Five to Nine provide an analytic discussion of the research findings. By exploring texts and work knowledge, Chapter Five focuses on how a person becomes a course leader and how they learn about their everyday work. Chapter Six critically discusses course leaders' everyday work in relation to working with others and accessing support in their work by drawing on the work knowledge of course leaders and their line managers. Drawing on work knowledge, texts and observational data, Chapter Seven critically explores the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE in relation to specific aspects of their work, namely, marketing and recruitment, curriculum work and working with students. Drawing on texts, observational data and work knowledge, Chapters Eight and Nine both focus on the surveillance and accountability systems in The College Group and how these influence the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE. Explicitly, Chapter Eight focuses on the surveillance of teaching and learning whilst

Chapter Nine focuses on surveillance and accountability through tracking student progress and student voice. Finally, Chapter Ten offers a discussion and concludes the findings of this research. It is in Chapter Ten that I answer my research questions of how the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE is socially organised in The College Group, and how trans-local forces influence the organisation of The College Group. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and knowledge contribution this thesis makes and a discussion around the limitations of my research and recommendations for CBHE professional practice.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2:1 Introduction

College-Based Higher Education (CBHE) and the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE are inextricably linked to the institutional structures and processes with the Further Education (FE) sector. In reviewing the literature, I found several pertinent themes. Figure 2 provides an overview of the journey through my literature review, highlighting the themes that I have identified in the literature and critically discussed in this chapter.

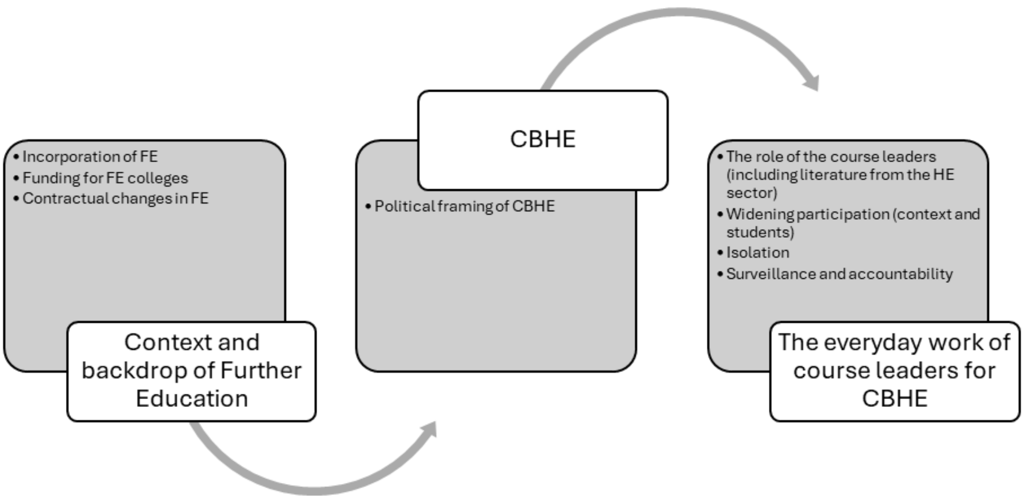


Figure 2: A journey through the literature review: Themes identified in the literature.

To understand the everyday work of CBHE course leaders, this chapter will start with the context and backdrop of FE. I discuss the impact of the incorporation of FE colleges in England from 1992, and how this process heralded changes in funding and the management of the FE college infrastructure and staffing. In particular, I will explore how the focus on New Public Management (NPM) within the post-incorporated FE colleges resulted in contractual changes for FE lecturers.

The chapter continues with an exploration of the position of CBHE within a political context in England. This will set the context in which I will explore the multifaceted role of the course leader in contemporary CBHE. Research on CBHE course leaders is somewhat limited. Whilst CBHE has been subjected to research, there is often a lack of acknowledgement for the specific work of the course leader. Instead, where available, this work seems to fall under the umbrella term of lecturer for CBHE. Therefore, I will also be drawing on literature for CBHE lecturers and at times FE lecturers. The reason for this is that in many FE colleges, course leaders for CBHE are also lecturers for CBHE and often FE lecturers too. Furthermore, I also draw on literature on course leaders from the higher education (HE) to acknowledge the nuances related to HE work.

The final sections of this chapter bring together the themes of the preceding sections of this chapter to contextualise the key themes to the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. In exploring the course leaders' everyday work, I focus on their role, discussing the wide range of duties that this work entails. I then contextualise this role with the remit of FE colleges, highlighting the challenges of the FE contracts of employment and working conditions on the work of the course leader. I then go on to explore how CBHE is central to the widening participation agenda. Yet with this brings students who often do not have traditional entry qualifications, and are often older (AoC, 2024). All these results in course leaders needing to provide additional support to help the students be successful. Finally, I explored the internal and external surveillance and accountability processes that provide accountability to the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE.

2:2 Incorporation of further education colleges and post-incorporation management

The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) (applicable to England and Wales) saw FE colleges being removed from local authority control and positioned under the control of central government. This significant change brought about by legislative changes is known as incorporation. In their chapter defining and describing FE, Hodgson, Bailey and Lucas (2015) describe incorporation as a process that combines both funding reforms and changes in the governance structures of FE colleges. Exploring this further, Lucas and Crowther's article (2016) note that as a result of incorporation, FE colleges became corporation-like in their own right, being partially state funded, self-governing and independent with responsibility for their own assets, staff and budgets.

These changes came about within the context of changes in the global political landscape of the western world. In England during the 1980s, the Conservative government argued that the public sector was inefficient (Mather, Worrall and Seifert, 2008). In the Government's White Paper 'Education and Training for the 21st Century' (DfE, 1991) it was specifically argued that FE colleges were inefficient and had poor financial management. Further, there were concerns over academic standards and accountability (Randle and Brady, 1997a). Considering the concerns about academic standards, The Audit Commission raised concerns about public money allocated to colleges due to poor retention and the poor success of college leavers. It was argued that improvements could be made if colleges were positioned in competition with each other and if they adopted the more progressive management practices of the private sector. It is the drive for competition between colleges for funding that has led to a quasi-market whereby the market has resulted in changes how colleges are governed and organised, whilst still being largely under the control of central government (DfE, 1991; Hodgson, Bailey and Lucas, 2015; Lucas and Crowther, 2016; Mather, Worrall and Siefert, 2008; Bailey and Urwin, 2014; Bleiklie, 2018).

In adopting the management practices of the private sector, the post-incorporated FE colleges introduced a management style known as New Public Management (NPM). This dominant management style focuses on economy (e.g. keeping staffing and resource costs to their lowest), efficiency (e.g. ensuring that staff and resources are productive) and effectiveness (e.g. ensuring the right results: students are achieving their qualifications). The three Es were monitored with the extensive use of performance indicators and market discourses such as productivity, cost-effectiveness, performance and value for money (Bleiklie, 2018*;* Shore and Roberts, 1993; Leatherwood, 2000).

The NPM style introduced changes in a management style based on efficiency and effectiveness. The changes saw performance indicators and surveillance becoming more commonplace instead of trusting that lecturers were working in the best interests of the FE college (Mather, Worrall and Siefert, 2005; 2008). FE Colleges were forced to adopt more business-like approaches; they have had to become accountable to stakeholders and organisational structures have changed. Power has shifted from teaching professionals to stakeholders such as governing boards, students and employers, and institutional leaders (Bleiklie, 2018) to which the teaching professionals have now become accountable.

Under the Learning and Skills Act (2000), the FE Funding Council was replaced by the Learning and Skills Council (Skills Funding Agency from 2010). This new council was to take responsibility for funding. Ofsted became responsible for external surveillance of schools and colleges (Hodgson, Bailey and Lucas, 2015). Ofsted's role in surveillance and accountability was to be enacted through the inspection of a range of educational institutions, including FE colleges, whereby judgments would be made and publicly available reports produced on the quality of education (Ofsted, n.d.). As NPM became embedded, new performance indicators for colleges were based on financial health of the college, Ofsted inspection grade and success rates benchmarked against national rates - all of which were closely monitored (Hodgson, Bailey and Lucas, 2015). By 2008, the Learning and Skills Council published the document 'Identifying and Managing Under-Performance'. This was designed to eliminate inadequate and unsatisfactory provision in the sector. There were four metrics by which the Learning and Skills Council (2008) identified under performance: the "*analysis of success rates compared with minimum levels of performance; financial health and financial management and control; inspection outcomes; and learner health, safety and welfare arrangements*" (Learning and Skills Council, 2008, p.6). Success rates, based on student completion, became a well-established measure used by Ofsted, and the use of competition was illustrated in the publication of league tables (Hodgson, Bailey and Lucas, 2015; Shore and Roberts, 1993).

The new language of education in the post-incorporation period led also to students being recast as consumers of education and new stakeholders, with an entitlement to have say in how their courses were designed and managed (Nixon, Scullion and Hearn, 2018; Cook-Sather, 2006). Further to this, through their interview-based research into undergraduate students in an English university, Nixon, Scullion and Hearn (2018) found that the student as consumer identity was adopted by the students themselves, finding that students expected to be entertained by lecturers, spoon-fed, provided with hand-outs and high marks in their assessments. Further, Nixon, Scullion and Hearn (2018) found that students wanted choice over their course and were mainly driven by and completed work which carried credits rather than formative learning tasks. Similarly, Quinlan (2021) conducted research on undergraduate students in an English university to understand their consumer attitudes. However, her findings differed from Nixon, Scullion and Hearn (2018). Quinlan (2021) found, in her open –ended question-based survey, that students did not refer to discourses about value for money. Therefore, Quinlan (2021) questions whether students see themselves as consumers of education, and arguing that students are less consumerist than is often thought and seeking value for money is not their goal.

Despite differences in whether students view themselves as consumers or not, student surveys and forums have become part of the new management systems as discourses of students as consumers changed their role to one which encourages the monitoring of lecturers through quality systems and complaints procedures (Grayston, Orr and Wye, 2015; Randle and Brady, 1997b). In other words, with the changes in managerial styles to NPM and FE colleges' and fundings for FE colleges being determined by student numbers and outcomes, it is evident that students-as-consumer discourses have become characteristic of how FE colleges are spoken about and how they operate. Whilst there is a wealth of literature on students as consumers in the HE sector, there is no comparable literature on CBHE students. Therefore, it is not known how CBHE students identify in relation to students as consumer discourses. Regardless of this gap in literature, CBHE students are operating within FE colleges where managerialism and the student as consumer logic has become prevalent.

2:3 Funding for further education colleges

The funding for FE colleges has a direct impact on the policies and cultures which govern that college. This in turn impacts on the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE who are working within the FE environment. Therefore, I argue that it is important to discuss the funding arrangements for the FE sector before showing how this influences the social organisation in which course leaders for CBHE work.

The merger of the Education Funding Agency and the Skills Funding Agency resulted in the Education and Skills Funding Agency (2017). They introduced government funding that followed the FE student, and if the student was not retained or if they did not successfully complete their course, the college would not receive the full funding allocation for that student. Funding for FE colleges was applied per student in three stages: entry on courses, during the courses and on achievement (Hodgson, Bailey and Lucas, 2015). FE colleges now had a renewed focus on increasing student numbers and therefore vying for the same students. This competition created the scope for FE colleges to offer greater flexibility in how courses were delivered and student-centred responsiveness in the courses. Yet this flexibility in how courses were delivered also allowed managers to reduce the teaching hours on their courses, resulting in lecturers still needing to deliver the same content but in fewer hours. Furthermore, while the mantra of ensuring that the right learner is on the right course was bandied about, this was not always achieved. Instead, it resulted in colleges prioritising the increase in student numbers with a mentality on ‘bums on seats’ rather than student being on right courses (Randle and Brady, 1997a; Mather, Worrall and Seifert, 2008).

Working within an incorporated institution means that senior management teams (SMT) and the governors must focus on the financial stability of the institution (Mather, Worrall and Siefert 2008). It is of note that FE colleges receive less money per student than schools and universities (Lewis and Bolton, 2023). Whilst the rational for these funding differences is not clear, the result is that FE colleges need to increase student numbers, retention and achievement to secure their financial sustainability (Illsley and Waller, 2017).

In their small-scale interview–based research in two curriculum areas within an FE college in England, Illsley and Waller (2017) found that the impact of funding was felt most keenly by the lecturing staff. They reported that lecturing staff felt the pressure to keep students on their course and to ensure that they passed the course no matter what; where students were failing and not achieving, it was the lecturer’s responsibility to put more work in to ‘get them through’ (Participant in Illsley and Waller, 2017, p.484). This pressure to retain students and ensure that they achieve their qualification resulted in lecturers needing to justify and document any potential failures and losses in student numbers.

Therefore, in an era of shrinking funding, competition for students became key to the financial stability of FE colleges, with the argument being made that without the money brought in by students, there would be no jobs for course leaders or lecturers (Donovan, 2019; Illsley and

Waller, 2017).The balance between student funding and jobs for teaching staff is further evidence of efficiencies, economy and effectiveness inherent NPM which pervades FE colleges. This policy-led reduction in funding for teaching and learning in FE colleges and the financial pressures they face has led to some colleges looking for other sources of income. One solution to securing additional funding related to diversifying the courses on offer and to developing HE courses which are funded directly from the student (mostly via a student loan) rather than the central government (Elliot, 2017). Drawing on his interview-based research of FE college leaders and senior HE partnership manager in England, Elliot (2017) argued that despite the drive to increase funding through the development of partnerships with HEIs, there is still an issue with competition between the CBHE and the validating university. In particular, the neoliberal competition may lead to the HEI restricting which awards they validate for CBHE; thus, leaving FE colleges at a disadvantage in developing HE level provision.

2:4 Further education college lecturers: contractual changes post-incorporation

When discussing contractual changes of FE lecturers, it is important to note that course leaders for CBHE are mostly employed on FE academic contracts and therefore, many changes in FE level policy and working practices have a direct effect on their work. The changes in governance in the post-incorporation era led to changes in the contracts of employment for FE lecturers. Mather Worrall and Seifert (2005) argue that the ‘silver book’ contracts which covered terms and conditions, national pay and hours for FE colleges became a thing of the past and contracts were being introduced to align with the NPM philosophies of economy, efficiency and economy (Mather, Worrall and Seifert, 2005; Randle and Brady, 1997a; UCU, 2024). Consequently, the replacement contractual arrangements for lecturing staff included increases in workload and contracted teaching hours (Mather, Worrall and Seifert, 2005; Shore and Roberts, 1995).

From their research on FE lecturer labour processes in three FE colleges in the West Midlands, Mather, Worrall and Seifert (2005) argue that these labour changes took place through two overlapping processes: intensification, whereby lecturers' workload outside of nominated teaching time increased (such as pastoral work and marketing and recruitment) and extensification (the increase in the number of hours required to teach each week). Under the post-incorporation conditions, working hours that were originally denoted as teaching and non-teaching times were redefined by college leaders, with a greater number of hours being allocated to teaching activities in addition to the extra duties place on lecturers through intensification.

The increased workload brought about by contractual changes resulted in a negative impact on the time lecturers had to prepare and develop new courses. Empirical research argues that lecturers struggled to keep on top of their workload, with no time to do their job properly, feeling too tired, feeling like they are going through the motions and often using their evenings and weekends just to complete the tasks in their workload (Mather, Worrall and Siefert, 2005; Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). In his article on CBHE lecturers, Feather (2017) echoes these findings. He argues that CBHE lecturers find it difficult to complete the high levels of administrative duties due to the high number of contracted teaching hours that FE colleges impose.

This intensification (an increased workload outside of nominated teaching times) and extensification (more teaching hours) of work came along with an increase in student numbers and a reduction in overall numbers of lecturers in the sector leading to fewer lecturers doing more work (Mather, Worrall and Seifert, 2005). Lecturer shortages have become increasingly problematic in a sector where workload and teaching hours have increased. People who left the sector were not replaced and if someone was off work sick, there was not adequate maneuverability in the timetables for cover (Mather Worrall and Siefert, 2005; Feather, 2017). Whilst this research was completed some years ago, it appears that the findings are still relevant for the FE sector labour market. In a review of 118 providers in the academic year 2018-19, The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) found that the number of staff on permanent contracts in the education and training sector was decreasing (ETF, 2020). Reasons for lecturers leaving their role vary, however, the common reasons relate to pay and working conditions such as unrealistic workload demands (AoC, 2022; Odejimi and Ekpenyong, 2019). Yet whilst this survey was conducted some years ago, it is the most recent data on the FE labour market.

In summary, as a result of policy changes in funding and NPM approaches to manging FE colleges, there has been an increase in competition for students between colleges due to colleges vying for students who bring in fundings. This led to an increase in the number of students in FE colleges and the number of courses on offer. Whilst at the same time, the number of lecturers in FE colleges has decreased due to workload, pay and conditions. This exasperated the problem for lecturers who were now faced with needing to do more in relation to teaching and learning, administration and pastoral work to cover the shortfall in staffing.

2:5 College-based higher education: the changing political landscape

This section shifts away from FE literature to explore more specifically the politicised positioning of CBHE in England. I will make clear how CBHE is positioned within the education sector and how this influences the nature of the students taking up this form of HE. CBHE is often seen as a more accessible way of gaining HE qualification which will lead to employment (Johnson, 2015). In its first mission in the post-war era, the purpose of FE colleges was to equip the workforce with the skills and training needed to support rebuilding the country. The government's focus was on vocational training and education. The need for vocational education and training is something which has been at the forefront of many governments post-16 educational reforms since then.

CBHE is an important form of education which offers HE for those learners who may, for whatever reason, not be able to access HE in a university (Goodson, 2020; Elliot, 2020). Therefore, CBHE can be seen as a useful tool in addressing the widening participation agenda (Elliot, 2017). In today's HE market, there are several forms of CBHE. These can include higher apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications in addition to the traditional forms of CBHE (Augar, 2019). There are different ways in which CBHE is organised. This can be via partnership arrangements where the FE college and the awarding university collaborate on all aspects of the course, including the teaching. In this type of arrangement staff from the college and the university can deliver the course which could take place on either site: college or university (Kadi-Hanifi, 2020; Elliot; 2020). Another way in which the HE can be organised is through a franchise agreement. With a franchise arrangement, the university validates the qualification, staffing and resources and overall awards the qualification, but the college is responsible for teaching, learning and assessment (Kadi-Hanifi, 2020; Elliot; 2020). A further way of organising CBHE is through the college itself having foundation degree or degree awarding (undergraduate degree qualifications at level 6) powers. Here the college is wholly responsible for all aspects of validating, teaching and awarding of the qualification (Kadi-Hanifi, 2020; Elliot; 2020).

CBHE is categorised in two ways: prescribed and non-prescribed HE. Many colleges offer both prescribed HE, developed in partnership with a HE institution, and non-prescribed HE, developed with local employers (Kadi-Hanifi and Keenan, 2016; Parry and Thomspon, 2002). The distinction between the two came from The Education (Prescribed Courses of Higher Education) (England) Regulations 1989, which offered clarity to the Education Reform Act (1988). In the Regulations, certain courses were to be 'prescribed' with funding coming directly from the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council. This includes courses such as Higher National Certificates and Diplomas and professional programmes in subjects such as accounting, law and leadership and management. These types of courses were accredited by a professional body. All other forms of HE were to be non-prescribed. Non-prescribed HE includes courses such as foundation degrees and degrees. This can include subject areas such as aviation and tourism, early years and counselling. These are accredited by higher education institutions such as universities. Following the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) and the abolition of the binary line between universities and polytechnics, many prescribed HE courses became non-prescribed and were to be funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) until its demise in 2018 (Clark, 2002; National Audit Office, 2002).

Yet the picture for CBHE is not straightforward. CBHE offers a wealth of part-time and full-time HE courses, designed to support the widening participation agenda (Bathmaker, 2016). Therefore, CBHE offers a more flexible way of accessing higher education for those with other commitments. However, whilst CBHE is designed to address the widening participation agenda by increasing the participation of people from low participation demographics in HE, the reality may not always be driven by a desire to increase social justice (Elliot, 2017). Indeed, from his interview-based research with college leaders and senior HE managers, Elliot (2017) found that widening participation was a by-product of the drive to increase student numbers which brings about funding.

Whilst for both university-based and CBHE, there has been a growth of students in the full-time HE courses and a decline in students taking up part time HE (Gallacher and Reeve, 2019; Avis and Orr, 2016). The 2008/9 academic year saw a peak of nearly 590,00 students on part time HE courses in England, the numbers were a little fewer in 2009/10. By 2015/16 the overall number of part-time HE students in England had fallen by 47% (Hubble and Bolton, 2017). This decline in part-time student numbers can be attributed in part to the policies of the Coalition government and Conservative government between 2010 to 2015 which increased barriers to study by reducing financial support for part-time and mature students seeking to learn at HE level (Shaw, 2014). So, on the one hand, the government was seeking more flexible part-time HE courses which are sub-degree (below level 6) and on the other, they were putting barriers in place for students to access these courses, leading to the government failing to meet its own aims.

However, under a Conservative government, former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, sought to address this. He aimed to support flexibility in HE with a mission for FE colleges and universities to offer a wider range of vocational courses and with flexible funding options (Johnson, 2020). This is echoed in the Government White Paper 'Skills for Jobs' (DfE, 2021b) which seeks to challenge the view that a degree is the only route to success and into a good job. The Department for Education (DfE, 2018) argue that there needs to be an overhaul of higher technical qualifications designed to meet the needs of employers and the economy. Further, the DfE is seeking to create a lifelong loan entitlement designed to offer flexible finance, so that students can study modular over their lifetime to allow for training and retraining, rather than taking out finance for a whole degree (DfE, 2023b). This policy is therefore aiming to address the issues with funding created by the 2011 Coalition government.

Despite the most recent conservative government policies and agendas for increasing qualifications and student numbers in CBHE, the reality of this mission provides challenges on a philosophical level. Nash (2010) and Parry and Thompson (2002) reflect that HE in an FE college is different to HE in a university. Whilst not assuming homogeneity for university-based HE, it is argued that CBHE offers a more teaching intensive approach to its HE delivery (Nash, 2010; Parry and Thompson, 2002) through its offer of teaching-intensive programmes. Creasy (2013) argues that whilst it is possible to deliver a higher-level qualification in a FE College, HE is more than a level of qualification. Creasy elaborates, highlighting that FE colleges make it difficult for staff to engage with research and higher education beyond the delivering of curriculum content due to staff demographics and the high number of teaching hours. He continues to claim that FE colleges do not hold the same values for research and innovation as a HEI, nor the same drive for the development of new knowledge. As such, this makes it difficult for an FE college to develop a HE ethos. Therefore, Creasy argues that it is the ethos and environment of an FE college that provides the challenge in delivering a full HE experience. Thus, Creasy (2013) argues that CBHE is ‘HE Lite’.

Whilst Creasy’s (2013) article is conceptual, the issues raised above are echoed in the large-scale empirical research by Lawrence and Hill (2018) conducted in forty-two colleges in England. Drawing on their data collected through the Association of College’s Scholarship Project, Lawrence and Hill (2018) found that it was difficult to create an HE ethos when the professional practices and pedagogies of the lecturers were not recognised by managers in the college as good practice and when there was minimal support, time, resources or opportunities, for professional development for those teaching CBHE.

The difficulties in FE colleges delivering HE arise not only from the culture and values they hold but also from a financial perspective. With HE in FE only providing a small part of the overall income in the college, FE colleges do not have the funding and resources to offer a HE culture similar to that of universities. Whilst Creasy (2013) is making a valid point, Lawrence and Hall (2018) argue that CBHE should not try to emulate the practices of traditional universities, but they should celebrate the strengths that CBHE offers and develop an ethos that fits their context.

2:6 The everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education

The everyday work for CBHE course leaders in an FE environment is one which encompasses managing course paperwork, marketing, recruitment, academic duties such as teaching and learning, course development, quality assurance, managing a team, student satisfaction and pastoral work (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020; Cahill *et al*., 2015; Paterson, 1999). In their research into twenty-five course leaders in English universities, Cahill *et al*. (2015) refer to a course leaders' role as the nominated person for students and course related issues, where the course leaders need to have many skills for effective course management, including the ability to advise, interpret, oversee, inform, counsel, organise, reprimand, sell, chair, guide and enforce rules. In other words, a course leader for CBHE needs to have a flexible mindset with the ability to be able to seamlessly move from one task to another (Cahill *et al.,* 2015; Paterson, 1999; Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020).

Whilst the research into course leaders for CBHE is limited, there is some research on course leaders in universities which illuminate the specifics of the role in relation to leading HE courses. Based on focus group interviews with course leaders and associate deans in one university in England, Cahill *et al*. (2018) describe the course leaders' role as a one stop shop for students which takes into account academic duties of advising students on progression and course development, administrative duties relating to the quality of the course and enhancing student experiences and pastoral work. Cahill *et al*. (2018) also allude to the impact of NPM in the work of the course leader. Here they discuss how the course leader is accountable for the quality of the courses and the monitoring and reporting of course performance, and writing reports and reviews as needed. In addition, course leaders for CBHE just as university-based course leaders, are accountable for student experience and meeting the diverse needs of the students in order to result in a positive outcome in the National Student Survey.

In their research conducted across two universities in England, one ‘Russell Group’ and one ‘post-92’ university, Murphy and Curtis (2013) interviewed 25 course leaders across a range of departments. They found that most course leaders were positive about their role, yet they did not specify what these positive aspects were beyond the opportunity to shape the curriculum and learning experiences for students. Instead, they focused on aspects of the course leaders' work which led to course leaders feeling “overworked and stressed” (Murphy and Curtis, 2013, p.38). Murphy and Curtis (2013) found four reoccurring themes in their data. These themes were role confusion, management of others, status and demands of leadership and bureaucratic burdens. They argued that course leaders were accountable to management but had no authority or say over the allocation of staffing and resources; something the course leaders found frustrating and stressful. Further to this, they were responsible for the courses but had no line management responsibilities for the staff on the course. Murphy and Curtis (2013) also found that there were inequities in course leadership with some course leaders being allocated more time and some having smaller courses with less students to manage. However, the two did not always go hand in hand. Overall, the participants in this study argued that there was no kudos for being a course leader given that it was not recognised in status or money.

Overall, the course leaders' everyday work also appears to be one surrounded in ambiguity. From their empirical research into course leaders in English universities, Murphy and Curtis (2013) and Cahill *et al*. (2015) argue that course leaders have responsibility and accountability but often do not have any authority to make strategic changes to their courses or any line management responsibilities. They manage the course but not necessarily the people who deliver on these courses, often with little input regarding the allocation of resources. With course leaders managing the course with limited authority over their colleagues working on the course, the role seems to rely on the cooperation and collaboration of other members of the team (Murphy and Curtis, 2013). As a role, it is not something that people particularly want to do as it is often misunderstood and undervalued. Course leaders are often thrown in at the deep end without the support required to be successful (Murphy and Curtis, 2013). Whilst this research was based on course leaders in universities, parallels can be made with course leaders in FE and for CBHE as course leaders for CBHE are still working within the regulations and policies of the partner university.

2:6:1 Course leaders for college-based higher education: contracts and workload

In the previous sections I have discussed the role of the course leader for CBHE and how this role is multifaceted and ever changing. To add to this complexity, the literature draws further attention to issues with the contracts on which the CBHE lecturers and course leaders are employed. In their book chapter on the CBHE lecturers' experiences, experienced and practicing CBHE lecturers and managers Tucker, Peddler and Martin (2020), reflected that CBHE lecturers often have a higher workload than both FE course leaders and lecturers and a higher number of teaching hours that HE lecturers in a university. This is often within a shortened period of time as the HE academic calendar is often six weeks shorter than an FE academic calendar year. This higher workload is often sandwiched around other FE activities, including enrolment, induction, taster days and exam invigilation. It is commonly documented in empirical research that those lecturing (including course leaders) for CBHE struggle with work-life balance (Feather, 2017; Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009).

This challenge with time comes from the managerial drive for efficiency and the contractual focus (discussed in the section on contracts in colleges) of more time in the classroom teaching: not having a lecturer in the classroom, in front of the students is viewed as inefficient (Turner, McKenzie, McDermott and Stone, 2009; Mather, Worrall and Seifert, 2005). This is often compounded by the colleges' one size fits all approach with contractual requirements for HE and FE course leaders being the same (Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009; Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020; Harwood and Harwood, 2004). The issue derives from FE colleges not having sufficient HE provision to employ lecturers solely on HE contracts (Keenan, 2020). Furthermore, the fact that in some FE colleges CBHE lecturers and course leaders are still employed on FE lecturer and course leader contracts demonstrates a mismatch between HE and FE systems (Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009).

With the one-size fits all approach taken by FE colleges in relation to contracts of employment, there are concerns about the workloads based around time for planning, delivery and assessment being the same for HE as for FE, with research showing that the average teaching hours of academic staff in an FE college being 26.6 hours per week within 35 hours per week academic year (Creasy, 2013; Hobley, 2018;

Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). This is in comparison to a mean of 6.5 hours of teaching for a university lecturer reported by Ellis *et al*. (2014). However, due to being 10 years old, this article may not truly reflect the work of lecturers in universities today. Whilst the number of teaching hours may differ greatly between institutions, UCU (2023) argues that it does not necessarily reflect the workload of the HE lecturer. The survey of HE lecturers by the UCU (2023) showed that 39% of lecturers found their workload unmanageable. It is clear from the UCU survey that the problems with workload are prevalent both in universities as well as in FE colleges. However, the issue of an unmanageable workload seems to be, in part, because the HE is being delivered in an FE college. Feather (2017) found that those with HE responsibilities struggled to keep on top of their workload whilst working in an FE environment. Based on data gathered from questionnaires and interviews of lecturers for CBHE across 29 FE colleges, Feather (2017) argued that CBHE lecturers all reported that they did not have sufficient time to complete their workload. Feather's (2017) findings highlight that time is an issue due to the high levels of teaching hours per week and the administrative duties that are part of the role for a CBHE lecturer. However, it is also argued that FE contracts lack the time needed for those with HE responsibilities to meet the demands of their role such as knowledge updating, length of time to prepare for lessons, attend conferences, marking, course administration, scholarly activity and student support (Turner McKenzie and Stone, 2009; Feather, 2017; Taylor and Bullock, 2024).

The additional duties discussed in the paragraph above are on top of an already challenging workload. Mather, Worral and Seifert (2008) argue that the work intensification seen in the post-incorporated FE colleges leaves insufficient time for developing new courses, for reading and planning HE lessons and completion of the administration. They found that lecturers are working many more than their contracted hours just to stay on top of their work, with many working at least one day of the weekend (Mather, Worral and Seifert, 2005; Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020). The high contracted contact hours seen in FE leaves little time for the onerous administrative duties and pastoral care (Feather, 2017; Harwood and Harwood, 2004; Sutton, 2023). Therefore, questions are raised over whether the contracts of employment that do not distinguish between the levels of course provide additional challenges to those teaching and leading courses in CBHE. Due to the reasons outlined above, both Tucker, Peddler and Martin (2020) and Turner, McKenzie and Stone (2009) argue that trying to fit HE into a FE model does not work. However, Feather (2017) also argues that the lack of time was not only inherent in CBHE lecturers' work but also literature on universities reported similar findings, particularly those universities that were newer or 'post-92' universities. I have established that the workload in HE and FE is described as problematic in the research literature. When considering this workload and the additional work needed by course leaders in an FE college when teaching CBHE, it is clear to see how workload is a complex landscape.

2:6:2 Working on the periphery of college teams

Notions of teaching and delivering HE courses in FE colleges not quite working are further exemplified in research which argues that course leaders for CBHE feel isolated from or on the periphery of the teams they work in. In her research into CBHE, Hobley (2018) argues that a lack of understanding of CBHE, the partnership and administrative requirements of the course leader for CBHE and their workload by FE college middle and senior management leads to lecturers being left to manage themselves and feeling on the periphery. From her interviews with HE managers, middle managers and HE in FE practitioners, Hobley (2018) further argues that because of this lack of understanding, course leaders seek other forms of support from those with an understanding of their role. However, research further shows that the structure and culture in some FE colleges compound feelings of being on the periphery as course leaders for CBHE are not working alongside other CBHE lecturers but positioned with curriculum area teams with FE lecturers (Young, 2002; Hobley, 2018). Yet, the sense of isolation does not come from physical isolation but through lecturers feeling alone in the work that they do and the lack of recognition from their line managers and peers of their HE work (Young, 2002; Gale, Turner and McKenzie, 2011). This sense of isolation or not belonging was echoed in the more recent work of Taylor and Bullock (2024). In their interview-based research with CBHE lecturers, they found that CBHE lecturers felt overlooked in their work and under-represented due to the FE work in the college being the core business (Taylor and Bullock, 2024). The sense of being on the periphery in the work that the course leaders do may have arisen from CBHE fitting into neither HE nor FE. Similarly, in the research by Turner, McKenzie and Stone (2009), using CBHE lecturers across four FE colleges, it was found that participants felt that as CBHE practitioners, they did not belong within their departmental teams. Their participants argued “we don’t fit… that’s the problem when you teach HE in FE” continuing that CBHE is like a “square peg in a round hole” (Turner, McKenzie and Stone (2009, p.363).

2:6:3 The influence of widening participation on the everyday work of course leaders

As argued earlier in this chapter, CBHE is a form of HE which attracts students from a wider demographic than is seen for university based HE (Parry and Thompson, 2002; Parry 2012; Bathmaker, 2016). This section of the chapter sets the political context of the widening participation agenda and how working with non-traditional students impacts the everyday work of the course leader for CBHE. Widening participation is not something new. In England in the 1870s, the university extension programme was introduced with the aim of increasing access to education beyond compulsory schooling (Lawrie, 2014). The first major report on widening participation to encourage those with relevant qualifications to access HE was the Robbins Report (1963). It has been a key driver for all subsequent government policies including the Dearing Report (1997) and its special mission for recommending colleges to raise participation rates for those with non-standard entry qualifications. A particular focus was on those from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as from students with lower income backgrounds. The aim was to use the Aim-Higher courses[6] to increase the numbers of people aged 18 to 30 from disadvantaged backgrounds who apply for and enter HE (DfES, 2003). To continue to promote widening participation, the most recent Conservative government offered more flexible finance for lifelong learning under the policy of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement: funding in England to help pay for college or university courses designed to train or up-skill the workforce (Johnson, 2020; DfE, 2023).

The Higher Education and Research Act (2017) legislated a requirement to boost social mobility and life chances and opportunities for all, and to increase competitiveness and productivity to the economy. English policymakers regard CBHE as particularly useful form of HE as it addresses the widening participation agenda. It aims to help overcome the barriers to participation in HE often created by social and cultural backgrounds such as needing to be in employment, coming from a lower socio-economic group which may not value HE and the acceptance of non-traditional qualifications and experiences

[6] A government funded project that covered initiatives related to widening participation in HE in the UK amongst students with good grades and no family history of university study, particularly among students from non-traditional backgrounds, minority groups and disabled persons.

(Bathmaker, 2016; Thomas, 2001). Furthermore, colleges were tasked with addressing widening participation in HE in the drive towards universal access, as colleges are seen as good at focusing on cold spots in participation in HE that universities do not address (Gallacher and Reeve, 2019). The advantage of colleges is that they often offer flexible attendance requirements, learning opportunities and environments adapted to suit the needs, characteristics and capabilities of their students in a safe and supportive environment (Elliot, 1999; 2020). Government policy makers see FE colleges as offering an alternative environment which is more supportive and adaptive to the needs of the students. Yet tensions arise when considering that the post-incorporated colleges are governed by NPM. By its very nature, a NPM style focuses on economy, effectiveness and efficiency (Randle and Brady, 1997), in essence, more work from less staff. This leads to questions being raised about how the colleges are able to provide such responsive, safe environments which meet the particular needs of widening participation students.

A government report from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills found that CBHE students tend to be older and studying part-time, and more commonly on vocational courses (DBIS, 2011). However, as discussed in Chapter One (section 1.2), the number of part-time students taking up HE has declined; there are now many more full-time students studying HE in an FE college. Furthermore, there are also many CBHE students on undergraduate courses and studying topics within the Arts, Education and Business, rather than the government's intended STEM subjects or vocational courses (Bathmaker, 2016; HEFCE 2009b). However, only a small proportion of these students come with traditional qualifications like A-Levels (Parry, 2012). Often entry requirements are lowered for CBHE students due to the widening participation objectives (Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). Therefore, colleges tend to attract local students who are perhaps academically less confident and require a more supportive learning environment (Parry, 2012). It also means that CBHE lecturers must boost their students' skills and knowledge, often teaching them how to learn (Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). Furthermore, teaching non-traditional students often requires the management of learning or social issues. A number of research studies into non-traditional students highlights that they may need increased pastoral support, study skills or emotional support once they begin a programme (Minter, 2001; Baker, Brown, and Fazey, 2006; Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). Therefore, the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE with students extends beyond teaching and learning in the classroom. Tucker, Peddler and Martin (2020) report that CBHE students require high levels of nurturing. As such, monitoring the students' wellbeing has become part of the course leaders' everyday work (Murphy and Curtis, 2013; Sutton, 2023).

Course leaders are facing the need to provide pastoral care to students daily (Cahill *et al.*, 2015; Sutton, 2023). HE students are amongst the highest population suffering with psychological stress (Larcombe *et al.*, 2016). Working on the frontline with students, it is the course leaders who students trust and come to for support rather than using the wider services provided by the college or universities (Crawford and Johns, 2018; Walsh, Larsen and Parry, 2009). Students will often knock on the staff office door for a conversation or advice not emailing or booking in advance (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020). While this nurturing approach provides emotional stability and resilience for the students, there are questions over what it is doing for the lecturers and their already heavy workload (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020). Thus, high levels of support can create "demanding students" who expect more (Tucker Peddler and Martin, 2020, p.94). Whilst I established in section

2:2 that there was a gap in the literature regarding whether students of CBHE see themselves as consumers, the evidence here of demanding students perhaps feeds into the student as consumer narrative. The demands of students, in turn, have an additional impact on workloads and impinging on tutor well-being (Tucker Peddler and Martin, 2020). The label 'complex' is often attributed to CBHE students given the nature of support required, qualifications on entry, the increased pastoral role required and needing to learn how to learn (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020*;* Turner, McKenzie, and Stone, 2009). Despite this pastoral work being a regular aspect of the course leaders' work, it is often not recognised within workloads or by management (Crawford and Johns, 2018; Sutton, 2023).

Yet, whilst much of the available literature presents widening participation students in a deficit model, Tucker, Peddler and Martin (2020) argue that course leaders see the benefits of CBHE and report that it is a joy to see the students flourish and the ability to study at a high level. Further arguing that they enjoy teaching at a high level and the personalised approach that CBHE teaching affords (Tucker Peddler and Martin, 2020). The pleasure and satisfaction of teaching CBHE students is not isolated to the findings of Tucker, Peddler and Martin (2020). Course leaders and lecturers commonly report that they enjoy working with the students and that they are the main source of satisfaction (Taylor and Bullock, 2024; Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). This highlights a complexity in the work of lecturers (and course leaders for CBHE), with the pleasure of working with the students on the one hand and the challenges of delivering HE courses within an FE college on the other.

2:7 Surveillance and accountability

It is important that the context in which the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE is understood in terms of surveillance and accountability. As outlined earlier in this chapter, even though course leaders are responsible for HE courses, in most colleges, they are employed as FE lecturers, working within the conditions of the FE lecturers and subjected to the same policy regimes as through teaching all levels qualifications in the FE sector (Keenan, 2020). As such, course leaders are managed within a regime of performance indicators for the FE sector whilst also trying to satisfy the HE sector's demands (Young, 2002).

Surveillance includes a range of techniques employed by institutions to predict the behaviour of their staff. In relation to surveillance in education, techniques such as observations, learning walks, peer observations and student voice are used to monitor the behaviour of staff to predict how they are likely to perform when subjected to external inspection regimes (Skerritt, 2023; Page, 2017). In education, often the term surveillance can be used synonymously with terms such as quality assurance and performativity as these refer to systems of monitoring teaching, learning and assessment (Gravells, 2016) and the performance of individuals in measurable outputs (Ball, 2003) respectively. However, through its techniques in relation to observing staff in order to predict behaviour and outcomes, I argue that surveillance, as a concept, fully captures the essence of monitoring the performance of lecturers in education. Further, I have chosen to employ the concept of accountability. Accountability too captures the essence of working in education. In his book on educational accountability, Kogan (2022, p.25) writes that accountability is “a condition in which the role holder is liable to review and the application of sanctions if their actions fail to satisfy those whom they are in an accountability relationship with." In defining the term accountability, its application to education can been seen through the lecturer being responsible for the fulfilment of their role to the standard required by the educational institution (e.g. an FE college). In highlighting and defining these terms, I will show how surveillance has become inherent in an accountability culture.

Within the context of surveillance, the drive for classroom observations of teaching and learning can be traced back to the introduction of His Majesty's Inspectors and Ofsted and the drive to provide accountability in how public money was being spent (O'Leary, 2020). With the demands that an NPM regime brought to satisfy stakeholders, surveillance and accountability became a major part of reconstructing the FE sector (Brown, *et al*., 1996). Accountability and the drive for efficiency and performance, can be viewed through audit technologies, with lecturers' performance in their role being measured against institutional key performance indicators and targets (Ball, 2003). It can be argued that the FE sector is high risk as it is driven by efficiency as well as competition for students to secure funding. In her conceptual paper on the English FE sector, Donovan (2019) argues that where the risk is high, so too is surveillance. With increasing levels of surveillance, Perryman, Maguire, Brown and Ball (2018) describe the teachers' experiences of inspection regimes as relentless. This is because inspection regimes are both internal and external and include observations of teaching and learning, student satisfaction surveys and monitoring of data and external inspections such as Ofsted.

In her qualitative interview-based research, Hobley (2018) discusses quality assurance in relation to CBHE. Yet by understanding her research I can see that Hobley is discussing the surveillance of CBHE.

She argues that the internal surveillance regime that has been designed to align with the external surveillance regimes by Ofsted do not align with HE surveillance regimes set by the Office for Students and universities themselves (discussed in the section below). Hobley (2018) argues that college managers did not always understand the differences between the surveillance regimes for FE and HE.

2:7:1 External surveillance of teaching and learning in further education colleges

This section argues for an understanding of external surveillance in FE colleges. This understanding is important as it governs the internal policies on surveillance and accountability within the FE college and therefore the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. Since the Education Reform Act (1988) there has been an increase in surveillance and accountability systems in FE colleges and the need for management to know what goes on in the classroom (Pierson, 1998). The drive for accountability in line with NPM ideologies meant that external inspections of FE colleges became more prevalent (Fletcher, Gravatt and Sherlock, 2015). The Education (schools) Act (1992) brought about the introduction of an inspectorate regime whereby the inspection of schools and colleges was outsourced to a private company: Ofsted (Naz, 2021). Whilst initially FE colleges were inspected under two different regimes, Ofsted for courses for young people under the age of 19 years and the Adult Learning Inspectorate for courses for those over the age of 19 years, in 2007 Ofsted took over the inspectorate regime for all courses classified as FE. Yet the reform of external surveillance in the FE sector did not impact on the majority of the HE sector.

Whether HE falls under the remit of Ofsted is determined by whether the courses are ‘prescribed’ or ‘non-prescribed'. Non-prescribed courses are ‘owned’ by awarding organisations such as City and Guilds and are regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulations and funded through advanced learner loans (Phoenix, 2019; DfE, 2019b). As such they are included in the Ofsted inspection regime. Prescribed HE courses are those regulated by the Office for Students and can be funded by HE loans (DfE, 2019b). These courses are not inspected by Ofsted. The exception to this is where courses are part of initial teacher training/ education. Due to these courses training people to teach in schools and colleges, they are subjected to the same inspectorate regimes as those sectors (Tummons, Orr and Atkins, 2013; Robson, 2006).

There has recently been a change in the way observations are carried out. In 2015, Ofsted ceased conducting graded lesson observation. Whilst the FE sector has been slow to follow suit (and in some cases they continue this way), changes have occurred in observations with a greater focus on development and support with peer observations being a common feature. Yet also a new regime of surveillance has replaced the graded observations. In line with the Education Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2019), the focus is now on the three Is: intent, implementation and impact which are monitored through Deep Dives (a phrase given to the process that inspectors use to gain a deeper understanding of the curriculum). The complexity for course leaders for CBHE comes from FE colleges where the internal surveillance of HE courses is being carried out in the same way as FE courses.

Yet, the HE sector has adopted a very different approach to the surveillance of student experience and teaching and learning. HE sector mostly retained its independence away from the scrutiny of government inspections with a focus on an internal peer review-based system, course reviews, student evaluations and external examiner reports as well as on the quality and impact of the research outputs (Flecther, Gravatt and Sherlock, 2015; Robson, 2006; O'Leary, 2020). However, the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in 2016 and reviewed in 2023, is bringing about changes in this area. The TEF grading of bronze, silver or gold focuses on three core aspects: teaching quality, learning environment and student outcomes (DfE, 2021). To date, the TEF's measurement of the teaching quality of an institution remains a desk-based process, using evidence from the National Student Survey and the Destination of Leavers from HE Survey submitted to the Office for Students (OfS) by the university (OfS, 2023).

Where Ofsted has clear standards and goals for judgements for compulsory and the FE sectors, in HE there is not the same single method of judging the overall quality of the provision. Different aspects of HE are surveilled in different ways as whilst the surveillance of teaching and learning is enacted through the TEF rating, research outputs are surveilled in a different way through the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2029, 2024). While agencies such as the OfS are changing the way that teaching and learning is viewed in HE, it is still expected that HE institutions can define their own version of excellence (Shore and Roberts, 2004). This becomes problematic in an FE environment and in a system which by its very nature requires standardisation and produces hierarchical league tables (Shore and Roberts, 2004). Thus, providing further challenges for those who teach on and are responsible for CBHE. Whilst CBHE is not subjected to the actual Ofsted inspection, it is the internal surveillance policies that are derived from such inspection regimes that are often imposed on CBHE.

It is often found that those delivering CBHE are trying to fit the ethos and delivery of HE into the inspectorate regime of the FE sector.

2:7:2 Internal surveillance of teaching and learning in further education colleges

Further evidence of the surveillance culture in FE colleges comes through the internal monitoring of teaching and learning. The internal monitoring of teaching and learning in FE colleges is driven by the external surveillance and accountability of FE colleges to Ofsted. Through a review of the literature on the surveillance of teaching and learning in the FE sector, I show how this is enacted before discussing how this impacts the everyday work of the course leader for CBHE.

Teaching and learning observations are used in educational environments worldwide to measure and improve the quality and support professional development (Edington, 2013). Yet, there are differences between what managers and what teachers view as an excellent lesson. Failing to achieve a minimum standard can have detrimental effects on a teacher's life (Dixon and Pilkington, 2017). Boocock (2013), suggests that the observation process is more about survival for lecturers and course leaders, rather than a reflection process. Drawing on interviews and participant observations of lecturers and middle managers in a large FE college, Boocock (2013) argues that the emphasis, rather than professional development and reflection, is one of accountability. He argued that accountability, through internal surveillance, is needed so any issues can be addressed before external agencies such as Ofsted conduct their inspections. With the pressure from government targets and economic forces, observations of teaching and learning in FE colleges have been developed to appear more objective than they are.

According to their ethnographic insider research into the concept of excellence in teaching and learning, Dixon and Pilkington (2018) found that management in FE colleges are striving for a good or outstanding judgement in their Ofsted inspection and therefore align internal surveillance policies with the external framework. These policies can include observations of teaching and learning in several different ways. Observations and teaching and learning are surveillance tools to measure and control what lecturers do in the classroom (O'Leary, 2013). These can include full lesson observations, learning walks and peer observations, and student voice activities. While observations of teaching and learning provide a top-down form of surveillance. In his article on the surveillance of teachers, Page (2018) argued that learning walks are designed to 'catch out' the teacher "*as the senior leader approaches the classroom to surveil, it is a matter of how quickly the teacher can see the observer coming and how quickly non-desirable practice can be changed.*" (Page, 2018, p. 387).

Peer observations form what is referred to as 'horizonal surveillance' as form of surveillance from those working at the same level as the person being observed rather than by a manager (Page, 2017; Skerritt, 2023). O'Leary and Price (2017, p.114) argued that peer observations take place "*under the radar of audit-driven activity*" due to the data being generated not really being used. This could be due to Ofsted not valuing this form of observation due to the process being between peers and not including management and therefore being seen lack accountability (Boocock, 2013). For successful peer observations, Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2005) put forward that there should be no hierarchy, that peers should be equals for the process to be fully supportive and developmental for all. However, Boocock (2013) further proposed that the addition of peer observation to an observation regime would mean that lecturers are being over-observed. Given that peer observations are not valued by external inspectorates, it could be argued that their implementation is not required and therefore they become burdensome and lack value. However, from their research into peer observations discussed in interviews with lecturing staff in a 'post-92' university, Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2005) found that peer observations can be of benefit to both parties as it can build collegiate relationships and feedback from a peer can be less threatening than from a manager allowing greater opportunities for collaborative reflective discussions to take place.

Yet in FE colleges, often CBHE teaching and learning is measured against criteria not relevant to the sector (Gale, Turner and McKenzie, 2011; Harwood and Harwood, 2004). In their small-scale empirical research on CBHE lecturers, Gale, Turner and McKenzie (2011) go on further to argue that college surveillance and accountability systems are built towards FE and therefore are inappropriate for and undermine the pedagogical styles of HE. Furthermore, observation of teaching and learning policies do not recognise HE independent study and group research tasks. This type of learning activity could result in poor grades for lecturers of CBHE in observations as observers may not have specific subject knowledge or knowledge of the pedagogy for CBHE learners (Harwood and Harwood, 2004; Boocock, 2013).

2:8 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed how the incorporation of FE colleges resulting from the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 has brought about fundamental changes to the way FE colleges in England operate, are managed and how they view lecturers and students. Through this discussion I have shown how the influence of NPM has ushered in contract of employment for lecturers (and course leaders) based on economic rationale, efficiency and effectiveness, resulting in an intensification and extensification of lecturers' work. This is pertinent to this research, for CBHE course leaders as they are mostly employed on FE contracts of employment and therefore managed within the regime of NPM, central to FE college governance. In keeping with the theme of contractual changes I have focused on workload. This theme is prominent in the literature with concerns over the amount of work needing to be completed for CBHE within the confines of the working week and within the context of a high teaching workload around 24 hours a week that is inherent in FE colleges.

Changes in government policy around how FE college students are funded have been explored. While this is not directly linked to CBHE students, I argue that this policy shift brought about changes to how students are viewed in relation to funding. These changing views set up an ethos of students bringing funding. This results in an imperative to recruit and retain as many students as possible and provide pastoral care to avoid students leaving their course before completion. This ethos is echoed into CBHE students who too are a means of funding.

I have discussed the demographics of CBHE students arguing that CBHE students often come from lower participation backgrounds and fall under the category of widening participation. Despite the literature presenting a deficit model of these students, emphasising the perceived lack of skills and knowledge required for HE study, research has shown that course leaders and lecturers tend to enjoy this aspect of their everyday work. In particular Tucker, Peddler and Martin (2020) argue that the course leaders enjoy the more personalised approach to teaching and learning and like seeing their students flourish in their development and progression.

Further evidence of the impact of NPM on FE colleges and CBHE arises from the drive towards accountability. The literature in relation to this focuses on performativity and surveillance of lecturers. Specifically, I have focused on surveillance and accountability. The surveillance from external agencies such as Ofsted and how this influences internal surveillance and accountability policies for monitoring teaching and learning. I have highlighted this with the differences in expectations for CBHE from that of FE and how CBHE is required to fit within the surveillance regime of two different sectors, FE and HE. From here I demonstrate that prescribed CBHE (except for ITE), does not fit within the inspectorate regime of Ofsted. Yet the policies and practices for surveilling teaching and learning for CBHE are aligned to the one-size-fits-all observation policies in FE colleges. Thus, conferring a disadvantage to those seeking to align their teaching to HE pedagogy.

One of the challenges faced in this chapter was the limited amount of literature on CBHE. Where available much of the CBHE literature is dated. Therefore, I have drawn on literature from both the FE and HE sectors too. However, this is not without its challenges. I argue that neither HE nor FE literature really acknowledges the nuances of CBHE. CBHE finds itself caught between two sectors; it has two masters. The enactment of CBHE is through having to follow the policies and regulations of the university it is franchised with (where applicable) and the wider HE sector in general, whilst being written and delivered by FE college staff in FE colleges under the policies and practices of that college. Despite this challenge, the literature is aligned with this research and this review reflects the limitations and challenges of research in this area. In particular, there is a gap which focuses on the work of course leaders for CBHE. Within the context of the available literature on course leaders in the FE and HE sectors (including CBHE), I have discussed the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE. I have highlighted the diversity of the role through administrative duties, their teaching role and pastoral work. It is within the gaps in the literature relating to course leaders for CBHE that I am positioning my research. This research aims to make a valuable contribution to and extend the research into CBHE: research which seeks to explore the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE through the theoretical lens of institutional ethnography, adding to the literature and ensuring it is current.

Chapter Three: Theoretical framework

3:1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to critically explore institutional ethnography as the adopted framework for this research. In adopting institutional ethnography, I will discuss how this framework offers a way of understanding the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education (CBHE) and how their work happens through the social organisation of The College Group. Institutional ethnography is rooted in the work of Dorothy E. Smith. Drawing on its Marxist and feminist roots, I explore the evolution of Smith's work into institutional ethnography. In doing so, this chapter starts by offering a critical discussion of institutional ethnography as a framework for inquiry. Here, I explore the features which make institutional ethnography distinctive through its focus on the social relations which organise people's lives and through its methodological features such as the importance of talking with people and the use of texts to reveal how things happen (Tummons, 2018). I will explain how institutional ethnography has allowed me to investigate the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE in a way that remains faithful to the standpoint taken up. Yet in institutional ethnography, I have found a framework which allows me to move beyond the standpoint of the course leaders for CBHE to understand the practices within the institution which organise and rule their work. Following on from establishing institutional ethnography as a framework for this inquiry, I explain several key concepts which are central to this institutional ethnographic inquiry. This in-depth discussion provides clarity on the concepts and situates them in relation to this research. The concepts explored are: standpoint; local, extra-local and trans-local; problematic; work and work knowledge; social organisation and ruling relations and finally, texts and the text-reader conversation.

3:2 What is institutional ethnography?

Institutional ethnography is concerned with the social organisation of people's experiences and the processes which govern or rule them (Smith, 2006). One of the aims of institutional ethnography is to make this social organisation visible (DeVault, 2013). It is an approach to conducting research which seeks to address questions regarding how everyday life is organised and coordinated (Tummons, 2018). Institutional ethnography begins in the local actualities of the everyday world with a focus on the perspective of people being located distinctively within the institutional processes (Smith, 2005). Therefore, it is the actualities and experiences of people that guide the inquiry and give it direction.

Dorothy E. Smith did not start out with an established theoretical framework. Rather, it evolved through her lifetime of work. The origins of this evolution can be charted through her earlier books (Smith, 1987; 1990a; 1990b; 1999). Smith (1987) reviewed an interview that 'K' had given and looked at the discourses used by the interviewer to determine that 'K' was mentally ill. She argued that institutional discourses were central to determining 'facts'. Further, Smith (2005) realised that we are ruled by professional settings, by corporations, organisations and governments, determining that knowledge is socially organised, and it is this social organisation of knowledge that rules our everyday actualities. In the development of institutional ethnography, Smith heavily draws on her own experiences as a woman, mother and an academic. Yet it is in her book *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (Smith, 2005) that Smith begins to draw on her previous work to introduce institutional ethnography. Through reflection and refinement, she arrived at a sociology that she proposed offered an alternative from the male dominated traditional sociology that imposed a male-oriented understanding to experiences of women. Instead, Smith sought to create a sociology which was *for* people rather than being done *to* people (Smith, 1987; Smith, 1999; Smith, 2005, Smith, 2006).

Institutional ethnography is an inquiry that starts in the world we live in, taking the starting point of everyday activities and experiences of people. People are seen as experts in their own lives. It is not for institutional ethnographic researchers to impose their knowledge on people (Smith, 2006). The aim of the research is to investigate how the people have these experiences. Through understanding how things happen, the researcher can begin to understand practices of ruling (Smith, 2005; Smith, 2006 and Campbell, 2003; Campbell and Gregor, 2008). Smith argues that the questions underlying an institutional ethnographic study are, '*How is this world in which we act and suffer put together?*' and '*How does it happen to us as it does?'* (Smith, 1987, p.154).

Therefore, Smith is not concerned about how everyday activities are reflective of social structures, but about how these activities are organised and shaped at the level of the extra-local (processes outside the everyday work from the chosen standpoint) as work processes. These work processes form the social organisation, which are often not visible from the adopted standpoint but are felt through everyday activities. It is this social organisation that reveals the ruling relations (Heap, 1994).

Institutional ethnography, as a framework for inquiry, is built upon four essential components. These are: that individuals are present; they are present in their lives; they are active in their everyday work; and that everyday work is coordinated with others (Smith, 2005). Smith is keen to understand how things work and how they are put together, developing a 'how' typology for inquiry and not a 'why' typology (Smith, 1987; Smith, 2006; Deveau, 2009). Therefore, the aim of institutional ethnography is not to test hypotheses, nor does it seek to generate or develop theories or objectify the subject of research. Its aims are one of discovery, learning and revealing (Smith, 1999; Smith, 2006), to make visible and to map the socially organised world and to uncover the relations of ruling that govern the everyday work from a given standpoint (Campbell and Gregor, 2008).

Institutional ethnography aims to preserve the subjects in its research. That is, it aims to faithfully present the subject of the research as they are and not change this in any way. Yet, Walby (2007) challenges this view, arguing that the researcher produces rather than preserves the subject in the research. This takes place through the ways in which the researcher represents the informant through the data collection, the analysis of the data and the writing up processes in institutional ethnography (Walby, 2007). Whilst arguably, this is a limitation of institutional ethnography, I argue that it is a limitation of qualitative research in general where there are always elements of research interpretation of the data. Furthermore, I argue that in this research, such limitations have been addressed through checking for clarification and further elaborations from my informants during their interviews. This has allowed me to be assured that I am not imposing my interpretation on their work knowledge and that I am representing their knowledge faithfully. This form of checking for accuracy of representation along with my reflexivity is essential for ensuring the validity of the findings. Without reflexivity it would be difficult to see the processes in which the data has been collected and analysed.

Central to Smith's (1987; 2006) institutional ethnography is its purported lack of theoretical imposition. Smith (1987; 2006) argues that if a line of inquiry were to start with what she refers to as traditional sociological concepts or use their procedures and methods, it would miss the actualities of people's everyday experiences. In developing her framework, Smith (2005) criticised the male dominated sociologies which took experiences of people and explained them with existing theories. Her premise for the rejection of overarching grand theories and generalisations relates to remaining faithful to the actualities of people's lives (Tummons, 2018). Smith (2005) argued that starting by over relying on existing theories to collect and analyse the data would create a pre-determined way of viewing the data. This would therefore determine what will or will not be attended to in the inquiry (Smith, 2005). Her concern was not with the construction of theories or in using theories at all to explain behaviour but to think about and write about how the everyday actualities of people's lives are socially organised and to make this social organisation visible (Smith, 1987). By withholding assumptions based on established theory, Smith (1987) proposed that an inquiry can explore the social complexities that help understand how things happen in the way they do. In rejecting theoretical concepts, institutional ethnography claims to have no prior interpretive commitments, instead, its aims are to simply find out how people's activities are coordinated beyond what can be seen (Smith, 2005).

Yet critics such as Doran (1993) put forward concerns about Smith's desire to move away from an ideological male sociology and replace it with an ideologically female sociology, as Smith cannot help but be ideological herself. It can be assumed that the reality of withholding assumptions and suspending all knowledge is challenging, and institutional ethnography itself is the evolution of Smith's work: it has not arrived from nowhere. Smith was part of the feminist movement in the 1960/70s, as such she adopted the ideologies advocating for women to be seen, heard and have equal rights. It is these ideologies that have underpinned her early thinking about an alternative sociology and therefore, these ideologies have inadvertently influenced the development of institutional ethnography. Furthermore, Smith (2005) herself acknowledged that in developing her institutional ethnography, she has been guided by the work of others in arriving at the key concepts which underpin this framework for inquiry (I have highlighted in section 3:3 of this chapter where Smith has developed her concepts by drawing on the work of others).

Through its approach to how people are viewed and its purported lack of theoretical imposition on experiences, institutional ethnography claims to offer something different from the traditional sociologies developed by the white male forefathers of sociology (Smith, 2005). Taking a paradigmatic shift from the traditional thinking in sociology, institutional ethnography adopts a social ontology. In her 2005 book, Smith posits that a social ontology is the theory of how the social exists, with institutional ethnography selectively focusing on the actualities of people's everyday lives. In doing this, institutional ethnography does not seek objective truths, but how truth and knowledge are constructed from a given standpoint (Smith, 2005). Institutional ethnography is grounded in the everyday/ every night experiences of people, therefore it offers a framework for discovering how our experiences are organised in social ways (Luken, 2021). As such, institutional ethnography is not the study of people that Smith is proposing, nor is it the study of institutions (Smith, 2006), it is the understanding of the social organisation of people's activities or everyday work which is central to this method of inquiry (Smith, 1987). The social ontology Smith (2005) discusses is one that is built around a focus on standpoint, institutions and text. Institutional ethnography takes the perspective that the social connections between these three elements are waiting to be discovered (Walby 2007). Yet, in this respect institutional ethnography fails to consider the social relations it is part of, for example, through the social relations in research and what is and is not possible through the bounds of ethics or through the positioning of the researcher. It is for this reason that the researcher must be transparent and demonstrate reflexivity in their work.

It is evident that institutional ethnography does indeed offer a distinctive sociology in its social ontology. It is focused on social organisation within institutions rather than on the people or the institutions themselves, yet it remains rooted in the adopted standpoint and its capacity to move beyond what is locally observable without turning to theoretical explanations (Smith, 2005; Tummons, 2018). The distinctiveness highlighted above is clear to see; yet, Smith fails to see its similarities to other methodologies. For example, institutional ethnography does not differ too greatly from other ethnographies, indeed, institutional ethnography has many features similar to that of other ethnographies such as the use of multiple methods of collecting data, gaining insider accounts and the acknowledgement of the presence of the researcher are to name but a few (Russell, 2018; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). Russell (2018) further argues that no two ethnographies are ever the same. She goes on to say that institutional ethnographies also vary greatly according to the everyday problematic under investigation and the nature of the researcher: institutional ethnography fails to critically analyse itself in relation to this. Therefore, whilst institutional ethnography does offer some uniqueness, a critical stance needs to be taken when reading about its purported distinctiveness.

3:3 Key concepts

Whilst explaining what institutional ethnography is in the section above, I have already introduced some key concepts rooted in an institutional ethnographic framework for inquiry. In the following section, I will explore each of these in more detail to clarify the conceptual underpinnings of institutional ethnography and their application to my research. In particular, I will focus on standpoint, local and extra local, problematic, work, work knowledges and institutional capture, social and ruling relations, the textually mediated world and finally, levels of data and mapping. I have chosen to focus on these concepts as they became central to how I conducted my data gathering and analysis.

3:3:1 Standpoint theory and identifying our small hero: who are we talking to?

Standpoint was initially formulated as a concept for feminist research to guide the line of inquiry; it was further used by other marginalised groups (Harding, 2009). A standpoint is the social positioning of the knower, the subject and the creator of the knowledge (Smith, 2005). The particular standpoint adopted in this research is that of course leaders for CBHE in The College Group. The crux of standpoint theory is that it posits that there are some perspectives in society from which knowledge is not directly visible when looking from traditional sociological methods or stating with sociological theory (Hekman, 1997). Therefore, standpoint theory has become an underpinning and central concept of many feminist approaches as it gives a voice to women and other marginalised group that have been overlooked in traditional research approaches (Hekman, 1997).

In some instances, the term standpoint is used synonymously with perspective. However, Smith's adoption of the concept moves beyond this. Standpoint requires an understanding of the ideology and social relations from which it is constructed. (Smith, 2005). Standpoint is a collective term and not a term used for individuals. For example, Griffiths and Smith's research took up the standpoint of single mothers with children in school (Griffiths and Smith, 2013), and my research adopts the standpoint of course leaders for CBHE. However, standpoint theory is still based on essentialism, thus assuming homogeny within the standpoint, which is not always the case (Hekman, 1987). In other words, while the work of two people from a given standpoint may be the same, their experiences of their work and the way they talk about it may differ; therefore, these two people can also offer different ways of investigating the ruling relations (Smith, 2005). While not assuming homogeny within the group, however, I argue that there is still an element of collective identity as often the people within the standpoint perform similar roles (Informant details discussed in Chapter Four). In the case of this research, all course leaders for CBHE are employed by the same college group and on the same contracts of employment. Thus, there are commonalities present within their position. The location from the standpoint is privileged as it advocates a vantage point that reveals the situated truth about social reality.

3:3:2 The local, extra-local and trans-local: positioning in institutional ethnography

In starting from the standpoint of the course leaders for CBHE and going on a journey of discovery, an institutional ethnographic inquiry moves from, in the terms of Smith, the local to the extra-local (Smith, 2005; Russell, 2018). For Smith, the local refers to the standpoint position adopted, the extra-local is defined by the move away from the standpoint position to follow up on lines of enquiry generated at a local level. Further away from the standpoint still is the trans-local. This is a position that moves beyond the immediate context of the research into wider influencing factors. For this research, the local is the course leaders for CBHE. The extra-local is the members of middle and senior management and institutional texts in The College Group and the trans-local includes government policies and legislation and how they influence the social organisation within The College Group.

In this research, the move from the local standpoint position of the course leaders for CBHE means moving into other social positions, namely that of the programme area leaders who line mange the course leaders, to the heads of department, group head of HE and other members of the senior management (SMT). Further, this move beyond the local position of the course leaders for CBHE includes discovering textual artefacts which organise the work of the course leaders for CBHE. The notions of moving from the micro (local) to the macro (extra-local and trans-local) is not something new in ethnographic or qualitative research studies. Other methodologies also require a shift from the micro at the level of actualities to macro and into theories form the basis of other methods of inquiry. For example, in the extended case study methodology, a phenomenon is investigated at the local level before being extended out to the wider influencing environment in order to understand the phenomena more fully (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). Furthermore, the extended case study can turn into a theory that explains what is happening beyond the local level (Smith, 2005).

However, in the case of institutional ethnography, the ontology is different: it always keeps a social ontology that centres around social organisation. As discussed above, the social ontology adopted by Smith for institutional ethnography aims to keep the inquiry rooted in the everyday practices (Smith, 2005; Smith and Turner, 2014). Therefore, moving towards theoretical explanations is something which Smith aims to avoid. Rather than being viewed as two distinct areas, moving from the micro to the macro institutional ethnography assumes a gestalt perspective, with the 'whole' always being there. Yet whilst always present, as the inquiry progresses, there must be a shift in focus from foregrounding the work and experiences from the standpoint to foregrounding the other informants' work knowledge which illuminates the social organisation of the institution (Campbell, 2003).

3:3:4 Problematic: the entry point of institutional ethnography

The next concept to be explored is that of the problematic. To conduct an institutional ethnographic inquiry, there needs to be an area of focus. For this research the problematic is that course leaders for CBHE find their work complex. Smith refers to the area of focus as the problematic of the research (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). It is from the standpoint that a disjuncture or problematic is to be identified (Burstow, 2016). The problematic therefore arises from practice rather than existing literature. For CBHE course leaders this disjuncture lies between the competing demands and experiences of the further education (FE) and higher education (HE) sectors which produce a challenging work environment. Smith (2005) argues that people's lives are problematic and that the actualities experienced do not always align with the expectations outlined in institutional texts and practices. The problematic sets out "the project of research and discovery and organises the direction of investigation" (Smith, 2005, p.227). However, the term problematic is not one to be confused with the word, problem. The researcher is not looking for a problem, but a point of entry into everyday life, the experiences and actualities, from a given standpoint: one which does not transform the subjective knower into an objectified form for study (Smith, 1987). Problematic is therefore a methodological term which orients the research inquiry (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). From the problematic the researcher develops the questions to be asked (Smith, 2006; Smith, 1987). The problematic is part of the social organisation of the everyday world; it guides and focuses the sociological inquiry (Smith, 1987). Traditionally, an institutional ethnographic inquiry does not start with a question as this can be seen to constrain the research (Smith, 2005). Institutional ethnography is an iterative form of inquiry in which the researcher goes back and forth in the data to build up a picture of how things happen. However, for practical reasons, the researcher will always start with some notions of what the problematic is and a general understanding of the questions to be asked, although they may not fully understand the problematic and the institutional processes or ruling relations behind it at the start (Smith, 2005). In this research, I had a good understanding of the problematic. I understood that course leaders talk about the complexities of the everyday work, this was my entry point into my inquiry. Yet the actual research questions could not be formulated until some initial data gathering took place, and until I had a clearer understanding of the nature of my problematic. As such, the sub-questions to my overall research question developed as I started to collect and analyse my data. Therefore, the problematic is used as a point of entry. The inquiry then tracks into the often-complex organisational structures. In doing so, questions are developed as the inquiry proceeds (Campbell and Gregor, 2008).

3:3:5 Work, work knowledges and institutional capture: what people know

When Smith refers to work, she uses the term in a very specific way. For Smith, work is any activity which requires intent, effort and time; for Smith the definition of work is a 'generous' one (Smith, 2005, pp.151-152): she is not referring to specific paid or unpaid employment. Once an understanding of work has been gained, Smith talks of work knowledges (Smith, 2005). This is the knowledge of the informants relating to their everyday work. There are two distinctive and central threads the research will follow to generate data in an institutional ethnographic inquiry: talking with people and using institutional texts (Tummons, 2018). Talking with people via an interview requires the informant to share their 'work knowledges' (Smith, 2005, p.149). Work knowledges function in a variety of ways, they are a person's experiences of their work, how they think and feel about it and how they do their work. They are the informant's understanding of the ways in which their work is coordinated with others (Tummons, 2018; Smith, 2005). Talking to a range of people about their work knowledge may reveal others who could provide their work knowledge in the area of investigation. As an institutional ethnographer, I followed these lines of inquiry by speaking with other people that were mentioned or suggested by initial informants. In this research I sought to understand work knowledge firstly from the course leaders for CBHE. I was then guided by the course leaders in their disclosure of their work knowledge regarding who else I was required to talk, e.g. line managers and members of the senior management team (SMT) to also understand their work knowledge.

In seeking work knowledge, my role as the researcher was to get the informants to speak about their everyday lives, experiences and activities. Furthermore, the researcher's role is to question, seek clarification and elaboration where required (Smith, 2005). However, the aim is not to understand the behaviour of the informant nor to see clarification of *why* they do what they do, instead it is to find out how they do what they do by coming to understand *how* their everyday work is organised (Smith, 1987; 2006). It is also important to clarify meaning. Informants use institutional discourses when talking about their everyday work. Institutional discourses can hide as well as reveal the ruling relations. Having and using institutional discourses means that the researcher would be embedded within the institutional discourse, something Smith terms as 'institutional capture' (Smith, 2005, p.127). With institutional capture, the researcher cannot see how discourse operates within the lives of those who use it. Therefore, it was important that I clarified what they meant by these discourses to avoid misunderstanding (Campbell and Gregor, 2008).

3:3:6 Social organisation and ruling relations: revealing how things work

As I have established in the preceding sections, institutional ethnography holds the belief that the world is social. In defining the world as social, Smith (2005) is putting forward that people's experiences and actualities arise from the interactions (known and unknown) with others. Therefore, Smith argues that social relations organise what goes on: they are what people do (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). The social organisation is a sequence of actions that relate to what people do or have done elsewhere (Smith, 2005), and it is through understanding these sequences of doing that ruling relations are revealed. Institutional ethnography seeks to understand the ruling relations which influence local practices (Smith, 2005).

Smith's notion of ruling derives from Marx's theories of domination and subordination. Marx conceptualised power and ruling as part of class oppression in the 1800s (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). He argued that ruling served in capitalist ways with the ruling class imposing structure and rules on the subordinate class in order to maximise production and wealth and serve the interests of the ruling class (Smith, 2005). Smith (2005) argues that for this to take place ruling occurs in everyday administrative tasks. As such this allows for ruling relations to be observed and identified. Ruling relations are more than a set of rules, they require the person to know how to take them up and act within them (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). People are active in the ruling relations, they are part of the social organisations and therefore, ruling relations are not done to people. Instead, people actively participate in the ruling relations and in turn are coordinated in line with expectations or organisational rules (Campbell and Gregor, 2008).

Smith refers to power as a form of ruling relations: the ruling practices of institutions (Smith, 1990a). Smith's conceptualisation of power has evolved through her understanding and application of Marxist critique of capitalism whereby power is seen as a means of control from those with the means of production and capital over those without (Marx and Engels, 1998). For institutional ethnography, ruling is seen as a top-down process whereby the institution wields its power through institutional discourses and the use of textual artefacts (Smith, 2005; 2006). Smith argues that ruling must be understood as arising in everyday activities and that power is a means of coordinating and organising (Smith, 1990a). Yet, the ruling does not stop at the level of the extra-local organisation. Ruling also comes from the trans-local level, e.g. ideologies of education which are embedded in government policies. Through exploring work knowledge and texts at each of the levels, this research has been able to make visible the ruling relations relevant to the problematic and show how these influenced the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE.

3:3:7 The textually mediated world: understanding texts in institutional ethnography

Texts are a central component of the ruling apparatus (Deveau, 2009). Ruling operates across extra-local and trans-local levels, relating to complex organisational practices and discourses and being revealed through institutional discourses and texts (Smith, 1987). People are ruled by social organisation which is vested in and mediated by text and documents that are external to the standpoint (Smith, 1987). One of the key features of institutional ethnography is its focus on text and how in contemporary organisational practices, work is textually mediated. This method of inquiry capitalises on this aspect (DeVault, 2013). For Smith, texts coordinate activities across location and time (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). Institutional texts have been produced for a specific purpose to allow the coordination of people, and they are used to standardise activities (Smith, 2005). Texts reflect the organisational interests and priorities of the institution (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). They use institutional discourses, categories in language and specific terminology which the researcher must unpack (Smith, 2005). Texts are seen as tools which the ethnographer uses to reveal the extra local coordination of the local work (DeVault, 1993).

It is the institutional texts and discourses that may contain and sustain the ruling relations. Yet the idea of text is something which Smith conceptualises in a different way to other methods of inquiry, for example, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis that treats the text as an object to be studied (Fairclough, 2015). Yet, Smith argues that institutional ethnography differs from critical discourse analysis in the objectification of text in two distinct ways. Firstly, Smith sees texts as material objects which convey messages. They can take different forms and can be reproduced. They can be words or images, television programmes and other forms of media (Smith, 2005). However, the key aspect of texts from this perspective is that they are replicable; they can be reproduced and shared with people at different times and in different locations. Secondly, texts are not the object of research, they are to be seen as 'in-action'; how the text is being read, and used (Smith and Turner, 2014). However, I argue that this is a narrow view of textual analysis; the background of the text's production is central to how it socially organises institutional processes (discussed further in Chapter Four). The latter is a particularly important difference from critical discourse analysis. In other words, texts are a means by which ruling relations can be made visible and a method of identifying how social relations coordinate people's activities; they are the technologies that shape action and experience from the extra local level to the local level (Smith and Turner, 2014; Heap, 1994). The purpose of analysing texts is to allow the researcher to understand the objectifying nature of the texts and institutional discourses and to identify ways in which they coordinate and organise local experiences: in other words, how they rule everyday work (Smith and Turner, 2014). Texts are to be explored as they enter people's work knowledge (Smith and Turner, 2014). In this research, there are several different texts explored in uncovering the influences on the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. When texts act in alignment with other texts, this is known as intertextuality. For this research the coordination of action which organises the everyday work of the course leaders includes timetables, contracts of employment and partner university quality framework text (each to be discussed in further detail in Chapters Five to Nine).

In institutional ethnography, texts offer the start of a conversation (Smith, 2005). It is a conversation between the person who produces the text and the person who reads it. On its own, the text is inert, however, the reader activates the text: something Smith (2005) refers to as the text-reader conversation. This is where the reader engages with the discourse it contains and responds to it in some way, bringing the text into local practices (Smith, 2005) (see Figure 3). Texts are produced in a time and place. When the reader activates the texts, their consciousness is transported from the present to the time of the texts production (Smith and Turner, 2014). In doing so, the reader needs to think about what the text means and the actions the writer intended to result from reading the text. Engaging with and understanding the meaning contained in the text requires the reader to have a certain level of insider knowledge (Smith, 2005).

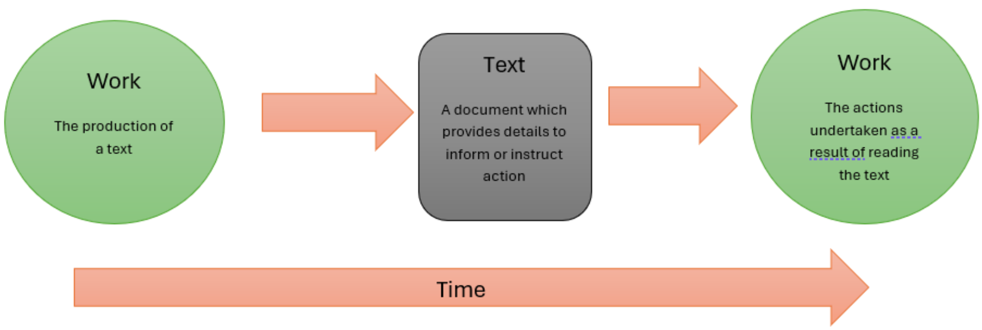


Figure 3: Text-Reader Conversation (Smith and Griffiths, 2022)

However, institutional texts and discourses often are also part of ideological discourse. Texts are a form of power; they are created within particular ideological systems (Smith 1987); they are written with purpose and for action. As such, ruling can often be hidden (Collins, 1992). In addition, texts often contain nominalisations as these are often found in institutional discourses. Nominalisations remove the subject and time from the sentence, leaving ambiguity that needs to be unpacked in order to see the individuals or agents and the ruling within them (Smith, 2005; Fairclough, 2015). These institutional discourses await to be analysed, offering rich insights into ruling relations. Institutional texts may contain nouns and nominalisations which are 'shells' they stand for other things without specifying what they stand for. These shells are gaps to be filled by the reader with information from local activities (Smith, 2005). Therefore, the reader relies on their existing knowledge of the situation or similar situations they have found themselves in to make sense of what the text is advocating. This makes the information in the text problematic as it could be interpreted in different ways depending on the reader's knowledge. However, whilst texts can be interpreted selectively and subjectively, drawing on prior knowledge and experiences, it is important to note that texts are not changed as a result of activation, they are designed to exert control over the reader (Smith, 2005). Thus, the reader becomes the agent of the text and the text coordinates local practices.

When processes are put into text form, the person or persons instructing those processes is/are lost, they become invisible in the processes (Campbell and Gregor, 2008; Smith, 2005). The moment actualities are put into text, all that has gone before becomes invisible. Experience is lost and it becomes what has happened or what is to happen (Collins, 1992). The text's activation allows it to perform its ruling properties, which can be made visible. This allows the researcher to see whose interests are served and how the power is activated through the text (Campbell and Gregor, 2008).

3:8 Chapter summary

Institutional ethnography is the theoretical and methodological framework for inquiry used to explore issues such as governance, health care, social work and policing (Smith, 2006). Whilst I have explored the theoretical perspective in this chapter, the methodological framework will be explored in depth in the methodology chapter (Chapter Four). Much of the research using institutional ethnography has stemmed from Canada. Yet, within the United Kingdom, it is not a well-known framework, nor has it been used extensively in studying education and educational practice. However, I argue that institutional ethnography and its underpinning concepts offer a helpful way of researching the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. By using institutional ethnography as a theoretical and methodological framework, the study can make both a knowledge contribution relating to the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE and theoretical contribution by expanding the use of institutional ethnography as a method of inquiry in education.

Furthermore, Institutional ethnography is distinctive in how it allows the research to start from the adopted standpoint, exploring the actualities of the everyday before using this knowledge to explore beyond these local experiences to find out how these experiences happen through its commitment to talking with people and exploring texts. Despite the progression of the inquiry into the extra-local, the institutional ethnographer never loses sight of the standpoint, always keeping in mind how the knowledge they are discovering is socially organised in a way that is experienced by those in the adopted standpoint, whilst never turning to grand theories to understand what was found.

However, as discussed, institutional ethnography is not without its limitations, such as its failure to see how the balance of power is always in the favour of the researcher. Yet I argue that limitations such as the role of the researcher in the inquiry can be addressed through reflexivity. It is through reflexivity that I will be able to offer transparency on how my data is collected, through the first dialogue in talking with people and interpreted in the second dialogue, through my analysis. Reflexivity will also show how my position as a course leader for CBHE, employed by The College Group, impacted my knowledge as an insider-researcher (discussed in Chapter Four).

Despite the limitations discussed, I argue that institutional ethnography is best placed to study the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. Through identifying my problematic, that course leaders for CBHE find their everyday work complex, I will adopt the standpoint of course leaders for CBHE. The problematic and standpoint are the starting point for this inquiry. From this local standpoint and using the course leaders' work knowledge, the study will investigate the extra-local position of the middle and senior managers in The College Group, seeking their work knowledge and explore institutional texts. Beyond the local and extra-local, I explore the trans-local position of education policies from government and from the private sector discourses of NPM. By taking up the course leaders' standpoint for CBHE, it will become possible to explore the social relations from a local and extra local perspective to show how their everyday work is organised by the ruling relations within The College Group. By tracing and exposing ruling relations, across a variety of locations and periods in time, the course leaders’ knowledge of their everyday lives can be illuminated beyond what they can know locally (Smith, 2005).

Chapter Four: Methodology

4:1 Introduction

The theoretical underpinnings of institutional ethnography have been discussed at length in the previous chapter (Chapter Three). In this chapter, the focus is on how this theory translates into the framework for inquiry. The chapter starts with discussion on the selection of informants for this research. Due to the nature of institutional ethnography and its drive for work knowledge to uncover the social organisation for an institution (Smith, 2005), a purposive sampling technique was employed to select informants who are course leaders for college-based higher education (CBHE), programme area leaders (PALs), the group head of higher education (GHHE) and members of the senior management team (SMT).

Given the inquiry-based nature of institutional ethnography, it was clear that a range of data collection techniques was necessary to uncover the social organisation of The College Group and to reveal the ruling relations for CBHE course leaders' everyday work. This chapter critically discusses the methods of data collection used: interviews (formal and informal), observations, textual analysis and researcher reflections (DeVault and McCoy, 2006). The advantage of taking this multi-method approach is that it allowed me to investigate the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE in a range of ways and gather data from different perspectives such as through observations, texts and talking with people. I argue that a single method of data collection would not allow this scope and therefore not fully capture the everyday work of the course leaders. By adopting a multi-method approach, I was able to immerse myself in the standpoint of course leaders and use a range of data collection tools required to investigate their work in depth. Each data collection method was used in collaboration with other methods. For example, I used talk about texts in interviews which in turn lead to observations of the use of the text in practice (DeVault and McCoy, 2006).

Throughout the chapter, I embed discussions on reflexivity, whereby I offer transparency around my role as an insider researcher and the influence this may have had on the inquiry (Symon and Cassell, 2012). I will discuss how analysis of my data has taken place and how, due to the limitations of institutional ethnography, I have had to draw on the work of Fitzgerald (2012) to support the analysis of texts. The final section of this chapter focuses on ethics and how I have positioned myself as an insider researcher. Further, I will address working ethically in this research based on the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018). I acknowledge that BERA has now updated these guidelines for 2024, however, at the time of data collection, the 2018 version was the most current.

4:2 Selection of informants

Institutional ethnography uses the term informants rather than participants. The term informants highlights that those participating in the research are the ones with the knowledge that can be shared with the researcher. All of the data was collected from informants in The College Group. The College Group is made up of two FE colleges, one sixth form centre, one skills centre and a training provider. The informants were from the two FE colleges in The College group.

Data was initially collected from informants from the standpoint I have adopted. As the research is focused on the everyday work of course leaders who are responsible for higher education (HE) courses delivered in a further education (FE) college, it was course leaders for CBHE who became the initial informants in this research. The course leaders were initially approached in a professional development meeting where I gave a short presentation on my research, explaining my aims and outlined what I would be asking of them as informants if they agreed to take part. This was then followed up later in the academic year with an email (Appendix 1) with full information detailed on a Informant Information Sheet and Consent Letter (Appendix 2) and Privacy Notice (Appendix 3). At the time of my data collection, The College Group had sixteen HE course leaders (excluding myself), nine of which consented to participate in this research. Each course leader had responsibility for one to three courses from level four to level six, delivered as part of the partner university franchise. The consenting course leaders were from the two of the three campuses (Dormand and Oakview colleges) which offer HE in The College Group. On the third campus, there was only one course leader. They chose not to participate in this research.

With course leaders for CBHE being the standpoint I have adopted; they were the first informants I approached to collect data from. Therefore, in institutional ethnography, they are known as the local position from which entry level data is collected (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). Once I had access to the entry level data, I then needed to follow up on the lines of inquiry generated at this level. This required that I move from the local position of the course leaders for CBHE into the extra local. The extra local position in one which is a step into the social organisation of the course leaders for CBHE's work. This level includes line managers, middle managers and members of the SMT. In doing so I needed to be mindful of not moving the initial standpoint. The objective was always to work from the course leader position (Deveau, 2009; DeVault and McCoy, 2006). Data collected from the extra-local level is known as the level two data (Campbell and Gregor, 2008).

As outlined above, the informants in the extra-local level were other people within The College Group who were able to offer an insight into the connections between the entry level data and other areas of the institution, thus allowing the social organisation to be identified and mapped, and ruling relations revealed (Deveau, 2009). There were seven informants in the level two data, including the Chief Executive of The College Group, a campus principal, the cross-college group head of department (HoD) for higher education (HE), the cross-college group programme area leader (PAL) for HE and PALs for curriculum areas. Level two informants were identified through interviews with course leaders, observations, researcher diary notes and through the identifications of text. They were approached individually and asked via email if they would be willing to take part in this study. After initial agreement, a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Letter (Appendix 4) and Privacy Notice (Appendix 3) were emailed. Full, informed consent was gained from all informants. Whilst not specifically aiming to sample any of the informants in this research, it could therefore be argued that this method of informant selection and recruitment follows a purposive sampling technique, as every informant in this study was approached for a specific purpose, and because they held certain characteristics (Gobo, 2004; Mukherji and Albon, 2018). Details of the informants for this research and the position they hold in The College Group can be seen from Table 1 below.

Table1: Informants in this research and the position they hold in The College Group

Pseudonym	**Role – entry level informants (local level)**
Carol	Course Leader for CBHE
Craig	Course Leader for CBHE
Eric	Course Leader for CBHE
Elizabeth	Course Leader for CBHE
Grace	Course Leader for CBHE
Mandy	Course Leader for CBHE
Mark	Course Leader for CBHE
Phil	Course Leader for CBHE
Rebekah	Course Leader for CBHE
Pseudonym	**Role – level two informants (extra-local level)**
Andy	Programme Area Leader (curriculum)
Diana	Campus Principal and Strategic Lead for HE
Alishba	Programme Area Leader (curriculum)
Frankie	Assistant Principal and former Group Head of HE
Sam	Former Programme Area Leader (HE) current Group Head of HE
Margret	Programme Area Leader (curriculum)
Sonia	Human Resources (HR) Advisor
Kay	Chief Executive

4:3 Data collection methods

This section discusses the data collection methods used in this research. For institutional ethnography and indeed any research inquiry, the data collection methods and the way the researcher goes about gathering that data are inextricably linked to the theoretical underpinning of the research. For institutional ethnography, the inquiry is driven by the problematic (discussed in Chapter Three). My inquiry was driven by the problematic that course leaders find their everyday work as complex. Therefore, this was my starting point, along with the standpoint of course leaders. As an insider research I was aware of some of the complexities of being a course leaders for CBHE. However, this research is not about my everyday work, therefore I needed to speak with the course leaders to understand their work knowledge as a starting point to understand what makes their everyday work complex. Therefore, my data collection started with interviews: local level interviews. It is these interviews, with the course leaders, that highlighted the lines of inquiry I was to follow up on. In following up on the lines of inquiry, and delving into the extra-local, I engaged in seeking out texts, seeking other people to talk to and observing firsthand elements of the course leaders' everyday work. My lines of inquiry then led me to observations of senior management meetings.

It is here that this chapter discusses interviews, observations, researcher diary, reflective diary and the use of texts. Table 2 provides an overview of the scale and scope of the data collections methods used. All of these methods help to generate a rich description of what people do and how they do it. The qualitative multi-method approach is one in which is driven by the research problematic (the driving force for institutional ethnographic research, discussed in Chapter Three) (Silverman, 2017; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018), which, in the case of this research relates to the scholarly and practical hunch that course leaders for CBHE find their work challenging within a further education (FE) college group. In starting with the problematic, my data collections methods have been driven by following up on the lines of inquiry generated in the problematic. It is for this reason that interviews were the initial data collection methods used. During the time frame where interviews were conducted observations and seeking out texts were conducted simultaneously. In addition to critically discussing the methods, I have contextualised each data collection method within the institutional ethnographic framework which guides this research.

Table 2: Overview of data collection methods used in this inquiry

Data collection methods	**Number included in this inquiry**
Interviews (formal)	16 (9x local interviews, 7x extra-local interviews)
Interviews (informal)	12
Observations	8
Texts	22
Researcher diary	28 entries between 2019 – 2022

4:3:1 Interviews in institutional ethnography

Interviews are a key method of data collection associated with institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005), and this method can be used at any stage of the inquiry (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). In particular, interviews facilitate an open-ended inquiry, built around the concept of work (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). Best described as talking with people, the purpose of interviews is to understand the coordination of activity across different people and places (DeVault and McCoy,2006; DeVault and McCoy, 2012). In very simple terms, this open-ended inquiry allows the researcher to find out how things work (Campbell and Gregor, 2008).

An interview is where knowledge is constructed between two or more people, with the knowledge being produced depending on the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Kvale, 2007). Where informants are feeling more relaxed, the more likely they are to feel comfortable sharing information. Interviews are a way of gaining in-depth information from individuals or small group of people. Whilst this is a common method of data collection in qualitative research, care needs to be taken. For example, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) argue that it is difficult to do an interview well if it is not well planned out in advance. To do this, the researcher needs to consider both the informants' needs and their own skills in addition to showing critical awareness during the interview process. The interviewer needs to be aware of what is being said and how they understand the knowledge being shared. It is important that the researcher clarifies information where there is ambiguity. Therefore, a critical awareness during the interview process is essential. Furthermore, reflexivity is key to ensure the quality of data generated through this data collection method (Mann, 2016).

Whilst acknowledging that interviews take different forms, they are still seen as a conversation with structure (Kvale, 2007). There are several types of interviews, each with a different purpose ranging from tightly structured interviews to non-structured narrative interviews (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). This inquiry focused on a non-standardised qualitative interview approach. Whilst I had a notion of the questions I wanted to ask (Appendix 5), I remained open and flexible, allowing the interview conversation to follow the lines of inquiry directed by the informant. Given that the purpose of interviewing is to build an understanding of the coordination of activities, interviews in institutional ethnography do not have to be standardised with a prescriptive set of questions or format (DeVault and McCoy, 2012; DeVault and McCoy, 2006). Being guided by institutional ethnographic principles, it allowed me to follow the lines of work knowledge that the course leaders chose to share at a given moment.

4:3:1:1 Conducting interviews

The aim in institutional ethnographic interviews is for the informant and researcher to explore their work knowledge together, with the researcher being part of the construction of knowledge and understanding the social situation (DeVault and McCoy, 2006). Institutional ethnographic interviews are not used to reveal subjective states, but to locate and trace points of connection among individuals working in different parts of institutional activities, with the goal of eliciting information, or talk, to highlight a particular circumstance and to point towards next steps into the extra-local processes (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). Interviewing allowed me to understand how course leaders for CBHE construct and talk about their everyday work. Through the data gathered in the interviews, I used informants' accounts to investigate ruling relationships that shaped local experiences of work (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). Yet, interviews in institutional ethnography are, in themselves, an analytical project; Mykhalovskiy (cited in DeVault and McCoy, 2006) argued that analytic thinking for the researcher begins during the interview. As such during the interviews I ensured that I regularly checked for understanding and clarification on points being made. I ensured that I asked informants to explain key terms and avoided filling in 'gaps' with my insider knowledge so that no detail was left out (Campbell and Gregor, 2008).

Beyond the course leaders, further informants were chosen as the inquiry progressed (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). All informants were chosen for the specialist knowledge they had about the work of the course leader or the setting and social practices within it (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). In line with institutional ethnographic aims, all informants are positioned as experts in their everyday work (Kearney, *et.al*. 2019). It is through the interview process that other people who have important work knowledges were identified. Institutional ethnography allows for a shift in focus as it proceeds, as such I was able to move beyond my standpoint of the course leaders into the extra-local: from the entry level data collection into the level two data (Walby, 2012; DeVault and McCoy, 2006). In moving into the level two data collection, I interviewed PALs, HoDs, The Group Head of HE, assistant principals and campus principals. The questions asked during these interviews focused on their role in relation to HE in The College Group, their role in relation to the strategic running of The College Group and their understanding of the work of the course leaders for CBHE. In each case, I avoided going into the interview with a very structured set of questions. Instead, and as with the course leaders, I allowed the informant to talk and listened for talk of texts and the work of others in addition to the informants' own work. For level 2 informants I simply asked them to tell me about CBHE in The College Group and their work with course leaders for CBHE. From here I asked questions based on the knowledge shared.

Whilst most interviews were conducted as planned interviews, I also seized the opportunity to conduct unplanned or informal interviews as they arose (DeVault and McCoy, 2006). Both planned and unplanned interviews took the form of a conversation rather than a formal interview (DeVault and McCoy, 2006). Planned interviews took place in a classroom in one of The College Group's buildings. For convenience I conducted the interviews with my informants on the site they were based. Where an in-person interview was not possible, the interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. Planned interviews lasted between 45-75 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Prior to the interviews, course leaders were asked to consider general aspects of their role. I maintain that allowing informants to consider the topic of the interview beforehand would minimise the risk of colleagues over disclosing (Bartlett and Milligan, 2015) whilst also allow them to consider their work rather than being put on the spot. For informants in the level two data collection, for example, the head of HE or the campus principal, I informed them of the interview focus (the work of the course leaders and CBHE in general) at the time of making an appointment. Again, this allowed them to come to the interview prepared. I conducted sixteen formal interviews for this research. These were with course leaders for CBHE, PALs, GHHE and members of SMT.

The unplanned interviews were less formal. The majority of unplanned interviews only took place with course leaders. Again, these informal interviews were based on notions of work. However, there were occasions where I sought additional information for members of the PALs, SMT and HR teams when following up on lines of inquiry. I conducted twelve informal interviews. Unplanned interviews tended to take place in the moment. These unplanned interviews took the form of a conversation with the informant. These ad-hoc moments arose out of me observing something or hearing something in my everyday work that I wanted further elaboration on. They consisted of me asking the informant about the issue that was raised and then recording their responses in my researcher diary with notes of reflection added (see section on researcher diary). All unplanned interviews were conducted with informants that had previously given consent to take part in this research. I made each informant aware when talking to them how the information was to be used. The unplanned interviews lasted between 5-30 minutes.

Yet, listening to and learning about the work of course leaders was not a straightforward line of inquiry. In their talk, there was evidence of institutional discourses and institutional work processes. I needed to pay attention to these categories and how they are connected to one another (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). During the interviews, I had to be aware that institutional categories were being used by the informants, then ask my informants questions about how these operated (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). Examples of institutional categories include the periodic review (reviewing the course in line with Waterside University's Quality Framework discussed in Chapter Five) and Learner Level Tracking (a meeting with the GHHE to discuss each learner's progress on the course. Discussed in Chapter Nine). Failure to do this would have resulted in me collecting data that says very little about the ruling relations that I was aiming to investigate (DeVault and McCoy, 2006). Therefore, openness and awareness were always required. For example, I asked course leaders to assume that I did not know what they were talking about, and this meant that when they were talking about work such as Learner Level Tracking, I asked them to explain this process to me as a novice. However, there were times when the use of categories only became apparent during the transcription and reflection phase. In these instances, I went back to the informant for further clarification as part of an informant interview.

4:3:1:2 Reflexivity: interviews as in insider researcher

The interviews with my informants provided a dual challenge for me. Firstly, the informants were well versed in using the institutional discourse, concepts and categories that I needed to unpack. Like any other professional, they are accustomed to speaking from within ruling relations (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). Secondly, as an insider researcher, I too was accustomed to speaking these institutional discourses, meaning that I was also tied into the ruling relations (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). To mediate this challenge, I asked my informants, at each point, to fully explain and elaborate what they meant. It is the role of institutional ethnography, and my role as the researcher, to identify when such situations happen. Failure to do so would have meant that there would be a lack of usable data from an institutional ethnographic perspective. Instead, I would have purely had the evidence of institutional ideology with the institutional language being used, obscuring the ruling relations I was seeking to discover and describe (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). Being tied into the institutional discourses would have resulted in what Smith (2005) calls institutional capture, whereby I would have been caught up in the very social relations I was seeking to investigate. This is where my research diary proved valuable as I was able to reflect on what was being said and what that meant in terms of my research inquiry. For example, reflecting on a group conversation (through my everyday work rather than data collection) with Frankie and others, I then approached Frankie for an informal interview to discuss the specifics about what had been said. I made notes from informal interviews in my researcher diary (discussed in section 4:3:4).

A further challenge with interviewing is with the balance of power. In interviews, it is argued that there is a power imbalance between the interviewer and the informant, where the conversation is one-sided with the interviewer asking the questions and the informants responding (Kvale, 2007). Yet institutional ethnography seeks to address this power imbalance, stating that it is the informants who hold a particular type of power related to their work knowledge. Informants are seen as experts in their everyday work and so are seen to be the one with the power (Kearney, *et al*., 2019). To address this, I started each interview with a statement that told the informant they were to assume I know nothing about their work, so when I asked questions to probe for a depth of understanding, I was not trying to catch them out but trying to understand their work knowledge in their own words and from their own experiences.

Despite attempts to address the issue of power imbalance due to the informants being cast as an expert, even in institutional ethnographic interviews the interviewer is still the one who asks the questions and follows up on lines of interest; in fact, they determine the lines of interest and therefore drive the dialogue. The researcher is also the one who interprets the transcripts and data (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015), organises the findings and write these up. Thus, despite the attempts to position the informants as in the position of power, it could be argued that I was still the one with power and influence during my interviews. I was the one requesting the interview, recording it, and asking the questions. So, despite the course leaders for CBHE and other informants in this research being the experts in their work, I was organising and requesting the interview, therefore I would argue that the power imbalance was still in my favour.

4:3:2 Texts

In large organisations, text-based forms of knowledge are essential for coordinating the activities of people (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). In institutional ethnography, texts are a central aspect on the inquiry. Texts coordinate and instigate action; they shape everyday practices (Smith, 2006). Whilst texts are fixed and replicable, they can be electronic or hard copy, they can be stored, transferred, copied and distributed. Whilst the term text can be multimodal with ‘text’ used to represent words and images: in short, the text involves things that can be seen or heard (Smith, 2006; Rudrum, 2016). Due to the nature of the texts within The College Group, this research focuses on texts and words in the written form, both hard copy and electronic.

Through the text reader conversation (Chapter Three), text draw people into everyday work processes (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). The key feature of texts in institutional ethnography is that they must be replicable: the ability of the text to be reproduced and used in different times and locations (Smith, 2006). Further, texts are used for coordinating extra and trans local activities (Rudrum 2016). According to Campbell (2006) texts transmit social relations, they are central to institutional ethnography as they create a bridge between the local and extra and trans local ruling, thus, conveying action (Rudrum, 2016; Smith, 2005). They can be produced in one place, while being influential in another (Rudrum, 2016). Whilst texts are active in coordinating what is done, the ruling is not always visible. It is through the examination of texts that institutional processes and power relations can be extrapolated and understood (Smith, 2005). It is important that texts are not taken as face value but are ‘cross-examined’ (Gilbert, 2008). It is important to know: Who wrote it? What is the purpose of the document? For whom is it written? Who benefits from it? What is the meaning? Like many other institutions, The College Group is textually mediated. As a researcher, my role is to find these texts and identify how they were instrumental in the social organisation of work in The College Group; more specifically, in the social organisation of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. I had been given permission by The College Group Chief Executive to access all institutional texts for my research. The majority of these texts were available to all staff on the internal intranet. In cases where they were not available to all staff, I asked for them.

When accessing texts, I was mindful that they do not often stand in isolation. With an institution such as The College Group, the intertextuality occurs where one text refers to another or requires knowledge of other texts and practices to be understood (Barton, 1994). Further to this is the concept on intertextual hierarchy, where not all texts are equal, but some texts have more power and therefore more ruling than others (Smith, 2006). At the top of this hierarchy are ‘boss’ texts (Burstow, 2016). Boss texts exert the most influence over the everyday work of the course leader (Talbot, 2018; Burstow, 2016). Boss texts constitute regulatory frameworks, institutional laws, policy and governance (Smith, 2005). In this research twenty-two texts were used, and these are outlined in Appendix 6. There were two ‘boss texts, the *Contract of Employment* from The College Group and the *Operations Manual* from Waterside University. The main types of texts used were those of policies, data gathering documents and Waterside University partnership quality frameworks.

The examination of texts was twofold: when they come into discussion in interviews in relation to how the text is used by the reader and using the framework for analysis (Appendix 7) on an individual text to understand the details and purpose of the text. This allowed me to position the text in context, noting, amongst other things in my framework, who wrote it and the purpose. Details on the use of the framework for analysis will be discussed in this chapter's analysis section 4:4:2. When texts entered discussion or became apparent through observations, I observed how the informants were using the text and how this impacted their work. It was important for me to find out how the text was read and used: institutional ethnography refers to this process as understanding how the text is activated (Smith, 2005). To do this, I focused on how the text comes to the informant, and where it goes next, what the informant needs to know in order to use the text, what existing knowledge did they need to draw on to know how to activate a text, and what the informant does with it (DeVault and McCoy, 2012). In line with the typical pathways of institutional ethnography's use of texts, I therefore followed the chain of events activated through the text (DeVault and McCoy, 2012).

4:3:3 Observations

In institutional ethnography, the researcher's experiences are usually the starting point from which the research problematic arises. It was through my everyday observations, from the standpoint of a course leader that the focus of this inquiry became visible (Diamond, 2006). Whilst my observations as a practitioner have led to this research inquiry, they do not form part of my data collection. Instead, and aligned with good ethical practice, I have conducted observations as a researcher. This section discusses these observations. Observations are grounded in the reality of actual events from which stories and experiences arise (Diamond, 2006).

There are a range of different types of observations that can be carried out in research, including overt and covert, where the former is carried out in the open with the knowledge and consent of those being observed and covert being a more discrete form of observation where those being observed are not aware that they are being watched (Flick, 2018). However, covert observations raise ethical issues in terms of consent and good ethical practice and therefore were avoided in this research. In addition, there are observations which are conducted in artificial setting such as laboratories, where the behaviour being observed is not naturally occurring in a field setting, and observations which are of naturally occurring behaviour in their natural setting (Flick, 2018). In institutional ethnography, the objective is to witness naturally occurring behaviour and to capture the actualities of peoples' everyday work. Therefore, naturalistic observations method of observation not only increases the validity of the research but were also the most appropriate for the aims. However, in doing so I needed to be mindful of observer effects. Observer effects, or Hawthorne effects is where those being observed act in a different way due to the presence of an observer (Wood and Ross-Kerr, 2011). To mitigate the impact of myself on the observation, I ensured that I positioned myself at a suitable distance where I could still hear and see what was taking place without imposing on the event. Overt observations allowed me to see the everyday work from the standpoint of the course leader and to observe the processes that occur and impact the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE. Therefore, I was observing in the open with the full consent of those being observed (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). The observations conducted were non-participant observations where my role was to observe, listen and create field notes in my research diary. Examples of non-participant observations included observations of Business Planning (BP)/ Performance Review (PR) meetings and of course leaders carrying out their everyday work. In total, I conducted eight observations between 2020 – 2022; from which four were with course leaders for CBHE and four with BP & PR meetings. Observations with course leaders proved challenging. As an insider researcher I was working in The College Group full time. As such finding times to observe course leaders was when I was not teaching was challenging. Table 3 details the observations that were conducted as part of this research.

Table 3: Details of observations conducted as part of this research

Observation type	Focus of the observation	Number of minutes observed
Course Leader – In person - Mandy	Working with students	30 mins
Course Leader - In person - Rebekah	Working with students	25 mins
Course Leader- In person with Eric	Learner Level Tracking	60 mins
Course Leader – In person with Grace	Learner Level Tracking	57 mins
SMT – Via Microsoft Teams	BP & PR	120 mins
SMT – Via Microsoft Teams	BP & PR	60 mins
SMT – Via Microsoft Teams	BP & PR	62 mins
SMT – Via Microsoft Teams	BP & PR	130 mins

Yet the role of the observer is not something which is straight forward in institutional ethnography. Observations are taken from a standpoint. Therefore, it was important that the I remained faithful to that standpoint even when observing everyday work and talking to people in level two of data collection (Diamond, 2006). Taking up a standpoint, being present, allowed me to ground the events being studied. It allowed me to develop an appreciation of the stories being told and the events happing in real time and place, thus developing a greater understanding of how the ruling works (Diamond, 2006).

Whilst interviews are helpful for capturing stories and experiences, they rely on informants telling those stories and the natural editing, biases and reliance on memory. The benefits of observations are that I was able to see them unfolding as they happened in real time and place (Diamond, 2006). Diamond (2006) suggests, the researcher needs to be visible and show through reflexivity where they become part of the construction of knowledge. Being part of the stories constructed, is a crucial element of this inquiry therefore, reflexivity is a central aspect in this research and how the data is collected and understood. Whilst there is evidence of reflexivity throughout the thesis, I particularly focus on this in section 4:5:1.

4:3:4 Researcher diary

In addition to observing others, observing oneself is a key aspect of this inquiry (Flick, 2018). Self-observation allowed for the development of a research diary and field notes. Self-observation and field notes provided the opportunity to reflect. Being in the position of a course leader for CBHE meant that the everyday work and institutional processes being researched were part of my own everyday work. Therefore, it would not be feasible to ignore the impact of this dual role on the understanding of the informants' work and the insider knowledge granted in this research. Fieldnotes gave me the opportunity to reflect on my role, on the information from others and about any potential questions and lines of enquiry to follow up on (Diamond, 2006). Fieldnotes were made on an ad-hoc basis during the academic years 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Examples of my field notes can be seen in Appendix 8. These mostly occurred in the moment when I observed or heard something of interest which I wanted to follow up on. In addition, my researcher diary was used to make notes on the work knowledge gained from informal interviews. The notes that were made in the moment were then revisited at the end of the day and were followed up with either reflection or an action plan on who I needed to speak to or which texts I needed to access. Furthermore, taking a position from inside the standpoint means that I was able to observe and participate, in real time, aspects of the everyday work of the course leader for CBHE. All observational data was recorded via detailed fieldnotes in my research diary.

4:3:5 Reflective diaries

The opportunity to complete a reflective diary was given to all course leader informants. It was designed as a way of capturing the work of the course leader as it is lived (Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli, 2003). For reflective diaries to be effective, it is important for the informant to have a clear understanding on how and why they will be used (Menter, *et al*., 2011). A diary template was provided to the participating course leaders with instructions to use (Mann, 2016) (see Appendix 9). The instructions included writing up any critical incidents which occur in their role, reflecting on instances of challenge and instances of success and to make general notes for discussion for interview. This could be on an aspect of their role that they chose to discuss or be based on a textual artefact as directed. I emailed the template to the informants to be completed and returned via email. The aim of using electronic submission was to help increase the turnaround times for the reflective diaries and reduce the need for transcriptions (Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli, 2003).

Despite careful consideration of this method of data collection, the reality was that course leaders did not complete their reflective diary proformas. When asked during their interviews, course leaders reported that they had forgotten about it. On reflection, perhaps I was asking too much of my course leader informants. This was particularly evident on reflection when analysing the data from the interviews where time, or lack of time to complete their everyday work, was an issue raised on several occasions. On further reflection, perhaps separating the two data collection methods may have contributed in the reflective diaries not being completed. In hindsight, I could have asked for the reflective diaries to be completed prior to arranging the interviews. This too would have allowed me to focus on the issues the course leaders raised and plan my interviews around this knowledge gained.

4:4 Analysis

In institutional ethnography, the aim of analysis is to explore the links between people's actual doings: it is these links that reveal the social organisation of the institution (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). Smith claims that in any data analysis as part of institutional ethnography, there are two distinct analytic phases: the primary dialogue and the secondary dialogue (Walby, 2012). The primary dialogue is always with the informants, between the interviewer and the interviewee. However, there is a secondary dialogue which is where the researcher transcribes the interviews and makes sense of it by adding their field notes and highlighting points of interest or key aspects to follow up (Walby, 2012; Campbell and Gregor, 2008). In seeking out work knowledges, my role was to encourage the informants to speak about their everyday lives, experiences and activities. I was to question, seek clarification and elaboration where required (Smith, 2005). However, the aim was not to understand the behaviour of the informant nor to see clarification of *why* they do what they do, but *how* they do it (Smith, 1987; DeVault and McCoy, 2006). It was also important to clarify meaning.

An institutional ethnographic study, such as this one, is an analytic project from the start (DeVault and McCoy, 2006). It is therefore difficult to distinguish between data collection and analysis, as the analysis is in the data collection process and not something which is done to the data after it has been collected. The aim is one of discovery: to discover the social relations that occur in the everyday lives from a given standpoint (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). It is through the data collection, using interviews, research diaries, texts and observations that I was able to see the ways in which the everyday activities of my informants in their work as course leaders for college based higher education are being coordinated (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). The more pieces of data analysed, the greater the clarity of the social organisation of the institution (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). The standpoint adopted must always remain at the forefront of any analysis. The goal in this institutional ethnographic research is to make visible the social organisation which rules the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE. Therefore, my analysis must show the social organisation from their standpoint at the local level into the ruling relations at the extra-local level and trans-local level (Campbell, 2006).

Whilst there is no schema or blueprint for analysis in institutional ethnography nor any fixed analytical techniques, the ultimate aim is for the analysis is to make sense of the findings and present them in a way which makes sense from the perspective of people's experiences and in a way that it remains truthful and convincing (Campbell and Gregor, 2008; DeVault and McCoy, 2012; Campbell, 2006). I felt that the essence of my analysis was an iterative process through the checking for understanding and going back and forth between the data, my informants, my field notes and checking that I had understood accurately. The ultimate goal is not to produce an account from an insider's perspective but to explicate how local settings, including local understandings and explanations are brought into being in a way that informants talk about them in the way that they do (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). My analysis started with transcribing the interview data from the course leaders, I started to see themes emerging from the data in the way they talked about their work. I then re-read my observation notes and field notes and combined these with the interview data where similar themes were discussed. The observation notes and reflective diary notes were not objects for analysis in themselves. Instead, they were used to supplement the interview data gathered and to inform further lines of inquiry. A more detailed description of the analysis of each type of data has been discussed in the sections below.

My analysis needed to show what the informants know, what I have observed and what people are doing in a way which extends beyond the boundaries of my informants' experiences (Smith, 2005). I needed to show how the institutional stories being told are intertwined with the problematic and with other people in other places (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). I needed to search out the social relations and describe the connections between different sites within the setting and institution (Campbell, 2006). However, my roles as a researcher and analysist were not to generate a theory (Campbell, 2006) but to make visible the connections, to show how ruling takes place and to make the coordinating explicit for others to understand (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). The analysis needed to show how texts coordinate action and form part of the social organisation. This allowed me to see how informants talk about their work and to trace upwards into the second level, into ruling relations.

As noted previously, the data analysis in this study did not start on the completion of my data collection. Indeed, using the guiding principles of institutional ethnography, my analysis started the moment I started to collect the data. When conducting interviews, I was thinking about and interpreting what had been said and using this information to inform the next questions asked. I was gathering texts: texts discussed in interviews, texts I had seen operationalised in observations and texts I found relevant to the work of the course leaders and The College Group policies.

4:4:1 Analysing interview data, observations and researcher diary notes

My interviews were transcribed verbatim, along with this I added the field notes from my researcher diary. Yet institutional ethnography eschews any form of analysis which transforms data into codes. DeVault and McCoy (2006) argue that the best way for an institutional ethnographer to make sense of the data is to conduct simple groupings of topics. Yet naming things groups or themes could arguably be simply down to semantics. However, I found it difficult to make sense of interview data without conducting some form of thematic analysis. Therefore, I turned to NVivo. NVivo is software for storing and managing qualitative data (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019). After initially inputting the data from my interviews, observations and researcher diary notes, I ran into technical difficulties. I found that each time I tried to log in the system, the system would not recognise my access details, and I had become the regular visitor to the Computer Information Services at Durham University to allow me to access the software. This was both stressful and unsustainable; I needed to access my data and analyse it in a different way. Armed with a pen and scissors, I set about coding my data the old-fashioned way. I carefully cut out and labelled sections of my transcripts and started to organise these into themes, carefully adding the to the folders (Appendix 10). This work was completed with interview data, observation data and researcher diary entries.

On reflection, this method is most aligned to the intentions of institutional ethnography. During this process I came across data that would fit into more than one theme, so I rethought the themes to add clarity. Campbell and Gregor (2008) argue that institutional ethnographic analysis requires the researcher to think, puzzle and go back and forth with the data collected to see what key themes (or groupings) emerge and going back to the informants to clarify any further detail. This was certainly the case for me as a researcher. Whilst this was a time-consuming process, I became increasingly familiar with the data and the themes as a result. In the end of this process, I had eleven themes. These can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Initial themes arising from the data

Initial themes arising from the data
Demographics
Teaching and working with students
Auditing and Monitoring
Support
Recognition and belonging
HE in FE models and Partner university
CPD
Strategic aims and wider college management
Line management
Roles and responsibilities
Challenges

Having arrived at the themes listed in Table 4, I found it difficult to ‘put pen to paper’. These themes were not working in a way that would allow me to faithfully present the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE and how their work was tied into the social organisation of The College Group. The themes were still too broad and there was still too much data which cut across these themes. Therefore, I set out again to look try and figure out the story I had been told. Many of the themes listed in Table 4 have been accommodated into the themes below in Table 5. From looking at the two tables, it is clear to see that line management and recognition and belong for the basis for Chapter Six and roles and responsibilities and working with students form the basis of Chapter Seven. Yet other themes did not provide sufficient data to explore fully. Given the amount of data collected, those themes which did not allow for full exploration were left out of the final set of themes. The process of thinking, rethinking and grouping and regrouping of data from interviews, observations, and texts resulted in the following themes which have become the subject of Chapters Five to Nine. Table 5 below shows how my themes and sub-themes have formed the findings chapters of this thesis.

Table 5: Final themes and sub-themes organised by chapter

Chapter number	**Theme**	**Sub-themes**	**Links to research questions**
Chapter Five	Becoming a course leader	• Becoming a course leader • Learning about their everyday work • Challenges of time	How do course leaders come to understand their everyday work?
Chapter Six	The everyday work of course leaders	• Positioning the course leader in the staffing structure of The College Group • Working in partnership with Waterside University	How is the everyday work of course leaders situated within working with others?

		• Belonging or being on the periphery • Limited understanding of the course leader for college-based higher education from their line manager	
Chapter Seven	Actualities of course leaders' everyday work	• Marketing and recruitment • Writing the curriculum • Working with students	How do course leaders come to understand their everyday work? How is the everyday work of course leaders situated within working with others?
Chapter Eight	Surveillance of the everyday work of course leaders	• Peer observations • Teaching and Training Reviews • Unannounced walkthroughs	How do The College Group's surveillance and accountability processes impact on the everyday work of course leaders?
Chapter Nine	Accountabilities and the everyday work of course leaders	• Learner level tracking • Student voice activities	How do The College Group's surveillance and accountability processes impact the everyday work of course leaders?

Engaging in the secondary analysis level (after the data had been collected rather than during the data collection process) I was able to begin to make sense of the work knowledge shared. I was able to find key elements to be followed up, key texts to seek out and also further informants to talk to, allowing the research to move away from the local of my course leader informants into the middle management structure and then beyond – into the extra and trans-local and ruling relations. Using these themes and the texts I had collected, I started to map how they all fitted together to shape and explain the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE.

4:4:2 Analysing texts

Texts are of central importance in institutional ethnography as they create a connection between the local, extra and trans local ruling (Smith, 2005). For institutional ethnography, and this inquiry, texts are central in understanding and extrapolating the social organisation of an institution (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). Ruling relations come into being only in people's work as coordinated by the materiality of texts activated in the text reader conversation (Smith, 2005). Despite the importance placed on texts, institutional ethnography does not offer any guidance on analysing them. My research therefore demanded that I find a way of understanding and analysing the texts in a way that would allow them to be viewed in context with the data that was collected from my other methods.

In order to analyse texts, I developed a toolkit (Appendix 7) drawing on information from institutional ethnography - from Smith (1990) and Campbell and Gregor (2008) - and from Fitzgerald's (2012) framework for document analysis. Textual analysis in institutional ethnography offers a distinct way of analysing and understanding text. For institutional ethnography texts must be seen as active and in the context they are used. They must be seen in sequence to understand them and there must be some form of existing knowledge for the reader to be able to understand and activate them. In institutional ethnography, texts are active. Smith (1990) argues that texts form part of a conversation when read: the text-reader-conversation (discussed in Chapter Three). This also means that any analytic tool used to analyse texts must be able to situate the text within the social organisation. I argue that Fitzgerald's (2012) framework for document analysis complements the underpinning ethos of institutional ethnography. Fitzgerald asks eight questions as a starting point for document analysis (Appendix 7). Whilst I have not drawn on all eight of these questions in my framework, I have used questions which align with institutional ethnography and added additional questions to support my analysis of the text from an institutional ethnographer's perspective. Using the questions listed below in Table 6, I looked at each text to understand its place within the social organisation of The College Group and how this too provided social organisation and ruling. An example of this in practice can be seen in Appendix 12.

Table 6: Questions used to analyse text (adapted from Fitzgerald (2012))

Core analytic questions for textual analysis
What type of text is it?
Who wrote the text?
When was it written?
What prompted it to be written?
Where is the text available?
Who was it written for (intended audience)?
What knowledge is assumed by the reader?
What is the text's role and function? What are the key messages?

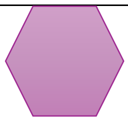
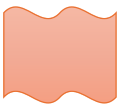
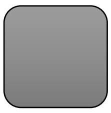
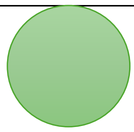
What other practices and documents does the text refer to?

4:4:3 Mapping

The ultimate analytic process in institutional ethnography is in the writing and re-writing process where, in trying to figure out the social organisation, a story will emerge from the various forms of data collected and the ruling relations revealed (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). Smith (2005) used the term mapping to describe how the analytical process that makes visible the social organisation and ruling relations uncovered in the inquiry. As such, mapping is central in institutional ethnography and forms a major part of the analysis process. The mapping process involves tracing institutional processes and explaining them, showing how they fit together into sequences of activity which leads back to the everyday work of the adopted standpoint (Smith, 2005). Maps are useful tools to make visible the social organisations and the ruling relations allowing the everyday work from the standpoint to be seen fully, identifying texts and processes that are part of the ruling relations (Smith, 2005; Rankin, 2017). They make links between people and places in time and allow the researcher to identify how things are organised and how people's lives are being ruled (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). Although mapping the social organisation is key in institutional ethnography, whilst aiming for accuracy in its representations it refrains from claiming objectivity. Instead, it seeks to provide a map or pathways into the ruling relations as experienced from a given standpoint (Smith, 2005). Thus, allowing the informant to see the processes of ruling which coordinate their everyday work. Therefore, it can help the course leaders see how their work is tied into wider educational policies and ideologies. The mapping process can produce a visual representation, for example, diagrams and charts or it can take the form of a written explanation of how the processes are sequenced (Smith, 2005).

From the analysis of my data, I have been able to map social organisation from the local level into the extra-local level using the work knowledges gained from interviews with informants and through the analysis of texts and institutional discourses (Smith, 2005). My tentative maps can be seen in Appendix 13. These maps serve as a guide through the social organisation to allow the ruling to become visible (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). Whilst mapping can be done in different ways, I initially chose to map my data in visual form to try and make sense of the themes that are emerging from the interview data and to see how combine this with textual data (Rankin, 2017). However, ultimately, I found that the complexities of any connections can be more clearly represented when focused on elements of the course leaders' work at a given time rather than trying to map everything in one large map. Evidence of these maps can be seen in Chapters Five to Nine. A key to the map symbols can be seen below in Table 7.

Table 7: Key to visual maps in Chapters Five to Nine

Mapping features	**What features represent**
	People/ Positions
	Meetings
	Texts
	Processes

In addition to the visual maps, my analysis is also mapped in written prose, whereby the process of revealing the ruling relations is produced in writing; specifically for this research in Chapters Five - Nine. Mapping always starts with the local practices of the course leaders highlighting the 'you are here' stance (Smith, 2005). The map will then track from the local of the course leaders into the work of other people, then into the extra local or the organisation, making use of work knowledges through interviews, observations, reflective diary notes and texts (Smith, 2005; Rankin, 2017).

4:5 Ethical considerations

As with any university-based research project, it is vital that the Ethics Committee within the university authorises the study. Evidence of approval for this research can be seen in Appendix 14. To gain this approval, I was required to demonstrate how I would ensure I worked in a way that follows good practice. Good practice in research involves adherence to ethical principles. Underlying any ethical guidelines are four main principles: protecting informants from harm, ensuring that consent has been gain, avoiding deception and ensuring no laws are broken in the process of conducting research (Denscombe, 2021). In addition to following these guidelines and gaining approval, I also followed the guidelines for ethical research in education set by BERA (2018).

4:5:1 Insider researcher and reflexivity

Smith (2005) argues that institutional ethnography is an ideal methodology for the practitioner researcher. According to Costley, Elliot and Gibbs (2010), an insider researcher is uniquely positioned to study particular issues in relation to work. Yet, it is important to acknowledge my role in this research. As a researcher I approached this inquiry with my own history and background which potentially impacted the decisions I have made. Indeed, as an insider researcher, I came to this research with a wealth of knowledge in the field I have chosen to research. In the introductory chapter (Section 1:8) of this thesis I set out why this research was important to me and how my history within the field has led me to choosing the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE as my focus. I positioned myself and my standpoint in relation to this research. I therefore argue for the importance of reflexivity.

As an insider researcher, negotiating access to the setting of this inquiry was not a straightforward one. Being employed in the setting meant that I had to be aware of the implications of my research not only on knowledge gained but also on my position as an insider researcher entrenched in the standpoint of a course leader. A key element in gaining access to staff and institutional documents and procedures related to developing trust (Briggs, Coleman and Morrison, 2012). This was initially achieved through discussion of my research and my role with the Chief Executive of The College Group. In looking at extra local processes I would be delving into aspects of the institution which were not normally visible from the standpoint of the course leader and as such the Chief Executive wanted to be assured of my professional conduct and confidentiality. Through discussions, he granted permission for me to access aspects of the setting and institutional processes I required for my research. Despite leaving my job as a course leader for CBHE prior to the completion of this research, I was still able to continue my research due to the trust that was built up during my time working in The College Group and conducting my research and the ongoing participation and goodwill of my informants.

Throughout this thesis I have brought an awareness to my position as an insider researcher. At each point I have put forward how I have addressed these issues and any power dynamics. For example, when interviewing course leaders for CBHE, as a peer, I was mostly aware of their everyday work. However, I wanted to hear from them, not impose my own experiences. For this reason, I always started each interview with a statement explaining that I was to act naïve, and if I asked them to explain their everyday processes in detail, I was doing so to hear them and their experiences, not to try and catch them out in any way. By attending to my presence and maintaining transparency in my positioning and relationships between informants, in the data I have collected and the institutional context, I argue that I have worked ethically throughout the duration of this research, thus I can ensure the reliability of my findings and the rigour from which they have been collected and presented.

4:5:2 Consent and the right to withdraw

Consent is the underlying ethical principle in this research. It is necessary to allow informants to choose whether or not they wish to take part (BERA, 2018). The research was conducted in my place of work (during data collection). My former place of work during analysis and write up) with the aim of uncovering institutional processes. It was therefore essential that permission from the Chief Executive of The College Group is sought before any data collection takes place. Consent from the Chief Executive was given both verbally and in writing. Individual informants from the entry data collection level and the second data collection levels were all approached on an individual basis. Each was provided with Participant Information and Consent form. In addition, I needed to ensure that participation in the research was voluntary and that informants did not feel obliged to take part (Costley, Elliot and Gibbs 2010). Informants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research study at any time during the data collection phase. They were given my contact details and a pseudonym to allow any data collected to be withdrawn (participant information and consent form can be seen in appendix 2 & 4). Consent to take part in the research was secured at each point in the research that the informant took part in. Therefore, at all times informants were clear on their rights and how their data would be used.

4:5:3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a vital aspect of conducting research in order to protect the informants (BERA, 2018). Throughout this thesis confidentiality has been maintained. The College Group and the individual colleges which make up The College Group are pseudonyms. The use of pseudonyms has continued when writing about other partner colleges or former places of employment. In addition, I have not shared the size or location of The College Group, partner university or partner colleges. This level of confidentiality has been maintained through the naming of informants in this inquiry. When seeking informed consent, I asked the informants to choose their own pseudonym. Where no name was chosen, I chose for the informant. Therefore, the names given are not a reflection of the names of the informants taking part, nor their gender as some informants chose a pseudonym typically assigned to someone of a different gender. The assigning of pseudonyms took place soon after collecting the data. This was important to avoid any risks of informants' information being traced back to them (Hammersley, 2017). Inadvertently, my own position may reveal information about The College Group. However, care was taken at all times to protect the confidentiality of the informants in this research.

4:5:4 Data storage, protection and transparency

When seeking permission from all informants, it was important that I was open and honest about the data being collected and how this would be used (BERA, 2018). This is particularly the case being an insider researcher. This was due to the informants being either colleagues or managers at my place of employment. Furthermore, failure in transparency would have resulted in informants not being able to give full informed consent. Furthermore, the transparency of my role has been evidenced throughout this thesis and in my research diary.

All data collected in electronic form was password protected and stored securely on my university cloud storage (Microsoft OneDrive) and accessed from my personal computer. All hard copy data such as my researcher diary were kept in a locked cupboard in my home. The respectful management and storage of information shared by informants is especially important. As soon as it was possible after collecting the data, the data was anonymised, and I ensured I stored the data separately from the information they shared at the start of the process (Denscombe, 2021). All data collected was stored in line with General Data Protection Regulations (2018) and the Data Protection Act (2018). With all data being stored and used fairly and solely for the purpose it was sought.

4:6 Chapter summary

Throughout this chapter I have explained how I used institutional ethnography and created a methodological framework for this inquiry. In remaining faithful to the framework, I have discussed the recruitment and selection of informants through purposive sampling based on their working knowledge of course leaders for CBHE. I have discussed and rationalised my choices of data collection methods which include the use of texts, interviews, observations, reflective diaries and my researcher diary. I have discussed the use of a reflective diary for course leader informants. Yet on reflection, this did not work as the reality of this data collection method was that it proved too time-consuming for course leaders. I have discussed and rationalised my choices for analysing data. This is an aspect of institutional ethnography that is underdeveloped, offering an opportunity to explore more widely and utilise analytic tools from other design framework. To develop the analysis of texts, and how they are activated, I argued that it was necessary to understand where it came from and its purpose. Hence, I turned to Fitzgerald (2012) to provide a framework to address this element.

Throughout the chapter, I have considered my position as an insider researcher and the role this has played in all aspects of the research, from the outset and being aware of the problematic, to the questions I asked in my interviews and to the analysis of the data and the themes selected. Central to this reflexivity and my positioning as an insider researcher, were deep ethical considerations. I have discussed how this research has remained faithful to the ethical guidelines for educational research by BERA (2018) through the considerations of consent, confidentiality, transparency and data protection. The next chapter in this thesis is the first of five chapters which explore the data collected. Chapter Five sets out how a person becomes a course leader and how they start to understand about their everyday work. Following on, in Chapter Six I explore how course leaders for CBHE work with others and the support mechanisms they use. This chapter also focuses on how course leaders feel isolated in their CBHE work. In Chapter Seven I focus on specific aspects of the course leaders' work. These include marketing and recruitment, curriculum work and working with students. Chapters Eight and Nine examine how the surveillance and accountability processes in The College Group impact the course leaders' work.

Chapter Five: Becoming a course leader, learning about their everyday work and concerns about time to complete their everyday work

5:1 Introduction

With the overall aim of the research being to explore the everyday work of the course leaders for college-based higher education (CBHE), this chapter focuses on addressing the sub-question of ‘How do course leaders for CBHE come to understand their everyday work?’. The chapter is organised into three themes: becoming a course leader for CBHE, learning about the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE and the challenge of time for course leaders for CBHE. Whilst institutional ethnography eschews organising data around themes, I argue that themes in any qualitative research are an essential tool to make sense of and present the research findings. The themes in this chapter have arisen from the data I collected from interviews with course leaders, programme area leaders (PALs), members of the senior management team (SMT) and from institutional texts. These three themes present a starting point for understanding the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. The first theme of becoming a course leader explores how a person becomes a course leader in The College Group. Here I focus on the specifics of their work, as outlined in the institutional texts of the *Contract of Employment* and the *Job Description*. The second theme on learning about the everyday work has been explored through outlining the role as it is defined in textual artefacts from Human Resources (HR) and from the franchising university, Waterside University. The third theme relates to time in course leaders’ everyday work. As this theme emerged on various occasions during the course leader interviews it also became central to how informants understand their work in The College Group setting. The theme of time has been explored through the work knowledge of the course leaders from their interviews and through analysis of the *Contract of Employment* and course leaders' *Timetables*.

5:2 Becoming a course leader for college-based higher education

To capture the course leaders' work from the starting point, I have focused here on the recruitment process and the processes related to when a course leader first starts out in their role. I found that initially this was through the recruitment process where the position of course leader is advertised on The College Group's website and with an external organisation, Indeed[7]. In The College Group, a course leader is not someone simply assigned with specific duties; it is a position in the staffing structure with a higher pay scale to lecturers. Figure 4 maps the processes, people and texts used in recruiting a new course leader for CBHE. This Figure offers a visual mapping of the processes discussed in this section, starting with the programme area leader (PAL) or head of department (HoD) as the budget holder requesting permission to fill a vacancy for a course leader for CBHE.

[7] An employment website with job vacancy listings.

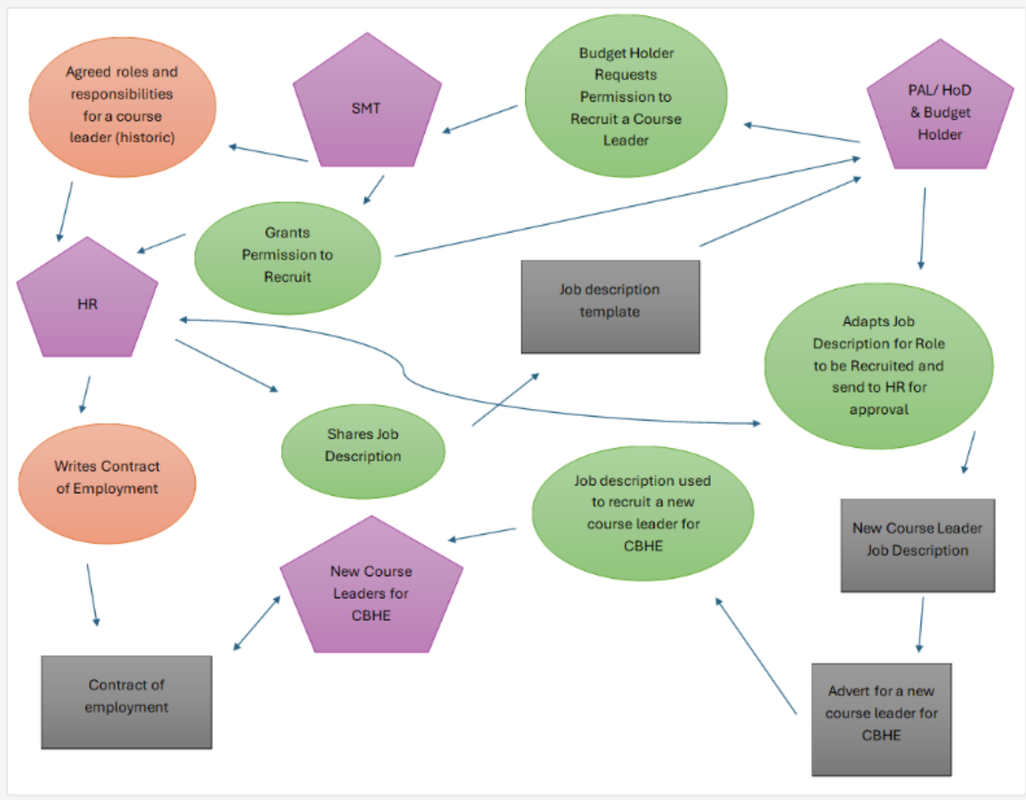


Figure 4: Mapping the process of recruiting for a new course leader for CBHE

As Figure 4 demonstrates, I have focused on two key texts relevant to the recruitment and appointment process: the *Job Description* and the *Contract of Employment*. In understanding their everyday work, course leaders engage in a work-text-work sequence (Smith, 2006. Discussed in Chapter Three). The work-text-work sequence is an action whereby a text is produced by one person and distributed for the use by others. In this case, both the *Job Description* and *Contract of Employment* have been written by the Human Resources (HR) department and edited by the budget holders in the department where the position is available (see paragraph below for more detail). The *Job Description* is then used by the budget holder to recruit a person for the role who meets the requirements of the role, as per the *Job Description*. Once an offer of employment has been made, the *Contract of Employment* is signed by the newly appointed course leader for CBHE. The actions arising from this process inform the course leader for CBHE of their roles and responsibilities in their everyday work.

As an institutional ethnographer, I explored the process of recruiting a course leader for CBHE in more detail through analysis of the *Job Description* and *Contract of Employment.* My aim was to understand how the work of the course leader was socially organised in The College Group. Moving beyond the local position of the course leaders, I approached HR to ask about these texts. From my discussions with HR, I found that the *Contract of Employment* is used, along with the specific requirements of the post, to determine the *Job Description*. The *Job Description* I accessed was the most recent course leader post advertised: the *Job Description* for the course leader for Education and Training (PGCE/ Cert Ed). This job was advertised in 2018. By accessing the most recent *Job Description*, I was able to see what the current expectations are for a course leader for CBHE. This text is also what is advertised publicly to recruit a course leader. I spoke to Sonia, a HR Advisor at the time of accessing this text. I was interested to know how the details in the *Job Description* came about. Sonia informed me that they provide a budget holder with an electronic template of the *Job Description*. In a further email, Sonia explained how the *Job Description* is created. Here Sonia writes about accountabilities and the importance of the newly employed member of staff understanding these accountabilities. It is clear that Sonia is referring to those duties that constitute the fulfilment of the role, thus aligning with Kogen's (2022) understanding of accountability. Sonia's email states:

> "*The Job Description is created by the manager [budget holder] to ensure the staff member is fully aware of their accountabilities. It ensures that the relevant staff member has the skill set for the organisation to ensure our learners receive a high level of education and experience*" (HR Advisor email, July 2021).

The budget holder is either the PAL or Head of Department (HoD) for the curriculum area that is recruiting. It is the budget holder that adds the details of the post in terms of the section which outlines the 'components of the job' (Table 8). Following up on my discussions with Sonia in HR, I spoke with Alishba, a budget holder and PAL, I asked about this process:

> "*I put together a job description, person specification, and a job advert, then that will go through HR approval, so I'll work with the HR advisor that will check all of that. And then they also support with the fair recruitment and safer recruitment - it's done very much in liaison. So, everything that with regards to recruitment... HR will guide me on for recruitment of a member of staff*."
> (Alishba PAL Interview, June 2021)

In a subsequent informal interview, noted in my research diary, I asked Alishba about how the components of the job are decided. She stated that they looked at the previous course leader post that was advertised and 'tweaked' this to suit the specifics of the new role. Taken from the most recent recruitment for the Course Leader for Education and Training, the components of the job are outlined in Table 8 below. It is these duties that form the accountabilities that Sonia was referring to when she emailed (HR Advisor email, July 2021) about the job description. The accountabilities are the duties that a course leader must perform to meet the standards set by The College Group (discussed further in this chapter and Chapters Six to Nine).

Table 8: Duties, taken from Job description for a course leader for Education and Training.

1.	Lead Cert Ed/PGCE and Education related courses and contribute to the review, planning and development of the curriculum.
2.	Develop new courses, curricula and/or methods of delivery, in collaboration with partners and employers.
3.	Responsible for student recruitment, attendance, achievement, pass, rates, progression and destinations for named courses.
4.	Lead on the evaluation of provision through self-assessments and action planning.
5.	Production and preparation of high-quality schemes of work, lesson plans and teaching and learning resources.
6.	Provide teaching, learning and assessment to at least a good standard on curriculum programmes appropriate qualifications, experience and expertise on a range of courses from level 3 to level 6.
7.	Devise and apply a range of assessment activities.
8.	Completing formative and summative assessments of students' learning, including the marking to a high standard of student work and where appropriate examinations.

9.	Verify and certificate work as appropriate.
10.	Provide personal tutor and tutorial guidance as appropriate to student groups.
11.	Responsible for enrolment and marketing processes for new and future student groups including interviews, assessments and other requirements as appropriate to the role.
12.	Monitor individual learning plans, set smart targets for learners and update plans according to college protocol.
13.	Line management as directed by Programme area Leader and Head of Department.
14.	Any other duties as required as appropriate to the post.

Following the recruitment process, course leaders are given a *Contract of Employment* to sign. Sonia (HR Advisor) sent me a copy of the course leader *Contract of Employment* in October 2020. The *Contract of Employment* provided was a template with all generic details for the role and responsibilities. The contract was originally a further education (FE) course leader contract but also covers course leaders for CBHE. Therefore, this contract is used for all course leaders across The College Group, both on FE and higher education (HE) levels. This is common for those working on CBHE to be employed on an FE contract (Keenan, 2020; Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009; Harwood and Harwood, 2004). Table 9 Shows the duties set out in the course leaders' *Contract of Employment.*

Table 9: Duties of a course leader set in the *Contract of Employment*

The development of courses.
The supervision of staff delivering those courses.
Observation of teaching and learning.
Recruitment and retention of students.
Ensuring the quality of the course and the outcomes for learners through engagement in quality assurance activities such as self-assessment and action planning; achieve and maintain high standards.
You will also be required to provide information which may be used as part of the appraisal of staff delivering courses within your remit.
Your duties will also include formal scheduled teaching, tutorials and student assessment, management of learning programmes and curriculum development, educational guidance, counselling, preparation of learning materials and student assignments, marking of students' work, marking of examinations, management and supervision of student visit programmes, research and other forms of scholarly activity.
The analysis of data on learners of the courses that you lead pertaining to progression, destinations and other quality-related aspects.
Contribution to the marketing and promotion of the provision, for which you are responsible.

After I had familiarised myself with the *Contract of Employment*, I approached Sonia (HR advisor) and Alishba (PAL) again, with the aim of understanding how these duties were compiled. However, getting an answer to my query was a challenge. Neither Sonia nor Alishba was able to explain where these duties came from. In an informal interview, noted in my researcher diary, Sonia explained that the duties are developed to reflect the roles and responsibilities of the employee and processes required to carry out their role; the duties also specify who they are accountable to and who will be accountable to them (Researcher Diary Notes, informal interview with Sonia, HR Advisor, July 2021). Again, Sonia placed emphasis on the processes of accountability (role, responsibilities and duties) set out in the *Job Description* and the *Contract of Employment* and that must be performed by course leaders for CBHE to the standard required by The College Group.

Whilst I understood that the main expectations for the course leaders' everyday work were outlined in the *Job Description* and the *Contract of Employment* and this was 'tweaked' for each role recruited, I was still not clear where these duties originated from. To uncover the origins of the course leaders' duties, I spoke to an Assistant Principal, Frankie. In our conversation, (Researcher Diary Notes, informal interview with Frankie, September 2021) he stated that the duties of a course leader were generic regardless of whether they work on FE or HE level; he also noted that these duties were decided 'years ago' at a wider college management meeting. This suggests that the everyday work of the course leader for CBHE has not been identified as different from the work of the course leader for FE within the *Contract of Employment*, and neither had been reviewed and updated but instead relied on institutional memory. Furthermore, given that the duties were decided 'years ago', it could have been that this took place even prior to The College Group's decision to provide HE level courses. However, the differences between HE and FE course leaders work is talked about (this is explored in more detail later in this chapter).

Furthermore, it is clear from Tables 7 and 8 that the accountabilities outlined in the *Job Description* are similar to those in the *Contract of Employment* which the course leader signs. However, there are differences in language used to describe the duties. Arguably for each course leader post to be recruited the *Job Description* is the most up-to-date text as this is the one that gets adapted as part of every recruitment process. Whereas, as discussed above, the *Contract of Employment* is a historic document based on discussions and agreements on the accountabilities of the course leader (both HE and FE) from some time ago. For example, the job description refers that the course leader is “Responsible for student recruitment, attendance, achievement, pass, rates, progression and destinations for names courses.” The monitoring of students in this way and using this language derives from the accountability of course leaders that is inherent in FE colleges today (Perry and Davies, 2015). A further example of the FEness of the language used is that of course leaders needing to be able to “Provide teaching, learning and assessment to at least a good standard on curriculum programmes”. With the terminology echoing that of the Office for Standards in Education’s (Ofsted) Education Inspection Framework (2019) where teaching and learning and institutions overall are measured in terms of outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate. It is clearly that whilst Ofsted no longer grades observations, the Ofsted-based discourses around the quality of teaching and learning still pervade (Dixon and Pilkington, 2018).

Despite the *Contracts of Employment* being the same for FE and HE course leaders in The College Group, those with responsibilities for HE were able to articulate that the work was different between HE and FE course leaders. Below, Diana, a member of the SMT and the strategic lead for HE in The College Group talks about the differences between the two roles, and additional work associated with the course leader for CBHE role:

> "*The big differences is that you're working to a different set of criteria in terms of, you know… you've got to look at your programmes, you've got to make sure that they're current in terms skills. If they're not current, you need to put in a degree scheme variation or whatever it is, we call them over at [Waterside] University. And I think you've also got to be, because you are liaising with that external third party and also different institutions where you wouldn't get that with a course leader here [FE course leader]. So for a course leader in construction, for example, is just looking at course leading construction at [The College Group], whereas a course leader for Initial Teacher Ed, you know, you've got the, you know, you are liaising with different [Millfield College] or, you know, whoever [Seaview College] whoever it may be, and then, you know, [Waterside] University. So, there are two, at least two additional layers to the course leader role for HE provision than for FE provision. It's more complex"* (Diana, SMT Interview, October 2021)

I began to wonder why it was the case that differences in work were known but not acknowledged within the *Contract of Employment*. Whilst there is no clear explanation in the case of The College Group, I turned to literature of CBHE. Addressing the work of lecturers for CBHE, Keenan (2020) argues that this is often the case in FE colleges as they tend to have insufficient HE provision to employ staff solely on HE contracts. The additional duties or "additional layers of work", highlighted in the above quote by Diana, add to the course leaders for CBHE's workload. Additional work may involve working in partnership with the franchising university (explored later in this chapter) as again explained by Diana.

5:3 How course leaders for college-based higher education learn about their everyday work

With similarities in the contracts for FE and CBHE course leaders but differences in expectations in their work, particularly related to the work required by the franchising university, I was keen to understand how course leaders for CBHE learned about their own everyday work. Using interviews, I asked the course leaders and their line manager about this. Margret, a line manager for course leaders for CBHE and PAL explained that upon appointment, new course leaders are assigned a mentor to help them learn about their everyday work and to provide support.

> *"The new course leaders are given a mentor… we tend to allocate somebody within the team who has experience and point them towards somebody who they can talk to that's not me [a line manager]. And so, they can have those informal conversations, as well and say, 'what do you do in your role?'. They will have regular meetings with the course leaders and have open door thingy for if they're not sure about something"* (Margret, PAL interview, June 2021)

However, this view of support for new course leaders contrasts with the course leaders' own experiences. In their interviews, the course leaders talked about how they were 'thrown in at the deep end', and how they learned about the job by doing it:

> “*Probably just being in the job. I think I was going to be given a mentor, but I'm not sure that ever happened when I first came into the role. There was no training, no.*” (Rebekah, Course Leader interview, November 2020)

> “*Like most people in, in our sector you get thrown in the deep end in the job. There was no hand over when the, when my former colleague retired. She'd gone weeks before I took up post, so it was just a case of throwing it in the deep end.*” (Phil, Course Leader interview, June 2021)

> “*I hit the ground running. They saw me coming.*” (Grace, Course Leader interview, October 2020)

> “*I've literally been thrown in the deep end, yeah.*” (Carol, Course Leader interview, November 2020)

> “*I just did it … there was never any formal training, no.*” (Mark, Course Leader interview, July 2021)

What is clearly emerging as a result of these differing views between PALs and course leaders is that the informants are talking about events from different standpoints. When Margret is talking about processes from a managerial perspective, she talks about what ‘should’ be happening from her understanding of the onboarding process for new course leaders for CBHE. However, the course leaders talk about their own direct experiences. Experiences that differ from the expectations Margret discusses. Instead, course leaders talked about how they had no form of induction to the role or proper handover from the previous post-holder, echoing the findings of Cahill *et al*. (2015) as regards a lack of specific support for course leaders.

The lack of formal induction to the role resulted in course leaders seeking support from elsewhere. Elizabeth highlighted that she even had to go beyond The College Group for support and seek out other course leaders at the partner colleges. She also explained how the lack of training or support from her line manager caused her anxiety due to fear of missing something important:

> "*Purely by fluke, I think. I think it is just about… there is no guidance given really. There are no tick-box procedures and practices that would guide you through different times of the year, what you needed to do and when you needed to do it. So, it is either from other people who are teaching HE, erm from other course leaders at the other colleges, erm and from the HE manager possibly. But initially, until you got to understand how to do it, it is really difficult and erm, quite anxious really, making sure that you hit the dates and targets you are supposed to if you weren't aware of what you're supposed to do."* (Elizabeth, Course Leader interview, October 2020)

Through analysis of text and through formal and informal interviews with PALs, HR and course leaders, I have started to develop a picture of how course leaders for CBHE have come to understand their everyday work in The College Group. It is evident that course leaders tend to learn about their everyday work by doing their job, rather than with the support from a mentor or any formal induction to the role. Moving on from The College Group, I now explore how the role of the course leader has been positioned in texts from Waterside University.

In the Introduction Chapter (Chapter One) and Literature Review (Chapter Two) I described the position of a course leader for CBHE, drawing on the existing research in the field. I argued that the work of the course leader for CBHE was varied and complex. In The College Group, course leaders are required for all levels of courses, including HE courses provided through a franchise partnership with Waterside University and regulated by the Quality Framework.

Waterside University's Quality Framework "*sets out the University's approach to the setting and maintenance of academic standards, the quality of students' learning opportunities, and continuous enhancement across … home based provision and collaborative partners*". There are numerous texts which make up the *Quality Framework*. Where texts are used with others, institutional ethnography refers to these as intertextuality (discussed in Chapter Three): that is, they are not stand-alone texts but part of many texts that coordinate work and can be used together (Smith, 2005). The *Quality Framework* has intertextual links with the *Operations Manual* (July 2021). Produced by Waterside University's Student Learning and Academic Registry (SLAR), the *Operations Manual* sets out its aims to:

> "*Assist University and College staff to implement the necessary activities in line with University academic regulations, admissions and registration processes, quality assurance and enhancement procedures and contractual Partnership*

> *arrangements, in a way which achieves comparable outcomes for students*." (Operations Manual, July 2021)

As an instructional text, the *Operations Manual*. Unlike the *Contract of Employment* and the *Job Description*, which are texts from The College Group, the *Operations Manual* sets out the course leader's role from the franchising university's perspective. It highlights the need for the person to have 'an appropriate academic background'.

> *"The College will appoint a course leader with an appropriate academic background for each collaborative course to ensure that all necessary activities are implemented in line with University academic regulations, admissions procedures and continuous review and monitoring procedures."* (Operations Manual, July 2021)

The course leader, with an 'appropriate academic background' must ensure that the courses are developed, delivered and monitored in line with Waterside University's *Quality Framework*. Yet, what is not clear from this quotation is what is meant by an 'appropriate academic background'. This permissive phrasing therefore allows the university and partner colleges the flexibility to define this requirement to meet their own needs based on the staff they have. It could therefore be argued that the *Contract of Employment* and the *Job Description* are representative of The College Group's interpretation of the phrase 'an appropriate academic background', and the requirements they set for the person in the course leader role.

Moving on to establishing what the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE, I return to the data generated in their interviews. During the interviews held with course leaders for CBHE in The College Group, I explored what the everyday work of a course leader entails for those in such roles. Drawing on their work knowledge, the course leaders described it as follows:

> "*Everything from marketing to student going out the door*." (Craig, Course Leader interview, June 2021)

> "*If only it was just course leader, you're a marketer, yeah, you're an agony aunt... you're a timetabler.*" (Eric, Course Leader interview, June 2021)

> "*And it's just sort of making sure the area is running to the best of its ability we're getting the student...to achieve it, attendance, retention."* (Mandy, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

> "*Planning courses, and writing schemes of work organising erm, how the course runs and dealing with liaising with Waterside, the team from Waterside and moderation. Erm, that's it really, erm student support, feedback.*" (Rebekah, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

These responses show the varied work of the course leader. Perhaps pertinent here is how Eric and Craig talked about the everyday work of the course leader for CBHE. Eric talks about '*if only it was **just** a course leader*" going on to talk about all the 'additional' things he has to do.

Whereas Craig sees the everyday work of the course leader as all of the duties, not a course leader plus the additional duties outlined. Therefore, whilst the everyday work of course leaders may have parity in formal texts, there are differences in how course leaders talk about their everyday work.

Grace draws attention to the issue of additional duties in the form of extra workload. In particular, she focused on the general lack of understanding by her line manager as regards the additional duties course leaders have compared to the FE level staff in The College Group.

> "*I'm not sure the college really understands that when you're a course leader for what the difference that that extra workload is, dealing with, you know, the partnership as well. So, I don't think that's always appreciated*." (Grace, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

Whilst Grace does not feel that the additional duties required from a course leader for CBHE are recognised, there is evidence that the members of the management team are aware of this work, despite this work not being documented in formal texts that organise the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE (discussed in section 5:2 and later is this section). The fact that the additional work is not considered in the course leader for CBHE's overall workload raises concerns about how this work is completed within the context of a busy workload.

In seeking further clarity on the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE, I turned to the staff *Timetables*. I wanted to understand if texts from an operational level offered further clarity on the course leaders' additional duties. From the *Timetables* I could see that the only work visible related to teaching duties. This was the same across the board for all lecturers and course leaders. However, there was one exception which related to the fact that the FE course leaders had tutorial time added into their timetable, whereas HE course leaders did not. The tutorial time is generally used to provider pastoral support to students. While CBHE course leaders may not have it recognised in their timetables, they still have to perform pastoral work. This is confirmed by Sam, who as GHHE, states that "*because of the nature of our HE, the pastoral... sort out any issues, concerns*" (GHHE Interview, June 2021). However, they must do so without any hours allocated to this type of work. In other words, the total work was counted in the same number of hours for CBHE and FE course leaders - 864 hours teaching per year – however, for FE course leaders this number also involved the tutorial time. The time beyond these teaching hours involves planning, marking and other administrative work.

The responses from the course leaders highlight some of the everyday work needed to ensure the smooth running of the course. These align with the *Quality Framework* as suggested in the *Operations Manual*. The main aim of the *Operations Manual* is to ensure that the quality of the courses align with the standards set by Waterside University. However, it does not capture the full extent of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. For example, when I talked to Sam, the group head of higher education (GHHE), about the everyday work of the course leaders, she gave the following summary:

> "*So, not only the course leader, [they're] a teacher, so they teach on the programme, they've got to prep and deliver their*

sessions. There's going to be, because the nature of our HE, the pastoral sort out any issues, concerns. They're [course leaders] generally the first point of contact for a lot of students and the relationship that the course leaders tend to build with the students… they know they're responsible, personal tutor role. So, they'll be dealing with those pastoral issues, whether that's formally, as in a meeting in the tutorial time or informally, walking through a library and someone grabs them and there's an issue that's… I think that's something extra that goes onto the course leader's role, and there's going to be the monitoring. They make sure their programmes run well. So, they might be the first point of call if something's not going quite right. So generally, because the relationship a course leader has with students that go to the course leader, and then might need to deal with an issue with another member of staff, or the teaching resources or access to something. That's where the course leader will support quite a lot with, with that, that's, that's the additional stuff that probably no one wants, it's not even in a job description. There's extra stuff that comes with being course leader, and it's all fine when things go really well, but it's when it's not… And then of also, you've also got the X amount of teaching hours on top of that and the prep and delivery for the teaching too. (Sam, GHHE Interview, June 2021)

What I find interesting in this narrative is that Sam talks about the everyday work of the course leaders in a similar way to how Eric spoke about the dichotomous nature of the course leader by saying "*if only he was just a course leader*". Sam starts with "*not only the course leader…*" and goes on to highlight the other duties which form the everyday work of the course leaders. It can be surmised that, for some, there is an unwritten notion of what a course leader is, and this unwritten notion includes the duties highlighted by Sam and by Eric in addition to being a lecturer: duties such as pastoral work and partner university work.

Similarly to the course leaders, Sam acknowledges the more complex work of the course leaders. In her quote: *"the nature of our HE, the pastoral sorts of any issues, concerns",* Sam emphasises that that nature of CBHE is different to traditional HE and HE students. In particular, Sam refers to different needs of widening participation students. CBHE often recruits from this demographic (Bathmaker, 2016; Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020), and it is known that the CBHE students' needs differ from traditional HE students due to students coming predominantly from lower socio-economic backgrounds, being older and/or returning to study after a break (Tummons, Orr and Atkins, 2013). Sam sees supporting widening participation students as a part of the course leaders' everyday work. Yet whilst this additional work is seen by Sam as GHHE, it is not recognised in texts or workload, making course leaders for CBHE refer to such aspects of their everyday work as being unseen work (discussed further in Chapter Seven). Therefore, I argue that the institutional texts do not make explicit the complexities of the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE, despite course leaders and members of SMT being aware of additional duties that course leaders carry out, especially as regards pastoral support and partnership work with Waterside University. The apparent invisibility in texts of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE leads back to the question of how do course leaders know about their everyday work? The conclusions that can be drawn here are that course leaders for CBHE learn about their everyday work by working in the role and seeking support from others in similar positions.

5:4 The challenge of time for course leaders for college-based higher education

Issues around additional duties and differences in *Timetables* for FE and HE course leaders have been discussed in the sections above. Here I have highlighted that unlike FE course leaders, the CBHE course leaders are not allocated additional time for pastoral work. The final section of this chapter draws the two elements of additional duties and differences in timetables between HE course leaders and FE course leaders, as they formed an important part of the course leaders' narratives when sharing their work knowledge. I found that time is an issue that was raised several times by course leaders in their interviews. Specifically, course leaders talked about not having the time to complete their everyday work. Normative hours for teaching in an FE college stems back to the incorporation of FE colleges and the erosion of the 'silver-book' contracts. One of the key differences in the introduction of new contracts was denoting lecturers work in terms of hours per week/ year (Smith, 2015).

The aspect of not having enough time is typified in the quotations below from Carol, Rebekah and Craig. Craig particularly explains that the components of his everyday work are not the challenge, but the time to complete this everyday work is the difficulty.

> *"From a course leader point of view, if you take the individual components, there's nothing hard. There's nothing particularly difficult, but fitting all of that into an 8-hour day for argument's sake..."* (Craig, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

Similarly to Craig who highlights the issue of time, Carol talks about the impact that a lack of time to complete her everyday work is having on her work-life balance. She explains that she is working evenings and weekends just to keep on top of her everyday work.

> *"I don't have enough time to do my job role. I work probably every night and weekends, just to kind of balance the books really, that's stressful. And if I don't do that, then, then I'm swamped."* (Carol, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

> "*You don't get any time for a course leader role, so I think the extra stuff that's expected as course leader is just done in your own time. Erm, and I think with me just being by myself. There's nobody else really within the team to input into things like course journals, course reviews and things like that. There's just me kind of inputting and me leading it which doesn't always work, because there's only ever my aspect really that's put into it, which is quite difficult.*" (Rebekah, Course Leader Interview, November 2020).

Rebekah talks about not having any time for the course leader role and that this is 'extra stuff'. Rebekah's understanding of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE aligns with the dichotomous ways in which Eric, Sam and Diana talked about the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE in the previous sections of this chapter. Rebekah also separates the course leader's role from the other duties she is responsible for fulfilling. This separation of everyday work comes from having a full-time teaching workload with the additional duties of the course leader being added on top of this. Notions of the additional aspects of course leaders' work are also discussed by Carol. Here Carol argued that there is not enough time to balance both the teaching and course leader aspects of their everyday work.

> "*Sometimes I feel like my role as a course leader, often can be sidelined with commitments to say my teaching role... the most important thing is to kind of have a balance and sometimes I don't feel like I have that balance because it's so busy.*" (Carol, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

As is the case with Carol and Rebekah, Mark too feels that his everyday work is not always something that can be completed within the bounds of a normal working week. However, to maintain some separation between work and home, Mark explains that he prefers to stay at work until his work is completed rather than taking work home.

> "*I have a bit of a rule about working at home that I, I won't. I don't work at home, I mean I am right now, but this [this interview] isn't work, I, I did do in lockdown, obviously, but I won't mark or assess work at home. If I can't get it done, I will stay at work until it's done. I don't like to bring... I think while I'm at home, at home this is my, this is my space to not be thinking about work and not be working. I mean I do think about work, I think that's a natural thing. But I think my time at home is my time at home. I really value that and make sure that that's the priority, because I think that's important for your mental health*." (Mark, Course Leader Interview, July 2021)

Drawing on the work knowledge gained from the course leaders above, it has become apparent to me that their everyday work is not something that course leaders can routinely complete within a normal working week. Whilst Mark argues that he will not take work home, preferring to stay at work until his work has been completed, this still impacts on his work-life balance due to working outside of the normal working week. This is in contradiction to texts such as the *Contract of Employment* which states that as a course leader:

> "*You will be expected to work such hours as are reasonably necessary for the proper performance of your duties and responsibilities, with a normal working week"* (Course Leader *Contract of Employment*, October 2020)

The insights from course leaders as regards them not being able to complete their everyday work within the bounds of the 'normal working week' led me to return to the *Contract of Employment* and to analyse the course leader *Timetables*. Here I found great differences in the number of teaching hours each course leader was expected to undertake. The *Contract of Employment*, whilst stating a 'normal working week', did not specify what this meant. Instead, it includes space for the HR department to add the hours upon issuing the *Contract of Employment* to a newly appointed course leader. I was informed by Andy (Researcher diary notes, informal interview PAL, December 2020) that this information is added to reflect the full-time or part-time nature of the employee. A full-time course leader will have 37.5 hours added into their contract. Yet this does not reflect the number of teaching hours that are expected of the course leader as this only reflects the hours in a working week, not how these hours are assigned to particular aspects of the course leaders' everyday work.

This led to further questions for PALs Margret and Andy (PAL interviews, June 21 and July 21 respectively) who both confirmed that the number of teaching hours for all full-time teaching staff, including course leaders is 864 hours per academic year. This averages 24 hours of teaching per week. Yet Andy suggested that this number was not set in stone:

> "*But then again, it depends if you put your staff up to hours at the top end of the scale*." (Andy, PAL Interview, July 2021).

Andy's comment on the number of teaching hours not being set in stone suggests that there is a level of flexibility that can lead to inconsistency across The College Group. This inconsistency was highlighted when looking at the number of teaching hours on course leaders' *Timetables*. With the absence of additional duties, as in the case of Mark, I have noted that the number of teaching hours allocated to course leaders ranges between 650 hours to over 900 hours for a full-time course leader. The course leaders, Carol and Rebekah, who are on 900 hours and 650 hours respectively took part in this research. In her interview, Rebekah did not discuss any further responsibilities for everyday work. There was one part-time course leader, Eric on a 0.5 contract, allocated 529 teaching hours.

Whilst mathematically, the number of full-time teaching hours should work out at 24 hours per week, if taking the annual hours of 864 over the duration of an FE course at 36 weeks. Craig argues that "*I was teaching 29 hours*" (Craig, Course Leader Interview, June 2021). At 29 hours of teaching per week, this makes Craig exceed his annual hours of 864.

Therefore, Carol and Eric are not alone in having an increased number of teaching hours.

Whilst it is argued that teaching 24 hours per week or more leaves very little time for anything else (Feather, 2017; Harwood and Harwood, 2004), it seems from the course leaders' *timetables* and the time issues discussed by the course leaders support the findings of Feather (2017) and Harwood and Harwood (2004). Therefore, there is very little time to complete the duties required in their everyday work with the bounds of a normal working week for course leaders for CBHE in The College Group.

These individual differences led me to go back and look at the *Contracts of Employment* for course leaders in The College Group. The C*ontracts of Employment* for course leaders for CBHE are the same as those for further education (Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009; Harwood and Harwood, 2004). This is often due to FE colleges not having sufficient HE provision to employ staff solely on HE contracts (Keenan, 2020). As previously highlighted, the issue of time is compounded by a one size fits all approach often taken by FE colleges (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020), with course leaders for FE and HE having the same contracted hours and contracts of employment despite differences in their everyday work. Feather (2017) found that those with HE responsibilities struggled to keep up with their teaching and administrative duties whilst working in an FE environment. The challenges come from the need to not only fulfil the teaching requirements of their role but to fulfil the other duties required as a course leader for CBHE (discussed in the sections above). Furthermore, the fact that CBHE lecturers are still employed on FE contracts demonstrates a mismatch between HE and FE systems

(Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). Yet FE contracts lack the time needed for those with higher education responsibilities to meet the demands of their role (Turner McKenzie and Stone, 2009). Tucker, Peddler and Martin (2020) found that those with responsibilities for CBHE carry out much of their preparation time outside of the working day, with some spending at least one of the days on the weekend working, as exemplified in Carol's quotation below.

> "*Sometimes I'll get an email to say that you know, there are kind of group meetings with Waterside University, or there are partner meetings that may be helpful with say, say marking or things like that or HE forum or things like that. And I do attend those, those things. Again, it's down to time. It's all dependent on, you know, on how much time I've got, I don't have a lot of time.*" (Carol, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) argued that there should be a reduction in teaching hours for those teaching CBHE (HEFCE, 2009a). Before 2014, course leaders for CBHE in The College Group experienced this reduction in teaching hours. In her interview, Elizabeth, a course leader discussed the time they used to be allocated for additional duties relating to being a course leader.

> "*You got 120 hours a year course leader time which is about half a day per week you were given for course leadership roles and responsibilities, and that was really helpful. No, that got stopped now... So, I suppose that's why it's kind of frantic and I think, again, that's another recognition of how money plays a part. And how scholarly activities get diminished because really they*

should say to people in HE, you shouldn't teach the way FE does, you shouldn't be. When I first started teaching HE, we were given 20 minutes a week or something" (Elizabeth, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

The twenty minutes Elizabeth is referring to is the time allowed for planning, preparation and marking when delivering HE modules. This was an allowance for all lecturers teaching HE in Dormand College and it was at the rate of 20 mins remission from the annual teaching hours for each hour the lecturer/ course leader taught on HE modules. Both the course leader time allocation and this additional remission ceased in 2014. This was prior to my data collection period. However, as it had been raised in an interview, I asked Frankie (an assistant principal) about this in an informal interview (Researcher Diary, SMT informal interview, December 2020). He explained that it was the previous Head of Finance that removed this allocation as it was not classed as an efficient use of course leaders' time, when the time could be spent in the classroom with learners. Therefore, the intensification of workload as proposed by Mather, Worrall and Seifert, (2005) can be seen in the workload. Whilst the time allocation for being a course leader and for teaching on HE courses was taken away and replaced with teaching hours, the work for the course leaders was not reduced, simply squeezed into their non-contact time, arguably impacting their work-life balance. A work-life balance that course leaders have stated they struggle to manage.

As noted earlier in the chapter, all HE courses in The College Group are delivered via a franchise arrangement with Waterside University. This also means that a part of the everyday work of the course leaders involves liaising with other colleges also in the franchise partnership and the link tutors at Waterside University to ensure that all academic and assessment processes are completed in line with the *Quality Framework* at Waterside University. Quoted in the sections above, Diana, the strategic lead for HE in The College Group highlighted this additional work for the course leaders for CBHE; she described it as an extra layer of work. The extra layer of work adds to the workload of the course leader and thus impacts on the time they have to complete their everyday work.

The requirements for working in partnership with Waterside University are something some course leaders discussed in their interviews. The views expressed were particularly in relation to the time needed for the additional duties but also time pressures as regards competing priorities between their role in The College Group and the duties of a course leader for a franchised provision. The *Operations Manual* stated that course leaders need to attend meetings to ensure that standards are met.

> "*Ensure attendance of staff at agreed meetings for the purpose of conducting rigorous and standardised assessment and moderation practices.*" (Operations Manual, July 2021)

Whilst it could be argued that FE course leaders too have internal and external moderation work to do, the problem arises for course leaders for CBHE in aligning time for this type of work with others from partner colleges and Waterside University. The issues around workload and time, particularly regarding working with Waterside University, were discussed in the interviews with Rebekah and Carol. They talked about the difficulties in finding the time in their busy workload by The College group to attend meetings at Waterside University.

> "*I guess things like the university expect us to do additional research and have time to always kind of update their systems and attend their meetings, but actually when we're at the college…we're not given time. And equally, we might be teaching when the university want us over, so the kind of the timetables don't match or marry up, sometimes we're missing stuff at the university because we're teaching here just for timetabling issues because obviously, they don't marry.*" (Rebekah, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

> "*Sometimes I'll get an email to say that you know, there are kind of group meetings with Waterside University, or there are partner meetings that may be helpful with say, say marking or things like that or HE forum or things like that. And I do attend those, those things. Again, it's down to time. It's all dependent on, you know, on how much time I've got, I don't have a lot of time.*" (Carol, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

In the quotations above, Rebekah discusses a further issue of expectation in relation to research. Engaging in research is set out in the *Contract of Employment*. Through exploration of other institutional texts such as *timetables* and the *Job Description,* I have not found any texts produced by The College Group of Waterside University that set out this expectation. However, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher

Education[8] (QAA) sets out expectations that learning and assessment should be informed by research or scholarship (QAA, 2024). This can include empirical research but also other scholarly activities relating to updating knowledge in relation to professional, academic, personal and commercial activities. Therefore, whilst research is not a necessary component of the course leaders' everyday work, scholarly activity is, as required by the QAA. Yet the need to engage in scholarly activity becomes another aspect of unseen work: work that course leaders for CBHE need to perform within an already busy workload and with no additional time in their *Timetable*.

Overall, it can be argued that the tensions related to course leaders' time and workload derive from the FE model in which the CBHE is being delivered. A model that is grounded in efficiency, economy and effectiveness (Randle and Brady,1997) where non-teaching work is not visible, nor do they have time allocated for it (Sutton, 2023). These challenges arise in the form of workload, resulting in a lack of time to engage in scholarly activity to support the development of teaching material, curriculum materials and wider sector knowledge (Lea and Simmons, 2012). In her interview, Elizabeth discussed some of the challenges she faced with time.

> "*I think it is teaching HE in an FE provision, because we are actually teaching it under FE guidelines, erm, teaching hours, delivery modes and things like that. I think it is no additional time for HE, so doing research, academic research for that level that we are doing. I think it has also become quite evident this year with re-writing the programmes as well, which we are heavily*

[8] An independent charity who provides impartial and regulatory quality assurance and enhancement for higher education in the United Kingdom

involved in that we are not given all of the additional the time to carry out all of this research for writing the new programmes as well." (Elizabeth, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

Elizabeth highlights that the lack of time to be able to engage in scholarly activity and research to support the curriculum development (explored further in Chapter Six) and teaching is due to higher education being molded into FE practice. She argues that the issues arise from HE and FE models not aligning to support meaningful practice (Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009).

5:5 Chapter summary

This chapter sets out to answer the question of, how do course leaders for CBHE come to understand their everyday work? To do this, I sought out texts such as the *Job Description*, the *Contract of Employment*, and the *Timetables* and spoke with course leaders and their line managers. I found that course leaders learn about their everyday work by doing their work and by gaining support from the course leaders in the partner colleges. However, this is contrary to what PALs believe and discussed in their interviews, where they state that course leaders receive mentoring to learn about their everyday work.

The everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE is shaped by The College Group and Waterside University. Everyday work is set out in texts activated by the reader: texts which offer a set of requirements for the course leader. Whilst there is some vagueness from Waterside University, there is clarity about the work from The College Group. However, this clarity does not fully capture the everyday work, as experienced by course leaders for CBHE nor does it acknowledge the differences in work between an FE course leader and a HE course leader. Texts are set up to capture the everyday work of a course leader, yet they are not sufficiently nuanced to fully capture the CBHE course leaders' everyday work. It is important to see differing perspectives on learning about the role from a line management standpoint and a course leaders' standpoint. It is evident that Margret is saying 'the right thing' and highlighting the correct procedures that should be followed in terms of course leaders being allocated a mentor to support them. However, not one course leaders I spoke to experienced this. On the contrary, they felt that they had been left to figure out their everyday work on their own. As existing research shows (see Cahill *et al.*, 2015) such experience is uncommon, and CBHE course leaders rarely experience formal hand-over or induction to support their roles.

It emerged in my inquiry that the *Contracts of Employment* did not differentiate between course leaders for HE and course leaders for FE (Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009; Harwood and Harwood, 2004). Yet this is something that is not unusual for CBHE course leaders due to colleges having insufficient HE provision to allow for staff to be on separate contracts (Keenan, 2020). However, this one-size-fits-all approach has an impact on the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE with course leaders struggling to complete their everyday work within the bounds of a typical working week (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2002; Feather, 2017). While past research has found the course leaders' additional workload problematic (Tucker, Peddler and Marin, 2020), my research has importantly shown that the members of the SMT and the GHHE can be aware of these additional duties. However, this awareness did not translate into additional time for these duties: duties such as partnership work with the franchising university, scholarly activity and writing curriculum materials and pastoral care

(Lea and Simmons, 2012). It is clear that there is a mismatch between FE and HE everyday work, with the models of HE and FE not aligning, forcing course leaders for CBHE to work outside of their typical working week which in turn impacts their work-life balance (Feather, 2017; Harwood and Harwood, 2004; Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009; Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020).

The removal of scholarly activity time and course leader remission time for course leaders for CBHE is clear evidence of the prevalence of New Public Management (NPM) in shaping the course leaders' workload. The removal of scholarly activity and course leader time due to it being an inefficient use of time echoes the discourses of NPM and its focus on the three 'Es' of efficiency, economy and effectiveness (Randle and Brady, 1997a). In 2020, at the time I started my data collection, there was no sign of a reduction in hours as proposed by HEFCE (2009) nor the remission for being a course leader or teaching higher education. Instead, The College Group seemed determined to enforce the rules of the FE sector more broadly with FE contracts and over 800 hours of teaching per year for all course leaders (Creasy, 2013). The time related issues experienced by the HE course leaders arise from policies which try to shoehorn CBHE into existing FE contracts and working models (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2022), ignoring the lived experience of those carrying out the HE work in FE colleges.

Chapter Six: The everyday work of course leaders: working together, support and belonging

6:1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education (CBHE) in relation to where they are positioned in The College Group's staffing structure and within the wider structures of the Waterside University college partnership. In particular, this chapter addresses the sub-question of 'How is the work of course leaders for CBHE situated within working with others?'

Drawing on data from interviews with course leaders, programme area leaders (PALs) and the group head of higher education (GHHE), this chapter examines the ways in which the everyday work of the course leader is positioned within the organisation of The College Group and also within the wider structure of the Waterside University College Partnership. The purpose of providing this clarity is to then examine how the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE is supported both within The College Group and externally, within the Waterside University College Partnership. There are four themes discussed in this chapter. The first theme situates the course leaders' everyday work within the staffing structure of The College Group. Within this theme, I explore the ways in which the course leaders are positioned in the staffing structure in The College Group and how having both a line manager from PAL and GHHE proves a challenge in relation to who to approach for support. Theme two offers an insight into working in partnership with Waterside University. With this theme, I will explain the support but also tensions that emerge from working in a franchise partnership as well as how the Waterside University College Partnership has offered new ways in which the course leaders for CBHE can seek support. The third theme explores course leaders' experiences of being on the periphery in terms of feelings of not belonging and the isolation they feel within their curriculum teams. The fourth and final theme in this chapter focuses on how the sense of not belonging and being on the periphery stems from course leaders feeling that their line manager has a limited understanding of their everyday work. The third and fourth theme build on the evidence presented in Chapter Five where I established that course leaders do not receive support in learning about their everyday work from their line manager or peers.

6:2 Situating the course leaders' everyday work within The College Group

The College Group structure (Figure 5) highlights where the course leader position is situated in relation to other staff members in the staffing structure. It is evident that the course leaders are line managed by PALs. The PAL that a course leader is managed by depends on the curriculum area within the college where their courses are positioned and on which campus the course leader works. For example, Education courses are in the Childcare and Education curriculum area, and Counselling courses are within the Health and Social Care curriculum area. PALs are budget holders and are responsible for staffing the courses in their curriculum area and creating the staff timetables, in addition to teaching, data management and financial management of the curriculum area.

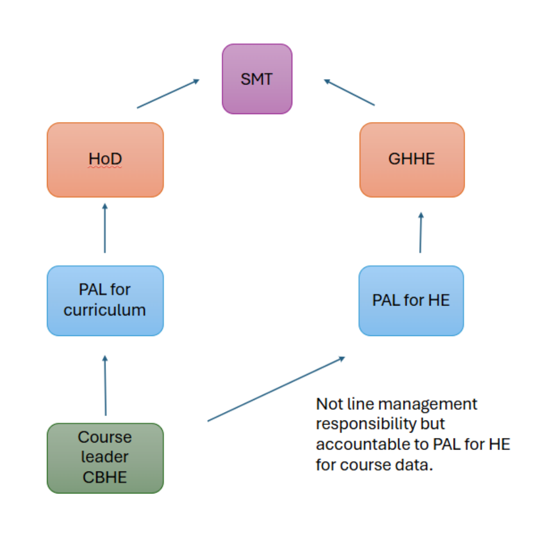


Figure 5: Diagram to show line management and staffing structure in The College Group

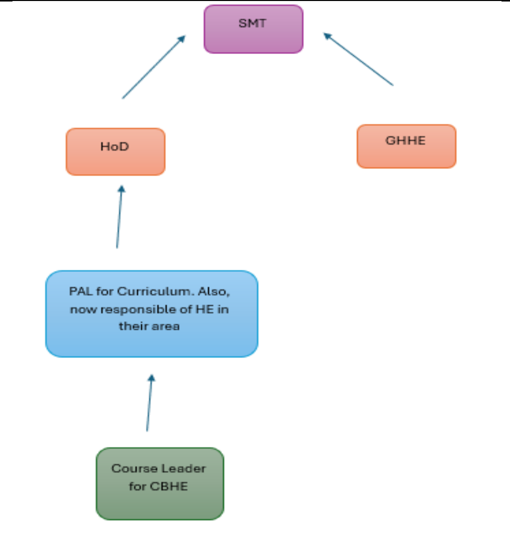


Figure 6: Restructured positions in relation to course leaders for CBHE

During their interviews I asked Alishba, Andy and Margret about their work as a PAL. Here I found that each PAL had a different focus when talking about their everyday work. In the quotations below, the PALs talk about how they are responsible for managing their curriculum area which includes the budget, quality, data, staff and ensuring that the curriculum area is contributing to the department in which it is positioned and therefore the overall college targets and finances.

> *"It involves managing the curriculum team in both of those subject areas, who cover teaching on levels one through to six and PGCE, alongside the management, the curriculum management side of it. I'm involved in the data management for that role as well, so I organise contracts in liaison with HR. I work on the budget management with, in terms of the senior management, and try to keep that department within the cost*

income ratio set by our financial department." (Alishba, PAL Interview, June 2021)

"The role of a PAL is an interesting one at best. [...] we're a manager but also, also a lecturer as well. So, we've got...we've got essentially...get pretty much a half a timetable depending on how big your areas are normally, I normally teach around 12 hours a week" (Andy, PAL Interview, July 2021)

"*My role is about looking at the financial management, the quality management in the curriculum management of that programme area. We are managed by the Assistant Principal... what used to be the Head of Departments... I've got the Assistant Principal, but they now manage the budget area. So, if I've got a budget area...everything in that budget area is my responsibility. So, in terms of the quality, in terms of finances that cost-income ratios what you have to hit in terms of your areas' contribution, to departments' contribution, to whole colleges' contribution, to make sure that the college is financially sustainable and valuable to continue to deliver the provision that means courses suitability, course viability, but also is down to do we recruit enough students do we remain solvent, and ultimately, the staff remain in jobs. That's, that's a big thing.*" (Margret, PAL Interview, July 2021)

However, to add complexity to this structure, there is also a person that is responsible for the operational aspects of higher education (HE) at College Group level. When I started my data collection, this position was the PAL for Higher Education (see Figure 5). This was a cross-campus role overseeing all the HE in The College Group. However, the former Group Head of Higher Education (GHHE), who was also a HoD was promoted to the position of Assistant Principal and the PAL for HE, Sam was promoted into the role of GHHE, with no PAL appointed underneath that role. The GHHE is responsible for financial management and the quality of HE in The College Group. However, this role is not one with any line management responsibilities (see Figure 5 and 6). Something which Sam as GHHE finds frustrating:

> "*My role… I think leading without authority is a tough one. I don't have any line management of individuals. The course leaders have not had any clarity on these roles. However, they have made their own assumptions about where to go for support within the college structure*." (Sam, GHHE Interview, June 2021)

However, within the new structure outlined in Figure 6, course leaders are sometimes confused about where to go for support and feel caught between the two systems of HE and FE (Harwood and Harwood, 2004). Therefore, having a curriculum PAL being responsible for the HE courses in their area can cause uncertainty for the course leaders. This issue can come from PALs having insufficient understanding about CBHE, to the point that they are not able to support them. This was established in Chapter Five, where I found that course leaders do not have any support in learning about their everyday work.

> "*So sometimes between the two roles it can be confusing who you go to for the different elements of erm delivery of the course. sometimes feel that they sort a there's a void between their roles as well.*" (Elizabeth, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

Sam's view that the course leaders make their own decisions about where they need to go for support is also a common experience for the course leaders. As Sam has a more hands-on role in relation to HE in The College Group, the course leaders feel she is the most appropriate point of contact when they have issues or questions relating to HE.

> "*I feel like she was more involved because he was more involved with the programme. Whereas [PAL], I suppose just generic support and I don't know. There's nothing specific course related that I think [PAL] would have an influence on"* (Rebekah, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

> "*I have got a sounding board with Sam; she does listen; she does feed things back so I can sort of raise awareness…*" (Elizabeth, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

> "*Yeah, our HE manager, for me she's been really supportive… I think she's quite good at listening… I for one have felt very supported*." (Phil, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

However, complications arise when course leaders are unsure who to turn to when they have questions or concerns. Grace highlighted the tensions she has experienced regarding having a PAL line manager and a different person as GHHE. She argues that there is no clear boundary in roles and sometimes she feels like she cannot 'please anybody'.

> “*It is the most complex thing. I am forever putting [PAL] nose out of joint because, to me, if it is an [FE] thing it is [PAL], [PAL] is head of [curriculum area] so I think if it is an [FE]student or an [FE] issue I go to [PAL]. If it is a HE student or a HE issue, it would be Sam who is Head of HE. But that doesn’t always work because if [the PAL] is left out, she doesn’t always like it, so I end up not pleasing anybody. When I said to her that I am not being horrible or trying to keep her out of things. I said I went to Sam because he is Head of HE. She said, ‘yes, but I am head of [curriculum area]’.*” (Grace, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

All of the course leaders I interviewed found it valuable to have Sam as a point of contact and support as the GHHE. Often in FE, it is found that line managers have limited understanding of CBHE and there is very little support for those with responsibilities for CBHE (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020; Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). In The College Group, the lack of understanding of HE courses and processes has proved problematic for Sam and the course leaders. Where Sam sees that progress is starting to be made with PALs’ understanding CBHE, from the course leaders' perspective this is not the always case. As Sam has taken on the GHHE role within The College Group, she has more strategic responsibilities. Therefore, it is no longer in her remit to support the course leaders in daily operational matters. This has resulted in curriculum PALs needing to take more responsibility for the HE courses in their area, something they have not fully had to do until now. Sam explains that this is a challenging transition for which she is relying on the relationships she has built up with people through her prior role.

> “*And I think people are getting on board and come with me because of maybe my personal relationship with those people, as opposed to line management… For us to be successful and growing… How do we get them on board I think that's, that's something that is potentially gonna be a challenge this year, resilience wise, it's going to be tough to embed this new role*” (Sam, GHHE Interview, July 2021)

In situating the everyday work of the course leaders and highlighting their position within The College Group staffing structure, I have brought to the fore a complexity that has arisen within the roles of PAL and GHHE and where the course leaders need to go for support. This section has highlighted that in the current staffing structure, the formal mechanism for support, via their line manager, is not always the most helpful channel. However, support can come from different places, including more informal relationships and channels of communication. The next section discusses the support mechanisms that course leaders seek out beyond their immediate line manager.

6:3 Working as part of the Waterside University College Partnership

Waterside University College Partnership comprised of The College Group and several other local FE colleges. As such, for the course leaders, working in partnerships extends not only to Waterside University but also to the other FE colleges where a qualification is shared and delivered. For Waterside University, the franchise agreement in the *Operations Manual* states that the partnership includes the two FE colleges in The College Group and two more local FE colleges. Each course delivered as part of the franchise arrangements has a link tutor. The link tutor is a member of academic staff in Waterside University whose role is to support the course leaders for CBHE in the partner colleges.

The course leaders talked about working with the link tutor and other partner colleges to ensure that academic standards are consistent across the partnership:

> "*It is liaising with [Waterside] University on a regular basis to check if any information has changed. It is coordinating moderation with partner colleges when we are double checking students' work and grades. It is attending… board meetings, assessment boards*" (Elizabeth, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

> "*I suppose I see mine as maintaining that quality and standards of the programme and linking in with a course to the college and the university's processes and procedures. Making sure that, similar to teaching, isn't it, making sure that we conform to what external bodies require, so liaising with us for the course partnerships such as [Waterside] University.*" (Phil, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

> "*It is supportive [working with the other partner colleges] you can share good practice, and the fact that we are in a good team that will share resources, we will share ideas, we will plan together, we will, erm sort of coordinate new ideas that are coming into the areas. So, it is a really good bouncing board as well as just checking that you are doing things correctly.*" (Elizabeth, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

I enquired further about the nature of the partnership with the other local colleges. Here, the course leaders describe the types of everyday work required. Typical work carried out in partnership with the other colleges in the franchise relates to the *Quality Framework* and adhering to academic regulations.

> "*And also, standardisation events, you know, internal moderation, cross college internal moderation and making everything, making sure everything sort of done to the deadlines and the target dates that we've been given by the university that learners know how to hand in*" (Mandy, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

> "*Erm, then it is coordinating the delivery of the course, so planning organisation, erm, who will teach it, how it will be delivered. How often will there, the module delivery and everything… We second mark work and moderate work both in the college and across the colleges*." (Elizabeth, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

Elizabeth goes on to explain the importance of the College Partnership relationship and the support she receives from it in a little more detail, arguing that this is her biggest source of support for being a course leader for CBHE:

> "*I would not cope properly without that. That mechanism is on place, and that's built up over the last 14 years where people*

> *have come and gone from the teams, but we have got quite a solid team where everybody will help. Erm, you don't feel undermined by asking a question, that you think, 'ooh, it's a bit tricky this', you don't know whether they'll understand or checking that'... it's a very open, relaxed, friendship colleague type of relationship where you can just drop emails, ring people, and you get information back immediately, so you don't... it's crucial, absolutely crucial to keeping the role live and working effectively*." (Elizabeth, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

Elizabeth talked about the positive, supportive nature of her relationship with the course leaders in the partnership colleges and Waterside University. Yet, for Grace in particular, the tensions with her link tutor at Waterside University and one of the partner college were evident in her discussion about an event which took place during cross-college moderation process. As the courses are delivered in more than one college, a moderation event needs to take place to ensure that the work is standardised across the different colleges. This is to ensure that students are not advantaged or disadvantaged in their marks by their choice of college. In her interview, Grace described one particular event where she was made aware of a potential issue by one of the lecturers on her course. The lecturer had undertaken some moderation work with the one of the partner colleges. Arising from this moderation work were questions about the grading of assignments from the other partner college. Grace raised this issue of grading work from one of the partner colleges with the course leader in that partner college and the link tutor, citing that the work was not of the standard of the grade awarded by that college, and the feedback did not follow the marking policy set out in the academic regulations.

> "*So he [a lecturer on Grace's course] said to me, 'Sarah, [course leader in a partner college] isn't marking according to the assessment criteria'.*" (Grace, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

As the two course leaders were not able to reach a suitable compromise, the work was passed over to the link tutor. In this instance, the link tutor sided with the other course leader rather than Grace. This upset Grace as she felt that the link tutor was not following the academic regulations in the decision he was making.

> "*The link tutor, he rings me up. He said, 'I've had a conversation with Sarah about this assignment, this marking…', I said 'ok, yeah', 'and I think there is nothing wrong with her feedback. I think her feedback is absolutely fine.' And I said, 'ok, I understand what you're saying. However, it is not my opinion, it is what the feedback… the assessment and feedback policy says'. And he said 'I just think that'...and you could see he hadn't even looked at that policy*." (Grace, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

The tensions of working in partnership with Waterside University described by Grace is just one example. Other course leaders also talked about the tensions they had experienced, particularly in relation to feeling at a disadvantage by working in the college partnership rather than directly for Waterside University.

> "*So, I don't know if it echoes in other establishments, but when they created the partnership, they created it for us to definitely*

> *be at a disadvantage here*." (Eric, Course Leader Interview, May 2021)

> "*I think one of the challenges... probably communication from the university for wider things. So, a lot they're really good with course specific stuff, we have had some challenges this year around things like library cards, inductions and learners being registered on the wrong course, and that's took a long time to kind of sort out and organise. So that's been a challenge this year in particular, erm but is always a bit of an issue. So, while specific stuff is supported well, I think the wider stuff is a little more difficult*." (Rebekah, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

> "*Equally we might be teaching when the university wants us over, so the kind of the timetables don't match or marry up, sometimes we're missing stuff at the university"* (Rebekah, Course Leader Interview, November 2020).

Working in partnership with other local colleges can be a source of support as well as a source of tension for some course leaders. Equally, can the partnerships with the franchising university be a source of support for some course leaders but not others. It is evident, however, that working with others is complex. The next two sections explore this complexity further, particularly in relation to course leaders' feelings of being on the periphery and experiencing isolation within The College Group.

6:4 Course leaders experiences of not always belonging

Beyond teamwork with Waterside University and partner colleges, course leaders discuss how they work in a team in relation to other members of staff in The College Group. Within each curriculum area, there are FE courses from level one to three, and in most areas, there is also at least one HE course. This means that the curriculum teams managed by PALs are largely made up of FE lecturers and course leaders, one HE course leader and a few lecturers who teach across both HE and FE courses. In this section, teamwork focuses on how the course leaders are supported in terms of curriculum material and specifications and academic and assessment regulations.

For some courses, there is a team of people teaching the course. For example, both Carol and Grace discuss working as part of a team in relation to having a team of lecturers teaching on their course.

> "*Very much part of a team. We've gone from [named colleague] and I to having five members on the team now to, to kind of cope with the demand of the extra courses and delivery*." (Carol, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

> "*If you look across the board, we've got... so there's me, Jane, Peter, Marie and Jaswinder, who has joined this year. She hasn't started teaching yet – she is teaching from next semester. So, five, there is five of us... From a teaching perspective, I would oversee all of the teaching, making sure that everything is in place. That there is somebody teaching, that they know what they are doing. If they were unsure, they would come to me. Erm,*

> *so I would sort of streamline all of that, if you like.*" (Grace, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

However, teamwork is not all plain sailing. In the case of Grace, she is the course leader, on her team is her line manager, Jane, and three colleagues, Jaswinder, Peter and Marie, who are also line managed by Jane.

> "A *couple of times Peter asked me a couple of things, he didn't like the answer, then he asked Jane* (Grace, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

In instances such as this, Grace feels undermined in her role as a course leader, as the member of staff asked her a question, and when he did not like the answer, he went above her head to the line manager.

The feeling of being part of a team is not shared by all course leaders for CBHE. On the contrary, there are several course leaders that discuss the isolation and a sense of not belonging in their experience as a course leader for CBHE. Whilst it could be argued that each course leader is a member of a curriculum team (discussed above), the theme of isolation and not belonging emerged from course leaders during discussion about working in partnership and teamwork in their interviews. Young (2002) argued that the sense of isolation does not come from physical isolation but through staff feeling alone in their work. The sense of isolation in the work that the course leaders do could have arisen from CBHE fitting into neither HE nor FE (Young, 2002; Taylor and Bullock, 2024). CBHE is part of both HE and FE but never fully belongs to either (Lea and Simmons, 2012). It is this sense of not belonging that emerged from the course leaders' talk about teamwork. It is a sense of not belonging that echoes the participants of Turner, McKenzie and Stone (2009, p.363) who argued "we don't fit... that's the problem which you teach HE in FE" they argued that CBHE is like a 'square peg in a round hole'.

> "*Yeah, I suppose it's strange because I'm course leader for the BA programme, and for Teacher Ed, but there's only me who teaches on those programmes, so being course leader certainly doesn't mean managing a team, or working within a team.*" (Phil, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

Similarly, Rebekah highlighted her sense of not belonging. In her interview, she articulated that although she is part of the team for her curriculum subject area, she is still on her own. This complements the findings of Young (2002), who also found that those teaching CBHE felt a sense of not belonging in their team due to those undertaking FE work not understanding the CBHE work.

> "*I deliver on my own, so there's nobody else specifically on my course. It's just me, although technically, I am part of a wider team.*" (Rebekah, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

The sense of isolation also came from Elizabeth. Whilst Elizabeth felt being a member of the wider team within the Waterside University College Partnership and through the relationships she has bult up over the years with the partner colleges, she felt alone in her work within The College Group.

> "*It was mainly me by myself delivering the foundation degree we really did one which was [named curriculum area]. Erm so it was quite sort of an insular role really, but now we are doing two foundation degrees, so I do have another person teaching alongside which makes it a lot easier. I think…[the] team element has come more from working with partner colleges*" (Elizabeth, Course Leader, October 2020)

This sense of isolation was echoed by Phil who was starting to question his role as a course leader, using strong words such as being 'a cheat':

> "*It can be really isolating. I can work with people across the group in all the campuses, but it is a strange role. I feel like I'm almost a cheat at being a course leader. Because there's just me… I don't hold any meetings because that would be futile. You know, so it doesn't feel a course leader as some of my colleagues, maybe, you know who teach on, on the [named] programme and I go to their course meetings, and you know, it seems a bigger role"* (Phil, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

Whilst Phil feels alone in his work, he enjoys a sense of freedom in relation to nobody micromanaging him. However, he also feels that the balance of freedom and being left alone is not right, leaving him feeling isolated and not belonging; something Phil is not used to in his career as a teacher

> "*The sense of freedom is overshadowed in some by a sense of isolation. Course leaders feel that being left to do what they want leads to them feeling like they don't belong… but very rarely have you [I] ever worked in isolation. So, to do that is really strange.*" (Phil, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

This section has shown the complexity of working as part of a team in The College Group. I have shown how some course leaders are very much part of a team as there are a team of people who teach on their course. Yet for others, this is not the case, and they are the only person teaching on a particular course. This leads to some course leaders feeling a sense of isolation and being on the periphery of their curriculum team. The next section explores how this sense of isolation and being on the periphery is exacerbated by their line managers not understanding their everyday work.

6:5 Course leaders for college-based higher education's experiences of support from their line manager

It is difficult to know if the feeling of isolation and not belonging discussed above in section 6:4 are due to not working with other course leaders who do a similar role or if these feelings are due to colleagues and line managers not fully understanding their everyday work (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020; Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). Both Phil and Eric talked about this in their interviews.

> "*No, I don't think she [PAL] does at all. I don't think she understands*" (Phil, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

Phil goes on to explain the lack of understanding by his curriculum PAL. He argues that his PAL does not understand his role. To evidence this, Phil cites several activities such as a ‘rewrite’ (reviewing and developing the curriculum. Discussed in Chapter 7), the ‘marking of students’ work and the time to conduct scholarly activities to support his HE teaching and course leading:

> "*I don't think she understands the depth of marking. Well again, I think more than my big rubs [things that upset Phil] erm, unlike the University of research weeks, we get very limited time to do any academic reading or scholarly activities. We've just done a rewrite, as you know Clare. For new programmes or new modules, so I think there's a lack of understanding about how much knowledge and input you need to put in to deliver those modules, so I think there's a lack of insight there for, for my, from my management team. And yeah, that, that the whole research, and the depth and the level of marketing, and marketing is very intense at the end of the year.*" (Phil, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

Concerns over the lack of support from line managers was something Eric raised in his interview. It is Eric’s view that he has two line managers. One of the line managers is the HoD for the curriculum area that his HE courses align with (in this department there is no PAL for curriculum, as it is a small department). The other line manager that Eric discussed is Sam, the GHHE. Although not actually his line manager, at the time of the interview it was Sam (as the PAL for HE) that had responsibility for the HE courses at a strategic level in relation to the data on recruitment, retention, achievement and the financial aspects of the course.

> "*I have two line managers, and neither one of them wants responsibility for me… no one wants to be in a room alone we've been. I can't decide why… Well, I haven't had, you [referring to himself] haven't had an appraisal for the past three years.*" (Eric Course Leader Interview, May 2021)

The challenge for Eric is that whilst his HoD has a great deal of industry experience in the curriculum area, they do not hold a degree level of education. Eric feels that this is why his HoD takes a more hands-off approach. It is this which could possibly lead to feelings of isolation and not belonging.

> "*Not because they don't want to… When you're explaining it to somebody [HoD], perhaps it hasn't, perhaps even got a qualification that's probably the lowest qualification of your learner, you can come across patronising.*" (Eric, Course Leader Interview, May 21)

The feelings of not belonging in The College Group were clear from the examples from Phil, and Eric. However, Eric and Elizabeth take these feelings of not belonging a little further. They argue that the sense of not belonging arises from a marginalisation of CBHE. Elizabeth talks about feelings on being on the periphery and never quite belonging to either the HE or FE sectors, whereas Eric talks about HE being marginalised within the FE environment. Therefore, this may create a perception of their work in HE not being as important (Young, 2002).

> "*One of the difficulties of teaching HE in FE, is you're on the peripheral of both organisations. You know you're on the peripheral of have FE, and you're on the peripheral of HE. You never truly belong anywhere. And I think that can be sometimes a difficulty. You don't know whose field you're batting for… I do worry that HE doesn't recognise a practitioner route. An FE doesn't recognise a scholar route.*" (Elizabeth, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

> "*We, I feel sometimes we are battling our institution, to get the right level, the right quality. So, I think because of that, some people aren't really sure of what HE or CBHE is about because it's not a conversation that's widely spoken about in this particular establishment, I do not believe, I think it will become more on the agenda, but I think it's been marginalised.*" (Eric, Course Leader Interview, May 2021)

I asked Eric about his notions of marginalisation and where he feels they come from. He argued that the marginalisation comes from The College Group not fully committing to the delivery of HE. Through the Business Planning (BP) and Performance Review (PR) observations I undertook and from reviewing the *Financial Statement* for 2021, I found that HE in The College Group only makes up a very small percentage of the income revenue, approx. 3% of the overall College Group's income.

> "*I think perhaps maybe because you have to decide which route you're going to do [HE or FE], and if you're going to do that route, you've got to 100% commit, and sometimes I don't believe we*

fully committed the HE pathway at present, as an establishment as an organisation. I think, if you look at the physical resources, I think that often echoes that. I believe it's my personal opinion... I believe we have some of the most outstandingly dedicated and intelligent tutors, and don't believe they are given sufficient time to be nurtured, to become completely HE immersed. And I think that's evident in the way that it feels like the HE allocations of rooms and resources are a bolt on second class, not dedicated. How he [the director of finance] chooses not give any scholar activity time at all is appalling... Heavens to Betsy, I think that there are these mixed metaphors because they say, 'yes we want to do HE, but only kind of 50% HE because we're not going to give you a scholarly activity, we're not going to give you the resources to support it. We're not going to give you any budget to support it'." (Eric, Course Leader Interview, May 2021)

Eric's argument for feeling marginalised appears to come from the lack of recognition for HE within The College Group. He argues that The College Group wants to deliver HE but does not want to provide the resources for the staff to be able to deliver it in a way they would like. He has argued that there is no time for scholarly activity (discussed in Chapter Five) and that HE seems to be a 'bolt-on', rather than being an embedded provision. Given that HE only makes up a small proportion of The College Group's income, it could be argued that spending money on resources and course leader time is not seen as efficient and effective. Certainly, within the context of NPM this would be the case, where decisions are made from an economic or efficiency basis (Creasy, 2011)

The feelings of not belonging do not stop at the institutional level within The College Group. Eric, in particular, was highly reflective about a sense of belonging, or particularly not belonging which stretches to the partner university and the wider sectors of HE and FE. In the context of CBHE, the courses belong to one sector, HE, but are the responsibility of another, FE (Bathmaker, Brooks, Parry and Smith, 2007).

However, it is not just a sense of belonging that is missing for the course leaders within The College Group. There is a prevailing sense among the course leaders that they do not belong within the wider HE sector. Mandy alludes to a sense of exclusion between those who teach HE in The College Group and those who teach HE in Waterside University. An exclusion that stems from a shared understanding of language, which he is not familiar with (Paltridge, 2015). Not being fully immersed and belonging in the university means that course leaders are not always familiar with terminology and the acronyms used by Waterside University.

> "*I think it's enormous challenge, enormous challenge. I always feel I'm slightly second guessing is probably not the right terminology, but I almost feel and slightly a minute or two behind. When I'm at a meeting in HE, like okay I don't quite alright, 'Oh yeah, that's what we're doing now'. You know, I almost feel a little bit like that. And I think, again, this is just my experience, it just very much depends upon how much HE and how much HE wants you to be involved. It feels like, yes, we're quite happy to take our percentage but no we're not happy for you to actually consider yourself a HE tutor.*" (Mandy, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

Eric further reflects on this, arguing that he feels it is why some course leaders strive for additional qualifications to show that they are as good as others within a HE institution.

> "*That could be one of the reasons why some of us are striving for the doctorate because maybe we think we need that validation to be able to sometimes that meeting, say that you, for example, whenever we go to meetings, we always have to introduce ourselves. And as always, doctor this, doctor that.... But I suppose. I guess what I was sort of saying I think the biggest difficulty. I believe in my perspective is that fact that you were on the periphery, you never quite FE, you are never quite HE... We just kind of just keep our heads down and hope for the results, don't we?*" (Eric, Course Leader Interview, May 2021)

Eric, who is currently studying for a doctorate, argues that striving for additional qualifications provides a sense of validation, and a public mark of expertise, that is needed to address the feelings of not belonging in either sector.

6:6 Chapter summary

This chapter set out to answer the question, how is the work of course leaders for CBHE situated within working with others? The focus here is on where the course leader position is situated and who they will be working with in their everyday work. The course leader in The College Group is a position on the staffing structure. This differs from other institutions where a course leaders' role has additional duties taken on by lecturers. Yet the reality of the course leader role is that they are lecturers, working under FE sector conditions but with additional duties of course leadership (Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). Within The College Group, a course leader is positioned above lecturers and below PALs, who are below HoDs. The course leader is also an associate lecturer at Waterside University, for which they liaise with a link tutor, and they are part of the Waterside University College Partnership.

Furthermore, they work with a line manager who shows little understanding of the course leaders' everyday work (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020; Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). Further, the course leaders find themselves between two sectors which do not necessarily align in working conditions and values supportive of CBHE course leaders (Tucker, Peddler and Martin 2020; Harwood and Harwood, 2004).

This unique positioning has led to course leaders feeling isolated in their work. A sense of isolation and not belonging seems to stem from two places. One aspect is not belonging to a team who shares an understanding of the work of the course leader within The College Group. The second aspect is feelings of being on the periphery of two sectors: not quite belonging to the HE sector or the FE sector. In particular, course leaders feel that they do not belong in their FE teams through the differences in their everyday work but also, it is argued by Eric that there is an element of not belonging in the HE sector too. Eric and Mandy argue that there is a lack of shared language and understanding between the two sectors leading to feelings of not only isolation but also of not being good enough. Furthermore, Eric argued that the sense of isolation and not belonging could be the driving force for course leaders for CBHE to pursue additional qualifications to feel like they are more equal to their counterparts in universities. These findings echo that of Young (2002) who also argued that isolation, rather than being a physical separation, comes from not being around others who understand what the course leaders do in their everyday work. Yet, this sense of isolation and not belonging has meant that some course leaders are going beyond the formal structures of The College Group to seek support; they have turned to other course leaders within Waterside University College Partnership for the support they need. Yet the sense of isolation and not belonging is not something new for those teaching CBHE. In their article exploring the work of course leaders and lecturers for CBHE in 2009, Turner, McKenzie and Stone's participants also argued this point, stating that, "*we don't fit… square peg in a round hole"* Turner, McKenzie and Stone's (2009, p.363).

Chapter Seven: Course leaders' everyday work: marketing and recruitment, curriculum work and working with students

7:1 Introduction

To continue my journey into the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education (CBHE), the aim of this chapter is to explore specific aspects of their everyday work. Specifically, this chapter focuses on answering in part the question, what are the course leaders for college-based higher education's actualities of their everyday work? Whilst all of the findings chapters focus on the actualities of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE, this chapter focuses specifically on three aspects of their work that they focused on most when sharing their work knowledge: marketing and recruitment, curriculum work and working with students.

This chapter draws on data from a range of sources. Specifically, I have drawn on the work knowledge of course leaders for CBHE in their formal interviews, from Sam, the Group Head of Higher Education (GHHE) formal interview and programme area leader (PAL) formal interviews, informal interviews with two members of senior management team (SMT), in addition to observational data of course leaders carrying out their everyday work. In Chapters One and Five I established that the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE is varied and complex. The themes discussed in this chapter reflect specific aspects of the course leader for CBHE's everyday work that they discussed in detail during their formal interviews when asked the open question, 'tell me about your work'. There are three themes in this chapter. The first theme is marketing and recruitment. This is the work that course leaders do to encourage students to enroll on their course. The second theme is curriculum work, focusing on how course leaders for CBHE are responsible for writing and reviewing their curriculum in line with the quality processes set by Waterside University. The final theme that course leaders discussed in relation to the aspects of their everyday work is working with CBHE students. Specifically, this theme focuses on the satisfaction course leaders get from working with CBHE students and the pastoral work they undertake to support the students. Here I examine pastoral work from the perspective of supporting students as well as it being tied into the accountability measures for course leaders for CBHE.

7:2 Marketing and recruitment work

Marketing and recruitment were foremost in the minds of the course leaders for CBHE when asked to talk about their work. Whilst this aspect of their work is not unique to the CBHE course leader, it was one of the first things they raised. The importance of effective marketing and recruitment was summarised by Eric:

> "*Ultimately if we don't get the bums on the seats, we haven't got a job in September*" (Eric, Course Leader interview, May 21).

This suggests that if course leaders do not recruit enough students, the impact would be on the security of their employment. This is something Craig also discussed in his interview. He was telling me about the loss of a contract for international students and the financial impact this had, leading to a reduction in CBHE staff, as it was no longer financially viable to keep them.

“*When we got to basics, basically, we lost quite a lot of staff. So, we're very, very minimalised staff wise”* (Craig, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

Interestingly, it is not just the course leaders who hold the view that job security is influenced by recruiting sufficient students on their courses. PAL, Margret, who is responsible for the staffing and budgets in her curriculum area, also highlights this issue.

“*…to make sure that the college is financially sustainable and valuable to continue to deliver the provision that means courses suitability, course viability, but also is down to do we recruit enough students, do we remain solvent, and ultimately, the staff remain in jobs. That's, that's a big thing.*” (Margret, PAL Interview July 2021)

Following work knowledges from the course leaders for CBHE, I turned to texts in order to find out if marketing and recruitment work was part of the course leader for CBHE’s work. It is here that I analysed the *Operations Manual* from Waterside University. Initially introduced in Chapter Five, the *Operations Manual* is a text which is:

“Designed to assist University and College staff to implement the necessary activities in line with University academic regulations, admissions and registration processes, quality assurance and enhancement procedures and contractual Partnership arrangements, in a way which achieves comparable outcomes for students.”

The *Operations Manual* is a text which mediates between Waterside University and The College Group. The *Operations Manual* specifically states that the partner college must: "*Market courses effectively (in liaison with the University's Student Recruitment and Marketing Department) and make every endeavour to recruit to target*". However, the responsibility for marketing and recruitment seems to fall within the everyday work of the course leaders (Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009; Cahill et al., 2015). Tucker, Peddler and Martin (2020) further argue the recruitment duties undertaken by course leaders are made around an already full teaching timetable (see Chapter Five). Craig and Elizabeth both discuss their work in relation to marketing and recruitment:

> "*Well, if you start at the beginning. Well, beginning back end of the year, you're literally making sure that all the publicity, marketing stuff is in place.*" (Craig, Course Leader interview, June 2021)

> "*I think initially it is about recruitment and marketing. It is about highlighting the course.*" (Elizabeth, Course Leader interview, Oct 2020)

Marketing and recruitment take up much of the course leaders' time (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020). Further, I examined the texts relating to the work of the course leader, including their *Job Description*, *Contract of Employment* and *Timetable*, beyond stating that this work is part of the duties of a course leader, there is no further detail on what this involves or the extent to which course leaders are involved. Further to this, there is no time allocation on any of the course leaders' *Timetables* for this work. Instead, it is one of the duties that course leaders are expected to perform in addition to their teaching hours.

There are three main ways in which the course leaders talked about their work in relation to marketing and recruitment: externally facing events, internal progression and social media. Firstly, Elizabeth discusses HE open events.

> "*It is about attending HE events, publicity, we have HE open evenings, we attend and people are invited into the college*" (Elizabeth, Course Leader interview, Oct 2020)

The open events held by The College Group are usually held on the evening and advertised locally for potential students and their parents to learn more about the courses The College Group offers. The format of the open events is usually a marketplace-style event with course leaders representing their courses. The public can walk around freely and discuss the course details and entry requirements with relevant course leaders.

In addition to the externally facing events and marketing materials, course leaders are required to recruit students from within The College Group. Internal recruitment in The College Group can take many different forms. These can include master classes (HE taster lessons), internal promotion events and visiting the classes of students who may wish to progress onto HE. This aspect of marketing work was highlighted by Elizabeth, Grace and Mandy:

> "*It is about going and visiting level 3 possible students to transfer [progress] onto the foundation degree*" (Elizabeth, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

> *"I do a lot of master classes, you know, going into like level three classes to deliver master classes, and sort of tell everybody, you know, about progression of what the course is about*" (Mandy, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

> "*So, I go into all of the level 3 Health courses*" (Grace, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

Grace explained that this recruitment activity needed to be completed in her own time, outside of her typical working week. "*I am going into [...]'s class. I don't normally work on a Thursday night, but it's like, they are only in on a Wednesday and a Thursday [evenings], and I teach on a Wednesday [evening] so I can't do a Wednesda*y" (Grace, Course Leader interview, October 2020). In this instance, Grace is talking about having to work an additional evening to promote her course. This is something which creates a challenge for course leaders in maintaining a work-life balance (discussed in Chapter Five). (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020)

The third element of the recruitment process is through developing a social media presence. For most course leaders any social media presence is handled by the marketing team but for others, it is something they have chosen to actively engage with.

> “*The fact that we're constantly on Instagram or Twitter, or we've got our marketing personnel in, or you're taking photographs, or you're arranging things, or you're doing evenings, you know, ‘An Evening with Eric’, you know*” (Eric, Course Leader interview, May 2021)

> “*I make sure that so the foundation degrees have their own Instagram pages… we do a lot of marketing we do a lot of in terms of recruitment*” (Mark, Course Leader Interview, July 2021)

However, Mark uses course promotion on social media as a learning opportunity, and he has found a way of engaging his students in this activity.

> “*So, I do a lot of delegation to the students, but I oversee everything, I oversee. And it might be that they sent me an image, we're gonna put this out on social media, and I'm like ‘Great, get it out’.*” (Mark, Course Leader Interview, July 2021)

The quotes above indicate the importance of marketing and recruitment to the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. Using their work knowledge gained from interviews, course leaders have talked about this aspect of their work in relation to job security. Issues of job security are real, for example, Craig vividly talked about how his team has lost various members of staff as enrolment numbers have decreased: "*We lost quite a lot of staff.* (Craig, Course Leader interview, June 2021)

Marketing and recruitment were one of the first things that course leaders discussed when I asked them about their work. It forms a large part of their work, involving social media use, internal course promotion and external marketing events. This sense of needing students on course for job security comes from colleges working on a business model. As a result of post incorporation, colleges became self-governing and independent with responsibility for their own assets, staff and budgets (Lucas and Crowther, 2016). New Public Management (NPM) discourses that pervade FE colleges in the post incorporation era, focus on principles of a free market and the drive for the three 'Es': efficiency, effectiveness and economy (Randle and Brady, 1997a). Therefore, if the course is not financially viable, there is no space within efficient financial management to run and staff the course. With this view in mind, it can be clearly seen why course leaders have chosen to share their work knowledge of this aspect of their everyday work. Following discussions on marketing and recruitment, course leaders focused on their work of writing the curriculum. This was particularly pertinent for many of the course leaders for CBHE who were, at the time of their interviews, undergoing new course development or periodic reviews of existing courses.

7:3 Writing and reviewing the curriculum

The development of courses is something which is a feature of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE in both the *Job Description* and the *Contract of Employment*. This development includes both writing new courses and developing existing ones. Whilst it is mentioned in these texts, there is nothing in any texts within The

College Group relating to the details of this aspect of the course leaders' work, it is evident in Waterside University's *Quality Framework*. The *Quality Framework* was written by the Student Learning and Academic Registry (SLAR) department of Waterside University, updated in 2023 and is subject to annual review. It guides the staff to ensure that the review process is rigorous. The partnership *Operations Manual* highlights that all courses franchised by the partner colleges are subject to the periodic review and the re-approval processes in line with the University's regulatory framework: the *Quality Framework*.

The *Quality Framework:*

> "*Sets out the principles and procedures within the quality system for the planning, quality assurance and enhancement of taught and research degree provision, including Partnership provision*"

As is evident from the quotation above that the partnership provision, and therefore the courses that the CBHE course leaders deliver are subject to the same regulatory framework as other courses at Waterside University. The *Operations Manual* (July 21) highlights the periodic review process:

> "*The University currently operates a Periodic Review and re-approval process for existing courses, normally on a 6-year cycle. [W]UCP [Waterside University College Partnership] courses are subject to this process and are managed by AREG (QAV) [Academic Registry (Quality Assurance and Validation)] in conjunction with the relevant School according to University process*."

Taking place on a six-year cycle, the Periodic Review process is to establish that "*all taught courses remain academically sustainable, that academic standards continue to deliver a high-quality student experience and opportunities for success … have been maintained or exceeded."* Stemming from the overall *Quality Framework, Chapter C: Periodic Review of [Waterside] University Provision Including Collaborative Provision,* offers a way of organising and directing the everyday work of the course leaders, guiding them through the periodic review process. This framework was developed by Waterside University's SLAR department. The current version of the *Quality Framework, Chapter C: Periodic Review of [Waterside] University Provision Including Collaborative Provision,* was written in 2021. This text was due for review in July 2022, but this was not carried out until September 2023. The chapter is available publicly on Waterside University's website and a link is sent out to the course leaders when they enter the Periodic Review phase of their course.

The *Quality Framework*, *Chapter C: Periodic Review of [Waterside] University Provision Including Collaborative Provision* (2021) explains the purpose of the review and the procedures needed to carry out the review in line with the regulatory framework.

> *"The purpose of the Periodic Review process is to establish that all taught courses remain academically sustainable, that academic standards continue to deliver a high-quality student experience and opportunities for success (i.e., NSS [National Student Survey[9]], award classifications and student*

[9] The NSS is an independent national survey which HE students are invited to take part in during their final year of study. The survey focuses on the quality of their course.

destinations) have been maintained or exceeded." (*Chapter C: Periodic Review of [Waterside] University Provision Including Collaborative Provision, 2021)*

Course leaders refer to this process as either a Periodic Review or a re-write. The Quality Framework (QF), *Chapter C: Periodic Review of [Waterside] University Provision Including Collaborative Provision*, is an active text which course leaders engage with through what is known as the text-reader conversation (Smith, 2005). Thus, forming a Work – Text – Work sequence (Figure 3). Course leaders for CBHE review the link for the text, they activate the text by reading it and implementing the actions it suggests.

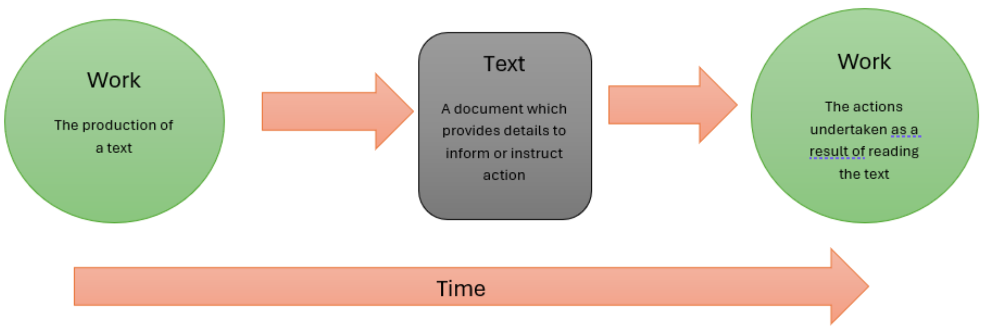


Figure 3 (revisited from Chapter Three): Text-Reader Conversation (Smith and Griffiths, 2022)

The Quality Framework, Chapter C: Periodic Review of [Waterside] University Provision Including Collaborative Provision, is guidance which takes a step-by-step view of the process and provides clarity of how the Periodic Review process differs from a new course approval process. It emphasises that the focus is on the on-going evaluation and monitoring of an existing course. However, the document does not give any specific guidance on the completion of the paperwork involved.

> "*The guidance contained in this document provides detailed information on the University requirements for undertaking a Periodic Review (PR) of a course… The process for Periodic Review is distinct from Course Approval, the review incorporates the philosophy of Continuous Monitoring and Enhancement (CME) of undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research*." (Chapter C: Periodic Review of Teesside University Provision Including Collaborative Provision, Nov 21)

As several course leaders were going through the Periodic Review and re-approval process at the time of interview, it was also something they discussed as an important element of their everyday work. Mark came to The College Group from a college who had their own foundation degree and degree awarding powers, where staff had written their own courses without the requirement of a validating university. Therefore, writing courses was something that Mark was familiar with. It is also evident that Mark sees the review process as one of his key strengths and takes pride in his skills and knowledge in writing and developing courses.

> "*One of the things that I came into the college to do was to rewrite and revalidate new programmes, so there was a feeling that the FdA [Foundation Degree in Arts] [curriculum area], was no longer fit for purpose… When I first joined, I wrote three new*

FdAs, [names the three FdAs] so we've got one year recruited to that FDA [names course] is starting next year, as well as... [names course]. That was based on student needs, but also employers had input into that, and I had come from leading the biggest FdA [names curriculum area] programmes in the North-East, and so I sort of brought my own industry expertise to that as well as my educational expertise, and because I was an [names career] before I went into teaching." (Mark, Course Leader Interview, July 2021)

In addition to the six-year Periodic Review process, course leaders also write new courses. The requirement for Periodic Reviews and new course development is set out in the specifics of the *Job Description* (discussed in Chapter Five). The framework for new course approval, once again is rooted in Waterside University's *Quality Framewor*k and for new course this is *Chapter C: Course Design, Development and Approval of [Waterside] University Taught Provision Including Collaborative Provision.* As with the Periodic Review guidance, the new course development framework was developed in 2021 and was due for review in July 2022. The review took place in September 2023.

In their interviews, Mark and Mandy discuss the new courses they have developed. They once again activate the relevant text - Chapter *C: Course Design, Development and Approval of [Waterside] University Taught Provision Including Collaborative Provision* - which provides a sequence of action for course leaders to follow when engaging in a text-reader conversation.

When the process of a periodic review starts, the Waterside University SLAR administrator assigned to the review sends out the details and links to all academic regulations. As part of the franchise arrangements, the courses written and reviewed belong to the partner colleges and not Waterside University. So, while Waterside University will ensure that the courses and paperwork and the review processes meet the requirements of the *Quality Framework* and associated regulatory texts, it is the responsibility of the course leaders to write the courses in line with these texts. Due to the nature of the franchise arrangements and the partnership with the university, there are often other partner colleges involved in the review processes:

> "*Franchised Courses: Throughout the Periodic Review process Course Leaders must consult and incorporate views from Collaborative Partners in all locations approved to deliver the award"* (Chapter C: Periodic Review of [Waterside] University Provision Including Collaborative Provision, November 2021)

A challenge with the periodic review and new course approval process is that it is something completely new to most people working in the FE sector as the FE sector is accustomed to delivering qualifications created by external bodies such as Pearson or City and Guilds. This can lead to course leaders feeling like they are "winging it" (Grace, Course Leader Interview, Oct 20). With course leaders not feeling confident in undertaking the periodic review and new course approval processes, Sam offers support where she can but argues that it is ultimately the course leaders' responsibility.

> “*How does that ultimately, it's going to fall down to the course leader, and how he or she handles it... I've also worked with a course leader where they've been the one person, they haven't got a department, or teaching staff, they’re one person. So, the support needs for each situation is very different. If someone's kind of on their own, I will be a bit more involved with that, to try and support. Whereas when there's a network of people, it's just monitoring and making sure we're meeting deadlines to the standard that we need*” (Sam, GHHE interview, June 2021)

Notions of training and support for course development is something that the course leaders have differing experiences of. Where some course leaders highlight some levels of training and support, others feel they have been left with little support. The *Quality Framework, Chapter C: Periodic Review of [Waterside] University Provision Including Collaborative Provision* and *Chapter C: Course Design, Development and Approval of [Waterside} University Taught Provision Including Collaborative Provision* highlights that a link tutor will provide support curriculum development, to ensure that the curriculum work is aligned with the regulations of Waterside University. It states that *"A Link Tutor will be assigned to work with collaborative colleagues to support the review process*”. The link tutor’s role is to support the course leaders for CBHE with following the universities processes. They are members of staff at Waterside University who work in the same field as the courses being delivered in the colleges. Whilst I did not specifically ask about the role of the link tutor, course leaders did not discuss this, or any support offered. Mandy and Grace have felt alone in their periodic review journey:

> *"We were pretty much on our own with the paperwork*" (Mandy, Course Leader interview, June 2021)

> *"I think, I'm winging this, Clare"* (Grace, Course Leader interview, October 2020)

Yet Mark, who is more experienced in these matters, is happy with the process and able to navigate it on his own. It seems his experience and understanding of the processes for writing the curriculum have allowed him to be confident in the processes. However, he too has not had the support of his link tutor.

> *"I have meetings with [Waterside] university because they validate our programmes. So, at the bottom the validation process is lengthy, and there are a lot of documents to fill out, so I've been quite closely linked with them. I have not had much support from our link tutors at [Waterside]. I think it'll be fair to say they've changed [different link tutors], I'm now on to the third one in two years, and they, so it's they've not been particularly involved in the courses as I wouldn't have said. But that sort of suits me. I like to do my own thing and not be told by other people who have to me [who are his link tutor] because I think that they don't know as well as I do"* (Mark, Course Leader interview, July 2021)

For one course leader, training with Waterside University was offered. Eric highlighted that he had two training sessions.

"*I've had two sessions of training, so we had to I had one session on the library, and one session on them taking me literally, and that was not individual that was delivered to three HE tutors, so I was the only HE in FE , at that particular desk-based webinar, and the rest were all HE, and I did bring out several times that you put in this thing's on your staff Intranet, I access can't them, I can't access that, I can't access tha*t" (Eric, Course Leader interview, May 2021)

However, the usefulness of these sessions was seen limited in helping him understand and navigate his way through the process, mostly due to the limitations of accessing university systems for partner colleges. The lack of access to university systems for course leaders for CBHE, suggests that, as associate lectures, course leaders are not perceived on the same level as those working in the university as they are not able to access the systems that will support their everyday work. This lack of parity comes from course leaders not being employed directly by Waterside University but by the partner colleges.

However, as he was alone in the periodic review process, Eric found support from Sam:

"The HE line manager [Sam], she and I created a SharePoint. So yes, so obviously, she sort of, I think has been quite supportive, yeah. She's always giving me examples, of examples of other people [other people's periodic review paperwork]" (Eric, Course Leader interview, May 2021)

In this case, the support offered by Waterside University was not fit for purpose as seen by Eric. In particular, it was the lack of access to Waterside University internal resources that hampered the support on offer. This is a limitation of The College Groups' franchise partnership with Waterside University. However, Eric was still able to find support in Sam in her capacity as GHHE. This support allowed him to be successful in achieving the goal of completing the periodic review of his courses.

Whilst course leaders experience challenges with the paperwork and the process, the lack of understanding of the process by PALs and the tight rein on cost-income ratios mean that most course leaders are not allocated time to complete these additional duties. Again, this aspect depends on the course leader's line manager and whether they have the capacity in their budget to allocate additional time to them. Mark and Elizabeth explained that time was an issue with periodic reviews:

> "*Part of the problem with the periodic review or new course approval process is the time that it takes for doing the research [reading around the subject and changes in the sector(s)], completing the paperwork and attending the boards*" (Mark, Course Leader interview, July 2021)

> "*I think it has also become quite evident this year with re-writing the programmes as well, which we are heavily involved in that we are not given all of the additional the time to carry out all of this research for writing the new programmes as well*" (Elizabeth, Course Leader interview, October 2020)

In my interviews with PALs, I asked about the work of course leaders for CBHE. The involvement of course leaders in curriculum design, and the time needed to undertake such work was something which the PALs raised. However, there were inequalities in the approaches made by PALs in relation to time given for curriculum design:

> "*I'd like to think I could allocate some time to them [course leaders]. However, in reality I don't think I can do it, I think there's so much demand for cost effectiveness, and those demands are getting greater and greater that I think that that is where the challenges is.*" (Alishba, PAL interview, June 2021)

> "*So, if [Course Leader] has got to rewrite year, I'll probably, normally give around 100 hours less than normal [864 hours of teaching]*" (Andy, PAL interview, July 2021)

These inconsistencies have an impact on the workload of the course leaders for CBHE. Whilst the course leaders for CBHE who are line managed by Andy receive remission for curriculum work, course leaders who are line managed by PALs such as Alishba are not afforded this time, yet they are still required to carry out this work. Given the information from Alishba and Andy, budgets within a curriculum area are a clear indicator of whether time is allocated. If there is money within a curriculum area budget, there is a level of flexibility. If there is not a sufficient budget then all staff within that curriculum area need to be working at the capacity of their contract, on 864 hours teaching, leaving limited or no time for additional duties such as curriculum work. Therefore, it is evident that the NPM is central to the squeeze on course leaders' development time through its drive for economy and efficiency.

The restrictions on departmental budgets have created a situation where some course leaders for CBHE have remission for their curriculum work and others have not. I have shown that this is just one of the complexities the course leaders for CBHE face in their curriculum work. Whilst Mark seems to be completing his curriculum work without an issue, this is not the case for all course leaders for CBHE. I have established that further complexities arise in relation to support for course leaders during their curriculum work and the challenge of accessing suitable training and access on Waterside University's intranet systems.

7:4 Working with college-based higher education students

7:4:1 Perspective on teaching

The final theme of this chapter is on CBHE course leaders' everyday work with students. As the data shows, working with students and teaching in the classroom is a source of pleasure for the course leaders. In Chapter Five, I discussed the issues relating to time and the amount of time course leaders spend in the classroom teaching. I emphasised that this time does not allow course leaders to complete the other aspects of their everyday work. Yet, course leaders find the time they spend in the classroom with students as the most rewarding aspect of their everyday work. Similarly to existing research (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020), course leaders in this study enjoy teaching the students and seeing them make progress. Working with students in the classroom can be seen as a good distraction from other work course leaders face daily (Cahill *et al.,* 2015), including the curriculum development discussed in the previous section.

> "*Teaching is solace. When you have to say, 'I'm sorry there's now four hours devoted to lecture or seminar work', it's solid, it's lovely. It's slow, in comparison, isn't it, because it's the time you can kind of breathe out…*" (Eric, Course Leader Interview, May 2021)

> "*I still love teaching. Teaching, the best bit of the job for me, and I still love, I love being in the classroom, I love teaching, I love, observing and developing people's practice in the classroom, and probably that really. Although I do enjoy the course leader role but I'm probably more of a teacher.*" (Rebekah, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

The love of teaching students was a sentiment echoed by most course leaders for CBHE. Mark argued that teaching students is his motivator for getting out of bed: "*I love being in that room, and being creative with the students, that's, that's the best thing. That's what gets me out of bed."* (Mark, Course Leader Interview, July 2021). Similarly, Phil and Grace emphasised that teaching is a privilege in their work: *"I love teaching. I know how to teach, and I want to keep sharing that. It is a privilege."* (Phil, Course Leader Interview, June 2021), and "*I enjoy the teaching, and I love that privileged position you get of making a difference to people, it's good, it's great."* (Grace, Course Leader Interview, October 2020).

Course leaders clearly enjoy their work teaching and supporting students. Yet, an interesting dynamic arose from a discussion with Kay, the Chief Executive of The College Group. In her informal interview, Kay's view seemed to be at odds with the actualities of the course leaders' everyday work. Kay, in her position as Chief Executive, feels that the focus of the course leader role is on the more managerial side of their everyday work, rather than the time they spend on teaching and learning in the classroom. It could be argued that the further away a manager is from the local position of a course leader, the less they understand their work (Donovan, 2019; Paterson, 1999). This view of Donovan (2019) and Paterson (1999) seems to represent the position shared by Kay. In a conversation recorded in my research diary, I noted:

> "*I was surprised by her views of course leaders. Where course leaders saw their role as teachers with added duties of being a course leader, Kay saw the role of more strategic and management related. She voiced her indifference to the fact that course leaders were passionate about their students*"
> (Researcher Diary notes, April 2021)

This view from Kay seems to contrast with the views of course leaders who see their teaching work as a priority. Yet, these views could be reflective of the standpoint each person assumes. My reflections on the conversation with Kay made me question her understanding of the course leaders' work. Her views seemed to be at odds with the reality of the course leaders' everyday work. The *Job Description* for course leaders includes curriculum delivery, yet this is just one aspect amongst the many listed. It could be that Kay is placing more emphasis on the other duties the course leaders perform in their work, or perhaps the course leaders prioritise teaching as this takes up most of the workload and is visibly counted in *Timetables* as explained in Chapter Five. What Kay might not see from her standpoint at the top of the structural staffing hierarchy is the impact of efficiencies and cost-income ratios on course leaders. It is possible that he may not see how the efficiency drive in The College Group has removed the time allowed for teaching HE courses. This has led to the HE teaching remission time being reallocated to teaching and learning time. The reallocation of this time to teaching and learning time in the classroom can be seen as evidence of making the course leaders for CBHE's work financially efficient for The College Group (discussed in Chapter Five).

7:4:2 Pastoral work: supporting students

Whilst course leaders for CBHE are vocal about the satisfaction they get from teaching CBHE students, concerns were also raised about students' 'neediness' and mental health. Indeed, a number of research studies into non-traditional students highlights that they may need increased pastoral support, study skills or emotional support once they begin a programme (Minter, 2001; Baker, Brown, and Fazey, 2006; Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009). It is the need for emotional support that both Grace and Mark discussed in their interviews. However, they both take a different view on this. Grace focuses on the students' 'neediness' as a result of managing learning issues and social issues, whilst Mark focuses on the issues related to students' mental health.

> *"They are very needy. Don't know if it's just my students, but a lot of my students are very very needy, and they get lots of one-to-one to be fair. I think they like to feel valued. I do value all of my students and they know that, but I think just having that little bit of quality time, particularly if you've got big groups… They like*

that little bit of extra support at the end of the day they can do it themselves" (Grace, Course Leader Interview October 2020)

Whilst focusing on their 'neediness', Grace understands the support she offers as needed by her students. It may not be needed necessarily to allow the students to progress, but she sees it needed for emotional support and to help her students feel valued as HE learners.

Yet for some students the need for support goes a step further. Instead, they need a more medical or counselling approach to address concerns over their mental health. Mark discusses this:

> "*I think the on... the growing level of student mental ill health.... is getting worse and worse and worse every year, it's getting more and more evident that a lot of young people struggle with mental health. How do you find that then as a course leader, because I said before that they come to you.... Like for example, they know not to message me after six o'clock on an evening, unless they are, you know, in dire straits, I would rather them message than not message*." (Mark, Course Leader Interview, July 2021)

Lecturers are finding that they are increasingly working with students with mental health problems (Baik, Larcombe and Brooker, 2019). Paton *et al.*, (2023) argue that traditionally under-represented group in HE are the most at risk of poor well-being. Whilst arguably, this issue is not confined to the CBHE students as it is also clear that student mental health has been in decline for all groups in more recent years (Sampson *et al.*, 2022). In line with the findings from literature, Mark talked about how there is a growing concern over mental health and well-being, which is leading to an increase in daily pastoral work. In Mark's experience, he felt that issues surrounding mental health were becoming severe and that he was not always equipped to deal with complex issues. However, as course leader he was the one they trusted and came to, echoing the findings from Crawford and Johns (2018). Mark talked about the time needed to support these students. Mostly this time was to listen and to advise and to signpost to support services. As students prefer to talk to someone they know rather than to a stranger, he had become the frontline support for these students, rather than them accessing the support mechanisms within the college or the partner university. Such findings, that students prefer to talk to the member of staff they are familiar with is aligned with the findings of Walsh, Larsen and Parry (2009).

Whilst crisis instances are not seen daily, the need to provide pastoral care of students with mental health issues is. Course leaders, Mark and Carol, discuss this:

> "*I provide pastoral care and support to the students on a day-to-day basis. I am that first point of contact for any issues worries, concerns, I undertake.... The students survey with them. I am there with them, so we do... students can listen to respond to the student voice*." (Mark, Course Leader Interview, July 2021)

> "*Given my role is course leader for the [curriculum area] is that those students who have quite severe problems or mental health issues or things that I'm always brought into that process.*

> *So that can be quite challenging.*" (Carol, Course Leader Interview, November 2020)

The course leaders clearly address their students' needs, whether this be skills building, making students feel valued or working with students with mental health problems. In the next section I take a deeper look into the pastoral work and whilst acknowledging the need for course leaders for CBHE to carry out this type of work, I also explore how accountability mechanisms in The College group have started to drive the need for pastoral work.

7:4:3 Pastoral work: 'covert duties'

The previous section focused on CBHE students and highlighted the deficit model of 'neediness'. This section develops the argument for the need for pastoral work that was made in section 7:4:2, by drawing on interviews with course leaders and observational data of the pastoral work taking place. This section also draws on discourse and actualities of pastoral work being unseen. Very early on in his interview, when asked about his work, Eric raised the issue of overt and covert duties.

> "*You know, basically you have overt and covert duties, don't you?*" (Eric Course Leader Interview, May 2021)

Following up on this, I asked Eric to explain what he meant by overt and covert duties. He explained that some of his work was seen and accounted for, for example teaching and learning, yet other aspects of his work were not seen. However, he argued that these covert duties are necessary for his role. On further discussion, Eric revealed that part of this covert work he referred to was in fact the pastoral work he conducted with his students, alluding to it being part of a hidden curriculum (Chowdhry, 2014). A hidden curriculum is expectations which are unseen and can be in the form of unspoken values, procedures and behaviours (Alsubaie, 2015). Therefore, Eric is arguing that the pastoral work is expected but not written into the course leaders for CBHE's workload.

Yet the time for carrying out pastoral work was central to how other course leaders talked about this aspect of their work. Course leaders talked about the busyness of their time outside of their teaching commitments: teaching commitments which are more than their counterparts in a HEI (Lea and Simmons, 2012). In her interview, Grace highlighted this issue. Here she talked about the lack of time she has to engage in pastoral work, despite the students needing support:

> Grace: "*They [students] do take up a lot of your time...*"
>
> Clare: "*outside of class time as well?*"
>
> Grace: "*Well... you get no time in college do you when you think about it? You don't get very much time*." (Grace, Course Leader Interview, October 2020)

This was further compounded by Mark who questioned the priorities in what you do when you are dealing with a student talking to you about their problems.

> "*It's, it's not having the time to do that [pastoral work]. And sitting with somebody once they have, you know, an episode or*

> *something. Yeah, so that's difficult.*" (Mark, Course Leader Interview, July 2021)

Evidence of the 'unseen' nature of pastoral care in relation to space was seen when I observed Rebekah with one of her students. The observation was of a face-to-face meeting between Rebekah and one of her students. At all times, the student was aware that I was conducting an observation for my research. I explained that the research and this observation was on the everyday work of the course leader, rather than on her. I assured the student of confidentiality. This meeting took place in the college library. The meeting lasted around 25 minutes, and the student discussed issues in her personal life affecting her studies. I was concerned that discussions around such personal aspects of the student's life were being discussed in a 'public' space such as the library, so later I asked Rebekah about her choice of location for such a meeting. She explained that there is an absence of private space for such occurrences. The lack of time and suitable space suggests that SMT are not seeing this work as a priority (Crawford and Johns, 2018).

It is evident from the course leaders' interviews and from my observations that the pastoral work is happening. Yet, there is no space or facilities within the college to conduct this work. This provides further evidence of this aspect of the course leaders' for CBHE everyday work being unseen. Course leaders understand that this aspect of their work is not recognised and forms part of the hidden curriculum.

The unseen and unrecognised nature of course leaders' pastoral work was further evidenced in their *Timetables*. The *Timetable* is a text which organises the academic year for the course leader in terms of their face-to-face work with students. In Chapter Five, I discussed how there are differences between HE and FE course leader *Timetables* in relation to the visibility of pastoral work. In Chapter Five, I established that pastoral work for FE course leaders was seen; it was visible in institutional texts, yet it was unseen and not in texts for course leaders for CBHE. I questioned this area of difference with two PALs.

The PALs explained that the pastoral work for FE course leaders is added onto their *Timetable* as it is a condition of government funding on Study Programmes[10] for those learners who are 16-19 years old (Education and Skills Funding Agency 2022). However, it is not a condition of funding for HE, therefore, course leaders for CBHE students are not given this time in their allocated annual hours. One PAL continued stating that it was all to do with the cost-income ratio. If the college is not funded for this time, it cannot be allocated to staff hours for the purposes of workload management and efficiency. Yet the impact of this decision is felt by the course leaders for CBHE. Not being allocated time on the *Timetable* does not mean that this work is not taking place. The reality of this funding-based decision is that the pastoral care takes place in the course leaders' non-contact time.

7:4:4 Pastoral work: accountability work

I was now aware of how pastoral work happened, and how its unrecognised status in terms of time and facilities has led to Eric

[10] Study programmes were introduced in 2013, to provide breadth and depth to young people's education, provide experience that would prepare young people for the workplace and future life and to ensure a focus on English and maths for those with lower prior attainment (DfE, 2024)

referring to pastoral work as covert or unseen. Yet there is another strand to pastoral work. This strand was brought to my attention through observations on course leaders engaging in Learner Level Tracking work with Sam (discussed in depth in Chapter Nine). Here I observed Sam questioning the course leaders for CBHE on an individual student level. The course leaders were required to know all about their students, any issues they were facing, and the course leaders were questioned about how they were addressing these issues. It is evident that through this conversation, Sam was asking the course leaders what pastoral work they were doing. This made me look at pastoral work from a different angle, and in relation to accountability drivers.

Moving beyond the local positioning of the course leaders, I followed up on this line of inquiry with members of the SMT. Figure 7 maps the social organisation of pastoral work in The College Group. In Figure 7, the bottom and right-hand side sections show how CBHE students have support needs which are addressed by course leaders carrying out their pastoral work. The complexities arise as I have moved beyond the local position of course leaders and into the extra local, a line of inquiry stemming from my observations of Learner Level Tracking meetings. Figure 7 maps the social organisation of pastoral work as beyond what is wholly visible from the course leaders' standpoint.

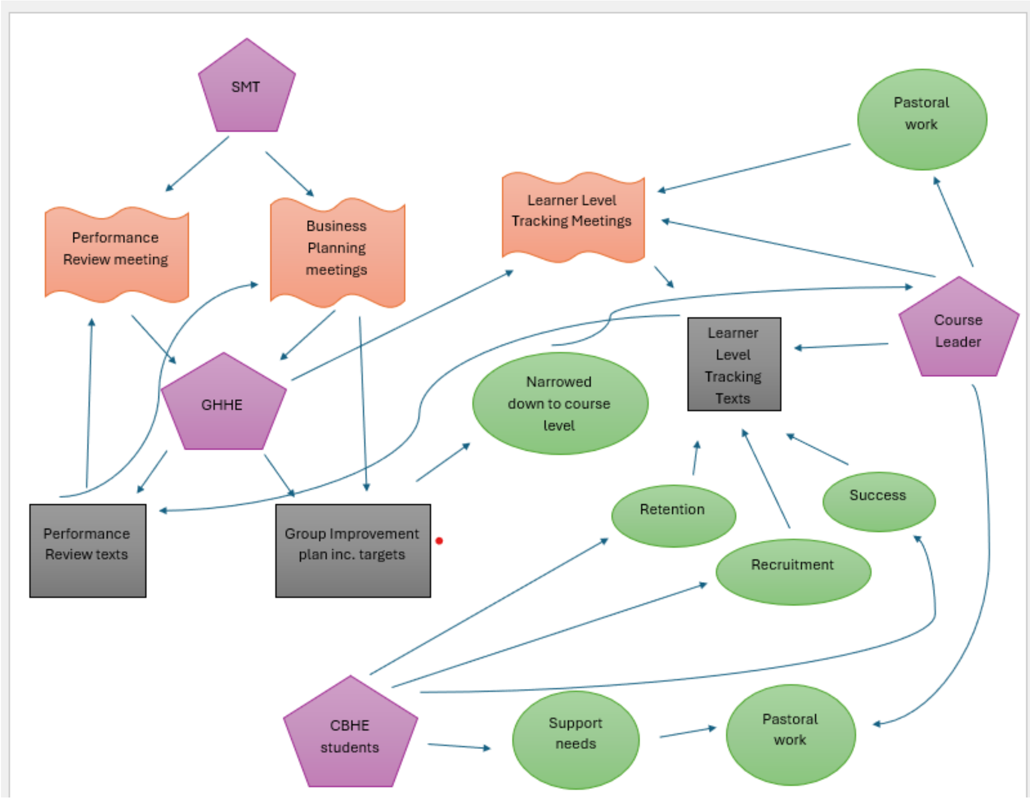


Figure 7: Mapping the social organisation of pastoral work in The College Group

My first inquiry led me to Sam as GHHE. Sam explained how course leaders for CBHE are responsible for the performance on their programme and should understand each student at an individual level.

> *"The course leader is responsible for their programme, and the performance of their programme, and the student experience on their programme, so they know a lot of detail about what's happening with each student, or they should know what's happening with the student, where a student is in terms of any*

issues that they might have going on…" (Sam, GHHE Interview, June 2021)

Instead of solely being a way of removing barriers to learning, pastoral work was also seen as a vehicle for course leaders to engage in the conversations at the Learner Level Tracking meetings. The Learner Level Tracking meetings have become a way of not only measuring the success of the learners but the success of the lecturers. A lack of information on what lecturers are doing and the outcome of their work leads to mistrust (Didau, 2020). Learner Level Tracking therefore has become a way of ensuring the effectiveness of the lecturers' work. It is a way of monitoring the course leaders for CBHE to ensure that they are meeting the requirements of their role (Gravell, 2016). It is a means by which management is able to ensure the performance of the course leader's course in terms of their accountabilities.

With Sam highlighting that the course leaders for CBHE are responsible for the performance of their programme, it appears that high levels of accountability are evident at all levels (Bleikie, 2018). This accountability will be discussed further in Chapter Nine in the section on Learner Level Tracking. I continued with my line of inquiry generated by Sam relating to the need to monitor students and how accountability for course performance led to the need for pastoral work. I questioned why there is the need for this level of monitoring on a student-by-student basis. The answer to this came from my observations of Business Planning (BP) and Performance Review (PR) meetings.

During their interviews, Diana (Strategic Lead for HE), Sam (GHHE) and Frankie (Assistant Principal) explained the Business Planning (BP) and

Performance Review (PR) process to me. The BP and PR process is a quarterly review that takes place in the form of a meeting with the Group Head of HE and the SMT, comprising of heads of finance, marketing, HR, campus principals and the Chief Executive of The College Group. The purpose of the meetings is to assess the financial stability of HE and monitor the quality measured by student voice, attendance, retention, achievement and of staffing. The GHHE presents information which comments on current cohorts, and projected numbers and finance data for the coming year. Through my observations of the SMT BP and PR meetings, it became clear that the drive for student level knowledge by Sam stems the accountabilities she has to SMT through her role as GHHE. Sam is also questioned by SMT on the same elements of data as course leaders for CBHE, but at an overall HE level, rather than course level. Through the questions Sam was asked of each of the members of the SMT, I observed the drive for accountability and information relating to student experience, attendance, retention and finance. Sam was questioned and required to justify the data presented. She was also required to have knowledge of the current student voice, retention and withdrawal data and reasons for each of these.

Through my interview with Sam and observations of BP and PR, I now understood how pastoral work was central to the accountability culture in The College Group. Working within an incorporated institution means that SMT and the governors must focus on the financial stability of the institution (Mather, Worrall and Siefert 2008). As a result, I saw that Sam is also targeted on the financial aspect of HE. In particular, Sam was targeted on the recruitment and drive to retain students once on the course. In her interview, Sam identified that one of the challenges faced in her role is that course leaders do not see the impact of not retaining learners on their courses and therefore are not always doing everything they can to retain learners. She argued that:

> "*I think they should have an understanding of the consequences of that [students withdrawing] Because, for people to be a bit more accountable and responsible, it makes sense for them to have a good, a really good understanding of exactly what's happened on their course and the consequences impact of that.*" (Sam, GHHE Interview, July 2021)

From her standpoint, Sam suggests that if course leaders understood more about the impact of student retention on The College Group's financial aspects, they would understand the need to retain the students. The focus on the financial impact of retention continues with an explanation of how pastoral work impacts the data on retention and success at that higher level. Sam stated that having a student withdraw from the course has real world impacts on the ability to successfully deliver HE in the College Group and provide job security.

> "*So, the impact of that is that we'll lose 60% of the fee. So maybe I'll start the year expecting this amount of money coming in, but we've lost it, so financially every student retained means we get more money. And I don't think, course leaders they see that as their role though, 'I'm just looking after the course and the student, and if they go, they go', you know, kinda, that can be frustrating from my point of view, not everyone's like that though. Some people are buying into that and that they I think they realise, but others don't see it, they're all, because there's so*

> *many other things going on I guess."* (Sam GHHE Interview, June 2021)

Course leaders' position is ambiguous within this drive for accountability. There is ambiguity between whether the course leaders' focus should be on students and the pedagogical role or one of financial accountability. Whilst *Job Descriptions* and *Contracts of Employment* for course leaders do not take account of financial implications, it is clear that this tension exists. Whilst Sam is focusing on her everyday work as GHHE and her accountability to SMT and the governors, her accountability is being filtered down to the course leaders. This level of accountability in turn shapes the pastoral work that the course leaders for CBHE carry out.

From my observations of BP and PR, with members of the SMT it became clear that the pastoral work conducted by the course leaders was a consequence of the wider accountability culture within The College Group; accountability which spans all levels of the organisation. Accountability is a way of ensuring financial stability for The College Group. This aspect of accountability will be explored further in Chapter Nine on accountability.

7:5 Chapter summary

This chapter set out to address the question, what are the actualities of the CBHE course leaders' everyday work? To do this I focused on the interviews with the course leaders and the duties they chose to talk about. This chapter started with an analysis of the marketing and recruitment work of course leaders for CBHE. Whilst this everyday work was deemed necessary for job security, there was no explicit detail on what their work should be in relation to marketing and recruitment in any institutional texts nor is there any time allocated for this work. However, this work was seen necessary, as the responsibility of recruiting sufficient students on their courses is within the remit of the everyday work of the course leaders (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020). Course leaders needing to carry out marketing and recruitment work is central to ensuring that HE courses remain financially viable and therefore maintain their job security.

The chapter continues with an examination of curriculum work. The ongoing process of curriculum review and development in line with the regulatory frameworks was highlighted as a key aspect of the course leaders' everyday work. Yet the process and following the regulatory texts can be challenging for the course leaders. Some feel that the support by the partner university and their own curriculum department is lacking. They argue that there is a lack of understanding of the process and paperwork, and the time needed to work through the processes. However, what is clear to see is whether a course leader is supported with time to complete the curriculum work needed for the periodic review process is driven by economics and whether there is sufficient money in the budget for that curriculum area to be able to allow the time needed whilst still being efficient. Thus, the result is an inconsistent approach with some course leaders having support and others not. Therefore, whether a course leader receives support or not for their curriculum work impacts on the time it takes to complete the work involved in the process.

Finally, this chapter addressed the course leaders’ everyday work with CBHE students. I found that despite differences in views relating to the work with students, course leaders for CBHE gain a great deal of job satisfaction from working with their students (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020). Yet CBHE students often face issues requiring support. This chapter focused on issues of emotional support and how this translated into confidence building and supporting students with mental health issues. With course leaders being the frontline support for their students, they become trusted (Crawford and Johns, 2018; Walsh, Larsen and Parry, 2009). These issues require course leaders to take on additional duties such as pastoral care to support these students and minimise barriers to learning (Turner, McKenzie and Stone, 2009; Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020). Yet from the work knowledge of course leaders and through my observations, I have seen that pastoral work is “covert” work without space or time allocated to it. However, by moving beyond the local position of the course leaders for CBHE into the extra local I began to reveal the social organisation and ruling relations behind the drive for pastoral work. I have seen the drive for course leaders for CBHE to engage in pastoral work with students within the drive for accountability and the financial stability of The College Group: evidence of NPM principles.

Overall, this chapter has discussed three themes arising from the interviews with course leaders for CBHE, PALs, the GHHE and members of SMT in addition to observational work. Three very different aspects of their everyday work but aspects which seem to be driven by the post-incorporation NPM discourses that colleges have been forced to adopt to remain financially secure. Working within an incorporated institution means that SMT and the governors must focus on the financial stability of the institution (Mather, Worrall and Siefert 2008). Course leaders need to take on additional duties to ensure that their work is seen as efficient and economically viable. Evidence of the accountability culture within the HE sector can be seen in the requirement for course leaders to report on several metrics, including retention, attendance and achievement (Chowdhry, 2014). Further discussion around the surveillance and accountability of course leaders will be discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Chapter Eight: Surveillance of the everyday work of course leaders: teaching and learning

8:1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to focus on surveillance of course leaders for college-based higher education (CBHE). It is the first of two chapters which addresses the sub-question, 'How do The College Group's surveillance and accountability processes impact the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education?'. The chapter takes a departure from the work knowledges of the course leaders for CBHE. Aligned with an institutional ethnographic approach, the themes in this chapter focus on the extra-local or second data level. To do so, I have drawn on the work knowledge of programme area leaders (PALs), the group head of higher education (GHHE) and members of senior management team (SMT), in addition to the data collected through observations. Where necessary, I have also drawn on information from course leaders' informal interviews. In institutional ethnography, the shift from the local position into the extra local allows the researcher to make visible the ways in which The College Group organises the course leaders' work. Smith (2005) argues that it is this social organisation that may not be seen from the position of the course leaders' local position. Each of these informants and methods of data collection have been essential for illuminating aspects related to the social organisation of the CBHE course leaders' everyday work.

In exploring the social organisation of the course leaders' everyday work, this chapter specifically focuses on the surveillance of teaching and learning through the lens of the *Observation Policy* and the text reader conversation that takes place between the text and observer for those who enact the policy. The chapter focuses on the three elements of surveillance of teaching and learning in The College Group: peer observations, a situation where colleagues are paired and conduct lesson observations on each other; unannounced walkthroughs, whereby members of the senior and middle management can come into a class and observe for a short time without any notice; and teaching and training reviews (TTRs) which are full lessons observations conducted by members of the middle and senior management teams. Consequentially, I argue that the system, designed around the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (2019), applicable to all levels of courses in the College Group, offers challenges to course leaders (and lecturers) for CBHE through its enactment of regulatory frameworks from Ofsted and the Department for Education: frameworks not designed to apply to higher education (HE).

8:2 Observations of teaching and learning

Since government agencies such as the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) arose in the aftermath of the Education Reform Act (1988), there has been an increase in accountability systems in further education (FE) colleges and the need for management to know what goes on in the classroom (Pierson, 1998). This has resulted in an increase in observations of teaching and learning. The increase in accountability, the need for staff to fulfill their role to the required standard, stems from the marketisation of FE colleges which forced them to compete for funding and students; thus, becoming high risk environments where failure has an impact on the financial stability of the college and the ability to recruit students (Donovan, 2019). Observations are seen as a surveillance and assessment tool which makes judgments on teaching and learning but also on lecturers' performance and competence (Wind, *et al.*, 2018). As such the observation of teaching and learning has become high stakes. The result of constantly surveilling of teachers' performance as a means to demonstrate value for tax-payer money and to try and improve outcomes for students, has become a normalised tool of surveillance and control in education today (O'Leary, 2020). It can also be seen as forming a key part of New Public Management (NPM) and prevalent accountability culture. This is particularly seen in The College Group.

The surveillance of teaching and learning in The College Group is conducted in line with The College Group's *Observation Policy*. This is a regulatory or 'boss' text which outlines and standardises practices across locations and time (Burstow, 2016) in The College Group. It was written and approved in September 2020 by the Head of Quality for The College Group with a renewal date for one year later in August 2021. I left The College Group two years after the introduction of this policy, and it has not been reviewed at this point. The *Observation Policy* was approved by the SMT. It states that it applies to all campuses of The College Group. The focus of the policy is on curriculum staff, which is a generic term for covering all staff involved in teaching and learning in The College Group, including PALs, course leaders, lecturers and assessors and is available to all staff via the internal intranet.

Figure 8 maps the social organisation of the surveillance of course leaders teaching and learning in The College Group. With the starting point of the external inspection regime by Ofsted, the surveillance of teaching and learning in The College Group and of course leaders for CBHE can be mapped into the everyday work of the course leader for CBHE.

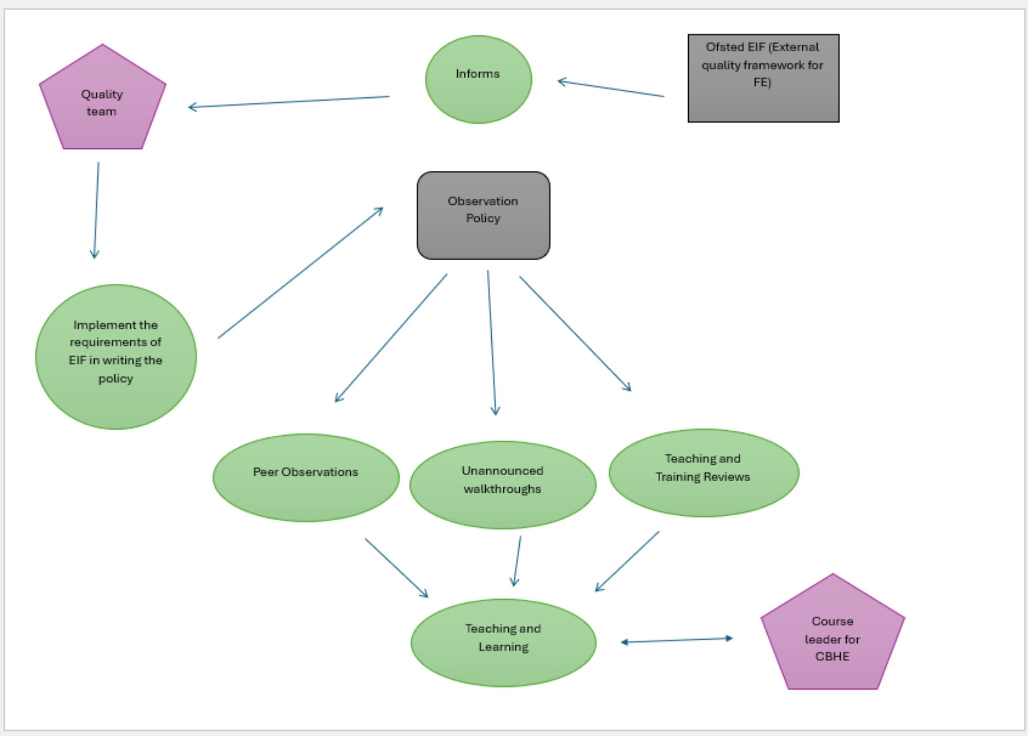


Figure 8: Mapping the social organisation of the surveillance of course leaders for college-based higher education

One of the objectives stated in the *Observation Policy* is to allow all curriculum staff to reflect on their teaching practice and to encourage, challenge and support them to improve their skills in teaching and learning to promote an "*outstanding learner experience*". This policy highlights the importance placed on teaching and learning in The College Group. However, the *Observation Policy* does not elaborate further on what this "*outstanding learner experience*" is. To understand what is meant by the phrase "*outstanding learner experience*", further texts were explored. Whilst I did not find texts offering a specific definition, *Appendix 1* of a *Curriculum Self-Assessment Report (SAR)* offered some insight. The *SAR* is a text which is produced by the PAL for their curriculum area. It is a report which offers a review and evaluation of the performance of the curriculum area against The College Group targets. The *SAR* also outlines The College Group's *Teaching and*

Training Strategy for 2020-2022 and includes the monitoring of outcome-based measures of success, raising learners' aspirations, improving the quality of teaching and training, tailored support for disadvantaged learners to close the gap and an increase in the use of digital technology (e.g. electronic systems such as iPads, online libraries and Microsoft applications, used to enhance teaching and learning).

The process of observing teaching and learning aims to identify any developmental needs for ‘curriculum staff’ (staff with teaching responsibilities). Any identified needs are to be addressed through a range of methods, including action plans, intensive support and development days. A further aim of conducting observations of teaching and learning is to identify and allow for the dissemination of good practice. According to the *Observation Policy*, sharing good practice can take place in department meetings, team meetings or at the annual staff development Learning Fair each February (*Observation Policy*). Through the surveillance of teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice, curriculum staff become one of the means by which The College Group can achieve its strategic aim in relation to the delivery of an ‘*outstanding learner experience’*, whereby students are retained, show satisfaction with their course and achieve their qualification (Perry and Davies, 2015).

The *Observation Policy* sets out the three main ways in The College Group in which teaching and learning is directly surveilled: peer observations, unannounced teaching and training walkthroughs and teaching and training reviews (TTRs). Each of these surveillance technologies are explored in detail in the following sections.

8:2:1 Peer observations

All curriculum staff are required to participate in non-graded peer observations. Peer observations form what is referred to as 'horizonal surveillance' (Page, 2017, Skerritt, 2020). Horizontal surveillance is where the surveillance is conducted by a staff member on the same level, e.g., lecturers or assessors. Curriculum staff must comply with this process, which happens twice per academic year within windows of time set by the Group Teaching and Training Development Manager (GTTDM). Records of the peer observations are to be sent to the GTTDM within 10 days of the completion of the peer observation.

The peer observation process is organised by The College Group's GTTDM who allocates staff into pairs for the observations. I noted in my reflective diary (January 2022) that the pairing of the staff for peer observations is not random. Instead, having knowledge of the staff profiles for the department in which I worked, I noted that staff are paired with one member being someone who performs well in walkthrough and TTRs with a member of staff who needs support with their practice. Whilst information on performance in walkthroughs and TTRs is not publicised by The College Group, it is often the topic of conversation, with staff sharing the details of their performance. The pairing of staff in this way can be seen as beneficial for the member of staff needing support, a perspective aligned with a Vygotskian theory of a more knowledgeable other (Shabani, 2016). Yet, it could also be argued that this method of pairing peers does not provide an equal platform for trust to be built. Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2002) put forward that there should be no hierarchy in peer observations, that peers should be equals for the process to be fully supportive and developmental for all. The unequal pairing might relate to the fact that some members of staff perceived the process as just "*another hoop to jump through*" (Researcher Diary notes, October 2020).

The issues of inequality are reflected in research literature on peer observations. O'Leary and Price (2017) argue that the pairing of partners for peer observation should be done by practitioners themselves as this allows pairings between trusted and valued colleagues, thus, resulting in a deeper level of engagement in the process. It could be argued that peer observations take place "*under the radar of audit-driven activity*" (O'Leary and Price, 2017, p.114). This is due to the data being generated in peer observation processes not being used by outside agencies such as Ofsted. The fact that the practitioners have no control over this process highlights that in the case of The College Group this may be seen as another form of surveillance.

Further issues arise with the organisation of the peer observation process, concerning the level(s) of courses each member of staff is delivering on. For example, one of the HE course leaders was paired with a lecturer for level 2 courses in a different curriculum area. As such, this calls into question the credibility of the observer in relation to their suitability and experience to be able to competently observe their peer and give supportive feedback (Cockburn, 2005). The knowledge, skills and behaviours taught at level 2 in a different subject differ greatly from those required at level 4 and above. For those members of curriculum staff, the peer observation process may feel futile. In my reflective diary (January 2022), I had made notes on conversations with curriculum staff detailing concerns over the process being a *'waste of time'*. Instead, the preference would be for pairings on similar levels and demographics of students. Grace (Course Leader, informal interview Researcher Diary notes, January 2022) argued this point stating that she predominantly teaches on HE therefore, *"I wish they would put me with a HE person, I would prefer to see someone teach the same level as me so I can learn from them"*. Given the perspective given by Grace in relation to their pairing of staff for peer reviews, a more considered approach to peer observations could be made. This approach could include pairings based on the level of courses being taught. An approach that would be more beneficial to all staff, not just needing extra support. One which considers the needs of all staff and the subjects and levels they teach on, especially for those course leaders who largely only teach on HE courses.

Once the peer observation process has been completed, the *Observation Policy*, states that, "*The GTTDM will co-ordinate the sharing of best practice from peer observations at Group level through the annual learning fair. Best practice at departmental level should be shared through team meetings*." In reality, the sharing of good practice is not something that, as an insider researcher, I have experienced in team meetings either over the course of my fieldwork or during my time as a member of the curriculum staff in The College Group. Team meetings instead tend to focus on where problems are and what needs to be done to address these. The issues which tend to surround attendance and retention are based on the current and predicted data. The sharing of good practice through the annual Learning Fair takes place in every February before the half term break. The GTTDM chooses individuals to share good practice, which means that the event is not organised on a voluntary basis. During my fieldwork and time working as a curriculum staff at The College Group, I have not experienced anyone sharing good practice for HE at the Learning Fair. This lack of visibility of HE good practice adds to the course leaders' sense of feeling on the periphery and not belonging, as their work remains ‘unseen’ as discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter Seven).

8:2:2 Unannounced teaching and training walkthroughs

According to the *Observation Policy*, unannounced teaching and training walkthroughs (referred to as walkthroughs) are mostly carried out by departmental managers, and this includes both HoDs and PALs. This form of observation has become more prevalent and a valuable form of surveillance to managers and quality teams within education (Page, 2018). As Page (2018, p. 387) argues, it is designed to ‘*catch out’* the teacher “*as the senior leader approaches the classroom to surveil, it is a matter of how quickly the teacher can see the observer coming and how quickly non-desirable practice can be changed*”. In addition, the *Observation Policy* states that the walkthrough observations are carried out by departmental managers, members of the senior management team, quality team, governors and external consultants: “*Some walkthroughs may be conducted jointly with either the Group Director of Quality, the GTTDM or external consultants for standardisation purposes.”*

The walkthrough process is simple, where those on the walkthrough observations team can walk into any classroom where teaching and training is taking place and observe what is going on. The walkthroughs are non-graded observations lasting around 15 to 20 minutes. Curriculum staff usually undergo these termly. The Group Head of Quality will choose a focus for the walkthroughs based on areas Ofsted included in their inspections. In other words, the focus for walkthroughs is aligned with expectations of what should be seen in an FE classroom from a DfE perspective and aligned with an Ofsted perspective (Ofsted, 2019). The criteria stated in the *Observation Policy* include:

> *"[Walkthroughs] will typically focus on investigation of good practice and areas for development related to cross Group themes that may include, but is not restricted to:*
>
> - *Sequencing and structuring of programmes;*
> - *Delivery of the tutorial programme. This includes consideration of Fundamental British Values and the Prevent Agenda*
> - *Learner behaviour*
> - *Planning and utilisation of additional learning support"*

The focus on the delivery of a tutorial programmes, in the list above is in line with expectations from the FE sector. This is a requirement of the 16-19 Study Programmes[4]. Further evidence of the FE influence on these areas relates to the expectation of embedding British Values and Prevent Duty into classroom practice. Unless the observer makes the relevant timetable checks before entering the classroom, it will not be known to them if the observed session is an HE or FE session, thus, resulting in a course leader (or lecturer) of a HE class being judged by the criteria set out in the *Observation Policy* which largely drives by FE sector needs and expectations (this is discussed further in this chapter in relation to TTR observations).

Alishba, a member of the departmental observation team, and PAL, explains the walkthroughs:

> "*So, learning walks [*walkthroughs*] are a system that we use in our college to check that students are making progress, and staff are delivering good quality education to those learners and to ensure that they are having a good learning experience. And it is literally short check, so it'd be a 10-minute walk through a lesson, see what's going on, see if any areas of good practice that can be shared or whether there's any areas that where we think of something doesn't seem right there, and it might raise some questions that you could have as a discussion.*" (Alishba, PAL Interview, September 2020)

In this quotation, Alishba discussed the notion of getting a feeling about what is going on in a classroom with her statement of *"something doesn't seem right there"*. Whilst this eventuality is not discussed in the *Observation Policy,* it led me to ask the question what the outcome of such a walkthrough would be. To understand this further I asked Margret what she would do if something did not 'feel right' in a walkthrough. Margret stated that it would depend on what the issue was:

> "*If it was something minor, it would result in it being discussed with the feedback; if it was something more concerning, this would be discussed, but the offer of further support being put in place via an action plan.*" (Margret, PAL Interview, June 21)

The action plan is a local practice which at least one curriculum department uses to set targets on the areas for improvement and is reviewed regularly. This is not a College Group-wide process, but one that has been developed by the PAL and HoD for the curriculum department Margret was in. The implementation of an action plan is separate from the *Observation Policy* procedures. The action plan outlines a set of targets designed to support the development of the lecturer's practice. It is used as a tool to hold academic staff in that department accountable for their teaching and learning work.

The *Observation Policy* states that the feedback on the walkthrough should be given within three days, focusing on good practice and areas for development. Feedback on the outcomes of the walkthroughs is also sent to the GTTDM. This feedback informs staff development programs, performance reviews, self-assessment and improvement plans, indicating the high-stake impact that the walkthrough can have on CBHE course leaders' work and career.

8:2:3 Teaching and training reviews (TTRs)

During my fieldwork, there was a change in policy for formal observations of teaching and training that are conducted by the PALs and HoDs. This change took place from the start of the academic year of 2020/21. The College Group changed its formal observation policy from one where lessons were graded to one where no grades were given, and a smaller notice period was instated. This change in policy falls in line with the current Ofsted perspective, where graded lesson observations ceased in 2014 (Ofsted, 2018). It aimed to provide a fairer system for curriculum staff. Where previously, staff could be observed in any one of the twenty-four hours of teaching they had in that week (although some staff teach more than twenty-four hours), with one week notice, to a system of an agreed session, with notice given on the Thursday prior the observation window week. Whilst this session is agreed, it is not solely at the discretion of the observee; any observation also needs to fit around the timetable of the observer. The new three-step system, known as the Teaching and Training Reviews (TTRs), allowed staff to choose the session they wanted to be observed, though the observer could come in at any point in that lesson rather than at the start of the session.

According to the *Observation Policy*, TTRs are a 60-minute session including a mix of professional discussion and an observation of teaching or training. Feedback on TTR should be given within two working days to allow self-reflection and professional discussion. Written feedback is provided on ProObserve, a web-based system purchased by The College Group for providing a record and feedback on the surveillance of teaching and training. The ProObserve system is designed to capture the details of the learning walkthroughs and the TTR observations. Once completed, the observer submits their report. The observee can then access this report via ProObserve. They are expected to read it and write their own action plan based on the feedback given. The action plan is written in a section on the report and is visible to the observer. Examples of actions and targets for the action plan might include developing questioning techniques or ensuring that all learners remain engaged. More serious actions might be in response to concerns over safeguarding in the classroom, health and safety or staff or student behavioural issues (Researcher Diary notes, January 2022). If significant areas of concern are identified and not addressed within four weeks, the staff member will be referred for ’intensive support’, typically lasting six weeks, after which a further TTR observation will take place (*Observation Policy*, 2020). The six-week process and support will continue until the staff member provides an acceptable observation.

Alishba, a member of the departmental observation team and PAL explained this new TTR process.

> "*The TTR process is a process for kind of doing a deep, deep dive within a subject area or a course, and the TTR is more, it's, it's meant to be a supportive way of developing a tutor's teaching in order to improve the learning experience for the learners. I think the TTR system is much better than previous observation systems in that it is more supportive and a little bit less threatening for, for staff."* (Alishba, PAL, Interview September 2020)

What is interesting here is the referral to a 'deep dive', an Ofsted phase, which is not mentioned in the *Observation Policy*. As discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2:8:1, a deep dive is an in-depth investigation into a curriculum area. Alishba states that this level of scrutiny is applied to the observation of the member of staff. In this quote, refers to the new process as being less threatening and more supportive. Whilst course leaders did not discuss this in their interviews, informal interviews (noted in my reflective diary, April 2021) found that the course leaders felt that the new system was better, as they had some influence over the lesson that was being observed and there was not a grade attached to the observation outcome (Challis-Manning and Thorpe, 2016).

The new system, which combines professional discussions with the observation of teaching and training, would start with a meeting between the observer and the observee. The focus of this meeting is around lesson planning with a focus on what is going on in the session and why the observee has chosen to take a particular pedagogical approach. It also allows the observer to question the observee on their knowledge and understanding of students, e.g. the students' starting points, their intended destinations after the course, how this particular lesson fits in with the module and the course as a whole and on whether the lesson meets the individual needs of all the students. This is followed by the lesson observation focusing on the implementation of the 'what' and 'why'. During the observation itself, observers also have discussions with learners to establish the impact of teaching and training over time and not just in the session being observed. Curriculum staff must provide group profiles (a text which outlines each learner in the class and their current attainment and needs), schemes of work (a planning text to show the sequencing and lessons), lesson plan (a detailed text showing the lesson being observed) and session resources to the observer before the observation. A class register must also be available on the day.

The TTR process requires the lecturer of that class to have an in-depth knowledge of all the class students. Informal interviews (Researcher Diary notes, November 2021) show that this can be especially challenging when a staff member only teaches the group for a couple of hours each week for a short time in blocked modules. Grace (informal interview noted in my Researcher Diary) explained that she would "*struggle*" if the observer could only come to the session she had with a new cohort of students. I asked Grace why this would be the case. Grace explained "*I don't know them very well or the course, it's not my curriculum area*". Grace went on to explain that she would need to "quickly get up to speed" otherwise she would "not pass" her TTR observation. Course leaders' *Timetables* show that they teach not only on the courses they are responsible for but also on other courses and modules. This often means that course leaders are required to have detailed knowledge of all courses they are teaching (not just their own) and an in-depth knowledge of each individual student, including their starting points, their intended destination after the course and everything in between. Further challenge arises when an observation takes place with a cohort of students the members of staff may have only met on one or two previous occasions. Therefore, the depth of knowledge required on the cohort and the course they are studying may not be at the level required in this process.

Andy, a member of the departmental observation team and PAL describes the initial meeting to me. In his interview, Andy talked about the need to have a good level of knowledge about the cohort of students, the course they are on and what the observer will expect to see in the lesson:

> "*The first part is meeting that member of staff and discussing their course, their knowledge of the course. Yes, we'll discuss their, their learners, if, if need be, their group profiles, what, what, what would I be expecting in the lesson. What, what is your understanding of your students? What's your understanding of the, the course, and what's the expectations of course, it's, it's, it is quite long winded."* (Andy, PAL Interview, November 2020)

After the initial discussion the observation takes place with a focus on the 'how' of teaching and training. The lesson observation usually lasts between 30-45 minutes. Followed by a second meeting between observer and observee for discussion on what was seen in the lesson. According to the *Observation Policy*, this takes place in the form of a discussion whereby the observer and observee reflect on the lesson and feedback.

Further in his interview when discussing the TTR, Andy states that when he is observing, his first focus is on the attendance in the class – how many of the students are in attendance? “*That's normally a sign of the, the teaching of the lessons, not, not up to expectations.”* (Andy, PAL Interview, November 2020). Here Andy talks about The College Group’s attendance expectations, and he takes the view that the number of students in attendance in the class is a sign of whether or not the teaching is in line with the students’ expectations. In this light, attendance is seen as a way of surveilling the lecturer and holding them to account: placing the responsibility for lack of attendance on them personally and their pedagogy, rather than looking at other potential reasons. Within an HE session, there may be several reasons why learners cannot attend any given session. The issues may be due to the nature of the students being from widening participation backgrounds, and the challenges they face in their home lives (Webber, 2015). Yet, Andy argues that the low attendance means that there is something wrong with the way the session is being taught and how the lecturer is engaging the students in the sessions. This deficit thinking contradicts the existing research on absenteeism which highlights that if a student is “silently withdrawing”, the issues tend to lie with the students and the potential barriers they experience in their lives (Bowen *et al*., 2005), rather than an issue with the teaching and learning within the control of the lecturer. Therefore, course leaders and lecturers being observed in a HE class may be disproportionally affected by the FE perspective on monitoring attendance.

The process in which the observers are trained to observe all lessons proves to be a complex issue for CBHE. There is no differentiation between an FE and HE lesson in how observers are trained to observe the session and engage in professional discussion. All staff carrying out the observations are trained to do so within the guidance of the current Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF) (2019). Yet the regulatory text, which is the *Observation Policy,* does not refer to Ofsted in any way, with the exception of the observation now being referred to as 'teaching and training' to align with Ofsted terminology. However, what is interesting is that the procedures of the TTR process directly echoes that of the EIF. In other words, the observation team uses the processes from the EIF without the specific language or acknowledgement.

Analysis of the *Observation Policy* has revealed that the first stage of the TTR process is the initial pre-observation discussion. This forms the part of the 'intent', where the focus is on how the curriculum has been planned and sequenced to allow all learners to achieve (Ofsted, 2019). The second aspect of the TTR process is observing the lesson, the 'implementation' with a focus on teacher subject knowledge and the delivery of that knowledge in a way which is inclusive of all learners, with a focus on learners being able to recall material previously learned and to show immediate progress. The final stage of the TTR process is a further professional discussion which focuses on the 'impact' of the session and teaching and learning. The *Observation Policy* does not refer specifically to the discourses used by Ofsted. Perhaps this is to appear like a more inclusive policy. Yet its intentions in following the current EIF are clear through the following of the Ofsted inspection processes for teaching and learning, regardless of whether the lesson being observed is a FE or HE lesson.

Issues around the *Observation Policy* following the guidance set out in the Ofsted framework raises an interesting question regarding the text. Within a text reader conversation, the text offers a set of actions to guide the observation team on how to conduct the observations. Yet texts are not always read and actioned as intended by the author(s) (Smith, 2005). Existing knowledge and an understanding of the process and previous observation processes may result in texts being interpreted in different ways. However, the criteria on which to observe and judge curriculum staff is absent from this text. Thus, leaving the judgement open to interpretation within the text reader conversation.

Margret, a member of the departmental observation team and PAL offers an insight into how the observation team is guided in carrying out observations and how judgments are made:

> "*And we are being trained in-house, I've been trained by Ofsted consultants, do double walkthroughs with Ofsted consultants to check what we're doing. And we've also got access to coaching and mentors through FE further matters… me and the Assistant Principal went on the FE middle managers programme last year, so we went through that training package over the year. And within that, that's about being a manager in FE, so that will also link to your walkthroughs, as well as with the things that you do.*" (Margret, PAL Interview, January 2022)

When asked if this was the same training or process for all levels of course, Margret confirmed that it was: *"it's across the board, no matter what level"*. (Margret, PAL, Interview, January 2022)

Despite the training and Ofsted focus, not all observers applied the criteria so rigidly. Alishba argued that for an FE lesson, she certainly takes an Ofsted focus to her observation, but this differs when focusing on HE. Alishba's inconsistent approach to criteria highlights the permissive interpretations that the text-reader conversation affords (Smith, 2005). In other words, Alishba draws on her knowledge of teaching and learning in HE, and she interprets the *Observation Policy* in light of her knowledge and experience.

> *"[In] an observation of an FE lesson, you're looking very much at it from an Ofsted perspective. So you're looking at it with in terms of your curriculum intent to look at it in terms of the progress or learners taking in, making it within a lesson in HE that progress might not be evident within one lesson, because the thinking at a much deeper level, which can take a lot longer. And also the, the focus on HE is much more about giving the learner the skills to do things for themselves. So, it's less teacher led*." (Alishba, PAL Interview September 2020)

The challenge for those who teach HE and who are observed in a HE class is that the expectations for FE learners are different. Alishba expressed an understanding of the challenges faced by HE lecturers within the observation process in the college. Alishba continued to say:

> *"I think the difficulty with learning walks [walkthroughs] and TTRs is if you haven't got experience of HE, you have a tendency to look at HE with the same head as that you're looking at FE*

learners, and the experience of HE learners is very different." (Alishba, PAL Interview, September 2020)

Alishba explained that those who do not have experience in teaching HE may not be able to observe the lesson in an appropriate way for HE classes. She emphasised that teaching HE is different to teaching FE, so those who do not have experience of teaching HE, will not understand the nuanced pedagogy for HE. She argues that: *"I think the learning walks and TTR don't necessarily match to the HE expectations"* (Alishba, PAL Interview, September 2020).

Whilst Alishba did not elaborate further on these differences, the literature can help explain what she is referring to. Lea and Simmons (2012) argue that there is a distinct difference in knowledge between FE and HE levels. For FE levels, knowledge is about 'what is' with a focus of students learning about what is in the textbooks. However, at HE level, this focus on knowledge shifts to 'what might be'. Here the focus is on understanding and contesting existing knowledge and taken for granted assumptions. I argue that it is this difference of how knowledge is viewed that leads to the pedagogical differences that can be seen between what goes on in an FE and HE classroom. Therefore, the pedagogical focus in HE will shift from the teacher imparting knowledge to the teacher facilitating learning and discussion. This leads to questions about the suitability of the observer for HE lessons. Consideration should be taken to ensure the observer has the knowledge and experience (Cockburn, 2005) of teaching HE to make sure that a fair judgement and feedback is given.

Issues surrounding the skills and knowledge of the observer for CBHE were also raised in Diana's interview. Diana, a member of SMT, recalls having to deal with a complaint about an observation of a member of curriculum staff delivering HE by an observer without a background in HE teaching. She reflects on the challenges faced by those who teach HE in an FE environment when the observation process is geared towards the FE processes and learners.

> *"… an observer who has an FE background has gone in and observed in HE session and then had a go or criticised in the feedback, the fact that the lecturer hadn't provided the group with calculators or with pens or something like… some resource. I remember saying that that is not, you do not do that in HE, might do that with a level one group, you know, you know, because that they need a lot of support, but with HE groups, the expectation is, they're responsible for their own learning really. If you don't have experience of HE, you don't understand that process, so it looks like, what's going on, they're all doing their own work."* (Diana, SMT Interview, March 2021)

A similar view on the differences in HE teaching, learning and the pedagogical approaches was echoed by Sam:

> *"…teaching and learning to a proper standard higher education students are very different to level 3 students in terms of the skills that we should be drawing out at level four, there is going to be a lot more support, but progressively as we go through five and six, they should become more autonomous, they should be analytical critical thinking, those type of skills as opposed to a*

spoon fed and being told everything. Yeah, looking a teaching and learning to be quite inspirational, really, in terms of the subject knowledge and the demonstration from the tutor and the skill set to be able to encourage and motivate students to learning more. No, it's a difficult one when you, you put a grade because you can't measure teaching and learning against the same kind of criteria at level 6... you've got to have that understanding of higher education, I think, to observe higher education, otherwise you would get caught up in ticking boxes, doesn't meet certain criteria for Ofsted." (Sam, GHHE Interview, August 2021)

It appears that those teaching HE courses are facing additional challenges of the FE model of observations enacted by The College Group. Whilst some members of the observation team and SMT are aware of these challenges faced by HE course leaders and lecturers, this is not consistent, as some members of the observations team stick rigidly to the Ofsted criteria in which they have been trained for. Furthermore, there is no further training for the observation team on the differences in HE classes they may observe. It remains that the current EIF (2019) is the standard by which the HE teams are observed by. In the same vein as the TTR, the observation processes for peer observation and walkthroughs too have issues relating to the different pedagogies and practices between HE and FE which directly impact the course leaders for CBHE, and the judgements made on them in the surveillance of teaching and learning.

8:4 Chapter summary

This chapter set out to answer the question, 'How do The College Group's surveillance and accountability processes impact the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education?'. To do this, I focused on talking to course leaders in informal interviews, PALs, the GHHE and members of SMT, in addition to seeking out texts. Surveillance in FE is inherent in an institution aligned with the neoliberal management style of NPM. Post incorporation, FE colleges found themselves in a new position whereby they were subjected to the ebbs and flows of a market. In order to remain competitive, the three Es -efficiency, effectiveness and economy - have prevailed as the dominant discourse (Randle and Brady, 1987). Alongside NPM, FE colleges have to work with government agencies such as Ofsted whose influence has far-reaching implications for the survival of the FE colleges (Coffield, 2017). As such the need to monitor staff performance and business needs against these agendas has become essential for the survival of FE colleges in a saturated market where competition for students is fierce.

In The College Group, there are several ways course leaders for CBHE are surveilled in relation to teaching and learning. In this chapter, I have focused on the enactment of the *Observation Policy* through the text reader conversation. What emerges here is that the *Observation Policy* has clear guidelines on how to conduct a TTR observation. The TTR observations are grounded in the Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (2019). For courses that fall under the remit of the Ofsted inspection framework, this is not problematic as the *Observation Policy* echoes the expectations from Ofsted.

However, for those prescribed HE courses that are not part of the Ofsted inspection regime, like the ones delivered in The College Group (except for initial teacher education), this can present issues for both the observer and observee. For the observer, they are being asked to observe teaching and learning by criteria that do not necessarily match what is expected in a HE classroom in terms of content and pedagogical approach. I have shown that the text-reader conversation allows permissiveness based on experience and through this, not all observers follow the policy equally. Further to this, I have raised the issue of the observer, who may not have any experience in teaching HE, or in some cases, may not even have qualifications at the level they are observing, as a university degree is not a requirement of teaching in an FE college (DfE, 2023). Therefore, the interpretation of the policy based on their text-reader conversation may differ. I have also called into question the credibility and suitability of the observer when observing HE lessons (Cockburn, 2005). Yet, it is clear from evidence provided in this chapter that some observers such as Alishba, who have experience of teaching HE courses, take a more nuanced and flexible approach to observing teaching and learning in HE context. For the course leaders for CBHE and those teaching on HE, the value of this process as a tool for development is limited. Yet the focus on using observations of teaching and learning as a surveillance and accountability measure is clear. Where observers are not familiar with the pedagogies of HE, the competency of the HE lecturer or course leader will be called into question. However, it is not the drive for accountability per se that is the issue here, but the issues surrounding the surveillance of teaching and learning course leaders for CBHE in The College Group and how these are aligned to the observation process, for observing their teaching in HE has been designed and implemented within a context of FE. The focus on the question of surveillance and accountability continues in Chapter Nine. In the following chapter, the focus moves away from the surveillance of teaching and learning to the monitoring of the course leaders' performance through accountability measures such as Learner Level tracking meetings and student voice.

Chapter Nine: Accountabilities and the everyday work of course leaders: student tracking and student voice

9:1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to focus on the accountability of course leaders for college-based higher education (CBHE). This chapter is the second of two which focuses on the question: How do The College Group's surveillance and accountability processes impact the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education? Whilst Chapter Eight focused on the surveillance of teaching and learning, this chapter takes a focus on the elements of the course leader for CBHE’s work outside of teaching and learning for which the course leader is held accountable. In particular, this chapter focuses on two aspects of the course leader for CBHE’s accountabilities: Learner Level Tracking and student voice. The first aspect that I have focused on is Learner Level Tracking. This is the process in which the course leader is held accountable for each learner on their course and the subsequent success or failure of their course against The College Group targets. Here I focus on the work knowledge and observations of course leaders, senior management meetings such as business planning (BP) and performance review (PR), work knowledges of programme area leaders (PALs), Sam as the Group Head of Higher Education (GHHE) and texts such as the Learner Level Tracking documents. The second theme focuses on student voice which will be explored through learner surveys, student representative forums and the external National Student Survey (NSS). In a similar vein to Chapter Eight, I move beyond the standpoint and the local level of course leaders for CBHE to illuminate the social organisation which governs their everyday work. The social organisation of work in relation to the accountabilities of course leaders for CBHE, discussed in this chapter, can be seen in Figure 9. The starting point for this map is with SMT. Yet I draw attention to the position of the GHHE. It is this role that mediates between SMT and the course leaders for CBHE in both directions in the planning for HE at strategic level and the reviewing of performance at course level.

9:2 Learner Level Tracking

Learner Level Tracking (initially introduced in Chapter Seven) is a system set up by Sam, the GHHE, to monitor HE students at an individual level. This allows Sam to report information to SMT and make predictions about cohorts in relation to finance and outcomes. This information is of particular importance when it comes to reporting during the BP and PR meetings (as can be seen in Figure 9). The Learner Level Tracking meetings take two forms. One monthly meeting between Sam, the GHHE and the course leader and a second meeting to include the programme area leader (PAL) for the particular higher education (HE) course's curriculum area. The Learner Level Tracking meetings were introduced initially when Sam was the PAL for HE. This meeting was between her and the course leaders. The second meeting was introduced when Sam became the GHHE.

The first form of meeting was solely between the GHHE and the individual course leader. Learner Level Tracking meetings were added to the individual course leaders' calendars. The HE administrator added these in bulk for a regular monthly meeting. The time and place were based on the availability (non-teaching time) of the course leader and the availability of Sam. The place of the meeting depended on which site within The College Group Sam was based on that day. Whilst for the most part, Sam aimed to have these meetings in person with the course leaders, this was not always possible. In those instances, and during the global Covid-19 pandemic all meetings were held on Microsoft Teams. According to Sam, Learner Level Tracking meetings were introduced several years ago. It is a monthly meeting which lasts around 30 minutes depending on how many courses the course leader is responsible for and "*how many things have gone wrong*". (Sam, GHHE Interview, June 2021). Whilst the response by Sam can been seen as humorous, this could be true, as the main focus of the Learner Level Tracking meetings is indeed focused on what has gone wrong and discussing the actions taken by the course leaders for CBHE to mitigate any potential issues in meeting The College Group targets (discussed in the paragraphs below). As with other forms of monitoring within The College Group, such as observations of teaching and learning, the Learner Level Tracking is designed to pick up on ongoing issues and to discuss how these can be addressed.

In her interview, Rebekah talked about the Learner Level Tracking meeting: *"We have meetings every few weeks to go through numbers and figures, things like induction processes marketing and how the course runs. Any student issues transfers, withdrawals, feedback"* (Rebekah, Course Leader Interview, June 2020). Similarly to Rebekah, Sam describes the Learner Level Tracking meeting as a part of a regular process to discuss student performance:

> *"I sit with each course leader and go through student by student…The course leader is responsible for their programme, and the performance of their programme, and the student experience on their programme, so they know a lot of detail about what's happening with each student, or they should know what's happening with the student, where a student is in terms of any issues that they might have going on, which could help*

explain poor attendance. They might also have a greater understanding of forecast grades and where they [students] are with assignments, and whether or not they're going to be achieving as we move towards the end of the year. So, it's an opportunity for us to monitor that monthly, to have a really good idea of how our performance is going to be at the end of the year. Out of that, if there is any red flags that come up where performance, for example, achievement looks like it's going to be below the target or the previous year's performance, we need to put some actions in place, and that will be again logged on that level tracker." (Sam, GHHE Interview, June 2021)

A key aspect of this meeting relates to monitoring the attendance of the students. This is something which Eric, a course leader, felt was not necessary for HE learners and was perhaps a result of a prevailing culture in the FE institution:

*"So, we're audited, obviously on attendance which I think is a misnomer in some cases... we have a higher expectation of our HE learners' attendance in FE than they do in HE. So there's a slight disparity, for example, I think we have got something like 98% of the attendance which I think, if you think about most of our HE learners, it's quite high, but they're working, a lot of them got family, you know, it's not like a 16 to 18 year old and generally don't have the same commitment, generally." (*Eric, Course Leader Interview, June 2021)

Central to these meetings are data spreadsheets created on Microsoft Excel (see below and Appendix 15).

Course Code	Course Title	se Year	Programme Leader	Learner Ref	Learner Forename	Learner Surname	Start Date	End Date	Status on Reporting Ce...	Predicted to be Retain...	Predicted to be timely	Predicted to be achiev...	Predicted Grade	Ontrack to achieve	Issues	Actions	Impact of Actions
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	P				
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Operation. Working with IV. Struggling to make contact.		
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	P				
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Confidence - worried about work. Unable to do the workload. Wants to withdraw.		
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	P				
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Attendance. Crisis team involved. Might be retention issue due to loan.		
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	P				
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	P		Mother in law ill.		
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	P				
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	P		Health concerns. Monitor.		
CC401-UA02	FdA Early Years (Sector Endorsed)	Year 1	[redacted]	[illegible]			[illegible]	[illegible]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	P				

These texts standardise work activity in these meetings regardless of time or location. The information contained within them is all related to the HE courses across the college, from individual student level to course level, campus level and overall HE in The College Group level.

The data spreadsheets are not available to course leaders, other than when Sam is completing them during the Learner Level Tracking meetings. All texts relating to the Learner Level Tracking meetings are stored securely on a password protected OneDrive belonging to Sam. It could be argued that these texts form part of the social organisation of HE in The College Group with the respect that they form accountability circuits. Institutional accountability circuit is a term used by Smith and Turner (2014) to describe how texts form sequences of text – action. It is this action which results from the text-reader conversation which brings front line work into alignment with institutional strategic goals (Griffith and Smith, 2014). These texts can be mapped into a sequence of action which can be seen in Figure 9.

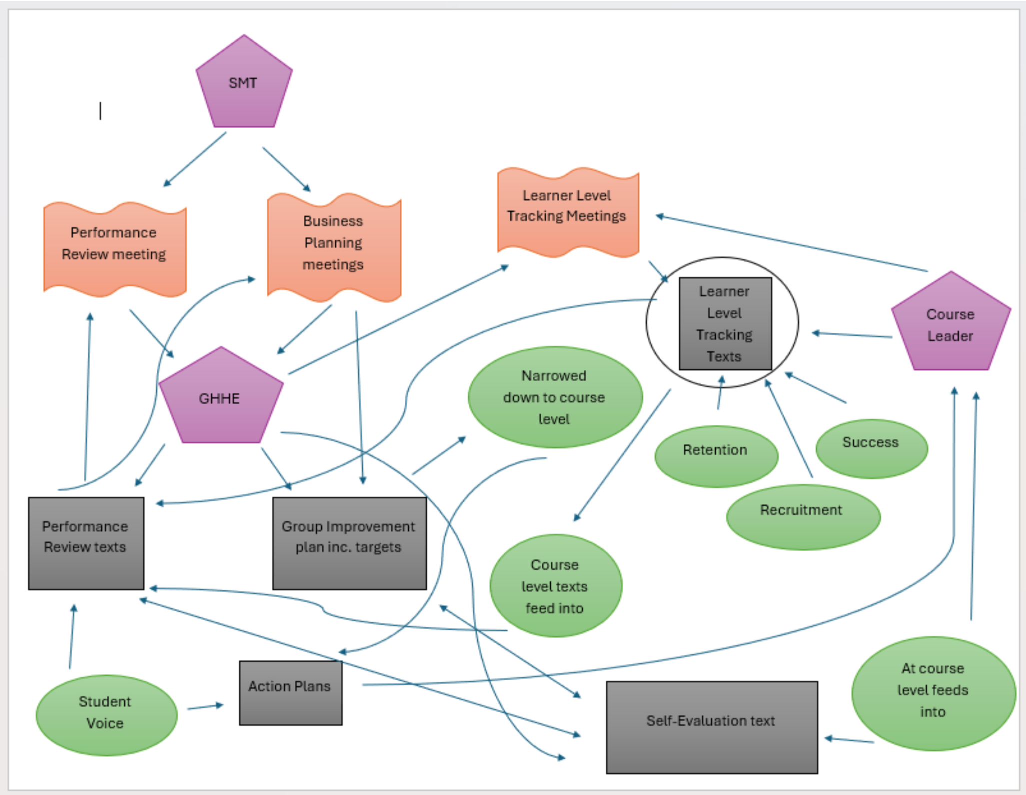


Figure 9: Mapping of the social organisation of the accountabilities of course leaders for CBHE's everyday work

Figure 9 maps the complex process of accountability of course leaders. It is difficult to identify a starting point as this process forms an institutional circuit. An institutional circuit is whereby those involved are tied into traceable sequences of institutional processes (Griffiths and Smith, 2014). For the purpose of analysing the processes, I have chosen to start with the texts in the Learner Level Tracking meeting and follows through to BP meetings, performance review meetings, each Learner Level Tracking text feeds into Sam's PR text (Appendix 15). This text offers a template and details of the elements of the performance of HE that Sam must account for at the PR meeting. In the PR template text, it is clear to see how the individual Learner Level Tracking texts are needed in section 9 of the template: risk management. Section 9 is where Sam must account for anything which will jeopardise her ability to meet the targets she has been given for HE course performance. Therefore, the Learner Level Tracking texts provide vital information for Sam to judge the risks posed to not meeting her targets.

When asked about how she felt the course leaders responded to the introduction of these meetings, Sam argued that at first there was "*a bit of a hesitation*". She felt that this hesitation was due to course leaders initially feeling that the Learner Level Tracking meeting was yet another form of checking up on them. She talks about course leaders being reluctant to share information or even hide information from her, as they were unsure how the data would be used. Yet, now she feels that the course leaders understand the purpose of the Learner Level Tracking meetings as it helps to "*forecast where we are all year*". She believes that course leaders are now more open and honest with the information they share about what is going on with their students and the courses they are responsible for. She stated:

> "*I think there was a high percentage of courses where they were pretty accurate all the way through, which again allows us to early intervention, if something goes wrong, or have a good understanding of where we're gonna be."* (Sam, GHHE, Interview, August 2021)

This aspect of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE, for which they are accountable, is central to supporting Sam in her work and her accountability to higher management.

I had the opportunity to observe two Learner Level Tracking meetings. The following comments have been taken from the observations of Grace and of Eric's Learner Level Tracking meetings that I carried out (Observations, Grace Course Leader, April 2021; Observation, Eric, Course Leader, April 2021) and from my researcher diary written at the time of the observations (Researcher Diary notes, April 2021). Both meetings took place in the GHHE's office, and they started in the same way, with Sam (GHHE) asking how they were doing and how 'things' were going. This prompted Sam to activate the data spreadsheet texts (Appendix 16). Asking how things were going, at the start of the meeting was a prompt for the course leader to talk about their courses and the students on them. Both Eric and Grace responded similarly, they understood that by 'things' Sam was asking how they were in general terms of how they were managing in their role and in specific terms how their courses are progressing. As the course leaders were responding to this question, Sam opened the course data tables on her computer. These take the form of spreadsheets. The spreadsheets were organised by course and for each course and cohort, there is a list of students' names and colour codes next to them – red, amber and green (anonymised version in Appendix 16). On the other spreadsheet, courses were listed in tables, showing in year data based on retention, with three-year trend data. The GHHE also had the attendance data for each cohort. The information in these tables feeds into the monitoring HE at the BP and PR meetings. I could not access any texts which outlined the BP process, but I could access the template for the PR process (Appendix 16). The template for the PR process is broken down into sections. The sections listed are:

- Actions (from previous meeting)
- Recent successes and new opportunities
- Financial strength
- Outstanding student experience

- Great place to work
- Green initiatives
- Local college for local people
- Capital
- Risk management
- Any other business

For each section, Sam is to provide details on how she is addressing each agenda item. What is clear from analysing these sections is that the focus is for Sam to show the performance of higher education in The College Group, with a focus on the financial health and on student success. I had the opportunity to observe both BP and PR meetings.

After the Learner Level Tracking meeting I asked Eric about the coding of learners in the data sheet. He said that ‘green’ meant that they were on track and would achieve, ‘amber’ indicated concerns but that the student was still likely to achieve, and ‘red’ meant that the learner had either left the course work, were likely to either leave, or not complete the course.

Sam went through each data table for each cohort of students that the course leader was responsible for. She asked about attendance and what the course leader was doing to address any issues of low attendance. She asked about the submission of work by the students and the progress being made. She asked about any concerns the course leader had about the students. When the course leader expressed any concerns, Sam followed up with questions on what was being done by the course leader to try and address the issues. I noted the following from the observation of Eric’s meeting:

"Eric responded that most were OK and on track, but that he had concerns about one learner. The GHHE asked questions regarding the nature of the concerns. Eric gave a detailed account of the issues faced and the actions he had taken to try and support the student. These actions included telephone calls, letters being sent out, meetings and tutorials being held. The GHHE then asked if the student was likely to remain on programme and achieve. Eric said that he was fairly confident that the learner was back on track and would stay and complete the course. However, he also said to the GHHE to code the student amber 'just in case'". (Learner Level Tracking Observation of Eric, Course Leader, April 2021)

This was also exemplified in the observation of Grace's Learner Level Tracking meeting. I noted the following:

"On this spreadsheet, there were two students who were already red flagged, meaning they are at risk of not passing, and one amber. The rest of the cohort green. Sam asked the same question about commenting on the group. For the green learners, Grace just responded, no issues. For the red and amber learners, there was a more in-depth discussion. Grace explained for each one what she was doing to keep them on track. For example, Grace discussed that letters had been sent out about attendance for one learner. She discussed in detail another learner's personal life and what she was doing to support that learner to remain on track with her studies. This included regular phone calls, signposting the learner to Teams [The College Group's virtual learning environment] to keep up to

> *date with classroom-based learning. Grace even discussed offering tutorials to the learner on a 1:1 basis should she need them."* (Learner Level Tracking Observation of Grace Course Leader, April 2021)

In both cases, Sam made notes on her spreadsheets of the actions the course leader took to support the student attending and remaining on the course. Following the discussions about each student, Sam turned them to the data at cohort level and discussed how this compared against targets and data from previous years. Discussions took place between Sam and the course leaders on where that data for the current cohort was in relation to previous years. Where the cohort's data was lower than expected in relation to attendance, retention and progression, discussions were made about how the course leader could try and ensure that the data did not fall below expectations in relation to these targets. The following extract from my observation with Grace highlights the focus on this aspect:

> *"After each learner in that cohort had been discussed, the focus, once more, moved onto the data tables. She [Sam] explained to Grace that if the two red learners did not pass, it would take her course below the target expected for her courses in terms of achievement. She explained that if they remained on programme but did not pass, it would not have a financial impact. However, if they left, each learner would not continue to pay their fees and that would have an impact on the financial forecast for HE. The emphasis was on even if learners did not achieve, they needed to not withdraw."* (Learner Level Tracking Observation of Grace, Course Leader, April 2021)

It is evident that the Learner Level Tracking process places additional scrutiny and accountability on course leaders for HE in The College Group face. Course leaders must know about their students' personal lives and assess how it can affect their studies as regards their ability to progress or remain on the course (as discussed in Chapter Seven). This information is essential, so that the course leader for CBHE can explain to Sam, in the Learner Level Tracking meeting, the situation with the student and what they are doing to prevent the student from withdrawing. The impact of losing a student has a financial implication and with margins being so small in The College Group, this can impact course leaders in terms of whether their course will continue to run in future years and ultimately whether there will still be a job for them. Such a process makes course leaders accountable to Sam as GHHE for ensuring that students are performing in their academic studies and remain on the course.

The information gained in the Learner Level Tracking meetings and information from the BP and PR meetings feeds into an annual *Self Evaluation Document (SED*).

> *"…we've got a HE SED, sort of self-evaluation document from the previous year, which I put together, evaluate performance regard, regarding a range of factors from enrollment, retention, attendance, grades, student voice, destinations, that kind of thing… we can put an action plan in place to address any concerns that we've got"* (Sam, GHHE, Interview, June 2021).

The SED is reviewed by SMT and The College Group's governing body, and any matters arising are fed into a *Group Improvement Plan* for Sam to address. This improvement plan is reviewed by Sam, and anything that needs to be addressed at course level will be passed on to the course leaders. This passing on information is a verbal exchange rather than being recorded in text.

As a result of the changes in Sam's role to that of the GHHE, there are also changes in how she manages the day-to-day data as regards HE improvements. She is now required to have an oversight at a more strategic level, rather than a day-to-day level, with a focus on course performance in relation to finances, student success and achievement, and student voice as a whole, and not the everyday issues with individual students that arise. Whilst Sam still conducts the Learner Level Tracking meetings, the result of this change meant that it is the curriculum PAL who are now responsible for the operational aspects of the HE courses under their curriculum area and the GHHE was to take a more strategic overview. However, the reality of this is somewhat different, with Sam continuing to monitor HE across The College Group at an operational level due to the PALs not addressing this aspect (discussed earlier in this section). The PAL meetings were added to their calendar by the HE administrator to reflect the time that all parties were available. However, it must be noted that these meetings did not always take place. I spoke to both course leaders and PALs about this (Researcher diary notes, January 2022). When I asked course leaders about this, their view was that the PAL did not see the meetings as a priority and often made other arrangements which meant they were not able to attend. PALs commented that they were too busy. I specifically asked Rebekah about this. On this day, she was waiting to start the Learner Level Tracking meeting with the PAL and GHHE, it reached the point when the meeting was due to start 10 minutes earlier and the PAL had not yet arrived. Rebekah responded that "*the PAL never turns up, stating that she (the PAL) was not interested in HE, so she never made* *the time to attend"* (Rebekah, Course Leader Informal Interview, January 2022). The PAL did not turn up at all for this meeting, nor did she send apologies in advance. Whilst the meeting went ahead without the PAL, so Sam could be updated on the progress of the students on the course, the aim of integrating the PALs into these meetings in their curriculum area was not achieved. This lack of time and prioritisation from the PALs to attend HE related meetings with the course leader may be one of the contributing factors to the HE course leaders' feelings of being on the periphery and their lack of belonging (as discussed in Chapter Six).

9:3 Student voice

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed how the changes in management approach to NPM have led to an increased marketisation of FE and HE. In this chapter and Chapter Eight, I have explored how the increased marketisation has led to a greater increase in the surveillance of and accountability for teaching staff, including course leaders. In the context of marketisation, students have been positioned as consumers of education with a need to have a stronger voice and say in how their education is organised (Nixon, Scullion and Hearn, 2018; Cook-Sather, 2006).

Student voice activities can take many forms within an institution. These can be questionnaires/ surveys, having student representative in forums and governance meetings and national surveys such as the NSS (Little and Williams, 2010). Enabling student voice in The College Group takes several different formats. These formats include a bi-annual learner survey, Principal's student forums where student representatives are invited to discuss the courses and the experiences of their cohort, and through the GHHE coming into classes bi-annually to talk to cohorts. Through Waterside University, HE students also complete module evaluations forms and representatives can either attend or submit feedback for course board meetings and the annual Quality Enhancement Visit (QEV). In addition, some HE students are eligible for the annual National Student Survey (NSS). The way the qualifications are structured in The College Group (two-year foundation degree and one year top-up) means that those eligible for the NSS are students in year 2 of their foundation degree, rather than final year undergraduate students. The results of these methods of eliciting student voice impact on the course leaders through The College Group's drive for accountability.

Along with monitoring teaching and learning and Learner Level Tracking, student voice can be identified as one of many ways in which the surveillance of course leaders take place (Page, 2017; Skerritt, 2022). Yet often, student voice is presented in the guise of student empowerment in line with requirements by QAA (QAA, 2018). Through the elicitation of student voice, course leaders are monitored in line with what Page (2017) refers to as vertical surveillance. Whilst observations of teaching and learning through TTRs and walkthrough provide a top-down form of surveillance, student voice activities are seen as a bottom-up form of surveillance (Nelson and Charteris, 2020). It allows students to monitor and report on the course leaders, holding them accountable for their work.

A great deal of importance is placed on student voice in The College Group. As discussed in the previous section on Learner Level Tracking, each course leader is accountable for the results of student voice activities and responsible for making the necessary changes to address any issues where possible. Alishba explained the student voice protocols to me:

> "*So, the student voice is also done through learner surveys, and feedback from group discussion. So, we will invite student reps to meetings to discuss their feelings about courses, or, you know, anything we can do to improve their experience. And I think we're pretty good at acting on the information that we get from the students, we do take it quite seriously."* (Alishba, PAL Interview, May 2021)

Whilst there is an understanding of taking the student voice seriously, there is also an element of pragmatism in the management view. Sam explains how, as the GHHE, she would investigate further before deciding if any raised issues need to be act upon by course leaders:

> "*So, if students raise some concerns, say something that you can't obviously take students at face value. Yeah, you can't and say, 'This is wrong, we'll fix it'. We have to do some further investigation. And if it becomes apparent that there's something that needs to change what action plans in place for them cohorts*." (Sam, GHHE Interview, June 2021)

Whilst Sam does not stipulate the forms of investigation in this instance, extracts from my researcher diary from informal interviews (July 2021) show that this investigation takes the form of a conversation with the course leader, and if necessary, a conversation with the whole cohort of students to try and understand the issues they have raised, so that it can be addressed.

9:3:1 Learner surveys

The learner surveys are electronic surveys for which a link is sent out to students via their Virtual Learning Environment page. This happens twice per academic year: in the autumn term and the spring term. Students are encouraged to complete the survey within the two-week period. It is the course leaders' role to ensure that all students complete this survey. Where this is not the case, course leaders were made accountable. I noted this accountability in my researcher diary (March 2021). The incident was not observed as part of this research specifically, but notes were made for reflection in my researcher diary. I recall an incident in the staff room of the department I worked in. Here course leaders are not only accountable for the results of the learner survey, but also to ensure that the students exercise their student voice and complete the survey.

> *"I was working in the office marking papers on my computer. There were other people in the office, other course leaders, lecturers, assessors and PALs. The HoD came out of her office and into the main office. Very publicly she began to shout about the response rates for the learner survey 2. We were two weeks into the survey being open, and the SMT decided to keep it open longer due to poor response. Taking each course leader in turn, the HoD read out the response rate and shouted about this not being good enough. She argued that as course leaders, we should put everything on hold and find out who had not completed the survey and telephone them to complete it immediately. A challenge as this is an anonymous survey! The task was to put every student's learner number into the survey system, if it went in OK, this meant that the student had not*

> *completed the survey – thus identifying the non-compliant culprits!"* (Research Diary notes, March 2021)

However, issues with data recorded within The College Group means that in many instances it is impossible to gain a 100% completion rate. The data held by the college was often inaccurate, and it does not consider those students who had withdrawn from the course. Therefore, it often becomes impossible to get high levels of completion rates. Furthermore, research shows that online survey response rates for students are low across the sector, and less likely to be as high as paper-based surveys (Nulty, 2008; Denscombe, 2008).

The College Group Learner Survey (excerpt Appendix 17) is developed on a five-point Likert Scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The questions fall into eleven categories: Teaching and Learning, Learning Opportunities, Assessment and Feedback, Academic Support, Organisation and Management, Learning Resources, Learning Community, Student Voice, Prevent and Safeguarding, General Facilities and Services and Overall Satisfaction. In addition, there is a 'free writing' box for students to write any comments they wish to share. The results are then rated Red, Amber or Green (RAG) and graded A-D. A link for the college intranet to the completed survey results is sent out to course leaders via email. Course leaders are expected to analyse these results and account for any instances where results have fallen from previous surveys or where there are any negative results (D grades). Course leaders do not automatically get comments from the survey from the 'free writing' comment box. Instead, course leaders must ask Sam for these comments.

Once analysised, the course leaders need to speak with the cohort of students about any negative results and try and gain an understanding of why this was the case. An action plan is then drawn up by the course leader to identify how they are to address any issues. This action plan is passed on to Sam as GHHE. Conversations about the progress in relation to the action plan were often picked up in general conversations about the course in the regular Learner Level Tracking meetings.

Whilst the methodological issues of a questionnaire can be debated (Spooren, Brockx and Mortelmans, 2013), one PAL explained that it is used as just one tool in the student voice toolbox and there are other formats such as student forums. What Margret (PAL), is more concerned about is not just the learner survey but a triangulation of results from different format of eliciting student voice:

> *"I think it's fit for purpose to the extent it's going to be any questionnaire is going to have some ambiguity and can always be tweaked, but it is coupled alongside learner forums."*
> (Margret, PAL Interview, September 2021)

Margaret further indicates that student voice methods are used as a form of surveillance to triangulate against other measures that monitor the quality of the course leaders' work, allowing a fuller picture before invoking an action plan regarding the course leader's compliance and competency.

> *"You've got to look at… if you, if you're going to look at things as a whole. Before you would worry, or action plan somebody, there's*

> *got to be hole in multiple areas. It's a bit like that Swiss cheese trajectory model, if you can get the line all the way through, right you've got problems…"* (Margret, PAL Interview, September 2021)

Margret discusses looking at multiple areas. In this, she refers to the auditing of course leaders on a number of metrics, including observations of teaching and learning and of student voice. It is through looking at these areas that Margret argues that she will be able to judge the competence of a member of her team.

9:3:2 Student voice forums

Each class of students has at least one student representative. Typical class sizes for HE in The College Group are between 10-30 learners. The student representative is a member of the class chosen by their peers to represent them in student voice activities in the college and university. Student representatives are invited to the Principal's HE student forum. The student forum is a meeting between the student representatives for all HE cohorts, the GHHE, the Principal and strategic lead for HE, and a member of the quality team from The College Group.

Sam, the GHHE talked to me about the importance of the forums and student voice:

> *"… it can have a knock-on effect and a range of things, Clare. If the students are not happy, they're paying a lot of money. So, value for money is one thing, if not happy that leave, poor reputation, if they're sharing that with friends and family, and it*

> *could have a detrimental effect on our growth and recruitment moving forward. So, we needed to get that right. So, I introduced group forums. We've got a big push on Class Reps. So now every class or every cohort has one or two reps like a main rep and a stand in rep, and they attend four Principal's forums."* (Sam, GHHE Interview, August 2021)

With Sam drawing on a consumerist discourse (Tomlinson, 2017), it seems that the focus is on viewing students as paying customers who should be satisfied with the product they are buying (Guilbault, 2018). The impact of the student as consumer discourses is seen widespread, e.g. Sam has indicated that student satisfaction, or more importantly dissatisfaction, can influence future recruitment and the financial viability of HE in The College Group.

In the Principal's HE student forums, students are asked about teaching and learning, how the course is organised, induction, resources for the course, what progress is being made, general questions about facilities and resources within the college and if there are any areas for improvement. The details for any areas for improvement are passed onto the course leaders to address where appropriate. These actions are addressed through the completion of an action plan. The action plans are completed solely by the course leader responsible for the cohort raising the concerns. This is then emailed to Sam as the GHHE. I asked Sam about passing on information that was positive from the forums. I asked why this information was not passed on to course leaders. She could not answer the question but agreed that perhaps it should be. She explained how the information is processed:

> *"[The] good things that come from that I think that they pass through up to the SED [Self Evaluation Document] to start with. So, it is reported at a strategic level, so it'll be shared with governors, it'll be shared with senior managers and shared with heads of department. And then recognised. Ultimately, in other meetings with myself or meetings to the heads of department."* (Sam, GHHE Interview, August 2021)

According to Sam's account, course leaders are being informed of the things that need improvement for their courses. However, the areas of good practice are not being shared with them; they are not getting recognition for their work (discussed in Chapter Six). Therefore, I argue that it is a missed opportunity that positive feedback is not shared with course leaders to the same extent as the areas of improvement are.

9:3:3 National Student Survey (NSS)

The NSS is a high-stakes external survey offered to all HE students in the UK who are in the final year of their undergraduate courses lasting two years or longer (Office for Students, 2023). The aim of the survey is threefold: to improve students' choices in HE, to improve student experience in HE and to provide public accountability (Office for Students, 2023). Although The College Group is in a franchise partnership with Waterside University, the NSS results are separate for the college and the university. For The College Group, they are even separated by campus where the HE is delivered. Therefore, each eligible cohort has its own results.

I observed the importance The College Group places on the NSS in the BP and PR meetings (Observation during the academic year 2022-23). It was something that came up regularly. As is evident in all colleges and universities partaking in the NSS, there is a desire to get this right and have as many students as possible completing the survey with a positive overall result (Murray, 2022). However, it is argued that the NSS has taken on a significance that far outweighs its validity, with concerns raised whether it is accurate in measuring what it sets out to measure' (Sabri, 2013).

Further to this, evidence of external influences was noted in my observations. One key element that the SMT returned to at the BP and PR meetings was the National Student Survey (NSS). The importance of student voice became apparent when looking at external agencies such as the Office for Students and the NSS (Crawford and Johns 2018; Murphy and Curtis 2013; Motta and Bennett 2018).

The Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the NSS. This trend can be seen nationwide with overall results in student satisfaction falling from 83% to 75% in 2021 (THE, 2021). The main issue faced was in relation to the policy requirements between The College Group and Waterside University with regards to online and face to face learning differed. During the pandemic, Waterside University made the decision to move all its teaching and learning to online delivery, whereas the college remained open to students and continued, largely, with face-to-face teaching after the first lockdown. However, as the HE is franchised, The College Group needed to follow the guidance given by the university to move to online learning. Course leaders were informed about this change via email from Sam, the GHHE. The CBHE students were not happy about this as they could not see why the FE students in the college could be taught face-to-face, but they could not be. This difference in policy between The College Group and Waterside

University had a negative impact on the NSS results on that year. In instances like this where the NSS results are below expectations, the strategic lead for HE reports it to SMT. This would also need to be reported to The College Group Governing Board. Reporting on this would include an in-depth analysis of the cause of the issue. To get the information needed, Sam, the GHHE, would arrange a meeting with the course leader(s) responsible for the courses and query why this has happened and what they had done prior to the survey to try and circumvent these results. Course leaders therefore had to explain and justify any negative aspects arising from the NSS. Sam, the GHHE, with the course leader, would then create an action plan for course leaders to implement. All this information would then be reported to the governors. As can be seen with other student voice activities, such as the Principal’s forum, it is not clear if positive aspects are given the same amount of attention as any negative incidents.

9:4 Chapter summary

This chapter is the second with a focus on the question of ‘How do The College Group's surveillance and accountability processes impact the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education?’ In this chapter, the focus was on how course leaders for CBHE are held to account through the enactment of Learner Level Tracking meetings and through the elicitation and implementation of student voice. I have shown how the textually mediated tracking of students at individual level form institutional circuits developed based on text-reader conversations and actions that have been taken in the accountability of course leaders for CBHE (Smith and Turner, 2014; Griffiths and Smith, 2014). I have mapped this institutional circuit in Figure 9. Here I have also shown how the actions arising from these text feed into performance review and business planning, both of which monitor the performance of individual courses and therefore the course leader.

Finally, I have discussed the ways in which student voice is used to monitor the performance of course leaders for CBHE. I have found that the marketisation of FE and HE has led to students being viewed as consumers (Nixon, Scullion and Hearn, 2018; Cook-Sather, 2006). This discourse positions students as stakeholders in education whose voice should be heard as they are seen as paying customers, with customer satisfaction at the fore (Tomlinson, 2017; Guilbault, 2018). This means that student voice can also be viewed as another tool for surveillance for the course leaders (Page, 2017; Skerritt, 2022). The results of these student voice activities have a real impact on the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE through the development of action plans which set targets for the course leader to address. I argue that the surveillance through observations and the emphasis on accountability through student voice and Learner Level Tracking initiatives derive from the drive for efficiency that is inherent in an institution molded by a NPM regime.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

10:1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to summarise and reflect on the key findings of this study, and the impact this research can have on scholarly and policy understandings of the everyday work of course leaders for college-based higher education (CBHE). Within institutional ethnography, the aim is not to theorise but to make it visible how work is organised. The iterative process of institutional ethnography has allowed me to start at the point of formulating a research question, drawing on the problematics from existing research and lived experience relating to the fact that course leaders for CBHE find their work complex. It is here that I started the journey of data collection. However, it is by reading and rereading my data, reviewing and questioning the data collected that themes have emerged which formed the sub-questions for this study. By following lines of inquiry as they emerged in the research process, the institutional ethnographic study allowed me to answer my research question:

- **How is the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE socially organised in The College Group?**

With this final chapter, I will demonstrate how the everyday work for course leaders for CBHE is socially organised from the standpoint of course leaders, while moving upwards into the extra local of The College Group's policies and trans-local of government legislation and policies. Therefore, my aim in answering the research question is to make visible the legislation, policies and processes which influence the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. Based on these findings about the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE, I will also propose recommendations for professional practice.

After answering the research question, I will propose recommendations for practice, highlight and discuss the original contribution my research makes to the understanding of institutional ethnography as a theoretical and methodological framework for inquiry and the original contribution of knowledge it offers about the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. As I begin to draw to a close, I take a critical look at this thesis and explore the limitations of my research. With these limitations in mind, I make recommendations for further research in this field. Finally, I explore my own journey as an early career researcher and former course leader over the six years it has taken to complete this thesis.

10:2 Summary of main findings

In Chapter Five, I found that initially, the course leaders' everyday work is set out in text. There is a *Job Description* and a *Contract of Employment* which offer an initial understanding of the course leaders' work. These have been written by both human resources (HR) and programme area leaders (PALs)/ head of department (HoD). However, what is not immediately known is how the component of the job set out in both texts came to being. I also discovered that the *Contracts of Employment* are the same across The College Group regardless of whether the course leader is for CBHE or further education (FE) courses. Whilst this demonstrates a lack of acknowledgement of the differences between the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE and FE courses, it is not uncommon to see such practice in FE colleges where HE makes up a small proportion of the overall college provision and income (Keenan, 2020).

By moving beyond the texts and the local standpoint of the course leaders for CBHE into the extra local, I turned to explore the work knowledge of PALs and human resources by asking the question of where the components of the job, highlighted in texts, came from. I found that those responsible for the *Job Description* and the *Contract of Employment* do not know where this information came from. Instead, what became clear is that the components of the job are a product of institutional memory which are tweaked to align with what the budget holder requires for that role. These texts are the first texts a course leader encounters in relation to learning about their everyday work. Following up on this line of inquiry in seeking out a further understanding of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE within texts, I turned to texts from the franchising university, Waterside University. Within the *Operations Manual,* I found a vagueness in the description of the everyday work of the course leader for CBHE. The texts from Waterside University presented permissive phrasing of someone with 'an appropriate background' and brief details of the role in relation to meeting the requirements of the quality framework. Therefore, I concluded that the texts did not offer sufficient information for course leaders to activate the process of a text-reader conversation in understanding their everyday work. However, what emerged in the data as I explored further into the extra-local, was that there was an understanding of the differences between FE and HE course leaders from those with a strategic role in CBHE in The College Group. Therefore, it could be argued that this lack of acknowledgment could be the result of The College group not seeking to update their *Contract of Employment* for course leaders for CBHE. The result of this is that aspects of the course leaders work is not seen in texts.

Upon appointment as course leader for CBHE, the institutional process would be to assign a course leader a mentor to support them in understanding their everyday work. Yet, the actual experiences of the course leaders in this study do not align with this process. On the contrary, course leaders talked about being "*thrown in at the deep end*" (Phil, June 21; Carol, November 20) and needing to "*hit the ground* running" (Grace, October 20) with "*never any formal training*" (Mark, July 21). Through following this line of inquiry to find out how course leaders for CBHE understand their everyday work, I found that the course leaders chose to find their own ways of learning about their everyday work, whether this is from within The College Group or from the course leaders for CBHE in other FE colleges.

As regards everyday work, course leaders for CBHE shared their work knowledge through the interviews. As summed up by Craig, one of the course leaders in this study, his work is everything from marketing and recruitment to the students graduating. Yet for others there was a notion of being a course leader and there were additional duties which fall outside of the notion of being a course leader for CBHE. It is duties such as pastoral care and marketing and recruitment that seem to fall under the banner of additional duties. Therefore, it can be argued that the formal texts do not capture the complexities associated with the course leaders' everyday work. *Timetables* did not offer any clarity on the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. In fact, the *Timetables* reflected the allocated teaching hours and, for FE course leaders, this also included time for pastoral care related duties. This means that neither line managers, HoD or members of the senior management team (SMT) have an oversight of the tasks and workload for course leaders for CBHE. This has resulted in course leaders for CBHE struggling with time to complete their everyday work within the bounds of a typical working week. Further, some course leaders teach 864 hours, some more and others less. My analysis suggests that this inconsistency is driven by economy, effectiveness and efficiency, characteristic of the New Public Management logic in contemporary FE and HE institutions (Randle and Brady, 1997b). In cases where a budget holder (programme area leader (PAL) or HoD) has the financial capacity and flexibility, course leaders for CBHE will be left some space in their workload for these additional duties. As this study has shown, this is an exception rather than a general rule in The College Group.

Therefore, what has become apparent in exploring how course leaders for CBHE come to understand their work is that texts which organise the work offered insufficient information for course leaders to fully understand their everyday work. The lack of specificity creates spaces for permissive interpretation where line managers and HoDs can organise the course leaders' work to meet the evolving needs of the department based on financial pressures in their curriculum area. However, this inconsistency means they are not adequately supporting the course leaders for CBHE when appointed to this position, pushing course leaders to seek out other ways of coming to understand their everyday work. The limitations of the texts in supporting course leaders in understanding their everyday work was a theme I found throughout my research.

After exploring and analysing how a person becomes a course leader and learns about their everyday work in Chapter Five, I turned my focus to the emerging theme of working with others in Chapter Six. The everyday work of the course leader for CBHE is not something which happens in isolation. Course leaders work with their line managers, for Waterside University, and in partnership with other FE colleges in the franchise arrangement. Yet the positioning of the course leaders for CBHE in The College Group is not as straight forward as for other roles in The College Group. PALs assume line management duties of course leaders for CBHE in line with their curriculum area. However, this was in addition to the PAL for HE (who became the GHHE). Course leaders found themselves caught between the two: one had the knowledge and understanding of HE to be able to support the course leaders, the others had the line management responsibility for the HE in their curriculum area and the course leader. Whilst for the most part course leaders, PALs and the GHHE were able to navigate this complexity, in some cases it proved too challenging. As time went on, the PALs were to assume more responsibility for the HE provision in their curriculum areas. This proved challenging as they did not understand the courses being delivered or how they were run with Waterside University and the other college partners. This lack of understanding by line managers in The College Group led to course leaders seeking support from outside of The College Group.

Yet for some, working outside of The College Group brought about issues in relation to the parity of work. For some course leaders, they were part of a team delivering their courses; for others they were left to work on their own. However, many course leaders for CBHE expressed feelings of isolation (Young, 2002). These feelings stemmed from a lack of understanding by those in their curriculum team, including their line manager, of the work they do. I followed up on this line of inquiry with the course leaders. It seems that this sense of isolation stems from two sources. It could be a lack of understanding by their line manager, but it could also be a larger institutional issue. With HE in The College Group making up only a small percentage of the overall provision and funding, course leaders found it easy to feel marginalised in their work. This was further exasperated by feelings of marginalisation within the HE sector, as not all Waterside University colleagues perceived them as equal. In short, there was an overwhelming sense of not belonging in HE and not belonging in FE.

Having positioned course leaders for CBHE within the staffing structure of The College Group and discussing notions of teamwork and belonging, Chapter Seven moved to discuss the duties the course leaders talked about in their interviews. I discussed the work knowledge of course leaders for CBHE, where they have focused on a range of elements that make up some of the duties comprising their everyday work. These distinct aspects offer an insight into their work and how it is socially organised. Chapter Seven started with the course leaders' work knowledge of their marketing and recruitment work. Marketing and recruitment take many forms, including both internal and external marking and recruitment events. The main focus of their work knowledge on marketing and recruitment was two-fold: job security and time. The everyday work of marketing and recruitment stems from The College Group's drive for financial sustainability. Course leaders were mindful that if they did not recruit a sufficient number of students onto their course to make them financially viable, then the course would not run. This would make their position in the college insecure. However, the work in marketing and recruitment takes up a lot of the course leaders' time (Tucker, Peddler, and Martin, 2020). Whilst it is visible in institutional texts as one of the tasks expected of the course leaders, it is not visible on the course leaders' *Timetable*: in the actual workload allocation.

Following on from marketing and recruitment work is that of curriculum work. Writing and reviewing the curriculum is a central part of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. There are two elements required in writing the curriculum: writing new courses and reviewing and updating existing courses. The process of writing the curriculum is part of Waterside Universities *Quality Framework*. Writing the curriculum can be challenging for CBHE course leaders. This challenge can be presented in many ways from accessing the documents to understanding the processes and the requirements of completing the necessary paperwork. These challenges result in some course leaders for CBHE feeling like they are "*winging it"* (Grace, October 21). In cases where mechanisms for support in Waterside University do not meet the needs of course leaders for CBHE, course leaders seek out others to gain support, allowing them to be successful in writing the curriculum. Following up on lines of inquiry generated by course leaders and my reflections on the time needed to complete such work, I once more turned to texts. Whilst this work is clearly outlined in both the *Contract of Employment* and *Job Description*, it is not visible in the course leaders' *Timetable*. Furthermore, I again found inconsistencies in allowing time for this work to be completed. It seems that it is at the discretion of the PALs as to whether time is allocated to the course leader. This means that workload and its effects on the everyday work of the course leaders are driven by efficiencies within curriculum areas.

Course leaders also emphasised working with students as part of their everyday work, both in relation to teaching and learning inside the classroom, and the work they do outside of their allocated teaching sessions. The course leaders talked about how much they enjoy working with students and teaching them. Many course leaders talked about their '*love'* for teaching CBHE students. However, the main area of focus was on the time needed to complete their pastoral work, with CBHE students requiring higher levels of nurturing than traditional HE students (Tucker, Peddler and Martin, 2020). One area course leaders shared their work knowledge of was in supporting the students. They argued that CBHE students often require emotional support. Further work knowledge focused on the mental health of students and how, as a course leader, they are at the front line of that support. I observed this support taking place and noted the time and care given. However, my inquiry also noted the lack of resources, due to differing funding streams, in terms of space and time allocation for this type of work to happen, thus, leading to pastoral care been seen by some course leaders as a "*covert duty*".

Yet understanding the drive behind pastoral work did not stop at the local level of course leaders for CBHE. Having observed meetings between course leaders for CBHE and Sam as the GHHE, I saw that pastoral work was a necessity for course leaders to be able to engage in the Learner Level Tracking meetings. In line with an institutional ethnographic framework, I continued into the extra local to find out how pastoral work became a tool for the accountability measure placed on course leaders for CBHE. From speaking to the GHHE and members of the SMT and through observations of the Business Planning (BP) and Performance Review (PR) meetings, I discovered that pastoral care was driven by an economic need to retain students and to secure successful completion rates. Yet the necessity of pastoral work did not translate into the necessary time or space for this work to take place. This, once more, results in course leaders needing to find this time in their already busy workload.

I now had an understanding of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE in relation to learning about their everyday work. I listened to them talk about the different components of their work and it was clear to see how these have been organised around discourses of NPM and accountability. I turned my attention to understanding how notions of NPM and accountability translated into the social organisation of the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE through The College Groups monitoring processes.

The focus of my analysis in Chapters Eight and Nine is related to how The College Group monitors the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. The particular themes related to the surveillance and accountability processes for teaching and learning, Learner Level Tracking and student voice. The monitoring of teaching and learning in The College Group takes place through three processes: peer observations, teaching and training reviews (TTRs) and walkthroughs. Through following this line of inquiry, I found that those carrying out the TTR observations were trained by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) consultants, and whilst the *Observation Policy* did not directly speak of Ofsted, my analysis showed that the processes were made to align with the current Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (DfE, 2019). This can be seen through the structure of the TTR which is looking at the intent, implementation and impact of the lesson being observed.

The validity of observations at CBHE level is called into question when the *Observation Policy*, driven by government policy, was written with the FE sector in mind. It was also evident that some observation teams were aware that HE lessons offered a different pedagogical approach, and they were mindful of this when observing HE lessons but for others this sectoral difference was not a consideration. The further complexity relates to the fact that some observation teams do not hold a qualification as high as the lessons they are observing. Therefore, course leaders for CBHE are being observed and judged against criteria from government policies relating to the FE sector and not the criteria relevant to the HE sector. This impacts course leaders for CBHE where their observation performance is raised and discussed in PR meetings to ensure they are suitable for leading and teaching the course.

The everyday work of course leaders is also monitored through Learner Level Tracking meetings. Here the focus is on attendance, retention and achievement of students. Course leaders for CBHE must account for each individual student and give a clear explanation for what they have done to support any student that is at risk of leaving the course or not achieving their qualification. This information feeds into data tables which are scrutinised against targets that have been set in BP and PR meetings. These targets are ultimately aligned with the financial stability of the HE provision in The College Group.

The final aspect of monitoring for this research related to student voice. The importance of student voice arose from my observations of the BP and PR meetings. Student voice activities within The College Group were learner surveys and student forums. What transpired from talking to the GHHE is that negative aspects are fed back to course leaders for CBHE to translate into action plans. However, positive feedback was not shared with course leaders. I argued that this may have contributed to the course leaders' feelings of isolation and that aspects of their work being unseen, or covert as Eric argued. However, the most important aspect of student voice from the perspective of SMT relates to the external NSS. I observed the discussions around NSS during the PR meetings. Again, the analysis of any results came down to the course leaders for CBHE to produce action plans. The surveillance of course leaders' everyday work is driven by the need for course leaders to be accountable to the GHHE. The GHHE, on the hand, is accountable to SMT and the SMT is accountable to The College Group's board of governors. This chain of accountability is driven by the need to ensure the financial stability of The College Group and the drive to meet the demands of external agencies such as Ofsted.

Overall, the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE is socially organised by The College Group in a number of ways. It is organised through HR and recruitment processes but mostly through the way The College Group enacts NPM. The drive for financial stability and accountability through the enactment of economy, efficiency and effectiveness drives the policies that organise the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE. This can be seen through the BP and PR meetings and the drive for monitoring student recruitment, attendance, retention and achievement. However, the social organisation of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE can also be seen through policies such as the observation policy within The College Group and through the *Operations Manual* and *Quality Framework* from Waterside University.

Yet this is not a choice per say of The College Group. Like other FE colleges, The College Group found themselves at the mercy of government legislative changes from the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) which resulted in the incorporation of colleges. As discussed in Chapter Two, this incorporation meant that colleges were now responsible for managing their own funding and assets. Needing to find a way to stay financially stable, colleges adopted a managerial approach akin to the private sector with changes in employment contracts and a drive for efficiency, economy and effectiveness. The Education Reform Act (1988) increased the drive for accountability of FE colleges, including the introduction of external agencies for monitoring teaching and learning and its effectiveness. Further policy changes from the Education and Skills Funding Agency resulted in greater competition for students and the need for the students to be retained and achieve their qualification. Overall, these policy changes resulted in internal policies and processes in The College Group which supported and reflected these political changes and goals. In turn, it is these government driven changes in policy that are the ruling relations that have led to the social organisation of The College Group and for all those working within it. Yet whilst marketisation has shaped the HE sector more broadly; it is this intersection between the worlds of FE and HE that has resulted in particularly difficult working conditions for the course leaders for CBHE. As a result, the course leaders for CBHE find themselves in a unique position where their work in managing HE courses is bound by the policies of the FE sector. To add to this, working in franchise with Waterside University means that the course leaders for CBHE are also drawn into the policies of the HE sector.

10:4 Contribution of this thesis

Institutional ethnography was developed by Dorothy Smith as a way of countering the male-dominated sociology she found herself exposed to (Smith, 2005). Institutional ethnography is a versatile framework that can be used to understand the everyday work of people (Smith, 2005, 2006; Campbell and Gregor, 2008), however, it has mostly been used in Canada and to study the everyday work of nursing and healthcare professionals. This thesis provides a theoretical contribution to institutional ethnography and in my field of study. The theoretical contribution is evident in the expansion of institutional ethnography not only into the UK but also into the field of CBHE and through the development of my framework of analysing texts. I have remained faithful to the concepts of institutional ethnography throughout my research, drawing only on other frameworks when institutional ethnography could not address what I needed, e.g. the analysis of text. Through my many readings on institutional ethnography, I was not able to find a way of examining the texts, in the way I wanted. A way in which not only highlighted what the texts were and where they come from, but also how they were used within a text-reader conversation. I wanted a framework that would allow me to understand how the text fitted into understanding the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE. It is for this reason that I sought out the framework by Fitzgerald (2012). By combining institutional ethnography with the framework of Fitzgerald for analysing documents, I was able to position the texts with the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE rather than having them as the dominant feature of their everyday work. Through my focus on the actualities of course leaders for CBHE and those working with them, and by taking an archaeological approach, I kept 'digging' and following the lines of inquiry to find out how the course leaders for CBHE's work have been socially organised by The College Group. The aim was always to reveal the ruling relations which organise their work. It is by following the framework set out in institutional ethnography that I have been able to stay true to the actualities of the everyday lives of course leaders for CBHE rather than turning to theory to provide an explanation.

This research makes a significant contribution to both the development of institutional ethnography as a framework for inquiry and the knowledge gained. It is likely to be the first research into the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE, using an institutional ethnographic approach. Starting with the problematic that course leaders talk about the complexities of their everyday work and using institutional ethnography, I have been able to follow up the lines of inquiry whilst remaining rooted in the course leaders' standpoint. I have summarised my main findings above and answered my research question, thereby showing how the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE is socially organised in The College Group. By taking this standpoint and by following up the lines of inquiry, I have been able to make visible the ruling relations. Yet to analyse my data I have had to find a way of organising the data from a range of methods. In organising my data, I have argued that there is a need to use themes. Whilst institutional ethnography claims to eschew such themes, I believe they are an essential element in making sense of the data. Therefore I have expanded the understanding of analysis in institutional ethnography, offering clarity of method where there was limited literature. I have shown how the CBHE course leaders' everyday work is organised around The College Group's internal policies and practices, which in turn have derived from government policies and legislation. In particular, I argue that the ruling relations ultimately stem from two main pieces of legislation from many years ago. The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) which led to the incorporation of FE colleges, transforming their overall management structure and policies, and the Education Reform Act (1988) led to the introduction of inspectorate regimes for FE colleges (and schools). Overall, I have shown that the everyday work of the course leaders for CBHE is organised in ways which do not necessarily support the everyday work of the course leaders. An understanding of the workload and the course leaders for CBHE's everyday work is needed to be able to fully support them in their role. Through this research I have been able to show the social organisation and ruling relations which govern the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE and which was not wholly visible from their standpoint. In summary, my main contributions are expanding the work of institutional ethnography into a new country (England), into a new field of study (course leaders for CBHE), through the development of an analytical framework for texts and through demonstrating the need for 'themes' to support the analysis of the data.

10:5 Recommendations for professional practice

Based on the findings of this research, I propose four recommendations for professional practice for college leaders and line managers of course leaders for CBHE in England.

The first recommendation is for the induction process for course leaders for CBHE. I recommend that upon appointment, all course leaders should be offered a full induction. This should include a full overview of the course and the franchising university's processes (where appropriate) and a formal introduction to the link tutor at a franchising university (where franchising universities are involved). It is also recommended that a handbook is written to support new course leaders for CBHE. This should be used as part of the induction process. The handbook should include key dates in the academic calendar and timeframes for the completion of administrative aspects of the role and contacts within the franchising university. This would support the course leaders in their understanding of the whole academic year. Further, providing a complete academic calendar with key dates will allow course leaders to plan their time more effectively. The findings of this study also recommend that the course leaders should be appointed a mentor who is also a course leader for CBHE. The mentor should be someone who can support the course leader in understanding the college and the franchising university's formal processes. However, additional time for the mentoring work should be taken into account in the mentor's workload.

The second and third recommendations are linked. They both relate to the work of line managers for CBHE course leaders. Based on the findings of this research, I recommend that line managers for course leaders for CBHE have an overview of the course leaders' workload. An overview which includes all aspects of their everyday work, rather than a timetable of their teaching commitments. Further, I recommend that, where necessary, line managers for course leaders for CBHE have training to understand CBHE and the processes and administration required for course leaders to complete. An understanding of the courses and work processes will help the course leaders feel less isolated and have someone to go to for support within their college when needed.

My final recommendation related to the policies and processes enacted in an FE college. I recommend that, where possible, a one-size fits all approach to FE and HE to be avoided. This would allow CBHE to be monitored in ways that is nuanced to reflect the FE and HE sectors. Therefore, I recommend that SMT and those managers who write the policies in FE college also have an oversight of CBHE and ensure that the policies implemented are fit for purpose for all aspects of the college's provision, not just the FE provision.

10:6 Limitations and reflections on my research

In the sections above, I have explained the strengths of my research based on the contribution this thesis makes theoretically through institutional ethnography and through the knowledge gained on the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE. However, research is a journey, and no journey is without bumps in the road!

One of the key limitations is the scale of the research. I have focused on one college group and the HE delivered on two campuses. Further, the research is based on the HE that is delivered with one franchising university. Based on my published article(s) and a book chapter, feedback from course leaders for CBHE in other colleges as well as those in The College Group, I anecdotally know that colleagues find my findings insightful and a true reflection of their everyday work. This feedback has given me assurances that my analysis of the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE is trustworthy. One course leader for CBHE from another college (and franchising university) argued that she wishes she had had my article on pastoral work to show her line managers and the SMT in her college. She felt this would have given her the confidence and 'evidence' to push for more time to complete the pastoral work and to have this as a recognised aspect of her everyday work rather than being unseen. Whilst my aim was not to produce findings that are generalisable to all, it could be argued that future research would benefit from taking a larger population of course leaders for CBHE and across different colleges and franchising universities to see if the everyday work highlighted in this study is translatable to other contexts.

I have been transparent in my role as an insider researcher. I found, as a course leader for CBHE in The College Group, that time was an issue for me as well as my informants. I collected my data around my own busy schedule and that of my informants, often during lunch breaks and between teaching lessons. Not only has time been an issue with my data collection, but time also to read, write and even think has been a challenge given my schedule as working full-time and researching and studying part-time. Therefore, I argue that time has been a limitation in my research. On reflection, I would be more mindful of time and perhaps not combine a full-time job with PhD research. However, studying part time has also allowed me the benefit of time. I have had periods of time away from my reading and data. This time has allowed me to be more reflective on what I have read and encountered during data collection. It has allowed me to go back to my informants and ask more questions through informal interviews. Therefore, because of time, I have gained a depth of understanding of the ruling relations at work in The College Group.

My final limitation is that I collected my data during the global Covid-19 pandemic. I will never fully know the impact of this on my research. This was a time of great uncertainty and change, both professionally and in people's personal lives. I have often reflected on if or how it influenced my informants and the things they chose to share with me. As a result of the pandemic, we live in a different world; therefore, I do not think I will ever know the true impact of this unprecedented time or how it has influenced my research.

10:7 My personal journey

As the first in my family to even consider HE, I found myself in unfamiliar territory. I was the first to get a degree, the first to get a master's degree and the first to undertake doctoral study. Yet something inside me was driving my desire to complete not only a Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD) but this research on the work of course leaders for CBHE. As an early career researcher, my journey through this PhD has been a rollercoaster. At times I questioned my ability to complete my research. However, my wonderful supervisors had faith in me and kept me going during the many times when imposter syndrome crept in. They were responsive to my emails, and I always left my supervision meetings with a renewed vigour for my research when I was finding things tough.

Therefore, this work represents both a personal and professional achievement. In relation to the knowledge I have gained, I would argue that I have become more open to new experiences and perspectives. I have learned so much about research as a process, and through the intellectual generosity of my supervisors and through talking to my informants, I have gained a perspective on the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE beyond that of my own. Whilst I have an inherently inquisitive nature, research has taught me to channel my inquisitive nature. As such I have developed a criticality I did not have before.

By the time I had collected most of my data, I was feeling constrained by my role as a course leader for CBHE in The College Group. I could neither move up the career ladder through promotion as there was no position to move to, nor up the pay scale. As such, I began to seek opportunities outside of The College Group. This is when an opportunity opened at Waterside University. Upon taking this opportunity and no longer being part of The College Group, I began to take a different perspective, a world beyond what I had known. This too helped with the analysis of my data. I no longer felt bound by the institutional capture that Smith (2005) writes about. I felt I could write from the standpoint of the course leaders but still have the separation to allowed perspective. As I am currently writing, I am still working for Waterside University. However, through my role as a link tutor for the college partnership, I have found a way to maintain my relationship with course leaders for CBHE. My unique perspective on the everyday work of course leaders for CBHE gained through this research has allowed me to support the course leaders effectively and be an advocate for them in the university as well as supporting them with the confidence to question aspects of their everyday work when necessary. I hope my unique position in understanding the everyday work for course leaders for CBHE serves to support them in their everyday work.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Email to course leaders – 21st April 2020

Hello,

I am Clare, most of you know me but I think there are a few of you who may not. I am the course leader for the Foundation Degrees in Supporting Teaching and Learning and Early Years and the BA in Education and Training, based on the xxx site in the Health, Care, Childcare and Education team. I am studying for a PhD in Education with Durham University (I mentioned it in HE CPD last August). My research focuses on the work of the course leader for college-based higher education and, as such, I am looking for course leaders who would be willing to take part in my research. I have attached a Information/consent form and a privacy notice for you to read, this contains the specific details of my research and what I would be asking from you.

In brief I am using a framework called institutional ethnography which looks at institutional processes and ruling and how this impacts the work of course leaders. My research questions are still work-in-progress but centre around working in partnership with TU, working with widening participation students and the management processes and audits. In order to find out about these aspects I am asking if you would be prepared to be interviewed by myself 1:1 about your work. I anticipate that I will need to carry out a planned interview with you around three times over the next three/four years. In addition, before each interview I will give you an idea of the sort of thing I will be looking to discuss and give you the opportunity to make notes and reflect on this before-hand. Interviews will be arranged at your convenience for time and place. Given the current situation I expect this to be in the new academic year. There will also be an opportunity for you to write up thoughts at other times, although this would be optional. The final thing is that I might want to talk with you on an informal and ad-hoc basis as I see you in your working day, however, only if this is convenient for you and never while you are in class or working with students.

I have the relevant ethical approval from Durham University for this research and I have written permission from Phil Cook. In line with conducting ethical research all interviews and participation will remain confidential and you name will not appear on any work. You will be asked to provide a pseudonym for yourself to help with this. After this initial email I will only contact you via by Durham University email, clare.sutton@durham.ac.uk to help with issues surrounding confidentiality. If you reply to me via this email too there will be no record on any of our college systems of your participation.

I really hope that you feel you are able to take part and support me in this. If you are please can you sign and date the consent form and email it back to my university email. If you have any questions about my research or any questions regarding your participation, please just email me.

Thank you for your time,

Clare Sutton

Appendix 2 – Informant information sheet and consent – entry level informants.

Informant Information Sheet and Consent

Project title: Investigation into the institutional processes which influence the work of the course leader for HE in FE

Researcher(s): Clare Sutton

Department: Education

Contact details:

Stockton Riverside College, Harvard Avenue, Stockton on Tees, TS17 6FB.

Work email: Clare.sutton@stockton.ac.uk

University email: clare.sutton@durham.ac.uk

Supervisor name: Rille Raaper and Jonathan Tummons

Supervisor contact details:

rille.raaper@durham.ac.uk & jonathan.tummons@durham.ac.uk

You are invited to take part in a study that I am conducting as part of my PhD at Durham University. This study has received ethical approval from The School of Education Ethics Committee of Durham University.

Before you decide whether to agree to take part it is important for you to understand the purpose of the research and what is involved as a participant. Please read the following information carefully. Please get in contact if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The rights and responsibilities of anyone taking part in Durham University research are set out in our ‘Participants Charter’: https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/charter/

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to investigate the processes within the college that influence the work of a course leader for higher education in a further education college. There are three key areas that I am interested in: firstly, how auditing in education influence the work of the course leader. This can be at the course leader level in terms of tracking students or at a higher level in terms of QAA; secondly, in how student feedback, through surveys and forums, influences the work of the course leader; finally, I am interested in working in partnerships with the partner university. This project is expected to last for five years with data being collected over the next three/ four years.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because you are a course leader for higher education courses in the college group. As such your experiences of your work are the key staring point of this research project.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to agree to take part. If you do agree to take part, you can withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in the study, you will be asked to make use of a reflective diary where you can highlight and make notes of any experiences or issues you have. This will be in the form of a shared document on my university OneDrive account. The document will only be able to be accessed by me and you and the file name will be your pseudonym for the research project. This will ensure anonymity from the start. You will have your reflective diary for the duration of the data collection period which will be for three/ four years. During this this time in the lead up to your interview I will prompt you to make an entry regarding the nature of the interview. For example, if the interview will be based on the learner level tracking documents, I will prompt you to make notes on how and why you use this document. Your reflective notes will be used as a basis of starting the interview. The reflective diary many also be used at your discretion should you wish to make any additional comments or reflections about your everyday work. Again, these will be used for discussion in interview.

You will also be asked to take part in one to one interviews and potentially focus group interviews. For one to one interviews I expect that you will be asked to take part in between 1-3 interviews lasting between 30 mins and one hour. The data collection period will be over three/ four years. This means that you will be asked to take part in an interview no more than once per year. Interviews are expected to take place on college premises in a private room/ classroom. In the interviews you will be asked to discuss your daily work and experiences including a discussion of documents and emails that influence your work. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. I am seeking your permission to record your interviews. All information gathered will be anonymised to protect your identity.

In addition to interviews and the reflective diary, I will be conducting observations of meetings relating to course leaders for HE in FE. Some of these will be participant observations where I will be part of the meeting, others will be non-participant where I will be solely there to observe. Data collected from the observations will be in the form of written notes. I am seeking your permission in advance to do this but will also seek obtain your permission again at the time of data collection.

Are there any potential risks involved?

All data collected will be anonymised and kept confidential to minimise any risk or discomfort. Neither yourself o the college group will be named or be able to be identified from the research. During the interview process if you do not wish to answer a particular question you can refuse to answer. During observations you can choose to withdraw consent for any notes being made regarding your contribution.

Whilst you will not receive any payments or incentives for your participation in the research it is hoped that the results of the research will make visible how processes in the college influence your role. This can provide a better understanding of the reasons for doing various aspects of your job. It is also an opportunity for senior leaders to see the impact of their roles and the decisions being made at a higher level on your role.

Will my data be kept confidential?

All information obtained during the study will be kept confidential. If the data is published it will be entirely anonymous and will not be identifiable as yours. All data from interviews and observations will be anonymised within 2 months of collection. For any direct quotations or discussion around a particular participant a pseudonym will be used. Any documentation used in the study will also be anonymised.

Full details are included in the accompanying Privacy Notice.

What will happen to the results of the project?

The results from this study may inform journal articles for peer review. Findings may also be discussed and used in academic conferences. A copy of the research results can be made available to participants of the study and stakeholders of the college if requested. Again, all information will be anonymised so no particular participant can be identified. This will be done within two months of collecting the data. All data collected will be stored on my computer and university OneDrive. All anonymised research data and records needed to validate the research findings will be stored for 10 years after completion of the project.

Durham University is committed to sharing the results of its world-class research for public benefit. As part of this commitment the University has established an online repository for all Durham University Higher Degree theses which provides access to the full text of freely available theses. The study in which you are invited to participate will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be published open access.

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns about this study?

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please speak to the researcher or their supervisor. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please submit a complaint via the University's Complaints Process.

Thank you for reading this information and considering taking part in this study.

Confirmation of Consent

On the basis of the above information I, ... consent to taking part in this research project.

Preferred email address for contact:

....

Signed: .... Date: ....

Please provide a pseudonym

Participant pseudonym..

Appendix 3 - Privacy Notice

Privacy Notice

Durham University

PART 1 – GENERIC PRIVACY NOTICE

Durham University has a responsibility under data protection legislation to provide individuals with information about how we process their personal data. We do this in a number of ways, one of which is the publication of privacy notices. Organisations variously call them a privacy statement, a fair processing notice or a privacy policy.

To ensure that we process your personal data fairly and lawfully we are required to inform you:

- Why we collect your data
- How it will be used
- Who it will be shared with

We will also explain what rights you have to control how we use your information and how to inform us about your wishes. Durham University will make the Privacy Notice available via the website and at the point we request personal data.

Our privacy notices comprise two parts – a generic part (ie common to all of our privacy notices) and a part tailored to the specific processing activity being undertaken.

Data Controller

The Data Controller is Durham University. If you would like more information about how the University uses your personal data, please see the University's Information Governance webpages or contact Information Governance Unit:

Telephone: (0191 33) 46246 or 46103

E-mail: information.governance@durham.ac.uk

Information Governance Unit also coordinate response to individuals asserting their rights under the legislation. Please contact the Unit in the first instance.

Data Protection Officer

The Data Protection Officer is responsible for advising the University on compliance with Data Protection legislation and monitoring its performance against it. If you have any concerns regarding the way in which the University is processing your personal data, please contact the Data Protection Officer:

Jennifer Sewel

University Secretary

Telephone: (0191 33) 46144

E-mail: university.secretary@durham.ac.uk

Your rights in relation to your personal data

Privacy notices and/or consent

You have the right to be provided with information about how and why we process your personal data. Where you have the choice to determine how your personal data will be used, we will ask you for consent. Where you do not have a choice (for example, where we have a legal obligation to process the personal data), we will provide you with a privacy notice. A privacy notice is a verbal or written statement that explains how we use personal data.

Whenever you give your consent for the processing of your personal data, you receive the right to withdraw that consent at any time. Where withdrawal of consent will have an impact on the services we are able to provide, this will be explained to you, so that you can determine whether it is the right decision for you.

Accessing your personal data

You have the right to be told whether we are processing your personal data and, if so, to be given a copy of it. This is known as the right of subject access. You can find out more about this right on the University's Subject Access Requests webpage.

Right to rectification

If you believe that personal data we hold about you is inaccurate, please contact us and we will investigate. You can also request that we complete any incomplete data.

Once we have determined what we are going to do, we will contact you to let you know.

Right to erasure

You can ask us to erase your personal data in any of the following circumstances:

- We no longer need the personal data for the purpose it was originally collected
- You withdraw your consent and there is no other legal basis for the processing
- You object to the processing and there are no overriding legitimate grounds for the processing
- The personal data have been unlawfully processed
- The personal data have to be erased for compliance with a legal obligation

- The personal data have been collected in relation to the offer of information society services (information society services are online services such as banking or social media sites).

Once we have determined whether we will erase the personal data, we will contact you to let you know.

Right to restriction of processing

You can ask us to restrict the processing of your personal data in the following circumstances:

- You believe that the data is inaccurate and you want us to restrict processing until we determine whether it is indeed inaccurate
- The processing is unlawful and you want us to restrict processing rather than erase it
- We no longer need the data for the purpose we originally collected it but you need it in order to establish, exercise or defend a legal claim and
- You have objected to the processing and you want us to restrict processing until we determine whether our legitimate interests in processing the data override your objection.

Once we have determined how we propose to restrict processing of the data, we will contact you to discuss and, where possible, agree this with you.

Retention

The University keeps personal data for as long as it is needed for the purpose for which it was originally collected. Most of these time periods are set out in the University Records Retention Schedule.

Making a complaint

If you are unsatisfied with the way in which we process your personal data, we ask that you let us know so that we can try and put things right. If we are not able to resolve issues to your satisfaction, you can refer the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: Information Commissioner's Office

Lawful Basis

Under data protection legislation you need to identify the legal basis for processing personal data.

- For the majority of projects, the legal basis will be the University's public task: Collection and use of personal data is carried out under the University's public task, which includes teaching, learning and research.
- For further information see *https://durham.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/governance/dp/legalbasis/*

How personal data is stored and processed:

Your personal data will be stored on a password protected personal computer and backed up on password protected cloud storage with Durham University. On this basis it is only myself, as the researcher who will have access to this information. All personal data will be held in the strictest of confidence and used for the purposes of the research only.

Once you have agreed to take part you will be given a participant number/ pseudonym. This will be used to anonymised all of your personal data and will be used for reporting results in the research. Signed consent forms will be stored separately from any data. These will be kept in a locked drawer away from the college. Audio recordings from the interviews will also be stored securely away from the college. These will be deleted once the information has been anonymised and transcribed. I will be the only person who has access to your personal data and the information you provide. I will be the person who anonymises and stores all information.

The anonymised information will be used in my PhD thesis and may be used to discuss my research in academic conferences and journal papers. The results will also be made available to other participants in the study and stakeholders in the college should they request it. No data collected or personal information will be shared without being anonymised.

Withdrawal of data

You can request withdrawal of your data until it has been fully anonymised. Once this has happened it will not be possible to identify you from any of the data I hold.

.

How long personal data is held by the researcher:

It is expected that all data will be anonymised within 2 months of collection.

How to object to the processing of your personal data for this project:

If you have any concerns regarding the processing of your personal data, or you wish to withdraw your data from the project, contact Clare Sutton: clare.sutton@durham.ac.uk

Further information:

For further information please contact Rille Raaper: rille.raaper@durham.ac.uk or Jonathan Tummons: jonathan.tummons@durham.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Level two informant information and consent letter

Informant Information Sheet and Consent

Project title: Investigation into the institutional processes which influence the work of the course leader for HE in FE

Researcher(s): Clare Sutton

Department: Education

Contact details:

Stockton Riverside College, Harvard Avenue, Stockton on Tees, TS17 6FB.

Work email: Clare.sutton@stockton.ac.uk

University email: clare.sutton@durham.ac.uk

Supervisor name: Rille Raaper and Jonathan Tummons

Supervisor contact details:

rille.raaper@durham.ac.uk & jonathan.tummons@durham.ac.uk

You are invited to take part in a study that I am conducting as part of my PhD at Durham University. This study has received ethical approval from The School of Education Ethics Committee of Durham University.

Before you decide whether to agree to take part it is important for you to understand the purpose of the research and what is involved as a participant. Please read the following information carefully. Please get in contact if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The rights and responsibilities of anyone taking part in Durham University research are set out in our 'Participants Charter': https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/charter/

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to investigate the processes within the college that influence the work of a course leader for higher education in a further education college. There are three key areas that I am interested in: firstly, how auditing in education influences the work of the course leader. This can be at the course leader level in terms of tracking students or at a higher level in terms of QAA; secondly, in how student feedback, through surveys and forums, influences the work of the course leader; finally, I am interested in how the course leader's work is influenced by how staff and the academic community talk about higher education students in further education colleges and the support they need. This project is expected to last for five years with data being collected over the next four years.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because you have responsibility for the course leader for higher education courses in the college group. As such your experiences of your work are the key staring point of this research project.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to agree to take part. If you do agree to take part, you can withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in one to one interviews. For one to one interviews I expect that you will be asked to take part in one possibly two interviews lasting up to 45 minutes. Interviews are expected to take place on college premises in a private room/ classroom or via Microsoft Teams. In the interviews you will be asked to discuss your daily work and experiences including a discussion of documents and emails that influence your work and how you work with and line manage the course leaders for college-based higher education. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. I am seeking your permission to record your interviews. All information gathered will be anonymised to protect your identity.

In addition, I will be conducting observations of meetings relating to course leaders for HE in FE. Some of these will be participant observations where I will be part of the meeting, others will be non-participant where I will be solely there to observe. Data collected from the observations will be in the form of written notes. I am seeking your permission in advance to do this but will also seek obtain your permission again at the time of data collection.

Are there any potential risks involved?

All data collected will be anonymised and kept confidential to minimise any risk or discomfort. Neither yourself or the college group will be named or be able to be identified from the research. During the interview process if you do not wish to answer a particular question you can refuse to answer. During observations you can choose to withdraw consent for any notes being made regarding your contribution.

Whilst you will not receive any payments or incentives for your participation in the research it is hoped that the results of the research will make visible how processes in the college influence your role. This can provide a better understanding of the reasons for doing various aspects of the course leader role. It is also an opportunity for senior leaders to see the impact of their roles and the decisions being made at a higher level on the course leader role.

Will my data be kept confidential?

All information obtained during the study will be kept confidential. If the data is published it will be entirely anonymous and will not be identifiable as yours. All data from interviews and observations will be anonymised within 2 months of collection. For any direct quotations or discussion around a particular participant a pseudonym will be used. Any documentation used in the study will also be anonymised.

Full details are included in the accompanying Privacy Notice.

What will happen to the results of the project?

The results from this study may inform journal articles for peer review. Findings may also be discussed and used in academic conferences. A copy of the research results can be made available to participants of the study and stakeholders of the college if requested. Again, all information will be anonymised so no particular participant can be identified. This will be done within two months of collecting the data. All data collected will be stored on my computer and university OneDrive. All anonymised research data and records needed to validate the research findings will be stored for 10 years after completion of the project.

Durham University is committed to sharing the results of its world-class research for public benefit. As part of this commitment the University has established an online repository for all Durham University Higher Degree theses which provides access to the full text of freely available theses. The study in which you are invited to participate will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be published open access.

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns about this study?

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please speak to the researcher or their supervisor. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please submit a complaint via the University's Complaints Process.

Thank you for reading this information and considering taking part in this study.

Confirmation of Consent

On the basis of the above information I,

…………………………………………… consent to taking part in this research project.

Preferred email address for contact:

…………………………………………………………….

Signed: ………………………………………………………. Date: ……………………………………….

For researcher only

Participant pseudonym…………………………………………….

Appendix 5 - Interview questions for course leaders for CBHE

Interview questions

- Tell me about your work as a course leader for higher education in a further education college
- How do you know how to perform your role?
- What guidance is there to support you in your role?
- What autonomy do you have in your role?
- In what ways are you able to effect change in your role?
- What are the challenges you face in your role and why are they a challenge?
- Are you able to overcome these challenges? Describe how you do this
- In what ways do the students influence your role?
- How do you feel about students giving feedback formally and informally?

- In what ways do you think student feedback influences your role?

Appendix 6 - Details of texts used in this research

Document	Where from	Date accessed
Learner surveys Nov 19	College Gateway	February 2020
Developmental Deep Dive Policy	College Gateway	September 2020
Group Calendar 20-21	College Gateway	September 2020
HE strategy – stakeholder consultation	Principal	May 2020
Observation Policy	College Gateway	September 2020
HE SED	PAL for HE	February 2020
Staff Code of Conduct	College Gateway	September 2020
Strategic Priorities	College Website/ Gateway	September 2020
Course Leader Job Description	HR	October 2020
Course Leader Contract of Employment	HR	October 2020
HE SED forecast data tables	Group Head of HE	22 October 2020
HE Learner Level Tracking	Group Head of HE	22 October 2020
Cross-College HE	Group Head of HE	22 October 2020

Annex 4 CPCEM	Group Head of HE	22 October 2020
Waterside University Terms of Reference	Principal	22 October 2020
Waterside University Contract	SLAR Waterside University	19 April 2021
Quality framework documents	WU Website	24 April 2021
Operations manual for TUCP	WU website	19 April 2021
Learner survey 2 & comments	Group Head HE	March 2021
Performance Review Template	Group Head of HE	April 2021
Group Improvement Plan	Group Head of HE	April 2021
Financial Statement	College Group Website	January 2023

Appendix 7 - Framework for analysis texts

Framework for Analysing Texts

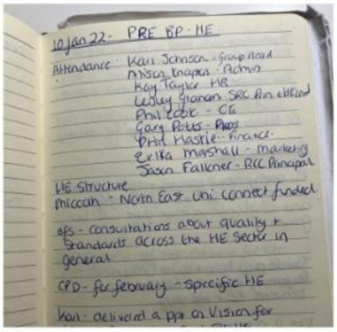
Adapted from Fitzgerald (2012)

Question	**Evidence from the text**
What type of text is it?	
Who wrote the text?	
When was it written?	
What prompted it to be written?	
Where is the text available?	
Who was it written for (intended audience)?	
What knowledge is assumed by the reader?	

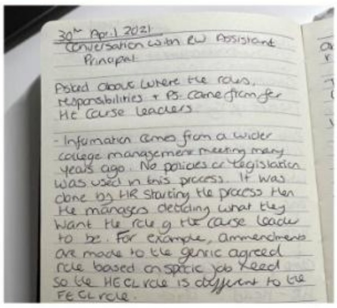
What is the text’s role and function? What are the key messages? Summary (details to be included in the table below)	
What other practices and documents does the text refer to?	

Exerts from the text	Code or themes
1.	
2.	
3.	

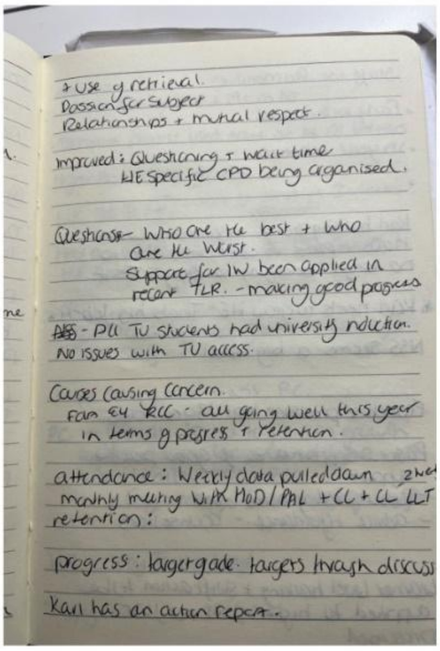
Appendix 8 - Excerpts from my researcher diary



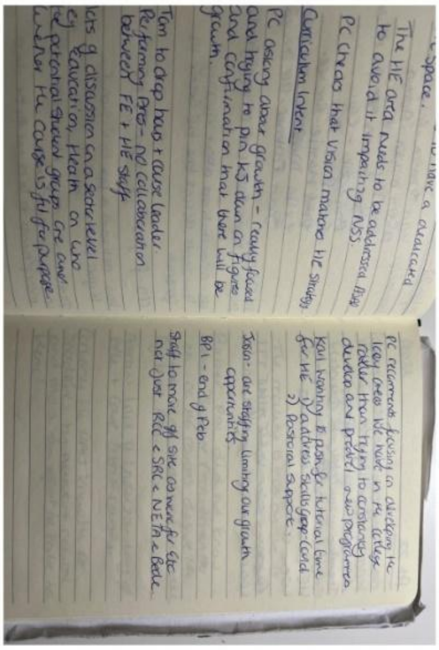
10 Jan 22. PRE BP - HE
Attendance Kari Johnson - Group Head
Kay Taylor HR
Phil Cobb - CG
Phil Hastie - Finance
Erika Marshall - Marketing
Jason Falkner - RCC Principal
HE Structure
Miccan - North East Uni connect funded
OfS - consultations about quality + standards across the HE sector in general
CPD - for February - specific HE
Kari - delivered a ppt on Vision for



30th April 2021
Conversation with EW Assistant Principal
Asked about where the roles, responsibilities + PS came from for HE course leaders.
- Information comes from a wider college management meeting many years ago. No policies or legislation was used in this process. It was done by HR starting the process then the managers deciding what they want the role of the course leader to be. For example, ammendments are made to the generic agreed role based on specific job need so the HE CL role is different to the FE CL role.



+ use of retrieval.
Passion for subject
Relationships + mutual respect.
Improved: Questioning + wait time
HE specific CPD being organised.
Questions - Who are the best + who are the worst.
Support for IW been applied in recent TLR. - making good progress
ABS - All TU students had university induction.
No issues with TU access.
Courses causing concern.
Fdn Ey RCC - all going well this year in terms of progress + retention.
attendance: Weekly data pulled down 2 wee
monthly meeting with HoD/PAL + CL + CL LLT
retention:
progress: target grade. targets through discuss
Kari has an action report.



The HE area needs to be addressed this to avoid it impacting NSS.
PC checks that vision matches HE strategy.
Curriculum Intent
PC asking about growth - really focused and trying to pin KS down on figures and confirmation that there will be growth.

Appendix 9 - Reflective diary template

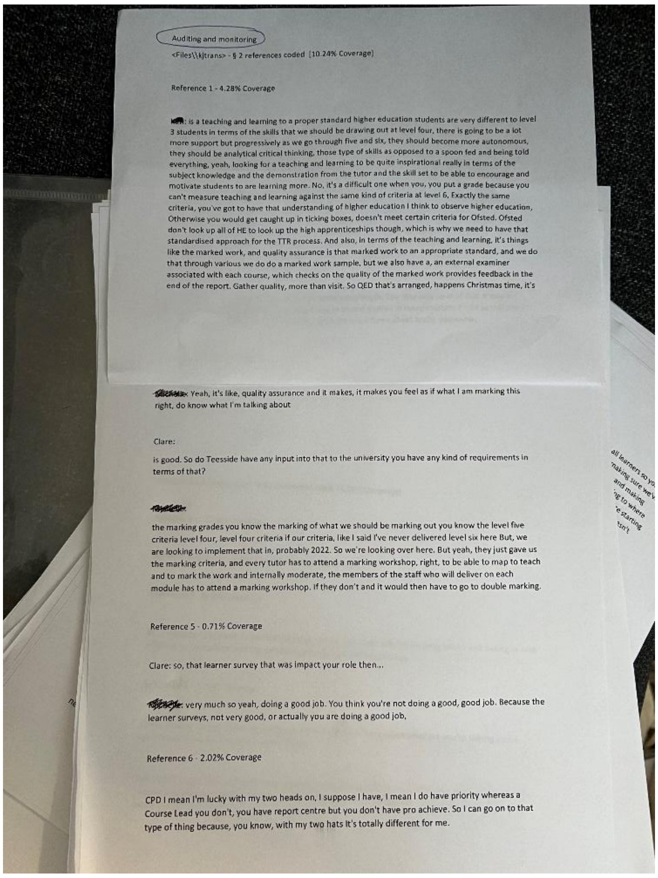
Reflective Diary Template

Pseudonym:

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Date:	**Time**
This template can be used however you wish. One way is for you to make notes of the theme(s) of the interview and use this to support your discussion. Another is to type in the details of an occurrences you wish to discuss and email it to me either before or after the interview. All data collected will remain confidential. Please use my Durham University Email: clare.sutton@durham.ac.uk	
Roles and Responsibilities:	
Things to discuss:	

Appendix 10 - Images of data analysis



Auditing and monitoring

<Files\\kjtrans> - § 2 references coded [10.24% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.28% Coverage

[redacted]: is a teaching and learning to a proper standard higher education students are very different to level 3 students in terms of the skills that we should be drawing out at level four, there is going to be a lot more support but progressively as we go through five and six, they should become more autonomous, they should be analytical critical thinking, those type of skills as opposed to a spoon fed and being told everything, yeah, looking for a teaching and learning to be quite inspirational really in terms of the subject knowledge and the demonstration from the tutor and the skill set to be able to encourage and motivate students to are learning more. No, it's a difficult one when you, you put a grade because you can't measure teaching and learning against the same kind of criteria at level 6, Exactly the same criteria, you've got to have that understanding of higher education I think to observe higher education, Otherwise you would get caught up in ticking boxes, doesn't meet certain criteria for Ofsted. Ofsted don't look up all of HE to look up the high apprenticeships though, which is why we need to have that standardised approach for the TTR process. And also, in terms of the teaching and learning, it's things like the marked work, and quality assurance is that marked work to an appropriate standard, and we do that through various we do do a marked work sample, but we also have a, an external examiner associated with each course, which checks on the quality of the marked work provides feedback in the end of the report. Gather quality, more than visit. So QED that's arranged, happens Christmas time, it's

[redacted]: Yeah, it's like, quality assurance and it makes, it makes you feel as if what I am marking this right, do know what I'm talking about

Clare:

is good. So do Teesside have any input into that to the university you have any kind of requirements in terms of that?

[redacted]

the marking grades you know the marking of what we should be marking out you know the level five criteria level four, level four criteria if our criteria, like I said I've never delivered level six here But, we are looking to implement that in, probably 2022. So we're looking over here. But yeah, they just gave us the marking criteria, and every tutor has to attend a marking workshop, right, to be able to map to teach and to mark the work and internally moderate, the members of the staff who will deliver on each module has to attend a marking workshop. If they don't and it would then have to go to double marking.

Reference 5 - 0.71% Coverage

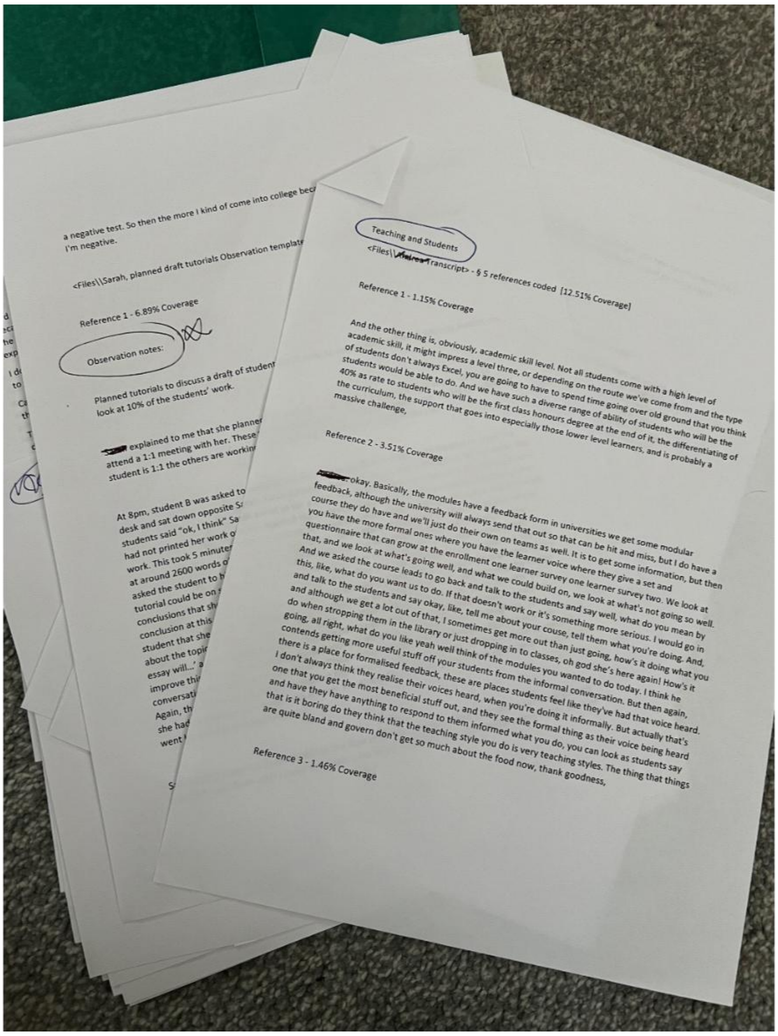
Clare: so, that learner survey that was impact your role then...

[redacted]: very much so yeah, doing a good job. You think you're not doing a good, good job. Because the learner surveys, not very good, or actually you are doing a good job,

Reference 6 - 2.02% Coverage

CPD I mean I'm lucky with my two heads on, I suppose I have, I mean I do have priority whereas a Course Lead you don't, you have report centre but you don't have pro achieve. So I can go on to that type of thing because, you know, with my two hats it's totally different for me.

Appendix 11 – Including observational data in analysis



Appendix 12 – Example of textual analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the University Operations Manual

The Operations Manual ("the Manual") is designed to assist University and College staff to implement the necessary activities in line with University academic regulations, admissions and registration processes, quality assurance and enhancement procedures and contractual Partnership arrangements, in a way which achieves comparable outcomes for students.

For each Course, there is normally an Addendum (see OM-Annex 1a, **Teesside University College Partnership Operations Manual Addendum**) which provides a specification for minimum content and details any variations from this generic handbook and any processes specific to a course.

In addition, the Quality Framework must also be read in conjunction with the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance, which is divided into 12 Themes designed to support providers in meeting the mandatory requirements of the Quality Code. In particular, specific consideration should be given to the advice and guidance relating to Partnerships which articulates how partnership arrangements can be effectively managed and overseen by providers. **UK Quality Code for Higher Education.**

1.2 Supporting University Policy and Strategies

The University has a number of supporting documents that underpin this Manual:

The Contract for Collaborative Provision between the University and each College
This details the contractual arrangements between the University and each of the Teesside University College Partnership (TUCP), their Financial Memorandum and the Schedule of Approved Courses and Targets. There is a requirement within the Contract for Collaborative Provision (CCP) to fulfil the obligations set out in the University Operations Manual.

Teesside University Student Handbook
The **Student Handbook** outlines the services and facilities available to University students and the relevant University regulations, which impact upon the student learning experience.

Teesside University Quality Framework
The Quality Framework sets out the necessary regulatory procedures to ensure effective planning, assessment and quality assurance and enhancement of the Partnership and its courses. The Quality Framework also contains the relevant additional information to support the above procedures including necessary annexes and pro-forma. **Chapter E** and its annexes relate to collaborative provision and give a useful overview of quality processes and regulations.

1
Operations Manual: TUCP Provision

Clare
Key purpose
SUTTON, CLARE
Share university regulations with partner colleged
Reply

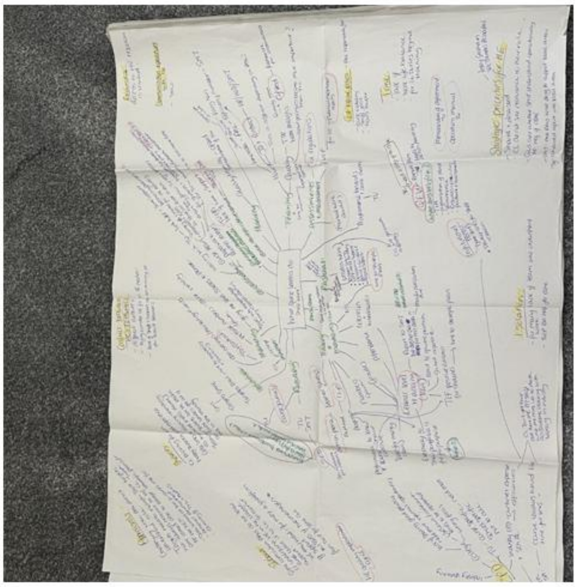
Clare
Find these documents
Reply

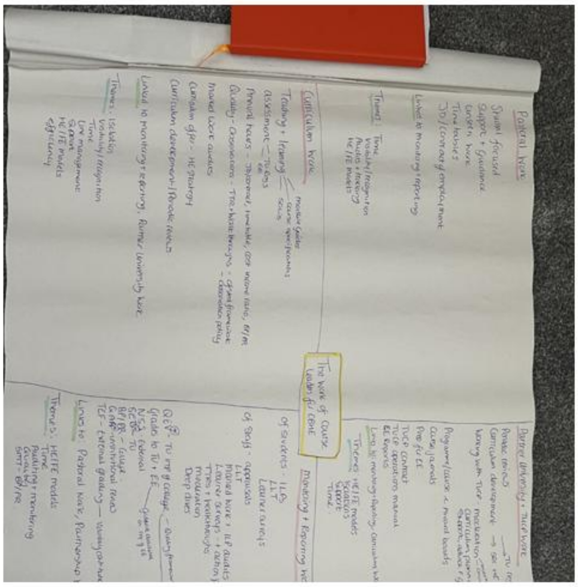
Clare
See saved files - template
Reply

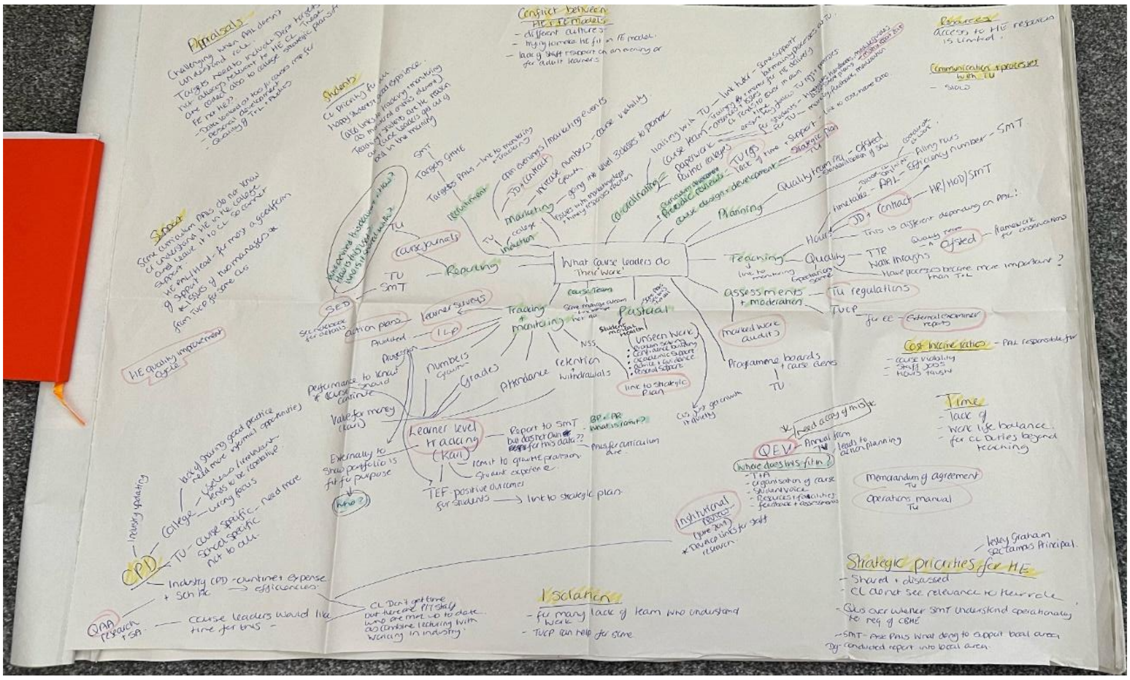
Clare
Student handbook | Current students | Teesside University
Reply

Clare
University documents | Teesside University
Reply

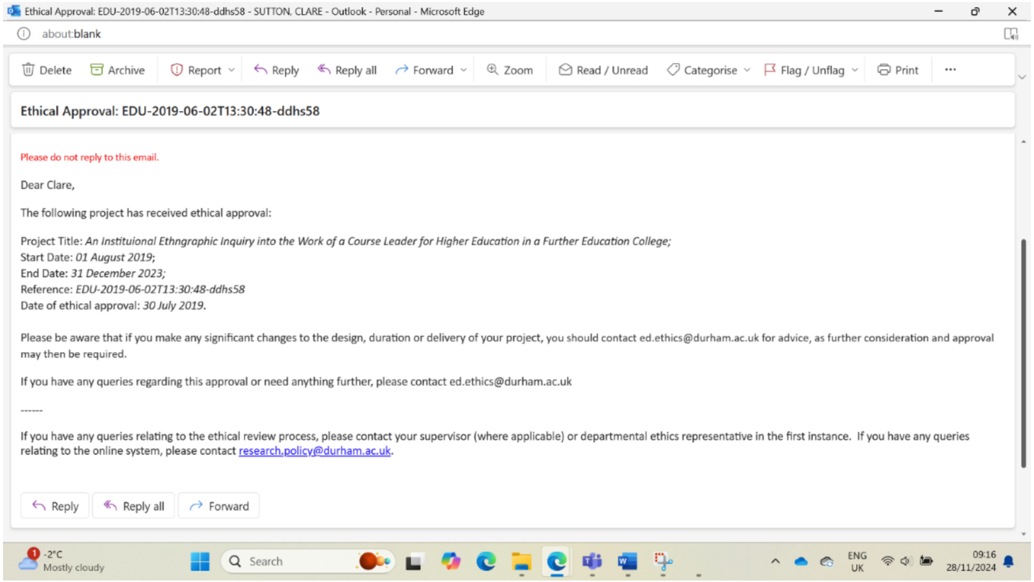
Appendix 13 - Tentative Mapping







Appendix 14 – Ethical Approval



Ethical Approval: EDU-2019-06-02T13:30:48-ddhs58 - SUTTON, CLARE - Outlook - Personal - Microsoft Edge

about:blank

Delete | Archive | Report | Reply | Reply all | Forward | Zoom | Read / Unread | Categorise | Flag / Unflag | Print

Ethical Approval: EDU-2019-06-02T13:30:48-ddhs58

Please do not reply to this email.

Dear Clare,

The following project has received ethical approval:

Project Title: *An Institutional Ethngraphic Inquiry into the Work of a Course Leader for Higher Education in a Further Education College;*
Start Date: *01 August 2019;*
End Date: *31 December 2023;*
Reference: *EDU-2019-06-02T13:30:48-ddhs58*
Date of ethical approval: *30 July 2019.*

Please be aware that if you make any significant changes to the design, duration or delivery of your project, you should contact ed.ethics@durham.ac.uk for advice, as further consideration and approval may then be required.

If you have any queries regarding this approval or need anything further, please contact ed.ethics@durham.ac.uk

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If you have any queries relating to the ethical review process, please contact your supervisor (where applicable) or departmental ethics representative in the first instance. If you have any queries relating to the online system, please contact research.policy@durham.ac.uk.

Reply | Reply all | Forward

-2°C Mostly cloudy | Search | ENG UK | 09:16 28/11/2024

Appendix 15 Performance Review Template (partially completed)

2021/2022 Performance Review 6

Department:	Higher Education & Skills
Completed by:	
Performance review date:	01/03/2022

Agenda

1. Actions
2. Recent successes/new opportunities
3. Financial strength
4. Outstanding student experience
5. Great Place to Work

6. Green Initiatives

7. Local College for local people

8. Capital

9. Risk management

10. Any other business

Performance Review 6

Guidance

The following pro-forma is to assist managers and SMT to work through the PR agenda.

All responses should be brief and focused – there is no requirement for extensive reports.

Please refer to the document “Approach to BP/PR when working remotely” for additional instructions. When working remotely:

- There is no need for you to organise the mass printing of documentation in advance of the meeting;

- However, **all** documentation required for your BP/PR meeting should be uploaded to your departmental area of the 'Financial Management' SharePoint site **at least 48 hours prior** to the start of your BP/PR meeting. This will enable SMT some time to review;
- Consideration should be given to who else you invite to the meetings. Normal rules apply, but a larger number of participants usually makes teams meetings more problematic to manage. Careful consideration should, therefore, be given to who is an essential departmental participant, balancing the number of participants against the need for BP/PR meetings to complete all of the usual business as normal.

It is essential that mangers ensure all actions are completed related to your previous PR/BP meeting. At PR we will review PR3 actions. It is your responsibility to ensure that **all** actions from your previous PR are updated, not only those assigned to you.

It is essential that managers upload completed versions of the following documents for the Performance Review meetings:

- Staff structure chart;
- Budget monitoring – please bring to the meeting:
- o Completed finance template, including:
- ▪ Overall summary sheet;
- ▪ Financials sheet(s) for each cost centre.
- o Completed pay template, including:

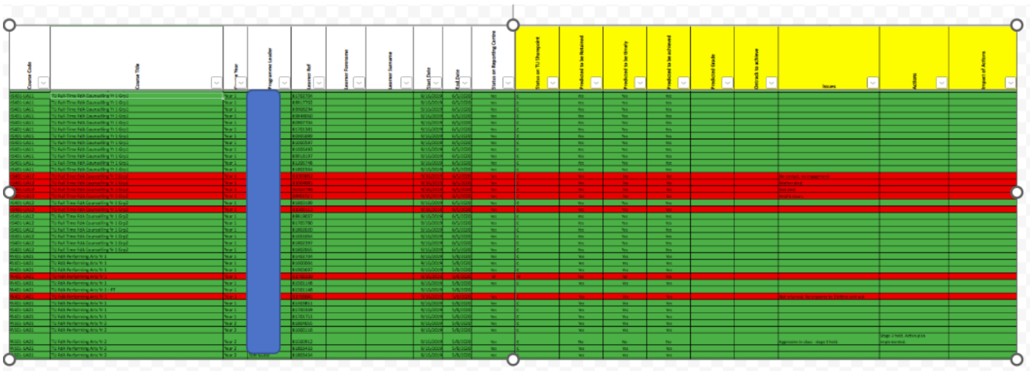
- ‘To enter on financial sheet’;
- ‘ActualsInd’ sheet;

ensuring the totals on each sheet agree.

Ensure that print area is set correctly before printing.

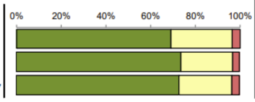
- Exceptional costs relating to COVID sheet;
- Quality data sheets;
- Department Risk Management Plan;
- Developmental Deep Dives (with a progress update column added to the right and completed);
- HR ‘People’ reports.

Appendix 16– Learner Level Tracking texts



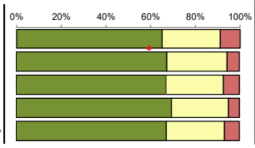
Appendix 17 – Learner Surveys

Learning Opportunities



		Return Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Answered	Rating	Difference	Agree%	Distance Travelled	Quartile	External Benchmar
8	Opps to bring info & ideas together from diff topics	197	136 68.3%	54 27.1%	6 3.0%	1 0.5%	2 1.0%	83	+1	96	+4	A	+3
9	Crse prov opportunities to apply what I have learnt	198	146 73.4%	46 23.1%	4 2.0%	2 1.0%	1 0.5%	85	+2	97	+4	A	+6
	Summary		433 72.5%	141 23.6%	15 2.5%	5 0.8%	3 0.5%	85	+2	97	+4	A	+5

Assessment and Feedback



		Return Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Answered	Rating	Difference	Agree%	Distance Travelled	Quartile	External Benchmark
10	Criteria used in marking made clear in advance	192	125 62.8%	50 25.1%	13 6.5%	4 2.0%	7 3.5%	78	+1	91	-2	B	-2
11	Marking and assessment has been fair	163	110 55.3%	44 22.1%	5 2.5%	4 2.0%	36 18.1%	81	-2	94	-2	B	=
12	Feedback on my work has been timely	167	112 56.3%	43 21.6%	8 4.0%	4 2.0%	32 16.1%	80	=	93	+2	B	+7
13	I have received helpful comments on my work	184	128 64.3%	47 23.6%	5 2.5%	4 2.0%	15 7.5%	82	+1	95	+5	A	+5
	Summary		475 59.7%	184 23.1%	31 3.9%	16 2.0%	90 11.3%	80	=	93	+1	B	+2