Graduates’ perceptions of their attributes when making the transition to employment and in managing their careers

By

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Statement of originality

I, Janet Ferguson, declare that the thesis entitled *Graduates’ perceptions of their attributes when making the transition to employment and in managing their careers* is my own work. This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed by Janet Ferguson

Date November 2016
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Finally

**Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated, with loving memory, to my sister

**Pam**

21/9/1964 – 11/7/2015
Abstract

Little research attention has been given to how graduates perceive their knowledge, skills and other qualities (KSOQs) in their careers, despite significant attention to graduate attributes by universities and employers. The common perception is that graduates complete their degrees, make the transition to employment and become effective professionals in a relatively straightforward manner, facilitated by their graduate attributes. This thesis considers whether graduates understand how to transfer their attributes in terms of KSOQs and the part these attributes play in their careers. This thesis also considers whether graduates demonstrate career agency by actively managing their careers.

The limited existing literature on graduate transition is mostly grounded in the psychology rather than the management literature. In addition, the (much more extensive) literature on graduates’ KSOQs, also known as graduate attributes, has focused on the varying perspectives of universities and employers regarding what the attributes ‘are’ and how they should be embedded in degree programs. However, graduates’ opinions of their skills and other qualities (SOQs), and of their early career management, have rarely been sought.

This thesis therefore combines three distinct bodies of literature, specifically transition to employment, KSOQs and careers theory. This research considers whether graduates acknowledge their attributes, if they successfully transfer them into employment and to what extent they are in control of their careers. The research question is: What are graduates’ perceptions of their attributes for shaping their careers when making their first career transition from university to professional employment? The subsidiary questions are: How do graduates negotiate the transition to professional employment? What is the value of graduate attributes during this transition? What is the role of graduates’ career agency in their transition to professional employment?

A mixed methods research design was used, with a qualitative core of 25 interviews containing a card-sort, and a quantitative supplementary survey of 122 graduate employees and
professionally employed near-graduates in the final stages of an online degree. In the interviews, graduates shared their experiences of the transition to employment, discussed in the card-sort how they used KSOQs and reviewed their careers to date. The survey gathered data on prior experience, graduate development program (GDP) activities (where relevant), graduates’ ranking of KSOQs, and their attitude towards their careers.

The results showed first, that graduates who had what they considered a successful transition, with opportunities to demonstrate graduate attributes, felt more agentic in their careers. Second, that the different approaches to SOQs in the literature was confusing and the composition of graduate attributes, which separated knowledge from SOQs, is unclear to graduates and employers. Based on the findings, the argument in this thesis is that SOQs could be reconfigured from the current lengthy lists to a shorter list of six ‘new’ graduate attributes. Third, that the new graduate attributes, specifically self-management, have links with the protean concept of self-directedness and assist graduates’ transition. One important contribution from this research is the proposed concept of ‘the learning career’, defined as an evolving process of self-directedness, continually reflecting on, articulating and transferring attributes in a wide range of professional career experiences in diverse employment contexts.

Implications of the findings are that graduates would benefit from considering their careers and their attributes earlier, employers and universities would benefit from a better shared understanding of graduate attributes, and universities could develop the suggested ‘new’ graduate attributes into a more meaningful graduate profile that could then be used to guide learning design, curriculum development and assessment.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.............................................................................................................. i
Abstract.................................................................................................................................. iii
List of Figures ............................................................................................................................ vii
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................. viii
List of Appendices .................................................................................................................... ix
Statement of contribution to co-authored papers................................................................. x
List of abbreviations................................................................................................................. xi

**Chapter 1. Introduction** ........................................................................................................ 1
  Background to the research problem ....................................................................................... 1
  Theoretical and conceptual domains ....................................................................................... 3
  Transition .................................................................................................................................. 6
  Graduate attributes ............................................................................................................... 7
  Careers .................................................................................................................................... 9
  Concept map .......................................................................................................................... 12
  The practical domain for the research ................................................................................... 14
  Statement of purpose and research aims ............................................................................... 16
  Research design and scope .................................................................................................... 19
  Overview of remaining chapters ........................................................................................... 22

**Chapter 2: Literature Review** .............................................................................................. 24
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................... 24
  The changing world of work ................................................................................................. 25
  Graduate attributes ............................................................................................................... 32
  Graduates’ first transition to professional employment ......................................................... 51
  The evolving nature of careers ............................................................................................ 66
  Theoretical framework ........................................................................................................ 80
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 83

**Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods** ............................................................................... 88
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................... 88
  Philosophical considerations ............................................................................................... 88
  Shaping the research design ................................................................................................. 92
  Emergent research design ................................................................................................. 98
  Methods .............................................................................................................................. 100
  Data collection .................................................................................................................. 107
  Contextual information about the participants ................................................................. 110
  Qualitative core component methods .............................................................................. 113
  Quantitative supplementary component methods ........................................................... 118
  Approach to the analysis ..................................................................................................... 131
List of Figures

Figure 1 The research context ................................................................. 5
Figure 2 Concept map and key definitions for this research ................................. 13
Figure 3 A conceptual summary, with definitions, for graduate attributes as the overarching term for knowledge, skills and other qualities ......................................................... 35
Figure 4 Theoretical framework incorporating graduate attributes and careers concepts ................................. 82
Figure 5 The mixed methods process and integration of data and findings ......................... 105
Figure 6 Conceptual framework for quantitative supplementary component of mixed methods ................. 119
Figure 7 Frequency of events where SOQs used and mentioned first, second and third ................. 160
Figure 8 Interdependence and integration of mixed methods findings ................................. 239
List of Tables

Table 1 The common skills components of graduate attributes ........................................ 39
Table 2 Other qualities required of graduates ................................................................. 42
Table 3 Applications of skills and other qualities as graduate attributes in action .......... 45
Table 4 Analysis of traditional and alternative perspectives of careers ....................... 69
Table 5 Analysis of careers concepts with implications for graduates ......................... 72
Table 6 An evaluation of paradigms and applicability of the interpretive social science approach to graduates’ experiences .......................................................... 96
Table 7 Methods used to address the research question and subsidiary questions ........ 103
Table 8 Some demographic characteristics of participants ............................................. 112
Table 9 Schedule of surveys ......................................................................................... 122
Table 10 Summary of advantages and disadvantages of each method used in this research ......................... 123
Table 11 Questions in OUA survey not included in APSC and Graduate 2 (Grad2) survey ........ 128
Table 12 Sources of quantitative data ........................................................................ 130
Table 13 Graduates’ skills and other qualities matched with graduates’ suggestions ........ 180
Table 14 Protean and boundaryless advice items and careers sub-scales .................. 197
Table 15 Data from sources to account for varying sample size .................................. 207
Table 16 Sample characteristics .................................................................................. 209
Table 17 Respondents’ prior work experiences ......................................................... 211
Table 18 Graduate development program activities and transition .............................. 213
Table 19 Perceived importance and ranking of skills and other qualities .................... 215
Table 20 Principal component analysis results n=73 ................................................. 218
Table 21 Bivariate correlation matrix: ‘new’ graduate attributes and transition success ........................................ 220
Table 22 Further development activities of those on a graduate development program ......................... 223
Table 23 Further development activities of those not on a graduate development program ........................................ 224
Table 24 Percentage scores for protean and boundaryless sub-scales ....................... 225
Table 25 Career attitudes and intended length of stay with current employer ............ 226
Table 26 Correlation matrix for protean and boundaryless career orientation ............ 228
Table 27 Summary of results of quantitative analysis ................................................. 230
# List of Appendices

1. Definitions and explanation of concepts used 302
2. An analysis of literature on graduate transitions from university to employment 307
3. Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form 314
4. Biographical and contextual information about participants 317
5. Interview schedule: graduates 334
6. Card sorting 339
7. Discussion schedule: managers 343
8. Survey 344
9. Operational constructs for the survey 361
10. Ethics approval 366
11. Average ranking of skills 367
12. Average ranking of other qualities 368
13. Further development 369
14. Percentage scores for protean orientation and boundaryless mindset items 370
15. Integration of mixed methods research findings 373
Statement of contribution to co-authored papers

Conferences


Other Presentations


Poster

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## List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAGE</td>
<td>Australian Association of Graduate Employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSC</td>
<td>Australian Public Service Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS</td>
<td>Boundaryless Mindset</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>Employee Assistance Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Graduate Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grad2</td>
<td>Label for second survey to organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSOQ</td>
<td>Knowledge, Skills and Other Qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMR</td>
<td>Mixed Methods Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMP</td>
<td>Organisational Mobility Preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUA</td>
<td>Open Universities Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Self-directed</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMEs</td>
<td>Small and Medium Sized Enterprises</td>
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<td>SOQ</td>
<td>Skills and Other Qualities</td>
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<td>VD</td>
<td>Values-driven</td>
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Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis explores graduates’ experiences during their transition from university to professional employment, with a specific focus on how graduates use and evaluate their attributes for managing their careers at this early stage. As organisations evolved in response to the pressures of an increasingly competitive environment there have been significant changes to the nature of work. This is of interest to graduates, universities and employers because graduates expect universities to offer degree programs that prepare them adequately for the challenges of the changing world of work and employers expect graduates to make an efficient transition to effective employee. Accordingly, governments, universities, employers and careers organisations have called for research into whether university adequately prepares graduates for work. This thesis addresses these calls by examining how graduates make the transition from university to employment and what factors ease the transition into this crucial stage of their careers.

This chapter sets the broad context for this research, which is the changing world of work. In this context, new graduates’ careers are explored along with the use, and value of, graduate attributes that have been developed at university and subsequently applied in professional employment. This chapter identifies the background to the research problem, explains the significance of the research, provides justification for the research design, discusses the specific terms and definitions of key concepts used in the thesis, acknowledges delimitations in scope and outlines the structure of the remaining thesis.

Background to the research problem

The changing employment environment means that, as they commence their careers, graduates have to differentiate themselves in order to gain employment and to demonstrate
their current and projected value to potential employers. The data available on graduates’ sense of preparedness for this task is encouraging, but not the optimum. For example, the annual AAGE Graduate Survey examines graduates’ perceptions of how well their university degree had prepared them for the job they held at the time of the survey. In 2014, of graduates who had completed in 2013, only six percent felt their studies made them ‘very prepared’ for their current job; the majority, three-fifths, felt ‘reasonably prepared’, rating their level of preparation either 5 or 6 out of 7 (Australian Association of Graduate Employers, 2014). This indicates that there is some misalignment between the learning and preparation that occurs at university and what graduates expect when they enter employment.

Graduates’ learning and preparation involves developing their knowledge, skills and other qualities KSOQs which can then be transferred into employment. Drawing on the work of Barrie (2004) and others, these qualities are grouped together and referred to as graduate attributes. Graduate attributes and specific skills, such as critical thinking, have been a key aspect of the curriculum debate since the mid-nineteenth century (Bledsoe, 1955). Transferability of attributes has long been an educational and employment issue (Nabi, 2003), but rapid changes in the world of work lead to a widening gap between actual and required knowledge, and for enhanced transferability of attributes. In addition, graduates seek careers that represent a return on their investment in their degrees (Tomlinson, 2008). Arguably, they desire careers into which they can have some input and use their knowledge and attributes.

The first year of employment is critical. If graduates are recruited based on their attributes (Geall, Harvey, & Moon, 1997; Hager & Holland, 2006; Sanguinetti, Waterhouse, & Maunders, 2004), this transition period is a crucial time for demonstrating their capacity to transfer their attributes, and thus become effective employees (Duberley, Mallon, & Cohen, 2006). A successful transition, therefore, with opportunities to demonstrate attributes, affects
immediate (and potentially later) career success and employee effectiveness. A successful transition is thus vital both for graduates themselves and for their employing organisations.

The burgeoning literature on career attitudes is relevant in this context. There are a variety of approaches to careers, encompassed in two broad fields, one based on traditional approaches (Bird, 1994) and the other on a more contemporary approach (Arthur, 2008). Traditional careers tend to be more organisationally determined (Hall, 1976), while alternative approaches view careers as more individually determined (Tams & Arthur, 2010). Contemporary careers concepts, therefore, focus on the role of career agency, the changing nature of careers, and the ownership and management of careers by individuals (Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006; Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh, & Roper, 2012). Graduates’ transition to professional employment is their first crucial step in their career, wherein they and their employers determine who is in control of their careers. These three key concepts frame this research – the nature of transition, graduate attributes and the concept of career agency - they are briefly reviewed in the following sections.

**Theoretical and conceptual domains**

Graduates entering employment compete for employment in which they can showcase their attributes comprising knowledge skills and other qualities KSOQs. Contemporary organisations require graduates who have the ability to transfer their attributes into work processes. An important premise underlying this thesis is that graduates who are proactive in recognising opportunities to transfer their attributes into employment, contribute in a more meaningful way to shaping their careers than those who are not proactive. This premise is developed further in Chapter 2 Literature review but emerges from aligning extant research on graduate attributes and careers such as Jackson (2016), on career success and proactivity such as Tolentino et. al., (2016) and career attitudes, such as boundaryless and protean attitudes...
(Briscoe & Hall, 2006). For the purpose of this thesis the boundaryless attitude, taken from Briscoe and Finkelstein, (2009, p. 243), is explained as one where graduates transcend multiple organisational and personal boundaries regardless of constraints as they decide on various career opportunities. Protean attitude is defined as having the ability to change according to one's career environment (Hall, 2004) which, for graduates, means having an attitude wherein they are self-directed to change their career path to suit the environment providing a more individual vantage of careers.

However, little is known about graduates' experiences of the role their attributes play in their careers, especially in the first year of professional employment, even though much literature exists about graduate careers. Similarly, the use and value of graduate attributes during this transition – from the perspectives of graduates themselves – are under-researched. These gaps provide the basis for this research. A schematic description between these concepts and the context and focus of this research is presented in Figure 1.
Figure 1 The research context

In addition to showing the broad context of the research - changing world of work, Figure 1 depicts how graduates’ perceptions of their attributes may change in response to the changing needs of employers. It also shows how the inter-relationship between graduates’ attributes, graduates’ transition experiences and graduates’ careers and career attitudes may affect graduates’ perceptions of their attributes. This research on graduate attributes and their value to graduates and employers is situated within this important context. The employment context has undergone rapid changes as a result of technological developments, and shifts from local and national organisations to global organisations offering global occupations, both of which require enhanced educational and skills levels to apply to ever-changing work processes.
in fluid times (Castells, 2011). In addition, shifts towards global work processes are supported by new economic structures which shape graduates through the performance of work, conditions of employment and the impact of paid work on social identity (Giddens, 1991).

As indicated, changes to the nature of work have multiple impacts that affect graduates. First, they affect the curriculum offered by universities, since graduates’ learning experiences help shape their attributes. Second, graduates’ employment experiences are influenced by the ways in which graduates and their employers – apply their attributes in new employment contexts. One significant influence on their experiences is the availability of opportunities to transfer their attributes and to develop them further in the early stages of their careers.

This interest in graduates’ attributes and their careers and the theoretical context and domain have shaped the concepts, research questions and methods in this thesis and the subsequent conclusions reached. Just as there are many perspectives on the changing world of work there are many terms and definitions for graduate attributes and careers at wide in the research. The concept of transition also needs to be explained as it applies to graduates. Key decisions needed to be made about terms used in this thesis; these definitions are largely detailed in Chapter 2 Literature Review in the order that they are mentioned and some key examples are given in this chapter for clarification. A summary of all key terms and definitions is provided at Appendix 1 along with the page number where it is first discussed or explained.

Transition, graduate attributes and graduates’ careers are the key theoretical and conceptual domains aligned in this thesis, they are explained here commencing with transition.

**Transition**

If graduates can expect to experience a series of transitions between jobs and face more frequent employment changes, their initial transition experiences will be instrumental in shaping their careers. Three models of transition, drawn from different bodies of literature are
considered in this thesis and applied to graduates’ transition to employment. These are the psychological process involved in coming to terms with a new situation in a three-stage process of ending/letting go, explorations/neutral zone and new beginnings (Bridges, 1991, 1994, 2009). The second is the concept of liminality (Allan et al., 2015, p. e79) which conceptualises transition as made up of several key events leading to eventual adjustment; pre-liminal (separation), liminal (transition) and post-liminal (reincorporation). The third model drawn from literature on careers (Royle, 2015), recognises transition as a crucial stage of transition with important linkages to career choice and attitudes. There is limited empirical application in the literature of these transition processes, especially to graduates in transition. Some research has considered early transitions (Bishop, 2006) while other studies have focused on graduates’ experiences of transition to employment after a longer period of time, such as two years (Gedye, Fender, & Chalkley, 2004), three to five years (Holden & Hamblett, 2007), or five to ten years. Nonetheless, and perhaps surprisingly, there is limited research on the transition experiences of graduates during the first six to eighteen months of employment. Hence, one reason why this time period forms the period of interest in this thesis.

**Graduate attributes**

The terminology for graduate attributes has evolved and remains somewhat difficult to navigate. The confusion extends to the literature at wide and specifically involves skills and attributes. What this thesis calls ‘graduate attributes’ were originally referred to as ‘generic skills’ (Australian National Training Authority, 2003) and later, variously, as ‘common skills’, ‘key skills’ and more recently as ‘employability skills’ (Jackson, 2013). Leaving the terminological debate aside temporarily, previous research has focused on which skills employers want in graduates, which skills universities should develop and how they should develop them, and how to align skills mismatches and changing skills needs.
A particular concern has been methods of embedding skills and attributes into the curriculum and establishing the most appropriate methods of assessment (Barrie, 2007). As a result of this interest, many universities in Australia now have profiles of graduate attributes and most curricula now contain information about how specific skills are assessed (Barrie, 2007). Evidence of graduates’ attributes is provided in university transcripts, graduate profiles and data from the Australian government’s annual Graduate Destination Survey (Australian Association of Graduate Employers, 2014). Some graduates may now leave university with graduate profiles, validating assessment and measurement of their attributes (2012). Researchers have also questioned whether knowledge and skills are sufficient, and have added ‘other qualities’ to the mix (Bridgstock, 2009; Nunan, 1999). Therefore, skills and attributes have been discussed as similar terms in the literature and this has been clarified in Chapter 2. For example, the term ‘graduate attributes’ in this thesis is defined as the overarching term encompassing knowledge, skills and other qualities KSOQs. Definitions for KSOQs are also given and explained in Chapter 2 and shown in figure 2 later in this chapter.

Some academics regard the concept of generic SOQs as modifying earlier approaches to connecting the curriculum to employment (Clanchy & Ballard, 1995). Others associate it with a separate curriculum, or see it as an integral part of teaching content or from the perspective of student engagement in university life (Barrie, 2007). In the midst of the debates within universities and between them and employers, graduates’ own perspectives are largely missing and should not be neglected. Universities and employers have contributed to the attributes debate now graduates need to be able to contribute their ideas for how their attributes are developed and how they can apply them in professional employment.

Employers continuously rethink their networks and relationships with employees and business partners to ensure they can balance the supply of graduate challenges and developmental projects (Baruch, 2002). However, a significant contribution to the attributes
debate would be to better understand graduates’ perspectives of these networks and relationships. Traditional career development practices, discussed later, include internal job openings, formal education as part of career development, career counselling by managers and by the HRM department, lateral moves, succession planning, mentoring, dual ladders, assessment centres, development centres, career workshops, induction, special programs for ‘high-flyers’ to develop innovation and decision making and secondments (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). These career development practices are also often developed without the input of graduates, which this thesis seeks to redress.

**Careers**

Definitions of careers have also changed based upon the changing nature of work and organisations. Careers are distinguished from jobs in this thesis as jobs may be tasks within careers or work activities done and therefore not part of a pathway chosen by graduates. Definitions of careers range from ‘typical work sequences’ (Hughes in Baruch, 2006), to ‘work-related experiences, inside and outside of organisations’ (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009, p. 1543). However, using definitions from Hall (2004) and Tams and Arthur (2010) careers are defined in this thesis as sequences of work experiences, managed either by individuals in achieving personal values and growth or by organisations to gain competitive advantage.

Two particular careers concepts are important for this thesis: the boundaryless career, defined as career opportunities beyond the boundary of a single employer (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 6); and, the protean career, defined as a career in which the person, not the organisation, is in charge (Hall, 2004; Hall & Moss, 1998). However, this thesis derives a graduate protean concept using Hall (1976) explained as a career in which graduates not organisations drive their careers based more upon their own psychological success and decisions rather than upon a structure, sequence, or set of standards imposed by the
organisation. Thereby graduates protean attitude is one wherein graduates are self-directed to change their career path to suit the environment providing a more individual vantage of careers and being self-directed SD and values-driven VD. Similarly, a graduate boundaryless concept is created, drawn from Arthur (1994) where graduates’ careers are independent of organisations vocations and other bounded social and regulatory mechanisms. Graduates’ boundaryless career attitude is indicated when they transcend multiple organisational and personal boundaries regardless of constraints as they decide on various career opportunities and are demonstrating a boundaryless mindset BMS and organisational mobility preferences OMP.

This thesis builds on the operationalisation of boundaryless career concept and protean career concept attitudes (Briscoe et al., 2006), and explores the interconnection between the two with respect to applying KSOQs.

Components of the boundaryless and protean concepts identified above are: SD, VD, BMS, and OMP (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Briscoe et al., 2006). SD is explained as graduates’ ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands, VD indicates graduates’ internal values providing guidance and measures of success for their career BMS refers to graduates psychological and physical mobility or general attitude to working across organisational boundaries and OMP is the strength of interest in remaining with one or multiple employers (Briscoe, Hall, Frautschy de Muth 2006).

This thesis, therefore, aims to provide information to assist graduates in identifying their attitudes to their careers and exercising career agency independent of, or parallel to, employer efforts. Career agency as used in this thesis is explained as the proactive role graduates take in managing their careers. While traditional career patterns still prevail, graduates may be employed in, and out of, traditional and contemporary career environments and may need to have the attributes to manage their careers in both environments.
Integrating transitions, graduate attribute and careers

Graduates may benefit from a professional development program at transition, which integrates development of attributes and career management. Professional development, although frequently discussed, (Kivinen, & Nurmi, 2014), as professional practice (Jackson, 2013) as professional work experience (Jackson, 2014) and as professional life (Holmes, 2013), has not been adequately defined. It is defined more specifically here, for graduates, as continuous learning for the purpose of career advancement. From employers’ perspectives, the costs of graduate development are offset by increasing the knowledge base of the organisation and thereby its human capital (Clarke, 2009). Such development often takes place within a graduate development program GDP, which is explained specifically in this thesis from observations of graduates in their GDP as; a carefully planned, structured, outcomes based, series of events and activities for graduate recruits, to enable them to learn about organisations’ functions, culture, protocols, and values as they orient themselves into effective working practices. From graduates’ perspectives, it is worthwhile to explore if graduate attributes are developed either in graduate or professional development programs, which encourage flexibility, adaptability and future career attitudes.

The thesis develops the notion of ‘the learning career’. It follows Arthur, Claman, Defilippi, and Adams (1995), who regard graduates as possessing new knowledge and developing career attitudes even in their early transition stage in order to enhance their employability (Bridgstock, 2009, p. 33). The underlying premise of the thesis is that graduates have a contemporary attitude to careers which is shaped by opportunities in ‘traditional’ and ‘alternative’ careers contexts, emphasising the requirement for boundaryless career (Hall, 2002) and protean attitudes. Linking the idea of graduate attributes to the notion of careers, a particular focus of this thesis is to tease out how applying and developing their KSOQs links to graduates’ evolving attitude towards careers in their early transition-to-employment.
A seamless transfer, from university to employment, using graduate attributes may be expected by graduates. Graduates expect to be able to use and further develop their attributes in employment (McIlveen & Pensiero, 2008) and if such job tasks are not available, graduates may be underemployed (Nonaka, 1991, p. 97). Underemployment denies new graduates the chance to use the attributes they have acquired through university and may lead to a decline in these attributes. There will always be a gap between attributes developed at university and employer requirements, due to the continually changing nature of work (Jackson, 2009). This thesis addresses the possible gap between graduates’ perceptions of the value of their attributes and the reality of their experiences in professional employment. It may be that graduates can identify and close the gap between their expectations and reality as they take more agentic roles in transferring their attributes to employment.

**Concept map**

This chapter has introduced the three main conceptual areas for this research - graduates’ transition to professional employment, graduate attributes and graduate careers within the context of the changing world of work. Figure 2 presents the concept map for this thesis with definitions of the key concepts and indicates the interplay between graduate attributes and graduate careers during the process of transition.
Figure 2 Concept map and key definitions for this research
Although conceptually dense, Figure 2 shows the core concepts for this thesis and how literature on graduate attributes has been introduced, how graduate attributes have been clarified as KSOQs and that the most common SOQs have been identified. Similarly, contemporary careers and careers concepts have been introduced in the literature and clarified for the purpose of this thesis. The clarification of these concepts is given in Chapter 2 Literature Review.

The practical domain for the research

In addition to the theoretical domains there are practical domains of relevance to this thesis. It is significant practically as graduates’ transition experiences, attributes and careers are of interest to universities and employers in Australia, and of significant European interest too. The Bologna process, which created an integrated European higher education arena with greater linkages between higher education and employment, also had implications for graduates in Australia (Bishop, 2006). A comprehensive source, The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society: new demands on higher education in Europe (REFLEX), funded by the European Commission generated six reports (Arthur & Little, 2010). One of these reports (report 6, Graduates Retrospective Views on Higher Education) explored graduates’ views of the relationship between university and employment.

In Australia, AAGE represents employers who recruit and develop graduates. AAGE does this by creating and developing relationships between employers, with universities and industry associations, conducting research and sharing best practice. The Graduate Survey research conducted by AAGE focuses on employee profiles, satisfaction levels and expectations and plans for the future, which until 2011 was collected in the Graduate Development and Research Survey. While AAGE research generally focuses on surveying the relationship between what graduates do at university and in employment in Australia from
employers’ perspectives, this thesis will focus on the experiences of graduates in employment and in utilising their KSOQs to establish if and how these KSOQs are what employers expect.

In practical terms, therefore, this research makes a significant contribution to identifying common SOQs avoiding ambiguity between graduates, universities and employers. Other practical implications are in addressing the use and value of KSOQs as graduate attributes to graduates and their employers upon transition to employment. The application of KSOQs, for example during GDP or orientation activities, might indicate their transferability and value. With regard to graduates’ careers, this research is significant in that as graduates make their first transition and use their attributes to commence their careers, employers may observe a specific attitude that graduates might have towards their careers. This may indicate to employers how graduates may take responsibility for their careers.

Therefore, the practical domain for this thesis includes, but is not restricted to, large bureaucratic organisations that employ large numbers of graduates comprising government and private organisations. They are organisations in Australia employing skilled graduates entering professional work with mostly business and commerce degrees. This practical domain anchors the research to the changing world of work, acknowledging that the accelerating process of change affects all organisations and is dependent on sector, industry, degree of internationalisation and the nature of management. This thesis will, therefore, contribute to existing knowledge by complementing current university and employer-based quantitative research.

Commencement of the data collection for the thesis started in 2013 which was a challenging year for graduates with implications for this research as most participants completed their degrees in 2013. The 2013 Graduate Destinations Survey indicated that just 71.3 percent of bachelor degree graduates who sought full-time work found it within four months of completing their courses. This was the lowest since 1993, when just 71.2 percent...
were in full-time work (18.1 percent were working part-time or casually while looking for full-time employment and 10.6 percent were not working) (Graduate Careers Australia, 2013). As graduates enter their careers within this environment, there are implications for career orientation. It is likely that their career experiences will be more varied and they will work with more employers than previous cohorts. Thus the broad context of the changing workplace has implications for graduates’ capacity to learn from discontinuous career experiences (Tams & Arthur, 2010) and the transferability of their attributes into their evolving careers.

**Statement of purpose and research aims**

This thesis arises from, and builds on, three bodies of literature, namely graduate transition to employment, graduate attributes and graduate career attitudes. As a consequence of calls for research into the effectiveness of university degrees in employment, there has been an increase in research culminating in appropriate skills for the curriculum (Barrie, 2007; Collet, Hine, & du Plessis, 2015) or conversely focusing on the transfer of one skill such as communication into employment (Jackson, 2016). Much research has focused on the delivery and measurement of graduate attributes in the curriculum, and the findings have helped universities to develop curricula and measure educational outcomes, as well as assisting employers in designing graduate development programs GDPs. However, little is known about how graduates perceive their attributes in their early professional employment. Despite this research, there is limited consensus between universities and employers regarding what KSOQs best suit the needs of both and little attention given to how graduates might assist in identifying the most appropriate KSOQs. With respect to career attitudes, while there is a large body of scholarly work covering diverse approaches such as protean and boundaryless attitudes (Briscoe et al., 2006; Gubler, Arnold, & Coombs, 2013; Hall & Moss, 1998), there is limited research specifically examining how graduates shape their early careers, drawing on their
graduate attributes. Finally, research about graduates’ experiences of the transition to employment mostly focuses on a longer transition duration and not the very early stages. It can be argued that existing research is inconsistent in providing a complete solution to the attributes needed of graduates and how to manage their careers especially at this crucial early stage of their careers. However, the number of graduates is growing in response the needs of employers for qualified and skilled graduates who must compete effectively for the reducing number of graduate positions.

A key purpose of this thesis is to contribute towards resolving inconsistencies in the literature on what graduate attributes are, including the debate about varying lists of skills and other qualities that are component parts of graduate attributes. It is argued that graduate attributes are developed at university in response to employers’ needs, which does not attend to asking graduates what attributes they need. A second argument is that it is assumed that graduates make a smooth transition to employment from university. Research into graduates’ transition to employment has rarely been accounted for until recently (Jackson, 2016) and especially into the use and value of all of their attributes during this crucial phase. Further, this thesis is designed to explore the possibility that a smooth transition could be assisted by the use of graduate attributes and how this may shape graduates’ early career attitudes.

Much research focuses on attributes and careers from an education perspective and there is a gap identified to explore the management perspective. As this research focuses on graduates in the early stages of employment this research focuses on the management domain specifically human resources management HRM.

In sum, this research explores three important and inter-related issues: graduates’ experiences of their transition to professional employment, graduates’ attributes during this transition and graduates’ career attitudes. In so doing, this research addresses three important matters: first, the gap between graduates’ expectations of transition and the reality; second,
their perceptions of the value of their attributes and the reality of their application in professional employment; and, third, how graduates’ early career attitudes can be understood.

In the wider global context mentioned above, these issues are significant to all stakeholders including graduates, universities and employers. This significance is in determining how to develop appropriate graduate attributes, in developing graduates’ awareness of early careers and transition and, in recognising the interplay between graduate attributes and careers theory during this crucial transition. Chapter 2, Literature Review, identifies significant gaps in the literature on graduate attributes, specifically the use and value of graduate attributes during the crucial period of transition to professional employment. Chapter 2 also finds gaps in the literature on career attitudes during the transition to professional employment. In sum, limited literature exists which explores the role of graduate attributes during transition to professional employment and in shaping graduates’ career agency. This thesis addresses these gaps in order to extend extant knowledge regarding graduate attributes and career agency during the transition to professional employment.

Therefore, the research questions are:

*What are graduates’ perceptions of their attributes for shaping their careers when making their first career transition from university to professional employment?*

The subsidiary questions are as follows:

1. *How do graduates negotiate the transition from university to professional employment?*
2. *What is the value of graduates’ attributes during this transition?*
3. *What is the role of graduates’ career agency during their transition to professional employment?*

Having highlighted the overall aims of the research and introduced the research questions, the next section describes the design and scope of the research.
Research design and scope

The three areas aligned and researched in this thesis use a combination of qualitative and quantitative to explore factors that may affect how graduates shape their careers during the first transition to employment. In order to address the research question and subsidiary questions and, in particular, to capture graduates’ perspectives, an inductive, interpretive process was considered ideal. The theoretical drive, which refers to the overall inductive or deductive direction of the inquiry (Wolfe, Wilkins, Niehaus, & Morse, 2006) was a qualitative one (Morse & Niehaus, 2009), but the method also involved a quantitative component, leading to a mixed method (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Wolfe et al., 2006).

The core, qualitative component involved interviews and a card-sorting task to elicit graduates’ accounts of their early career experiences and how they applied and developed their KSOQs. The supplementary quantitative component comprised surveys and written career extracts to establish the value of KSOQs and graduates’ perceptions of their careers. Minor supplementary data was also collected from a review of documents about GDPs and data from national graduate surveys. Both reviews were subsidiary and designed to set the primary data collection in a broader context. Extant data from the course experience component of the Australian Graduate Surveys for 2012 and 2013 was evaluated for an overview of trends in graduate experiences Minor supplementary data was also collected from informal discussions with some graduates’ managers and documentary information from surveys by AAGE. As explained in Chapter 3, Methodology and Methods this research design evolved from a qualitative method to mixed methods as problems with access to large numbers of new graduates became evident during the early stages of data collection and new opportunities to conduct surveys in a large organisation arose.

The mixed methods were based on the concepts of resolving tensions in choosing between qualitative and quantitative methods in the ‘paradigm wars’ (Tashakkori & Teddlie,
Data was analysed and integrated based on a model by Morse and Niehaus (2009, p. 56) and notation developed further by Cameron (2012). The analysis of findings and discussion of results is based on a GRAMMS (Good Reporting of a Mixed Methods Study) model (Cameron, Dwyer, Richardson, Ahmed, & Sukumaran, 2013). This model was developed from an existing six-part framework, (O’Cathain, Murphy, & Nicholl, 2008, p. 97). The first part of the framework focuses first on the justification for using mixed methods. The second part presents a description of the design purpose, priority and sequence of methods. The third part gives a description of each method in terms of sampling, data collection and analysis, then where integration has occurred. The fourth part shows how integration occurred and who participated in it. The fifth part gives a description of the limitation of one method associated with the presence of the other method. Finally, the sixth part provides insights gained from mixing or integrating methods.

Participants were graduates in their first six to eighteen months of professional employment in the public and private sectors in 2014 when the data was collected, and professionally employed near-graduates who were in the final stages of an online degree. In total, 25 graduates (or near-graduates in the case of the online students) were interviewed and 122 participants were surveyed (who included the 25 interviewees). Additional data were collected from 44 written careers extracts of near-graduates. Full details are provided in Chapter 3, Methodology and Methods.

There are a number of ways in which the scope of this thesis is intentionally limited. This thesis is a business management thesis as it focuses on graduates’ transition to employment. However, there are delimitations with regard to transition and graduate attributes, which are employers’ perspectives on inclusion and assessment within a GDP. This thesis is also not an education thesis because it does not explore universities’ perspectives on inclusion and assessment of graduate attributes within the university curricula. Similarly, this thesis is
not intended to develop and test a new conceptual model for assessing career agency, but rather offers an integrated understanding of the roles of graduate attributes and graduates’ career attitudes during their transition from university to employment. Delimitations which have some impact, but which are not explored in depth with regard to careers, are the creation of a new theoretical careers concept and a new measure of career agency. Delimitations with regard to methods pertain to more sophisticated quantitative analyses such as regression or structural equation modelling which were not used because the quantitative component was supplementary and in some instances the sample size was too small for these analyses.

**Perspectives on the research problem**

Varying opinions exist on the roles of universities and employers in developing attributes for employment. The perspective taken in this thesis, of the legitimate role of universities in educating its graduates and the responsibility of graduate employees and their employers in relation to work and careers, draws from research for this thesis. Universities are now charged with developing curricula to prepare graduates’ knowledge, attributes and careers awareness, for employment. In addition to updating curriculum content of degrees, universities have incorporated activities to develop graduate attributes required by employers. However, with the rapidity of changes in the world of work and as the result of the duration of a degree there is naturally a time lag in developing current graduate attributes ready for the changing needs of employers. The differences between what employers want and what universities provide could be due to this time lag and also to the missing perspective of graduates themselves about their attributes and career attitude. While this view is taken in this thesis, it is based on the premise that graduates’ perspectives of their attributes or their levels of career awareness are not sought. Certainly the inclusion of graduate attributes and career awareness interventions indicates that university education preparation for employment, and graduate employees assist employers with their objectives and success. This thesis investigates what
impact these interventions and curriculum changes have on graduates’ successful transition to their careers from their perspective.

Graduates have invested a lot of time and money into their degrees thereby taking responsibility of their careers and may seek out employers who wish to continue their development so that they may remain competitive. The role of universities in preparing graduates for employment and the role of organisations in continuing this development have changed in response to competitive pressures. Therefore, a dynamic career attitude, putting more emphasis on graduates’ responsibility for developing their attributes as they work with more employers than in the past, may be the contemporary normative approach to graduates’ careers.

Overview of remaining chapters

Chapter 2, Literature Review addresses the changing world of work, graduate attributes, graduates’ transitions to employment, the impact of changes on graduates’ careers, and the (limited) literature on graduates’ experiences in their first professional role. This chapter identifies gaps in the literature, clarifies decisions around the terminology and definitions used and explains the reasons for the research question and subsidiary questions. Chapter 3, Methodology and Methods, explains the research paradigms and philosophical considerations in developing the research question that inform the research design. The qualitative core and quantitative supplementary components of a mixed methods approach are justified. It explains how mixed methods (Morse & Niehaus, 2009) have been applied to analyse and integrate the findings.

Chapter 4, Qualitative Findings, presents the data from the interviews, card sorting task and careers extracts regarding graduates’ experiences during their transition under a number of key themes such as their transition year overall, events where they used their SOQs and their
perception of their careers. Chapter 5, Quantitative Findings, presents survey findings regarding graduates’ KSOQs, their career attitudes and mindset and how they perceive their career development to date.

Chapter 6, Discussion, combines the findings and analysis from Chapters 4 and 5 in order to answer the research question and the subsidiary questions. The discussion addresses the first theme transition and identity, prior experience and transfer of learning. The second theme, graduate attributes, is discussed with graduates’ perception of the value of their KSOQs in the workplace, additional SOQs graduates identify from their experiences, their perceived ability at the KSOQs, and their contribution to transition success, the ‘new’ graduate attributes and the graduate attributes profile. The third theme of graduate careers is discussed with regard to graduates’ role in employment, what a career is to graduates, their protean and boundaryless attitudes, graduates’ further development and career preparation at university. Of significance in this discussion is the introduction of a new careers concept which has emerged from this research – the learning career. The ‘learning career’ is proposed to supplement existing careers theory. The learning career integrates the concepts of graduate attributes, careers and transition from graduates’ point of view.

Chapter 7, Conclusion, summarises the notable contributions to the research, implications for all stakeholders, graduates, universities and employers. Limitations of the research and future directions for research are also presented here.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is four-fold. It demonstrates the impact of the changing world of work on organisations and specifically on graduates, as new employees, to provide an understanding of the context in which they commence their careers. It also shows the growing interest in how graduates negotiate their first transition from university to employment in the changing world of work, and identifies key features of transition during the early stages of employment. It is important to graduates, employers and universities to identify these features in order to align graduates’ needs and employers’ needs during this period and improve the transition experience for future graduates. Consideration is given to whether graduate attributes are key features shaping graduates’ transition along with an understanding of how attributes may be applied to assist the transition process. Finally, attention is given to contemporary careers concepts; whether they vary as the result of the changing world of work and how this may affect graduates’ attitudes towards their careers. In understanding graduates’ attitudes towards their careers and how they manage their careers by responding to the needs of employers using learning from university, tensions around differing expectations of graduates and employers are identified.

This chapter is organised into six sections. The first section considers the context of the changing world of work in order to establish the work context in which graduates become professionals and considers the impact on graduates. The second section reviews the graduate attributes debate and consolidates and synthesises the attributes required by employers, specified in the literature. A major criticism of this body of literature is the large number and overlapping nature of lists of attributes from different sources. This chapter synthesises these lists, proposing a common set of attributes. This section also identifies the gaps in the literature
with respect to how graduates’ attributes are applied in employment, especially in the transition stage. The third section considers transition models and analyses existing research on graduates’ transition experiences from university graduates to their first professional roles in their careers.

The fourth section explores the nature of careers in the changing world of work and the changing definitions of careers and analyses the effects of varying careers concepts on graduates’ careers. The implications of graduates working in traditional and alternative careers and shifts in responsibility for careers are reviewed. In particular, the key concepts of boundaryless and protean attitudes are explored. This progresses to literature on career agency with definitions and implications for graduates. The fifth section culminates in a theoretical framework that deals with the complexity of the different literature and integrates the concepts in a way rarely done (Yorke & Harvey, 2005, p. 89), or explained as ambiguous (Jackson, 2014, p.221) yet frequently called for (Collet, Hine, & du Plessis, 2015, p.553). The sixth and final section of the literature review presents a synthesis of the gaps in the literature to show how these have informed the research questions for this thesis and analysis and clarification of three separate but related concepts of transition, graduate attributes and careers.

**The changing world of work**

This section sets the broad context for the research by exploring contemporary changes in the world of work, brought about by the transformation of social and economic structures in Australia and globally. As part of this exploration, implications for employers as well as employees, particularly graduates who are commencing their careers as considered. Work has changed over time. Society has evolved from pre-industrial to industrial, then to post-industrial or modernist, then to postmodern and an information technology-driven era (Robertson, 1988). The context and nature of work have continued to evolve with each era. The industrial era
(roughly 1750-1850) came with the Industrial Revolution. The post-industrial era, roughly from 1950-1960, saw manufacturing replaced by services as the dominant work activity (Bell, 1976; de Foucaud, 1996). The post-industrial era has been further delineated into phases of ‘modernity’ and ‘postmodernity’. Modernity is characterised by industrialisation and the division of labour (Delanty, 2007) and is a shorthand term for modern society. Alternatively, some speak of industrial civilisation (Giddens, 1998), which they argue ended in the 1980s-1990s. Postmodernity, also labelled high modernity (Giddens, 1991) or liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000), is characterised by risk and uncertainty (Beck, 1986). The postmodern phase has also been labelled post-materialism (Inglehart, 1981), the knowledge economy (Drucker, 1993), post-Fordism (Kumar, 2005) and the network society (Castells, 2011). All of these terms refer to changes in organisations (in relation to technology, knowledge or globalisation), which involve the commodification of knowledge and a passage from solid time to liquid time, meaning times of challenge and uncertainty (Bauman, 2013).

Technologies have enabled the development of this network society through the changing context of work from local to global (Castells, 2004). Technologies have also changed the nature of work and provided greater interconnection between all types of work, such as paid, formal, unpaid, informal and domestic work (Glucksmann, 1995). These changes have inevitably altered the relationships between individuals, employment and society at large; they have also shaped the individual employee and their identity (Watson, 2008, p. 67) who must adapt to this changing context.

The overall point that requires emphasis here is that socio-economic structures shape individuals by influencing the conditions that affect the performance of work, the conditions of employment and the impact of paid work on social identity (Giddens, 1991). Since the environment in which work takes place shapes the nature of work and the relationship between work and employees, the intermediary forces that enable this shaping are significant. Scholars...
have argued that the broader context of work is based not on the micro-economics of supply and demand, or on macro-economic aggregate demand, but on the meso-economic importance of the structures enabling economic transactions (Strangleman & Warren, 2008, p. 15).

**The adaptive employee in the postmodern era**

Changes to the nature of employment influence the relationship between work and individuals and affect how organisations design jobs and manage employees. With the expansion of the services sector, the nature of work for many has shifted from craft and trades requiring physical skills and craft knowledge, to knowledge work that is strongly focused on organisations’ customers, both external and internal (Barley & Kunda, 2001). Attitudes to the value of work and participation in work have also changed. Work for sustenance, as in the pre-industrial era, was replaced in the industrial era by work for the business owner’s profit. Employees were generally ‘subjected to a high degree of managerial control in the industrial era’ (Edgell, 2006, p. 48), creating feelings of powerlessness and a lack of purpose and fulfilment, which led to social isolation, self-estrangement and boredom (Blauner, 1964). While high-control strategies that hinder employees’ careers are still common among some managers (Arthur, Claman, Defilippi, & Adams, 1995), some organisations are developing practices today to increase employees’ empowerment and autonomy.

As a consequence of employees’ more recent empowerment and autonomy, scholars argue that significant changes have occurred in the employment relationship (Gallie, White, Cheng, & Tomlinson, 1998). As tacit knowledge is a key feature of labour power in professional jobs, employers increasingly depend on the exercise of more intangible forms of labour power than in the past (Strangleman & Warren, 2008, p. 30). Twentieth century flexible specialisation offered customised products to diversified markets. It involved the development of trusting and cooperative relationships between employers and employees as well as relationships with other organisations and employees were required to utilise their technical
skills (Watson, 2008). In addition, the employment relationship, once a collective experience of control, is becoming more individualised and defined by what individuals consume rather than the work they do and from this perspective, the concept of ‘work’ has to some extent become marginalised (Bauman, 2004). However, the returns for graduates from their careers other than pay may derive from changes in their perceptions of the value and application of their attributes in employment and greater self-management in more diverse careers, both of which potentially give them more control over their careers.

The postmodern phase of the post-industrial era resulted in post-bureaucratic Weberian organisations (Hecksher & Donnellon, 1994) but with flexible methods of organising (Bolin & Harenstam, 2008). Some observers argue that such organisations are hybrids requiring a new approach from employees while managers continue to operate a traditional bureaucracy (Josserand, Teo, & Clegg, 2006). Examples of such work include project work with project organisation structures (Hodgson, 2004), although bureaucratic forms of organising continue (Bolin & Harenstam, 2008). Such theoretical explanations of evolving organisational forms lack detail about what individuals actually do and the attributes they need (Barley & Kunda, 2001).

This lack of clarity about emerging work practices in post-bureaucratic organisations may present uncertainties for employees. In short, as a result of these changes, employee attributes are now more vital to organisations than in earlier times. Understanding how graduates use their attributes to navigate the transition to employment in the changing world of work is therefore an important issue; it is explored in the following subsection.

**Impacts of the changing world of work on graduate employees**

Graduates are a special group of employees to investigate in the context of the changing world of work. They are different to existing employees; they are new to the volatile world of work, they have developed new graduate attributes to previous graduates, they are likely to
have different expectations and may accept more frequent changes, particularly career changes. Employers seek to become competitive in fluid times with different markets and technologies (Castells, 2011) and may expect graduates to be equipped for such challenges as they commence work. Graduates face a variety of work opportunities that require a flexible approach to managing their careers as well as these particular challenges. As graduates seek opportunities for career advancement, and as organisations change, the notion of the permanent job for life is eroding (Arthur, 1994; Baruch, 2002). A consequence of this is that graduates may encounter different employment opportunities and a range of roles with a variety of employers throughout their careers, rather than a predictable career progression with one employer (Tams & Arthur, 2010). This changing world also requires employees to adopt new approaches to managing their careers.

The fluid nature of work and employer requirements shape how graduates transfer their attributes in employment. Conflicts between imperatives of profit maximisation (Watson, 2008, p. 253), traditional management control and the need for flexibility present challenges to both employers and employees. For graduates who are relatively new to professional employment, the role and identity they had as students is greatly altered by the employment context (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002) and requires a proactive transfer of graduate attributes. The neo-liberal forces that affect the values, worldviews and practices that dominate work, pressure graduates to take responsibility for themselves, and in the process ‘shape’ themselves into employable graduates (Hill, Walkington, & France, 2016). The term ‘professional employment’, normally applies to those with a specific identity such as health or engineering. Professional employment has been explained as the estimated point where 90 per cent of employed graduates in a given country are in jobs that are considered as professional by that country’s standard occupational classification (Kivinen & Nurmi, 2014). It also refers to employment in which attributes are marketable features, enhanced by higher academic learning
and which are sought by employers for profitable growth in a global competitive environment (Kivinen & Nurmi, 2014). For the purpose of this thesis however, this definition has been simplified to employment that requires a degree and incorporates KSOQs as the marketable attributes within degrees. This is simplified because a degree denotes higher academic learning and is typically achieved for employment in today’s competitive economy.

While some consequences of changes to the world of work have been described as detrimental to a fair and just society, they also present opportunities for identity formation through individual agency, choice and the deliberate creation of self (Watson, 2008, p. 251). Organisations today are beset by these multiple contradictions. Graduate employees are absorbed into a culture of enterprise, in which traditional contracts of employment have been replaced by transactional agreements. This might not be as confronting for graduates as for other employees, as graduates are less likely to have prior experience of traditional systems.

Changing work practices demand flexibility, quick thinking and versatility (Strangleman & Warren, 2008, p. 131). If employers want graduates to be flexible, to learn and manage complex routines and adapt them rapidly as circumstances change, and to have some capacity to control their work practices, then managers must handle the tensions this creates. Managers are expected to exert both direct control, which generally applies more to low-skilled jobs, and indirect control, which generally applies to skill-rich jobs (Watson, 2008, p. 151) such as those of graduates. Ideally managers are required to mentor rather than control, but under some circumstances they may find it difficult to identify and develop employee capability and commitment in ways that are concordant with the principles of good mentoring (Watson 2008, p. 154). If management practices are contradictory, the resultant tensions may influence graduates’ initial perceptions of work and present them with difficult challenges.

The challenges for graduates are considerable. An emphasis on sophisticated teamwork places a high value on technical and professional skills, making higher education a condition
of entry into post-industrial society. Social skills have gained importance, especially as service work becomes more common (Edgell, 2006, p. 57). Contemporary education for the knowledge age focuses on attributes needed for knowledge building (Bereiter, 2002). Life chances and access to resources and opportunities (Davis & Moore, 1945), are still valid in terms of assisting graduates to develop, but graduates need to be more proactive in identifying and using these resources and opportunities.

Relationships are all-important. New graduates, like other professional employees, are required to manage their interaction with others, such as in service provision regarding colleagues and managers as internal customers. This example of using intellectual resources characterises a successful organisation and an ‘intelligent enterprise’ (Arthur et al., 1995) as will be discussed later in this chapter. This means that in the early phase of professional employment, graduates may need to focus on fostering trusting professional relationships within the complex networks of the organisation, including its suppliers and clients. Each of these aspects has implications for how graduates assimilate into professional employment, acquire organisation-specific social skills and develop relationships to provide and manage service work. These changes may also impact on what is expected of graduates as they commence professional employment. Graduate attributes need to be aligned with continually emerging forms of work, which are occurring through more rapid and frequent changes than in the past.

The impact of changing eras, economic society, meso-structures, and interactions, affect the nature of work and graduates’ experiences of work. These changes in the world of work may have an impact on the formation of graduates’ understanding of the value of their attributes. Because graduates’ attributes help determine their success in the workplace, the opportunity for them to identify, develop and use these attributes is instrumental to transition
to professional employment. The fluid nature of work today may require graduates to apply their attributes flexibly to changing roles and different employment situations.

**Graduate attributes**

The debate on graduate attributes has been an ongoing one in both industry reports and in the academic literature for several decades. In the early 1990s, a key Australian report, the Mayer Report (1992, p. 4), benchmarked the role of graduate attributes (then referred to as ‘generic skills’ or ‘the 7 key competencies’) and their linkages between education and work (Australian National Training Authority, 2003). Another Australian report, Learning for Life (West, 1998), found that many employers were critical of the theoretical bias of graduate education which they argued was inappropriate for contemporary organisations. West also suggested that feedback from employers may help determine what graduate attributes were needed for professional employment, in addition to those that universities already sought to address in their curricula. This feedback from employers included other practical and intellectual attributes thereby lengthening the list of desirable graduate attributes. In Australia, most universities now claim that graduates have mastered a set of university-prescribed attributes, although descriptors of those attributes vary considerably (Barrie, 2007; Green, Hammer, & Star, 2009). However, Jackson (2014) argues that despite university and employer contributions an attributes gap will always remain in times of constant change, suggesting that universities are driven to focus on immediate employer needs.

This section explores relevant debates about graduate attributes and their importance during the early career phases including a discussion of the various definitions of the term and what it encompasses. This thesis explores how graduates perceive their attributes in transition to professional employment. Therefore, it is important to be clear about how ‘attributes’ are defined for the purpose of this thesis, since definitional ambiguity is identified in the ‘graduate
attributes’ literature. Further, it is important not only to clarify definitions, but to examine research on the phenomenon (in this case, graduate attributes) in action, which is done in the penultimate subsection. The section concludes with an analysis of the literature on the employers’ role in developing graduate attributes, which is also central to a thesis on transition to employment.

**Graduate attributes: Definitions and terminology**

Various terms have been used to describe the attributes that graduates bring to professional employment in addition to knowledge from their degrees, including skills and other (more amorphous) qualities. Definitions of graduate attributes vary (Barrie, 2004; Bridgstock, 2009; Gera, 2011; Green, Hammer, & Star, 2009; Hager & Holland, 2006). For example Barrie (2004, p. 262), uses the definition of graduate attributes drawn from Bowden, Hart, Trigwell & Watts (2002); namely, that they are ‘qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students would desirably develop during their time at the institution and consequently shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession’. Hager and Holland (2006) explain attributes in broad terms as features of university graduates which are applicable in a range of contexts. Both definitions are important in influencing this research; the first one makes the link to qualities and the second one discusses features and varying contexts which are also evident in a later explanation of graduate attributes. Also important to this thesis is reference to the overarching term: ‘graduate attributes’ as a mix of features that employers require of graduates (Rigby et al., 2009) as this research identifies those features as SOQs. I follow Barrie (2004, p. 263) in arguing that there is an opportunity for ‘new wisdom’, which can help graduates to own and apply the process and resources for the application of their graduate attributes. As there may be more career opportunities, and as graduates are required to be more flexible in varied employment situations, it is useful in this thesis to consider graduate attributes.
A formulation used by many authors to represent graduate attributes is summarised by the acronym KSA; that is, knowledge, skills and abilities (Barley, 1997; Duberley, Mallon, & Cohen, 2006) or alternatively as knowledge, skills and attitudes (Blanchard & Thacker, 2013). These authors discuss knowledge as a component of graduate attributes which is the approach taken in this thesis, where the term KSA is modified to KSOQs, with ‘other qualities’ being a catch-all term to include many amorphous elements of graduate’s attributes not captured by the labels of ‘knowledge’ and ‘skill’.

The lesser-researched role of graduates’ other qualities is also explored, as it is important to determine how graduates’ other qualities combine with knowledge and skills. In this review of the literature the term ‘graduate attributes’ is changed from being a term currently used for SOQs, which are complementary to knowledge, to the overarching term for all of graduate attributes. References to what are broadly regarded as graduate attributes in the literature – such as generic skills, personal attributes, competencies, abilities, capabilities and qualities – are subordinated to the term attributes for the purpose of this thesis. Therefore, this thesis posits that KSOQs become the specific mix of features required of graduates namely ‘graduate attributes’ thus presenting a consolidated and more clear conceptual framework for graduate attributes.

The importance of valid skills lists for employers and universities is recognised as is the lack of a framework is lamented (Collet et al., 2015) and a ‘failure to generate second and third generation skills frameworks that are empirically meaningful is a missed opportunity’ (p. 553). This thesis responds to these problems with a clarification of the components and new definitions of graduate attributes from analysis of the literature. These are shown in in Figure 3 which is a conceptual summary of graduate attributes developed for application in this thesis, with definitions given in Chapter 1 Introduction.
Graduate attributes

The overarching term encompassing knowledge, skills and other qualities

Knowledge

Standard curriculum content of the university degree that helps individuals prosper in situations of multiple interpretations and creative problem solving

Skills

Demonstrable generic abilities, alongside knowledge, are developed through life experiences, university, then transferred into professional employment

Other qualities

The more amorphous characteristics complementary to knowledge and skills, which can be managed by graduates in their careers

Figure 3 A conceptual summary, with definitions, for graduate attributes as the overarching term for knowledge, skills and other qualities
The following three subsections define and explain the components of graduates’ attributes as they are used in this thesis and as summarised in Figure 3.

**Knowledge component of graduate attributes**

The definition of ‘knowledge’ is complex and contested. One definition classifies knowledge as either explicit or tacit. Explicit knowledge is defined as that which can be transmitted to others for use (Baartman & de Bruijn, 2011; Burton, Westen, & Kowalski, 2009; Hillage & Pollard, 1999). Tacit knowledge is knowledge embedded in individuals’ experiences, and is therefore difficult to transmit. An alternative approach to defining knowledge is to divide it into three components: First, traditional formal knowledge (mode 1 knowledge); second, supplementary knowledge that prepares employees for a complex world (mode 2 knowledge); and third, knowledge that helps individuals prosper in situations of multiple interpretations and creative problem solving (mode 3 knowledge) (Bird, 1994; Nonaka, 1991). For the purpose of this thesis, however, graduate knowledge is the standard curriculum content of the university degree, and therefore closest to those used by Nonaka and Bird in defining explicit knowledge. For the three modes of knowledge, the distinctions made between knowledge, skills and other qualities are identified here as somewhat artificial for this thesis. That is, skills are knowledge in action (mode 2) and other qualities are self-knowledge in application (mode 3). However, the distinctions have been made here in order to make sense of, and bring some order to, the literature, which can be criticised for lacking a standard nomenclature.

**Skills component of graduate attributes**

During the 1990s, international debates about graduate performance in employment began to centre on skills and how they could be incorporated into university pedagogy. Skills, also referred to as generic skills, core skills, key skills and employability skills (Holmes, 2001, p. 111) and, at times, used synonymously with the terms competencies reflecting the nature of
organisational requirements (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Council of Australia, 2002, p. 5). Skills are also referred to as qualities and outcomes (Hill et al., 2016). The terminologies for skills and components of skills have been much discussed by policy makers and educators. For the purpose of this thesis, the definition of skills created here is derived from the wide debate over terminology but applied to graduates as they continue to develop them in professional employment. Therefore, skills are defined as demonstrable generic abilities which are developed through life experiences then through university experiences, then transferred into professional employment.

The skills issue is a global debate and has led to considerable change in educational, employment and policies and practices in many countries. For example, in the UK (Dearing, 1997) a new approach to implementing skills in higher education was proposed which led to the development of a national qualification framework and ultimately the European Qualifications Framework. In New Zealand, (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 1993) a National Qualifications Framework (developed in consultation with education and industry specialists) also has a skills focus. The Dearing report mentions a number of earlier forays in various countries. In the 1970s, in Canada, several universities introduced critical skills courses involving work-based/work-related learning criteria to help graduates particularly at the start of their careers (Dearing, 1997). In the USA, a forum for developing necessary skills culminated in broad agreement on the incorporation and measurement of agreed skills (Dearing, 1997). In Denmark, a competence profile was developed to guide university curricula. In Finland, universities began to integrate skills courses into both the curriculum and students’ personal study plans. In South Africa, national policy identified critical and specific activities that contribute to graduates’ personal development as well as to the social and economic development of the community and nation (Dearing, 1997). Therefore, as Dearing identified, many countries have developed either a national qualification framework containing
skills content, or have a national policy focus that involves stakeholders recognising and developing skills.

**Common skills identified in the literature**

As mentioned above, there is no agreed ‘list’ of skills for application by universities and employers. Table 1 provides a synthesis of the skills required of graduates, those most commonly mentioned in significant Australian industry and government reports and in academic literature. Table 1 groups the commonly identified skills in both industry reports and the academic literature, showing how the list has grown over the past two decades. Skills identified early on include communication, teamwork and problem solving (Mayer, 1992; Nunan, 1999; West, 1998). Within the next decade self-management, although advocated as early as 1997 (Geall, Harvey, & Moon, 1997) and 1999 (Nunan, 1999) was a favourite (Cranmer, 2006; Martensen & Gronholdt, 2009). Technology, critical thinking (Green et al., 2009), planning and organising, initiative and enterprise, and collecting analysing and applying information have been mentioned throughout the debate and have been added as shown in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 The common skills components of graduate attributes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Employability skills for the future (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Council of Australia, 2002)</td>
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<td>Graduate employability skills (Business Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council, 2007)</td>
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<td>The Mayer report (Mayer, 1992)</td>
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<td>The Learning for life report (West, 1998)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate qualities, employment and mass higher education. (Nunan, 1999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality in higher education: Linking graduates’ competencies and employers’ needs. (Martensen &amp; Gronholdt, 2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defining generic skills (Australian National Training Authority, 2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facing up to the challenge: Why is it so hard to develop graduate attributes? (Green et al., 2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A conceptual framework for the teaching and learning of generic graduate attributes. (Barrie, 2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduates’ work: Organisational change and students’ (Geall et al., 1997)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employability for the workers – what does this mean? (Little, 2011)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows that the nine most commonly listed skills are: communication, teamwork, problem solving, self-management, technology, critical thinking, planning and organising, initiative and enterprise and collecting, analysing and applying information. It is also important to note that the debate about which skills to include continues. However, the above nine skills are generally accepted as being useful for graduates as they enter professional employment and are proposed here as the mutually agreed skills that Jackson (2016) has recently called for. Matters of terminology and conceptual clarity also arise here, as has been highlighted previously with respect to the graduate attributes debate. For example, skills identified in Table 1, such as initiative and enterprise could, alternatively, be classified as ‘other qualities’. Notwithstanding such slippages in terminology, this thesis defines ‘skills’ as these nine components.

Other qualities component of graduate attributes

The debate on skills referred to in the previous section, regarding lists, terminology, and alternative conceptualisations of graduate attributes, has led to burgeoning commentary and research on the ‘other qualities’ which employers require from graduates (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Council of Australia, 2002; Australian Learning and Teaching Council & The Australian National University, 2010; Australian National Training Authority, 2003; Bridgstock, 2009; Business Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council, 2007; Geall et al., 1997; Little, 2011; Nunan, 1999). These other qualities are more difficult to identify and evaluate than skills, as they incorporate personal behaviours and attitudes. However, research shows that employers place great importance on features that are closely linked to the personality and personal qualities of graduates (Bowden et al., 2002). Bridgstock (2009) too, has argued that these other qualities are not ‘givens’, but are shaped by a complex balance of the interests of employers, graduates and universities.
‘Other qualities’, being such an amorphous term, has been variously defined. ‘Traits’ and ‘attitudes’ are two of the most commonly used terms for graduate attributes that go beyond knowledge and skills. Traits are defined as emotional, cognitive and behavioural tendencies (Barrie, 2006). Attitudes are defined as employee beliefs and opinions that support or inhibit behaviour (Blanchard & Thacker, 2013, p. 480). However, neither of these terms entirely captures other qualities in their entirety, nor distinguishes them from knowledge and skills, and not surprisingly researchers have called for an alternative conceptualisation of ‘graduate attributes’ (Burton et al., 2009, p. 433). To make sense of the complexity of the ‘other qualities’ debate, Table 2 presents a summary synthesis of relevant literature which specifically mentions these other qualities, although they are much inferred in the skills literature too.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>Ethical behaviour</th>
<th>Enthusiasm</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Intellectual openness</th>
<th>Curiosity in uncertainty</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Use of support systems</th>
<th>Use of connections</th>
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<tr>
<td>Action learning in higher education: An investigation of its potential to develop professional capability (Liuzzo &amp; Wilson, 2004)</td>
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<td>An exploration of graduate students' career transition experiences (Wiesenber &amp; Aghakhani, 2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduates' work: Organisational change and students' change and students' attributes. (Geall et al., 1997)</td>
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<td>The Mayer Report (Mayer, 1992)</td>
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<td>Employability skills for the future (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Council of Australia, 2002)</td>
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<td>Generic capabilities of ATN university graduates (Bowden et al., 2002)</td>
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<td>The Learning for Life Report (West, 1998)</td>
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<td>Review of graduate skills: Critical thinking, teamwork, ethical practice and sustainability (Rigby et al., 2009)</td>
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<td>Facing up to the challenge: Why is it so hard to develop graduate attributes? (Green et al., 2009)</td>
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<td>A conceptual framework for the teaching and learning of generic graduate attributes (Barrie, 2007)</td>
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</table>
Table 2 shows the nine most common other qualities identified from the literature; namely: flexibility, ethical behaviour, responsibility, enthusiasm, intellectual openness, curiosity in uncertainty, resilience, use of support systems and use of connections. There is still no agreement on what to call these other more amorphous qualities. A working definition used in this thesis is: graduates’ other qualities are the more amorphous characteristics complementary to knowledge and skills (see Figure 3). These will now be referred to as ‘other qualities’ within the graduate attribute framework. For the purpose of this thesis, all references to graduates’ other qualities will be to these nine factors.

Flexibility and ethical behaviour are the most commonly-mentioned qualities in academic and industry literature and are both potentially relevant for new graduates. Some authors argue that the most critical ‘other quality’ is resilience (Wiesenberg & Aghakhani, 2007) and this may be particularly important for new graduates in competitive times. Further, as new graduates confront challenges in their workplaces, they need to access all available resources, including the ability to use support systems (Barrie, 2007; Lizzio & Wilson, 2004; Wiesenberg & Aghakhani, 2007). This is pertinent to the issues of networking and mentoring that are discussed later. These other qualities may indeed be essential for the varied work environments in which graduates find themselves; they face more opportunities and transitions than in the past. These qualities may also be fundamental in determining how graduates interact with employers and the broader community (Holmes, 2001, p. 111) and put their attributes into action.

**Graduate attributes in action**

During the review of some literature, discussions of how attributes could be applied, in action, were identified and synthesised. Graduate attributes have clear and interrelated areas of application such as in employment, learning and community. Graduate attributes in action during early stages of professional employment is a vital and potentially much neglected area
of research. An exploration of graduate attributes in action is important as it would connect with the evolving nature of employability and interest in careers discussed later. The literature, and these areas of application, are synthesised in Table 3 and mostly indicate application to employment and careers. The reasons for this synthesis, therefore, are to indicate the early implied interest in employability and careers within the discussion of skills and other qualities.

This interest has recently come to the fore in recent literature as discussed in the transitions section and also elsewhere in this chapter from a university and employer perspective. This is important as this research takes graduates’ perspectives of their attributes in action during their early careers. It is important to universities and graduates to understand if and how graduate attributes are enacted in workplaces which may in turn validate them. This is an issue to which this chapter now turns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Flexible capacity for employment</th>
<th>Career progression</th>
<th>Career management and learning about work and career choice</th>
<th>Job-specific application</th>
<th>Lifelong learning</th>
<th>Citizenship and service in society</th>
<th>Effective and wide participation in the community</th>
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<td>Defining generic skills (Australian National Training Authority, 2003)</td>
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<td>Graduate qualities, employment and mass higher education. (Nunan, 1999)</td>
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<td>Generic capabilities of ATN university graduates. (Bowden et al., 2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employability skills for the future (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Council of Australia, 2002)</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<td>Graduate employability skills (Business Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council, 2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Learning for life report (West, 1998)</td>
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<td>The Mayer report (Mayer, 1992)</td>
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</table>
In Table 3, graduates’ flexible capacity for employment, career progression and career management are the main areas for the application of graduates’ other qualities in the changing world of work. This indicates a recent shift in terminology towards the term employability.

**Graduate employability**

Increasingly, the literature on graduate attributes has used the term employability, hence the following brief discussion of employability and how it relates to graduate attributes. The antecedents of the term employability have been around for some time. For instance, Table 3 refers to the concept of flexible capacity for employment referred to as attributes of worker flexibility (Nunan, 1999, p. 4). Employability is now a core concept in the literature on the graduate experience (Andrews & Russell, 2012; Cleary, Flynn, Thomasson, Alexander, & McDonald, 2007; Cranmer, 2006; Forstenlechner, Selim, Baruch, & Madi, 2014). Similarly, recent literature, now suggests a ‘nexus with employability’ (Bunney, Sharplin, & Howitt, 2015, p. 257) responding to earlier calls for attributes to meet the changing needs of employers and customers (Australian National Training Authority, 2003; Cleary et al., 2007; Yorke & Knight, 2007). The popularity of the catchphrase, ‘employability for the future’ (Cleary et al., 2007) forced the need to define the term employability in more detail, such as identifying what factors enabled graduates’ suitability for appropriate employment, taking into account the nature of work (Yorke & Knight, 2007).

Employability is a set of attributes that enables individuals to be more likely than otherwise to secure work and be successful in their chosen occupation, thereby benefiting themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Moreland, 2006; Yorke, 2004). Employability is dynamic rather than static term said to apply to a convergence of graduates’ attributes required not only to gain employment (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008) but to stay in their preferred careers (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007) and to progress in those careers (Andrews & Russell, 2012). Likewise, the definition of employability used by the Australian
Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia which is ‘skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions’ (page 3). Oliver (2015), refers to graduate attributes in an employability schema (Yorke & Harvey, 2005, p. 48) interpreted where graduates have a meta-cognition of the efficacy of their attributes, in contributing to effectiveness in employment. In arguing that graduate employability is the not a ‘whole of higher-education issue’ and skills are developed over a whole working life (Tran, 2015), interpreted here as in a career, the importance of focusing on the use of graduate attributes in the early stages of a career is highlighted. Some recent literature (Cavanagh, Burston, Southcombe, & Bartram, 2015, p. 281) shares the view that graduate perceptions of their attributes appears to be sparse. Such research which is seminal and influential to this thesis, found undergraduates had limited opportunities to develop attributes for work, specifically in this thesis professional employment, and that universities and academics still do not understand the attributes employers need. A recent and particularly salient definition of employability for this thesis is from Lo Presti and Pluviano (2015, p. 196), wherein employability is as a personal resource that individuals develop across their working lives aimed at increasing one’s own career success. This is useful in this thesis as it focuses more on graduates as self-managing individuals with graduate attributes their personal resource. Importantly, this convergence of the discussion of graduate attributes, employability and careers indicates an opportunity to combine an exploration of graduate attributes in action and career attitudes which is the intention of this thesis and informs the research questions about graduates’ perceptions of their attributes and the role of career agency in the transition to professional employment.

The debate about whether developing graduates’ attributes prepares them for action in employment (Jackson, 2014b) underlines the importance and contribution of the thesis, as the
debate integrates the goals of the education system more closely with industry needs. Research suggests that graduate attributes are broader and more encompassing, helping develop career competencies (Hill et al., 2016, p. 156) suggesting that the nexus between graduate attributes and careers needs to be subject to further research, a gap which this thesis aims to address.

**The role of employers in developing graduate attributes and professional learning**

Employers have a key role in developing graduate attributes to align them with organisational needs, whereas the knowledge component is the central concern of university curricula. Graduate attributes and learning to apply them are central to graduates’ professional employment. A 2010 Graduate skills report focuses on the concept of ‘professional learning’ which integrates academic and industry attributes (Papadopoulos, Taylor, Fallshaw, & Zanko, 2010, p. 4). Methods of enabling integration and continuing professional learning include mentoring, work design and knowledge creation.

The HRM function can play a role in graduates’ successful transition and professional learning at this crucial stage, in the following ways: by changing organisation culture (Papadopoulos et al., 2010, p. 12); by stronger emphasis on knowledge creation and the learning organisation (Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth, & Larsson, 1996); by introducing new approaches to mentoring and networking (Nonaka, 1991); by implementing new approaches to work, including project and portfolio working (Mallon, 1998); and by more sophisticated performance appraisal processes (Zaleska & de Menezes, 2007). These methods may be incorporated into GDPs, thereby jointly developing graduates and indeed other employees (Zaleska & de Menezes, 2007). In doing so graduate development practices shift from the acquisition of attributes to an experiential participative approach situated in the context of the job (Legnick-Hall & Legnick-Hall, 2005; Zaleska & de Menezes, 2007, p. 1010). This argument is developed further by Jackson (2014a) in creating a model for transfer of graduates’
attributes from university to professional employment which centres on workplace characteristics including supervisors, support and opportunities for use of attributes. Jackson's approach is seminal to this thesis in observing that these different characteristics represent the need for a different approach to transition and using graduate attributes in a professional context. This thesis explores graduates’ use of their attributes during their continued learning when opportunities in the workplace are provided.

Drawing on the participative approach mentioned above, much has been written about mentoring as a human resource development strategy, but the literature, unlike Jackson recently, largely fails to consider the transfer of attributes from university to the workplace (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003). However, these authors observe that the role of mentoring is disputed as a predictor of career success in a changing world of work in favour of developing external networks. For graduates’ continuity of employment and flexibility in a fluid employment context, it can be argued that external networks, and I argue, external mentors in particular, provide support to develop graduates’ attributes in times of diminishing job security and increasing worker mobility (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009, p. 1552). Mentors external to organisations may therefore be regarded as valuable resources as graduates manage their careers in providing the ‘knowing whom’ framework of support (Arthur et al., 1995). The reason for this, in the context of this research, is that mentors can advise graduates about how to take up opportunities to demonstrate attributes. This discussion within the literature pointed indirectly to the need to explore if and how graduates use their support systems and networks. This is addressed here in the inclusion of the graduate attributes ‘use of support systems’ and ‘use of connections’.

The model from Arthur et al. (1995) of knowing why, whom and how is therefore a useful framework to ascertain how graduates’ attributes can be developed professionally and how they can achieve greater career agency. Similarly, the ‘knowing how’ aspect of the
framework (Arthur et al., 1995) concerns applying continuous learning and developing as a basis for the proactive use of other qualities, rather than specifically job-related knowledge (Eby et al., 2003, p. 692). Employers shape the experiences of employees; they facilitate experiential professional learning in order to share information and enhance organisational objectives, yet knowledge creation and management are complex tasks carried out through socialisation, imitation and practice of tacit, as well as the application of explicit knowledge and skills (Eby et al., 2003, p. 704). For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to explore whether graduate attributes developed at university are aligned with the needs of graduates and employers and importantly if, and how, they continue to be developed in professional employment. This exploration of graduate attributes and the continuation of their development in professional employment will go some way to contributing to the other recent insights attempting to bridge the education and employment domains which focused on modelling attribute transfer (Jackson, 2016). It will also support the development of the concept of the learning career discussed later in this thesis.

**Summary of graduates’ attributes**

There were several objectives of this section on graduate attributes. These objectives were to synthesize the broad range of literature into a narrower perspective; from education and curricula discussions to the application of graduate attributes in the transition to professional employment. Initially this meant reviewing literature on both broad perspectives in response to criticism that the needs of employers were not being met by universities. To establish the validity of this claim, an analysis of literature on the lists of preferred skills and emergent other qualities was made and the most common were identified.

Another purpose of this section was to identify the terms used to describe graduate attributes. The objective here was to analyse the literature on attributes to establish working definitions that will be useful in this thesis. Three tables have been developed to elucidate the
nature and purpose of attributes. These tables synthesised the literature to show commonalities. This analysis enabled a re-positioning and redefinition of graduate attributes as the overarching term for all KSOQs. The implications for graduates from this analysis are that the perspective of graduates on the value of attributes during transition is not frequently sought in the research. This is an important contribution to the broad discussion in the literature as this repositioning emerges from graduates’ perspectives not universities or organisations. It also draws a line around the varying terminology used by universities and organisations to give clarity to the discussion. During the analysis of KSOQs the value of graduate attributes in action was also analysed and included career attitudes and the role of employers and mentors in using graduate attributes and continuing their professional learning during this transition stage. Therefore, this clarification of the literature has identified the real opportunity to explore attributes in early careers and thus the continuum from university to employment. Thus, this analysis identifies a gap in the literature to draw together the three strands of literature; graduate attributes, transition, and career attitudes. Further, attention has focused on the defining period for exploring graduates’ first career transition and how graduates’ attributes are transferred into professional employment. The crucial early transition period is identified as the first 12 to 18 months.

**Graduates’ first transition to professional employment**

It seems reasonable for graduates to expect to use their graduate attributes in organisations and to expect their attributes to be of assistance in the transition. The manner in which they face transition is crucial to determining how they negotiate the transition process and to identify those features that may assist their careers and future transitions. This section reviews the relatively limited literature on graduates’ perspectives of their transition until the very recent emergence of interest in graduate transition experiences in Australia (Jackson,
The various dimensions of transition experiences as set out in the literature are investigated to better understand how graduates apply their graduate attributes and determine their career attitudes in their first professional employment. As explained in Chapter 1 professional employment, usually explained with reference to professions such as engineering and nursing, is explained for the purpose of this thesis as employment that requires a degree.

As graduates move from being students to professional employees, it is reasonable to assume they will aim to transfer and apply attributes they gained at university. Three broad concepts of transition drawn from the literature are relevant to this thesis. The first is the psychological shift involved in coming to terms with a new situation, recognising that change is external, but transition is internal (Bridges, 1991, 2009). Bridges’ (1991, 1994, 2009) proposes a three-stage model to describe this transition: (1) ending/letting go, (2) explorations/neutral zone and (3) new beginnings. The second transition concept is liminality as discussed by Allan et al. (2015, p. e79). They conceptualise transition as made up of several key events or stages leading to eventual adjustment: (1) pre-liminal (separation) identifying what factors contribute to the next phase; (2) liminal (transition) and (3) post-liminal (reincorporation) as competence develops.

There is much discussion of the importance of Bridge’s and Allan’s models but limited application and evaluation of their relevance in the literature. This thesis, therefore, contributes to an understanding of graduates’ transition, graduate attributes and careers against relevant components of Bridge’s and Allan’s models. Each key event of Allan’s process is useful in analysing transition but this thesis specifically focuses on the first crucial liminal stage in identifying what factors contribute to the transition to professional employment. The third stage in Bridges model, new beginnings is also of particular salience to this thesis owing to the focus on graduates entering employment. Looking to broader literature on careers, Royle (2015) offers a third model that is of relevance to research on graduate transitions from university to
professional employment. Royle outlines four stages in the transitions process: career goal
development, selection and entry, goal implementation and early career attitudes and
orientation (p. 47). Royle’s approach recognises the transition phase as a crucial fourth and final
stage and identifies linkages to career choice, which is of relevance to this thesis as it makes
connections between the transition and career attitude. This thesis follows Royle’s linkage to
the early career attitude phase adding to Bridge’s and Allan’s models and it broadens
application from careers to include an investigation of the use and value of graduate attributes
in transition to careers.

It is also of relevance to this study that Royle’s proposal of the benefits of factors such
as goal development and socialisation to early career evaluation were developed from a
literature review and have not been tested empirically. While this thesis does not develop a
processual model for transition as such, an opportunity for empirical application of Bridges’
Allan’s and Royle’s models is identified. Therefore, graduates’ early careers experiences are
explored empirically; for their perspectives on their transition experiences. Also explored
empirically; is whether factors such as graduate attributes and career attitudes, are useful during
transition.

**Identifying the transition period**

Various timelines are used in research examining transition from university to
professional employment with little consensus about which is most appropriate. Appendix 2
summarises sources identified that refer to graduates’ transition from university to
employment; the sources span a range of durations since graduating and entering employment
indicating varying interpretations of the transition period. Some sources include the degree
period within the transition duration (McIlveen & Pensiero, 2008; Pearson & Chatterjee, 2004),
the internship period (Kanye & Crous, 2007), graduates’ final year (Kwok, Adams, & Feng,
2012; Tomlinson, 2008), or adopt a longitudinal approach from pre-graduation to follow-up
after two years (Grayson, 2004). Others indicate a three-year period best denotes transition to allow for a period of adjustment (Jackson 2016; Messum, Wilkes, Jackson & Peters, 2016; Nagarajan & Edwards, 2014). Other studies use longer durations focusing on graduates’ experiences up to five years (Holden & Hamblett, 2007) or ten years after graduation (Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Mackenzie Davey, 2002).

It is noteworthy that in addition to little consensus about the length of time involve in the transition period, limited literature exists specifically on the first crucial year to eighteen months since commencing employment. Scott (2014), who focuses on the first year after graduation (2014), is a recent exception as is Gedye, Fender and Chalkely (2014) addressing up to two years. However, Scott takes a primarily organisational focus; his interest in the first year after graduation is directed at retention issues during this period (p.40). Gedye et. al. consider the perspective of the transitioning graduate to inform higher education careers education (p.383). They argue the pace of curriculum change needs to be more rapid. Therefore, research gathering information about graduates’ early transition is crucial to organisations who want to ensure graduates are employable. Such research is crucial to universities who compete on graduates’ employability success.

There is some ambiguity around the duration of the transition period and differences regarding what features to explore during transition. Graduates’ perspectives are sought in this thesis, during the early transition period, to identify how they use their graduate attributes and the extent of their career attitude. The purpose is to establish whether graduate attributes are understood and developed further during transition by both graduates and employers. New employment experiences with opportunities for graduates to use their attributes and shape their careers are crucial in determining a successful transition. Therefore, research for this thesis differs to the approach by Jackson, Arnold et. al., and Messum et. al., who surveyed graduates after three or four years. Jackson (2016, p. 222) highlights the need for a ‘process oriented’
approach to the transfer and use of graduate attributes adding that ‘progress is slow’. While this thesis does not develop a process, it does explore the initial process that graduates experienced in applying their attributes to workplace activities in their early careers. This thesis therefore, focuses on interviews with graduates in the first 12 to 18 months after graduation during early careers in interviews and surveys wherein graduates rank their value of attributes and their employers perceived value of those attributes.

**Expectations at transition**

In order to scrutinise the transition phenomenon more deeply, various themes have been identified from these sources. These include graduate and organisation expectations, graduate attributes and their effectiveness in transition, career management experiences at transition, employability, learning at transition, all of which culminate in a summary of the value of a degree at transition. Questions posited in some sources investigating undergraduates’ career management expectations versus employer expectations focus on loyalty and commitment from the organisational benefit perspective (Sturges et al., 2002). Others explore the argument that the degree is not enough for a successful transition to employment and discuss an expectation for graduates to have the skills to learn about self and use common sense (Holden & Hamblett, 2007). However, some authors refer to an interface between university and employment in developing and applying graduates’ soft skills, although what constitutes a ‘soft’ skill is not specified (Brooks & Everett, 2009).

Scott (2014) raises questions about conflict between employers’ needs and graduates need for autonomy and responsibility and the furtherance of graduate attributes. Importantly, and in support for the focus of this research, some of these sources investigate other factors that may affect transition to professional employment such as the importance of prior experience including work-integrated learning (Scott, 2014) and employment related experiences in the curriculum (McIlveen & Pensiero, 2008) which may go some way to
aligning undergraduates’ and employers’ expectations (Saarnivaara & Sarja, 2007; Sturges et al., 2002). In addition to aligning undergraduates and employers expectations, some transition literature is concerned with the differing expectations of students and universities and conflict between what is delivered, valued and expected (Pearson & Chatterjee, 2004). These authors present the perspective of learners to inform universities and employers about prospective transitions. This thesis acknowledges these authors suggestion of the need to explore other factors in enabling graduates to reflect on their attributes and how they are used in their early careers.

The perspective of graduate employees during their actual transition on the value of their attributes is sought in this research to explore if the remedy for the broken nature of linkage between universities and employers’ (Scott, 2014, p. 54) may come from graduates’ experiences and ease of transition. Similarly, a solution to the conflict between what is needed by employers and provided by universities (Pearson & Chatterjee, 2004) may emerge from this research such as in identifying mutually valued graduate attributes and graduates’ awareness of their career attitude. However, as Scott suggested (2014 p. 42), from similar research into graduates in their first year of employment, the first year did not contribute to the furtherance of graduate attributes identified as employability skills. This may be due to the nature of the graduateness or level of their employment which, although not a significant issue in this thesis, is important to an extent, as participants in this thesis are mostly in professional employment, which may be a contributory factor to the furtherance of their graduate attributes. As Scott’s findings emerged from surveys with open questions research for this thesis progresses Scott’s enquiry providing more depth and rich data with qualitative interviews and a survey. This thesis asks the question about the value of graduate attributes during that first year to eighteen months, but asks graduate employees, thus sharing the view of Messum et. al., (2016) that employers’ perspectives are often sought but not graduates’ perspectives. Although there is limited
literature examining linkages to bridge the gap between university and employment such as mentoring. These studies focus on the views of students (Saarnivaara & Sarja, 2007) or careers services (McIlveen & Pensiero, 2008) not graduates themselves. Therefore, possible links between opportunities to use and develop graduate attributes and evaluate career attitudes in the early stages of employment is explored in this thesis from the perspective of graduates.

**Graduate attributes and their effectiveness in transition**

Measures for, or an understanding of the actual effectiveness of graduate attributes in transition are needed when discussing the value of graduates’ KSOQs developed at university for employment. It is important, therefore, to identify what part graduate attributes play during transition, what graduates’ actual expectations are about the value of their attributes they bring with them and if graduates’ and employers’ expectations around graduate attributes are different.

Looking at previous literature on the effectiveness of graduate attributes, Tomlinson, (2008), investigating undergraduates, takes the perspective that graduate attributes are valuable, because degrees are not enough to gain employment. Tomlinson found that graduates’ concerns are based around the packaging of attributes to meet the changing demands of employers. Similarly, Saarnivaara and Sarja (2007), in their case study of acting careers, assert that knowledge, skills and competences do not guarantee satisfactory transition to employment nor, as they suggest citing Barnett, fully support what is it to learn for an unknown future (Barnett, 2004 now cited in Barnett, 2012). This research goes some way to explore further what might assist graduates in using their attributes in learning (about themselves) for an unknown future, in learning about the job, the organisation and thereby shaping their careers. Tomlinson and Saarnivaara and Sarja, present a gap to explore if attributes are deemed to be valuable, which is taken up in this thesis. They suggest a further gap, to explore the extent to which, graduates are given the opportunity to utilise their attributes and if such opportunities
enable them to better cope with career demands in, as Tomlinson suggests, the complex world of work.

Some authors focus on the use of ‘soft’ attributes in employment, such as initiative and motivation that yield economic and social returns (Pearson & Chatterjee, 2004). Grayson (2004) also takes an economic perspective of skills as cultural capital adding value to graduates and organisations similar to Tomlinson’s (2008) view of graduates as human capital to develop further. Grayson also investigates the role of the degree, as human capital, and the impact on four employment outcomes specifically relevance, income, job satisfaction and job security. While only Grayson’s first outcome is relevant to this research question, graduates reported that their degree (knowledge) was useful for their employment even though the amount or level of knowledge was less important than generic skills (p. 625). Grayson’s survey investigated eight skills and included communication, personal and organising skills and their effect on job outcomes. These eight skills are similar to graduate attributes identified in this thesis yet explored differently. This thesis goes beyond their job outcomes and how their attributes are applied in professional employment. Whether viewed as capital or utility for organisations, graduate attributes need to be effective for graduates too; this thesis investigates if this is so.

Ranking graduate attributes is another method of determining their effectiveness in addition to packaging and economic use. The effectiveness of graduate attributes has been measured for adequacy as a component of university programs (Nagarajan & Edwards, 2014) and for relevance to job and employment outcomes (Messum et al., 2016). In asking ‘what happens to graduates in their early career years, and what are the consequences for them and their employers’ Arnold et. al., (1994) surveyed graduates to rank their competencies. They found that graduates highest ranking was for self-organisation and that graduates were looking for career clarity. Another interview-based approach taken by Nagarajan and Edwards (2014), shifted towards skills and investigated the effectiveness of communication, time management
and teamwork. Graduates indicated that they developed the professional skills they needed for work from outside of university in work placement and project work which were most useful in the workforce (p.20). Messum et. al., (2016) surveyed graduates of health care management who ranked four broad employability skills; critical thinking skills (CT), self-management (SM), interpersonal and communication skills (IPC). Messum et. al., do not however, explain how these skills were determined. Messum et. al. identify that graduates valued their skills as they ranked SM (with a component of career planning) and IPC as most important.

In addressing issues around graduate performance in skills as opposed to ranking of skills Jackson (2016,) measured graduates’ perceptions of communication behaviours including verbal communication, feedback public speaking and participation in meetings. This thesis addresses a broader scope as suggested by Jackson (2016, p.222) in asking graduates to rank their ability at the eighteen SOQs in addition to ranking their order of importance to them and to their employers in the surveys. Further, in the interviews graduates related events wherein they had the opportunity to use their SOQs. This also follows Jackson (2016), who added to the debate and reported that graduates felt their performance improved after a period of time at work and opportunity to use skills. Jackson suggests that such research on transfer of attributes, as in this thesis, is notoriously difficult to measure (p. 222). This difficulty is acknowledged in this MMR thesis combining interviews and surveys wherein graduates experiences and their rankings of graduate attributes are the measures. Thereby, this thesis differs with the addition of a survey to provide more encompassing results, with a greater focus on informing graduates and universities and employers about what can be done to ease transition.

There is general agreement, as indicated by Messum et. al., that closer engagement of universities and employers (2016, p. 25) in developing and applying graduate attributes effectively is needed. This thesis addresses what is not known about the effectiveness of
graduate attributes, specifically graduates’ views and experiences of applying their attributes early in transition. Such information may be instrumental in the link for closer engagement of universities and employers. It is demonstrated here that it is possible that problems with graduate transition result from a misunderstanding of which graduate attributes are valued which is an issue explored in this thesis. Jackson suggests that this commences with learners accepting that while universities have some responsibility for skills transfer so too do they, then employers may support graduates’ goals with mentors, role models and supervisors providing feedback and support in skill transfer into careers. This shared responsibility may also serve to develop a clearer process for integrating graduate attributes and graduate careers in the context of their transition.

Echoing the view of Saarnivaara and Sarja (2007) of the features for a satisfactory transition, Holden and Hamblett (2007) found that graduates of nursing, engineering and hospitality make the transition to employment in an uneven and chaotic manner. Their emphasis on the transition itself from a case study approach viewed transition as a rite of passage towards career pathways and a process of learning about the job, organisation and self (Holden & Hamblett, 2007). Learning the job means learning about workplace conventions taught by peers, learning about the organisation means assimilating conventions. Learning about self occurs in the challenge to assimilate conventions. Although there was an intention to focus on skills there is limited attention to what they might be apart from learning about self which is similar to self-management. Therefore, what is not known from Holden and Hamblett’s research is what features enable this learning to take place and establish a less chaotic transition to a career pathway.

Pearson and Chatterjee (2004) found that existing students still at university expect that their university experiences would articulate into a related career (p.442) and also that the biggest gap between what was expected by employers and provided by university was in
communication skills. Much research discussed above acknowledges both the expectation gap and improvements to communication skills (Jackson 2016). This debate about the conflict between what is delivered, valued and expected (Pearson & Chatterjee, 2004) continues.

In exploring whether graduate attributes matter at transition to graduates and employees, and if they matter in similar or different ways, this thesis goes some way to contributing to the broad debate about graduates’ transition to professional employment. It examines graduates’ ranking of the importance of their attributes, their opportunities to use them in professional employment and how, in doing so they may have an easier transition into their early careers.

**Graduates’ career attitudes at transition**

In addition to using their graduate attributes, the early transition period is crucial to graduates in determining how their career is shaped and by whom. A somewhat limited focus on careers and graduates’ career attitude was identified within the literature on transitions. Some discussion about transition includes career management strategies (Sturges et al., 2002) and organisational and graduate career management interventions and initiatives (McIlveen & Pensiero, 2008) while others focus on career success (Kanye & Crous, 2007) or career prospects (Gedye et al., 2004) or job outcomes (Grayson, 2004). These findings inform this thesis in suggesting there are other inputs to graduates’ career success than knowledge alone, thereby making a potential linkage with graduate attributes. These, and a need to explore career attitude and other inputs to graduates’ success can be developed at university and elsewhere, for example in prior experience and extra-curricular activities such as work integrated learning. A gap still exists to investigate and review organisations’ application of graduates’ attributes (Nagarajan & Edwards, 2014; Scott, 2014) and explore if other inputs including graduate attributes and career attitudes, when taken into employment and developed further enable a successful transfer.
Sturges et. al., (2002) explored graduates’ use of their values and priorities to take control of their own careers during the first 10 years of employment. They found that individuals using values and priorities in their career self-management gained access to career support in a career partnership with their employees. This finding is useful as what is not known, but explored in this thesis, are the specifics of career attitudes, graduates’ values and their levels of self-management. Graduates’ values and their levels of self-management are explored in this thesis within both traditional and alternative careers. Therefore, this thesis explores if graduates have an attitude towards their careers at transition.

Employability and transitions

Although not a specific focus of this thesis, the issue of employability is either explicit or implicit in some of the above sources. It is included in this thesis as employability is one of the stages of transition and recent literature on employability includes discussion on attributes and careers useful to this thesis. One source suggests that graduates with higher knowledge are less likely to gain employment (Kwok et al., 2012, p. 502) because employers are looking for attributes in addition to knowledge. Two sources identified the need for enhancing employability outcomes and further learning (Brooks & Everett, 2009; Grayson, 2004). Brooks and Everett (2009) use narratives from 90 graduates five to seven years after transition. Their research using qualitative interviews into graduates’ success in their careers found that 80 percent used skills from their degree acknowledging skills as a valuable career component of a degree (Brooks & Everett, 2009). While this partially answers the research question about the use of attributes in careers Brooks and Everett only referred to soft skills in the degree and did not specify either one particular skill or a broad range as in this thesis. Also, what is not known is if graduate’s perceptions changed from transition onwards, thereby the transition experience is significant in benchmarking the learning gained from graduates’ use of attributes and their career attitudes during this early interface. Because these graduates were five to seven
years out, the findings reported by Brooks and Everett at this point may not reflect their perceptions of their attributes and career management at transition which is a specific focus of this thesis. Thereby the transition experience up to 18 months after transition is a significant gap in benchmarking the learning gained from graduates’ use of attributes and their career attitudes during this early interface.

**Learning at transition**

The early transition period is also crucial for graduates and further learning. Graduates learn to identify and apply their graduate attributes and form career attitudes both of which may assist with subsequent career transitions. This thesis explores what graduates learn at transition. Learning about the job and self, derives mostly from conventions taught to graduates by their peers, learning about the organisation occurs as graduates’ assimilate employer conventions and their implications (Holden & Hamblett, 2007). This discussion of learning experiences highlights possible tensions between graduates’ attributes learned and developed at university and later learning shaped by employer conventions, community specific conventions and later peer conventions. Therefore, a difference is suggested between graduates’ new learning experiences at university and later professional development learning in employment (Kanye & Crous, 2007). Transition experiences are similar to knowing how, why and whom (Arthur et al., 1995) discussed later. Learning ‘how’ may refer to learning about the job tasks and procedures from peers, learning ‘why’ may refer to learning about the role graduates play in the employment community and learning ‘whom’, may refer to the use of other people in and out of the organisation who can be instrumental in developing graduates. From this perspective, there is a gap in the research in terms of tensions around different approaches to learning, the content and method of learning at university and in employment and whose responsibility it is. This discussion indirectly pointed to the need for a new approach to learning during transition which is explored in this thesis.
Value of degree at transition

While the literature in the above sections infers the value of a degree, one quantitative source addressing the first year or so in employment (Gedye et al., 2004) specifically addressed this and asked graduates the dominant reason for studying for a degree. Here, 74 percent said it was to improve their career prospects but only 11 percent to develop transferable skills. More recent literature has focused on the adequacy of the graduate attributes approach in adding value to a degree (Nagarajan & Edwards, 2014) and on the ranking of the value of graduate attributes (Arnold et al., 1994; Jackson, 2016; Messum et al., 2016). This may indicate that graduates’ and employers’ perception of the value of their degree and attributes alters according to how they might be used in professional employment. This thesis explores the value graduates ascribe to their attributes as they are applied during the transition to employment. This transition literature confirms the view that a degree not enough for employers (Tomlinson, 2008) and more value is needed (Brooks & Everett, 2009) which could be from other inputs such as attributes and developing career attitudes. The degree is not enough because graduates have a lot to learn to become professional employees, as found with five case studies with graduates over the course of one year (Holden & Hamblett, 2007). However, Holden and Hamblett did not specially ask about the role of other graduate attributes besides degree knowledge or explore career attitudes which may have developed during the course of the degree. Therefore, this presents an opportunity to qualitatively explore with a larger sample of 25 graduates, their perceived value of their degree at transition, especially if it was more than just valuable in gaining employment.

This section explored gaps in literature on graduates’ experiences of transition as they enter professional employment. It is interesting and pertinent to this thesis that this literature includes discussion of features which may ease transition such as graduate attributes and a focus on careers attitudes all of which are aligned in this thesis. While some sources include
transition experiences over a range of periods, few studies address the value of such attributes during the crucial transition period of one year to eighteen months and their value in managing careers. While, there is some research on graduates’ expectations of how they use their attributes in their transition and what they actually experience, only two sources (Scott, 2014; Gedye et. al., 2004) addressed graduates’ actual transition to employment in the first year. In sum, research into what graduates say about the value of their attributes in transition is limited to investigating a few skills or a single skill such as communication and which are typically explored quantitatively. Currently, it appears there is limited international and Australian MMR research which explores, with graduates in interviews and surveys, their experiences and their opportunities to apply their attributes and career attitudes during transition to professional employment from university. This thesis takes up these opportunities and aims to address these gaps in the literature, and in the methods used in the literature, by exploring Australian graduates’ experiences in the first year out using a MMR design.

Work is changing and affecting all employees. However, graduates are a special group of employees because they are new and they bring new attributes to their professional employment. Research into what sort of career attitudes graduates appear to have has indicated that graduates need greater career clarity which could be partially their responsibility in addition to universities and employers’. Research exploring how graduates navigate the transition seems to suggest a chaotic ‘rite of passage’ which could be improved with a process or a better integration of clearly identified and mutually valued graduate attributes and understanding of graduates’ career attitude. When graduates move from university to work, this is first time they apply their attributes, so this transition period is crucial for setting up their careers and their expectations. This section has established the transition period and considered expectations at this crucial time and the possibility of a misalignment of expectations between employers and graduates. How graduates process this transition experience and how they use
their attributes is changing. The transition period is critical to determine graduates’ careers going forward. It is important to know about graduates’ careers in this changing world of work. Just as the world of work is changing so are careers, definitions of careers and graduates’ attitudes towards their careers. Therefore, another issue to be considered regarding how graduates’ careers progress is that the actual nature of careers is evolving in addition to the changing world of work.

**The evolving nature of careers**

Careers are widely contested in the literature and debates about careers have shifted over time. This section explores the evolving definitions of careers that scholars have put forward and traces the main debates in the literature about the changing nature of careers and career attitudes. Knowledge transfer, intelligent careers and implications in different organisation types are also discussed. Implications of this literature for graduate career agency and career attitudes are analysed. There are two purposes to this analysis of the careers literature. One is to identify those factors – including graduates’ career attitudes – which constitute contemporary career success in the very early stages. The second is to show different career contexts where graduates attempt to transfer their attributes to contribute to effective transition to professional employment. The evolving definitions, concepts and practices in relation to careers, the effects on career actors, particularly graduates, and emerging changes in the ownership of careers are discussed here.

As various terms, central to this thesis, are highly contested, this section explores debates about terminology. This discussion of definitions illustrates differences between traditional views of careers, generally those within hierarchical organisations, and alternative views of careers as flexible, holistic and individually determined. Two important concepts in the debate on careers are the boundaryless careers concept (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and the
protean career concept (Hall, 1976; Hall & Moss, 1998). Both concepts were operationalised as constructs to measure boundaryless and protean attitudes (Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006) and are used in this research and discussed in the Methodology chapter.

Analysis of evolving definitions of careers with implications for graduates

Definitions and concepts of careers vary according to the context of work, historical changes to organisation types and structures, debates on the organisational versus individual property as well as the theoretical perspectives from which careers are researched. In discussing the various and evolving concepts and definitions, broader perspectives and varied vantage points such as psychology, education and organisation studies are acknowledged and those relevant to this thesis are selected. In what might be regarded as alternative today, but as far back as 1937, careers were defined as the moving perspective in which individuals orient themselves, with reference to the social order and of the typical sequences and concatenation of office (Hughes in Baruch, 2006). From this perspective, careers are viewed as events, which are linked together in a series and are determined by factors such as social order. This reference to the changing social order is relevant here as graduates find their place within more dynamic networks and make use of them. Seemingly dated, the concept has relevance for graduates today as it implies career movement directed by graduates themselves. This sequential and life journey career was similarly conceptualised by Arthur Hall and Lawrence (1989) as an evolving sequence of a person’s work experience over time.

Those identified in this thesis as traditional careers concepts (Bird, 1994; Brousseau et al., 1996; Kanter, 1989) are generally agreed to be those wherein there is a vertical progression up a hierarchy where careers are organisationally owned and primarily managed by employers (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence 1989). Alternative careers concepts (Baruch, 2006; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Hall & Moss, 1998; Mallon, 1998; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Tams & Arthur, 2010) recognise horizontal progression routes with multiple employers, managed by
individuals or employers or jointly negotiated. Of particular interest, is Bird’s explanation of careers as a repository of knowledge embodied in skills, expertise and relationship networks which is a more alternative view to contemporary authors but heralds the conceptual change to a more alternative perspective. Bird’s view is useful in that it places ownership of careers with graduates and shows attributes as a requisite. While there is no clear distinction between traditional and alternative careers concepts in the literature, a brief overview of the historical development of careers concepts is provided and summarised in Table 4 which is an analysis of traditional and alternative perspectives of careers.
### Table 4: Analysis of traditional and alternative perspectives of careers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changing perspective of careers</th>
<th>Conceptual explanations of careers</th>
<th>Career ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional / alternative</strong></td>
<td>Moving perspective in which persons orient themselves in the social order sequences and concatenation of office (Hughes in Baruch, 2006).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Bureaucratic, organisationally determined with advancement (Kanter 1989).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Evolving sequence of a person’s work experiences over time (Arthur, Hall &amp; Lawrence 1989).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Repository of knowledge embodied in skills, expertise and relationship networks (Bird 1994).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Boundaryless career sequences of opportunities beyond the boundaries of single employment settings (Defilippi &amp; Arthur 1994).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Steady linear, expert, spiral and transitory progression and success in hierarchy (Brousseau et al. 1996).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Protean career – the person is in charge, core values of freedom and growth, varied experiences in several organisations. Personal career choices and search for self-fulfilment (Hall, 2004; Hall &amp; Moss, 1998).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Portfolio careers – collections of different bits and pieces of work for different clients (Mallon 1998).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Work-related and other relevant experiences, inside and outside of organisations forming a unique pattern (Sullivan &amp; Baruch 2009).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Work-related social engagement, past experiences and future possibilities, through which an individual invests in careers (Tans &amp; Arthur 2010).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 also illustrates the shift between organisational ownership and individual ownership of careers. Although it has not been previously discussed in this section, it is interesting in that there is a circular argument wherein Baruch (2006) views careers as property; they were originally the responsibility of individuals but shifted to organisational responsibility and are now shifting back to individual responsibility. This is also evidenced in Arthur’s later interdisciplinary examination of contemporary careers, which presents three sets of organisational career perspectives (2008, p. 165). One perspective Arthur identifies is from the community of organisational careers scholars citing Hughes (1937) and Savickas (1993). The second set comes from other organisational scholars citing Van Maanen (1997) and Schein (1977) and Gunz and Peiperl (2007). The third set comes from observations on the emerging knowledge economy such as Nonaka (1991) and Castells (2011).

A range of traditional and alternative concepts are shown in Table 4 however the literature is largely dominated by boundaryless and protean concepts as discussed further below. It is suggested in this analysis that employers facilitate careers for their own competitive purposes, thereby maintaining organisations’ ownership of careers. However, as organisations evolved, careers shifted from being bureaucratic and organisationally determined to being more entrepreneurial and individually determined (Kanter, 1989, p. 509; Templer & Cawsey, 1999). Presenting the organisational perspective provides important contextual information for this thesis and for exploring graduates’ perspectives. Traditional concepts and definitions include bureaucratic organisationally determined careers (Kanter 1989) where graduates may be subject to organisational investment, planning and management of careers. Entrepreneurial definitions of careers include the portfolio career and portfolio working, whereby employees do fragments of work for different organisations (Mallon, 1998). If graduates are able to manage their portfolio careers and select their opportunities in this manner, their careers are more likely to be their property than their employer’s.
This discussion about the issues and definitions of careers analyses implications for graduates who may experience more fluid careers in the changing world of work. Table 5 summarises an analysis of careers concepts with implications for graduates’ careers and their management of their careers. These career concepts and definitions were selected for their specific relevance to graduates making the transition to employment and the implications for graduates. Also included is the linear, expert, spiral and transitory careers concept (Brousseau et al., 1996), which acknowledges changes in roles and relationships as employees move up the hierarchy implying a bounded career in a single organisation. There are valuable implications of this concept for graduates, as many employers offer traditional career routes but offer increased status as they develop experience and expertise. Such career routes still enable graduates to become independent and manage their career pathway even if it is within the same organisation or profession.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Careers concept</th>
<th>Implications for graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moving perspective in which persons orient themselves in the social order sequences and concatenation of office (Hughes in Baruch, 2006).</td>
<td>Movement possibly directed by graduates in a range of employment experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repository of knowledge embodied in skills, expertise and relationship networks (Bird 1984).</td>
<td>Specifies features required for a career other than knowledge e.g. skills and relationships, networks and other people. Graduates are to be developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucratic, organisationally determined with advancement (Kanter 1989).</td>
<td>Organisations primarily invest, plan and manage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolving sequence of a person’s work experiences over time (Arthur, Hall &amp; Lawrence 1989).</td>
<td>Recipients of experiences not instigators, more connection with careers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaryless career sequences of job opportunities beyond the boundaries of single employment settings (Defilippi &amp; Arthur 1994).</td>
<td>Career progression by managing changing job opportunities in fluid times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady linear, expert, spiral and transitory progression and success in hierarchy (Brousseau et al. 1996, p. 52).</td>
<td>Progress hierarchically, determined in one profession, some choice, broader career experiences. Transitory model enables some independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protean career – the person is in charge, core values of freedom and growth, varied experiences in several organisations. Personal career choices and search for self-fulfilment (Hall, 2004; Hall &amp; Moss, 1998).</td>
<td>Links graduates’ experiences in multiple organisations, directed by graduates’ freedom personal growth in careers of their choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio careers – collections of different bits and pieces of work for different clients (Mallon 1998).</td>
<td>Fragmented job opportunities, possibly no progression and not self-determined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related and other relevant experiences, inside and outside of organisations forming a unique pattern (Sullivan &amp; Baruch 2009, p. 1543).</td>
<td>Assumes a unique experiential connection and ownership of careers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related social engagement, past experiences and future possibilities, through which an individual invests in careers (Tams &amp; Arthur 2010).</td>
<td>Connections between graduates and their experiences as a process and cumulative learning, including acknowledging the importance of others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another careers concept in Table 5 implies that as graduates leave university and embark on careers they may be regarded as repositories of knowledge, skills and expertise to be further developed in organisationally determined development programs containing relationship networks (Bird, 1994, p. 326). Implications for graduates are that this concept specifies features required for a career, other than knowledge, and raises the importance of skills, relationship networks, other people and specifically learning, in supporting graduates in their careers (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence 1989). This section is important as it analyses the various approaches to defining and explaining the nature of careers with particular reference to graduates commencing their careers. Careers are distinguished from jobs as jobs may be tasks within careers or work activities done which are not part of a career pathway chosen by graduates. A relevant definition of careers based on this analysis is suggested for use in this thesis. Thereby, careers are defined in this thesis as sequences of work experiences, managed either by individuals in achieving personal values and growth or by organisations to gain competitive advantage.

This thesis/research investigates how graduates navigate the career transition to professional employment and specifically investigates the role and perceptions of graduates’ attributes and career agency during this transition. Career agency is addressed further below.

**Boundaryless and protean careers concepts**

Of particular significance for this thesis are two alternative concepts: the boundaryless and protean careers concepts. First, the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) is defined as a career which develops in many organisations and along many pathways. The concept of the boundaryless career was originally developed in response to the notion of boundaryless organisations where employees could develop their expertise across the organisation (Ashkenas, 1995). Subsequent to this, the concept of the boundaryless career emerged in the literature, to describe employees who moved across
organisation boundaries to develop their expertise and their careers (Arthur, 1994; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Boundaryless careers have varied forms; they are not bound to single organisations and are therefore more difficult to understand than traditional careers. A more volatile work context, as discussed earlier in this chapter, identified careers in which availed themselves of a range of jobs and different employment opportunities (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) in a more boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 6). The definition, adapted from Defilippi and Arthur, of boundaryless careers which is used for this thesis is; sequences of job opportunities beyond the boundaries of single employment settings.

Arthur (1994) includes individuals’ perception of boundarylessness in his original definitions. Boundaryless mindset occurs when graduates navigate the changing work landscape by enacting a career characterised by different levels of physical and psychological movement (Briscoe et al., 2006), of which the former is easier to measure. Psychological movement crosses subjective dimensions and refers to how individuals, in this case graduates, change their perspectives and attitudes about a work situation (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Physical movement crosses objective dimensions, including organisational and other boundaries such as positions, job levels, employers, environment and opportunity structure (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009, p. 1561). Boundaryless careers are relevant to graduates today as they may expect more varied employment experiences. This variety may be with a single employer, with a range of different roles and professions, or in a variety of different organisations. In moving between organisations and careers graduates are displaying boundarylessness which has two components (Briscoe et al., 2006). The first is boundaryless mindset BMS which is graduates’ psychological and physical mobility or general attitude to working across organisational. The second is organisational mobility preference OMP which is the strength of interest in remaining with one or multiple employers. Boundarylessness is referred to in this thesis as boundaryless attitude wherein graduates are able to move between
organisations and careers. As this thesis is concerned with graduates’ transition from university to employment, where a variety of transitions exist, boundaryless careers are particularly significant.

The second significant careers concept is the protean career (Hall, 1976; Hall & Moss, 1998). The protean career was defined originally as a career in which graduates, not organisations, drive their careers based more upon their own psychological success and decisions than upon a structure, sequence, or set of standards imposed by the organisation (Hall 1976). Later, a protean career was defined as one wherein individuals, or in this thesis graduates, change their career path to suit the environment, providing a more individual vantage of careers (Hall, 2002). This was developed later adding the ability to change according to one’s career environment (Hall, 2004) yet displaying core values of freedom and growth, varied experiences in several organisations and personal career choices and search for self-fulfillment (Hall, 2004; Hall & Moss, 1998). In using their core values of freedom and growth within varied experiences and thereby applying the protean career concept as protean orientation where graduates, rather than employers, are in more control over their careers. Therefore, the definition of protean career applies these earlier definitions to graduates and is explained as a career wherein graduates use personal career choices and search for self-fulfilment. Protean orientation is referred to as protean attitude meaning graduates’ ability to be self-directed to change their career path to suit the environment, providing a more individual vantage of careers.

There are two components to protean careers applied to graduates in this thesis. The first is self-directed SD, which means graduates ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands. The second is values-driven VD, which means graduates’ internal values provide guidance and measures of success for their careers (Briscoe et al., 2006).
Protean careers assume graduates are self-directed in their vocational behaviour and may or may not be, less influenced by external factors.

**Operationalisation of protean and boundaryless careers**

This thesis operationalises protean and boundaryless careers within the concepts of protean and boundaryless attitudes (Briscoe et al., 2006). In this thesis graduates protean career attitudes draws from Briscoe et al. who explain that those with protean attitudes utilise values to guide careers and self-direction and independence in managing them. Protean attitude is explained here as; an attitude wherein graduates are self-directed to change their career path to suit the environment, providing a more individual vantage of careers.

Different meanings of the boundaryless career occur when graduates draw career validation from outside their employers, make a career decision based on work family reasons, or when they perceive a boundaryless career regardless of structural constraints. (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009). For the purpose of this thesis the boundaryless attitude, taken from Briscoe & Finkelstein, (2009, p. 243), is explained as one where graduates transcend multiple organisational and personal boundaries regardless of constraints as they decide on various career opportunities.

Critique of the boundaryless and protean career perspectives refers to a dark side of contemporary careers (Baruch & Vardi, 2016). Regarding boundarylessness they suggest, that in reality, graduates may not be able to cross boundaries for personal and practical reasons and requirements to do so may be stressful (p.362). Regarding protean attitude Baruch and Vardi indicate the costs of frequent changes such as limits to achievement and ambiguous identity transformations (p.363). Their critique also supports an argument that key careers concepts should be more reality-based’ (p.360) which is a useful critique for this thesis which explores graduates’ actual careers from graduates’ perspectives.
This overview of definitions and concepts as applied to graduates illustrates that while earlier careers theories identified linear and mostly non-transitory roles and expectations, alternative careers theories refer to flexible, holistic and more individually owned careers. Table 4 distinguishes between traditional and alternative careers, whilst also illustrating the degree of organisational or graduate ownership of careers. This analysis of the literature in this way contributes to the debate about graduate career attitudes and career agency which are both discussed later.

**Application of protean and boundaryless concepts**

In sum, in the changing world of work that graduates enter for the first time, there are implications for graduates’ careers in terms of contemporary careers concepts. Certain career attitudes are implied in boundaryless and protean careers concepts which present an opportunity to test empirically. Briscoe et al. (2006) created the first instrument to measure individuals’ boundaryless and protean career attitudes and their SD, VD, BMS and OMP which is developed and used in this thesis. Graduates may anticipate a boundaryless future regardless of economic and structural constraints; they may or may not have a protean career attitude and may have varying interpretations of these impacts on their careers.

These concepts have subsequently formed the basis of empirical research in response to a gap in the application of boundaryless and protean careers theory to individual behaviour (Kirby, 2000). There is an opportunity to explore connections between boundaryless and protean attitudes, explained above in the context of graduates’ transition experiences, and graduate attributes. The strength of more recent literature, such as Royle (2015) is in identifying a traditional versus alternative approach to careers similar to this thesis. Royle refers to the transition stage from student to employee and suggests an alternative approach to career management integrating career management and adult-life development theories (p, 35). However, Royle’s approach is limited to theories as the model and the alternative approaches
are not tested empirically which is a significant gap which is addressed in this research. Furthermore, the extent to which graduates’ careers are their responsibility, as opposed to organisations’, or a combination of both, is also investigated in this thesis initially in terms of the ownership perspectives illustrated in Table 4 and in discussions regarding career attitudes and career agency. Therefore, while all perspectives on careers and ownership of careers are presented here; the working definition of careers created for this thesis, incorporating others’ definitions given above is; careers are sequences of work experiences, managed either by individuals in achieving personal values and growth or by organisations to gain competitive advantage.

**Career agency**

As mentioned previously, more contemporary, alternative careers theories imply a greater role for graduates in managing their careers. Career agency has been is defined as a process of work-related social engagement, informed by past experiences and future possibilities, through which an individual invests in their career (Tams & Arthur, 2010, p. 630). This definition is useful to this thesis as it draws upon the self-directed component of protean attitude as Tams and Arthur combine career agency and knowledge, in their assertion that career agency also includes the ability of individuals to make, and act upon, free and independent choices where agentic knowledge is geared towards facilitating individuals’ ability to make these choices (Tams & Arthur, 2010). Since the commencement of this research there has been interest in how individuals, through their self-regulatory activities respond to changing nature of careers and explaining career agency as ‘career adaptability’ which pertains to attributes that individuals use in fitting themselves to work that suits them (Tolentino et al., 2014). Similarly, Jackson (2015) recognises the criticality of career self-management of those in the early stages of their careers and in suggesting an opportunity; ‘empirical evidence of the success or otherwise, of career self-management in developing career-decision making skills
and student ability to make informed career choices does not appear in abundance’ (p.3). This thesis addresses this gap around career self-management during early careers and in focusing on the use of graduate attributes and career agency. In a less stable, unpredictable, market-sensitive world (Arthur et al., 1995) graduates may experience change and uncertainty more confidently by adopting a more agentic role in formulating decisions about their careers. The definition of graduate career agency adopted for this thesis is: the proactive role graduates take in managing their careers.

The levels of independence and choice graduates encounter are likely to vary. The concept of career agency contrasts directly with employer interests, in that the former is centred upon independent self-development of graduates rather than on organisational management (Roper, Ganesh, & Inkson, 2010). I suggest this creates some conflict for graduates wishing to make independent choices. These explanations of career agency emphasise graduates’ roles in managing their own continued professional employment. There is a gap in the literature concerning the effects of these changing concepts of careers specifically on graduates’ perceptions of these changes and how they affect their ability to exert career agency. In defining career agency more narrowly for graduates, I intend to partially address this gap in this thesis.

Summary of careers in the changing world of work

In this section, key traditional and alternative perspectives on careers have been explored to identify the implications of these definitions for graduates. Varying perspectives on careers have been explored, including the debate about careers as being organisationally or individually determined, bounded or boundaryless, as repositories of knowledge, as intelligent careers and as portfolio careers. The implications of these perspectives for graduates have been considered and presented in Table 4 and Table 5.

Of significance to this thesis is the boundaryless careers concept as an individual mindset or as a psychological concept; this has been discussed specifically in terms of the
implications for graduates making the transition from university to employment. Also of significance is the protean orientation, which posits that graduates face employment opportunities that require changes to their attributes to suit the changing employment environment. Similarly, other perspectives affecting graduates have been reviewed including the debate about careers as the responsibility of organisations which was contrasted with graduates’ career agency. The reasons for considering graduates’ responsibility for careers are threefold. First, this thesis is concerned with the extent to which graduates exhibit career agency and make independent choices about their careers; second, to explore whether graduates have opportunities in a range of organisational contexts to manage their own careers in the changing world of work; and third, whether they learn from these experiences about how to transfer their knowledge and attributes. If, as argued above, it is important that graduate career agency is better understood, then understanding how graduate attributes are deployed during the transition to professional employment is critical.

**Theoretical framework**

The intended theoretical contribution of this research is to enrich and integrate three current bodies of literature regarding transitions, attributes and careers in order to explore graduates’ perception of their attributes for shaping their careers when making their first transition from university to professional employment during. A theoretical framework that brings together these theories (Figure 4) was created to guide the research and the relationships between the concepts in a conceptual landscape (Whetten, 1989). This framework has been created from two separate but interrelated concept maps first introduced in Chapter 1 Introduction. Figure 1, draws together and presents definitions for knowledge, skills and other qualities as graduate attributes and Figure 2 which defines boundaryless and protean career agency. The interrogation of the literature to establish clarity and definitions follows Wacker;
who argues for formal, unambiguous definitions of concepts (2004, p. 630). Also in Chapter 1 Introduction both concepts maps were combined in an overall theoretical landscape in Figure 3 showing the complex relationship between graduate attributes and career agency during transition.

This theoretical framework in Figure 4 details the transition from graduate to professional and the role and perceptions of graduate attributes and career agency in this process. In clarifying terminology and showing connections; the three concept maps leading to the theoretical framework could, to some extent, resolve the ambiguity around terminology and lists of skills and attributes and of contemporary understanding of careers and career agency in the changing world of work.

Recently Coetze (2014) sought to address this ambiguity by developing a theoretical framework for attributes required for successful transition to employment (p.899). Coetze's framework is useful to this thesis as it addresses the skills issue and identifies attributes that constitute the graduateness of students. A weakness with Coetze’s research is that this does not necessarily refer to careers. This thesis aims to identify attributes useful for transition to professional employment and careers. Earlier the lack of a framework for attributes was mentioned (Collet et al., 2015). Other recent research (Jackson, 2016, p. 203) has addressed this gap and provides a useful model, of graduate transfer, to guide development of a framework in this thesis. A theoretical framework is provided in Figure 4 below. Figure 4 draws on the concept map for this research which is provided in Figure 2 of Chapter 1 and the conceptual summary of graduate attributes provided in Figure 3 of this chapter.
Figure 4 Theoretical framework incorporating graduate attributes and careers concepts
Figure 4 highlights the value and contribution to research clarifying graduate attributes by identifying, from the literature, the common skills and other qualities. Figure 4 also shows that knowledge is subordinated to graduate attributes with skills and other qualities. Of further value and contribution is clarification of graduate career agency from analysis of contemporary careers concepts. Further, this framework aligns the newly posited graduate attributes and graduate careers within the context of graduate transition to employment which is an area under-researched in the literature. Finally, of significant contribution is that this framework takes the perspective of graduates as opposed to employers or universities and presents a realistic interpretation of graduate attributes.

In sum, the intended theoretical contribution of this thesis is the integration of three bodies of literature to allow a deeper investigation of the role of graduate attributes and levels of graduates’ career attitudes during graduates’ transition to employment. These bodies of literature are interwoven with the purpose of developing new ideas to address the continuing differences between the attributes graduates develop at university and what employers want from graduate employees. Such new knowledge may inform universities and employers about the experiences of graduates during transition, with potential impacts on the practices of both and ultimately benefit the transition experience of graduates who, as opposed to universities and employers, are the key focus of this thesis.

Conclusion

This literature review has evaluated literature in six key sections. The first section considered the context of the changing world of work and the impact on graduates. The second section reviewed the graduate attributes debate within the numerous and overlapping nature of lists of attributes from different sources and consolidated and synthesised the knowledge, skills and other qualities as the attributes required by employers. This section also identified the gaps...
in the literature with respect to how graduates’ attributes are applied in employment, especially in the transition stage. The third section analysed graduates’ experiences of making the transition to their first professional roles and commencing their careers. The fourth section explored the nature of careers in the changing world of work, the changing definitions of careers and analysed the effects of varying careers concepts on graduates’ careers. The implications of graduates working in traditional and alternative careers and shifts in responsibility for careers are analysed. In particular, the key concepts of boundaryless protean attitudes are also explored with a view to using the scales developed by Briscoe et. al., to measure graduates’ career attitudes. Literature on career agency was analysed presenting an overview of definitions and implications of the varying definitions for graduates. The fifth section culminated in a theoretical framework for this thesis that deals with the complexity of the different literature and integrates the concepts in a way rarely done and called for, as demonstrated in extant literature. This sixth and final section of the literature review is the conclusion and a synthesis of the gaps in the literature to show how these have informed the research questions for this thesis by analysing and clarifying three separate, complex but related concepts of transition, graduate attributes and careers.

**Synthesis of gaps in the literature**

This analysis of the literature has highlighted gaps in the literature and opportunities for this thesis to make a significant contribution to the literature on graduates’ experiences. The main debates around the changing contexts of work include employment in a postmodern, network society and differences to the employment relationship that demand new attributes. Regarding graduate attributes, this review identified problems around: differences in interpreting exactly what the term comprises; the varying terminology used; differences in what is needed by employers and provided by universities; and, the evolution of attributes into new concepts such as employability. In order to bring clarity to the literature gaps were identified,
first to reconcile the differences in the understanding of attributes between universities, graduates and employers and second, to clarify the relationship between knowledge, skills and other qualities. As a result, knowledge, skills and other qualities were posited as equal components of graduate attributes.

In reviewing literature on SOQs their evolving applications were discussed. Each of these applications of graduate attributes indicates a greater emphasis on graduate career agency. Graduates’ other qualities, as shown in Table 3, developed via the modes of application identified in Table 4, pertain to career agency. The application of graduates’ attributes when they make the transition from education to employment is a central concern of this thesis. There is value in analysing how graduates experience the transition from university to employment as well as identifying which other qualities are critical to this transition.

Regarding transition, the review identified concerns about how graduate attributes are applied in employment especially at the early transition stage to professional employment. The early transition period was identified. Gaps were identified in the transition literature about Australian graduates’ experiences of their first year in professional employment in the discipline of management, specifically HRM. Literature reviewed suggests that graduates have better transition experiences when they have had more contextual opportunities to transfer and develop their attributes. Making the connection between attributes and transition, this review also identified a gap in the research in interpreting graduates’ experiences of applying their attributes during transition which may inform universities and employers and attempt to reconcile the differences in interpretation of graduate attributes. The need for more empirical exploration with graduates themselves of the application of graduate attributes and the lack of graduates’ perspectives are gaps addressed in this thesis.

Regarding careers, it is suggested that the transfer of attributes and professional learning have implications for graduates’ careers. The literature on careers mostly pertains to differences
between traditional and alternative views of careers creating tensions around the responsibility for careers which has shifted between organisational responsibility and individual responsibility. This review of literature also identified a range of careers concepts with gaps presenting opportunities for more empirical application. This thesis takes these opportunities to explore graduates’ approach to taking responsibility during this critical transition. Gaps are identified in aligning the concepts of transition and graduate attributes with graduates’ career agency. This is important as graduates who apply career management techniques and learn about work and career choices may do so, on the basis that they face more frequent employment changes. Their attributes are likely to be cumulative and transferable into a variety of employment settings. In applying this type of learning, graduates may understand specific requirements of various career opportunities and transfer their graduate attributes effectively.

Much literature reviewed focuses on varying careers concepts including boundaryless and protean concepts. In exploring the measures of career orientation an opportunity was identified to explore gaps in the application of boundaryless and protean attitudes. The literature review shows there is an opportunity to explore whether graduates do indeed anticipate a boundaryless future, as well as the extent to which they have a protean career attitude. An additional opportunity remains to be considered to what extent graduates are assuming a more agentic role in their careers.

Overall, there is limited international and Australian MMR research which explores these important issues of graduates’ experiences and their opportunities to apply their graduate attributes in the early career stage of transition to professional employment. This review identified limited qualitative research internationally on the application of graduate attributes during transition to employment and in managing careers. Although there is a recent increase in literature discussing attributes from an educational perspective, few refer to the Australian
context investigating graduates’ transition experiences and their opportunities to apply their attributes in transition to professional employment and in commencing their careers.

Therefore, this analysis identified gaps in the literature which have informed the research question. The research question under investigation in this thesis is:

*What are graduates’ perceptions of their attributes for shaping their careers when making their first career transition from university to professional employment?*

Subsidiary questions are:

*How do graduates negotiate the transition to professional employment?*

*What is the value of graduates’ attributes during this transition?*

*What is the role of graduates’ career agency during their transition to professional employment?*

Graduates are likely to develop further if their attributes are understood by universities, and employers thereby allowing them to create ideas and challenge convention especially if this is continued beyond university education in their careers. Therefore, graduates in employment may be best placed to inform universities about how to develop attributes and may be best placed to inform employers about how to present opportunities for applying their attributes.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to explore graduates’ perceptions of their attributes and career agency, especially during their transition to professional employment. Chapter 1, Introduction, presented an overview of the research problem. Chapter 2, Literature Review, provided a discussion of the context of the changing world of work, definitions and theoretical concepts, the debates around KSOQs (KSOQs) that shape graduate attributes. Chapter 2 also identified some gaps in the research. This chapter describes the methods chosen for this research. The mixed methods approach involved a core qualitative component comprising interviews, a card-sort and careers extracts, with a supplementary quantitative component of an online survey.

This chapter begins with an outline of the philosophical foundations and how they shape the emergent research design. This is followed by a rationale of the methods used and a discussion of mixed methods approaches. There is a discussion of the data collection and efforts to recruit participants, details of participants and contextual information about the participants. This is followed by giving full details about the two sets of data collection tools: First, the core qualitative components; the semi-structured interview questions and the card-sorting exercise are explained. Second; the supplementary quantitative component which is the online survey is detailed and illustrated with a conceptual framework. Finally, the strategy and process for data collection and data analysis are explained.

Philosophical considerations

The nature of this research was reviewed against four philosophical assumptions which inform researchers’ choices of methodology and methods. These four assumptions are: what...
constitutes knowledge (ontology); how knowledge is known (epistemology); the values brought to the inquiry (axiology) (Swanson & Holton, 2005); and the process of the investigation, including appropriate methods to gather data (Creswell, 2003, 2013). These four assumptions help explain my position as a researcher in this field.

**Ontological and epistemological perspectives reviewed**

An ontological perspective is the way in which a researcher thinks about what can be known about the world (Fleetwood, 2005), as well as social entities and individuals’ perceptions of reality (Bryman, 2004; Neuman, 2011). This perspective determines a researcher’s epistemological view which in turn underpins the principles, procedures and ethos on which their research is based (Bryman, 2004). Epistemology refers to what researchers consider as acceptable knowledge within a discipline (Bryman, 2004) and how researchers understand and make claims about the truth about the world around them (Neuman, 2011). The motivation for this research arose from the researcher’s desire to learn more about graduates’ transition experiences from university to employment, thus determining an epistemology based on exploring how graduates apply their KSOQs during this transition as well as attempting to understand their perspectives on how they begin to shape their careers.

Researchers must reflect on their ontological perspectives and how they shape the process of enquiry and data collection to create new knowledge. This determines the manner in which researchers investigate, and collect, data to create theories about the world or the phenomena they observe (Neuman, 2011). If events are the building blocks of research about which researchers collect data (Fleetwood & Hesketh, 2006, p. 1979) then the ontology is of significant observable events (Fleetwood & Hesketh, 2006), such as graduates’ transition to employment from university. In this research, these events are observed reflectively through interviews with participants.
This thesis is a management thesis and in management research, ontology and epistemology are often subjects of confusion and ambiguity. Fleetwood and Hesketh (2006, p. 1987) suggested putting a stop to the implicit and uncritical acceptance of the scientific approach of developing theories and testing hypotheses and, like other commentators, questioned whether social science is scientific (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001; Fleetwood, 2005; Fleetwood & Hesketh, 2006). Fleetwood argues that such ambiguity in management research has implications for organisation theory and knowledge as it has the potential to preclude full understanding of the ambiguity of organisations (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 197). I acknowledge this ambiguity, with carefully considered philosophical and methodological choices, based on a review of nominalist and realist ontologies in relation to understanding graduates’ perspectives of their transition experiences, thereby creating a research design appropriate to the research question.

This researcher has reviewed both nominalist and realist ontologies. Nominalist ontology posits that the world is never fully experienced, as the way the world is perceived is affected by subjective interpretation. Realist ontology posits that the world exists independently of individuals who experience reality through a process of enquiry (Neuman, 2011). From a nominalist perspective the experiences of graduates were relayed to the researcher, so they were never fully experienced first-hand and may have been affected by the researcher’s subjective interpretation of their experiences (Neuman, 2011). As graduates’ attributes and the environment for graduates’ career agency are determined independently and prior to graduates’ employment, they are perceived via realist ontology. As graduates apply their attributes and shape their careers, this world or environment becomes their reality which, in the context of research, is then shared with the researcher. In the review of the realist ontological perspective there was particular reference to critical realism (Fleetwood, 2005) as it applies in management research.
Critical realism reviewed

Critical realism was explored as it is highly pluralist in terms of empirical research methods (Miller & Tsang, 2011, p. 150) and different research methods focus on different aspects of reality thereby achieving a richer understanding of the phenomena (Fleetwood, 2005; Miller & Tsang, 2011). Critical realism is a growing intellectual movement in the social sciences, especially in management, that rivals positivism and empiricism (Fleetwood, 2005). Advocates of critical realism argue that access to the world is always mediated by one’s senses, which are influenced by one’s concepts and values about the nature of the world (Fleetwood, 2005). Critical realism links ontology and epistemology, positing a realist ontology in a world independent of the researcher’s knowledge, and a fallibilist epistemology wherein the researcher’s knowledge is socially produced (Miller & Tsang, 2011). These authors assert that socially produced knowledge includes the materially real, the ideally real and the socially real, which are explained here. Examples of the ‘materially real’ in this thesis include knowledge of organisations; the ‘ideally real’ refers to beliefs about organisational culture and expectations about professional employment and, ‘socially real’ knowledge includes familiarity with social structures such as the market mechanism, rules, relations, power, positions and practices (Fleetwood, 2005). I also add application of graduate attributes and career management practices into the ‘practices’ component of the social structures as they are concepts similar to powers and practices.

Critical realists claim that an entity can exist without knowledge of it or identification of it, and that those entities exist independently of articulable knowledge but not of tacit knowledge (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 199). Similarly, human limitations undermine claims to indubitable or objective knowledge (Miller & Tsang, 2011, p. 144). Fleetwood argues that a socially real phenomenon, such as a graduate’s transition to employment, requires elaboration of socially real entities such as organisations and careers, wherein, for example, explicit rules
of the workplace require identification (or knowledge) to be reproduced or transformed. Therefore, I include graduate attributes here as they also require identification, acknowledgement and application during work tasks. Using Fleetwood’s terminology for differentiating between researchers as social analysts and those studied as social actors, the researcher becomes the social analyst and graduates become social actors as they use their attributes and shape their careers. Graduate attributes, as entities, may be unknown by some graduates as well as by other social actors such as managers and employers.

**Shaping the research design**

Using the ontological and epistemological reviews and a simple framework, the principle for the core focus of this research is inductive, the epistemological orientation is interpretivist as a contrast to positivist, and the ontological orientation is constructionist (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The interpretivist epistemology posits that research on people and their institutions is fundamentally different from research in the natural sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Interpretivist epistemology requires a different research procedure, reflecting the distinctiveness of humans against the natural order, who can be understood by interpreting the meaning for those involved in social action (Bryman & Bell, 2011). These authors support their argument for interpretivism by arguing that a strategy is required which respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social actions of graduates as they make the transition. This interpretivist approach is applied in this research along with Weber's notion of *Verstehen* (Neuman, 2006, p. 87), which means having empathy when exploring the phenomenon of graduates making sense of their world and where I, as researcher, put aside all my preconceptions of that world (Bryman & Bell, 2011).
It is generally agreed that reality is socially constructed, yet, as Fleetwood argues, little is understood about how reality is constructed and what sustains it (2005, p. 206). Constructivists assert that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being interpreted by social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This implies that social phenomena are produced through social interaction and they are in a constant state of revision (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In exploring graduates’ contextual changes in the transition from university to professional employment, their changing roles within their new careers, their application of graduate attributes and changing responsibility for managing their careers, I also adopt a constructivist supplementary component to this research to complement the interpretivist core component.

In order to grasp the meaning of graduates’ experiences during transition and how they interpret the world, my research as a phenomenologist attempted to view the transition from their perspective (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This research is therefore phenomenological as I sought to understand and share graduates’ experiences, their perceptions of the value of their attributes and their career management during their transition to employment. A phenomenological approach was used to analyse the interview data, to inductively ascertain (Burton et al., 2009) the meaning of text data and to analyse the experiences of graduates in transition to employment.

The ontological perspective of this research, as outlined above, is based on an axiological perspective from this researcher’s previous experiences with undergraduates as head of department, lecturer and human resources manager for over twenty years in a variety of countries. However, the specific focus of my research is on what constitutes graduates’ successful transition to employment and the continued management of their careers. Graduates’ subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously (ontology), so that their
experiences can be understood by interacting with them and listening to what they say (epistemology) (Kanye & Crous, 2007).

This approach suits the interpretivist methodology. The epistemological interaction, explained above, was gained from graduates via the semi-structured interviews (Holliday, 2002) and interacting closely with all the participants at this stage of employment. Semi-structured interviews were chosen, because in exploratory research the interview is one of the most effective ways of gaining direct and rich information (Fontana & Frey, 2003). A semi-structured, as opposed to a structured approach, enables greater rapport between interviewer and interviewee, more reciprocity on the part of the interviewer and better understanding of the perspective of those being interviewed, all within the context of a non-hierarchical relationship (Bryman, 2004, p. 336).

An ethnographic study was considered but subsequently rejected as it would have involved becoming too close to the participants and possibly influencing what happens during the first stages of employment. This researcher’s previous professional background with undergraduates, and in the design of learning, may have brought some values and bias into ethnographic research and the analysis of that research. This was minimised by creating carefully constructed questions and discussion topics that enabled graduates to freely shape the discussion and contribute fully in their own way. In the context of this background and proposed research, I acknowledge that there may have been some axiological implications, which are based on my values concerning education, learning and enabling graduates to achieve.

The research question was reviewed against the main paradigms, which are positivist, interpretive social science, critical social science, feminist and postmodern (Neuman, 2006). These paradigms were reviewed in terms of their suitability for the research question then the main interpretive, positivist and critical paradigms were further reviewed. Critical social
science, feminist and postmodern paradigms, broadly intended to dispel myths or gender structured power relations, were not further reviewed as they were not appropriate for this research because gender is not the focus of this research which intends to explore graduates’ real experiences rather than myths about their transition experiences (Neuman, 2006, p. 105). The main paradigm chosen for this phenomenological exploration is interpretive. The interpretive approach is consistent with this research because, in exploring how graduates interact with their employment environment (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), the researcher is hearing and interpreting the graduates’ stories of their experiences. The interpretive approach was chosen as the ideal method based on an analysis of differences in approaches to social research (Neuman, 2006, p. 105). The mixed methods approach was chosen after careful analysis of other paradigms. A summary of other paradigms reviewed and considered against the research questions and the rationale for the choice of the interpretative social sciences as applied to graduates is shown in Table 6, drawing on Neuman (2006). Neuman identified ten elements of enquiry shown in the first column of Table 6 to assist in deciding the paradigm and focus the research. These elements are interpreted here as a series of questions for the researcher to consider when determining the paradigm. For example, the reason for research, in investigating graduate transitions, was not necessarily to discover a natural law or dispel a myth; it was to understand and describe meaningful action specifically how graduates use their attributes in making the transition to employment. This is best achieved by hearing the experiences of recent graduates and analysing them for the benefit of future graduates, employers and universities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Critical social science</th>
<th>Interpretive social science</th>
<th>Applicability to this thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reason for research</td>
<td>Discovers natural laws to predict events</td>
<td>Dispels myths, empowers people to change society</td>
<td>Understand and describe meaningful action</td>
<td>Researcher learns and shares the actions of graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nature of social reality</td>
<td>Pre-existing patterns can be discovered</td>
<td>Layered and ruled by hidden structures</td>
<td>Fluid definitions created by human interaction</td>
<td>Fluid graduate experiences within varying work contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Human nature</td>
<td>Rational and shaped by external forces</td>
<td>Creative people trapped by illusion</td>
<td>Social beings who create meaning to make sense of world</td>
<td>Graduates take ownership of external forces to shape themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Human agency</td>
<td>External pressures shape people’s actions</td>
<td>Free choice limited but limits can be moved</td>
<td>People have volition, develop meanings and make choices</td>
<td>Graduates develop volition and agency to make career choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Role of common sense</td>
<td>Less valid than science</td>
<td>False beliefs that hide power</td>
<td>Powerful everyday theories used by ordinary people</td>
<td>Shared experiences create theories or concepts for others to consider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What theory looks like</td>
<td>Logical deductive system of interconnected laws</td>
<td>Reveals true condition and helps people take action</td>
<td>Description of how a group’s meaning system is made and kept</td>
<td>Graduates make sense of their KSOQs in an applied context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Explanation that is true</td>
<td>Based on facts</td>
<td>Supplies tools to change world</td>
<td>Feels right to those studied</td>
<td>Graduates’ genuine experiences are shared for the benefit of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Good evidence</td>
<td>Precise that can be repeated by others</td>
<td>Informed by theory that penetrates the surface level</td>
<td>Embedded in context of fluid interactions</td>
<td>Graduates’ interactions with varying work contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Relevance of knowledge</td>
<td>Instrumental – knowledge enables people to master and control events</td>
<td>Dialectical and lets people see and alter deep structures</td>
<td>Practical, empathetic sharing of others’ life experiences</td>
<td>Graduates share their own stories within this research and ultimately in a thesis, journal articles and reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Place for values</td>
<td>Science is value free</td>
<td>Science must begin with a value proposition; some are right and some are wrong</td>
<td>Are an integral part of life – no groups are right or wrong</td>
<td>Graduates learn of their own and employers’ values and decide how to apply them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: An evaluation of paradigms and applicability of the interpretive social science approach to graduates’ experiences
The last column in Table 6 has been added to show how the ten elements have been evaluated for this research and explain why the interpretive approach was decided. As indicated, the reason for the research is to explore and share the actions of graduates who face varying work contexts, affecting their ownership of external forces and shape themselves. In doing so graduates develop volition and agency to make career choices which, when explored, may be useful shared experiences and create theories or concepts about KSOQs and career attitude for others to consider. Also during this transition period graduates learn of their own and employers’ values and decide how to apply them which would provide an insight into whether they are aligned.

Extensive research is that which tests generalities quantitatively and intensive research uncovers explanatory mechanisms qualitatively, therefore it is argued that critical realism encourages mixed designs to cope with complex phenomena which might be missed in any single design method (Miller & Tsang, 2011, p. 151). Miller and Tsang assert that management researchers need to overcome the complexities of practical and philosophical issues. These issues: include the complexity of social phenomena; the openness of social systems; the acknowledgement within critical realist philosophy that theories are social products; and, the notion that ontological realism may provide greater precision to deal with the openness of social phenomena in mixed designs. This argument supports my use of a mixed methods design.

I have used this review of philosophical assumptions to justify my mixed methods approach, which comprises of a qualitative core component with semi-structured interviews, card-sorting and careers extracts as three of the methods (Kanye & Crous, 2007). The purpose of these methods was to hear graduates’ experiences of transition, their use of attributes and how they began to manage their careers. The supplementary quantitative component involved a survey of graduates, which established the value of their KSOQs and their self-rated ability
at these, as well as their protean orientation and boundaryless mindset. The experiences of graduates, my perceptions of these experiences prior to the data collection and analysis, and following the data collection and analysis, demonstrate the nature of multiple realities (Creswell, 2013).

From Table 6 it can be argued that an interpretive social science approach best suits the nature of this research. This thesis is developed from a Verstehen perspective (Neuman, 2006, p. 87) as mentioned earlier. That is, an empathetically observed set of graduate experiences are used to describe and explain meaningful social interaction and produce practically-oriented outcomes that are intended to benefit graduates and indirectly benefit other stakeholders.

**Emergent research design**

Having refined the research question, conducted a literature review and identified gaps in the literature, it was then initially established that a qualitative design would be the appropriate method of answering the research question. Semi-structured interviews were intended to enable graduates to reflect on their transition experiences, the use and value of their graduate attributes and how these contributed to shaping their careers. The inclusion of a card-sort during the interview was intended to enable more in-depth discussion about graduates’ actual experiences in using their attributes, thereby identifying those of value to them and to their employers. Finally, graduates would discuss how their careers were shaping up and their perceived levels of autonomy in shaping their own careers.

The initial research design however, was changed as the research progressed, as a different more pragmatic approach was taken. This was not purely a post-hoc rationalisation as three key factors influenced this process. First, there were some data collection issues specifically in relation to sourcing participants, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Second, attempts to resolve these issues coincided with an offer of participation from
a large national organisation provided there was a survey included. While the original design was appropriate to address the research question, it was reconsidered in order to establish how a survey could be suitably incorporated and how it could add value and contribute to the research. Subsequently, the third factor influencing this pragmatic approach emerged when reviewing the limited empirical testing of boundaryless mindset and protean career orientation, and more specifically, the instrument to measure this developed by Briscoe and Hall (2005). Thus, the organisation provided the researcher with an opportunity to include this scale to evaluate graduates’ boundaryless mindset and career attitudes in the survey.

When developing the survey, it was decided that a mixed methods research design (MMR) would be appropriate. The MMR methodology answers the research question while retaining the core qualitative component of the semi-structured interviews and card-sort as well as a supplementary quantitative component of a survey. More detail about each method is provided later in this chapter. In addition, the ways in which this design addresses the research question is discussed in detail later and summarised in Table 7 and also shown in Figure 4.

Some interview participants’ managers were interested in the research and requested to participate, so additional data were collected from manager interviews. In addition, scores on the boundaryless and protean scales were provided in careers extracts from professionally employed near-graduates. In a profile of part-time undergraduates in Australian universities it was established that one quarter of undergraduates are employed part time (Hayden & Long, 2006). This cohort of participants represented an increasing number of people who are in part-time or full-time employment and who fit studies in with employment (Hayden & Long, 2006, p. 47), in order to remain competitive, for progression, personal development and enjoyment (Bennion, Scesa, & Williams, 2011) and complement their skills and knowledge with a degree (Jackson, 2009). Two minor other methods were a brief review of organisations’ development programs and the collection of secondary national data on graduate destinations.
Methodology is the study of methods for gathering data in order to select the most appropriate to answer the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Methodology is broader than methods and incorporates the social-organisational context, philosophical assumptions and ethical principles of the researcher, the researcher’s ontology and the paradigm for the research (Neuman, 2006). The purpose of the philosophy of research is to understand the choices and decisions a researcher makes (Carson et al., 2001). The following section explains this philosophy and choice of methods.

Methods

The methods used by researchers explain what is actually done to collect data. Methods include techniques for selecting participants, measuring and observing social life, gathering data, analysing data and reporting results (Neuman, 2006). Overall, the core qualitative mixed methods for this research consisted of interviews, a card-sort, careers extracts, brief contextual data regarding the participating organisations’ development programs and a brief analysis of the broader secondary data available from national graduate surveys. The supplementary quantitative method selected involved an online survey.

As little is known about how graduates perceive their transition to employment, the interview component of the research was exploratory with the intention of working towards a more detailed understanding of a central problem (Creswell, 2005). The purpose of the research design was to explore the experience of graduates during their transition to professional employment. Initially, therefore, graduates were to be the only participants in this research; however, some managers wished to discuss my research and the role they played in graduate transition. This data has been used where appropriate to establish the context for graduate transitions. Similarly, there was some interest in participation in this research by
employed part-time Open Universities of Australia (OUA) near-graduates who were about to make the transition to qualified professional employment.

As explained earlier in this chapter, a post-positivist, interpretivist (Morse & Niehaus, 2009), social constructivist (Creswell, 2013, p. 21), mixed methods approach was used (Morse & Niehaus, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Even though this approach appears to be mixing the paradigms, the methods and paradigms are independent of each other and so the epistemology-methods link was not an issue (Feilzer, 2010; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Indeed, some researchers advocate crossing paradigmatic boundaries (Falconer & Mackay, 1999) to gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon. While this research is not mixing paradigms (Morse & Niehaus, 2009, p. 9), I used a vigilant analysis at the point of interface, which is explained later. The rationale for this approach was based on two considerations (Morse & Niehaus, 2009, p. 15). First, the research had multiple participants working with a variety of employers. Second, the research explored multiple dimensions of a concept, or concepts, using different forms of measurement of: the transition experiences of graduates, the use and value of their graduate attributes, and a measure of their career agency. The theoretical drive was to understand the experiences of graduates during their transition to employment. The theoretical drive is therefore qualitative and establishes the core component of the research (Morse & Niehaus, 2009, p. 24). Here it was inductive and therefore qualitative. This research design was based on a mixed methods approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) and, as noted above, used interviews containing a card-sort as the qualitative core component, with an online survey as the supplementary quantitative component. Although Morse and Niehaus argue that a supplementary component can be in itself incomplete (2009, p. 15), it can provide valuable independent data. Table 7 summarises the methods used in the thesis to address each of the subsidiary research questions stemming from the overarching research question about graduates’ perceptions of their attributes for shaping their careers, when making their first
career transition from university to professional employment. As indicated in the table the qualitative component addressed all questions. The card-sort provided an opportunity to explore how graduates used their attributes with more detail about their specific application and individual experiences. The careers extracts indicated OUA respondents’ scores for protean and boundaryless attitudes.
### Table 7 Methods used to address the research question and subsidiary questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Research question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How do graduates negotiate the transition to employment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What is the role of graduates’ career agency in their transition to professional employment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What is the value of graduates’ attributes during this transition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>APSC  n=16 Other organisations n=9</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Card-sort</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>APSC  n=16 Other organisations n=9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online survey</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>APSC  n=89 OUA learners n=20 Other organisations n=13</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers extracts</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>OUA employed learners</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: APSC: Australian Public Service Commission, OUA: Open Universities of Australia
The research method and participant involvement summarised in Table 7 was based on a simultaneous qualitative plus quantitative (QUAL + quan) design (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). The process of identifying the qualitative core component and the quantitative supplementary component driven by the research question is indicated as route b in Figure 5, which is an adaptation from Morse and Niehaus (2009, p. 56). The process in Figure 5 shows the left pathway with a qualitative theoretical drive determining an exploratory core component using semi-structured interviews, card-sorting and careers extracts as the data sources. The next part of the process is the identification of the sample of 25 graduates in first 12 to 18 months of employment since graduation followed by the collection of the core data. Similar processes and decisions were made regarding the supplementary component shown in the right pathway, wherein a survey was decided to enhance the understanding of graduates’ experiences with their ranking of SOQs and their boundaryless and protean career attitudes. The three routes for a supplementary component were carefully considered and the sequential/simultaneous route was chosen. The reasons for this decision were because all data sets were independent of each other, they were analysed separately and combined at a point of interface, thereby enhancing the value of each data set. The point of interface for QUAL + quan designs occurs after the analysis of the core component data, resulting in core component findings, followed by a separate analysis of the supplementary data, resulting in supplementary component findings (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). Both sets of findings were integrated and then analysed and discussed together. This process is also shown in Figure 5 and which illustrates the mixed methods process, focusing on the core component left pathway and the integration of data and findings. The QUAL + quan process is in route ‘b’ of the right pathway in the diagram, where both sets of data and findings are integrated.
Identified research question:

*What are graduates’ perceptions of their attributes especially when making their first career transition to professional employment?*

**Data contribution to answering the research question**

**Route a - rejected**
Simultaneous supplementary strategy
QUAN+ qual

**Route b - selected**
Sequential/simultaneous supplementary
QUAN → qual
QUAL → qual

**Route c - rejected**
Sequential supplementary strategy
QUAL → quan

Identified sample and collected supplementary data = 123 online surveys

Analysis of supplementary data
Integration of supplementary findings with those of core component

---

*Figure 5 The mixed methods process and integration of data and findings*
Also indicated in Figure 5, this research uses some features of a mixed method notation system such as the use of QUAN⇒ qual, QUAL + quan (Cameron, 2012). Although a sequential design in two phases would yield comparative data, the sequential design was rejected for three reasons. First, there was a need to focus on the transition stage, second, data collection would have had to be delayed for over eight months for this to be effective which was not consistent with the timelines for a dissertation, and third, it can be difficult to locate participants on a second occasion.

Data was analysed and integrated based on a model by Morse and Niehaus (2009, p. 56) and notation developed further by Cameron (2012). The analysis of findings and the discussion of results is based on a GRAMMS (Good Reporting of a Mixed Methods Study) model (Cameron et al., 2013). This model was developed from an existing six-part framework (O'Cathain et al., 2008, p. 97) The framework focused on the justification for using a mixed methods approach and a description of the design purpose, priority and sequence of methods. The framework also included a description of each method in terms of sampling, data collection and analysis and then where integration has occurred. Additionally, the framework suggested showing how each method occurred and who participated. This was followed by a description of the limitation of one method associated with the presence of the other method; and, finally insights gained from mixing or integrating methods.
Data collection

As with many research projects, the data collection for this thesis evolved as the research progressed. The original criteria for selecting participants were that they were graduate employees, they held business and commerce degrees or similar, and they were in their first 6-12 months of employment following graduation. The original means of selecting participants for this research was to recruit three to six organisations which employ large numbers of graduates annually, ask for access to new graduates via graduates’ managers or GDP coordinators and interviewing and surveying the new graduates.

The reason for choosing three to six organisations was related to the significant amount of time required to source organisations and to interview each participant. The organisations targeted employed large numbers of graduates, therefore it was envisaged that access and data collection would be easier.

Early efforts to recruit participants

Extensive efforts to recruit participants were made. Griffith University Careers Services suggested specific organisations which resulted in correspondence with AAGE. The request for participants was distributed via AAGE members, which resulted in an invitation for me to attend a Graduate Forum and briefly present my research. At the same time, additional meetings were held with Griffith University Careers Services, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Careers Services and Bond University Careers Services that resulted in my attendance at careers fairs to discuss the research make contacts and source participants.

The mining and resources sector was considered as this is an under-researched sector and one that is a significant source of graduate employment in Australia. Some organisations replied saying that their graduates had recently completed a similar survey from AAGE, whom I had approached several months earlier. In addition, and quite significantly, in late 2013 graduate recruitment in the resources sector declined, as a result of the downturn in the industry.
When it became difficult to get large organisations involved, participants were sourced via social media such as LinkedIn mining and resources sector groups, such as Women in Mining and Resources Queensland, the Queensland Mining, Oil & Gas Group and the Mining Industry Professionals group. The researcher attended an annual Young Engineers of Australia in Queensland (YEAQ) event in May 2014 and presented information about the research and attempted to recruit participants. However, many of the attendees were unemployed or facing unemployment. A similar request was made to attendees at a GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) event for engineers in July 2014. While there was a lot of support for, and interest in, this research few participants came forward.

Repeated contacts were made with more than 20 other organisations resulting in nine interview participants being recruited. The process for recruiting participants involved contacting Human Resource Managers or Graduate Development Managers and asking them to invite graduate employees to participate in the research. Contacts were provided with samples of the Information Sheet and the Consent Form which to be used with participants (Appendix 3).

Participants

With so few private sector participants obtained after an extensive search, the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) was approached and agreed to participate. In 2013, the APSC had employed over 900 graduates nationally in its GDP. After discussions with a senior executive at APSC, the request for participants and information sheets about the research were sent to graduate managers in the first instance for circulation to employees on the GDP. The APSC also requested that the research involve a survey followed by an interview. The commission expected that several hundred responses surveys would be returned, and that a sizeable proportion of those surveyed would agree to be interviewed. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, this did not eventuate. A Federal government hiring freeze was announced;
with the result that graduate employees became uncertain about their future in the public service and morale was low. Significantly, there was a delay in the usual final placement of graduate employees following their last rotation at the very time the survey was circulated. This meant that managers were unable to ascertain who their graduate employees would be. Finally, the senior executive took early retirement and was unable to follow up on some of the participants.

Strategies to increase response rates were employed at various stages such as maintaining contact with the senior executive so that pre-notification emails and reminders could be sent to managers and graduates (p. 266). Another strategy involved direct contact with managers in participating organisations who had responded positively and asking them to mention the research to their colleagues. Similarly, the graduates who had agreed to be interviewed were positive about the benefits of the interview process, and many forwarded my details to their colleagues and friends in the same organisation. Every contact and participant was thanked for their contribution and reminded that it was not too late to participate or to suggest other participation from their colleagues.

Despite the positive feedback from participants and the managers who had been interviewed, the response and interview participation rate was not as high as anticipated. This could have been due to the increasing number of online surveys graduates are expected to complete, with some scholars suggesting that online data collection produces an inferior response rate and that there are disadvantages and advantages to this collection method over interviews (Manfreda, Bosnjak, Berzelak, Haas, & Vehovar, 2008; Wright & Schwager, 2008). However, Manfreda et.al. (2008) also conclude that, if it can be shown in practice that responses are similar on a particular issue, the problem of lower response rates is not critical (Manfreda et al., 2008, p. 100).
As a consequence of lower than expected numbers from APSC, 20 other organisations were approached and a second, slightly modified, survey was created and administered. Later, another opportunity arose to include participants who were professionally employed near-graduates, studying part-time with Open Universities Australia (OUA), and in their final semester. In this manner, OUA participants over three cohorts over two years were included: Semester 1, 2014; Semester 2, 2014; and Semester 1, 2015. As a result, a third modified survey for OUA participants was created and administered. Specific information about the participants follows.

**Contextual information about the participants**

This section summarises contextual findings from participants about their background, GDPs if they attended one, and supplementary information given during the interviews. In addition to providing an insight into the lives of the sample, this information connects with this research as it provides an insight into how they started their jobs and any support they received from GDPs which are a focus of both this chapter and Chapter 5, Quantitative Findings. One year GDPs in the APSC offer graduates pathways through a range of roles within a government department. The program incorporates a nationally recognised Diploma of Government. The diploma program involves skills development activities such as a focus on leadership. Graduates normally have three rotations during the program. A buddy and mentoring system is developed for graduates but they are also encouraged to develop their own networks. When they have completed the program, graduates are formally placed in a role within a department and are encouraged to mentor new graduates from the next intake.

Some participants attended corporate GDPs and indicated that they were designed to attract high performers from a range of degree disciplines and who can typically follow an
internship program. Skills development was also included in some organisations’ programs, for example, interpersonal and communication skills, presentation skills, report writing, critical thinking and stakeholder management.

Other organisations, such as those in the mining and resources sector, have developed informal and formal programs with rotations and projects to develop organisational awareness and skills. Some participants reported not having participated in a formal GDP but were offered induction programs with projects or specific activities to develop skills and organisational awareness to enable organisational fit and assimilation. Table 8 presents the main demographic characteristics of participants for ease of reference.
Table 8 shows that participants were given an identity number in order of their interviews and their names were changed to protect their anonymity. They are categorised into those in a government GDP, those in a corporate GDP and those not on a GDP. Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>M / F</th>
<th>Prior work</th>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>I, C</td>
<td>Public-sector</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C, V</td>
<td>Public-sector</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>Public-sector</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Susie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>V, C</td>
<td>Public-sector</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Public-sector</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>FT, C</td>
<td>Public-sector</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C, I</td>
<td>Public-sector</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Tess</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>I</td>
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<td>Canberra</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Public-sector</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Lily</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>WE, C</td>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>Belmont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</tr>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Christy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>I, C</td>
<td>Public-sector</td>
<td>Mascot NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>WE, FT</td>
<td>Accountancy</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Adrian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>FT, FT</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Banking</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Rita</td>
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<td>FT</td>
<td>Private health care</td>
<td>Sunshine Coast</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>C, V</td>
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<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Banking</td>
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<td>Ruth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
prior work experiences are indicated as follows: Placement = P, Internship = I, Work experience = WE, Casual = C, Voluntary = V, Full time = FT. More biographical and contextual information about interview participants is provided in Appendix 4.

**Qualitative core component methods**

**Semi-structured interviews**

The core (QUAL) component involved collecting data by means of semi-structured interviews with 25 graduates in a range of organisations, but primarily in the APSC GDP. The semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy that gives the researcher more control over the topics of the interview than unstructured interviews. In contrast to structured interviews or questionnaires which use closed questions, there is no fixed range of responses to each (open-ended) question (Bryman, 2012).

A written interview schedule was developed in advance, which was based on the research question and the tentative conceptual model of the phenomenon that underlies the research (Given, 2008). The interview schedule contained a total of 22 questions, each with prompts where appropriate, and was divided into 11 sections (see Appendix 5):

- Getting acquainted and relaxed
- What it was like starting this job after university
- Card-sorting questions on SOQs
- Prior work experiences
- Career management
- Support
- Other events
- Final comments overall
- Did university prepare graduates for employment?
- Advice to new graduates
• Closing and thanks

Semi-structured interviews use many kinds of open-ended questions so that participants may express their views (Creswell, 2003; Given, 2008). Some questions may ask for relatively concrete information (Given, 2008) which in this research included questions about the use of SOQs. Questions may probe for narrative information (Given, 2008) such as, in this case, asking participants to discuss specific workplace events in which they had used SOQs. Semi-structured interviews also use a variety of probes that elicit further information or build rapport through the researcher’s use of active listening skills (Given, 2008, p. 810). For example, participants were probed to identify whether they felt in charge of their careers, and why.

Six APSC interviews took place in Canberra and another in Brisbane, each conducted in the graduates’ departmental offices. A further three from other organisations took place at the workplace, and the remaining 15 were conducted by telephone. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and an analysis and coding plan was developed.

Of the 25 interviews, 23 were with graduates in the first year of their professional employment, while the remaining two were employed and doing an online degree, and so interview questions and codes were altered slightly as appropriate. The practical reasons for limiting it to 25 participants were: the time-consuming nature of conducting interviews and gathering rich data from recent graduates and the difficulty of recruiting organisations and individuals.

Semi-structured interviews are especially useful in research questions where the concepts and relationships between them are fairly well understood (Given, 2008). The degree of structure in this interview format, where the resulting text is a collaboration of investigator and participant, means that interpretive validity is ensured by asking participants how they evaluate the main benefit of their approach to task opportunities (Given, 2008, p. 811). Participants were asked questions about, for example, what a career meant to them and their
evaluation of their careers to date was also explored. For both unstructured and semi-structured interviews, the development of rich, relevant data relies on the interviewer's ability to understand, interpret and respond to the verbal and nonverbal information provided by the informant (Given, 2008, p. 810). In this way, further probes were used where appropriate to interpret and clarify participants’ responses.

Semi-structured interviews also help to clarify the mechanisms behind quantitatively measured relationships among variables for data gathered in other methods. With the use of open-ended questions and supplementary probes, surprising or anomalous results, or results that were unexpected based on current theories, may be explored (Cresswell, Shope, Plano Clark, & Green, 2006, p. 3) such as participants’ discussion of their values in questions about both ethical behaviour and in their control of their careers, which is discussed later in the findings in Chapter 4, Qualitative Findings. This allows the voice of different perspectives and can generate a theory or model which may be subsequently enhanced, in a mixed methods approach, with quantitative methods (Cresswell et al., 2006, p. 3). Different perspectives were gained by recruiting participants who were graduate employees from a range of public and private organisations and also participants who were professionally employed but completing a degree part-time. The ability of the researcher in building a rapport is essential to gain an understanding of participants’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2003; Given, 2008) and developing the discussion. At the same time, the researcher must know how to ‘bracket’ their own experiences (Creswell, 2003) and axiological values.

Card-sort

During the 25 semi-structured interviews a card-sorting technique was used that contained pre-designed cards (Paul, 2008) (see Appendix 6). Card-sorting has been described as a type of semi-structured interview and creates a non-invasive means for assisting participants to organise and unpack concepts in order to understand them (Kanye & Crous,
2007); it requires careful management and clear explanations to participants to avoid ambiguity (Neuman, 2006, p. 383). Advantages of card-sorting include addressing gaps in the interview, prompting further discussion (Kanye & Crous, 2007; Neuman, 2006) and collecting and verifying additional data (Neuman, 2006, p. 482). The criteria for sorting needs to be explained fully (Kanye & Crous, 2007). A careful recording of the dialogue also provides the researcher with a way of checking their own assessment of what has emerged in the discussion to that point (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 301).

The card-sorting method has two types: the closed and the open (Paul, 2008). The closed card-sort involves participants sorting cards into categories determined by the researcher in order to add new content to an existing concept or to test ideas. The open card-sort is where participants sort cards into categories they create themselves (Paul, 2008). There are few restrictions as participants can rename cards with better labels, add or remove cards or position the same card in multiple places. According to Paul (2008), this freedom makes the method one of the strongest for drawing out an underlying mental model of participants. One method for analysing the results of open card-sorts is cluster analysis, which analyses the relationship of a card to a category and the relationship of a card with another card, such as in grouping SOQs. This is discussed in Chapter 6, Discussion. Closed card-sorting can be analysed in the same way as open card-sorting and by scoring participant’s results with others (Paul, 2008).

Eighteen laminated cards showing each of the SOQs were shown to participants. Each SOQ was explained and briefly defined on the card (see Appendix 6). The decision was to focus on SOQs in the card-sort, rather than knowledge as knowledge from degrees, was considered a given as discussed in Chapter 2, Literature Review. The cards showing skills were coloured blue and those showing other qualities were orange, although this classification by colour was not obvious to participants. The purpose was to enable participants to reflect upon, and describe, any events where they had used these SOQs and depict their own understanding...
of them. Participants were asked to review the cards and sort them by selecting those SOQs they had used and discuss the events in which they had been used. Participants were also given the opportunity to identify any skills or other qualities they had not had the opportunity to use and those they felt they had which were missing from the cards.

Once the cards had been sorted they were used to delve into a deeper discussion about how and why these skills or other qualities are valued, used or not used. There were prompts to ascertain which of these graduate attributes were important to them, and if they had any skills or other qualities that were not included on the cards (see Appendix 6). This method allowed freedom for participants’ stories to emerge with only a little direction regarding their perceptions of the value their SOQs. The card-sorting data was incorporated into the transcriptions and analysed and coded in the same way. The findings of the card-sort were used to complement the survey and interviews by developing graduates’ views on the value of their skills and qualities.

**Discussions with managers**

Prior to the interviews with graduates, there were discussions with the line managers of five graduates (see Appendix 7). This provided an opportunity to collect some contextual data but it was also essential for building rapport with the organisation and graduates. These discussions were sensitively managed, as graduates may have felt that their managers were gatekeepers. This may have changed the nature of the interview or inhibited graduates cooperation (Neuman, 2006, p. 388) if graduates felt the manager interview directed their participation in any way.

**Careers extracts**

Data was also collected from the careers extracts of 44 part-time employed Open Universities Australia (OUA) near-graduates who were making the transition to qualified professional employment. These extracts provided information about their perceptions of
careers and exploring if, how and why they had shaped their careers by undertaking a degree program and how that degree would complement their previous and current work experience. The extracts also contained their scores for the protean and boundaryless scales which were the same items as those in the survey completed by other participants.

**Quantitative supplementary component methods**

The quantitative supplement was primarily a survey. However, some of the data was collected from OUA near-graduates who submitted careers extracts. These extracts contained their responses to the protean and boundaryless mindset scale questions, which were part of the survey administered to other respondents. Their responses were extracted and entered into the survey data on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

**Surveys**

According to the terminology in the mixed methods literature, the core component (QUAL) was supplemented by a quantitative (quan) component (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). The supplementary (quan) method was an online survey. The advantages of a quantitative (survey) are that the data collected are a useful supplement to qualitative (interview) research for theory generation and may help refine a model based on larger participant numbers than could be feasibly interviewed (Cresswell et al., 2006, p. 8). A survey complementing interviews also addresses the potential problem that one research instrument will not effectively integrate quantitative and qualitative approaches because one will tend to be subordinate to the other (Bryman, 2006, p. 7). For the purposes of this research, the survey was subordinated to the semi-structured interview. However, the use of a survey complements interview data; it adds to the perspectives of graduates and may address those mixed methods readers who value numbers (Cresswell et al., 2006, p. 8). Figure 6 presents the conceptual framework for the quantitative component.
Figure 6 Conceptual framework for quantitative supplementary component of mixed methods
The conceptual framework in Figure 6 has two main parts. The first part focuses on graduates’ ranking of the commonly identified SOQs in order of importance to them and their employer. The second part focuses on graduates’ measurements in the protean and boundaryless mindset scale. Both parts of the conceptual framework were analysed and brought together to explain if they played any part in graduates’ transition to professional employment. KSOQs are outlined in full in Chapter 2, Literature Review however a key is also given in Figure 5 as a reminder of the SOQs.

After several drafts and reviews, three versions of the survey were developed using LimeSurvey, an open-source, free software application available from the Griffith University Research Survey Centre. A pre-test of the initial survey was conducted with eight people who provided feedback which was incorporated into the final surveys. The eight people were purposefully selected from management undergraduates, other PhD candidates and quantitative methodologists. The reasons for this pre-test were to ensure the questions were appropriate, easy to understand, unambiguous and unbiased, thereby avoiding administering an invalid or onerous questionnaire (Sekaran, 2003; Zikmund, 2003). The pre-test was conducted by opening the online survey for a limited period of two weeks. The link to the survey was sent to the pre-test respondents who completed the survey within one week. Pre-test respondents critiqued the survey in emailed comments (Neuman, 2011). The feedback included comments about the time taken, reducing the number of questions asked, merging some questions, and removing questions which seemed duplicated or too lengthy. Other feedback included rephrasing questions and explaining concepts to make them understandable. These changes were made and a further pre-test with three of the respondents was conducted. This process ensured the validity of the questions, their appropriateness to the research question, as well as devising a clear structure to the survey (Sekaran, 2003; Zikmund, 2003).
As mentioned previously, there were three versions of the survey, developed in response to different employers and graduates: for APSC graduates, for graduates of other organisations, and for OUA participants. The main survey on which all three surveys were based can be found at Appendix 8. In each survey, there was an introduction which was simply worded (Sekaran, 2003) and explained the aims of the research and the duration of the survey. Each section to the survey was briefly described and there was a link to the ethics information sheet which participants had already seen but could have reviewed again. The introduction also contained appreciative comments from the researcher and contact details should participants have further questions.

The surveys comprised eight parts and 34-36 carefully sequenced questions, depending on the version. The eight parts were titled:

1. About you
2. About your degree
3. About your current employment
4. About your skills
5. About your qualities
6. About your career attitudes
7. About your career possibilities
8. Your transition from graduate to professional employment

Following the questions in parts A and B that provided demographic information, there were deductive items (Morse & Niehaus, 2009, p. 40) which investigated levels of graduates’ KSOQs in parts C, D and E. The questions for parts C, D and E were a mixture of ranking questions and Likert scale questions designed to measure attitude or opinion, with five responses in rank order: strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005). Parts F and G investigated protean orientation and boundaryless mindsets using an existing research instrument (Briscoe et al., 2006), with the
same rank order responses. The final component H, asked open questions about graduates’
transition to employment where appropriate.

Links to the online surveys were sent to respondents after they had been sourced in the
ways explained earlier. Respondents completed the surveys and at the end of the main survey
there was an additional survey to complete, if they wished, to volunteer for an interview without
compromising their anonymity. Table 9 is a schedule of the surveys. The surveys were
launched and completed over a period of one year commencing in November 2013 with APSC
and ending with OUA in November 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Open</th>
<th>Complete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APSC</td>
<td>November 2013</td>
<td>30 December 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organisations</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUA semester 1, 2014</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUA semester 2, 2014</td>
<td>October 2014</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Careful consideration was given to the variety of methods. Table 10 represents the
thought processes given to deciding on each method and shows a summary of the advantages
and disadvantages of each method. Each of the methods was carefully considered against the
research question, the nature of participants and the nature of data generated and the level of
control by the researcher. For example, semi-structured interviews were chosen because the
researcher has some flexible control over the discussion topics to adhere to the research
questions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Methods used</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some flexible control over the topics discussed.</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>No fixed range of responses. Careful management of questions needed (Given, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured interview guide needed and based on research question (Given, 2008).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Structured interview guide needs careful monitoring (Given, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended questions for concrete or narrative information elicit participant views (Creswell, 2003).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dependent on researcher’s listening skills (Given, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended questions more appropriate for interpretivist approach (Creswell, 2003).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rich, relevant data requires ability to understand, interpret, and respond to verbal and nonverbal information provided (Given, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative researchers seek to understand the context of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information (Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2006).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Need to ensure interpretive validity by avoiding leading questions (Given, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of questions and flexibility of approach generates rich data (Given, 2008).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the lived experiences of participants (Creswell, 2003).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher ‘brackets’ own experiences to understand those of the participants (Creswell, 2003).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains or enhances results of a quantitative tool (Cresswell et al., 2006).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer adjusts to participant’s norms and language (Neuman, 2006, p. 407).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapport and trust between interviewer and participant (Given, 2008).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher needs to manage ambiguity and uncertainty on site (Neuman, 2006, p. 383).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predesigned cards useful in developing the interview and addressing any gaps in interview (Kanye &amp; Crous, 2007; Neuman, 2006).</td>
<td>Card-sorting</td>
<td>May seem trivial if not explained carefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add variation and structure to the interview (Kanye &amp; Crous, 2007).</td>
<td></td>
<td>May lead the interview too much if not managed carefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer explains criteria and can probe answers for more detail.</td>
<td>Sorting criteria needs to be explained carefully (Kanye &amp; Crous, 2007).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue is recorded and card-sort recorded photographically.</td>
<td>The final layout of the cards is less important than the discussion it generates (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 301).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers may use such exercises as a way of checking their own assessment of what has emerged from the discussion so far (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 301).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-design methods are used for creating information architecture. Post-design methods are used subsequently to validate or edit an existing architecture (Paul, 2008).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative (survey) data is a useful supplement to qualitative (interview) research for theory generation and might help refine a model based on larger numbers than could be feasibly interviewed (Cresswell et al., 2006, p. 8).</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative (survey) data may further advocacy related goals, from the many perspectives of individuals, and can also highlight emancipatory concerns to larger audiences who value numbers (Cresswell et al., 2006, p. 8)</td>
<td>Argument that one research instrument (survey) does not represent a true integration of quantitative and qualitative research, because one will tend to be subordinate to the other (Bryman, 2006, p. 7).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey can be issued at end of interview (Neuman, 2006, p. 299).</td>
<td>The social context is ignored (Neuman, 2006).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers greater anonymity (if not completed at interview) (Neuman, 2006).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid interviewer bias (Neuman, 2006).</td>
<td>Low response rate (Neuman, 2006) if not administered on site.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants may ask for clarification at the time of the interview (Neuman, 2006).</td>
<td>Survey’s attempt to mould the communication pattern into a framework (Neuman, 2006, p. 407).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate structured answers (Neuman, 2006, p. 299).</td>
<td>Researcher cannot control conditions in which questionnaire is completed if not on site (Neuman, 2006).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides contextual background for the purposes of this research.</td>
<td>Someone else may complete survey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishes rapport with organisation’s gatekeepers.</td>
<td>Low level of honesty of participants poses a risk when not observed completing survey (Neuman, 2006).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions with managers</td>
<td>Time delay in gaining responses if not on site (Neuman, 2006).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatekeepers may try to change nature of interview (Neuman, 2006, p. 388).</td>
<td>Gatekeeper approval may inhibit co-operation of participants (Neuman, 2006).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 indicates that semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow participants to provide individual responses and richer data depending upon good engagement with the researcher and the researcher’s listening and interpretation skills. The surveys and careers extracts collected different types of data due to the different circumstances of the graduate and near-graduate participants. The surveys of APSC respondents and other organisations addressed all three themes: graduate transition to professional employment, the value of graduates’ attributes during this transition and the role of graduate career agency in their transition employment. The careers extracts collected data on boundaryless mindset items and protean orientation items which were then computed into sub-scores for self-directed attitude, values-driven attitude, boundaryless mindset and organisational mobility preference which were then totalled to give an aggregate score. However, in some cases respondents only submitted the boundaryless and protean total scores.

**Data preparation and screening**

Screening quantitative data involves identifying errors, correcting problems with the data, checking for inconsistencies and dealing with missing responses (Neuman, 2006). Data were uploaded from LimeSurvey into SPSS. Each case was also given a unique identifier. Data were prepared by assigning numbers to responses, inserting a numeric value such as 99 or 999 for missing data and creating variable labels. There were 169 cases and 187 variables initially available for analysis, providing extensive data and triangulation (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013).

After a review of variables, such as job title and the length of stay with current employer, some data were reduced. Data reduction (Vercellis, 2009) is an efficient way of managing relevant data. Other data were not reduced but refined; for example, the various job titles for APSC participants were changed to Graduate Officer although some identified themselves within a particular field or specialism such as IT, health and law. Similarly, job
titles for other respondents were reviewed. Another example of data reduction concerned the responses to the question: How long will you stay with this employer? Data responses were reduced from 8 categories to 4.

There was no potential for duplicated responses as the surveys were online and the link could only be accessed once per participant. There were no opportunities for ‘other’ responses or for skipping questions, although there were 21 incomplete surveys. There were open questions asking for brief comments, about extra skills or qualities graduates have or which employers needed and questions about anything that assisted or prevented a successful transition to employment. The responses were uploaded and analysed thematically.

As the structure and content of the three versions of the surveys were slightly different, some data were missing owing to the revised questions and situation of each participant cohort. The variations to the questions and data collected include, for example, data about work experience during the degree and attending a GDP and activities on the GDP. These were not relevant to the OUA group and so they were not asked. Where missing data were observed 99 or 999 was inserted.

In the careers section of the survey there were 27 questions based on those by Briscoe et al. (2006) to assess respondents’ career attitudes. This interest in developing scales has increased recently (Praskova, Creed, & Hood, 2015; Tolentino et al., 2014). Tolentino et al. created the career adapt-abilities scale CAAS which uses four career constructs, concern, control, curiosity, confidence as behaviours indicating a sense of responsibility to mobilise their careers. Similarly, to operationalising career calling, Praskova Creed and Hood (2015) developed a 15-point scale to measure, in university students, their sense of personal meaning, being other-oriented and active engagement all similar to the values-driven component of protean orientation of the scale developed by Briscoe et al. (2006). Briscoe et al’s questions comprised two main sections: the ‘protean orientation’, comprising questions 1 to 14, and ‘the
boundaryless mindset’, comprising questions 15 to 27. The questions also provided subtotals for four subsections specifically: a self-directed (SD) score from questions 1-8 and a values-driven (VD) score from questions 9-14, a boundaryless mindset (BMS) score from questions 15-22 and an organisational mobility preference (OMP) score from questions 23-27. The self-directed and values-driven scores make up the protean attitudes scale and the boundaryless mindset and organisational mobility preference make up the boundaryless mindset scale.

The scales were reviewed and revised (Briscoe et al., 2006). In the survey design stage and in the survey of organisational graduates, some of the 27 questions were omitted as, at that time, they were deemed repetitive or not of value in determining the particular participants’ career orientation at that point in time. Later, when implementing the OUA survey, it was realised that there was an opportunity to construct a response to the original scales. However, the missing questions would have had an effect on respondents’ SD score, VD score, BMS score and OMP score. The differences in the surveys and effects on subtotals are shown in Table 11. The four questions affected are given in the table and the surveys that do not include them are shown. All questions from the scales are present in the OUA survey.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question number and question</th>
<th>Not included in APSC survey</th>
<th>Not included in Graduate 2 survey</th>
<th>Scale subtotals affected</th>
<th>Possible range of total scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. I am responsible for my success or failure in my career.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-directed</td>
<td>35 40 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What’s most important to me is how I feel about my career success; not how other people feel about it.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Values-driven</td>
<td>20 25 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. In the past I have sided with my own values when the organisation has asked me to do something I don’t agree with.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>Boundaryless mindset</td>
<td>30 40 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I would enjoy working with people outside of my organisation.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I have sought opportunities in the past that allow me to work outside the organisation.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 11 indicates there were missing variables. Although the number of missing variables was low in the careers agency section of the survey, it was decided to review strategies to maximise available data rather than exclude the cases with missing data. This was decided as those cases contained valuable data about other variables. There are several methods to resolve the issue of missing data (Neuman, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Vercellis, 2009). Rather than elimination, which is often the norm, other strategies for validation of data and for dealing with missing data include inspection, identification and substitution (Vercellis, 2009, p. 96). Another suggestion is the mean method (Manning & Munro, 2007, p. 22; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) would replace the missing value with the mean of that variable obtained from all valid responses. This was considered for those cases where the question had been omitted from the survey and so would affect the subtotals. This was also considered for just the subtotals for the self-directed, values driven, boundaryless mindset and boundaryless mindset variables, but was rejected.

Another approach used is the all-available approach which does not replace the missing data, but uses the case for data variables that have no missing values. In addition to the all-available approach it was decided that a more valid and reliable measure of, for example, the SD, VD and BMS would be computed, by generating a percentage of the available score rather than using the mean. This means that the SD scores, in full, were out of available 40 points for OUA where all questions had been asked, but out of an available 35 points for APSC owing to the missing question 2. The VD percentage score for APSC were out of 30 rather than 40 owing to two missing questions and for graduate 2/organisational graduates it would be out of a total of 35 owing to one missing question. The BMS score for both APSC and graduate 2 scores would be out of 30 not 40 owing to the two missing questions for both. The organisational mobility preference total had no missing questions therefore there is no missing data for this sub-total. The final scores for the complete total were adjusted to percentages according to the
relevant number of items. Subsequently all subtotals with missing questions were computed as a percentage from the available points.

As mentioned earlier, some surveys were incomplete but contained useful data for further research and demographics. This maximizes the data collected differently from the various sources and prevents the cases being eliminated from the entire analysis. The disadvantage of this method is that the sample and data content will vary (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). In other words, cases with some missing data were used for the value of the other data they contained.

**The final data set for analysis**

Data mining and reduction were undertaken for efficiency, accuracy and simplicity (Vercellis, 2009) without sacrificing the quality of the results. Table 12 summarises the various types of data sources, the main details of the 169 cases, the themes of the surveys and the content. Differences to the protean and boundaryless items are explained above. New variables were created to further explore relationships, and this will be discussed later in this chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Number</th>
<th>Data collection source</th>
<th>Demographic and transition</th>
<th>Graduate attributes</th>
<th>Boundaryless items</th>
<th>Protean items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>APSC survey</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Graduate 2 survey</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>OUA1 near-graduates survey</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Information collected in careers extracts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>OUA1 near-graduates’ careers extracts</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data was prepared, transcribed and stored in a locked cabinet and on a secure computer. Some data, such as interview transcripts, were analysed both manually and using Nvivo before the collection phase was completed to ensure adequate and valid data were being collected and to determine whether saturation levels were being reached (Teddle & Yu, 2007). When the data collection phases were complete, several reminders and prompts to graduate managers and Human Resources managers were sent. Once all data were collected and no further surveys or interviews were forthcoming, the analysis stage commenced.

**Approach to the analysis**

In a mixed methods approach the analysis of the core and supplementary data items are conducted separately (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). Following this, the research findings are integrated to answer the research question. This section presents the procedure for this analysis, starting with the core qualitative items.

**Semi-structured interviews**

The findings from the semi-structured interview transcripts were analysed according to the following coding plan:

1. All interviews were digitally recorded and uploaded to secure audio computer files.

2. As soon as each interview was completed, the audio files were reviewed for clarity. On one occasion, another copy had to be made wherein one interview was re-recorded by the researcher by listening to the audio tape and reading interview notes, as the transcriber could not understand the accent and language used by the interviewee.

3. As soon as the audio files were reviewed they were copied and uploaded to secure Cloud storage.
4. Transcriptions of the recordings were made into Word documents and placed on secure Cloud storage then accessed and filed on a secure computer. This was usually completed within five days of the interview.

5. Any questions and comments not from respondents were italicised to indicate that they were the researcher’s comments.

6. The documents were organised with the questions as headings using heading 1 format to become the first level codes in Nvivo. Comments from the researcher had been clearly identified and were not coded.

7. All transcriptions were proofread against the recordings for accuracy and to start developing familiarity with the data.

8. There was a first pass wherein all paper transcriptions were read and coded manually, noting emerging themes and serendipitous themes (Neuman, 2006, p. 462).

9. All transcripts were read again reviewing the main themes emerging from the interview questions, with notes made in margins and key points identified with respect to the following key themes:
   a. Transition experiences
   b. Skills and other qualities
   c. Careers

10. All transcriptions were placed on Nvivo and heading 1 question codes were created in the order of the interview, as in 9 above.

11. All transcriptions were coded, initially using the question codes and themes emerging from step 9 and then identifying new codes and themes.

12. Question codes and responses were reviewed for data which were classified as descriptive, interpretive and explanatory (Miles & Huberman, 1994) representing a patterned response (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

   In sum, manual coding was followed by electronic coding using Nvivo software, with both guided by the research question and the subsidiary questions. The coding and themes emerged by assigning labels or tags to the data to denote units of meaning (Neuman, 2006, p.
Three stages of the coding procedure were used: open coding to allocate primary categories, axial coding to create links and generate analytic categories, and finally selective coding where all previous codes were scanned and comparisons and connections between data were made to link themes and concepts further (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 2006). In this way, the transcripts were coded initially according to the themes of the semi-structured interviews and then for emergent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was done by assigning further labels or tags to the data to denote units of meaning (Neuman, 2006, p. 460) which became themes, then reviewing every theme and emergent relationships between them (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Card-sorting**

The findings from the card-sorting were analysed first by indicating which skill or other quality was selected first, second third and so forth. Second, the events wherein skills or other qualities (SOQs) were used were analysed. Third, any additional SOQs were analysed. Finally, SOQs which had not been used due to lack of opportunity were analysed. Comments such as participants’ understanding of the skill or other quality were also coded. This card-sorting discussion is reported in Chapter 5, Quantitative Findings, comparing the card-sorting results of all graduates.

**Discussion with managers**

After transcription and proofreading, the discussions were analysed and coded manually. Although these discussions were primarily analysed for contextual information about the employer and the GDP, they were also analysed for comments which may have emerged about managers’ roles in graduates’ transition, including their acknowledgement, use and value of graduates’ skills, and what role managers had, or might play, in supporting
graduates in the early stages of their careers. In addition, these discussions provided another, albeit brief, perspective on the transition experiences of graduates.

**Careers extracts**

The careers extracts from near-graduates of OUA were analysed and coded manually for their evaluation of their career to date and emergent themes. Their boundaryless and protean attitude scores were extracted from the extracts and added to the survey data and these were analysed quantitatively using SPSS.

**Surveys**

As surveys were a supplementary component of this particular mixed methods approach, developing hypotheses and statistical testing were not essential. A data analysis strategy was developed to analyse the online survey data. The aims of the analysis were to gather information about participants, demographics, how they had secured employment, any work experience undertaken, if graduate attributes had contributed to a successful transition to employment and, if so, and how career agency had contributed to a successful transition.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted in five steps similar to an approach by Cresswell (2003, p. 18) but commencing with step five, specifically the selection of SPSS software for analysis, based on the researcher’s training in SPSS. Cresswell suggests two phases, firstly, identifying a statistics program for testing which, as explained earlier, is SPSS and secondly, identifying the number of independent and dependent variables. Then, using the software and following step one, details of respondents and non-respondents were provided, for example the number of respondents, particular issues and problems, and a description of how the data were collected, when and from whom. The purpose of this was to identify relationships with other data from the interviews.
Step two involved a discussion of the method by which the response bias was to be determined. A wave analysis (Creswell, 2003) was conducted periodically, to check for any response bias from APSC participants, as those who respond towards the end are nearly non-responders. As there was no obvious trend, and as this quantitative data is supplementary, this was not pursued further.

Step three involved conducting a descriptive analysis and means, standard deviation and range of scores for all the variables. This was to ensure that the data was sound and to be able to identify trends that are discussed in Chapter 5, Quantitative Findings.

Step four involved data reduction (Jolliffe, 2002, p. 78) and combining some questions into scales or components, where appropriate. A strategy for analysis and a process of operationalising constructs using these steps was determined and this is discussed next.

**Strategy for quantitative analysis**

A process of operational constructs was determined incorporating the five steps outlined above. This started with a check for missing values, the identification of variable types and items to create a composite variable, checking for face validity, creating composite variables, checking validity, reliability and for outliers, looking for multivariate and unusual patterns across many variables, and scanning for high or low scoring across rating questions and unusual patterns in a single variable. Following the instructions from Briscoe et al. (2006), the boundaryless mindset scale items 7 g-k were reverse-scored.

The process of operationalising the constructs and identifying possible combinations is shown in Appendix 9; this is adapted from Manning and Munro (2007, p. 7). Ten abstract concepts based around participants’ demographics, work, skills, qualities, KSOQs use, graduate attributes, protean orientation, boundaryless attitude, career agency and transition comments were operationalised.
A demographic profile of participants was constructed from age, gender, degree, year of graduation, job title, whether participants were in a GDP or not and, if so, the length of time on the program. A work profile was created combining data about work experience including whether graduates commenced their degrees straight after high school, previous experience with their current or other employer, numbers of jobs since finishing their degree, length of time in the current job, length of time taken to get this job and the number of jobs they had applied for.

A new variable, ‘Experience’, was created to aggregate results for the value of prior experience from 10 items using their scores for their prior experience as well as the value by adding scores on each item from a possible range of 10-50. The 10 items were:

- internship
- cadetship or placement with current employer
- vacation work with current employer
- paid work with current employer
- voluntary work with current employer
- other activities with current employer
- internship, cadetship or placement with another employer
- vacation work with another employer
- paid work with another employer
- voluntary work with another employer and,
- other activities with another employer.

The generally agreed acceptable minimum level for Cronbach’s alpha is 0.7 (Hair, 2007), although 0.5-0.6 may be acceptable for preliminary research on new scales (Peterson, 1994, p. 382). As the Cronbach’s alpha was above 0.70 this was deemed a valid variable. Also in this part, data about graduates’ perceptions about the GDP and their further development
were collected to explore the value of knowledge as part of graduate attributes along with SOQs.

This was followed by graduates’ ranking of SOQs, their perceived ability with respect to the skill or other quality, the importance of the skill or other quality to them and to their job, and whether there were any additional skills or other qualities they had. To reduce the number of variables a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was used to explore the relationships between SOQs. A PCA is a type of factor analysis to summarise relationships between variables displayed in a correlation matrix (Manning & Munro, 2007, p. 167). In this research, there were 18 variables (nine skills and nine other qualities) which were combined and reduced from 18 to six and renamed ‘new’ graduate attributes. The six ‘new’ graduate attributes were: cognitive processing, interpersonal (attributes) referred to here as interpersonal, intrapersonal (attributes) referred to here as intrapersonal, self-management, curiosity and ethical behaviour. Graduates’ use of their knowledge, SOQs, and their value in transition in their job were analysed to address the role of these factors in transition.

Graduates’ protean orientation and boundaryless mindset were analysed next. Analysis also took into account any further studies, professional membership certificates or training and development and who initiated it, then intended length of stay with current employer. This was to determine if, and how, graduates were managing their careers.

The final part of the process analysed the open questions in relation to factors which assisted graduates to make the transition to professional employee, what made it difficult and anything else graduates mentioned about their transition.

All findings from the data collection were aligned after analysis in accordance with a sequential mixed methods approach (Morse & Niehaus, 2009) as illustrated earlier in Figure 4. These were broken down into five main themes: demographics, prior
employment/experience/employability (EXP), transition success (TS), the role of skills (S) in TS, the role of other qualities (OQ) in TS, and any other factors that influence TS.

After analysing the qualitative and quantitative components separately there needs to be a discussion of the results whereby data sets linked to the discussion are clearly shown to avoid any confusion over the origin of the data (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). This is found in Chapter 6, Discussion.

**Sampling**

Careful consideration was given to determining the sample size and guidelines from other mixed methods research were sought (Cameron & Miller, 2007; Denzin, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Hesse-Biber, 2010; Morse, 2010; Morse & Niehaus, 2009; Onwuegbuzie, Slate, Leech, & Collins, 2009; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Similarly, supervisors, colleagues and other PhD students were consulted about an appropriate sample size. A precise sample size and definite formulas for determining size remain elusive (Denzin 2010). Four broad categories of sampling are identified: probability, purposive, convenience and mixed methods. Probability samples aim to achieve representativeness of the whole population. Purposive sampling techniques are primarily used in qualitative (QUAL) studies and may be defined as selecting units (e.g. individuals, groups of individuals or institutions) based on the specific research questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

Teddle and Yu (2007), referred to dimensions of contrast for sampling (p. 84), which were reviewed. These include: purpose of sampling, generalisability, number of techniques, size depth and breadth of information, sampling frame and the form of data generated, which in this research is narrative and numeric. Subsequently the focus of this research involved purposive qualitative sampling, where graduates making the transition to employment are the special cases. The purposive sample was taken from a population of graduates which for 2013
182,174 graduates of whom 71.3 percent were in full time employment after 4 months (Graduate Careers Australia, 2013).

As purposive sampling was determined the most appropriate sample size was considered. The purpose of having a sample size in mixed methodology is to generate a sample that will answer the research question with reliability, validity, truthfulness and credibility (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) whilst having the potential for transferability (Teddle & Yu, 2007, p. 84). However, few exact formulas, standards or specifications exist in determining an adequate sample (Marshall et al., 2013; Teddle & Yu, 2007). In a review of literature for guidelines, three methods were outlined to justify sample size: first, cite recommendations by qualitative methodologists; second, act on precedent by citing sample sizes used in studies with similar research problems and designs; and third internal justification (Marshall et al., 2013). These authors reviewed a range of literature and found that while guidelines vary, recommendations regarding size were as follows, Creswell (Creswell, 2007) recommends at least 20 to 30 interviewees, Denzin and Lincoln (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) recommend 30 to 50 interviews. Morse (Morse, 2000) recommends 20 to 30 interviewees, and also suggests that power is a function of sample size, and so recommends as large a sample size as possible if the gain in power from each new observation is worth the expense of gathering it. Without specifying a number, others suggest using a sample that closely matches the population (Sekaran, 2003). This research generated 25 in-depth interviews and card-sorts, 44 careers extracts forming the qualitative component, which was supplemented by 92 completed in-depth surveys and 44 protean and boundaryless mindset items added to the surveys forming the quantitative component, thereby satisfying the criteria suggested here by Creswell and Morse.

Others (Bergman, 2008) suggest considering the importance of sample size when merging data sets. Similarly, time allocation was an important factor in determining sample size.
size as interview-based studies involving a small number of respondents are becoming more common in social science (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). These authors argue the positive case for small samples, which they suggest is 20, in research, albeit in grounded theory, where in-depth, labour intensive, interviewing is the method of choice and realism the epistemological foundation. Having different samples and different sample sizes when merging quantitative and qualitative datasets was another recommendation and is common in mixed methods designs because quantitative and qualitative data are usually collected for different purposes (Cresswell et al., 2006). In addition to the 25 interviews that also involved a card-sorting activity, there were 122 surveys and 44 careers extracts thus meeting the criteria for different samples and different sample sizes.

The discussion of sample size also includes the concept of saturation, whereby no further data is provided from additional interviews, and there are consequences in terms of debate about the representativeness/saturation trade-off (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Marshal et al., (2013) cited Guest, Bunce, and Johnson’s (2006) similar review and recommended selecting sample size in order to achieve theoretical saturation, which is: appropriate time allocation with the interviewee such as an average of 75 minutes, ensuring the quality of data and knowing when to recognise saturation. They also suggested that limited strategies and formulas are available to explain how, or when, saturation is achieved. The 25 interviews in this research were on average 40 minutes in duration and this researcher considers that saturation was achieved at 23 interviews.

Alongside the issues of sample size, consequences of sample size and saturation, is the concept of triangulation, which can ensure validity, particularly for mixed methods. Four types of triangulation are suggested where appropriate (Marshall et al., 2013): (a) data triangulation (i.e., use of a variety of sources in a study), (b) investigator triangulation (i.e., use of several different researchers), (c) theory triangulation (i.e., use of multiple perspectives and theories to
interpret the results of a study), and (d) methodological triangulation (i.e., use of multiple methods to study a research problem). Denzin (cited in Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 114) surmised that within-methods triangulation had limited value because only one paradigm (e.g., quantitative) is used and it might not adequately explain why relationships exist. Concurrent mixed methods designs allow researchers to triangulate the results from the separate QUAN and QUAL components of their research, thereby allowing them to confirm, cross-validate or corroborate findings within a single study (Creswell et al., 2003, p. 229). Triangulation has thus been achieved in the mix of interviews, card-sorting, surveys, careers extracts, discussions with managers and minor supplementary documentation regarding GDPs and secondary data from national graduate surveys. Using the suggestion put forward by Teddlie and Yu (2007), no mathematical sampling formulae are required as the focus is qualitative, however consideration has been given to the number of interviews and triangulation methods.

With particular reference to sampling decisions and mixed methods, there are different inferential outcomes as Teddile and Yu explain (p. 97). They suggest that the sampling strategy should allow researchers to draw clear inferences from both the QUAL and QUAN data. From the QUAL design perspective, this guideline refers to the credibility of the inferences and from the QUAN design perspective, this guideline refers to the internal validity of the inferences. Following the advice of Teddlie and Yu (2007), inferences are made primarily from the core component of interviews and then separately from the supplementary quantitative survey data. Qualitative and quantitative inferences are combined initially in this thesis to answer the subsidiary questions about transition experiences, the use and value of graduate attributes and graduates’ career agency, then summatively at the final stage of analysis to answer the research question.
Ethics

Ethics in research guides the researcher by means of principles and guidelines which protect both the researcher and the participants (Burton & Steane, 2004; Neuman, 2006). Ethics approval was sought from Griffith University (see Appendix 10). This research included informed consent to enable participants to decide whether to be involved in the research (Burton & Steane, 2004; Neuman, 2006; Zikmund, 2003). All participants were supplied with an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix 3). Informed consent was given by respondents to the survey, which was completed online and which contained a link to the participant information and consent form.

Graduates from participating organisations agreed to take part in the research entirely voluntarily. Anonymity and confidentiality were considered here (Zikmund, 2003) and all survey respondents are anonymous. Interview participants’ identities have been concealed, names have been changed and any identifying information removed. Participating organisations’ identities remain confidential to this researcher, supervisors and examiners and are given only in this thesis. All data was stored securely and was available only to the researcher and transcriber.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the methodology and methods have been justified as being appropriate to gather and analyse data in order to answer the research question. The chapter has considered the development of the research question, the most appropriate research design and the choice of methods. A discussion of the theoretical contribution was included.

On the basis of an analysis of the factors influencing the paradigms presented in Table 6, the research was set within an interpretivist paradigm taking a mixed methods approach. The methods were a qualitative core and a supplementary quantitative component. Participants
were sourced in two groups from three sources. The groups were graduates of the public service and private organisations and near-graduates of the OUA who were employed as professionals in the final semester of their online degree, in a range of organisations such as banking and finance. Qualitative core data collection activities comprised: semi-structured interviews containing a card-sorting activity with 25 participants, 44 careers extracts, 5 manager discussions for context and a review of extant data from the course experience component of the Australian Graduate Surveys for 2012 and 2013. These were each evaluated for an overview of trends in graduate experiences. The supplementary quantitative component survey had 123 respondents from the same range of organisations and near-graduates of the OUA.

These methods addressed the research question by exploring and analysing graduates’ experiences of their transition to professional employment and near-graduates’ perceptions of their careers. A summary of how these methods address the research question was given in Table 7.

The process of selecting and integrating the methods, data analysis techniques and integration of the findings has been discussed and are illustrated in Figure 5. Details about the processes of sourcing and conducting interviews and surveys have also been provided. Demographic information about the participants has been given at Table 8. A table justifying the schedule of surveys is provided at Table 9. Recruitment and data collection issues have been canvassed in this chapter. An overview of the advantages and disadvantages of each method has been given in Table 10. A table illustrating the variation of questions in each survey is given at Table 11. Table 12 summarises the sources of qualitative data and the operational constructs for the quantitative supplementary components of the research are given in Appendix 9.

Ethical considerations have been discussed with regard to voluntarism, confidentiality and anonymity. Sampling issues and limitations have been evaluated. The overall conceptual
framework in Figure 6 has been provided to support the use of a supplementary quantitative component, showing how it addresses the research question and supports the core qualitative component. The findings from this mixed methods program are analysed and discussed in the following three chapters.
Chapter 4: Qualitative Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative study collected using semi-structured interviews and a card-sorting activity. The chapter is structured in four sections in which graduates’ experiences are thematically analysed to address both the research question and subsidiary questions. The first section considers how graduates negotiate the transition to professional employment, what their transition year was like and the main challenges they faced, support graduates received, prior work experiences and their change from graduate to professional. This is followed by review of the literature on transition pertaining to the findings. The second section analyses graduates’ value of their attributes specifically SOQs during transition. This is illustrated by graduates’ discussion of events in which they had used these attributes and where they had not had the opportunity to use them. Graduates added any attributed they felt were missing and discussed those they developed during prior experiences. The third section addresses the third subsidiary question about the role of graduate career agency during transition, beginning with a link to existing literature. Graduates’ perceptions of their careers and levels of ownership of their careers are examined along with an analysis of their progress in their careers. This is followed by an examination of graduates’ future plans, for example, the number of jobs they anticipated having over the next ten years as well as their careers attitude. This section concludes with a thematic analysis of the advice graduates would give to current undergraduates. The fourth section is an overall conclusion which ends the chapter.
How graduates negotiate the transition from university to professional employment

Participants were asked the following question at the start of the semi-structured interview.

What was it like for you starting this job after university?

It was, where appropriate, supplemented with the following probing questions:

- How was the year for you?
- What, for you, have been the main challenges from starting this job?

The reasons for these questions were to explore graduates’ perceptions of their transition to employment and to hear about their early experiences, which are crucial aspects of the research question.

What it was like for graduates starting employment after university

Overall, the initial discussion generated interesting graduate perspectives and key themes. These include a range of comments about their transition such as exciting, challenging, daunting – in the move to a new city, – as well as pride in the status and reputation of their employer. Participants discussed having a reciprocal commitment, progressing in their career and being in the right place. Participants described their transition as reassuring, competitive and indicative of their achievement and potential as future leaders. Participants in GDPs acknowledged their quick learning during the rotations.

Negative themes concerned organisational constraints, such as restricted pay levels; comments that they were all paid the same regardless of age and experience being at the lowest level of the hierarchy; and the hiring and promotion freeze. Participants were apprehensive if they had no prior experience. Some perceived resentment of about graduates from colleagues. Others compared their prior experiences of supervision with current and, often higher, levels
of supervision. Broader themes included positive and negative feelings of excitement, experiencing a ‘culture shock’ and levels of support they received.

**Excitement**

Participants’ excitement centered on pride in securing a job with their organisation in the current economic climate and the reciprocal commitment that the job brought. This response from Anna is typical of the expression of pride and excitement in gaining the job:

*I’d walked through the doors, proud to walk through the doors of an organisation that is very respected...and so I was really pleased to have gotten into this organisation.*

Like Anna, Alan expressed excitement about the organisation but related this to the size of the organisation:

*It was I guess at times exciting while trying to work for someone that’s huge and so different to where I had worked previously (Alan).*

The excitement for Susie came from moving inter-state to start her career:

*It was exciting I think because I moved from UWA to come to this job (Susie).*

However, the excitement was often less positive for participants if they had to relocate to take up the job, as Tanya explains:

*I’ve had to move to Canberra which is fine, - that made the transition a lot harder because it wasn’t only transitioning into work; it was transitioning into a new life, new lifestyle and that was quite confronting.*

The challenges, or excitement of working and living in a new area, also include challenges in adapting to a different culture.

**‘Culture shock’**

One challenge which emerged in many interviews was experiencing ‘culture shock’ as a result of differences between university, previous employment and this new job. Participants experienced a ‘culture shock’ in a variety of ways, including comparing their knowledge and abilities with others. Tanya was surprised that colleagues did not have university qualifications:
You're working with people who didn't even have to go to university to establish themselves. It's sort of a 'culture shock'.

‘Culture shock’ can also include getting used to the routine of work compared with the levels of freedom they experienced at university as identified by Sarah:

It was a bit of a culture shock I guess in my first full-time job and working 9:00 to 5:00 pretty much. That's Monday to Friday it was quite a big lifestyle change as well as cultural change for me (Sarah).

The culture shock was also considered nerve-wracking by Lilly:

Compared to university, it's definitely more structured... I would say it's a little bit nerve-wracking in some ways because I've always been in a sheltered, school, university kind of life (Lilly).

Experiences of ‘culture shock’ arose in comparing life at university and in whether they had any previous work experiences discussed later.

The transition year overall

Generally, comments included positive perceptions about their first year and relief about having job security despite the economy, each of which increased levels of confidence and their sense of achievement. The most positive descriptions about the year overall included ‘good’ or ‘really good’, ‘loved it’, ‘getting better’, ‘proactive’, ‘busy’ and ‘changeable’.

Negative comments included ‘horrible, it was the worst year of my life’ (which was the result of many personal issues too), ‘trouble being away from family’, the ‘transition was too quick’, ‘ups and downs’, and about experiencing a hiring and promotion freeze which added to their stress and challenges.

The main challenges for graduates during transition

Challenges in adapting to the culture of professional work have been identified above. Challenges discussed here refer to starting job tasks and personal and professional challenges in learning to adapt. Themes include: learning the hierarchy and the nature of the work tasks; navigating their rotations; attitudes of people and the way people manage; experiencing the
real world; the nature of the industry; assumed knowledge; false promises regarding the hiring freeze; and, colleagues’ comments such as ‘being young for the job’ and ‘not having travelled’.

Significant comments about the nature of the job include being surprised about the ‘reward’ or ‘gift’ of being given higher levels of work responsibility as can be seen in Jim’s comment when he was told:

‘You are not supposed to deal with tax at your early age... but we give you the task’. I feel the responsibility and I have been recognised, for my effort or my contribution. It was like a reward or gift.

Alan viewed his actual tasks negatively compared with what had been promised:

The way it was advertised - as really challenging and using new skills. I know a little bit but I don’t think it is anywhere near as hard as I hoped it would be...It’s a lot of just sort of taking notes, turning emails, making calendar invites and not much actual physical work.

Similarly, supervision styles were found to be challenging, but achievable, by Abby:

...reading different supervisors...everyone I’ve worked with has been really good...a few of them just have a different quirk or something, and you need to just figure out how to work with that person which I kind of feel like has gone well.

The challenges of corporate language and learning the industry are exemplified here by Pam:

The civil and mining organisation is nothing you can prepare yourself for, adapting to that work, the work culture that they have here and then finding your feet and using the things that we’ve learned at uni to implement it into the workplace.

Different expectations are discussed, including expectations of work and of their rotations. The following comment from Abby best captures the transition from confusion to competence, which is the result of growth in the job and understanding. These are good examples of challenging experiences:

They sort of just chucked me in the deep end. Certainly, there’s a whole lot of meetings that I was running that I had no idea about. I sort of had the first two weeks where I absolutely just hated it. But now I’m doing a lot better about it like I’ve grown a lot more in these three weeks than I did in my four months in the other rotation.
Susie shares similar views as other graduates on learning about themselves when experiencing negative and positive experiences:

“You get put in a place that you weren’t expecting to or never knew you’d had an interest in. It was particularly in my last rotation I was like, ‘Why am I here? I’ve never done anything like this. I don’t enjoy it. God, this is horrible.’ I mean, now, I can look past it and go: ‘Yeah that was a good learning experience’.

A particular issue of interest in this thesis is represented by Ben, whose challenge was in being self-directed in his career:

“…getting used to the idea that you will be directing your own career...that’s been quite interesting. I found that quite good because I’m more of an independent person and realising that not a lot of things are handed to you...that’s good.

A comment that departed from the norm came from Paul who found the early transition a struggle as he tried to relate it to what he had learned at university. This response is of value, because transfer of learning is a key theme in this research

“I was struggling because it’s very hard for me to apply the theories into the real practice. And some of the terminologies I don’t really know the true meaning in real life.

Paul’s comments suggest that graduates expect to be able to apply their learning from university and find it a challenge. Overall graduates’ comments about their early stages of transition are positive and concern their excitement, commitment, experiences of adapting to a new working life style, learning from these experiences and articulating any organisational and personal consequences. However, graduates appear to negotiate transition by facing challenges using their knowledge, skills and qualities and by wanting recognition for doing so.

The value of additional support such as mentors or buddies

The value of support was discussed to ascertain the types and levels needed by graduates and that were provided by colleagues or mentors. Typically support was provided formally or informally from buddies, mentors, supervisors, managers, the team and other
graduates in the cohort or from those managing the program. There were several experiences of ‘buddies’ – which is a term for an unofficial or self-selected mentor – several references to mentors and few references to informal mentors, friend and other connections, team support, supervisor support, graduate management team support and support from other graduates. However, several did not have any support, one of whom was a mature and experienced employee.

Participants discussed the value of support in the early stages of their transition. These included levels of support from family, other participants via informal forums and immediate team leaders or managers. Negotiating transition may mean adapting to different levels of support and this response from Sam illustrates graduates’ appreciative responses:

*My team manager was very supportive...I used his influence to move into the current team. The support he gave me was quite amazing and quite a surprise.*

Other findings on support are discussed later in relation to the use of connections.

There were also other levels of support such as helping with work tasks, enabling interaction with colleagues and the ‘little things’ like finding their way around and being ‘sympathetic to graduates’. Comments such as this from Jim included the levels of support prior to commencing work if graduate employees had to relocate.

*I found the transition pretty good, for all the support given to me in the move and leading up, so we were prepared that we had the job about sort of six to nine months before we started.*

However, some negative comments were made about support during relocation which indicated an inadequate meeting of their needs during such a traumatic experience. Negative comments were also about the inconsistent levels of support, for example, within the public-sector and how they depend upon managerial styles and how different they are in reality to those experienced at university. Flora appreciated her support after comparing it to others’.
Listening to other colleagues of mine in that same situation - apparently they didn’t have a support network there like I had.

Graduates who had experiences of buddies commented that having one from the year above was a good source of common knowledge and that it was reciprocal, as many of them were now buddies to new participants. One had a poor relationship with the buddy so it ended. Another was offered a buddy but it did not eventuate. Some found their own buddies from the graduate cohort and another suggested that support could be improved.

Experiences of mentors included how useful they were, such as ‘definitely useful’, ‘worked on strengths and weaknesses’ and ‘very successful’. There were also comments on the nature of the relationship and personality, with some described as ‘awesome’ and ‘really lovely’. Having their manager or supervisor as a mentor was helpful in getting an established role. Anya said that her mentor gave consideration in designing a game during her orientation to match the nature of her job. As her job involved working across the whole organisation, the game helped Anya find her way around. She explained that the game was helpful ‘getting orientated into work and finding locations’.

Other graduates felt more comfortable asking friends for advice or relying on trusted fellow cohorts and would go to them before the GDP itself. Others worked in a team of older workers so felt cared for, or informally used supervisors from rotations, and continued to stay in touch or some were lucky to have senior staff and a team, as in order to do well they have to support each other.

Ben, who worked outside the public-sector, explained that he had four types of support:

You had a graduate manager, a placement manager, a mentor and a buddy. You can do anything with them from having a casual relationship where you have a drink every Friday or you can have a formal relationship where you sit down every couple of weeks.

This suggests there are varying roles of support needed by graduates and provided by employers.
The value of prior work experiences

Comparisons with prior experiences, and even a lack of prior experiences, contributed to graduates’ transition experiences. Anna had not worked full time previously, although she held part-time jobs in fast food outlets. She completed two internships as part of the degree program, and realised how important it was:

When you enter university at 17 or 18 and, you’re there for three or four years, you don’t always have that kind of foresight to know that you need to be doing other things and not wasting those years at university.

One of Anna’s internships involved working in the marketing department of the university in her second year. This involved talking to high school students across Sydney about the university. Anna explained that this internship and her part-time work in the fast-food sector were very useful in developing her confidence, and interpersonal skills.

Voluntary work was mentioned significantly too in organisations such as Meals on Wheels and charity events. Lilly had prior experience through voluntary work with international students to help them improve their English. Lilly also went on an exchange to Malaysia where she completed two of her degree papers. She explained that this experience helped with her writing skills, talking with international people and with developing cultural sensitivity.

I did some voluntary work with international students to help them improve their English. I also think that helped because it gave me more significant communication skills especially in a group setting and in [helping me in] meetings.

Others, like Sam who did not have prior work experience observed the impact it had on forming their careers. Sam regrets not having any relevant previous work experience admitting that prior experience would have helped him in shaping his career:

I didn’t have a good idea of where should I go…or how I could start a professional career or become a technical specialist in my field?
During the rotations within the GDP Sam’s team won a trophy for presenting the best idea during a project. Sam appreciates that this helped him to get placed in his current job.

The value of prior experience was acknowledged just before taking up employment by Tess who completed her degree mid-year. Although she was appointed to the job in October Tess realised that she would need to work until then. Her previous work experience includes an internship during the latter part of her degree where she worked almost full time in a physical job with some administrative duties. She also had experience working with Marketing and Advertising companies in the private sector during her degree. There were comparisons between their different rotations. If participants were given permanent roles in a section where they had had a rotation, that experience was felt to be of value as Tess explained. Tess realised the value of work experiences and even categorised GDP activities as prior experiences indicating how these contributed to her success in being appointed to this job:

*My eyes have been open over the past 12 months as to [the value of] experiences. I don’t think I would have gotten anywhere had I not have accepted the position in the program.*

Participants recognised the challenge of transition and a typical response from Beth shows how prior experience helped avoid being overwhelmed: ‘*I have had previous work experience and I haven’t felt challenged*’. The value of previous work was discussed to explore if it assisted transition and whether SOQs were developed during this time. The types of work experience were categorised into: placement, internship, work experience, casual, voluntary and full time. Six students had internships, 14 had casual work, seven did voluntary work, four had placements, five had worked full time before, during or after the degree, two had work experience either at high school or in a family business and one had no prior work experience.

A few participants had the benefit of degree program internships with specific organisations, which led to eventual employment as Ben found.
That was quite good because I got to meet a lot of people in different areas of the bank. I found that that setup as an intern first was good to get to know all of the people that I was going to be working with and then also for the graduate positions subsequent to my internship and the rotations for the graduate position.

Some internships were subject-based, for example working in a law firm as Christy did.

When I actually got to rotate around a few different areas and I was treated as though I was fully qualified, ready to hit the ground running and that was perfect. I had senior lawyers who I could go to for help and to discuss ideas with, which was really good. It's pretty much 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. days just like the rest of them so it was really good.

Others were part of the final year or research based within the university, or not in a particular industry such as attending an educational camp. Placements, as opposed to internships, include general work such as a personal assistant or placement at the university or specific professional requirements such as 12-18 week placements during the first and final year, often occur in nursing degrees.

Work experience includes formal work experience at high school in a Human Resources role and informal work experience such as receptionist, childcare, casual odd jobs or in the family business. Others were more proactive: one owned a business franchise another had worked prior to, and during, the degree program and another had an earlier profession as a beauty therapist. Casual work experience was very common and was usually in retail or fast food before or during university. However, some casual work was in the not-for-profit sector and casual work in current job.

The benefits of prior work experience were also recognised from practical perspective such as in learning about the routines of work which featured in responses. For some like Alan adjusting to the routine of work was quite a challenge:

*I'm just trying to get around the whole 37.5 hours a week and having to work every day.*
This view and the lack of freedom was shared by Lilly who as shown above had prior experience but in voluntary work:

*I supposed even [being] tied to a workplace. But university is very much... done from home. Then suddenly instead of working from home 30 hours a week, I'm working from a workplace away from home 50, 60 hours a week.*

Other responses about the value of prior experience included, for example, learning about the organisation, understanding the industry, learning about people, developing camaraderie, socialising into the workplace, having a work ethic, having objectivity, learning about the bigger context of work, learning how to manage the work environment, developing administrative skills, learning about expectations and being exposed to professionals. Some graduates discussed their experience as beneficial in developing job-related skills such as: assisting others, developing financial skills, business start-up or in gaining self-awareness and strengths.

**From graduate to professional**

During the closing section of the interview, graduate participants were asked: *Do you still feel like a graduate?* The most frequent responses were a definite ‘no’ and a definite ‘yes’. Other answers varied with several ‘yes but’ or a ‘little bit’, or ‘yes and no’, while others admitted they did feel like graduates sometimes or were unsure.

One issue of interest in this research concerned the factors influencing the graduates’ transition to professional status, some of which are identified in the reasons given for not feeling like a graduate. These include feeling like ‘a regular employee’, being annoyed at the ‘connotation that you are completely green’, feeling they are now better at their job or that they suddenly lost the support network and gained responsibility. This response from Tess is typical:

*You lose the support network immediately...you are no longer seen as a grad...someone who needs to be shadowed. You have a position. You have a responsibility. You own it because it's yours. It's in your job description.*
You sit at a desk and someone calls and asks you a question and you’ve got no one to turn around to and say, ‘Is this my job? Am I allowed to answer this?’ You’re it.

There seemed to be a specific event for some that marked the end of being a graduate, such as being replaced by the new cohort of graduates who now get special treatment, finishing the GDP or training, receiving a pay rise, being placed in a definite job role and having their own responsibility, caseloads and work tasks to complete.

The reasons given for a ‘yes’ answer included having achieved employment as a graduate employee but realising there is much to learn. Conversely some, like Christy, still felt like a graduate, as that is what they are referred to at work: *We didn’t know if we were ever going to drop the tag.* Interestingly, one combined both her graduate and professional status:

> I have a responsibility. I have budgets to make. I have employees that I have to have train and performance to manage. That’s a professional role as far as I can see… I’m a professional because I take it seriously (Ruth).

The majority of graduates recognised they had more to learn, even though they had moved from a GDP to an established role. The more ambiguous answers were explained in terms of being because they had stayed in the same section as they were in as a graduate or being referred to an ‘ex-grad’, thereby attracting other connotations. This is typified in Emma’s comments:

> People will view you as a grad or an ex-grad for a long time...there’s this double-sided associated reputation that you want to climb the ladder...to advance yourself. But then there’s also this expectation that you have a lot of knowledge.

Asking graduates whether they still feel like a graduate ascertained whether graduates felt their transition was complete and whether they were experiencing becoming professionals.

**Graduates’ transition experiences and the literature**

Extant literature on transition covers a range of perspectives which are also reflected in the findings in this thesis from graduates themselves. These perspectives include transition as...
an internal psychological process (Bridges, 1991, 2009) of ending, losing and letting go; accepting a neutral zone; and, acknowledging the new beginning. Other perspectives on transition include liminality (Allan et al., 2015, p. e79) evolving career competence (Haynie & Shepherd, 2011), requiring malleableness (Holmes, 2013) and relational interventions (Motulsky, 2010). These concepts are discussed in the next chapter. Some graduates refer to challenges by accepting managerial relationships and constraints which suggest that they are being shaped by organisations and managerial control strategies, cultural-communitarian patterns of identity regulation arising from broadly shared understandings and convictions, and quasi-autonomous patterns of identity regulation (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002).

Graduates experienced varied levels of success in finding their place during their experiences and accepted this cohesion and fragmentation as a rite of passage (Holden & Hamblett, 2007). If transitions are punctuation marks in a career story, critical incidents in the nexus between self-consciousness and social structure (Tams & Arthur, 2010, p. 630) or episodes of career change (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995), then graduate transition from education to work is itself a critical incident. Transition has been defined as moving into, through and out of an episode of career change (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Even though it emerges that for some participants this transition experience is the first stage of a career story and for others it is a new start; it is nonetheless a significant one in their careers.

**Graduates’ perceptions of the value of their graduate attributes during transition**

Graduate attributes include KSOQs identified in Chapter 2, Literature Review, which graduates have developed and may wish to develop further. Using the card-sort, participants were asked to spread the cards out and review them and their brief definitions. They then selected cards
they felt were most pertinent to their job roles and talked about the events in which they used these attributes. Figure 7 shows the frequency which the SOQs were used in their job activities. The numbers shown in the box in the columns indicates where this SOQ was discussed first, second and third suggesting levels of value in practical application to graduates’ work. For example, communication although mentioned most frequently was only mentioned first in a job activity four times, second eight times and third three times, whereas collecting, analysing and applying information was mentioned first five times in a job activity.
Figure 7 Frequency of events where SQOs used and mentioned first, second and third
As indicated in Figure 7 communication, and events where communication was used by graduates, was the most frequently discussed skill. There were two, second highest most commonly mentioned skills. One was collecting, analysing and applying information, which was mentioned first more often than communication. The other was planning and organising which was also mentioned first more often than communication. Both were followed by self-management and teamwork neither of which was mentioned first. It is worth noting from Figure 5 that there were only a limited number of events where ‘use of support systems’ was discussed first and yet it was identified as important in other areas of the discussion.

**Events where skills or other qualities were used**

In reflecting on their early experiences, graduates discussed each skill or other quality and the events where they had been given the opportunity to use them.

**Communication**

Events where graduates’ communication skills were being used, or developed, involve having the ability to communicate concisely and clearly to colleagues at all levels, such as in graduates initiating conversations with senior staff requesting their input or advice. Knowing how to approach colleagues at their desk was a practical communication issue.

Communicating also involved: face-to-face interaction, listening and contributing in meetings, including others in every decision, providing updates and clear guidelines, sharing expectations, being on the ‘same wavelength’, talking and ‘pitching’ to customers and understanding that others might have a completely different perspective. Written communication included writing emails to various audiences, learning the written genre of the organisation, protocols of letter writing, standards and style, and writing reports.

Presentation skills learned at university were considered useful for presenting and validating ideas and for interpreting briefs and giving presentations. Some pursued opportunities to give presentations and those better at writing would seek skills that were
complementary to presentation skills. One graduate referred to the value of the Honours thesis in research, analysis and reports.

> When I'm presenting, I'm usually presenting on something that I have done myself, something that I know about (Amy).

Communication with fellow graduates and graduate managers enabled them, as newcomers, to understand the nuances of communicating with other professionals and to obtain the results from other people.

> I was constantly having to talk to people and get to know different officers and then you know who the very helpful people are (Maggie).

Some graduates appreciated the value of communication if they had a negative experience, such as receiving unclear instructions or having to work outside their comfort zone. Others, like Adrian, were aware of the value of developing communication skills from prior experience such as being 'involved in presenting to bosses, clients in other countries and in training other people'. Others appreciated that communication was crucial to their work:

> Looking at your patient and having to communicate with your colleagues, with the surgeon and actively listening to see if things might change.

Communication was of equal value to graduates and employers and considered essential to analysing problems and making adjustments to the situation.

**Collecting, analysing and applying information**

Where collecting, analysing and applying information was discussed, first it related to the nature of levels of decision making within the job role, for example, when dealing with multiple sources of information or the procedures and policies of the job, which could change frequently. Participants reported their responsibilities and collaboration in making decisions based on collecting the correct information, for example, on policies as implications can be significant. The collaborative aspect of collecting, analysing and applying information is indicated in this response from Maggie when talking about this skill and linking it to decision-making:

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We make decisions based on guidelines that we have and rules that we have. So often... will come to us and ask us questions, my job is to go through the material that we have and give good advice or make a decision. While the information may be there, it’s... analysing it that is the challenging part in terms of trawling through lots of available information.

Another different response from Alan suggests that although information was collected and included in a report, the decision-making from the information was not a collaborative process and quite directive:

One of my roles was collecting different information from a number of sources and... then work out what is important and what isn’t important... basically writing reports based on that information... and turn it to a number of people in the department and other agencies.

Several participants discussed independence in collecting and analysing information and decision making. Independence in a variety of circumstances was mentioned by several participants and Adrian, who chose this skill first and, as a mature professional, took up the challenge:

I had to collect the evidence and create private plans and propose something to them with full information, even investing in things like an olive farm South America and presenting all the information and the research. I had to understand market prices and futures to understand the labour situation there; and I was heavily involved in that. I was also involved in a situation where I was setting up training strategies and this was fund management training. And you need to know more than what the average person knows about funds.

The other participants recognized collecting, analysing and applying information either as a challenge to be taken or an opportunity to be used more. Other participants referred to practical aspects of collecting and analysing information, such as looking into job profiles, job descriptions and current trends within Australia, gathering paper files or electronic files, conducting interviews and field observations, writing summaries of past literature for new papers and using that information to contribute to papers and reports.
Self-management

The majority of participants referred to self-management in managing projects, unexpected events and organising time, especially if there were conflicting pressures. References were made to a dislike of micro-management while acknowledging the value of support when needed, as illustrated by Anna and Christy:

I'd prefer to be given the opportunity to be creative in how I approach a subject.

I love self-management apart from the micromanagement experience. Most of the time you're left to your own devices…. you have to touch base where you're at and don't be afraid to ask for help.

Christy refers to ‘touching base’ which is a way of updating managers about progress. However most, like Jim, felt that opportunities for self-management were the norm:

I was given one project to work on - I had to [self-manage]. there were project timelines and milestones but within that I was left to the management my own sort of work. That was actually quite useful.

Self-management was discussed in relation to collecting, analysing and applying information and the nature of the job. e.g. as Jim said when he had to deal with venture capitalists, understand market prices and futures, analyse information and explain all this to others ‘in three sentences’.

Useful university experiences such as working on assignments and experiences of the Honours year were also useful for self-management. One of the features assisting self-management was being given clear instructions about the task and the deadline. Other skills added by participants during discussions about collecting, analysing and applying information are interpersonal skills, control of emotions and time management.

Teamwork

Only half of the participants mentioned teamwork first. A sense of team spirit was experienced with others, which could be because the majority of participants were in cohorts.
in the public-sector and therefore were recognised as a team. The others, employed individually, were placed in an established team. However, team spirit was recognised by graduates when they communicated with others about job tasks and progress on the rotations. Teamwork was also valued from a reciprocal perspective in terms of knowing each other’s needs and supporting one another as they develop their attributes. Graduates reported the value of being given challenging collaborative work in teams. The importance of learning through team experiences in team situations is of value in this research because of the focus on continual learning observed by Tess then Sarah.

*Being exposed to a lot of different experiences the more you contributed to the team, actively participated in meetings, maybe gave productive considerations on the way people work, how they might change things, just offering a new perspective meant that people were more willing to give you opportunities.*

*Our team is really a close team. We communicate quite clearly what it means that we’re all working on and if we -- each of us individually is feeling that we’re struggling can discuss that through as a team.*

In addition to providing opportunities to demonstrate attributes the team activities were valued from a reciprocal perspective in learning from others, how others work and others’ needs, as Mark suggested:

*We know each other’s needs and support one another.*

Some, like Susie, experienced recognising that she is learning from interactions with other people and learning during effective teamwork, for example in meetings, sharing ideas, collaborating and being given challenging tasks in teams:

*I am a team player I feel, collaborative and I get the best out of working with other people in environments where people are quite vocal (Susie).*

These comments are significant to this research as they identify the varied ways in which graduates can learn from others and transfer the skill of teamwork developed at university.
Others linked communication and teamwork in situations where they were ‘listening and presenting ideas and validating ideas’ as mentioned in the communication discussion. Beth developed competence through teamwork due to her prior experience with university team activities and she used this skill in some rotations and was thanked for contributing. Other participants liked being ‘able to step in’ and ‘put strength into teamwork’. Others saw it as an essential skill for everything they do; in that ‘each has a role’.

**Planning and organising**

Graduates discussed planning and organising in relation to their approaches to work, reliability and flexibility. Others, especially the OUA near-graduates, described it as a skill applied to their life as a whole. Interestingly, as shown in Figure 7 above this skill was mentioned first on four occasions, yet most acknowledged they needed to be proactive in this, as Pam stated:

> Something I need to take control of in employment. If I'm not planned and organised in the work that I'm completing, the work won't effectively get done.

On the other hand, this skill constituted a practical approach to planning a roster, or fitting in with others and being accountable, as Anna found:

> You learn very quickly how to organise and prioritise your current work commitments and future work commitments...especially...handing something over to someone else once you knew you were leaving for your next rotation.

Conversely some participants viewed the responsibility for planning and organising as a process. Sarah recognised that managers need to recognise proactivity and that graduates may be able to plan their work eventually:

> Initially I was working with someone else, and they were planning my day around what it is that I needed to learn - I didn’t have too much of that to do. Now I do - it’s quite overwhelming, but I communicate that back to people and plan work in the morning and review in the evening.

Some like Alan, wanted more responsibility commenting that opportunities for planning and organising were not offered enough:
Not as much as I want I have the chance there was a bit of project work and scheduling. I was drip-fed work.

Others like Jim seemed to accept that others would plan and organise their work:

I have not really had much to do with planning and organisation – comes from above (Jim).

Whereas others discuss this skill as it applies to work, Adrian in a different approach, suggested the process of planning and organising should start at university. He talked about the tensions of planning and organising tasks and wished he had realised the importance of this at university:

In a busy corporate life, you have so many tasks pulling you in different directions. I think I am now very efficient and I can prioritise. I did something at university on management skills and I wish I had known how important in the corporate world they are back then.

Adrian’s comment is useful as this indicates an issue regarding what graduates learn at university and the extent to which it is transferred into employment. Overall, graduates reported that they accept that their life and work need to be planned and organised and that there may be tensions. They also reported on the significance of planning their own work and the work of others and the impact of both.

**Enthusiasm**

Graduates explained their enthusiasm in terms of starting a new exciting career and they linked this to the excitement of being selected for the job, having the experience of a GDP and displaying confidence, as Flora explained, even if they did not feel confident:

Coming into a different city with a completely different job to anything that I’d experienced before I found that in a lot of instances I was able to just capitalise on that enthusiasm to fake it till you make it.

Enthusiasm was also seen by Pam as a core component of their role and for developing relationships and trust by Sarah:
Useful and very necessary for my role in particular…. more of a face of HR... representing the business... the positivity and enthusiasm to tackle whatever is a critical component of the role.

Definitely a key part of my transition into this position, and it was definitely a critical component of the role when I started and slowly develop the relationships throughout the business as you go. Builds trust.

Conversely, in some cases, enthusiasm was difficult to muster, such as in a rotation where they felt they had nothing to offer and where challenges were lacking as Beth experienced.

If you are in a bad placement and don’t have anything to offer but I did a good job trying but wasn’t challenged (Beth).

Others found enthusiasm could hard to summon when they were doing jobs no-one else in their workplace wanted to do, however as Pam experienced this is how you earn respect:

I think if you're not enthusiastic about the jobs that no one wants to get done, initially, you're not going to gain the respect from the management. You need to be out, to be enthusiastic about the jobs that they're asking you to get done and really realizing why these job needs to get done, [it’s] how you look at the bigger picture of completing that project.

Paul used enthusiasm in trying to show his initiative and capability to earn the respect of his colleagues:

I had a look at ATO website, after the new budget…. I talked to them [about it] ... I earned the respect and I earned confidence. They think, “Oh, Paul knows something.”

A minority refer to enthusiasm as a struggle at times especially in some rotations and where graduates are ‘talked up’ as being ‘super enthusiastic’ or when graduates were, as one explained, evaluated on their enthusiasm. Participants also linked enthusiasm to intellectual openness and being enthusiastic about new ideas. This discussion of enthusiasm by graduates is important as it shows that graduates are enthusiastic, what can happen to make them enthusiastic or not. It also indicates that employers expect them to be enthusiastic to earn respect and to demonstrate that they are settling into the organisation and thereby making their transition.
Initiative and enterprise

Discussion about initiative and enterprise was mentioned once. Of interest regarding the transfer of KSOQs, is that the event used to frame the discussion was viewed negatively. Typical responses throughout the discussions addressed limitations in getting someone to listen to initiatives such as in generating new ideas as Anna found:

[We were] told fresh ideas were needed and tried to suggest new ideas but severely limited by level of job and hard to get someone to listen.

Limitations existed owing to the lack of opportunities to demonstrate the skill and some reported having tried but not being appreciated. Paul stated:

...the outcome is not really good. The boss will say, ‘How come I said to you, you shouldn’t do this. Why did you do this again?’ I feel I don’t want to go to work anymore. It’s frustrating and there’s not much training around me.

These limitations were different from others, like Christy shown first here, who tried to utilise her initiative and enterprise and Abby, shown second, who used it and developed it:

I do a few things that I haven’t tried before like data collection and [suggesting] ideas for changes...all the rotations throughout the year were very different and each one was really good for initiative and enterprise.

A little better at it now... I'm just thinking, if I’ve finished a project and my supervisor is away, of the next step and can I start on.

Graduates perceived their value of initiative and enterprise to be different to their employers’ even when on a GDP like Anna and Christy. This is of interest in this research as participants suggested that initiative and enterprise are encouraged at university but not necessarily by employers. Practical aspects of using initiative and enterprise included making connections, making improvements, making decisions and accepting that work days are variable and managing work in response.
**Flexibility**

The ability to be flexible was described as a major requirement for most participants’ employment; however, some experienced challenges to flexibility. For example, Anna felt ‘limited by routines of others and incoming work...but flexibility was expected from them if workload increased’. This contrasted with Mark’s experience; his role changed continually and he had ‘to be prepared for anything that comes along’. Flexibility also impacted non-work life despite careful planning. Flexibility therefore depended on the nature of the job and clients who required immediate results, as explained by Pam:

> You have to adapt to each contract that you’ve won, so being flexible in the way that you process your work each day and realising the clients’ requirements. The flexibility always falls back to planning and organising and knowing why.

A similar comment was made by Jim who identified flexibility as something to be worked on personally when working with clients.

> Some clients require results immediately and the senior colleague said I have to work on this – conflicting pressures.

When discussing flexibility, credibility and other skills, such as planning, organising and resilience were interconnected in graduates’ comments. Also, as seen from the comments flexibility can be regarded as an attribute that needs to be learned rapidly and requires careful self-management and transfer during the early transition period – both issues are addressed in this thesis.

**Resilience**

The other quality, resilience, was discussed by many referring to the economy affecting the recruitment and promotion freeze especially in the public-sector, which disappointed graduates. Comments about resilience also included references to flexibility, expectations and uncertainty. As Emma explained quite well it was also about being realistic about having your ideas considered:
I think I’m quite good at distancing myself and just going with it. I do find it quite hard sometimes. I mean you take your small victories wherever you can and you learn to value them.

Like Emma, Sarah viewed developing resilience as a necessary learning experience when dealing with other people at work compared to university:

The world is a little bit tougher out of uni and previous work...I lived in a little bit of a naïve world and there is deceit or sneakiness around people trying to get around you. I’m quite shocked with some of the things that people think that they can do. You will take the brute force of that...take that in your stride and work on getting what it is that they need from you.

Flexibility and resilience were expected by employers but indications are that they are both of more value to graduates themselves. These comments from graduates also suggest that developing resilience is an important learning experience during early transition to employment. Some discussions about resilience were linked to problem solving.

**Problem solving**

Most participants, especially those on a GDP explained that problem solving was important and had been developed on projects within the GDP where they had to deal with many different situations as they arose. This response by Amy typifies most discussions about problem solving in the GDP:

They like to give us the project for our four months or it might be with the projects throughout and we own them ourselves, so we are responsible for bringing an outcome.

Others referred to problem solving as getting to the ‘crux of the issue’ and deciding how to best help people in their work duties using communication, problem analysis and resolution. Two graduates felt that upon completion of the GDP there were limited opportunities to solve problems. Maggie discussed problem solving as a skill that she had, but was not used:

I look at problem solving and I think I would love to do more of that. But I think often problem solving isn’t on my level. Often it’s a high-level sort of
task. So, I think that would be very interesting for me as a beginner to have had more opportunity to participate in.

By comparison, graduates not on a GDP mostly developed their problem solving skills as they became familiar with dealing with customers as Anya explained:

> When a problem arises with a customer, I have to probe, ask questions, find out what's going on. And I find that I am okay diving right into a situation, just getting all the information, getting all the facts and working out where the problem is so that I can pinpoint right where I've got to fix something. I find that I can do that quite well.

Problem solving and the opportunities to solve problems seem to be related to the type and level of graduates’ job roles and the expectations of supervisors.

**Use of connections**

Use of connections and the seeking out of people who are valuable to oneself and one’s work was important to many participants. Ben referred to connections as ‘mission critical to my role’. Anna’s similar comments are typical in this respect:

> Use of connections, that's a big one. You seek out people who are beneficial to you. Although they say that merit will get you a job, it's also who you know. It's a shame because you know you're capable of doing something but if you don't know someone who can help you, then there's nothing you can do about that.

This is important as graduates mentioned earlier they used connections for support and help during their transition. Some, like Maggie, realised the importance of finding helpful people to get the job done and having managers able to observe how they used their skills. A departure from this typical response came from Susie who found networking distasteful:

> I think like this is something that I don't ever really do. I never did it in my previous job. I don't do it in this job. To seek out people who are beneficial to you actually sounds to me really distasteful...parasitic.

Many of the comments with respect to the use of connections were linked to comments about levels of support graduates received during transition. From this respect, the skill using
connections is valuable to graduates for getting to know their work and interacting with people they work with.

**Technology**

Applying and analysing technology, evaluating technology for procurement, or adapting to technology were key themes in this section of the discussion. Comments about technology included the specialist nature of their job roles:

> A lot of my work this year has been the procurement of new technology and organizing for that technology to be implemented. I haven’t used a whole lot of it, but a lot of the work I’ve been doing has been investigating new technologies and choosing which one is best for our needs and which one [our company] should purchase and the best value.

Pam’s comment also supports the specialist nature of the evaluations of technology that some graduates do:

> ...review...why you must adapt to those changes and technology e.g. training software and you realise certain things and specifics are wrong when using it.

Others, like Adrian, relied on technology for instant communication and analysis, having 16 screens and analysis software; reading designs and interpreting and working on projects. The value of technology to both graduates and employers is primarily in specialist application and evaluation and was acknowledged by the minority of participants who are employed in such a role. Some, mostly employed as specialists, described this as a major part of their role and one significant response from Sam.

> We couldn’t identify the problem in the early stage before it really becomes a major problem. So, I collect information and I present this case to the team leader of IT. I just told him in IT that you need to have an assistant in place to identify the performance issue and enhance our capability in systems monitoring.

Sam’s comment is significant as it involves anticipating problems and preventing them, thus connecting to problem solving, initiative and critical thinking.
Critical thinking

The few discussions which emerged specifically about critical thinking were also linked to decision making, problem-solving, collecting and analysing and applying information and initiative and enterprise. Participants, like Flora, who had a GDP, and Ruth, who did not, suggest limited opportunities for critical thinking:

* A lot of us...come from science where critical thinking and problem-solving is in our repertoire of skills...there’s not much opportunity in my current job.

* I would like to be in a role that requires that a little bit more [critical thinking] of me. It’s a very prescriptive job. We question a lot of things and the company is open to suggestions but not necessarily open to criticisms whether constructive criticism or otherwise. That’s certainly another area that I wish I could use more.

The need to develop critical thinking further was important to some; they linked it to the gathering of information to support colleagues. Some, like Adrian suggested that team thinking is preferable to critical thinking as it is more acceptable in other cultures, especially eastern cultures and hierarchies, because critical thinking can be considered insulting to superiors. Thereby while critical thinking is valued by graduates and is probably of value to employers but opportunities to use the skill developed at university seem to be limited during transition after the GDP if they had one.

Responsibility

Responsibility was also discussed in relation to other SOQs, and was regarded as a quality that gradually develops over the period of the transition during the rotations. Time management and a responsible, task-based approach, led by organisational policy was the view some had in the public-sector.

Others discussed responsibility as taking the initiative with caution and not going above supervisors. This response, from Sarah, best illustrates this shared view:
Initially some of that responsibility is taken off me and is my manager’s role and a colleague who was training me would take a lot of the responsibility...I’m getting to that stage where I am taking responsibility for my good points and my bad points – learning.

Some, like Tess, acknowledged that responsibility was conferred eventually and upon completion of the GDP.

You have a responsibility. You own it because it’s yours. It’s in your job description.

This comment signified no longer being recognised as a graduate, being placed in their permanent job with their specific responsibilities that they are now deemed capable of.

**Ethical behaviour**

Ethical behaviour was either explicit, or implied, as a key feature for most participants, but especially for APSC participants. Aspects discussed in relation to this skill included requiring certain behaviours in the organisation, codes of conduct and knowing what to do when you know others are not doing their job. Some observed unethical behaviour when graduates were competing for the same project or rotation. Ethical behaviour was expected when dealing with very private information. The mature-age undergraduate, Adrian, commented that he had had discussions on ethical issues and had forced a lot of issues by doing so.

**Curiosity in uncertainty**

Participants identified that they had applied curiosity in uncertainty during projects, for example, when they had no knowledge or understanding. Curiosity in uncertainty was assisted by an ability to learn new things they had no previous experience of, or interest, and which they found interesting and enjoyable. Curiosity in uncertainty was also demonstrated when problems arose with customers and they had to probe, ask questions and work towards a solution. The OUA near-graduates’ application of this attribute was in establishing job security and in completing a degree to achieve this.
There was limited discussion of the two other qualities; use of support systems and intellectual openness. Incidents when support systems were utilised included applying policies, procedures and systems continuously; it was described by Beth as probably the dullest example. Support systems were recognised as important in big organisations to the extent that some participants mentioned systems outlining every step they needed to work through with templates and flowcharts. Intellectual openness was often linked to enthusiasm and curiosity when working on projects as well as learning new knowledge, as mentioned above.

**Skills or other qualities not used**

This was discussed to evaluate whether graduates were aware of skills they had that they might not have applied or transferred into the workplace yet. The purpose of this was to establish from the graduates’ perspectives if there were any attributes missing from the cards, which were compiled from lists mostly by educational institutions, as explained in Chapter 1, Introduction.

Ben suggested that initiative, enterprise and intellectual openness, are significant skills which could be used more during transition. This suggests there may have been a lack of opportunity in that particular organisation or that the organisation required him to be more self-driven and identify opportunities himself. Similarly, as suggested earlier, Alan felt there was a lack of opportunity to use initiative and enterprise:

*I’ve tried so many times to say we should be using this technology here or should we look at this different way of using this...the agency is such that we don’t like change and they say, ‘No we can’t have that’... and the entire group would know that it won’t happen ever...people have been there for 20, 30 years it wasn’t really received that well. It’s a little bit frustrating.*

Alan also mentioned the lack of opportunities to use self-management, curiosity and uncertainty, and communication skills:
There was no ability to sort of make things any different. I'm trying to suggest new ways of doing things and I was told well that's the way we do it here and that's that. I never really had the chance to demonstrate communication skills a whole lot. There was no real room to do any presentations or anything like that.

Alan also felt there was no scope to use high level skills as he had not been exposed to enough work to be able to use problem solving. It had also been implied that problem solving was not a requirement for his work level.

Maggie suggested that initiative, enterprise, planning and communication could be used more but that they tended to have a set workload. She stated that she does not challenge the way things are done or suggest ways of doing things differently. Maggie also identified that the use of connections skill was not used and even may have been inappropriate:

...no job requirement for [use of connections] there were some very basic token networking opportunities between the graduates, I didn’t find that I got any benefit out of them.

Like Maggie, Susie does not make full use of connections but would like to work on developing it as a skill. She also added the use of support systems and said that there are probably lots of policies, procedures and systems that could develop this ability in the workplace but she is not aware of them. Abby required more opportunities to develop skills, such as critical thinking, which she commenced at university:

...uni is a little different because you’ve got the role and you’ve got a resource and usually what you’re looking for is out there to find, whereas here, because we’re an internal company, everything is sort of embedded in something else. I'm really building on knowing where to look.

Abby admits that this will come with experience and talking to people.

Sarah did not get enough opportunity to be involved in teamwork as tasks were designated in meetings; she had also tried providing solutions to problems:

They weren't necessarily heard, and then the following meeting, all of a sudden your solution was being used and it was this novel idea that had never been heard of, despite you having said that the following week or
the previous week. I think although I got to use it, perhaps it wasn’t recognised I think as I had expected.

Other skills graduates required more opportunities to use included language, leadership, entrepreneurship and empathy. Tess added curiosity in uncertainty which, as a graduate, she has but is unsure about speaking out and questioning issues therefore she needed to use the skills of communication and initiative and enterprise. Identifying the skills that are not used is important in this research as it partially answers the research question: What is the value of graduates’ attributes during this transition? Graduates’ perceptions of the value of their KSOQs indicate that graduates may value them more than employers but there is a lack of opportunity to demonstrate them. In suggesting that there are limited opportunities for graduates to apply their skills, graduates also indicate a possible mismatch between their perceived value and their employers’ value.

Skills or other qualities not included in the cards

This was discussed to determine whether graduates had any additional skills or qualities that were of value to them, but which were not included in the cards. It was determined that the value of any additional skills which graduates may need is dependent on the organisation, but additions included [self]-awareness as well as the effects of external events. Self-awareness was also considered to be dependent on feedback and a willingness to learn, and was likened to self-management, as Anna indicated:

You need to know about your own skills and qualities so you can deal with your staff or your managers appropriately. Once you have that self-awareness and know your strengths and weaknesses and acknowledge what your weaknesses are, then you’re then able to improve.

Pam added new learning as a skill similar to self-awareness especially learning from feedback such as:

Just recently, we participated in my first performance development. My manager said, to focus more while at work and [in] managing the
different jobs that you have and the day-to-day correspondence of workflow. She says I'm adapting well into the workplace and I'm very approachable, friendly and happy to help.

This addition of learning as another skill is of value in this research in relation to the learning career, which is a concept proposed and discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. Another addition was confidence as an interpersonal skill added by Tess:

Once people start asking for your opinions and start getting you to write correspondence or briefings you realise that they think that I'm at a good stage now where I can actually contribute I get confidence from the impetus to be motivated [and from] face-to-face interaction.

Other additional SOQs from graduates included empathy, having influence, an ability to figure out your environment and a sense of openness. Also added were managing up, as in clarifying tasks and determining the extent of work required in the tasks: foresight; bringing your own personality to the job, referred to by the organisation as a personal brand; being emotionally aware; self-improvement; and broad-mindedness. Self-advocacy was also added, which was an important skill for career management.

Additional SOQs suggested by graduates also referred to those that might develop their use of support. Examples include the planned and considered use of mentors, team leader, human resources services, and development and training. While this also refers to graduates’ use of connections, this explanation derives from a graduate’s perspective and it implies more self-direction in the use of support systems. The additions are summarised and matched with the original attributes in Table 13 below.
Table 13 Graduates’ skills and other qualities matched with graduates’ suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills and other qualities</th>
<th>Additional SOQs suggested by graduates</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collecting and analysing information</td>
<td>Technical skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>Project management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
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<td>Intellectual openness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Managing up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using support systems</td>
<td>Using self-support systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using connections</td>
<td>Understanding people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Camaraderie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Dealing with difficult people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Dealing with chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Caring and nurturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>Helping people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning and organising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiative and enterprise</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Personality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoiding taking things personally</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-improvement</td>
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<td>Empathy</td>
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<td>Ethical Behaviour</td>
<td>Cultural sensitivity</td>
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<td>Commitment</td>
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<td>Loyalty</td>
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<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Openness</td>
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<td>Technology</td>
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</table>

As can be seen from Table 13, graduates discussed their contributions to SOQs and gave their interpretations which included: proactivity (which could be attached to initiative and enterprise), confidence (which could be attached to resilience and prioritising and in turn to planning and organising), having a work strategy, dealing with difficult people, dealing with chaos, avoiding taking things personally (which could be attached to self-management), camaraderie, time-management (which could be attached to self-management, planning and
organising) and understanding people (which could be flexibility or intrapersonal). Additional attributes, which were added by graduates during the interviews, were: project management, cultural sensitivity, commitment, caring and nurturing, helping people, proactivity (which could be attached to initiative and enterprise), confidence (which could be attached to self-management).

**SOQs developed through prior work experience**

Skills through prior work experience were discussed to explore if, and how, graduates use their skills to negotiate the transition from university to employment. The main findings from discussions were given earlier in this chapter; however, their answers made reference to SOQs which are collated here. The SOQs which graduates developed during their prior work experience emerged reflectively in the discussion and with reference to the cards. Communication was the most commonly referred to skill, with eight references, next were planning and organising and problem solving with four references each. Other skills such as collecting analysing and applying information, critical thinking and initiative and enterprise also featured. The other quality, flexibility, was the highest other quality mentioned, followed by enthusiasm and resilience.

Graduates discussed these skills, other qualities and additional attributes with the benefit of hindsight and reflection. Graduates acknowledged that during prior experience they did not necessarily identify or value their SOQs. However, one participant Maggie made a useful comment about the appreciating the value of SOQs learned during prior experience to employers in demonstrating that graduates have them and have practiced using them:

*Employers will look to people with actual work experience because that [indicates] demonstrated skills as opposed to just knowing [from the degree].*

Tess’s comment is typical of most graduates’ hindsight about the importance of developing SOQs during prior experience:
Evaluate your experience, once you look at it later when you’re finally in a full-time job and you’re able as a graduate to compare yourself to other graduates who have come straight from uni who didn’t really work before, versus the ones who are already working full time...you can see the big difference and that’s what causes you then to evaluate.

Some technical or job-related attributes were discussed and included project management skills, discussed above, writing, reading, research, customer service and business skills.

Graduate attributes in the form of skills, other qualities and additional attributes have been discussed and analysed here. In this previous section, in particular, the value and transferability of skills, other qualities and additional attributes during the transition to employment have been discussed as graduates start to manage themselves and their careers. The main point here is not merely that graduates have added other attributes to the lists generated by universities and organisations, but that these additions are important and authentic as they emerge from graduates’ own experiences, reflections and career management. Discussion with graduates about their career agency is in the next section.

Findings in this section contribute to the subsidiary research question: what is the value of graduate attributes during their transition? Graduates related their experiences of using their SOQs and suggested that their perceived value is determined during prior experiences and by their transferability and applicability into professional employment. Graduates’ reflections on the use and transferability of their KSOQs included experiences during professional employment where they used their SOQs. They then ranked the KSOQs and their ability at each skill. Interestingly, where graduates indicated their SOQs had not been used, or were under-used, they commented that this was due to the lack of opportunities to do so with their current employer. This focus on opportunities was mentioned earlier in relation to the subsidiary question how do graduates negotiate the transition to professional employment?
Additional SOQs were provided by graduates themselves in the discussion. In addition to answering the research question, graduates’ contributions that derived from their experiences, add empirical value to the SOQs debate via their practical application and analysis of those SOQs that are important in transition and in their careers. Thus, the three aspects of this research are aligned in the findings: transition experiences, graduate attributes and graduate careers perspectives.

**The role of graduate career agency during transition**

The section considers graduates’ career agency and their attitude towards their careers. Graduate were asked for their perceptions of what a career means to them, if they felt in control of their careers, how far they think they have come to this point, what they would change to further their careers and their career attitudes and what factors would assist in furthering their careers. They also discussed where they saw their careers taking them and their career attitude versus their values. Graduates also offered advice to future graduates.

**Graduates’ perceptions of their careers**

This section establishes graduates’ perspectives about their careers and their career attitudes and explores the factors influencing their responses. The question, ‘what does a career mean to you?’ was viewed by some as ‘a big question’ (Flora) or a ‘foul question’ (Beth), whereas Amy kept it simple making the connection between learning and employment saying:

* A career is ... to join the dots between what you’ve studied and the jobs that you take

Careers were described using analogies such as pathways, stepping stones, labels or in physical terms such as the workplace environment. Careers were referred to as: a trajectory, an investment, enjoyable, important in the big picture of life goals, something to facilitate other life goals, a flexible plan and not a straight line, as we see in this comment from Tess:
...there are certain experiences that you can't plan for...I am reluctant to plan a strict path now. A lot of people...haven't had a straight line.

Conversely, a minority of participants viewed their careers as a less significant part of their life plan. This differed from the typical perspective of a career, but was a view Sarah held:

I don’t have that much of significance on my career. I don’t really have this ambition of my career being this big and brilliant thing that I devote my entire life to.

Similarly, while others enjoyed their employment they, like Anya ‘very much appreciate work-life balance’. One interesting comment from Christy regarding readiness refers to an aspect of careers theory – self-directedness:

I was thinking about this the other day...whether I was ready to actually start my career.

Despite these different perceptions of careers, the majority of graduates were career-driven as in this comment from Adrian:

You need to look at your values and plans in life and how you can do the work that will help you to get there. You need to add value to achieve what you want to achieve.

Many graduates discussed careers from altruistic perspectives. This is similar to another aspect of careers theory – the concept of being values-driven. Comments from this perspective include making a change and having some impact, and are best typified in this response from Tanya:

A career for me always meant working somewhere or in a job where I was helping people. I'm a big picture person...power to implement positive change...applying yourself to the greater good. I thought of being a teacher once.

These aspects of the research indicate that graduates have expectations about their careers that include money, consistent employment, meaningful work, opportunities, challenges, fulfilment, return on investment, respect, reputation, progression and further learning in an innovative workplace environment. Sam, who demonstrates values-driven
tendencies, also referred to the importance of skills and an environment conducive to career progression:

...is a good workplace where I can demonstrate my skills and also my skills are valued.

Jobs are regarded by graduates as ‘just for money’, whereas careers require ‘more than being occupied’. Careers remain consistent and are to be maintained for the whole of one’s working life. Flora explains this comparison:

A job is something that you may be able to maintain or not. A career is something that you’re definitely able to maintain for your whole working life.

Careers success and reputation are dependent on the interaction with others and how graduates manage their careers as Angie explains:

You need your team members to be the best that they can be. Their reputation is going to impact your reputation...so their success is also your success.

Jim, who was originally not sure about the career concept, explains in a self-directed manner that careers are something you have control over:

something that you should be interested in to retain a level of control over, and explore the sort of things that interest you...rather than have your career directed...and progressing upward or moving sideways between different agencies and taking opportunities.

This view is partially shared by Maggie who refers to levels of control over decision making in progressing a career:

I don’t think it’s about what your position is in the company. For me it’s more about how much ability you have to make decisions, make changes and manage.

This concept of controlling careers and being self-directed emerged as a key theme in this part of the discussion, but is dependent upon having opportunities to do so.
**Graduates taking control of their careers**

When asked; ‘Who is in charge of your career?’ 19 responses indicated that they were definitely in charge of their careers. A further three indicated that they were in charge but that other factors affected this. Two more referred to other parties being involved in their careers.

Themes which emerged in participants’ explanations of their responses included the recognition that responsibility for their careers is with them. Beth suggested this in a comment:

*Me...and I need to realise that more I think.*

Themes also included external factors, such as the economy affecting their control, as Maggie mentioned:

*It's up to the individual if you're scanning your environment and the horizon and the future as to where you're at and where things are going.*

Similarly, Emma adds that she cannot necessarily say she is in charge:

*I'm in charge of the decisions that I make. I'm just not in charge of what decisions are available to me.*

Adrian made a similar comment:

*Because I determine what I want to do, what industry I want to work.*

Other themes included: personal issues such as disabilities, family commitments and parental influence which lessens over time as well as participants taking on more responsibility for themselves. These factors influence their control, but ultimately they make their own decisions.

Even organisations advised graduates should accept more responsibility for their careers as Sarah mentioned:

*Working in HR, we're definitely preaching that you're the driver of your own goal.*

Pam says the organisation plays a role but:

*I think if you rely too much on the organisation to provide your overall career, you stop developing yourself as a person.*
While finally Hanna admits that:

*I was certainly given a lot of opportunities to progress if I wanted.*

Again, the theme of progression was important in participants’ minds when they discussed careers and in determining how far they had come.

**How far graduates think they have come in their careers**

Even though participants were interviewed between 6 and 18 months after commencing employment this topic was discussed to determine their levels of progress and to enable participants to reflect on their success. Not all participants discussed this as the question was a prompt, when time permitted, designed to initiate a deeper conversation. The responses, however, indicate that context can determine levels of boundaryless mindset.

A tally of their comments was made; the highest comments were evenly spread across four themes. Some thought they had not progressed far, some were just at the beginning, others had progressed to a certain extent and others felt they had made it although they had further to go. However, Alan felt he had gone backwards in his career:

*I’m not that happy and I’m not really achieving any sort of outcomes or goals. I’m not making much of a difference in what I’m doing. I think I need to find a career where I am closer to those goals or closer to where I can use my skills better.*

Sarah felt she was at the beginning of her career: ‘it was a big step and one that I didn’t feel like I was going to take quite so suddenly’. Abby felt thwarted by current changes: ‘I hit the glass ceiling because there’s a hiring freeze’.

Again, as mentioned earlier, some participants decided to make a career change and study for a different career. Alternatively, they realised, like Rita, they had more to learn:

*I still feel that I don’t know anything when I compare myself to the others that have been in that same job for quite a few years. I just feel that I have so much more to learn. I think I probably just touched the tip of the iceberg so far. I don’t think I’ve even encompassed as much as I really think I could.*
Faced with many challenges to their prospects, participants were asked to discuss changes to their careers via another prompt question: where appropriate, which aspects of their careers would they change?

**Aspects of graduates’ careers they would change**

The immediate and most frequent response to this question was that participants would change nothing. Those who considered changes suggested changes to the team culture, having more support and more challenging work.

Others reflected that they might start their careers earlier, appreciate the value of life experiences, the independence a career brings and perform more relevant prior work. The importance of selecting a degree relevant to future plans was also discussed. These graduates suggested that at age 17, they may have a limited understanding of the, often misleading, marketing and information offered and the fact that some degrees can be too restricting, such as law and psychology.

Taking greater advantage of the GDP was also mentioned, as it provides a forum to share past and current experiences and self-development. Being in a graduate role in organisations also enabled a structured start to their careers but this was realised with hindsight. This could be a foundation for less self-directedness. Similarly, having pride in achievements and appreciating the value a degree adds to careers is important. There are therefore some constraints on self-directedness during the early stages of careers. Participants were then asked to consider their futures on the basis of this reflection.

**Factors to assist graduates further their careers**

This discussion produced a range of responses and reflections and focused graduates’ thoughts on plans, ambitions and levels of self-directedness which are a feature of protean orientation. Participants discussed skills development, levels of graduate work, opportunities,
pursuing further university qualifications, making the most of the support offered, seeking on-the-job training and making linkages between education and continuing learning.

Some features were dependent on how they communicated their ambitions and plans to demonstrate and develop their skills. This research suggests that skills development depends upon exposure to opportunities. This requires strategic thinking and creative thinking, as participants such as Tess acknowledged:

*I would love to develop strategic thinking, critical thinking... high level analytical brain skills. Creative thinking as well seems to get forgotten, using both the left-hand side and the right-hand side of the brain, forcing yourself to think in ways that are not comfortable. I don't want to lose that ability to switch between the left and the right...I feel like that's a skill that I would love to develop for a career.*

This attitude to additional learning, and particularly learning skills, is important in this research as it reinforces the value of SOQs, latterly known as graduate attributes. Others mentioned seeking out people who might assist with further development of their skills. Alan suggested:

*Soft skill training...whether that's a bigger emphasis on...communication skills and whatever working skill that you need...analytical skills, communication skills and presentation would be really good...for the workplace.*

This comment from Jim is typical and addresses the importance of the role of others in their further development:

*Continuing support from my supervisors and my agency here to develop my skills and not just necessarily the skills of this job but more so general business skills that could be employed elsewhere...certain sort of cross-business skills not niche knowledge, which can be applied wherever you are.*

As Jim suggested participants recognise that future prospects are also dependent on how much they are involved with projects and the work of others. Observing others would help, including their mentors and managers: *offering you certain insight and skills into what*
you could have’ and were of value in shaping their careers and developing confidence. The theme of continued learning is also mentioned in this comment from Tess:

On-the-job learning is beneficial…be open about where you want to be what you want to learn. Show that you’re motivated…those are all things that eventually get you where you want to be.

Getting involved with the work of others, especially in what is regarded as graduate work, featured in the discussion as a problem during competitive times. This was also a valid comment from Tess:

If you’re given work you might think, ‘Well, this is above my current level…how am I going to do this?’ You have panic moments…but you do it because you think… ‘Well, they have confidence in me to do it. I’m going to prove them justified in those thoughts’.

Tess continued in a similar vein, which was representative of other comments, communicating ambition and needs to those who can help was an important factor, and this could be done by articulating what is needed or communicating through actions:

Going the extra mile isn’t a big deal if you’re enjoying what you’re doing and you want to prove to yourself that you can do something as well as impress your supervisor or your higher ups. Not just to impress them but to show I’m actually interested and engaged.

Again, other people focus significantly as, according to Ben, they need to see enthusiasm in order to become motivated to assist:

We speak to a lot of the senior leaders and senior advisers who always consider your enthusiasm and where you can hustle your self-direction and then motivation…taking as many opportunities as I can in the future…and when they present themselves,

Additional factors to assist their future careers include loyalty and stability, becoming a specialist and focusing on further study and skills to progress, as Adrian indicated:

...maybe doing an MBA, focusing more on my communication skills from co-worker to up through the organisation and to have the emotion intelligence to deal with this.
Conversely, being able to further develop themselves in broader areas to avoid being in a niche role and ability to recognise and respond to opportunities is important to Amy:

*Knowing when a job is coming before it's been announced. Making sure, my personal brand is something that is consistent and that I've got a good reputation...as well as obviously working hard in the role that you're in."

Other people play a part in assisting graduates to shape learning: having some positive supervisors who can help me learn and teach me things that I haven't already learned. A similar approach related to learning about self-advocacy, as Christy discussed:

*Personally, I think an ability to advocate...I'm quite a yielder. I'm very open to information. Sometimes I find it hard to kind of put my hand up and put things forward...I found it really hard to assert myself to senior people about what I wanted for my own career development."

In identifying what would help them further in their careers, graduates demonstrated self-directedness in their careers. A lot of these findings are discussed further in the next chapter. Furthering their careers was also explored with graduates in relation to the more distant future and this is discussed next in terms of organisational mobility.

**Where graduates see their careers taking them**

Graduates’ future plans including intentions to stay with their current organisation and their levels of forethought about their careers are discussed in this section. Responses indicated that two participants were unsure overall, two considered staying with this organisation but were unsure, four were moving out of the organisation and upward, five were changing employer, and eleven participants were staying with the organisation for the present.

It is important to consider the contexts of the global financial crisis and the hiring freeze. These factors may have influenced almost half of the respondents who indicated their preference to stay with their current organisation. Similarly, the ambition to work for this organisation and its status may have had an effect on responses.
These factors, and in particular the hiring freeze, also affected the ambition and expectations for graduates such as Anna, who has a tendency for boundaryless mindset but not necessarily organisational mobility:

If it weren't for the [hiring freeze] announcement, I would have hoped that I would have applied for an overseas posting with this organisation and be working abroad maybe in five or seven years' time...I don’t see myself here for the rest of my life.

Other factors influencing participants’ decisions overall included age, ambition, progression up the hierarchy, family commitments, changes in personal circumstances, opportunities for further learning, feeling that they fitted with the culture and, finally, organisational environment.

Decisions to move are influenced by factors such as: the possibility of working overseas (also, for one, this was a factor influencing the graduate’s decision to stay), to start their own business, changes to job satisfaction levels, fitting in with changing life goals and pursuing further full-time qualifications, or limitations of the job. Susie shows organisation mobility preference and discusses the latter:

I don’t see myself progressing very far in the public service, I'm not a natural leader but secondly, I'd rather work at a lower level position in like an international organisation.

Decisions also include changing opportunities derived from further study, as Beth suggests in a boundaryless mindset:

Sometimes I think I wouldn’t mind doing my PhD and being an academic, but I just don’t know if I would find that as rewarding knowing that I much prefer kind of practical outcomes. I guess I don’t know enough yet to really know where I want to go.

Where participants discussed what they would be doing in their future careers the responses were: management consulting, travel and work in South East Asia, have parallel career, stay for two years maybe five and aspire to a managerial role, work in the community or as a nurse-teacher, not in the public service but somewhere more interesting, aspire to
executive level, staying as always wanted to work here, in current job or similar globally, to work for an organisation where passion is, to own a business (two responses for this), applied for job with international company in Europe, progress to senior management, executive and even chief executive officer (CEO), to specialise, to undertake a further qualification, to learn as much as possible with this organisation and organising a variety of events, not the same types of work. Whether or not graduates decided to stay they expected to have some movement in their careers as evidenced next.

**The number of jobs graduates might have over the next ten years**

This was discussed during the interview to establish graduates’ boundaryless mindset and organisation mobility preference. Over the next ten years the majority expected to have two jobs or only one job, with remainder indicating between two and four jobs, and only one having six or seven jobs. This is interesting because it indicates lower levels of boundarylessness than the quantitative results discussed in Chapter 5 Quantitative Findings. Reasons given for a lesser number of moves include the global situation, staying due to competition from graduates emerging from university, increased mobility and competing with foreign talent, and dislike of change. Comments were also about promotion prospects and ambition such as: being promoted in the next two or three years, being loyal to an organisation which looks good on curriculum vitae, age was also a factor as some envisages mature age and not wanting any more changes.

Participants indicating a lesser number of moves did however stipulate some conditions such as: in 10 years, they might feel differently and, if promotion does not happen, they may have to move departments or locations. Reasons given for a greater number of moves included: going overseas themselves, having a year off, having a second career, not wanting to stay in the same spot for ten years, needing experience in the private sector, needing to have a few jobs before that dream career, prospects of other companies offering a unique experience,
having their own business, travelling while working up the ladder, and going as far as they can while still young. Some of these participants suggested that any moves could be within the same organisation. Thus, boundaryless mindset and organisation mobility preference require a more stable context.

Graduate career attitude versus personal values

There was a discussion about the strength of graduates’ personal values and how this would impact on their careers. Data indicates whether participants are values-driven. The majority of participants, 16, said they would have issues which would affect their continued employment within that organisation, five would remain neutral, one would follow the rules to guide them, one would raise the issue and express their perspective and one would leave the issue with a higher authority.

Some graduates were aware that other factors influence how much freedom they have to raise issues and that values and views can change. Some, like Tess, considered this:

You’re taught you have to remove yourself from what you’re actually doing because there’s always evidence to back why a certain government is doing a certain policy. I think it’s more conflicting for people who work in other departments maybe where there might be stronger values attached.

However, others, like Susie, have stronger views but understand the political arena:

I’d feel uncomfortable about it and I’d definitely go back to the person that asked me and express my concerns about it. If I thought it was unethical, I wouldn’t do it. You just trust the electoral system to do what you think is in the collective best interest of the majority.

Participants not in the public service had similar views but, like Sarah, they would negotiate:

If I can clearly see that I am against it, I will work my hardest to make the people around me believe what I believe. If I can see that they’ve got a valid point, maybe there is something that I haven’t thought about. I’m very resistant to do something that I don’t agree with.
Pam, who also not working in the public service, explained she would be supported by the rules:

\[
\text{In this kind of industry, you can’t get away with much. There’s a lot of rules that stipulate what you can and can’t do.}
\]

Some explained their strong ethical values and they may be forced to make the decision to leave. This response is typified here by Ben:

\[
\text{I probably would have a pretty strong view, a pretty strong stance...if there is something that contradicts my views and my ethics, then it’s probably those of my colleagues and they probably wouldn’t serve me well. I wouldn’t enjoy working there if that was the case and it’s certainly not the case at the moment. But if it does become a case in the future, I would probably not enjoy my job. I would seek employment somewhere else.}
\]

Having strong ethical values and making the decision to leave could also be affected by money. Adrian sums up most of these similar comments:

\[
\text{There were too risky products and it was unethical behaviour, in my opinion. Everybody else just considered it was part of their job to do this and do what their boss told them. From what I’ve seen, I’m definitely a minority there. If I had a mortgage or kids, it might be a different issue...they would have known that they had problems if I’d walked because of the ethical issues so I spoke up.}
\]

Responses indicate varying perspectives on adherence to values, which can be dependent on the work or political environment. Some felt confident that expressing their views was the right thing to do; it was all that was needed in some cases, depending on how much money they had.

**Advice from graduates to new graduates about careers**

Graduates were very eager to offer advice in the discussion and focused on careers advice. The process for analysing the advice given by participants commenced with four themes emerging from the analysis of the discussion. The themes were: maximising the university experience, which means getting the most out of the broad activities at university
not just the degree; self-awareness which means learning about yourself, your preferences, strengths and weaknesses across a range of activities and contexts; personal planning means thinking about what you want to achieve and making a plan towards it, and attitude to work means having a proactive outlook on activities that can lead to work and activities at work. Following this, each piece of advice was cross-referenced into one of the four themes. The advice items were allocated to a theme on the basis of the closest match to that theme. Then the advice and themes are further cross-referenced with the self-directed SD, values-driven VD, boundaryless mindset, BMS and organisational mobility preference OMP sub-scales from the protean and boundaryless scale (Briscoe et al., 2006). These have been defined in chapters 1 and 2 earlier and are respectively as follows: graduates’ ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands, graduates’ internal values providing guidance and measures of success for their career, graduates psychological and physical mobility or general attitude to working across organisational boundaries, and finally, the strength of interest in remaining with one or multiple employers.

The cross-referencing to the sub-scales was done by reviewing the definitions above, and matching the advice items. While each of the four sub-scales may apply to most advice items they were allocated on the basis of how the advice item might contribute to future graduates’ SD, VD, BMS or OMP and their career attitude and transition success. For example, in having work experience prior to and during university, undergraduates may learn and apply their attributes thus maximising the university experience and may develop an understanding of their attitude to work, their preferences for working across organisational boundaries and their attitude to remaining with one or multiple employers. Table 14 presents the advice given by graduates to new graduates and an overview of how it has been cross-referenced.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Maximising the university experience</th>
<th>Self-awareness</th>
<th>Personal planning</th>
<th>Attitude to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiate yourself</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say yes and give it a go</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have work experience</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take up training</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be part of as many activities as you can</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for GDPs</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work around employers and departments to find what you enjoy</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use connections from university and from past and current employment</td>
<td>✓ SD/BMS</td>
<td>✓ SD/BMS</td>
<td>✓ SD/BMS</td>
<td>✓ SD/BMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn how to be adaptable</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be motivated and engaged</td>
<td>✓ SD/VD</td>
<td>✓ SD/VD</td>
<td>✓ SD/VD</td>
<td>✓ SD/VD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a positive and enthusiastic mentality</td>
<td>✓ SD/VD</td>
<td>✓ SD/VD</td>
<td>✓ SD/VD</td>
<td>✓ SD/VD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring knowledge from university</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work hard</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show your value</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help out</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan your promotion from the start</td>
<td>✓ SD/BMS</td>
<td>✓ SD/BMS</td>
<td>✓ SD/BMS</td>
<td>✓ SD/BMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be proactive</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan career from the beginning</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
<td>✓ BMS/OMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be open-minded</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be willing to learn</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
<td>✓ SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have realistic expectations</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
<td>✓ VD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: SD = self-directed, VD = values-driven, BMS = boundaryless mindset, OMP = organisational mobility preference.
This analysis of items of advice in Table 14 contributes to the discussion in two ways: First in sharing the practical advice given by graduates such as 'differentiating yourself', 'show your value' and having a positive and enthusiastic mentality. Second in identifying activities which may assist new graduates in developing a clearer career attitude and in demonstrating their attributes, such as and being willing to learn, which, as suggested in this thesis, indicates the importance of graduate attributes.

Maximising the university-experience

Maximising the university experience includes seeking work experience, which was considered to be of great value. Even voluntary work, which was discussed by several participants, as leading to employment and includes being active in clubs and societies where skills can be developed for the future. These comments from Tess represent these findings:

Go out there and be bold, show them you are keen and engaged. Make sure you are active in meeting all sorts of people when you’re at university, be open to exposing yourself to different clubs and societies and don’t be afraid to go out and get some work experience.

Other valuable comments referred to that fact that experience gave them the competitive edge, as graduates compete for top GDPs. These comments are best summarised by Susie:

Part-time or full-time work experience is invaluable to working here. The graduate program reflects that because so few of us came out straight from university.

Frequent comments related to planning careers from the beginning and about thinking clearly about: ‘why you are applying, why do you want to do that job, why that area, why that industry, why are you interested in it’.

Self-awareness

This theme focuses on being adaptable and ‘differentiating yourself’ from other graduates who may have similar degrees but different experiences. Some found self-awareness
in being motivated, engaged, positive and responsive. Comments indicate that self-awareness depends upon, and is assisted by, increasing levels of self-directedness.

**Personal planning and development**

This included seeking out employers with GDPs with which develop graduates further, and this comment from Ben best captures this theme:

*If you choose to go into the full workforce, well, some of the skills you may not get straight away. When you go for your development programs, you get some of that assistance and training and you get shown the ropes.*

Of interest, is one particular minority comment from Sam that identifies possible drawbacks of a GDP while acknowledging the program enables progress within the organisation:

*As I have been working before I think I should probably have gone straight to a full-time job [other than into a GDP]. There’s a bit of an illusion that if you become a graduate, you are more likely to progress along the organisation much faster than a direct entry.*

**Attitude to work**

This theme contains the most advice, ranging from having realistic expectations to working around different departments, to ‘get an idea of how people communicate in the office’. Advice also includes finding out what is enjoyable, taking advantage of all connections and being proactive as evidenced in this comment from Christy:

*You have to be proactive. Don’t be afraid to talk to someone and say, ‘Look, I really want to do this. Do you think I can happen for me? Is there’s anything I could do or you could do that could help me get there?’ No-one is going to knock you back for approaching them to help.*

Acknowledging that university experiences are valuable and learning to transfer these experiences is important for graduates’ career management and was identified in this representative comment from Abby:

*Work hard at uni. Listen to everything and anything anyone’s got to say about uni lecture-wise and your peers at uni and then it’s about yourself*
and developing yourself in the workplace and making yourself valuable as such. If you're not valuable to the organisation, there's the risk of you being either terminated or not taken on.

Some comments related to considering how all activities undertaken provide evidence to support a promotion and build a career, as Jim suggests:

One thing I found useful was from day one start planning towards your next promotion round and start collecting evidence very early on...keep those capabilities and criteria in the back of your mind and keep your feedback on record...that really helped me when I came up for promotion.

Tess advises on flexibility, not being scared and trusting decisions made. Final pieces of advice concern assistance with skills, assistance with the transition, using work placements more constructively and having a realistic view and are summarised in this comment from Beth:

In terms of university helping with the transition, having a better idea of your practical skills could be more beneficial. Every job that you have throughout university gives you some skills. I would have struggled a lot more to adjust if I hadn’t had that experience. You get built up at university as bright young things and it’s not always like that when you transition.

Some analysis and connections have been made on the important pieces of advice from graduates highlighted here. In the next chapter these will be discussed alongside career attitudes concepts, briefly referred to here such as self-directedness, being values driven, the boundaryless mindset and organisational mobility preferences (Briscoe et al., 2006).

Career preparation at university

Graduates were asked if university prepared them adequately for this job. This was discussed to explore the value of the university experience to careers especially during transition. The majority responded yes or ‘yes but’. Aspects of preparation included: the university experience, graduate attributes (skills, knowledge and other qualities) and work experience.
The responses indicated a significant point, namely that graduates may not realise the value of what they do at university until later. Explanations were provided, such as assignments should be more practical, university made me understand what was going to happen and what would be expected of me, university gave me understanding about different ways to address and analyse problems and provide solutions rather than simply just going out and doing it.

Others commented that it was the people and experiences at university which prepared them for professional employment. Lecturers with experience were considered more useful for critical thinking and learning and were more enjoyable. Support was provided but the responsibility was on undergraduates to make the most of it. These responses were also supplemented with suggestions for universities that included creating awareness of the value of consultation time, having to self-direct more at university than school and giving public presentations as a good start to working life.

Participants advised that some degrees, such as psychology, are only the first step in getting a job and practicing in that career, as knowledge from the degree is insufficient and necessitates a change of direction. Ben suggests that university is useful, but only:

*In giving you that ability to tick the box and say, ‘Yes, I have the qualifications to do this,’...yes, university has helped me.*

Graduates who commented that university did not prepare them suggested that knowledge, and some aspects of the degree program, were observed within the organisation, but overall as Anna says:

*What I learned, no, I haven’t used it. Doing those campus activities, going overseas, I think that’s worth a lot more these days because so many students go to university. So many thousands graduate. You’ve got to separate yourself from them...recruiter’s view extra-curricular activities as important now.*

Anna also regards university as a money-making venture now unfortunately saying that too many people are going into university. Flora felt that the skills from university were not transferable to her role. Regarding graduate attributes, participants felt that university prepares
graduates for work in some ways, but not so much through the content of the subjects as in developing skills and responsibility. Other comments referred to analysis and research skills as being useful in the workplace. There were comments regarding the recognition of capabilities and skills developed at university, especially after Honours or higher degrees, and how these complement personal growth. As Beth explained:

If I hadn’t done my Honours year, I’m not sure that I would be as well equipped...but that might have been probably due to the personal growth that I made because I had two years off after my undergrad before I then went back and did my Honours.

Participants who responded yes to this question described their degrees as: research-based, critical in a way that it developed your thinking, analytical and providing good written skills. However, the limitations of university were accepted by some, as shown in this comment from Alan:

The university I guess was good at teaching critical thinking stuff but in terms of actual work, I don’t think so. Work experience through engineering was really good to get experience. I don’t think they taught me enough of the idea of the actual workforce. There’s still big gap when you leave university and you start a job.

Maggie suggested that the business degree was a lot more academic than she thought and that she needed more formal work experience. Alan felt that in doing a degree he had gone backwards as he has worked in the industry for a number of years and some parts of the degree were very basic. However, this could also be attributed to the fact that he was a mature-aged learner.

Comments about maximising university included: being encouraged to do internships, learning how to present themselves, managing relationships and managing situations. Despite these positive comments, some graduates felt degrees should be more vocational with a work placement component to gain familiarity with the workplace, while another felt that university
was perfect for entry into management. Christy explained that the university experience depends on the person:

> I don't think university alone would prepare graduates. Absolutely not, there's no way. It's theory. It's learning. Its intellect...I don't think that uni is, or has ever been, designed to prepare you for the practical experience of work. The good thing is some degrees are now putting in elective work and it's a look at you as a whole rounded person.

Although most participants said that university had prepared them for work there are some interesting perspectives. These include accepting that university experiences and their transferability depend on how undergraduates participate at university and that organisations want graduates to show how they have differentiated themselves.

The graduate attributes profile was discussed with all participants to establish their awareness. Of the 25 interview participants, only two were aware of the profile when first discussed; one recalled a lecturer mentioning them and the other vaguely recalled attributes being in each subject. Almost all participants had no awareness or recollection of a graduate attributes or skills profile at all. Hannah even referred to the need for it to be more explicit:

> We didn't receive that...it might have been hidden somewhere in the career hub...but it definitely wasn't made explicitly available.

When discussed further, recollections included lists on paper and suggestions from lecturers that it should be used at interview and as Beth suggests, how it was useful later:

> Yeah, that was something that was definitely emphasised in my degree and which I think are really good and, of course, you need to apply like in my internship and in my final year project and then definitely throughout my own Honours year.

Another, on further discussion stated that it would be useful for graduates to clearly identify themselves and their skills and therefore the profiles are important. Another had the opposite view in that she did not appreciate being grouped together with other graduates in this way.
One participant (Christy) mentioned career preparation at university involving ‘readiness’ while others referred to pathways, journeys and control, all of which related to opportunities and the use and value of their attributes. Readiness may be attributable to the identification, or sequencing, of opportunities for participants in order to take control of their careers and apply their attributes. Participants discussed furthering their careers initially by developing skills, such as in networking, developing confidence and taking up strategic opportunities which challenge their ability and develop their careers. Again, as with transition and graduate attributes, the theme of opportunity arises.

Findings from this section contribute to addressing the role of graduates’ career agency during the transition to professional employment. This has been answered by considering graduates’ discussions concerning their understanding of the meaning of careers and, in doing so, showing the relationship between career attitudes, SOQs and how they interact during the crucial transition period. These reflective findings, with regard to taking control, reviewing what they would change and self-assessing their career achievements to date, answer the research question and provide a contemporary and, possibly unique, understanding of careers from graduates’ perspectives. These empirical observations from graduates aligned with the protean and boundaryless mindset sub-scales and then with the emergent themes: maximising the university experience, having self-awareness, personal planning and attitude to work, add value to the literature about career agency.

**Conclusions to the qualitative findings**

This chapter presented the qualitative findings in response to the research question and particularly the subsidiary questions. The rich findings from the interviews have provided valuable data about graduates’ transition to employment, the value of prior work experience, how graduates have used their attributes, specifically SOQs, and how they are taking control
of their careers at this crucial transition phase. Graduates negotiate the transition to employment face challenges in terms of new opportunities, by comparing this with their previous experiences and by applying KSOQs (graduate attributes) during transition. Graduates’ reflections from their own experiences suggest that they have a different understanding of some of the attributes from employers and universities. They also contributed their own interpretation of some attributes and some additional SOQs. Again, the focus was on their opportunity to demonstrate SOQs and to appreciate their value.

With regard to career attitudes, participants’ reflective findings about taking control of their careers and their self-assessment, add empirical value to the discussion on career agency. Graduate attributes, including those offered by participants, have been cross-referenced with protean orientation and boundaryless mindset to show linkages. Advice from participants for new graduates was classified into four themes: making the transition, maximising the university experience, possessing self-awareness, personal planning and attitudes to work which were then linked to the four sub-scales: self-directed, driven, boundaryless mindset and organisational mobility preference. Initial findings suggest that there is a relationship between graduate attributes, protean orientation and boundaryless mindset and the transition experience. This core qualitative component is supplemented by the quantitative findings from the surveys which are presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Quantitative Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present survey results for the three central topics of this thesis; namely how graduates negotiated their transition, the value of graduate attributes and their attitudes towards their careers. Results are presented in three sections. The first section presents results addressing how graduates negotiate their transition from university to employment and how prior work experience and activities within a GDP assist transition. The second section presents results about the value of graduate attributes, for example graduates’ ranking of the importance of KSOQs to them during their change from graduate to professional and their perceived importance of KSOQs to their employers. The divide between skills and other qualities and the contribution of SOQs to transition success are also analysed. The third section presents results about the role of graduates’ career attitudes during transition, beginning with their interest in further development activities and measures of graduates’ protean and boundaryless attitudes and also how these measures might affect length of stay with current employer and transition success. This is followed by a conclusion to the chapter which summarises the principal findings of the quantitative analysis component of the research.

Results

Survey sample sources and respondent characteristics

Survey data comprised a total of 169 cases. The breakdown of respondents and data set from each group is given at Table 15 and explains the varying sample sizes.
As outlined in Table 15 much of the complete survey data came from the APSC where much of the BLCP came from the OUA.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Methodology, the data has been screened and missing data issues have been taken into consideration. Table 16 shows sample characteristics and demographic. Also, as can be seen from Table 16 two-thirds of the sample was female (66.3

**Table 15 Data from sources to account for varying sample size**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source and number</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Fully completed</th>
<th>Data for all questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. APSC</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Grad2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. OUA1 survey</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. OUA2 survey</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotals for full surveys</strong></td>
<td><strong>122</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Fully completed</th>
<th>Data for age, gender, protean and boundaryless scores, subtotals and final total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. OUA1 scores from extracts</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. OUA2 scores from careers extracts</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. OUA1 scores only from careers extracts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotals for careers extracts scores</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>169</strong></td>
<td><strong>139</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
percent). The largest age group (45.6 percent) was under 25 years. Under half of the sample (46 percent) held a Business /Commerce /Economics degree.
As indicated in Table 16 the majority (71 percent) were employed as Graduate Officers and the remainders were in jobs titled, for example, HR Officer and Graduate Engineer. Over half of the sample had been on a GDP for up to 24 months. It is significant that half the respondents reported having other jobs since finishing their degree, as an assumption had been made that they had moved straight from university into professional employment.

### How graduates negotiate the transition to professional employment

Data in this section complements the interviews in which graduates discussed their transition and referred to prior experiences and what they had experienced, for example, in a
GDP, if applicable. This data complements the qualitative information and analysis of prior experience as well as levels of agreement that this assisted with transition. It also complements the analysis of whether any graduate development (if applicable) had assisted transition.

The value of prior work experience to transition to employment

APSC, Graduate2 and OUA respondents were asked two screening (cascading ‘if, then’ style) questions about their prior work experience, namely: ‘During your degree did you do any of these prior work activities with your current employer?’ and ‘During your degree did you do any of these prior work activities with another employer?’ If the respondent answered yes to either of these, they were asked about the type of activities they undertook. Respondents were then asked about their level of agreement that the activities helped their transition from graduate to professional employee.

Responses were grouped into three main categories based on levels of agreement: ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ were grouped together, as were ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’. The third category included ‘neither agree nor disagree’. Table 17 presents a summary of the results.
Table 17 Respondents’ prior work experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Level of agreement with assisting transition</th>
<th>Total activities</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With current employer</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship, cadetship or placement</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation work</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid work</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other activities</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With another employer</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship, cadetship or placement</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(44)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation work</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(32)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid work</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(81)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(62)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other activities</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(32)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results collectively indicate that the majority had no prior experience with their current employers. Of those who had, the majority indicated that prior experience activities...
undertaken with their current employer did not assist in their transition to employment. On the other hand, prior experience activities undertaken with other employers were of assistance, as 36.1 percent who had participated in an internship, cadetship or placement with another employer agreed that the experience was useful to their transition. Of all 10 activities, paid work with another employer was the most valuable prior experience.

As part of the prior experience measure validation process Cronbach’s alpha was calculated. Indicating the extent to which the items are positively correlated with one another (Sekaran, 2003); Cronbach’s alpha for the ten prior experience items was $\alpha = 0.82$, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Likert scores for levels of agreement for the 10 activities were subsequently aggregated into an overall ‘Experience’ score (ranging from 10-50) before being converted into a percentage of the maximum score for further analysis.

**The value of a graduate development program during the transition to employment**

Respondents from APSC, Grad2 OUA1 and OUA2, were asked if they had partaken in a GDP (screening item). Similar to the prior experience questions, respondents who indicated ‘yes’ were asked if the GDP included various activities, before being requested to evaluate the usefulness of those activities in assisting transition.

A total of 70 respondents from these sources indicated they had participated in a GDP (74.5 percent of the total sample and 41.4 percent of the total n). The column headed ‘missing’ represents sources 4, 5, and 7 who were not asked this question (see Table 15). The majority of these respondents (78.6 percent) indicated their GDP was 7-12 months in duration. As with the prior experience activities, the sample size for GDP activities varied. Table 18 summarises the percentage and number of respondents who had completed each activity and the perceived level of usefulness of that activity during transition.
Table 18 Graduate development program activities and transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate development program activity</th>
<th>Helpfulness during transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A great help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job rotations</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving performance feedback</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing advisory papers/reports</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing research</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results in Table 18 indicate that job rotations (85 percent) and performance feedback (74 percent) were perceived to be a great help, whereas preparing advisory papers, doing research and workshops were less useful.

The value of graduate attributes during transition to employment

This section presents results of survey questions on graduate attributes, namely KSOQs, their importance to respondents and their employers, how respondents self-rate their KSOQs, and how these KSOQs were useful in transition to employment.
Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with four statements designed to assess the value of KSOQs in their transition to employment. The four statements were, ‘I am using what I learned from my degree in this job’, ‘I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs’, ‘During early stages of this job I felt uncertain about using my KSOQs’ and ‘At this point I have made a successful transition to professional employment’. Scores ranged from 1 – Strongly disagree, through to 5 – Strongly agree. Mean scores (n = 73) ranged from 3.21 to 3.70 out of 5 as follows: I am using what I learned from my degree in this job: 3.21; I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs: 3.70; During early stages of this job I felt uncertain about using my KSOQs: 3.70 (which was reverse scored); At this point I have made a successful transition to professional employment: 4.14.

Results indicate respondents agreed their KSOQs were of at least some value during transition. However, with the means of the 4 items falling below an average ‘agree’ rating of 4, the results suggest other factors may be involved in transition success. Overall, when considering the value of KSOQs to graduates’ transition to employment the responses and mid-level mean for each question indicate some value for KSOQs to transition success but is not a strong overall endorsement. In addition, as suggested, there may be other factors involved in transition success which will be discussed in Chapter 6, Discussion.

The use and value of SOQs to respondents and employers

In order to explore the use and value of SOQs for graduates in transition, and for their employers, survey respondents (n = 99) were asked to rank the identified nine common skills and other qualities in order of importance to them as individuals, and then in a perceived order of importance to their employer. Further details are given in Appendix 11 for the ranking of skills and in Appendix 12 for the ranking of other qualities. Table 19 presents the results of their perceived importance and ranking of skills and other qualities. They also rated their ability at each of the SOQs. These scores were totalled and a new variable called ‘Self-rated SOQs’
was created. Reliability was acceptable at $\alpha = 0.79$. The range of scores for self-rated SOQs was 90-180; the mean was 138.05 which was moderately high given that the total possible score was 180.

| Table 19 Perceived importance and ranking of skills and other qualities |
|---|---|---|
| **Individual respondents’ rankings** | **Skills** | **Perceived employer rankings** |
| 1 | Communication | 1 |
| 2 | Critical thinking | 4 |
| 3 | Self-management | 7 |
| 4 | Collecting analysing and applying information | 3 |
| 5 | Planning and organising | 5 |
| 6 | Teamwork | 2 |
| 7 | Problem solving | 6 |
| 8 | Initiative and enterprise | 8 |
| 9 | Technology | 9 |
| **Individual respondents’ rankings** | **Other qualities** | **Perceived employer rankings** |
| 1 | Enthusiasm | 5 |
| 2 | Responsibility | 2 |
| 3 | Flexibility | 4 |
| 4 | Ethical behaviour | 1 |
| 5 | Intellectual openness | 7 |
| 6 | Resilience | 3 |
| 7 | Curiosity in uncertainty | 9 |
| 8 | Use of connections | 8 |
| 9 | Use of support systems | 6 |

As shown in Table 19 differences in perceived importance rankings for respondents and employers existed for the majority of skills and other attributes. Agreement in rankings occurred for four of nine skills (communication, planning and organising, initiative and enterprise, and technology). The ranking agreements for the nine other qualities were for ‘responsibility’ and ‘use of connections’. Results suggest more agreement on skills, with the
biggest disparity for ‘self-management’ at third for graduates and seventh for employers. There was less agreement on the more ephemeral other qualities where the biggest disparity was ‘enthusiasm’ but this was closely followed by ‘ethical behaviour’, ‘resilience’ and ‘use of support systems’. Therefore, there appears to be some misalignment between graduate attributes developed at university and perceptions of the value of these attributes to employers.

**The relationship between skills and other qualities**

Prior to addressing the latter part of the second research question regarding relationships between graduate attributes and transition success, tests of validity were conducted to determine whether the four transition success statements could be aggregated into an overall transition success measure. Bivariate item correlations $\alpha = 0.446$ suggest that these four items were not sufficiently correlated to form a scale, and so each of the four statements was treated as an individual indicator of transition success in all subsequent analysis.

In order to explore the possibility that the divide between the nine skills and nine other qualities is not necessary (as mentioned in Chapter 2, Literature Review) or expressing this another way, that connections may exist between SOQs, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. One purpose of an EFA is to establish whether item level data is better represented in a ‘reduced manner’, as factors or components of an overarching construct (Jolliffe, 2002, p. 78). A principal components analysis (PCA) extraction method with an orthogonal (Varimax) rotation, which does not incorporate assumed factorial correlation, was used. Having said this, a key assumption is that individual item pairs should correlate above 0.3 for the extraction PCA method to be considered appropriate (Manning & Munro, 2007, p. 167).

Many bivariate correlations between items exceeded 0.30; the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO = 0.701) was greater than 0.6 and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was significant, thus confirming the main assumptions of the technique. In
interpreting the PCA EFA results, the standard rules were applied: that an item loading should
above 0.4 to be considered for inclusion in a given factor/component, and a retained factor
should have an eigenvalue in excess of 1.0 (Hair, 2007; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The results
of the PCA are summarised in Table 20 (n = 73).
Table 20 Principal component analysis results, n=73

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Component 1: Cognitive processing (14.9%)</th>
<th>Component 2: Interpersonal (12.9%)</th>
<th>Component 3: Intrapersonal (12.7%)</th>
<th>Component 4: Self-management (11.2%)</th>
<th>Component 5: Curiosity (9.1%)</th>
<th>Component 6: Ethical behaviour (7.1%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Collecting and analysing information</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Critical thinking</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Intellectual openness</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Problem solving</td>
<td>.517</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Responsibility</td>
<td>.442</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teamwork</td>
<td>.814</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Using support systems</td>
<td>.699</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Using connections</td>
<td>.648</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Communication</td>
<td>.631</td>
<td>.486</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Resilience</td>
<td>.868</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Flexibility</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Enthusiasm</td>
<td>.708</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Self-management</td>
<td>.776</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Planning and organising</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Initiative and enterprise</td>
<td>.447</td>
<td>.574</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Curiosity</td>
<td>.698</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Technology</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Ethical Behaviour</td>
<td>.812</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


a. Rotation converged in 11 iterations.

As shown in Table 20, six components were extracted accounting for the majority (68 percent) of the total variance. Three cross-loadings over 0.4 were noted (see italicised values in Table 20); however, given the preliminary nature of this analysis and the fact these items loaded considerably higher on the allocated component than the cross-loading value, no further action was undertaken. Six new variables using the above PCA were computed from the components. Reliability of the six new variables was established with Cronbach’s alpha to
measure internal consistency. The six components were named based on content validity, i.e., according to their item content: cognitive processing (5 items; $\alpha = 0.763$), interpersonal (4 items; $\alpha = 0.757$), intrapersonal (4 items; $\alpha = 0.762$), self-management (3 items; $\alpha = 0.631$), curiosity (2 items) and ethical behaviour (single item indicator). By reducing 18 SOQs to six core components, the PCA results indicate there is no empirical reason for the existing separation of SOQs, which is a significant result. The 18 graduate attributes are conceptualised as six components of the umbrella term ‘graduate attributes’ (overall $\alpha = 0.656$), thereby contributing to the debate about graduate skills, other qualities and graduate attributes an issue explored in Chapter 6: Discussion.

**Graduate attributes and transition success**

In order to ascertain the value of these six new graduate attributes during transition, they were correlated with the measures of transition success. Table 21 presents the mean scores for graduates’ self-ranking of their ability with respect to the SOQs, comprising the ‘new’ graduate attributes and bivariate correlations between the six graduates attribute components and the measures of transition.
Table 21 Bivariate correlation matrix: 'new' graduate attributes and transition success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>x</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Component: Cognitive Processing</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Component: Interpersonal</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Component: Intrapersonal</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.369**</td>
<td>(.76)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Component: Self-management</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Component: Curiosity</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Component: Ethical behaviour</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.281**</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.252*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. KSOQ1: I am using what I learned from my degree in this job</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. KSOQ2: I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. KSOQ3: During early stages of this job I felt uncertain about using my KSOQs</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. KSOQ4: At this point I have made a successful transition to professional employment</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). n = 73 -112 Cronbach's alpha in brackets italicised on diagonal (where relevant).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Gender: Male = 0, Female = 1. Age Categories: 1 = Over 25; 2 = Under 25
As shown in Table 21, the value of graduate attributes in transition success is indicated where correlation results indicate positive relationships between all bar one graduate attribute component (the exception being ‘curiosity’), and the transition success indicator ‘I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs’. Two components, intrapersonal skills and curiosity positively relate to transition success in terms of the graduate using what they learnt in their degree in their current role. This result indicates that cognitive processing in terms of for example, critical thinking and problem solving, that universities wish to inculcate in their graduates, do have a role in graduates’ professional identity. Uncertainty regarding use of attributes was unrelated to any of the graduate attribute components.

The role of graduates’ career attitudes in transition to professional employment

This section outlines results in relation to the third research question, including: an analysis of further development in professional learning and career attitudes; the extent to which graduates in transition are self-directed and values-driven; and how graduates’ boundaryless mindsets and organisational mobility preferences affect their intentions to stay with their current employer. In addition, the nature of the relationships between graduates’ transition success, protean orientation and boundaryless mindset are analysed.

Further development

Respondents were asked to indicate if they were involved in further development activities, be it for career, non-career, or other purposes. Respondents who indicated they had participated in at least one further development activity (max n=122) were asked who initiated this further development (self-, manager-, or other-initiated). Table 22 presents a summary of the results for graduates who were in a GDP (maximum n=122). Table 23 presents a summary of the results for those who were not in a GDP (n=37-39, n=37 those doing further development...
for career purposes, n=39 for those doing further development for non-career purposes).

Further details and a summary of graduates’ professional, in-house and external training for career and non-career purposes are given in Appendix 13.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.0 (28)</td>
<td>56.6 (69)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>79.5 (97)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional membership</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6 (2)</td>
<td>77.9 (95)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>41.0 (50)</td>
<td>38.5 (47)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house training and development</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.0 (28)</td>
<td>56.6 (69)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>18.9 (23)</td>
<td>60.7 (74)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External training and development</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6 (2)</td>
<td>77.9 (95)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>2.5 (3)</td>
<td>77.0 (94)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiated by</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.6 (19)</td>
<td>63.9 (78)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>27.0 (33)</td>
<td>52.5 (64)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional membership</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1 (5)</td>
<td>75.4 (92)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>1.6 (2)</td>
<td>77.9 (95)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>30.3 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house training and development</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.8 (1)</td>
<td>78.7 (96)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>13.9 (17)</td>
<td>68.6 (80)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>13.1 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External training and development</td>
<td></td>
<td>45.1 (35)</td>
<td>34.4 (42)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>26.2 (32)</td>
<td>53.3 (65)</td>
<td>20.5 (25)</td>
<td>2.5 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Initiated by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further studies</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(35)</td>
<td>(83)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(33)</td>
<td>(83)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional membership</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(83)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(83)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house training and development</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(83)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(32)</td>
<td>(83)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External training and development</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(83)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(32)</td>
<td>(83)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results from Table 22 and 23 indicate fewer graduates were engaged in further development activities for non-career purposes than for career purposes, with the exception of professional memberships. Forty-one percent of those on a GDP and 12.3 percent of those not on a GDP, who engaged in further development activity, did so for non-career purposes. In terms of the subsidiary research question about the role of graduates’ career agency in their transition. These results indicate that as opposed to three of four further development activities, each of which were typically initiated by a manager, most external training and development activities were self-initiated.

Protean orientation and boundaryless attitudes

To explore levels of career agency using the boundaryless and protean scales, the average scores for the four sub-scales of the protean (self-directed and values driven) and boundaryless (boundaryless mindset and organisation mobility preference) instrument were calculated. Table 24 presents the percentage scores for the sub-scales (n=119; converted into percentages for comparison purposes). The full range of percentage scores for the 27 protean and boundaryless items are given in Appendix 14. All mean scores are well above 50 percent for each sub-scale, with SD the highest and VD the lowest means respectively indicating that respondents demonstrated a high level of protean and boundaryless attitude.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Mean Score (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-directed</td>
<td>78.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values-driven</td>
<td>69.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaryless mindset</td>
<td>77.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational mobility preference</td>
<td>72.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total scores</strong></td>
<td><strong>74.29</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from Table 24, self-directed and boundaryless attitude scores were the highest of the four subscales. Together with, results for self-initiated external training and development for career purposes (Tables 22 and 23), these results indicate respondents have strong self-directed career attitudes or a relatively high degree of career agency. Results also indicate there may be other factors preventing higher scores. Both of these results will be discussed in Chapter 6, Discussion. These results provide an indication about the extent of graduates’ career attitude during transition indicating self-directed and values-driven levels.

**Protean and boundaryless attitudes and intended length of stay with current employer**

In order to explore protean and boundaryless attitudes further the length of stay with their employers was examined. Table 25 summarises protean and boundaryless sub-scale scores according to respondents’ intended length of stay with their current employer (total \( n = 117 \)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Self-directed</th>
<th>Values-driven</th>
<th>Boundaryless mindset</th>
<th>Organisational mobility preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 years or less (20)</td>
<td>75.30</td>
<td>67.70</td>
<td>82.10</td>
<td>79.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years (19)</td>
<td>77.11</td>
<td>69.37</td>
<td>78.79</td>
<td>70.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ years (11)</td>
<td>75.64</td>
<td>59.82</td>
<td>76.09</td>
<td>68.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure (20)</td>
<td>75.65</td>
<td>73.30</td>
<td>76.80</td>
<td>78.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results suggest that self-directed scores are comparable across intended lengths of stay. The widest overall range in scores occurs for values-driven attitudes; the more values-driven a graduate, the shorter the length of time they intend to stay with their current employer. The highest OMP was for a length of stay of less than two years. A similar pattern is evident for
organisational mobility preference. Those intending to stay two years or less have the highest boundaryless mindset score.

**Career attitudes and transition success**

To explore the relationship between graduate attributes, career attitudes and transition success, correlations were conducted between the three transition success variables with percentage scores for the self-directed, values-driven, boundaryless mindset and organisational mobility preference sub-scales. Table 26 shows the only significant correlational pair was the transition component: ‘I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs and “self-directed” attitude ($r = 0.270, p < 0.5$). This result indicates to some extent the part that KSOQs play in graduates’ transition to professional employment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation matrix for protean and boundaryless career orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 I am using what I learned from my degree in this job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 At this point I have made a successful transition to professional employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Percentage score for self-directed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Percentage score for values-driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Percentage score for boundaryless mindset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Percentage score for organisational mobility preference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)  

n=73-119
As can be seen from Table 26 there are three key findings. First, that use of learning from degree is negatively correlated with organisation mobility preference suggesting that graduates who cannot use their degree knowledge may prefer to move to a different organisation; indeed the reverse may be true also. Second, that those who consider themselves as a professional are highly self-directed. Third, that none of the career attitudes were related to overall successful transition.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter the results from the supplementary quantitative stage of this mixed method research have been presented. Table 27 presents a summary of the overall results of the quantitative findings. The value of prior experience especially paid work is reported as the most valuable prior experience. GDP activities in transition have been explored and found that those who attended reported job rotations as the most valuable feature of the program and performance feedback of great help. The value of KSOQs in contributing to a successful transition has also been examined and indicates that the value of knowledge in transition is not endorsed. While there was a low endorsement of KSOQ in graduates regarding themselves as professional, KSOQs were endorsed as contributing to a successful transition. KSOQs were ranked in order of importance to graduates and employers. This demonstrates that there is limited agreement in the importance of skills apart from communication ranked first and technology ranked last. This also demonstrates that there is limited agreement on the importance of other qualities apart from responsibility jointly ranked second and use of connections jointly ranked eighth. Despite this graduates ranked themselves highly on their ability in each of the KSOQs. The KSOQs have been refined into a more useful six component model of graduate attributes: cognitive processing, interpersonal, intrapersonal, self-management, curiosity and ethical behaviour.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research and subsidiary questions</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Comments in answer to research question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ1 Transition success</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition success and prior experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Value of paid work with another employer</td>
<td>81% Agree</td>
<td>Most valuable prior experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition success and graduate development program activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Attended GDP</td>
<td>74.5% of the total sample group and 41.4% of the total sample</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Value of job rotations</td>
<td>85% ‘Great help’</td>
<td>Most valuable feature of program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Value of performance feedback</td>
<td>74% ‘Great help’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ2 Graduate attributes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSOQs and transition success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Value of learning from their degree</td>
<td>Mean score 3.21 = neither</td>
<td>Value of knowledge in transition not endorsed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Regard themselves as professionals thanks to KSOQ</td>
<td>Mean score 3.70 = neither</td>
<td>Low endorsement of KSOQ in becoming professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Had a successful transition thanks to KSOQs</td>
<td>Mean score 4.14 = agree</td>
<td>Some endorsement of KSOQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of SOQs to graduates and their employers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Skills of importance to them and employers</td>
<td>Communication ranked first</td>
<td>Limited agreement between graduates and employers on rankings of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Other qualities of importance to them and employers</td>
<td>Responsibility jointly ranked second. Use of connections jointly ranked eighth</td>
<td>Limited agreement on rankings of other qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rating of skills and other qualities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. New variable of scores</td>
<td>High mean of 138.05</td>
<td>Graduate ranked themselves highly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New graduate attributes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Graduate attributes and transition success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate attributes</th>
<th>Correlates with</th>
<th>Indicates which graduate attributes play a role in transition success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Learning from degree</td>
<td>Intrapersonal and curiosity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Regard myself a professional</td>
<td>All except curiosity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Successful transition</td>
<td>Cognitive processing, interpersonal and intrapersonal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Successful transition</td>
<td>Largest differences in means occurred for interpersonal, intrapersonal and cognitive processing components</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### RQ3 Role of career agency

**Further development as an indicator of career attitudes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Further development</th>
<th>Correlates with high level of professional membership for non-career purposes</th>
<th>Indicates self-directedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. For career/non-career purposes</td>
<td>High level of further studies for career purposes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ownership of career</td>
<td>Highest was self-initiated external training and development</td>
<td>Indicates level of career agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Protean orientation and boundaryless mindset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protean orientation and boundaryless mindset</th>
<th>Respondents were highly self-directed and with a high boundaryless mindset</th>
<th>Scores were above the mid-point and indicate a high level of career agency. This also indicates that something else is needed for transition success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Self-directed, values-driven, boundaryless mindset and organisational mobility preference scores.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Protean and boundaryless mindset and intention to stay with current employer</td>
<td>Highest difference between mean score for less than 2 years and more than 5 years for BMS and OMP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Protean orientation, boundaryless mindset and transition success

| Protean orientation, boundaryless mindset and transition success | Correlates with high percentage scores for subscale self-directed | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
Finally, as can be seen from Table 27 the role of career agency and the influence of graduates’ career attitudes, including further development initiatives and SD, VD, BMS and OMP on transition success has been outlined. The way that they influence transition success is as follows: In terms of further development; high levels of professional membership for career and non-career purposes indicates self-directedness and self-initiated external training and development indicates levels of career agency. Scores for SD, VD, BMS and OMP were above the mid-point and indicate a high level of career agency but also indicate that something else is needed for transition success. Finally, those graduates who regard themselves as professionals scored highly as self-directed. These key findings were shown in response to the research questions. I discuss the implications and scholarly contribution of both the qualitative and quantitative analytical results in detail in Chapter 6, Discussion.
Chapter 6: Discussion

Introduction

The overall aim of this thesis was to explore graduates’ experiences during their transition from university to professional employment, with a specific focus on how graduates use and evaluate their attributes for managing their careers at this early stage. This chapter integrates and discusses key findings from the qualitative interview data and quantitative supplementary survey data. The literature on which the analysis is based draws from three bodies of literature: on transition, on graduate attributes and on careers. All importantly, it does so from graduates’ perspectives as they make their first transition from university to professional employment. The chapter begins with the structure and aims of this chapter, an overview of the research and methods, the program of research and a summary of key findings in response to the research questions. Discussion of the key findings follows. The penultimate section of the chapter introduces the proposed concept of the learning career.

Structure and aim of this chapter

The aim of this chapter is to consider findings from mixed methods study that identify graduates’ perceptions of their attributes for shaping their careers when making their first career transition from university to professional employment. As indicated in Chapter 2, Literature Review, there is limited research addressing graduates’ perspectives of the value of their attributes during the transition from university to employment. This research seeks to redress that gap. The theoretical drive for this research, as explained in Chapter 2, Literature Review, was to understand the experiences of graduates.

Adhering to the GRAMMS model (Cameron et al., 2013; O’Cathain et al., 2008) which advises how to report mixed methods research, this chapter presents insights gained from
mixing and integrating methods. Appendix 15 summarises the principal points of integration of data for discussion. The discussion of key findings concerns the key theme of transition, which appears throughout this research, specifically addressing how graduates negotiate the transition to professional employment. Following this, consideration is given to graduates’ explanations of what it was like for them starting their employment. Importantly, this discussion addresses the value of prior experience, GDPs, their expectations, relationships with others, the process of changing identity and most significantly, what helped them in this transition. This section addresses the value of graduates’ attributes during this transition. Then, graduates’ perceptions of their careers to date, their career attitudes and how they perceive their role in managing their careers are discussed to address the role of graduates’ career agency during the transition to professional employment.

Qualitative data concerning graduates’ perception of their careers to date, the extent to which graduates feel in control of their careers and what might assist them further were supplemented quantitatively by further development initiatives and scores for boundaryless mindset and protean orientation subscales (Briscoe et al., 2006) and were empirically tested in this research. Important findings here include levels of protean and boundaryless mindset, particularly in relation to the concept of self-directedness which links directly to self-management, and is identified as a graduate attribute in this research. Career agency is also addressed in relation to further development activities for career or non-career purposes. Graduates’ scores for protean and boundaryless mindset have been correlated with length of stay with current employer and transition success.

The conclusion to this chapter commences by revisiting the gap identified in the literature review, namely the limited understanding of graduates’ perspectives on the value of their attributes when making the first crucial transition from university to employment. Second, the conclusion summarises the data on the nature of the graduate transition and transfer of their
attributes. Third, the conclusion highlights the significance of the main empirical findings of this thesis, the contribution to research about transition, attributes and career attitudes, and the importance of this research.

**Program of research**

Initially, a qualitative design was identified to answer the research question; however, the approach was modified as a large organisation agreed to participate, provided a survey was included. While the original design made sense in terms of utilising qualitative methods to ascertain graduates’ perspectives it had been identified that there had been limited empirical testing of boundaryless mindset and protean career orientation. There was therefore an opportunity to include this scale. Thereby a mixed methods research design (MMR) (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) was chosen with an inductive qualitative core component (Morse & Niehaus, 2009, p. 24) and an online survey as the supplemental quantitative component.

The semi-structured interviews and the card-sort with 25 participants addressed the research question: *What are graduates’ perceptions of their attributes for shaping their careers when making their first career transition from university to professional employment?* The subsidiary questions were also addressed at this stage: *How do graduates negotiate the transition to professional employment? What is the value of graduates’ attributes during this transition? What is the role of graduates’ career agency in their transition to professional employment?* The card-sort within the interviews focused particularly on the latter subsidiary question and asked graduates to discuss events in which they had used these skills (see Appendix 6). The interviews were coded manually and using Nvivo.

The online survey (see Appendix 6) with 122 respondents addressed the research question and subsidiary questions in eight sections: about you, your degree, your current employment experiences, about your skills, about your qualities, your career attitudes, your
career possibilities, your career and transition from graduate to professional. The survey contained protean and boundaryless sub-scales from an existing survey (Briscoe & Hall, 2005) which were modified slightly for this research.

Careers extracts, addressing the last two subsidiary questions, were sought from 44 professionally employed learners in the final stages of their online degree. They contained the protean and boundaryless sub-scales. Survey data were analysed using SPSS. Thus these mixed methods offered a concurrent triangulated approach to the research whereby integration took place during the interpretation and analysis phases as well as in this discussion (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003, p. 179).

**Research participants**

As set out in Chapters 3, 5 and 6, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from graduates from a range of organisations and OUA students. Some of the latter participated in interviews and all provided careers extracts containing protean and boundaryless mindset scores from the surveys. Sixteen of 25 interview participants and 89 of 122 survey respondents were from the public service, which may have influenced the findings, a factor which will be discussed later in Chapter 6, Discussion. As this research explores the actual behaviour and perspectives of graduates, it thus addresses a research gap also identified by De Caluwé et al. (2014) measuring behavioural intention and boundaryless mindset, they identify a limited boundarylessness in the public-sector, which is in contrast to the findings of high boundarylessness here.

Table 12 Chapter 6 indicates that most respondents for the surveys were female. Most were aged 25 or under, many had worked during the two years since graduating or prior to their degree in what they regarded as a non-professional job since graduating. Most had attended a GDP and expected to stay with their current employer for less than two years.
Summary of key findings

This section first briefly summarises the key findings of the thesis before subsequent sections explore those findings in more detail in light of the relevant literature. Graduates’ transition experiences were explored in the interviews and graduates identified that this is a crucial learning phase for graduates. Confirmation of the value of graduates’ prior experience is a key finding of this research. In interviews, for example, graduates compared their current experiences with prior experiences. In the surveys, they rated the extent to which their prior experiences assisted them with transition. Prior experience is crucial in assisting graduates make connections between what they have learned at university and what they learn as professionals. A significant finding therefore concerns the importance of designing events or professional learning opportunities where graduates are able draw on these refined attributes gained from prior experience in order to continually demonstrate them. The implications of this finding are that by transferring these attributes, graduates can demonstrate their value to themselves and to employers as well as contributing to a rethinking of university graduate profiles.

These findings suggest that there are other factors that contribute to knowledge gained from a degree. The appropriate combination of graduate attributes and their use by graduates make each graduate unique. Graduate attributes contribute differentially to measures of transition success, how graduates use what they learn from their degree, how they regard themselves as professionals and how they negotiate the transition to professional employment. Six ‘new’ graduate attributes were identified from this process. These findings have implications for the design of degree programs as well as GDPs.

One of the ‘new’ graduate attributes identified in this research is self-management which is similar to self-directedness which is one of the components of a scale to measure career attitude developed by Briscoe and Hall (2006). Graduates reflected on careers and their
role in managing their careers, which again had not been a prominent feature of their transition until they engaged in the reflection. A key finding suggests graduates should maximise the university experience and start reflecting on their careers earlier; this will assist with developing self-directedness. Some graduates specified career attitudes and taking control of their careers via further development for career purposes. This also highlights the importance of the application of the new graduate attribute, self-management.

**Discussion of key findings**

The process for integrating the qualitative and quantitative findings and to establish graduates’ perceptions of their attributes for shaping their careers when making their first career transition from university to professional employment is shown in Figure 8; it is based on an amendment of Bazeley’s (2010) concept of interdependence. Bazeley’s model indicates that the first point of interface is within the findings chapter. However, as also shown in Figure 8 the qualitative and quantitative results are reported separately in this thesis to indicate their significance.
Figure 8 Interdependence and integration of mixed methods findings

Therefore, the first point of interface in this thesis occurs where findings from qualitative and quantitative data are merged here in Chapter 6. The second occurs in this chapter.
and the third point of interface occurs in Chapter 7 Conclusion. The interface and discussion commences with how graduates negotiate their transition.

**How graduates negotiate the transition from university to employment**

Graduates have previously been identified as a special group because they are new to professional employment and they have different KSOQs to contribute to the organisation than previous graduates and current employees. The first transition from university to professional employment is a crucial learning process for graduates as they transfer what they have learnt at university and from other prior experiences (Eby et al., 2003). The interviews were important in helping graduates reflect on their transition. Dissemination of the findings of this research will be important in helping future graduates learn from previous graduates’ experiences and in helping universities to develop attributes that are transferable into the workplace. This research, specifically the theme of transition, has a management and careers focus and has drawn principally on those bodies of literature, while acknowledging literature from other disciplines such as psychology and education. Five key themes emerged from the results: graduates’ overall transition experiences, transition and identity, transition and others, transition and prior experience, and transition and transfer of learning.

**Transition theory and graduates’ overall experiences**

One of the intended contributions of this research was to provide knowledge to enable stakeholders to manage the critical intersections in graduate transitions to employment. If transitions are punctuation marks in a career story and critical incidents are the nexus between self-consciousness and social structure (Tams & Arthur 2010, p. 630) then the transition from university to professional employment constitutes a critical incident. Therefore, what graduates learn from their first transition to professional employment will be crucial to further transitions. Thus ‘first transitions’ are an important focus for this thesis and identifying the optimum transition period was important. This thesis shows that key features shaping the success or
otherwise of their transition year overall include: having managers and colleagues who are aware that graduates are learning in a new context, who are aware of their graduate attributes, and who are sympathetic to their newness and yet provide graduates with challenges. Being recognised as capable, having some autonomy and self-direction in tasks as well as being immersed in the role and receiving the ‘reward’ of extra challenges, were all valuable to graduates’ adjustment. These factors contribute to assisting graduate negotiate the transition to professional employment.

The conceptual models referred to in Chapter 2, Literature Review, are useful in framing these findings. The first model is Bridges’ transitions model of ending/letting go, explorations/neutral zone and new beginnings, which recognises forces for change may be external, but transition experiences are internal (1991, 1994, 2009). The second model is based on the concept of liminality (Allan et al., 2015, p. e79) which emphasises key events and rituals which graduates experience as they enter transitional phases, leading to their adjustment in a new phase as they settle into work. The liminal model envisages three phases: pre-liminal (separation), liminal (transition), and post-liminal (reincorporation) in which competence develops. The third model (Royle, 2015) comprises four stages of the transition process and makes linkages to career choice and attitude. This thesis followed Royle’s linkages to early career attitude and developed the models of Bridges and Allan et al. further in including an investigation into the use and value of graduate attributes during their first career transition. The two models formulated by Bridges and Allan are pertinent to the analysis of responses to the interview question: Do you feel like a graduate? Letting go and separating from a previous graduate identity to a professional identity depended on graduates’ perceptions of the term ‘graduate’, which included having ‘a double-sided reputation’ – as both a negative or positive ‘tag’. Negative references to the term ‘graduate’ included being ‘not quite ready’, while positive references included having achieved a certain status and being ambitious. The
transition from graduate and being ‘green’, to becoming a regular employee also depended on the perception of colleagues, some of whom did not have degrees and may therefore have had a negative view of higher education.

**Transition and changing identity**

As a result of learning from events and rituals which, in this thesis is the transition event GDP or orientation, graduates emerge transformed as their attributes have been re-contextualised in different practice settings (Allan et al., 2015; Van Gennep, 2011). Practice settings for re-contextualised knowledge in this particular research therefore include GDPs, orientation and rotations where graduates have opportunities to apply what Clouder terms ‘threshold concepts’ (2005) and apply graduate attributes and career management strategies. The critical incident for graduates is re-contextualising, which is important as some found it easier than others to transfer their learning from university. Re-contextualising may depend on events such as prior experience and practical experiences within the degree, all of which help with cumulative learning and the transfer of learning that involves ‘knowing how’ (Arthur et al., 1995).

Two very important points to note that contextualise the findings of this thesis are that graduate identity is malleable (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2010) and more than merely a series of attributes. Holmes (Holmes, 2001, 2013) argues that identity is relational, the emergent outcome of situated social processes; it is socially constructed, negotiated, contested, fragile and dependent on others. The findings of this thesis strongly resonate with this view. For the participants, changing identity from graduate to professional also involved an additional transition from the GDP and into rotations with defined job tasks which involved sudden loss, or letting go of the support network within the GDP. To counter this experience, participants suggested phasing out, rather than abruptly ending, the support network, and a gradual introduction of responsibility once they were in a permanent post. This stage could involve the
support of a transition mentor, who may assist graduates to more easily negotiate their change of identity. If this was done, it could contribute to the debate about the value of GDPs in assisting with transition.

One feature of the ‘letting go’ / ‘pre-liminal’ phase (Allan et al., 2015) concerns expectations. As the findings show, if graduates’ early careers do not meet their expectations, they may experience frustration. Therefore, this discussion also focuses on what graduates expected, what they actually experienced and how they coped with any misalignment of expectations in shaping their career path. The progress toward establishing an initial career path may be smoothest for those who can use the best of the past from their prior experiences, and navigate any barriers to their career and new identity using their graduate attributes. This addresses the first subsidiary question which explores how graduates negotiate the transition to professional employment.

Some literature suggests graduates’ professional identity develops via evolving career competence (Haynie & Shepherd, 2011) during which graduates learn how to manage their careers. Once students enter the workforce, their professional identity is shaped by the organisation in various ways, including the provision of opportunities to display and develop KSOQs. Such opportunities may be shaped by managerial control, and cultural-communitarian and quasi-autonomous patterns of identity regulation (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002). An argument presented here however, is that there are interesting and pertinent tensions here which concern findings about the varying levels of responsibility that some graduates were allowed. Also, findings regarding levels of management control that graduates were experiencing relate to organisational policies and regulations. These policies and strategies may conflict with graduates’ identity that has been shaped by prior experiences, expectations and university events, developing their autonomy, flexibility and independence. Graduates
experiences during transition are also shaped by employers, specifically managers, mentors, peers and those involved in the GDP.

**Transition and others**

This sub-section begins by considering the value of GDPs in assisting with transition and the roles of others during the GDP. When graduates started work after university many were excited albeit daunted; they were proud of their achievement and of the status of the organisation and the graduate programs, in which they expected to encounter many opportunities to transfer their graduate attributes. Graduates explained in interviews that they had expectations of a reciprocal commitment from the organisation and their managers, and were looking for reassurances from colleagues and managers that they would be supported in becoming competent.

One feature of the transition year overall was that graduates reported that they learned about people, supervision styles and managing peoples’ differences as well as adjusting their understandings about the best way to work with other people. The majority of respondents had taken part in a GDP of 12 months and indicated that rotations, performance feedback and peer support were of the most help during transition. Surprisingly, mentoring was reported the fourth most helpful. During the interviews, participants had valued mentors highly, but had commented that peers, recent graduates turned professionals and self-selected mentors were of most value. This finding was also surprising because participants who had a mentor/protégé/buddy relationship with those who had been on the GDP the previous year said it worked well as they developed trust with such mentors, because of the commonality of their shared experiences. Sharing experiences also helped in getting to know the style and personality of colleagues and managers and to make the most of rotations, especially in larger organisations. If graduates negotiated with others on the timing and levels of feedback and if support was provided from others, such as mentors, managers and peers and experiences and
expectations of rotations were discussed and shared, they found it easier to negotiate their transition.

The role of others and developing relationships in employment are valuable in supporting graduates’ transition. Relational connections and disconnections significantly influenced participants’ belief in themselves in career transition, consistent with the findings of others such as Motulsky (Motulsky, 2010). This aspect of this particular research provides an argument for researching relational issues and how resources can be mobilised to help ease the transition, in times of uncertainty and instability (Bauman, 2013). Of specific interest, are the ways in which the graduates connect with others in the workplace, such as mentors and coaches, and make use of them. External mentors in particular can support graduates as they develop their attributes in order to foster continuity of employment and flexibility in times of diminishing job security and increasing worker mobility (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009, p. 1552). Further, in providing support while at the same time allowing graduates to become autonomous, this relationship may assist what Scott (2014, p.54) described as the broken nature of employability linkage between graduates and employers. Transition mentors, external to organisations, may therefore be regarded as a valuable resource, as graduates manage their careers in a variety of organisations and enter a boundaryless future, a topic discussed later in this chapter.

**Transition and prior experience**

Developing relationships with others helps with reviewing expectations and actual experiences of work. This can include various processes such as informed career development, career counselling interventions, relational processes and individuals’ connections to self, others and society (Motulsky, 2010). Significantly in this research graduates indicated that developing and managing relationships had occurred widely in their prior experiences and that they could learn from these experiences if they are shown how to apply their attributes in a...
professional context. In interviews, for example, graduates compared their current experiences with prior experiences. In the surveys, they rated the extent to which their prior experiences assisted them with transition. These findings are similar to those of Kwok, Adams, & Feng, (2012, p. 502), namely that graduates who receive job offers have more relevant job experience than those who do not. Prior experience is crucial in assisting graduates make connections between what they have learned at university and what they learn in their new roles as professionals. Learning from prior experience assists the transfer of learning as well as the transfer to a new identity. The findings indicate graduates’ experiences before transition are shaped by prior experiences, university experiences and by graduates themselves to varying levels.

In discussing how they negotiated their transition graduates were eager to describe and explore the value of their prior experiences. Table 17, Chapter 5, Quantitative Findings, shows the majority of respondents had prior experience of paid work and voluntary work with other employers, which they agreed assisted with transition. They noted how such experiences were significant in shaping their expectations, levels of support and position within the organisation. Prior experience included formal, informal, paid and voluntary work. Graduates were able to articulate specifically how such experiences shaped their expectations, abilities and attributes. Yet responses indicated that prior experience with their current employer was low which may be attributed to a downturn in the economy as well as the hiring freeze for the public-sector cohort during that period.

The findings show that those with previous employment experiences were less apprehensive about their transition than others with less or no experience, perhaps because they were familiar with the process of starting work and fitting into an organisational culture. Graduates talked about the benefits of this prior experience which included: developing confidence; communication, including actively listening and writing; organisational skills;
flexibility; responsiveness; problem solving; customer service; managing people; dealing with chaos and difficult people; analysing information; resilience; initiative and enterprise; teamwork; and information technology (IT) skills. Many of these were those SOQs which have been identified in the literature and clarified in this research. At this point these findings contribute to the debate about the extent to which graduates utilise their prior experience to assist them in their early career transition.

Transition and transfer of learning

Graduates indicated that they negotiate the transition to employment by meeting the challenges of new opportunities and by comparing their achievements with their previous experiences. Transition is not only an identity issue, but also a process issue (Jackson, 2016) which involves the transfer of attributes from university to employment. Others argue that graduates are required to engage in knowledge (and attribute) transfer (Lizzio & Wilson, 2004, p. 463) via a rite of passage (Holden & Hamblett, 2007), however employers need to facilitate this. Overall, research participants’ comments about their early stages of transition were generally positive based on their excitement, commitment and the experiences of adapting to a new career that impacted on their lifestyle. Findings indicate that graduates are looking for confirmation from their employer about the transfer of their attributes and learning from previous experience. Such transfer of learning is an important element of graduates’ development of a professional identity.

A particularly important finding of this research is that there is new learning by graduates from their transition experiences. New learning from articulating organisational and personal consequences of recognising the contribution and value of graduate attributes to the nature of their work. This reinforces the link, for graduates, between theory and practice, and promotes ‘far transfer’ of knowledge, whereby what has been learned in one context is used in a different or remote context (Cranmer, 2006). However, graduates accepted they would need
to negotiate transition by encountering challenges using their attributes and receiving recognition for doing so. The new contextual challenge for graduates in transition is one of multiple new beginnings including: finishing university, losing student identity, gaining professional identity, relocation, professional and personal responsibilities, adapting to work routines and adapting to a different culture.

The value of graduate attributes during transition

Recognition of the use and value of graduate attributes is important in developing professional competence. The capacity to adapt to a boundaryless future relies on the new graduate having the opportunity to engage in events in which to apply graduate attributes. Part of graduates’ learning concerns how they understand and transfer their KSOQs, collectively referred to as graduate attributes (Holmes, 2001, p. 111; Mayer, 1992; Nunan, 1999; West, 1998). Relevant here is the concept of further learning in the context of professional learning. Professional learning is defined as ‘the development of professional capabilities through learning experiences and activities that integrate academic, discipline-specific and industry referenced knowledge, skills and attitudes’ (Papadopoulos et al., 2010, p. 4). As the literature amply demonstrates, professional learning and coping competence (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) requires opportunities or events to demonstrate transfer of KSOQs. Six themes were identified in the data with respect to graduate attributes, which are discussed in the next section. These are: the application of graduate attributes in the workplace, graduates’ additional SOQs, graduates’ perceived ability at SOQs, the contribution of the ‘new’ graduate attributes to transition success, the new graduate attributes and finally the graduate attributes profile.

The application of graduate attributes in the workplace

The second subsidiary research question concerns the value of graduates’ attributes during this transition. The term ‘graduate attributes’ is identified in this thesis as the overarching term for KSOQs. Although there is much literature on KSOQs it centres on how
they should be integrated into degrees (Barrie, 2007) and what the KSOQs should be for employability in particular (Cleary et al., 2007). The interviews explored graduates’ use of their KSOQs in transition, while the surveys explored graduates’ ranking of KSOQs to themselves and perceived ranking to their employers. This research found that OQs (Bridgstock, 2009) were not as prominent in graduates’ perceptions about their broad knowledge until they reflected on them in this research and ranked their ability at all SOQs. One finding from this is the value of graduates’ reflection about their SOQs. This research found that the value of SOQs differs between employers and graduates, which might be partly due to the lack of opportunities in employment to demonstrate them. This finding supports the suggestion in this research that the mix of SOQs in the literature was confusing and that KSOQs were not developed further. Graduates discussed the events in which they been able to use KSOQs and this evidence, along with their ranking of ability and the value of those SOQs in their workplace, combined with the results of the PCA (Manning & Munro, 2007, p. 167) to provide data suggest that the divide between skills and other qualities is unnecessary. Findings, particularly the ‘new’ graduate attributes, will help graduates, employers and universities clarify those KSOQs that are most valuable in employment.

Knowledge

The term ‘graduate attributes’ includes knowledge, rather than separating it as a stand-alone concept. Knowledge can be explicit or tacit, explicit knowledge is defined as that which can be transmitted to others for use (Baartman & de Bruijn, 2011; Burton et al., 2009; Hillage & Pollard, 1999). Tacit knowledge is knowledge embedded, in this case, in graduates’ experiences and is therefore difficult to transmit. For this reason, explicit knowledge was addressed in the surveys and in the interviews and tacit experiential knowledge about SOQs was explored via the interviews. Survey respondents were asked about their use of knowledge at work using the items: ‘I am using what I learned from my degree in this job’, ‘I regard myself
as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs’, ‘During early stages of this job I felt uncertain about using my KSOQs’ and ‘At this point I have made a successful transition to professional employment’. Mean scores suggest that while KSOQs were endorsed, other factors are involved in transition success which are discussed later.

Skills and other qualities

Graduates’ SOQs have been explained as the mix of features that employers require (Rigby et al., 2009), which universities seek to develop and which are applicable in a range of contexts (Hager & Holland, 2006). As identified in the literature review there is much debate about which SOQs to focus on. The relevance of the mix of SOQs identified in this research and their applicability were explored in a qualitative card-sort. Graduates discussed events where they used their SOQs and identified additional SOQs. They quantitatively ranked the SOQs in order of value to themselves and their perceived value to employers, and then they rated their ability with respect to these SOQs. Importantly, in analysing qualitative and quantitative findings on KSOQs, this thesis has provided evidence in Chapter 5, Quantitative Findings that would suggest the removal of the divide between the nine skills and nine other qualities, reducing them to six ‘new’ graduate attributes and explaining their relationship with transition success.

Although the ease of transition and employability are not guaranteed by the possession of knowledge and skills (Saarnivaara & Sarja, 2007), it seems logical from graduates’ expectations that opportunities to demonstrate all KSOQs and apply their learning eases the transfer of learning and thus transition. Overall, participants reported using communication the most, though it was not always the first to be discussed. Opportunities to display communication detailed in the card-sort included: learning organisational nuances, knowing how to approach colleagues and supervisors, and interpreting unclear instructions. They then identified collecting, analysing and applying information. Some graduates reported that when
collecting and analysing information, challenges arose if they received conflicting information from colleagues and managers and when they needed to interpret organisational policies in order to make decisions.

The next most significantly used attribute was self-management; this seemed to be the norm as graduates were mostly left to get on with work except when there were conflicting work roles and conflicting management controls. Intellectual openness and initiative and enterprise were the attributes participants reported using least. Self-management, which is similar to self-directedness and is discussed later, was practiced mostly by those who had prior work experience or who were older. This finding suggests that experience fosters these qualities. Some participants reported they had opportunities for self-management in teamwork where they felt more comfortable discussing and presenting ideas for collaborative approval. Enthusiasm, which in the analysis in Chapter 5, Quantitative Findings, became a component of self-management, was recognised by participants as important in demonstrating potential while building a reputation.

Planning and organising, like flexibility, depends on levels of management direction and, as one participant noted, can affect non-work life too. Resilience was regarded a key feature of transition as the world of work was described as tougher than university or casual work. The other quality, use of connections, linked to ‘knowing whom’ (Arthur et al., 1995) was useful for those who wanted support and who felt confident enough to ask for it and who engaged in networking, whereas some disliked networking as they said it felt artificial. However, as mentioned earlier, many graduates made use of mentors and buddies. Similarly, the use of support systems was felt to be important as policies and procedures protected them in decision making processes. The value of graduate attributes in negotiating transition was realised during the interviews as graduates reflected on their transition experiences. Overall, most graduates did not fully consider their attributes or their value at all during transition.
Graduates’ additional skills and other qualities

It is interesting that graduates themselves contributed to the SOQ discussion in the card-sort by adding their own versions of them to the items on the cards. Additions included self-awareness, self-advocacy, willingness to learn, intention to gain recognition and managing up. Table 13 Chapter 5, indicates that graduates develop their cognitive processing attributes by working on their technical skills and project management skills in the employment context, which points to a need for complementary specialist/work skills to be addressed during the GDP or in the early stage of transition. They developed interpersonal attributes by managing up, using self-support systems, understanding people, learning camaraderie, dealing with difficult people, dealing with chaos, caring, nurturing and helping people. Their intrapersonal attributes were developed further by imprinting their personalities on their work and their relationships, raising self-awareness, confidence, self-improvement, empathy and avoiding taking things personally. Self-management attributes were developed by having influence, managing the environment, having a work strategy, being proactive, prioritising, exercising emotional awareness and self-advocacy. Ethical behaviour in practice (Rigby, et al.,) was developed through cultural sensitivity, commitment and loyalty and curiosity by openness to ideas. These findings indicate which graduate attributes are most effective in facilitating a successful transition.

Graduates’ perceived ability at skills and other qualities

To assess the value of graduate attributes during transition, graduates ranked SOQs in order of importance to themselves and to their employers. Only communicating, and planning and organising, ranked similarly: as first and fifth. Of the other qualities, there was agreement about responsibility which ranked second, and the use of connections which ranked eighth. As levels of agreement on SOQs differed between graduates and employers this highlights a disparity in their perceived value, which is a further indication of the confused mix of SOQs.
Graduates may develop further if their other qualities are utilised. Combining transfer of KSOQs as graduate attributes in employment activities may encourage them to generate ideas and challenge convention, as Barnett suggests (2012, p. 67). This would, however, present some tensions if disagreement exists as to their value.

In addition to ranking the importance of KSOQs, graduates ranked their capabilities at KSOQs even after such a brief transition. This dual ranking indicates the utility value of SOQs in the early stages. That scores were not at the maximum suggests that graduates are open to further development of their KSOQs as graduate attributes in transition to professional employment (Arnold & MacKenzie Davey, 1994) which could be managed by graduates as part of their self-directedness or by their employers in a combined approach. Possibly supporting the argument for a longer transition period (Jackson, 2016), and for greater clarity about the attributes (Collet et al.) findings also indicate that graduates were unaware to an extent of how to use some of their attributes and employers were unaware of the types of attributes and levels of ability graduates had. Also, as the findings suggest, although KSOQs are useful the mix of SOQs was confused, thus graduate attributes were not fully understood by both graduates and employers. Therefore, the ‘new’ graduate attributes identified in this research could be developed further by employers and universities using this valuable information from graduates.

The contribution of the new graduate attributes to transition success

The findings of the card-sort are complemented by one of the most important aspects of this research — the results of the exploratory factor analysis EFA of the SOQs. This is a further refinement and contribution to the SOQ debate, which has recently focused on employability skills (Andrews & Russell, 2012; Cleary et al., 2007; Cranmer, 2006; Forstenlechner et al., 2014). This also contributes to the complex discussion among scholars, concerning relationships between skills and amorphous other qualities (Bowden et al., 2002;
Bridgstock, 2009) by offering a reformulation of the nature of and relationships between graduate attributes derived from graduates’ own experiences. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods in this research has therefore added meaningfully to the skills and attributes debate not only about what SOQs are on the lists, but also by reducing 18 SOQs to six ‘new’ graduate attributes, specifically: cognitive processing, interpersonal, intrapersonal, self-management, curiosity and ethical behaviour.

Further validation of graduate attributes is found in Chapter 5, Table 22, the bivariate correlation matrix; this addresses the research question regarding the value of these attributes in transition success. Positive relationships exist between all but one graduate attribute component (the exception being ‘curiosity’) and the transition success indicator ‘I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs’. Two components, intrapersonal attributes and curiosity, positively relate to transition success in terms of graduates using what they learnt in their degree in their current role, thus valuing their degrees (Brooks & Everett 2009). The principal component analysis (PCA) results indicate there may be no sound empirical reason, based on this exploratory study, for the existing separation of SOQs. Hence this current research allowed graduates themselves to assist in the refinement of the key components of their attributes. This is also interesting as the qualitative findings from the discussion during card-sort illustrate that participants also made connections between the SOQs in their experiences of using them by grouping them together as well as exploring connections between them.

These noteworthy results indicate that cognitive processing, especially using critical thinking, and other graduate attributes that universities wish to inculcate in graduates do actually appear to have a role in graduates’ transition to professional employment. This also suggests that opportunities to demonstrate self-efficacy at these ‘new’ graduate attributes, including social competence (Grayson, 2004), in a work setting are important. Further, results
summarised in Table 21 suggest interpersonal, intrapersonal and cognitive processing attributes may distinguish between those respondents who were successful with transition and those who were unsure about their transition success.

These results also show how the ‘new’ graduate attributes contribute to different measures of transition success including other factors that contribute to knowledge from a degree. Those participants who rated themselves high on intrapersonal also rated themselves high on ‘I am using what I learned from my degree in this job’. Participants who rated themselves high on curiosity also rated themselves high on ‘I am using what I learned from my degree in this job’. Thereby, the findings from this thesis suggest that opportunities to use their intrapersonal attributes and curiosity indicate their value to graduates and employers.

Therefore, in negotiating a successful transition to professional employment much depends on identifying and using graduate attributes in the process of becoming a professional employee. Regarding professional identity (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2010), there were connections between participants perceived cognitive processing, interpersonal, intrapersonal, self-management and ethical behaviour abilities and how they regard themselves as professionals in their job thanks to their attributes. This indicates that graduates recognise themselves as professionals if they apply their attributes that others recognise their value. The value of their attributes during transition to employment is similarly regarded, as graduates who rated themselves high on cognitive processing, interpersonal, and intrapersonal also rated themselves high on ‘At this point I have made a successful transition to professional employment’. Graduates also indicated that learning from a degree via intrapersonal attributes and curiosity contributed to transition success.

These ‘new’ graduate attributes contribute differentially to various aspects of transition success and indicate that university education is only one vehicle for developing useful graduate attributes. Prior experience and GDPs also play significant roles in transition success.
Collectively, these results about the ‘new’ graduate attributes suggest that there are different ways in which participants regarded themselves as professionals, attributable to cognitive processing, interpersonal attributes, intrapersonal attributes, self-management, curiosity and ethical behaviour. Results are interesting because these ‘new’ graduate attributes – specifically interpersonal, intrapersonal and cognitive processing – can distinguish between participants who are more successful with transition and those who are unsure. Thus, these three graduate attributes appear to play a significant role in how graduates negotiate their transition to professional employment thereby indicating their high value as graduates’ attributes.

**Graduates perceived value of the graduate attributes profile**

Most universities have a graduate attributes profile and this discussion of graduates’ awareness of this profile also contributes to understanding graduates’ perception the value of their attributes. Graduates reported limited knowledge of the existence and use of the graduate attributes profile and its value to them. Only two participants were aware of the university graduate attributes profile; one recalled a lecturer explaining graduate attributes and the other vaguely recalled them being included in each subject. These findings indicate that most did not recall a graduate attributes profile at all, despite much work on developing such profiles by most universities (Barrie, 2007). The graduate profile could be more explicit than a list, for instance by ensuring each assessment item was explicit about the attributes developed, how they would contribute to competence in employment and how they would enable graduates to clearly identify their abilities. These findings contribute to emphasising graduates’ and possibly employers’ lack of awareness of graduate attributes profiles formulated by universities and embedded into degree curricula.
The role of graduates’ careers agency

The role of graduates’ career agency in their transition to professional employment and graduates’ ownership of their careers are central to this thesis. This thesis is concerned with determining the extent to which graduates exhibit career agency during transition, exploring whether graduates have the opportunities to manage their own careers in the changing world of work; and establishing what graduates learn from these experiences. There are four themes identified from the results; namely: what a career means to graduates, the extent to which graduates have a protean and boundaryless attitude; graduates’ involvement in further professional development; and graduates’ perception of preparation for careers at university.

Graduates’ perceptions of careers

Graduates described their perceptions of their careers not merely as jobs but as trajectories for greater opportunities. For most, careers were essential for other life goals, while for a few, careers were not a significant part of their lives. Different perceptions can be ascribed to graduates’ career readiness and whether or not they had a clear life plan developed in the early stages of their careers. The significance of the impact of their careers was explained in terms of the ‘greater good’, ‘making a difference’ and a feature of life to be maintained. Overall graduates felt that at this stage they had achieved success in gaining employment, but in terms of career progression it was too early to tell and depended on the context of their employment and fit with the job.

Graduates reflected that it was important to start contemplating their careers a lot earlier than towards the end of their degrees, and to appreciate the value of their prior work experiences to their emerging careers. While recognising the argument that there are fewer traditional career opportunities (Baruch, 2003) for doing this, graduates could develop a careers strategy by identifying employers that offer GDPs. This is based on the assumption that GDPs would provide events or opportunities for graduates to transfer and develop their attributes.
This is consistent with the theory of intelligent careers whereby graduates would evolve their attributes over time based on ‘knowing why’, ‘knowing how’ and ‘knowing whom’ (Arthur et al., 1995). Graduates also reflected that the other factors that would assist them in their careers included: skills and attribute transfer and development (Jackson, 2016; Scott, 2014), graduateness of work (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2010), higher qualifications, networking and showing their ambition, being visible and possessing future potential.

The literature review identified career agency as a process of work-related social engagement, informed by past experiences and the future possibilities with which an individual invests in their career (Hall, 2002; Tams & Arthur, 2010). These findings from graduates themselves suggest they should be encouraged to reflect earlier on past experiences, on what a career means to them and what to expect from their careers, and to establish an awareness of their career attitudes. This would support the development of graduates’ career agency in preparation for their transition to professional employment. In doing so, it would assist graduates’ transition success and raise their awareness of their levels of protean orientation and boundaryless mindset.

**Graduates’ protean orientation and boundaryless mindset**

Two key features, identified in Chapter 2 Literature Review, for understanding careers and graduates’ career ownership during transition are protean orientation and boundaryless mindset (Briscoe et al., 2006). The scales were included in this research thus contributing to their limited empirical application and analysis and possible modifications to the scales specifically for graduates. There are, strong findings around the concept of self-directedness (Hall, 2004; Hall & Moss, 1998) which informs career attitudes (Briscoe et al., 2006), ease of transition, self-advocacy, and graduates’ own perceptions of themselves as professionals. The concept of self-directedness found in the protean and boundaryless literature is of significance as part of the most valuable new graduate attribute self-management. This important finding
should be a key focus of future research and has led to formulating the concept of the ‘learning career’, discussed later. Graduates’ scores for the sub-scales indicate that respondents perceive a high level of protean orientation and high boundaryless mindset, are self-directed and only marginally values-driven. This indicates that graduates expect to move between employers.

This research demonstrates that some connections exist between protean and boundaryless mindset and the value of the university experience. Analysis of advice given by graduates to new graduates resulted in four main points which are: maximising the university experience, self-awareness, personal planning and attitude to work, which were cross-referenced in Table 14 with SD, VD, BMS and OMP. Self-directedness is practiced within self-awareness and emerges when graduates differentiate themselves by saying yes to challenges, taking advantage of training offered and ‘giving it a go’. Self-directedness was also developed by taking part in activities at university and at work, working hard, being adaptable and enthusiastic and drawing on knowledge gained from university. Self-directedness also reflects graduates’ advice about personal planning and especially in identifying employers with good GDPs. Therefore, key findings of this research concern the SD sub-scale component of protean orientation and its overlap with the new graduate attribute self-management. This research found that graduates who scored highly on self-directed also regarded themselves as professionals in the job thanks to applying their KSOQs, particularly self-management in workplace opportunities.

As identified in Chapter 2, Literature Review, the protean orientation incorporates core values of freedom and growth, personal career choices and the search for self-fulfilment (Hall, 2004; Hall & Moss, 1998). As most graduates reported being decidedly in control of their career, these findings indicate that factors such as levels of control and responsibility could further develop and demonstrate self-directedness. This however, depends on the role of others in the workplace; on organisational controls; on graduates’ own learning attitudes; on accepting
responsibility; and on identifying what opportunities there are and decisions to be made. Organisations may still manage the availability of events requiring graduates’ decisions and may still support graduates as their self-directedness evolves. The self-directed component of the protean and boundaryless scales has close links with self-management, the new graduate attribute. In further addressing graduates’ career agency, their career attitude and personal values were compared with their levels of VD and indicate that graduates have strong personal and ethical values yet they are aware that freedom to raise issues is based upon security in the organisation and their dependence on salary. This was somewhat compensated for by knowing that where they had raised an ethical issue, they recognised that it was another’s responsibility to deal with it.

This research has contributed to debates about the empirical measurement of protean and boundaryless career attitudes. It complements previous research conducted by Briscoe et al (2006) and further empirical application of the use of their instrument to measure protean and boundaryless career attitudes by using a mixed methods approach. This research has added to the empirical testing of these concepts in the following ways: Protean orientation was explored qualitatively, especially in the discussion of the attribute self-management, which was one of the skills graduates added. Protean orientation was also discussed in terms of being self-aware which, combined with graduates’ reflection on their career achievement in the interviews, contributes to being self-directed. Self-direction is the strongest feature of all four sub-scales of the protean and boundaryless career scales and is discussed more fully later. More revisions to these instruments would be beneficial for future research especially addressing the periods before graduation and after transition in a longitudinal study commencing with a pre-graduation section. Questions could address graduates’ expectations about their careers, the types of activities they anticipate, their awareness of their KSOQs, how they may use them and some analysis of personal and external factors that affect their protean and boundaryless
attitudes. The impact of external factors on careers and boundaryless mindset (BMS) was discussed in the interviews for this research. These external factors include organisational and individual approaches to managing careers, facilitating dual careers and different organisational and hierarchical structures. Other aspects added in the interviews referred to organisational mobility preference (OMP) and include: loyalty, a reciprocal interest in graduates’ careers between graduates and university and graduates and employers, future development, matching expectations and opportunities and events to facilitate and value the transfer of graduate attributes further contribute to OMP.

**Graduates’ involvement in further professional development**

Graduates’ participation in further development was examined to assess levels of self-directedness in their careers. Findings summarised in Chapter 5 Tables 22 and 23 indicate a level of self-directedness and self-management. Personal career choices and the search for self-fulfilment are unifying elements of careers (Hall, 2004; Hall & Moss, 1998). Indications are that more graduates were engaged in further development activities for career purposes than for non-career purposes, with the exception of professional memberships, which may be more relevant for networking opportunities, future career purposes and career aspirations. These results also suggest that self-directedness is critical in evaluating what other options are available for graduates’ future careers.

These results also indicate that in terms of further development activities internal to the organisation which were typically initiated by a manager, most external training and development activities were self-initiated. These results suggest that graduates are sufficiently career-orientated to pursue further development. In addition, these results suggest a need for the continuation of graduates’ development of attributes as a useful complement to professional knowledge. Initial indications are, that at the time of data collection, it might have been too early for graduates to consider further studies as these participants had only been in
employment for up to 18 months, or that they were satisfied for the present with their current
degree achievements, or that they were overwhelmed by the demands of work and their GDP,
if applicable, or that they were satisfied by having a degree and a job.

Organisational mobility preference (Briscoe et al., 2006) develops in learning from
work experience opportunities at university, from being employed in many departments and in
using the connections made. Such learning may develop a positive attitude to work where
graduates could demonstrate their value to organisations, as well as the extent to which they
are values-driven. Career progress and future plans were discussed alongside the economic
context and other life factors preventing mobility. The number of jobs graduates anticipated
having over the next 10 years also reflected this, suggesting low organisational mobility
preference. Some of these participants suggested that any moves could be within the same
organisation. Thus, boundaryless mindset and organisation mobility preference require a more
stable context. This analysis of graduates’ boundaryless mindset, organisational mobility
preferences and how these affect their intention to stay with their current employer are
identified as factors that shape the role of graduates’ career agency in their transition to
professional employment.

If graduates are to take a more proactive role in their career development using the new
graduate attributes, it may have a significant impact on the content of GDPs, the role and
contribution of the HRM function, front line managers, mentors and transition mentors in
supporting graduates as they learn to manage their careers. Proactivity requires an awareness
and readiness to take up career pathways and control of careers that is enabled by opportunities
to transfer, use and add value to their attributes. Readiness may also be attributable to the
careful sequencing of opportunities for graduate professionals to enable them to take control
of their careers and apply their attributes. This would suggest an improved process for transfer
of mutually recognised attributes (Jackson, 2016) in a GDP or orientation accompanied with a
gradual increase in self-directedness. Features that determine protean and boundaryless career attitudes are implied in the interviews and survey questions. Interim findings in this research raise doubts about the validity of survey questions used by Briscoe et al., for assessing levels of boundaryless mindset, which is variable and dependent on economic and political factors. Suggestions to refine the scales are discussed in the next chapter.

**Careers preparation at university**

Useful data on graduates’ perceptions of careers preparation at university came from the interviews. Many graduates did not appear to realise the value of what they did at university until later. Graduates said they appreciated practical assignments, but recognised there was more need for analysis of problems, providing solutions and an understanding of what was expected in employment. However, the limitations of university were accepted by graduates. They understood that how they apply their attributes was considered to be up to them and could be complicated by relationships with mentors, supervisors or managers who had their own perceptions of graduate attributes. This might be resolved if the ‘use of others’ during transition e.g. external mentors and placement personnel, was considered and they had a clear insight into graduates, their attributes, and how the graduate attributes profile might be used by employers.

Comments from graduates about getting the most out of university included: being encouraged to do internships, present themselves professionally and enthusiastically, manage relationships, and manage situations, degrees should be more vocational with a work placement to get interaction with the workplace, and that university experience depends on the person.

Although most participants said that university had prepared them for work, there were some interesting perspectives that surfaced in the research. These perspectives from graduates follow Jackson’s (2015) suggestion (albeit for undergraduates) that at university they must become ‘career aware’ (p. 4) and develop skills such as self-management and understand the labour market. Graduates’ perspectives included accepting that university experiences and their
transferability depend on how undergraduates participate at university and that organisations want graduates to show how they have differentiated themselves. Such differentiation could emerge from prior experience of applying graduate attributes. One practical implication for the comment about ‘making the most out of university’ is that it should be conveyed to future graduates along with any other advice graduates can provide to current undergraduates. The practical implications of these responses will be discussed in the next chapter.

**The proposed concept of a learning career**

A new concept of the ‘learning career’ is proposed in this thesis. This concept emerged from examining the nature of careers in contemporary employment and analysing the applicability of some careers theories and concepts for today’s graduate in light of the data generated by the research.

The concept of the learning career draws from the transitions, graduate attributes and careers literature. After applying and analysing graduates’ early careers experiences, the learning career is proposed in this thesis as a potential careers concept which makes a contribution to careers theory. The ‘learning career’ is defined as follows: *The learning career is an evolving process of self-directedness, continually reflecting on, articulating and transferring attributes in a wide range of professional career experiences in diverse employment contexts.* The concepts which have informed the development of the learning career include concepts such as the intelligent careers concept of ‘knowing how’ ‘knowing whom’ and ‘knowing why’ (Arthur et al., 1995). This intelligent career concept has been a valuable one, yet there are some limitations to this formulation, such as that the process of ‘knowing’ is continuous – once a graduate knows how, whom and why, there may be more to know and learn as they develop their career.
The concept of the ‘learning career’ also borrows from the literature on continuous learning (Eby et al., 2003), which refers to a continuous evolving process of applying graduate attributes. The concept of using attributes as assets (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Parker et al., 2009) also underlies the ‘learning career’ concept, as graduates’ knowledge of their SOQs and how they can be transferred (Cranmer, 2006) and recontextualised, is a continuous process.

The concept of KSOQs as assets (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Parker et al., 2009) suggests that value can be added by continual investment; for example, from further development. The boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994), implies that graduates may experience employment in many organisations and must learn to cope with transfer. In addition, frequent changes, and different approaches, to careers also suggest a strong emphasis on learning. Finally, also of value in an emergent careers concept is the protean careers concept (Briscoe et al., 2006) whereby graduates change by learning, through self-awareness and by becoming directed in their careers as well as making decisions regarding their careers.

This new ‘learning career’ concept makes connections between findings of this research around graduates’ awareness of their attributes and their agentic role (Tams & Arthur, 2010) and career attitudes (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Findings from graduates’ reflections during the interviews provide evidence that graduates do not have sufficient awareness of their career attitudes. Similarly, findings suggest that graduates have only marginal awareness of their attributes and how to apply them and manage their careers. This is of great practical importance as graduates need to be able to make decisions to better align themselves with professional employment opportunities that suit their values. Growing interest in career agency (Duberley et al., 2006; Hall, 2002; Tams & Arthur, 2010) further highlights the need for a new concept such as learning career. If graduates become more self-aware about their career attitudes and
learn to take an agentic role in their careers, they may become responsible for their further learning generally. The concept of the learning career encompasses this learning process.

Data from this research shows that graduates’ ‘learning career’ is facilitated by opportunities to apply their attributes over a diverse and challenging range of tasks in organisations with either traditional or alternative approaches to careers. However, as some argue, graduates may learn less in alternative careers (Mallon & Walton, 2005), this could mean that graduates may not have those opportunities, in their new work setting, to apply their attributes in order to perform their work effectively. Graduates could learn to recognise this and become more proactive and self-directed in negotiating opportunities to apply their attributes and learn from this. This proactive approach of ‘mindful transfer’ (Jackson, 2016, p.200) of graduates’ attributes, if encouraged by universities and employers, would put graduates on, as Jackson (2016) suggests, their ‘high road’ to their careers. If graduates have the opportunity to apply their attributes over a range of tasks as well as in broader careers and multiple employers, they are likely to become more expert in managing their careers over time.

Therefore, the new concept of the ‘learning career’ extends the careers literature by drawing from other careers concepts and from the learning experiences of new graduates, then by creating a concept which integrates transition experiences, the applicability of graduate attributes and graduates’ continuous career experiences. The ‘learning career’ concept will be helpful for researchers of careers and of graduate attributes in that the concept has emerged from graduates’ perspectives and reflects the challenges they face in their first transition from university to professional employment. The application and empirical testing of this new concept presents a valuable future research opportunity which may benefit not only graduates but all professional employees.
Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the findings of a complex multi-method research to address graduates’ perceptions of their attributes for shaping their careers when making their first career transition from university to professional employment. The original problems identified in the literature review included the lack of graduates’ perspectives on transition; their graduate attributes and their value; and the nature of graduates’ career attitudes during the crucial first transition to professional employment.

Graduate attributes contribute to a successful transition in varying ways, but is an under-researched issue especially from their perspective. A problem identified in the literature review is that there is no agreement on the composition of SOQs and their relationship with knowledge. Graduate attributes identified in this research became the overarching term for KSOQs required by employers. Further, there are differences between SOQs required by employers and those developed by universities. The findings show that this leads to uncertainty for graduates and affects the success of their transition. There was, therefore, a need to research SOQs from a graduate-centred perspective based on their actual experiences.

The discussion of SOQs in the card-sort enabled graduates to recognise and transfer KSOQs and their perceived value to employers. As SOQs may represent factors other than knowledge that make graduates unique, the opportunities to apply, transfer and further develop all KSOQs are important. KSOQs were discussed with reference to graduate attributes profiles, which most universities have and which are little recognised by graduates and employers. The most significant feature of this research on KSOQs as graduate attributes is the further refinement of much-debated skills and the more amorphous ‘other qualities’ into six new graduates’ attributes.

Once all graduate attributes had been identified and reformulated as ‘new’ graduate attributes in this research, issues emerged about how they should be transferred into

267
employment. Graduates’ ability to transfer learning from graduate attributes depends on how they apply and value their attributes, as well as being able to learn from them. This ability to transfer attributes also depends on employers being able to encourage their application in workplace projects. Upon reflection by participants, graduate attributes were identified as being valuable to their career success. The findings from the interviews suggested that graduates had not given SOQs much thought; mostly focusing on the value of knowledge from their degrees in gaining employment. This indicates that some current literature does not really capture what graduate attributes are, or the part they all play in transition success. This is a limitation to this research as all components of these attributes, i.e. all KSOQs are of value to graduates’ transition success and career agency, in different ways and therefore more research is suggested perhaps on how they are used following transition.

Problems further identified in this research include graduates’ levels of awareness of changes to careers, their role in the management of their careers and the value of graduate attributes to their careers, especially during the first transition. These issues emerged in the interviews and graduates’ reflections about what a career means to them and their awareness of external factors that affect their careers. An instrument, developed to empirically test the two careers concepts; protean and boundaryless mindset, was used to assess levels of career attitudes and to establish what contributed to transition success. From the analysis of the responses to the items on the instrument, graduates’ high boundaryless mindset scores were discussed, as were their levels of mobility between organisations and different careers.

Despite graduates’ high protean and boundaryless scores there was a surprisingly limited relationship between protean and boundaryless attitude and transition success, suggesting that either the items in the sub-scales, SD, VD, BMS and OMP, of the instrument need to be more in touch with the reality of transition, or they need to be adapted to determine graduates’ success in their early careers. The results indicated, however, some connection
between items on the boundaryless and protean sub-scales of the instrument but that they may not be a valid means of calculating early career attitudes. Also, indicated in the results, for example, is the suggestion that ultimate individual career agency in terms of protean and boundaryless attitude needs to allow for the role and agency of employers and others in supporting the protean and boundaryless graduate. Graduates’ high scores for self-directedness in the protean and boundaryless sub-scale SD are discussed alongside the new graduate attribute self-management. These aspects of this research are discussed with regard to establishing graduates’ levels of ownership of their careers. Although in this research the protean and boundaryless scales in the survey were complemented with a qualitative component of interviews, they could be adjusted for new graduates as they are a special group of employees and the scales are too extreme in assuming individual graduate career agency. Inputting a qualitative component, as was undertaken in this research, could assess the role of employers and universities and identify modifications to the instrument.

There are several significant contributions to come out of this research overall. First, although much research exists on these important concepts individually, their combined focus from graduates’ perspectives of their experiences is unique. Second, the empirical testing of graduates’ career attitudes conducted in this research contributes to the limited existing literature on graduates’ career attitudes. Third, this research contributes to knowledge and has practical implications for graduates, employers and universities. Another major contribution of this research is in consolidating the three themes of transition, attributes and careers and in analysing these concepts in terms of their relevance for graduates working in contemporary organisations. The proposed ‘learning career’ concept, emerged from this research and combines the theoretical concepts about learning to manage transition and learning to transfer graduate attributes and learning to manage careers. This concept and its relevance to graduates’ changing careers, thereby adds value and empirical weight to this research and contributes to
current research about graduate transition, attributes careers and the current topic of employability. An important implication for theory includes the need for more empirical testing of graduates’ boundaryless and protean attitudes and possible revisions to the instrument. The next chapter addresses the implications of these findings for graduates, universities and employers.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings that address the research questions exploring: graduates’ perceptions of their attributes for shaping their careers when making their first career transition from university to professional employment. The chapter’s first three sections address the themes of transition, graduate attributes and careers, focusing on: how graduates negotiate the transition to professional employment; the value of graduate attributes during this transition and the role of graduates’ career agency during the transition to professional employment?

The chapter then outlines the practical contributions and the implications of this research for graduates, employers and universities. The chapter concludes by summarising the limitations of this research, and outlining future directions for research. For consistency, this chapter refers to interview participants as well as survey respondents as ‘participants’.

Summary of key findings and notable contributions

Evidence indicates that graduates have limited experience of the fast-changing nature of work apart from any prior work experience they may have. Research also shows that graduates’ expectations are changing and may differ from those of previous generations and from those of employers. For instances, graduates may prefer employment mobility, travel opportunities and autonomy to higher pay, job security and status. There are also differences between the SOQs that employers want and those focused on by universities. Although the three themes of transition, attributes and careers are interconnected, they are separated here for the purpose of analytical clarity.
Chapter 2 identified limited qualitative research on the transition experiences of graduates. Although, Scott’s (2014) discussion of skills addresses the first-year transition period, other recent literature addresses transition over a range of periods up to five years (Jackson 2016; Messum et al.). This thesis identified the crucial transition period for graduates as their first 12 to 18 months of employment. The literature summarised in Appendix 2 focuses on transition experiences, careers interventions and the use of skills in the first five years of employment. There is general agreement that successful transition is vital for graduates and for their employing organisations and that this would reflect the efforts of universities in developing graduate attributes.

This thesis contributes to the under-researched area of graduate transitions by focusing on the value of graduate attributes during this transition and how they assist with graduates’ careers – from the graduates’ own perspectives, rather than that of universities or employers. Participants who reported having had a successful transition, with opportunities to demonstrate their attributes soon after beginning work, felt they had more ownership of their career success than those who did not have such opportunities. Hence the research has the potential to inform graduates, universities and employers about how best to achieve the transfer of graduate attributes into the workplace (Duberley et al., 2006) and possibly assist the development of a clear process for modelling skills transfer (Jackson, 2016). In particular, the interviews conducted as part of this research have illuminated new graduates’ perceptions of their sense of responsibility for their careers.

Attributes

Most research on and analysis of SOQs has focused on curriculum issues, assessment and graduate profiles. However, limited extant literature focuses on the experiences and perspectives of graduates themselves, particularly during transition from university to work,
although there are some notable exceptions (for example, AAGE, 2014; Salas-Velasco, 2007; Schomburg and Teichler, 2007; Scott, 2014). The current study has therefore filled an important gap in knowledge about graduates’ experiences of the value of their attributes. This research has found that the most authentic application of graduate attributes occurs within workplace experiences such as internships placements while at university, in prior employment, and in orientation and GDP activities, during the transition to early professional employment. This research therefore contributes to the existing limited discussion in Australia about graduates’ perspectives of the transition from university to professional employment. The practical importance of these findings is that if employers want to maximise what graduates have to offer, a higher awareness of, and agreement on graduate attributes is needed by graduates, universities and employers. All importantly, employers (and graduates) need to understand how graduate attributes can be more effectively transferred into the workplace.

In particular, the literature has established that universities and employers have somewhat different perspectives regarding graduate attributes. Notable in this context is AAGE’s finding that only six percent felt their degree made them ‘very prepared’ for their current job; the majority, three-fifths, felt ‘reasonably prepared’, and rated their level of preparedness either 5 or 6 out of 7, with 7 being fully prepared (Australian Association of Graduate Employers, 2014). The current study has shown that graduates report differences in the ranking of SOQs in order of importance to them, and how they perceive employers rank those same SOQs. As a consequence, the lists of graduate SOQs used by universities may not be appropriate, and therefore the most useful attributes may not be acquired by graduates, nor valued and developed appropriately by employers.

This thesis suggested different approach to formulating SOQs, and has identified six ‘new’ graduate attributes based on the experiences of graduates. This thesis therefore simplifies the current lengthy lists of varying graduate attributes, initially identifying 18 commonly
mentioned SOQs – and their varying application by universities and employers. The ‘new’ graduate attributes may give a more workable set of concepts for future researchers to test. These are: cognitive processing, interpersonal attributes, intrapersonal attributes, self-management, curiosity and ethical behaviour. This is a shorter, more graduate-centred way of formulating SOQs. This research found that graduates who made a successful transition to professional employment ranked themselves high on cognitive processing, intrapersonal and interpersonal attributes. Another contribution is that it may be inappropriate to separate knowledge from SOQs, and so this research has combined KSOQs as components of graduate attributes rather than separating knowledge from SOQs. This is important because while graduates may have similar knowledge from their degrees their unique way of demonstrating their knowledge and ability at SOQs in employment differentiates them to other graduates. In focusing on all clearly identified KSOQs as graduate attributes in practical assignments and work placements for example, universities may enable graduates to feel more prepared and have greater confidence in the value of their attributes as they negotiate their first transition to their careers.

**Careers**

An important set of findings in this thesis concerns how graduates’ transference of their attributes to the workplace shapes their career agency (Tams & Arthur 2010). Key research addresses graduates’ employability issues and careers (Jackson, 2015; Royle, 2015; Scott, 2014; Tolentino et al.), employment and salary related outcomes of degrees (Graduate Careers Australia, 2013) and careers in changing organisations generally (Purcell & Elias, 2004). In particular, this thesis has empirically tested the prevalence of protean and boundaryless career attitudes (Briscoe et al., 2006) among new graduates. Relationships between the ‘new’ graduate attribute ‘self-management’ and the protean sub-scale SD were explored. This research has therefore used qualitative findings in order to suggest an amendment to career instruments such
as that used by Briscoe et al., or to create a new scale as suggested by Tolentino et al., (2014) and Praksova et al., (2015) specifically for graduates about their career attitudes and expectations before graduation and then after transition. Graduates’ scores, which are all above mid-point, with SD the highest and VD the lowest, indicate that participants have high protean and high boundaryless attitudes; they are SD and marginally VD. The importance of this is that graduates are aware of the need to change to respond to employment circumstances, and further, that their ability to do so could depend on their self-directed attitude.

**Practical contributions and implications**

The research has a number of practical implications for graduates, employers and universities. In setting out these implications, it is fully acknowledged that there are other factors which contribute to assisting graduates’ first career transition, such as an understanding of the nature of professional identity (Holmes, 2001) and the limited extent of awareness of university graduate attributes profiles, what graduate attributes are, and how they have been described by universities in their graduate profiles and embedded in students’ learning.

**For graduates**

The value of graduates’ prior experience and the importance of opportunities to transfer attributes is significant. Organisations want graduates to show how they have differentiated themselves in work-related experiences inside and outside of university and organisations (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009, p. 1543). A practical implication of this is that graduates need to learn to maximise all such experiences, and realise that transferability of their attributes may depend on how they are developed at university. This could be facilitated by a clearer process, following Jackson (2016), commencing with the development of curricula and experiences at university which enable graduates to reflect on their attributes and prior experiences, foster transferability and better differentiate themselves. This may also enable graduates to recognise
the immediate and long term value of such experiences, and knowhow to transfer attributes into changing employment circumstances and different organisations. Also, included in such a process would be a focus on identifying and developing career attitudes.

Graduates would continue with their development during transition. Employers could arrange opportunities for graduate professionals to gradually take control of their careers and apply the ‘new’ graduate attributes, particularly interpersonal attributes. Universities and organisations therefore need to know how to provide opportunities to develop relational connections (Motulsky, 2010), and show graduates how to ‘use others’ such as transition mentors or organisational mentors and placement personnel to assist them to showcase their attributes and ease their transfer. Such personnel could encourage graduates to reflect on their careers and also develop self-directedness, which is a component of boundaryless and protean attitudes and similar to the ‘new’ graduate attribute of self-management. Also, as graduates expect to move between employers, non-organisational transition mentors may be useful to help ease the transition during uncertainty, or until graduates are in a position to manage fully their own transitions.

An implication of this research for graduate careers agency is that graduates should start contemplating their careers and expectations much earlier in their degrees. Graduates should also reflect on their prior work, seek GDPs especially those which facilitate skills or attributes development, particularly self-management, and consider the impact of such development on their levels of loyalty and commitment. Self-management, incorporating self-directedness, could include negotiating the ‘graduateness’ and levels of work (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2010), achieving higher qualifications, networking and showing ambition, being visible and having future potential. Thus, those graduates who are proactive in identifying and seeking out what needs to be done, to help them further their careers as opposed to reviewing unfolding events, have an easier transition and are more self-directed in their careers.
Findings from this research indicate that while graduates are aware of how their capacity to demonstrate their attributes can distinguish them from other graduates, there is still scope for more self-awareness and self-management of their careers. This has practical implications for universities who need to understand the changing nature of careers and changing organisations’ approaches to careers develop more effectively graduates’ self-awareness and career attitudes. This would enable employers to better understand the attributes and expectations of graduates and facilitate their transfer into professional employment.

For universities

Results from the survey provide interesting implications for practice in universities. The ‘new’ graduate attributes, specifically interpersonal, intrapersonal and cognitive processing, can distinguish between participants who are more successful with transition and those who are unsure. A key practical contribution is that in refining the new graduate attributes universities can focus on activities to assist graduates to develop their new graduate attributes by encouraging reviews of their prior experiences and activities in their degree programs. Subsequently, graduates’ capacity to demonstrate their attributes can be reviewed by graduates, employers, external or transition mentors upon transition and when opportunities occur to demonstrate them.

Graduates identified the low visibility and limited real applicability of universities’ graduate attributes profiles. A practical implication for universities is to improve the awareness and value of a visible, meaningful, workable graduate attributes profile, using the six ‘new’ graduate attributes formulated here. Graduates’ high scores for self-directedness and ‘new’ graduate attribute, self-management, suggest what might be key features of a new graduate attributes profile. Such a profile may assist graduates appreciate the value and workplace applicability of what they do at university.
Practical contributions from the findings also include the importance of graduates’
advice to future graduates. Graduates appreciated that universities prepared them well,
especially if lecturers had workplace experience, connections with employers, if assignments
were more practical and work-related, and if work experience was available with potential
employers. However, more understanding of what is expected by employers is needed by
university staff to inform and prepare graduates. Such career preparation could commence at
careers seminars at the start of degree programs and introducing ‘transition mentors’ to students
while at university.

For employers

Prior experiences with current employers were low for most participants, which may
be attributed to a downturn in the economy at the time of data collection. Practical implications,
suggested above, for more prior experience strengthen an argument for employers to provide
more purposeful experiences to those they are considering recruiting, a strategy used by only
one employer in this research. If universities undertake reviews of attributes developed during
prior experiences with graduates, these could be continued later by employers to reinforce the
value of prior learning and work experiences. These reviews could be undertaken by transition
mentors working simultaneously with universities and employers.

Another practical implication of this research concerns the finding that experiences
after the transition to employment, such as the ‘reward’ of extra challenges and learning
opportunities, are crucial in developing graduate attributes and can facilitate the transfer of
learning from their degrees. This could possibly resolve some graduates’ concerns about the
‘graduateness’ of job tasks, and some negative concerns about the graduate ‘tag’ by graduates,
their managers and their colleagues that suggest graduates are not yet capable. Such
experiences could promote transfer of graduate attributes; however, they depend on certain
characteristics of organisations (Jackson, 2014) such as organisational recognition of the ‘new’ attributes and graduates’ career attitudes.

The card-sort was important in enabling participants to share their tacit knowledge of experiences in the workplace, and to review the use of their attributes during these experiences. There are implications for employers in how they present opportunities for graduates to demonstrate their attributes in GDP activities and other professional learning opportunities. There are also implications for employers in recognising that the ‘new’ graduate attributes contribute in different ways to measures of transition success and can distinguish between those graduates who are more successful with transition and those who are unsure. Employers could recognise the different ways in which the ‘new’ attributes contribute to job tasks and graduates’ career pathways. This information about the ‘new’ graduate attributes would be especially useful because this research identified that differing career patterns exist in traditional and contemporary environments, suggesting that graduates should be aware of potentially different approaches to careers. When graduates scored their ability at SOQs, their scores were not at the maximum. This suggests that graduates are open to further development of their attributes for their careers. This information could be relayed back from employers to universities and graduates by, for example, transition mentors.

Although all ‘new’ graduate attributes contribute to becoming a professional, one implication is for more attention to be given to ‘self-management’, at university and in employment. Self-management is similar to the sub-scale ‘self-directedness’ in the protean and boundaryless literature; graduates identified it as probably the most valuable new graduate attribute. Those graduates who scored highly on self-management, also regarded themselves as professionals, suggesting the need for opportunities to demonstrate self-management and self-directedness.
Also within the protean and boundaryless scales is VD which is similar to the new attribute ‘ethical behaviour’. Graduates high scores in VD suggest strong personal and ethical values. Graduates were aware that freedom to raise issues depended on their security in the organisation and was somewhat compensated for by knowing that it was another’s role to deal with ethical issues. Another practical implication is that employers should determine levels of VD in graduates, and clarify roles and expectations around graduates raising ethical issues and applying their values.

Further implications concern graduates’ ‘use of connections’, which is a component of the new graduate attribute ‘interpersonal’; specifically, graduates commented on the desirability of phasing out, rather than sudden loss, of the support network. This supports an important practical contribution regarding the creation of transition mentors, mentioned earlier, who could have experience of university provision and organisations’ needs and align them with graduates. These findings regarding the importance of transition mentors, concur with Jackson’s (2016) model for skills transfer. Jackson’s model (p. 203) included workplace characteristics enabling skills transfer, particularly peer support, role models, mentors and buddy systems which have all been discussed here by graduates leading to the development of the idea of transition mentors. This support is valuable in times of diminishing job security and increasing worker mobility (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009, p. 1552). Employers may benefit from better awareness of ‘new’ graduate attributes and graduates’ attitudes to their careers, thereby enhancing the interconnectedness between employers and universities; again, this could be facilitated by transition mentors. Such support could be phased out as graduates develop self-management and SD.

If graduates are to take a more proactive role in their career development and develop interpersonal behaviour with the ‘use and support of others’, this may affect the role and contribution of the HRM function, front line managers, mentors and transition mentors in
supporting graduates. Such roles and contributions involve university careers events in reviewing and clarifying graduates’ and organisational expectations about careers, then later at interview about the value of prior experiences, the process of change, the transfer of attributes and what to expect when working for the organisation and during a GDP. Such strategies would contribute to minimising the misalignment of expectations, maximising graduates’ purpose in managing their careers, establishing an initial career path and graduates maximizing their past to navigate any barriers to their career.

Theoretical contribution

This research has made a number of theoretical contributions which add to a better conceptual understanding of graduates’ needs during transition and their attitudes towards their careers. As Sutton and Straw (1995) suggest; although new ideas which arise from qualitative research may not necessarily create a new theory, those ideas are as important as new theories. Accordingly, the theoretical contribution of this research is in drawing insights into and enriching current theories about graduate transitions, attributes and careers and in the creation of a new careers concept. Thereby, in this research, three bodies of literature have been integrated to provide the theoretical context for the research. First, literature on careers theories; second, literature on career agency; and third, literature on graduate attributes concepts, specifically KSOQs have been interwoven with the purpose of developing new ideas with respect to graduates’ transition experiences. Recently Coetze (2014) sought to develop a theoretical framework for attributes required for successful transition to employment (p.899) but does not necessarily refer to careers. Also the lack of a framework for attributes was mentioned (Collet et al., 2015) attended to in recent research (Jackson, 2016, p. 203) providing a useful model guide development of a framework in this thesis. In light of these approaches and encouragement; the three bodies of literature were interwoven with key definitions in the
concept map developed in Figure 2. Subsequently, a theoretical framework was developed and was presented in Figure 4. Such new knowledge has implications for universities and employers about the experiences of graduates during transition, with potential impacts on the practices of both.

This research has contributed to transition theory, by focusing on graduates’ perspectives of their transition. This has been achieved by applying Bridges’ (1991, 1994, 2009) transition model, Allan’s (2015) concept of liminality and aspects of Royle’s model of career evaluation and success. Contributions have been made to the discussion on transition with regard to the impact on graduates’ malleable identity (Holmes, 2001) of the ‘new’ graduate attributes and the part they play in shaping graduates with different abilities, career attitudes and experiences. This research also contributes to the literature in its deep analysis of graduates’ views of their transition from graduate to professional, the use of their attributes (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2010) and the challenges to transition, deploying the literature on attributes and career management in a more integrated way than in previous research.

The literature on graduate attributes is wide and multi-faceted mostly focusing on lists used by universities (Barrie, 2006), one or two specific skills that employers need (Jackson, 2014; Messum et al., 2016; Scott, 2014) this thesis had a particular focus guided by its research questions and its graduate-centred perspective. The thesis therefore makes a key contribution to the literature with its findings on the six ‘new’ graduate attributes from the perspective of graduates on what attributes are used and how they use them. The literature review identified the skills most commonly referred to, identified that there were OQs separate to skills, placed knowledge as a graduate attribute alongside SOQs, and removed the divide between these SOQs. In particular, this research has suggested a new way of formulating graduate attributes based on data from graduates’ experiences in employment. This leads into new and possibly productive future research directions from what is a somewhat confused debate between what
employers want (Rigby et al., 2009) and what universities offer (Barrie, 2006), to a graduate-centred perspective. The rich and very useful theoretical debates about careers (Hager & Hodgkinson, 2009; Hall, 2002) and career agency (Tams & Arthur, 2010) have focused on conceptual definitions in response to rapidly changing times that impact on the world of work. The findings of this thesis, therefore, have added to the limited literature that uses protean orientation and boundaryless career instruments (Briscoe et al., 2006) with respect to graduates’ career agency and attitudes.

Overall, therefore, the thesis has drawn from three areas of literature – transition, attributes and careers – to understand more holistically graduates’ transition to the workplace. This research also adopted primarily a management perspective, viewing graduates as a key human resource, as opposed to a psychology or education perspective. Finally, as indicated in the preceding chapter and in this chapter, the research has led to a new careers concept, namely the ‘learning career’, which is defined as: an evolving process of self-directedness, continually recognising, articulating and transferring attributes in a wide range of professional careers experiences in diverse employment contexts. The application and empirical testing of this new careers concept represents a valuable future research opportunity.

**Limitations of the research**

Delimitations, such as omitting university and employer perspectives and avoiding an education-only focus, were addressed in Chapter 1, Introduction. Limitations must be judged against a standard of ‘perfect’ research practice (which is rarely if ever achieved), and what is possible within the time frame of a PhD thesis. For example, the research participants were not a random sample, but rather (as discussed in Chapter 3, Methodology and Methods) a convenience sample from the public-sector and other large employers of graduates. The sample was based on the initial willingness of a public-sector organisation to be involved (when
universities themselves were reluctant to allow access to their graduates due to ‘oversurveying’). Various adjustments had to be made to include non-public-sector organisations when participation was lower than expected because of the retirement of a key gatekeeper who was very senior in the organisation. A related limitation was that most participants were employed in the public service. The public service recruitment freeze may have influenced responses (in relation to questions about protean and boundaryless attitudes, for example). Further, the public-sector is a particular organisational context that differs markedly from other types of organisations, and this may limit the generalisability of the findings. In addition, most participants were engaged in graduate development programs, which recruit only the top-ranking graduates (as judged by employers), so the findings cannot necessarily be generalised to the larger population of graduates. Another limitation is that this research was confined to graduates in Australia although there is much interest in graduate transition internationally. There is therefore an opportunity to explore and compare the transition experiences of graduates starting work in other geographical areas.

**Future directions for research**

The field of graduate transition research is rich and varied, with much potential for future research. For example, a similar study might focus on the concerns of this thesis but from a management perspective; that is, managers’ perceptions of graduates’ transition to employment, graduate attributes, and graduates’ career attitudes, and the implications of all these issues for graduates’ early experiences in the workplace. Studies could explicitly compare different types of graduates, and different contexts: for instance, the experiences of graduates in a GDP with those who are not; graduates in small and medium-sized enterprises with those in large organisations; graduates who found professional employment with those who did not; and graduates in different disciplines. There are also alternative participant recruitment
avenues; for example, via university careers services, as many provide services to graduates for a period following graduation. Shifting the perspective to the university, studies could investigate whether current university graduate profiles are considered appropriate and, if not, whether the suggested ‘new’ graduate attributes would be more useful. Shifting the focus to the organisation, useful future research could include rich qualitative studies of whether graduates’ workplaces provide opportunities to enhance and develop their graduate attributes fully. Such research would include exploring the provision of sufficient challenging task opportunities, and what those might be; and the use of different types of mentors and mentoring arrangements. Some of this research might empirically test the ‘new’ graduate attributes developed in this thesis.

The findings also raise a number of questions about methods currently used to measure protean and boundaryless career attitudes, particularly for assessing boundaryless attitude, which is variable and depends on economic and political factors. Using these findings, a revised measuring instrument could be developed specifically for graduates before and after transition. Future research could focus on only the SD sub-scale that has close links with self-management, one of the ‘new’ graduate attributes. Qualitative methods such as interviews could complement future uses of the measuring instrument and provide an in-depth understanding of the particular context in which it is applied.

**Conclusion**

In answer to the research question, graduates’ negotiation of their transition from university to employment presents them with significant challenges, due in part to tensions between employers, universities and graduates regarding recognition, value and transfer of graduate attributes. The value of graduate attributes to graduates’ careers has been explored empirically with graduates and from their perspective. Transfer of attributes is a particular
challenge as graduates recognise they are partly equipped by their university and other prior experiences to make the transition to employment, but not yet fully able to deploy what they know without structured and well-managed opportunities to do so. Graduates, universities and employers recognise that having a degree, therefore, is not enough.

Graduates are also not practiced – nor could they yet be – in how to manage their careers. Graduates show a reflective awareness of career management issues but not of the varying organisational contexts and attitudes to careers and career management. It is initially unclear to graduates how they will be managed and who is responsible for some of the career decisions that they will face. An important finding is that graduates who are proactive in recognising opportunities for the transfer of attributes in their new employment, and in initially using others, such as transition mentors, are able to shape their careers more meaningfully than those who are not.

In summary, graduates’ ease of transition depends on a number of factors. These include effective processes for cumulative learning and transference of learning from university and other prior experiences; in other words, recontextualising their learning. As a tool to help further understanding of these matters, this study has recast current KSOQs into the ‘new’ graduate attributes. The concept of the learning career presented here has implications for collaborative and continual learning by all stakeholders – graduates, universities and employers – to help us better conceptualise, both theoretically and practically, graduates’ transition to professional employment.

Graduate transition is more complex and nuanced than universities and employers realise. Graduates bring important attributes to their careers, but have gaps in their attributes and in their application of them. This thesis contributes to knowledge in this area and challenges the prevailing hegemony around KSOQs and graduate attributes and, graduate attributes and careers. This thesis throws new light on graduates’ early career experiences and career
attitudes. The findings will hopefully contribute to better practice in universities and in organisations that will ease this crucial transition for graduates.
References


O’Donnell, R. (2014). What do Graduate Attributes have to do with Political Economy? In K. S. Schroeder & L. Chester (Eds.), *Challenging the Orthodoxy: Reflections on Frank
Stilwell's Contribution to Political Economy (pp. 57-76). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.


presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, Melbourne, 28 Nov – 2 Dec.


Appendices
Appendix 1 Definitions and explanation of concepts used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept and definition</th>
<th>Source and explanation of definition</th>
<th>Page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Professional employment = I refer to general professional employment as professional employment that requires a degree</td>
<td>Normally associated with key professions such as engineering but this definition created here for this thesis applies generically.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Knowledge = the standard curriculum content of the university degree that helps individuals prosper in situations of multiple interpretations and creative problem solving</td>
<td>This definition is a combination of knowledge defined as to others for use (Baartman &amp; de Bruijn, 2011; Burton, Westen, &amp; Kowalski, 2009; Hillage &amp; Pollard, 1999) and defined as helping individuals to prosper in situations of multiple interpretations and creative problem solving (Bird, 1994; Nonaka, 1991).</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Skills = demonstrable generic abilities, alongside knowledge, which are developed through life experiences then through university experiences, then transferred into the workplace.</td>
<td>Defined variously as generic skills (Jackson, 2015, p.13), core skills, key skills and employability skills (Holmes, 2001, p.111), Mayer 1992. Dearing 1997. The definition created here represents changing times and perspectives of the use and value of skills</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other qualities = the more amorphous characteristics complementary to knowledge and skills, which can be managed by graduates in their careers (Bridgstock, 2009).</td>
<td>Combined from call for alternative conceptualisation of ‘graduate attributes’ (Burton et al., 2009, p.433). Traits are defined as emotional, cognitive and behavioural (Barrie, 2006), attitudes (Blanchard &amp; Thacker, 2013, p. 480), personality and personal qualities of graduates (Bowden et al., 2002) and Bridgstock (2009)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) KSOQs = Knowledge, skills and other qualities.</td>
<td>Combined in this thesis as graduate attributes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Graduate attributes = the overarching term encompassing knowledge, skills and other qualities KSOQs.</td>
<td>Created from the combination of KSOQs in this thesis</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Professional development</td>
<td>continuous learning for the purpose of career advancement.</td>
<td>No suitable definitions found for graduates so this one created specifically for careers perspective as opposed to training for the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Career agency</td>
<td>The proactive role graduates take in managing their careers.</td>
<td>The definition is abbreviated from Hall (2002) = career agency is a process of work-related social engagement, informed by past experiences and future possibilities, through which an individual invests in their career (Hall, 2002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Traditional career</td>
<td>more organisationally determined (Hall, 1976),</td>
<td>Hall’s definition is appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) Alternative career</td>
<td>more individually determined (Tams &amp; Arthur, 2010).</td>
<td>Tams and Arthur’s definition is appropriate here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) Careers</td>
<td>are sequences of work experiences, managed either by individuals in achieving personal values and growth or by organisations to gain competitive advantage.</td>
<td>This is an interpretation of definitions from Hall (2004) and Tams &amp; Arthur (2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l) Careers as opposed to jobs</td>
<td>careers are distinguished from jobs as jobs may be tasks within careers or work activities done which are not part of a career pathway chosen by graduates.</td>
<td>This explanation was created for this thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m) Boundaryless careers</td>
<td>are sequences of job opportunities beyond the boundaries of single employment settings (Defilippi &amp; Arthur 1994).</td>
<td>This definition is the one used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n) Protean career</td>
<td>a career wherein the person not the organisation is in charge – here explained as wherein graduates use personal career choices and search for self-fulfilment (Hall, 2004; Hall &amp; Moss, 1998)</td>
<td>This definition is the one used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o) Graduate protean career concept</td>
<td>A career in which graduates, not organisations drive their careers, based more upon their own psychological success and decisions than upon a structure, sequence, or set of standards imposed by the organisation.</td>
<td>This definition was Drawn from Hall (1976; 2004) but refers specifically to graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p) Graduate boundaryless career concept</td>
<td>Graduates’ careers are independent of organisations, vocations, or other bounded or social and regulatory mechanisms.</td>
<td>Derived from Defilippi and Arthur (1994).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q) Protean attitude = For the purpose of this thesis is defined as an attitude wherein graduates are self-directed to change their career path to suit the environment, providing a more individual vantage of careers.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>r) Boundaryless attitude is explained as one where graduates transcend multiple organisational and personal boundaries regardless of constraints as they decide on various career opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from a definition by Hall (2004) wherein protean attitude is defined as having the ability to change according to one’s career environment.

Adapted from two definitions: boundaryless attitude = having the inclination toward physically crossing organisational boundaries in employment mobility (Briscoe, Hall, Frautschy de Muth 2006), and Briscoe & Finkelstein, (2009, p. 243), who explained it as one where individuals transcend multiple organisational and personal boundaries regardless of constraints as they decide on various career opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>s) Self-directed SD = graduates’ ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands (Briscoe, Hall, Frautschy de Muth 2006).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t) Values-driven VD = graduates’ internal values providing guidance and measures of success for their career (Briscoe, Hall, Frautschy de Muth 2006).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This definition is the one used

This definition is the one used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>u) Boundaryless mindset BMS = graduates psychological and physical mobility or general attitude to working across organisational boundaries (Briscoe, Hall, Frautschy de Muth 2006).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v) Organisational mobility preference OMP = the strength of interest in remaining with one or multiple employers (Briscoe, Hall, Frautschy de Muth 2006).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This definition is the one used

This definition is the one used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>w) Graduate development program = a carefully planned, structured, outcomes based, series of events and activities for graduate recruits, to enable them to learn about organisations’ functions, culture, protocols, values and orient themselves into effective working practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Created for this thesis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>x) Graduate skills</th>
<th>These explanations of graduate skills were created for this thesis.</th>
<th>118 and Appendix 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Collecting, analysing and applying information which is defined as ensuring that you have all relevant information at your disposal to make decisions and recommendations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Communication is actively listening, contributing, presenting and responding to information.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Critical thinking is evaluating, using and developing new ideas and responses to situations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Initiative and enterprise is generating and trying new ideas and new ways of working.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Planning and organising is organising and prioritising your current and future work tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Problem solving is identifying, articulating and resolving problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Self-management is creating and managing activities and plans for your own work and career.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Teamwork is actively participating as a key member of a productive, organised group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Technology is using appropriate technologies including information technologies.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>y) Graduate other qualities</th>
<th>These explanations of graduate other qualities were created for this thesis.</th>
<th>118 and Appendix 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Curiosity in uncertainty defined as desiring to know more to resolve what can be done when new situations arise.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Enthusiasm which is defined as where graduates see each task or challenge positively and know they can respond constructively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Ethical behaviour is that you know what is right to do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Flexibility is where graduates willingly change and adapt to suit the circumstances they face.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Intellectual openness is defined as where graduates are keen to understand, make comment on and apply new ideas from others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Resilience is that graduates can accept that things can go wrong, or not as planned and, if they do, they learn from them and manage themselves positively.
16. Responsibility is defined as graduates taking their job seriously and are aware of its impact.
17. Use of connections is where graduates seek out people who are beneficial to them.
18. Use of support systems is explained as graduates using policies, procedures and systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>z) The new graduate attributes</th>
<th>These explanations of the new graduate attributes were created for this thesis from the CFA and therefore a merger of the explanations of the SOQs that made up the new graduate attributes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Cognitive processing which is explained in this research as a combination of: collecting and analysing information; critical thinking; problem solving; responsibility and intellectual openness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Interpersonal (attributes), referred to here as interpersonal, explained in this research as a combination of: teamwork; using support systems; using connections and communication.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Intrapersonal (attributes), referred to here as intrapersonal, which is explained in this research as a combination of: resilience; flexibility; and enthusiasm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Self-management explained in this research as a combination of: self-management; planning and organising; initiative and enterprise.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Curiosity = the same definition applies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Ethical behaviour = the same definition applies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| aa) Employability = is defined as a personal resource that individuals develop across their working lives aimed at increasing one’s own career success (Lo Presti & Pluviano, 2015, p. 196) | This definition is the one used | 72 |

207
Appendix 2 An analysis of literature on graduate transitions from university to employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country / Discipline</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student situation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspective:</strong></td>
<td>Explores the expectations and value gaps of students during 1998 and 1999.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Logic:</strong></td>
<td>Moves from teacher to learner-centred experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues:</strong></td>
<td>Conflict between what is delivered, valued and expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Findings:</strong></td>
<td>New expectations of graduates from traditional values to global usefulness of the curriculum and appropriate pedagogy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education + Training</th>
<th>2. Transition of graduate from backpack to briefcase: a case study (McIlvdeen &amp; Pensiero, 2008).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country / Discipline</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student situation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia Education</td>
<td>First-degree students of business as its focus. Not first year out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspective:</strong></td>
<td>Employability interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Logic:</strong></td>
<td>Aligning employers’ needs with careers services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues:</strong></td>
<td>Does not ask undergraduates or graduates, but looks at implementation of interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Findings:</strong></td>
<td>Career services are a factor in improving graduate employability and transitions through such interventions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Discipline</th>
<th>Student situation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia, IT graduates</td>
<td>Graduated over the last three years.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Analysis of work experiences in interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perspective:** Effectiveness of IT programs in developing graduate attributes.  
**Logic:** Evaluates adequacy of graduate attributes in developing professional skills across cultures and multiple projects.  
**Issues:** Connects graduate attributes to professional skills and from graduate perspective in practice.  
**Findings:** Reveals challenges from the workplace of an absence of cultural awareness in skills development at university and when transferred to work.

**Asia Pacific Journal of Health Management**  
**4. Employability skills in health services management: perceptions of recent graduates** *(Messum, Wilkes, Jackson, & Peters, 2016).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Discipline</th>
<th>Student situation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia, Health services management</td>
<td>Graduates over the last 3 years and some in Masters program.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Quantitative survey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perspective:** To identify skills important for the job and their ranking of skills.  
**Logic:** To improve course employment outcomes.  
**Issues:** Closer engagement of universities and employers needed for generic not job-specific skills.  
**Findings:** Recent graduates provide relevant feedback to universities about skills.

**Journal of Education and Work**  
**5. Modelling graduate skill transfer from university to the workplace** *(Jackson, 2016).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Discipline</th>
<th>Student situation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia, Business graduates</td>
<td>Graduates in first three years of employment.</td>
<td>674 from 39 universities.</td>
<td>Quantitative online survey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perspective:** Transfer of graduate skills.  
**Logic:** To develop a model of skill transfer.  
**Issues:** Concern over graduates’ performance in employability skills and skills gaps.  
**Findings:** Need for process-oriented not outcomes focused approach to skill acquisition and transfer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Discipline</th>
<th>Student situation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scotland, Employment</td>
<td>Graduates in the first year of transitioning from university to employment.</td>
<td>14 undergraduates, 16 graduates</td>
<td>Online survey with one qualitative response.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perspective:** Effective management of ‘global talent’.

**Logic:** Is there a ‘broken nature of employability linkage between graduates and employers’?

**Issues:** One-third of graduates in low-skilled employment.

**Findings:** First year in employment did not contribute to furtherance of graduate attributes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Discipline</th>
<th>Student situation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Perspective:** Managers’ and graduates’ perspectives on development of graduates.

**Logic:** Improving graduate development, commitment, motivation and competence.

**Issues:** Specialist skills/knowledge graduates feel they have. Interpersonal skills: do graduates feel able to handle formal, informal interpersonal situations.

**Findings:** 21 areas standardised to measure and evaluate graduate development.

|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>8. A longitudinal study of the relationship between career management and organisational commitment among graduates in the first ten years at work (Sturges, Guest, Conway, &amp; MacKenzie Davy, 2002).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

309
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UK Organisational Behaviour</th>
<th>5 UK organisations. 212 graduates completed questionnaires. Data were collected at two points, 12 months apart.</th>
<th>Quantitative. 7 hypotheses on career management and commitment.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perspective: Relationships between organisational and individual career management, and organisational commitment.</td>
<td>Logic: Employees using their values and priorities, take control of their own careers. Future leadership and returns on long-term investment.</td>
<td>Issues: Those with career self-management skills gain access to career support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings: Career self-management separated individuals' future career development from employers, albeit in a career partnership.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country / Discipline</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student situation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sample size</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK Education</td>
<td>Geography majors. 1 and 2 years out.</td>
<td>203 issued, and a response level of almost 52 percent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspective:</strong> Undergraduate expectations and graduate experiences. Comparisons between two cohorts on least useful aspects of degree in their current employment.</td>
<td><strong>Logic:</strong> Employability and political agenda.</td>
<td><strong>Issues:</strong> List of attributes given to undergraduates to rank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Findings:</strong> Career prospects 74 percent, subject knowledge 50 percent, and transferable skills 11 percent - main reasons for doing a degree.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country / Discipline</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student situation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sample size</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK Education</td>
<td>Arts, sciences, business. Not first year out. Follow up after 2 years.</td>
<td>2211 respondents. 51 percent response rates at graduation. 81 percent response rate post-graduation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Education + Training

11. The transition from higher education into work: tales of cohesion and fragmentation (Holden & Hamblett, 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Discipline</th>
<th>Student situation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Perspective: Skills graduates need for career pathways.

### Logic: Perception of graduates’ managers too.

### Issues: Transition – a rite of passage.

### Findings: Learning about the job, organisation and self. Learning the job – ‘conventions’ taught by peers. Learning the organisation, assimilating conventions. Learning about self and the struggle to assimilate conventions different from professional development.

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12. ‘The degree is not enough’: students’ perceptions of the role of higher education credentials for graduate work and employability (Tomlinson, 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Discipline</th>
<th>Student situation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK Education</td>
<td>Final year undergraduates of social sciences. Not first year out.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Qualitative, semi-structured interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective:</td>
<td>Weakening currency of HE credentials, importance of grades and university profile.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic:</td>
<td>The social benefits of a highly skilled, flexible workforce and career progression opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues:</td>
<td>Emphasis on motivation, initiative and demonstration of personal abilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings:</td>
<td>Graduates’ concerns around packaging attributes into changing demands of employers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Country / Discipline | Student situation | Sample size | Method |

| Perspective: | To identify features enabling employment success. |
| Logic: | Evaluates academic ability, skills and extra-curricular activities. |
| Issues: | There are other inputs to career success besides KSAs. Some are developed separately from university. |
| Findings: | H1. Graduates receiving job offers have higher intellectual skills. H2. Graduates receiving job offers have higher academic performance (GPA). H3. Graduates receiving job offers are involved in extra-curricular activities. H4. Graduates receiving job offers have more relevant job experience. H5. Graduates receiving job offers have higher job pursuit intention than those who do not. Hypotheses 1, 2 and 5 are not supported. Hypothesis 3 neither supported not unsupported. Hypothesis 4 partially supported. T-Tests results suggest graduates with job offers distinguish themselves in terms of leadership skills No examination of differences between graduating seniors with multiple offers, and those with one or two offers. |

| Country / Discipline | Student situation | Sample size | Method |
| Finland Workplace learning | Graduating seniors. | In 69 selected US hospitality programs. | Quantitative, plus qualitative component. Five semi-structured interviews and a survey EFA t tests. |

| Perspective: | Scrutinise the transition phenomenon from two practical perspectives: university and employment. |
| Logic: | Knowledge, skills and competences do not guarantee satisfactory transition to employment. |
**Findings:** Dialogic mentoring assists with learning to deal with uncertainty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Discipline</th>
<th>Student situation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Perspective:** Focus on interns and career success orientations. Getting ahead, secure, free, high, balanced.

**Logic:** Career success formula; motives + values + talents – perceived constraints = career success orientation.

**Issues:** An internship program, aligned with personalised preferences is a compelling value proposition.

**Findings:** Career success orientation will help interns establish their career identity, subjective strengths or other qualities to cope better with the demands of a complex world of work.

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**Findings:** From university to working life: mentoring as a pedagogical challenge (Saarnivaara & Sarja, 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Discipline</th>
<th>Student situation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Not first year out.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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**Findings:** Career success orientation will help interns establish their career identity, subjective strengths or other qualities to cope better with the demands of a complex world of work.

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**Findings:** Graduate interns’ experiences: A career success orientations approach (Kanye & Crous, 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Discipline</th>
<th>Student situation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>All from finance institution in one-year internship. Not first year out.</td>
<td>18/30 interns interviewed.</td>
<td>Qualitative and used card sorting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Findings:** Career success orientation will help interns establish their career identity, subjective strengths or other qualities to cope better with the demands of a complex world of work.
Appendix 3 Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION:**

**GRADUATES**

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“Managing the transition from university to employment”

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**Research Team Contacts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>Griffith Business School, Griffith University, tel (07) 5552 7876, email <a href="mailto:t.marchant@griffith.edu.au">t.marchant@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

The researcher seeks assistance from new graduate employees who have commenced employment from university during the previous 6-18 months. The purpose of this is to conduct interviews and surveys with graduates. The aims of the research are to establish:

- How graduates negotiate the transition from university to work during their first year of professional employment
- The role of graduate career agency in their transition to professional employment
- The value of graduates’ attributes during this transition

**Participation**

Your participation will involve a survey and possibly a confidential one-to-one interview, conducted at your workplace where practicable, in which the researcher will ask you questions about your experiences of graduating from university and starting work. The survey will take around 35 minutes and the interview will take around 35 to 45 minutes. During the interview, there will be a card-sorting activity which will help clarify your experiences.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw at any time during the project without explanation, comment or penalty.

During the card-sorting activity photographs may be taken of the cards. Recordings, notes and
photographs will be destroyed as soon as transcripts are made. Transcripts will be held in a secure, locked cupboard in the offices of the principal researcher contact, and will be destroyed after five years. Data will be available to the research team on a password-protected computer, and all data will be removed at the conclusion of the project.

We require your written consent, and ask you to sign the attached form and return it to the researcher. In proceeding with an online survey, you are agreeing to participate and giving your informed consent.

**Expected benefits**
The project will deliver outcomes and insights that benefit graduates, recent graduate employees, universities, final year students and employers. It will provide information that will improve linkages between universities and employers with respect to graduate employment. It will also be of national benefit in enhancing student employability and attributes.

**Reporting and dissemination of results**
The main outputs of the project will be a doctoral thesis, journal articles for both academic and practitioner audiences and a report for participating organisations and their new graduates.

**Risks**
There are no anticipated risks, except that there is a risk that during the interview you will say something that you do not want reported. If this happens, you can request we remove your comment from the transcript. If, after the interview, you decide that you do not want a particular comment reported, you can email us and let us know and we will remove it.

**Confidentiality**
We will maintain the confidentiality of participants throughout the project. Data will be collected in such a way that comments are not attributable to you personally, and all identifying data will be removed.

**Privacy**
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 4855.

**Questions/further information about the project**
Please contact the Principal Contact Associate Professor Janis Bailey to have any questions answered or if you require further information about the project.

**Concerns/complaints regarding the conduct of the project**
Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research project you should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 07 3735 4855 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

“Managing the transition from university to employment”

GRADUATE INTERVIEW AND SURVEY

Statement of consent

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include a semi-structured interview with a card-sorting activity and possibly a survey and;
- I understand that the survey will be anonymous;
- I understand that my interview will be digitally recorded and may be transcribed in confidence by a person additional to the researchers;
- I understand that the outcome of the card-sorting activity may be photographed;
- I understand that only the research team contacts will have access to the survey data, interview recording and any photographs of the card-sort;
- I understand that the recording of the interview will be erased following transcription;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the researcher, Janet Ferguson, or the principal contact, Associate Professor Janis Bailey;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee, on 07 3735 48555 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

Name

_________________________________________________________

Job Title

_________________________________________________________

Organisation

_________________________________________________________

Signature ______________________________ Date ____________
Appendix 4 Biographical and contextual information about participants

This Appendix summarises participants’ backgrounds, GDPs if they attended one, and supplementary information given during the interviews. The appendix is in three sections corresponding to the three groups of participants. Each participant has an allocated number which was the order in which they were interviewed. Therefore, in this appendix they are not in numerical order but in the order they were interviewed.

Most of the participants (15 out of 25) were in a one year GDP in the APSC offer graduates pathways through a range of roles within a government department. These offer graduates’ pathways through a range of roles within a government department. The program incorporates a nationally recognised Diploma of Government. The diploma program involves skills development activities such as a focus on leadership. Graduates normally have three rotations to different departments during the program. A buddy and mentoring system is developed for graduates but they are also encouraged to develop their own networks. When they have completed the program, graduates are formally placed in a role within a department and are encouraged to mentor new graduates from the next intake.

Other participants (3 out of 25) were engaged in private sector corporate GDPs designed to attract high performers from a range of disciplines. Skills development was included in some organisations’ programs, for example, interpersonal and communication skills, presentation skills, report writing, critical thinking and stakeholder management.

Finally, some participants (7 out of 25) did not participate in a formal GDP but were offered induction programs with projects, or other specific activities, to develop skills and organisational awareness to enable organisational fit and assimilation. Some (2 of 25) of this latter group were professionally employed and participating in an online degree program.
Graduate employees in a government graduate development program

This section provides additional information about the 15 interview participants who were engaged in a government graduate program.

1 Anna

When interviewed, Anna was in the government GDP which she entered at age 20 having finished a three-year undergraduate degree. At 21, Anna said that she was one of the youngest on the program. Colleagues often asked her why she was not travelling or taking a gap year. Although Anna had been on an exchange twice, the ‘gap year’ concept was foreign to her family. Her parents strongly encouraged her to make the progression from high school to university into a good job, and she felt pressure to do well, like her older brother.

While Anna was a little apprehensive about her first full-time job, she was not worried about how she would cope at work. However, the graduate position meant she had had to relocate to a new city, so being away from family and friends was her main concern.

Anna was pleased with her achievement in gaining a place on the GDP, given that only 42 were accepted from 500 applicants. She was also pleased that she has gained work in an organisation with international linkages, which was one of her goals. Anna explained that she felt pride when, as a new employee, she ‘walked through the doors of the organisation’ knowing that it was respected and that she had a ‘career job with career progression’. Anna had not worked full time previously, although she had held part-time jobs in fast food outlets. She completed two internships as part of the degree program, realising the importance of doing so. One of Anna’s internships involved working in the marketing department of the university in her second year. This involved talking to high school students across Sydney about the university. Anna explained that this internship and her part-time work in the fast-food sector were very useful in developing her confidence and interpersonal skills.
Anna was studying for a Masters degree which she said is a struggle to combine with working five days a week. Last semester, she combined three subjects with full-time work. She would like to do an MBA one day.

2 Abby

When interviewed, Abby had just competed the GDP and been placed within a department. Abby’s ambition was not to make ‘millions of dollars’, but she was enjoying challenges at work. She works hard and is a high achiever. The top ranking of ‘outstanding contribution and excels in performance’ with respect to graduates’ feedback on their performance during the rotations was rarely given, but Abby achieved it for the last two of her three rotations. Although Abby was proud of this achievement she was disappointed that the promise of promotions for graduates had been withdrawn and there was no real recognition of her hard work.

Abby had done casual retail work in Sydney, and worked as a youth coordinator for a church during her last year at university. Abby described working in retail as chaotic especially when dealing with angry customers. Abby had three months’ work experience after completing her degree and before commencing the GDP working for a small non-government organisation (NGO) in Cambodia. Abby gained this opportunity because of her Honours degree in Development Studies. While she found it difficult to communicate with her manager and understand her role, she focused on her work. She noted that if she went back now she would do a lot better as she has more confidence and understood what was required of her. Abby described her transition to this job as easier than with the NGO because in government she works in a much more defined structure, has set tasks to do and can see the contribution she makes to the department. Abby was interested in movement and fitness and was considering doing a fitness instructor’s course as an additional career.
3 Mark

Mark completed the GDP and was placed in a department. Mark is Indigenous. He also has a disability, so has to manage his medical condition along with the normal challenges that graduates encounter. He applied for the graduate program on the advice of Indigenous liaison officers at university. Because of his Indigenous background, Mark has had additional specialist training sessions as well as sessions with Indigenous liaison officers within the GDP to assist with induction, support and retention. Mark is grateful for the support networks provided by the GDP, but is concerned that once he finishes the program his success would depend on what he could do for himself.

Mark studied a Technical and Further Education, (TAFE) legally-oriented program before starting his degree and was able to apply this legal knowledge to his work. He had also worked part-time in retail. Moving from casual retail to full-time government employment was an enormous culture shock for Mark, but he was proud of his achievements and wanted to continue with his career.

4 Emma

Emma joined the GDP after completing a Masters degree. It took her two degrees to get appointed to a particular department which was her ambition.

Emma had a side career working as a pole-dancing teacher while at university, and managed national competitions. After completing her Bachelors degree, and before doing her Masters degree, Emma worked full time for two years in the not-for-profit sector. Emma’s prior experience gave her familiarity with issues pertinent to the department she now works. She realised that she had a broader perspective about her current job than others, without similar experience, would have. She had realistic expectations about the kind of impact she could make. Emma however found it difficult at times to reconcile her current job with her prior experience in ‘frontline’ organisations which are affected by the kinds of policies she was
helping write. Emma describes herself as a quiet, reflective person who liked the writing aspects of her job and would be quite happy for that to be her main task.

Emma had also considered getting a fitness qualification to become a personal trainer. Emma said that this interest might lead into a parallel career, probably in fitness.

Emma found her relocation from Adelaide to Canberra difficult, due to personal circumstances. She immersed herself in her work because she felt it was the only thing that she had in the early stages. This was the first time in Emma’s life that she has had only one job.

**5 Susie**

Susie moved from Perth to take up this post. Susie has a double degree in Law and Arts. Susie did not do Honours at university and thinks this could restrict her future academic opportunities because of strong competition for career jobs. However, Susie realised that this job matched her career interests and as a result she said she enjoyed her work. This was despite having a rotation which she described as ‘horrible’, although it was a useful experience as she discovered the type of work she did not like.

Susie’s previous work experience included volunteer work dealing with refugee and asylum issues. This experience, she said, ‘humanised’ those issues for her and gave her insight into the bigger picture. She had also worked in children’s organisations, including Save the Children. Her experiences made her aware of the weight of the decisions being made by her department and their human impact.

Susie has also worked in the arts which she described as being full of ‘kooky extroverts’ an experience which gave her skills and confidence in teamwork situations. Describing herself as a positive person, Susie took on the role of advocate for the mentoring component of the GDP. This helped develop her presentation skills.
6 Flora

Flora was placed in a department following her third rotation. Flora was a nursing graduate who had also completed a Masters in nursing. Flora’s previous work experience included placements during her nursing degrees, and being part of an international peer mentor program.

Flora has a creative side and believed that what ‘got her down’ in nursing was that the work was becoming very bureaucratic and routine. Flora admitted that routine still remained very difficult for her and that her current job was starting to develop into a routine. She said she liked to be kept busy with diverse tasks that enabled her to continue learning. Flora appreciated the university experience and plans to do a Masters degree in Public Health. Her aim was to get back into a community health role. Flora relocated back to Melbourne from Canberra after her third rotation as she ‘had a lot of trouble’ being away from her family and friends.

7 Sam

Sam finished the GDP and now works as a systems administrator in a specialist role. Sam completed his degree in Information Technology as an international student and worked for three years before joining the GDP. He worked as a sales assistant and assistant manager in retail. He was subsequently a self-employed information technology consultant, developing business websites.

During the GDP Sam’s team won a trophy for the best idea and presentation, which helped him gain his current job. Sam moved his entire family from Brisbane to Canberra in order to take up the place on the GDP, which was difficult, especially as his partner had to resign from her job.
8 Beth

Beth relocated from Brisbane to Canberra to take up her place on the GDP which she had recently completed at the time of the interview. Beth had been placed as an analyst. While her work was research-based it was very connected to key issues which made her realise the significance of her work.

Beth had a mixed post-school experience. She did two years of undergraduate study then left university and worked for the Queensland government for a year. She returned to university to complete her degree in Social Science, majoring in health studies, and then completed an Honours year.

Beth had considered doing a PhD as she enjoyed working with her supervisors and other academics and has published from her honours thesis. Beth did an internship in a research area at the university, a compulsory final year project, and partnered with industries in a team-based research project during the final year of the degree. These experiences, she said, were useful in developing her research skills.

9 Tess

Tess had a degree in Marketing and Advertising Communications and had completed the GDP at the time of the interview and was placed in a department. Her current job at the time of the interview was a generalist position rather than directly related to her degree, but she had found ways of incorporating aspects of her degree into her job.

Tess appreciates that she could work on the skills she gained during her degree. She also spoke about the value of both her past work experiences and the GDP and how both have contributed to her success in gaining her job. Tess’s previous work experience includes an internship during the latter part of her degree and work in private-sector marketing and advertising.
10 Alan

Alan has two degrees in Civil Engineering and Commerce. After completing the first degree he gained a position in the GDP with an airline, thinking he could study part-time. However, he left that position and returned to full-time study. During his second degree, he completed a 12-week internship at a local council, working on engineering projects. For the last two years of his degree he worked part-time on civil engineering projects and in project management. Alan was then accepted into the GDP.

Alan’s ambitions were to use his engineering and management skills to rebuild communities and manage natural and other disasters. He was doing a Masters degree part time at the time of the interview and to further his ambitions planned to volunteer involved to assist with damage, flood rescue and cleaning up after major disasters. Alan had to move to Canberra to take this job and is eventually settled.

11 Lilly

Lilly completed the GDP and found work in the public service as a quality assurance officer. Lilly had some previous work experience during her degree, doing voluntary work and working with international students to help them improve their English. Lilly also went on an exchange to Malaysia where she completed two of her degree subjects. She explained that this helped with her writing skills, talking to diverse types of people and developing cultural sensitivity.

Lilly wanted challenging work and fulfilment in her career, noting however that long hours, routine and limited freedom in her current position are contrasted strongly with the freedom of the university environment. She had gained some knowledge of the public service from her husband who had started a year before and hence thought she had a good understanding about the expectations prior to commencing. Like others she felt frustrated at the promotion freeze as she had ambitions to work up to the executive level.
12 Maggie

Maggie applied for a place on the GDP before she had completed her degree. Following the successful completion of the GDP she was placed in a small team. Her partner also worked in the public-sector. This was her first full-time job.

Maggie’s prior experience included working as a receptionist for three years and on an internship with children at educational camps, which she described as a good experience because it was not a traditional work experience such as an internship or casual work. Maggie said she realises that, like many of the other graduates, her work was not degree specific but she enjoyed it. She appreciated the value of the varied experiences in the rotations during the GDP and how she learned from them especially as they apply to her current role.

13 Tanya

Tanya, who had a degree in International Relations, completed the GDP and was then placed in a department working on youth issues. Tanya worked throughout her studies from aged 15 and before university at McDonald's and at a cinema. Tanya also completed work placement as a compulsory part of her degree for an organisation producing school textbooks. At university, she was president of the International Relations Association.

Tanya’s ambition, since she was 15 had been to work in the public-sector and ‘make changes in small steps’. Tanya valued the impact of her work and dealt with significant problems and wanted to make an impact with her work.

Travelling for work was Tanya’s goal as she aspired to work for international government organisations like the OECD or UNESCO. Tanya had just started another Masters degree at the time of the interview.

16 Jim

Jim entered the GDP after completing an Honours year, then a gap year, then a Masters in Philosophy in Media Studies. Jim was a performance analyst. Despite being unsure about
the nature of the job when he was first appointed and learning the organisational and specialist
language he said he enjoyed his role.

Jim wished he had started his career straight out of university although he valued his
Masters degree as his thesis had been published. Jim had work experience only when working
full time during a gap year between high school and university. Jim relocated to Canberra and
he intended staying in his current role. Jim was appreciative of the support he had in relocating
and starting the job as his partner also lived in Canberra.

17 Christy

As a Law graduate, Christy was placed as a lawyer in a government agency when she
completed the GDP. Christy discovered that rotation placement allocations could be very
random, so she was proactive in organising her own placements and approached the areas
where she wanted experience.

Christy explained that the supervisors for each of the three rotations were supportive,
however there were times when she and other graduates felt as if they were ‘treated like
children’ by senior staff. In one rotation Christy said she was micro-managed and could not
leave her desk without reporting where she was going.

Christy’s previous work experience during her degree included casual jobs such as at a
gym, a doctor’s surgery and in a bar. Christy had an internship with a government agency for
three weeks during the degree program, which she described as a positive experience. Those
previous experiences were a factor in deciding where she would like to pursue a career and
how to manage career changes. Christy explained that being from Canberra and not having to
relocate contributed to an easier GDP experience than other graduates had.
Graduate employees in a corporate graduate development program

This section provides information on the three interview participants in corporate GDPs (i.e. other than the public service GDP)

15 Pam

At the time of the interview, Pam had been in the Human Resources section of a large mining and engineering organisation for six months. Her role involved graduate learning and development. Pam originally considered an accounting career but changed to a career in Human Resources. During her interview for this job, Pam took the initiative to discuss her training needs and opportunities. As the result of this, Pam’s manager created a two-year GDP especially for her and two subsequent human resources recruits. Her organisation had previously only offered GDPs to engineers.

Pam’s previous work experience during high school included an administrative role and marketing and promotional work during the early days of her degree. Pam decided not to pursue any further employment experience during the Human Resources degree and decided to focus on her studies.

Pam explained that she ‘is definitely a Perth-based person’ and growing up with a father in the blue-collar environment of mining helped her to understand the industry and helped address any issues she has about working in the sector.

20 Amy

At the time of the interview Amy was on a two-year GDP in a banking and finance organisation. During the program, graduate employees were ‘ranked against a bell curve’, and encouraged to compete for ‘that top spot’. Amy was also encouraged to create her personal brand which she described as reliability, efficiency and personality. Amy said she was always
looking for ways to progress and understood that earning a reputation within the organisation was essential.

Amy’s previous experience started during a gap year between school and university as a volunteer with Meals on Wheels as well as working part time. During her degree, she worked full time as a personal assistant for a strategy director in a media company. She shadowed her manager for more exposure to the nature of the work and developed her administrative skills. Amy said that in previous administrative jobs she was bored whereas at the time of the interview, after a day at work, she was satisfied although mentally tired.

23 Ben

Ben was also a graduate employee on a two-year GDP in a banking and finance organisation. Ben gained this job after an internship with the same organisation. He found that having an internship prior to being on the GDP was good as he got to know the people he would be working with and learned more about graduate positions available. Ben said he was given formal and casual support from mentors and other people in the organisation.

Ben described himself as an independent, self-driven person with the strong realisation that things are not handed to you ‘on a plate’. Ben felt it was important to consider the impact of your career on your life when applying for a job.

Graduate employees not in a graduate development program

This section provides information about the seven participants not on a GDP two of whom are professionals completing an online degree.

14 Sarah

After completing a degree in Business and Commerce Sarah was appointed as Human Resources Co-ordinator in the Human Resources section of a large insurance organisation. She had a useful orientation but did not take part in a GDP. She explained that her transition into a
‘very stringent’ corporate environment was initially a struggle. Her major challenges were the ‘culture shock of the corporate language’ and getting used to the ‘strict routine’ compared to the flexibility she had at university.

Sarah’s previous experience included over five years in childcare, which she describes as ‘fun, playing and messy’ compared to corporate activities. She initially started volunteering with a childcare organisation and enjoyed working with children aged four to 17.

Sarah accepted that she had a lot to learn and that it would take time. She values the support she receives from colleagues. At the time of the interview Sarah’s current focus was her job and her family, however, she hoped to pursue childcare qualifications or work in a Human Resources role in childcare.

18 Paul

At the time of interview Paul had recently graduated with a degree in Accounting and Finance and was working for a small accounting organisation as a Graduate Accountant. Paul got this job when he attended a seminar with prospective employers at university. Paul introduced himself, explained that he was graduating and looking for an accounting job. He was immediately invited to an interview and given this job.

Paul’s was from China where his father and entire other family members owned businesses. Paul’s previous work experience was in the family business. From age 12 he was dealing with customer service issues. When Paul first arrived in Brisbane as an international student, he completed a commercial cookery course and then an internship with a hotel organisation, working with top international chefs. He subsequently worked in a fish and chip shop for one and a half years to earn money and develop his communication skills. Later, on his father’s advice, Paul and a business partner bought a small franchise business which helped develop his business and financial skills. After successfully running the business Paul decided to become an accountant and sold his shares to his partner.
During his degree Paul took part in a Financial Analysis program and competition run by the Chartered Financial Institute which he described as a good experience even though he did not win. Paul believed in working hard for a degree and being competitive. He felt that students should not think a pass is enough or that more than fifty-one is a waste. Paul said that the working environment in Australia was different to working in China and that his career is important to his whole family. Paul planned to work in a bigger, more recognised organisation in Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne to gain more experience and eventually he wished to start his own business.

19 Adrian

At the time of the interview Adrian was in the final semester of an online degree in Business and Commerce. Adrian was a mature-age undergraduate who had decided to study for a degree to complement his vast international employment experiences. Adrian has never been on a GDP.

Adrian started an industrial design course at university. During his second year, he got work in industrial design so he left university to work overseas and never finished his degree. He worked in industrial design for seven years in China, Taiwan and Vietnam and also bought a retail business.

Adrian said he believed in the value of having a global career, being immersed in that career and in experiencing different national and organisational cultures. Adrian worked globally until he was 26 then returned to Australia to work in the banking and finance sector. Within two years he was offered a position in funds management and he worked his way into a private banking environment. He had nine jobs in seven years in the banking sector. When the global financial crisis hit, Adrian did not have a finance degree, which became a requirement. Adrian explained that he was made redundant six times in two years and so he decided to pursue an online degree. To avoid the ‘distraction of full-time work’, he decided to
teach English and economics overseas while working 12 hours a week. Adrian said that he really needed to get this ‘bit of paper’ to progress his career.

21 Rita

Rita worked as a theatre nurse at a private hospital, having graduated with a nursing degree in 2012. Rita was in a cohort of 500 graduates in that geographical area and knows that only 60 or 70 of those got a graduate job. Although she is not on a GDP Rita said she valued the support she received in her jobs.

Rita’s previous work experience started in England where she was a beauty therapist for 23 years. She could not see herself doing this for the rest of her life and was getting bored. Rita has no relevant prior experience; however, she felt that her beauty therapy experience developed her listening skills and her care for people.

Rita got ‘caught up in bringing up children and extended family responsibilities’ but originally wanted to be a midwife. She never thought she would do a degree aged 42. Rita found leaving England for Australia a huge challenge but with opportunities. Once in Australia she discovered an online course where she could study at home and be with her three children.

Rita was very nervous about starting work, not knowing what she was going to face. Her first practicum was in aged care, not theatre, and her nursing degree incorporated only a 10-week theatre practicum. Rita explained that she had no real experience of theatre and valued the ‘fantastic’ one-to-one support she has had for the whole year. Rita described herself as willing to learn and valuing the importance of feedback during the learning process. Rita wants to educate herself more to progress. She felt she was in an environment which supported her aims and she ‘still pinches herself’ at having gained the job she always aspired to.
22 Hanna

Hanna is working as a research assistant for a university at the time of the interview and was grateful to get the job as it had taken several applications since gaining her Psychology degree. She had also been offered the opportunity to do a PhD.

Hanna’s previous work experience included casual work as a research assistant through an acquaintance. However, she found her work in research isolating. Other work experience included volunteering. Hanna said she had learned of the importance of previous experience from other students, who had internships or practicums which she never had.

At the time of the interview Hanna had reviewed her career prospects and decided to leave her current employment. She planned to pursue a Diploma of Education and become a primary school teacher.

24 Anya

Anya had been working as a function manager for a catering organisation for several months since graduating in February with a degree majoring in event management. Anya values her achievement in getting a job straight out of university in the field she studied.

Anya also worked for this organisation casually while she was studying. Anya’s other previous experience included working at markets from age 14 and throughout high school, then a casual retail job for 12 months during her degree. Anya said she ‘is no stranger to working’. As part of a work integrated learning program, Anya volunteered at events as a casual event assistant with charitable organisations. This work included events such as a fun run for International Women’s Day and doing administration for an NGO which she describes as really good experiences because of the challenges. Anya also had extracurricular experience as a residential adviser at her college.

Anya enjoyed her job and its challenges but appreciates that her managers had the decision-making role which she is happy about at this stage in her career. Anya said her career...
and the path she would chose were determined by her ability and flexibility; she had to relocate from one state to another which was quite a challenge for her.

25 Ruth

Ruth was a mature-age undergraduate who had decided to study for a degree, majoring in Human Resources, to complement her experience. Ruth works in retail as a store services officer managing payroll administration. She was not on a GDP. At the time of the interview Ruth was half way through the degree program with Open Universities Australia.

Ruth worked 30 hours full-time, combining this with full-time study and raising a three-year-old child until recently when she commenced maternity leave after having her second child. Ruth and her partner both worked for the same organisation which was realigning its workforce. Ruth wished to remain with the company and hoped her degree will give her job security. After her maternity leave, Ruth planned to use the degree to gain promotion into another area or to start a career elsewhere.

Summation

This Appendix has provided insights into the interview participants, including their experiences and their transitions to work. This information is useful as it describes their varied backgrounds, the contexts for their career choices, implications of their career choices and some of their personal challenges in making the transition from university to professional employment.
Appendix 5 Interview schedule: graduates

Getting acquainted and relaxed
Introduce myself; explain that the interview will last up to one hour.
This is a copy of the ethics form which you may have seen when you completed the survey.
Please sign it to confirm that you agree to the interview.
I wish to draw your attention to the fact that this recording may be transcribed by an additional person to the researchers. Is this OK?
The purpose is to explore your experiences of making the transition to employment from university and discuss what factors are influencing your career. These factors include:

Your skills, knowledge and other qualities
What you think of your career to date
How university and your early days at work have helped shape your career

If at any time you want me to erase or amend a comment let me know and I can do this after the interview.
Have you any questions?

What was it like starting this job after university?
  i. I am really keen to hear about your experiences when you started this job.
  ii. Tell me about coming from university to this job
  iii. What did you expect of the job?
  iv. Were your expectations met?
  v. How is the job progressing?

What have been the main challenges to starting this job?
  i. What has caused this/these?

Overall how has 2013 been for you at work?
Card sorting activity on SOQs

1. I am interested to hear about specific events where you used your SOQs. Please look at these cards which explain SOQs. Where relevant select any of the cards and:
   i. Describe any events in your job where you have had to use these SOQs
   ii. Were there any skills or other qualities from these cards that you wanted to use but did not get the opportunity?
   iii. Tell me which how you would have used them
   iv. Have you used any other skill or quality not shown on the cards?
   v. If so please tell me which skills or other qualities you used
   vi. How did you use them?

3. Prior experiences

1. Tell me about any work experiences you had during your degree program
   i. Internships
   ii. Paid work experience
   iii. Voluntary work
   iv. Successful?
   v. Useful in getting this job

2. What new skills or other qualities have you gained through your current job?
   i. How did you gain these skills or qualities?

3. Tell me about any feedback you have had on your skills or other qualities since university?
   i. Such as when your use of SOQs went well or not so well?
   ii. Who from?
   iii. Are there any other examples you could tell me?

4. At university, you learned a lot! This included KSOQs often shown in a graduate profile. How has this been useful to you?
   i. The university statement about your SOQs
   ii. Were you aware of the graduate profile?

5. Career Management

1. What does a career mean to you?
2. How far do you feel you have come in your career at this point?
i. What has contributed to this?

3. In your opinion, who is in charge your career?
   i. Why do you think this is so?

4. What would help you further in your career?
   i. Would more support help you in your career – if so what kind?
   ii. Would a different approach to your job role help your career – if so what?

5. Where do you see your career taking you?
   i. To progress in this job
   ii. In a different type of job
   iii. Leaving APSC

6. How many other jobs do you think you might have over the next 10 years or so?
   i. Why?
   ii. Where?
   iii. Same type of job?
   iv. Same profession?

7. If you could change any aspect of your career to date what would it be?
   i. Why?

8. If your career depended upon doing something in your job that conflicted with your values or your ethics how would you react
   i. If you disagreed with it
   ii. If you disliked the outcome of the task

6. Support

1. During early stages at work what support did you receive?
   i. A mentor, buddy, coach, another graduate, formal contact, informal contact, internal to your organisation or external to your organisation
   ii. If yes – how is that working out?
   iii. If no – how might you have benefitted from this type of support?

2. Have you discussed further development of your skills or other qualities with anyone?
   i. At work
   ii. e.g. in a performance review
   iii. e.g. in a casual conversation with a manager
   iv. Outside of work
3. Are you encouraged to develop ideas and make suggestions about any aspects of your job?
   i. Tell me how this works?
   ii. Have you made any suggestions?

7. Other events
1. Tell me about any surprising, challenging or unexpected events which have occurred in your job.
   i. What happened?
   ii. What caused it to happen?
   iii. What did you do?
   iv. How did it make you feel?
   v. What was the outcome?
   vi. How important was this to your career?
   vii. Are there any other events either positive or negative?

8. Final comments overall
1. Do you still feel like a graduate?
   i. Why?
   ii. What happened to make things change?

9. Looking back over 2013 and your career so far do you feel that university adequately prepared you for this career?
   iii. If yes – in what ways?
   iv. If no – what else could be done?
   v. Was career advice and development support at university useful?

10. What advice would you give to new graduates just about to make the transition?
   vi. About the transition overall
   vii. About skills
   viii. About other qualities
ix. About career management
x. About anything else

2. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

11. Closing statement and thanks
I really appreciate your taking part in this interview and giving up your time to have this discussion. I have found this very interesting and very valuable to my research and to future graduates. I hope that it has been of value to you. Thank you so much.

If you want to add anything at a later date, please do not hesitate to contact me. If necessary, can I get back to you with any follow up questions?

12. If there are issues
Advise graduates about EAP
Might have to deal with anger
Manage irrelevant stories
Manage time
Appendix 6 Card –sorting

Cards were made of the skills and other qualities with a brief explanation of each. Skills were printed in blue and other qualities in orange and each card was laminated. The purpose of the cards was to delve deeper into graduates understanding of their SOQs and discuss how they had used them in work tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collecting, analysing and applying information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Ensuring that you have all relevant information at your disposal to make decisions and recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
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</table>

Actively listening, contributing, presenting and responding to information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical thinking</th>
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</table>

Evaluating, using and developing new ideas and responses to situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative and enterprise</th>
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</table>

Generating and trying new ideas and new ways of working
Planning and organising

= 
Organising and prioritising your current and future work tasks

Problem solving

= 
Identifying, articulating and resolving problems

Self-management

= 
Creating and managing activities and plans for your own work and career

Teamwork

= 
Actively participating as a key member of a productive, organised group

Technology

= 
Using appropriate technologies including information technologies
<p>| | |</p>
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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curiosity in uncertainty</strong></td>
<td>You desire to know more to resolve what can be done when new situations arise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enthusiasm</strong></td>
<td>You see each task or challenge positively and know you can respond constructively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethical behaviour</strong></td>
<td>You know what is right to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility</strong></td>
<td>You willingly change and adapt to suit the circumstances you face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intellectual openness</strong></td>
<td>You are keen to understand, make comment on and apply new ideas from others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resilience

= You accept that things can go wrong or not as planned and if they do, you learn from them and manage yourself positively

Responsibility

= You take your job seriously and are aware of its impact

Use of connections

= You seek out people who are beneficial to you

Use of support systems

= You use policies, procedures and systems
Appendix 7 Discussion schedule: managers

Introduction
The purpose of this discussion (where it was possible to carry it out) was to gain some idea of
the context of managers’ interaction with graduates. It was emphasised that it was not a
‘performance review’ of the graduate.

Questions
1. Can you tell me a little about the nature of the work in your agency?
2. What is the nature of the work you do with graduates?
   a. How many graduates do you work with?
3. How does this work develop the SOQs of graduates?
   a. Job task
   b. What SOQs did you expect graduates to have that they did not have?
4. How are job tasks allocated?
   a. Negotiated with graduates?
5. Do you receive any other graduates on rotation?
6. As a manager, do you have any input to the graduate development programme?
7. What support is there for graduates?
8. How would you describe your role in shaping graduates’ careers?
Appendix 8 Survey

Note: There were three surveys used in this research – each had slight modifications for the particular context of the respondents. This is the survey used for the public-sector respondents.

This research aims to establish which skills and qualities are important to you, as a graduate, as you make the transition to professional employment.

Thank you for doing this survey. This is an anonymous survey and you will not be identifiable from your responses.

The aims of the research are to establish:

- How graduates negotiate the transition from university to work during their first year of professional employment
- The role of graduate career agency in their transition to professional employment
- The value of graduates' attributes during this transition

The questions are about you, your degree, employment experiences, skills and qualities, your career and transition from graduate to professional.

Where necessary, brief definitions are given (for example, of 'skills' and 'qualities').

Your responses will be useful to graduates who will benefit by learning from the transition experience of other graduates. Employers and universities will also benefit by learning how they can assist graduates to manage their early career and make a successful transition to professional employment.

This research has ethics approval. The protocol number is EHR/11/12/HREC. Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research project you should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 07 3735 4855 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

I understand that the survey will be anonymous;

- I understand that data collected from the survey will be available to the research team on a password-protected computer and all data will be removed at the conclusion of the project;
- I understand that only the research team contacts will have access to the survey data.

If you wish to see the detailed informed consent form, click here.

If you have any other queries or comments about this survey, please contact the researcher at janet.ferguson@griffithuni.edu.au

This survey will only take you about 25 minutes to complete.

By selecting next you are agreeing to take part in this survey.

There are 35 questions in this survey
A. About you

There are 2 brief questions about you.

Age

1. What is your age?

Please choose only one of the following:

- Under 20
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- Over 25

Gender

2. What is your gender?

Please choose only one of the following:

- Female
- Male

B. About your degree

This section asks you about your degree experiences.

1. Did you commence your degree straight after high school?
Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
- No

2. Select your degree from the drop-down list.
Then in the comment box opposite state your major(s) if applicable.

If not applicable write N/A.

Please choose only one of the following:

- Agriculture
- Architecture/Surveying/Planning/Construction
- Arts/Communication
- Business/Commerce/Economics
- Computing/Information Technology
- Education
- Engineering
- Health (including Nursing, Medicine, Psychology, Physiotherapy)
- Languages
- Law
- Performing Arts/Music
- Science/Environment/Mathematics
- Social Work
Other degree

Make a comment on your choice here:

3. What year did you finish your most recent degree? Enter yyyy.

Please write your answer here:

4. During your degree did you do any of these prior work activities with your CURRENT EMPLOYER?

If yes indicate all activities which apply, if you did not do any of these activities indicate 'not applicable'.

For those activities, you did, show your level of agreement with how they helped your transition from graduate to professional employee.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internship, cadetship or placement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vacation work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other activities</td>
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</table>

5. During your degree did you do any of these prior work activities with ANOTHER EMPLOYER?

If yes indicate all activities which apply, if you did not do any of these activities indicate 'not applicable'.

For those activities, you did, show your level of agreement with how they helped your transition from graduate to professional employee.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internship, cadetship or placement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<td>Vacation work</td>
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<td>Paid work</td>
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<td>Voluntary work</td>
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<td>Other activities</td>
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</table>

C. About your current employment

This section asks you about your current employment.

1. What is your job title?

Please write your answer here:

2. Is this your first job after finishing your degree?

Please choose only one of the following:

○ Yes

○ No

3. How long have you been in this job?

Please choose only one of the following:

○ Less than 6 months

○ 6-12 months

○ 13-18 months

○ 19-24 months

○ More than 24 months
4. How long did it take you to get this job once you started looking for employment?

Please choose only one of the following:

- Less than 3 months
- 3-6 months
- 7-12 months
- More than 12 months

5. How many other jobs did you apply for before you got this one?

Please choose only one of the following:

- Only this job
- 1-4
- 5-9
- 10-15
- 16-20
- More than 20

6. Are you on the graduate development program?

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
- No

7. How long have you been on the graduate development program?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

* Answer was 'Yes' at question '13 [GDP]' (6. Are you on the graduate development program?)

Please choose only one of the following:
8. Activities from the graduate development program are shown below. Indicate the extent to which they have helped you make the transition from graduate to professional employee.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
* Answer was "Yes" at question '13 [GDP]' (6. Are you on the graduate development program?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>No help at all</th>
<th>Some help</th>
<th>Great help</th>
<th>I have not done this activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job-rotations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
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<td>Peer support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doing research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparing advisory papers and reports</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receiving performance feedback</td>
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9. Are there any other activities from the graduate development program which are missing from the list and which have helped you make the transition from graduate to professional employee?

If yes write them here:
**If none write 'none'.**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
* Answer was 'Yes' at question '13 [GDP]' (6. Are you on the graduate development program?)

Please write your answer here:

**10. Are you doing any further studies, professional membership certificates or training and development that are not part of the graduate development program? If so, indicate why and who initiated it. You may indicate all that apply.**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
* Answer was 'Yes' at question ‘13 [GDP]’ (6. Are you on the graduate development program?)

Check any that apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Further studies</th>
<th>For CAREER purposes</th>
<th>For NON-CAREER purposes</th>
<th>Initiated by ME</th>
<th>Initiated by my MANAGER or EMPLOYER</th>
<th>Initiated by PERSON EXTERNAL to my employment</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional membership or certificates</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-house training and development</td>
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<tr>
<td>External training and development</td>
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</table>

**11. Are you doing any further studies, professional membership certificates or training and development? If so, indicate why and who initiated it. You may indicate all that apply.**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
* Answer was 'No' at question '13 [GDP]' (6. Are you on the graduate development program?)

Check any that apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Further studies</th>
<th>For CAREER purposes</th>
<th>For NON-CAREER purposes</th>
<th>Initiated by ME</th>
<th>Initiated by my MANAGER or EMPLOYER</th>
<th>Initiated by PERSON EXTERNAL to my employment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional membership or certificates</td>
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<td>External training and development</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
12. How long do you intend to stay with this employer?

Please choose only one of the following:

- 1-6 months
- 7-12 months
- 13-18 months
- 19-24 months
- 25-36 months
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years
- Unsure at present

D. About your skills

This part asks you about your skills, which are defined as follows:

- Collecting, analysing and applying information = ensuring you have all relevant information at your disposal to make decisions and recommendations
- Communication = actively listening, contributing, presenting and responding to information
- Critical thinking = evaluating, using and developing new ideas and responses to situations
- Initiative and enterprise = generating and trying new ideas and new ways of working
- Planning and organising = organising and prioritising your current and future work tasks
- Problem solving = identifying, articulating and resolving problems
- Self-management = creating and managing activities and plans for your own work and career
- Teamwork = actively participating as a key member of a productive, organised group
- Technology = using appropriate technologies including information technologies

Read these definitions carefully.
1. Rank each skill in order of importance to you, in your current employment.

Click on an item in the list on the left, starting with the item which is most important to you, moving through to the least important item.

Please number each box in order of preference from 1 to 9:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Self-management
- Technology
- Critical thinking
- Planning and organising
- Initiative and enterprise
- Collecting, analysing and applying information

2. Do you have skills which are important to you in your current employment that are missing from the list?

If yes write them here:

Please write your answer here:

3. Rank each skill in order of importance to your employer.

Click on an item in the list on the left, starting with the item which is most important to your employer, moving through to the least important item.

Please number each box in order of preference from 1 to 9:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Self-management
- Technology
- Critical thinking
Planning and organising
Initiative and enterprise
Collecting, analysing and applying information

4. Do you have skills which are important to your employer that are missing from the list?

If yes write them here:

Please write your answer here:

5. Rate how good you are at each skill out of 10.

10 is the highest and 1 is the lowest.

Please enter a number between 1 and 10 for each item:

Teamwork
Problem solving
Self-management
Technology
Critical thinking
Initiative and enterprise
Collecting, analysing and applying information
Communication
Planning and organising

E. About your qualities

This part asks you about qualities that you might have, in addition to your skills. These qualities are defined as follows:

Curiosity in uncertainty – you desire to know more to resolve what can be done when new situations arise

- Enthusiasm – you see each task or challenge positively and know you can respond constructively
- Ethical behaviour – you know what is right to do
- Flexibility – you willingly change and adapt to suit the circumstances you face
- Intellectual openness – you are keen to understand, make comment on and apply new ideas from others
- Resilience – you accept that things can go wrong or not as planned and if they do, you learn from them and manage yourself positively
- Responsibility – you take your job seriously and are aware of its impact
- Use of connections = you seek out people who are beneficial to you
- Use of support systems = you use policies, procedures and systems

Read these definitions carefully

1. Rank each quality in order of importance to you, in your current employment.

Click on an item in the list on the left, starting with the item which is most important to you, moving through to the least important item.

Please number each box in order of preference from 1 to 9

- Flexibility
- Ethical behaviour
- Responsibility
- Enthusiasm
- Intellectual openness
- Curiosity in uncertainty
- Resilience
- Use of support systems
- Use of connections

2. Do you have qualities which are important to you in your current employment that are missing from the list?

If yes write them here:

Please write your answer here:

3. Rank each quality in order of importance to your employer.

Click on an item in the list on the left, starting with the item which is most important to your employer, moving through to the least important item.

Please number each box in order of preference from 1 to 9

- Flexibility
- Ethical behaviour
Responsibility
Enthusiasm
Intellectual openness
Curiosity in uncertainty
Resilience
Use of support systems
Use of connections

4. Do you have qualities which are important to your employer that are missing from the list?

If yes write them here:

Please write your answer here:

5. Rate how good you are at each quality out of 10.

10 is the highest and 1 is the lowest.

Please enter a number between 1 and 10 for each item:

Flexibility
Ethical behaviour
Responsibility
Enthusiasm
Intellectual openness
Curiosity in uncertainty
Resilience
Use of support systems
Use of connections

6. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am using what I learned from my degree in this job</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I regard myself as a professional in this job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
thanks to my knowledge, skills and qualities

During the early stages of this job, I felt uncertain about how to use my knowledge, skills and qualities in this job

At this point, I have made a successful transition to professional employment

F. About your career attitudes

This section asks you for comments about your career currently.

Read each statement carefully.

Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have sought out development opportunities with my current employer on my own</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I have a very independent, self-directed career</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to choose my own career path is one of my most important values</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am in charge of my own career</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultimately, I depend upon myself to move my career forward</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where my career is concerned, I am very much 'my own person'.

I have relied more on myself than others to find this job.

My personal priorities, as opposed to my current employer's priorities, determine how my career is being shaped.

It does not matter much to me how other people evaluate the choices I make in my career.

I would follow my own conscience if my current employer asks me to do something that goes against my values.

What I think about what is right in my career is more important to me than what my current employer thinks.

**G. About your career possibilities**

This section asks you about your career possibilities now and for the future.

**Read each statement carefully**

**Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.**

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I personally seek out tasks with my current employer that enable me to learn something new</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would enjoy working on projects with people across many organisations</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would like to focus on tasks that require me to work outside of my current employer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would like tasks that require me to work beyond my own section

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would enjoy tasks that require me to interact with people in many different organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am/would be energised in tasks which present new experiences and situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I like the predictability that comes with working continuously for the same employer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would feel very uncertain about my career if I could not work for my current employer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I prefer to stay with an employer I am familiar with rather than look for employment elsewhere

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If my current employer provided lifetime employment, I would never seek work in other organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In my ideal career, I would work for only one employer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little extent</th>
<th>Limited extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Considerable extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H. Your transition from graduate to professional

This section asks for your final comments about your transition to professional employee.

1. Other than matters covered in this survey, what particularly assisted you in making the transition from graduate to professional employee?

If nothing, write nothing.
Please write your answer here:

2. What made it difficult for you to make the transition from graduate to professional employee?

If nothing, write nothing.

Please write your answer here:

3. Is there anything else you would like to say about your transition from graduate to professional employment?

If there is nothing you would like to add, write nothing.

Please write your answer here:

Volunteers needed.

I would like to conduct a short, confidential interview with you, in your workplace, if convenient, to talk about your experiences.

If you would like to participate in an interview, please click on the link below to provide your email address so that I can contact you. This is a second link, which is separate to your original survey, so you will not compromise the anonymity of your survey responses.

Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, your comments are appreciated and will be very valuable in assisting other graduates make the transition to professional employment.

Jan Ferguson
### Appendix 9 Operational constructs for the survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract Concept</th>
<th>Conceptual Definition</th>
<th>Variable Labels</th>
<th>SPSS Variable Name</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Operational Definition (Codes)</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Demographics  | About graduates        | a. What is your age?  
b. What is your gender?  
c. Did you commence your degree straight after high school?  
d. Select your degree from the drop-down list.  
e. What year did you finish your most recent degree? | Age Gender         | EXP      | EXP      | EXP D D D D N O               | N     |
| 2. Work          | About their work      | a. During your degree, did you do any of these prior work activities with your CURRENT EMPLOYER?  
b. During your degree, did you do any of these prior work activities with ANOTHER EMPLOYER?  
c. What is your job title?  
d. Is this your first job after finishing your degree?  
e. How long have you been in this job?  
f. How long did it take you to get this job once you started looking for employment?  
g. How many other jobs did you apply for before you got this one?  
h. Are you on the GDP?  
i. How long have you been on the GDP?  
j. Activities from the GDP are shown below. Indicate the extent to which they have helped you | EXP EXP DD EXP EXP EXP DD DD DD DD EXP EXP | EXP DD EXP DD DD DD DD DD DD EXP | EXP DD DD DD DD DD DD DD DD EXP | EXP DD DD DD DD DD DD DD DD EXP | EXP N |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Skills</th>
<th>Graduate skills as identified in the literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Rank each skill in order of importance to you, in your current employment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Do you have skills which are important to you in your current employment that are missing from the list?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Rank each skill in order of importance to your employer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Do you have skills which are important to your employer that are missing from the list?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Rate how good you are at each skill out of 10.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AV/RANK</th>
<th>O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AV/RANK</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV/RANK</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV/RANK</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV/RANK</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Qualities</th>
<th>Graduate qualities as identified in the literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Rank each quality in order of importance to you, in your current employment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Do you have qualities which are important to you in your current employment that are missing from the list?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AV/RANK</th>
<th>O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AV/RANK</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV/RANK</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV/RANK</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Graduate attributes</td>
<td>Knowledge skills and other qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Rank each quality in order of importance to your employer.</td>
<td>d. Do you have qualities which are important to your employer that are missing from the list?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. KSQ use</td>
<td>How graduates use their KSQs in their job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Protean orientation</td>
<td>How far graduates are able to change in response to changes in the world of work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

363
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. Boundaryless attitude towards moving between employees and professions</th>
<th>Graduates’ attitude towards moving between employees and professions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I personally seek out tasks with my current employer that enable me to learn something new.</td>
<td>.563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I would enjoy working on projects with people across many organisations.</td>
<td>.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I would like to focus on tasks that require me to work outside of my current employer.</td>
<td>.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. I would like tasks that require me to work beyond my own section.</td>
<td>.698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. I would enjoy tasks that require me to interact with people in many different organisations.</td>
<td>.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. I am/ would be energised in tasks which present new experiences and situations.</td>
<td>.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. I like the predictability that comes with working continuously for the same employer.</td>
<td>.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. My personal priorities, as opposed to my current employer’s priorities, determine how my career is being shaped.</td>
<td>.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. It does not matter much to me how other people evaluate the choices I make in my career.</td>
<td>.279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. I will follow my own conscience if my current employer asks me to do something that goes against my values.</td>
<td>.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. What I think about what is right in my career is more important to me than what my current employer thinks.</td>
<td>.388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
h. I would feel very uncertain about my career if I could not work for my current employer.
i. I prefer to stay with an employer I am familiar with rather than look for employment elsewhere.
j. If my current employer provided lifetime employment, I would never seek work in other organisations.
k. In my ideal career, I would work for only one employer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9. Graduate career agency</th>
<th>How far graduates manage their careers</th>
<th>Aggregate of items 6+7+2l+2m</th>
<th>MP/RS</th>
<th>.436</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>CR/A &amp; FA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| 10. What else assisted transition to professional employment? Open questions | Their experiences of transition and the use of KSOQs | a. Other than matters covered in this survey, what particularly assisted you in making the transition from graduate to professional employee? b. What made it difficult for you to make the transition from graduate to professional employee? c. Is there anything else you would like to say about your transition from graduate to professional employment? | Coded in themes. Find all. |

**Key: General**
- N = Nominal
- D = Descriptive
- DD = Descriptive demographic
- Specific EXP = experience
- MR = mean/rank
- TOT = total score
- AV/RANK = average ranking
- SD = self-directed
- VD = values driven
- SD+VD = Protean
- BLM = boundaryless mindset.
Appendix 10 Ethics approval

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

12-Aug-2013

Dear Mrs Ferguson

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the conditional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "NR: How do employers and graduates manage the critical transition from graduate attributes to professional attributes?" (GU Ref No: EHR/11/12/HREC).

This is to confirm receipt of the remaining required information, assurances or amendments to this protocol.

Consequently, I reconfirm my earlier advice that you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards

Dr Kristie Westerlaken
Policy Officer
Office for Research
Bray Centre, Nathan Campus
Griffith University
ph: +61 (0) 7 373 58043
fax: +61 (07) 373 57994
email: k.westerlaken@griffith.edu.au
web:

Cc:

Researchers are reminded that the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research provides guidance to researchers in areas such as conflict of interest, authorship, storage of data, & the training of research students.

You can find further information, resources and a link to the University's Code by visiting http://policies.griffith.edu.au/pdf/Code%20for%20the%20Responsible%20Conduct%20of%20Research.pdf

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**Appendix 11 Average ranking of skills n=99**

In order of importance to graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3/4</th>
<th>3/4</th>
<th>5/6</th>
<th>5/6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>7.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>7.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting, analysing and applying information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organising</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>7.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>7.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative and enterprise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>7.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By graduates in order of importance to employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting, analysing and applying information</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organising</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative and enterprise</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 12 Average ranking of ‘other qualities’ n=92

**In order of importance to graduates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enthusiasm</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>Ethical behaviour</th>
<th>Intellectual openness</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Curiosity in uncertainty</th>
<th>Use of connections</th>
<th>Use of support systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**By graduates in order of importance to employers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical behaviour</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>Enthusiasm</th>
<th>Use of support systems</th>
<th>Intellectual openness</th>
<th>Use of connections</th>
<th>Curiosity in uncertainty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>6.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

368
## Appendix 13 Further development n=97

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>For career purposes</th>
<th>For non-career purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further studies</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional membership</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house training and development</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External training and development</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further studies initiated by me</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional membership initiated by me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house training and development initiated by me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External training and development initiated by me</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further studies initiated by manager/employer</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional membership initiated by manager/employer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house training and development initiated by manager/employer</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External training and development initiated by manager/employer</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further studies initiated by another person</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional membership initiated by another person</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house training and development initiated by another person</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External training and development initiated by another person</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 14 Percentage scores for protean orientation and boundaryless mindset items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SD1 When development opportunities have not been offered (by my employer), I’ve sought them out on my own n=95</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD2 I am responsible for my success or failure in my career n=35</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD3 Overall, I have a very independent, self-directed career n=95</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD4 Freedom to choose my career path is one of my important values n=97</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD5 I am in charge of my own career n=97</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD6 Ultimately, I depend upon myself to move my career forward n=97</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD7 Where my career is concerned, I am very much ‘my own person’ n=96</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD8 In the past I have relied more on myself than others to find work n=97</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VD1 I navigate my own career, based on my personal priorities, as opposed to my employer’s priorities n=96</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VD2 It doesn’t matter much to me how other people evaluate the choices I make in my career n=97</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>%22.9</td>
<td>%37.1</td>
<td>%25.7</td>
<td>%11.4</td>
<td>%2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VD3 What’s most important to me is how I feel about my career success; not how other people feel about it n= 35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VD4 I’ll follow my own conscience if my company asks me to do something that goes against my values n=97</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VD5 What I think about what is right in my career is more important to me than what my organisation thinks n=97</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VD6 In the past I have sided with my own values when the organisation has asked me to do something I don’t agree with n=23</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS 1 I seek job assignments that allow me to learn something new n=97</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS 2 I would enjoy working on projects with people across many organisations n= 97</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS 3 I would enjoy job assignments that require me to work outside the organisation n=97</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS 4 I would like tasks at work that require me to work beyond my own department n= 97</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS 5 I would enjoy working with people outside of my organisation n= 34</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS 6 I would enjoy jobs that require me to interact with people in many different organisations n= 97</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS 7 I have sought opportunities in the past that allow me to work outside the organisation n=34</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS 8 I am energised in new experiences and situations n=97</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMP 1 I would like the predictability that comes with working continuously for the same organisation n= 97</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMP 2</td>
<td>I would feel very uncertain about my career if I could not work for my current employer n=97</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMP 3</td>
<td>I prefer to stay with an employer I am familiar with rather than look for employment elsewhere n=97</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMP 4</td>
<td>If my current employer provided lifetime employment, I would never seek work in other organisations n=97</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMP 5</td>
<td>In my ideal career, I would work for only one employer n=97</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
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</table>
# Appendix 15 Integration of mixed methods research findings

What are graduates’ perceptions of the value of their attributes for shaping their careers especially when making their first career transition from university to professional employment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core - qualitative findings</th>
<th>Supplementary quantitative findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extracts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sample characteristics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How graduates negotiate the transition from university to professional employment</strong></td>
<td><strong>How graduates negotiate the transition from university to professional employment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What it was like for graduates starting their jobs after university?</td>
<td>1. The value of prior experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Excitement</td>
<td>a. Table 18: Level of agreement with assisting transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Culture shock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Levels of support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The transition year overall</td>
<td>2. The value of GDPs during the transition to employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The main challenges, for graduates, from starting this job</td>
<td>b. Table 19: GDP activities and transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The value of additional support such as mentors or buddies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The value of prior work experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. From graduate to professional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What graduates tell us about their transition experiences and what literature tells us</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduates’ perceptions of the value of their graduate attributes during transition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Graduates’ perceptions of the value of their graduate attributes during transition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Frequency of events where skills or other qualities were used</td>
<td>1. The value of graduate attributes during the transition to employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Communication</td>
<td>a. I am using what I learned from my degree in this job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Collecting, analysing and information</td>
<td>b. I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Self-management applying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Teamwork</td>
<td>c. During early stages of this job I felt uncertain about using my KSOQs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Planning and organising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Enthusiasm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Initiative and enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Initiative and enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Perseverance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>Use of connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td>Self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o.</td>
<td>Ethical behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.</td>
<td>Curiosity in uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q.</td>
<td>Use of support systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r.</td>
<td>Intellectual openness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Skills or other qualities not used

3. Skills or other qualities not included in the cards

4. SOQs graduates brought from their prior work experience

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. At this point I have made a successful transition to professional employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The use and value of specific SOQs to respondents and employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Table 20: Perceived importance ranking of SOQs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. SOQs measure validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Table 21: PCA Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Graduate attributes and transition success - six components were named based on content validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Cognitive processing (5 items; (\alpha = 0.763)),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Interpersonal (4 items; (\alpha = 0.757)),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Intrapersonal (4 items; (\alpha = 0.762)),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Self-management (3 items; (\alpha = 0.631)),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Curiosity (2 items)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Ethical behaviour (single item indicator)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Relationship between graduate attributes and transition success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Table 22: Bivariate correlation matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. What contributes to knowledge from a degree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Participants who rated themselves high on intrapersonal also rated themselves high on ‘I am using what I learned from my degree in this job’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Participants who rated themselves high on curiosity also rated themselves high on ‘I am using what I learned from my degree in this job’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. What contributes to graduates’ transition to a professional identity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Participants who rated themselves high on cognitive processing also rated themselves high on ‘I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ii. Participants who rated themselves high on interpersonal also rated themselves high on ‘I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs’.

iii. Participants who rated themselves high on intrapersonal also rated themselves high ‘I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs’.

iv. Participants who rated themselves high on self-management also rated themselves high on ‘I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs’.

v. Participants who rated themselves high on ethical behaviour also rated themselves high on ‘I regard myself as a professional in this job thanks to my KSOQs’.

c. 3. Which graduate attributes are the most effective in facilitating a successful transition?

i. Participants who rated themselves high on cognitive processing also rated themselves high on ‘At this point I have made a successful transition to professional employment’.

ii. Participants who rated themselves high on interpersonal also rated themselves high on ‘At this point I have made a successful transition to professional employment’.

iii. Participants who rated themselves high on intrapersonal also rated themselves high on ‘At this point I have made a successful transition to professional employment’.

iv. Learning from a degree via interpersonal skills and curiosity contributed to transition success. Participants regarded themselves as professionals in their job via cognitive processing, interpersonal, intrapersonal, self-management and ethical behaviour.
The role of graduate career agency during the transition to professional employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The role of graduate career agency during the transition to professional employment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Graduates’ perceptions of their careers</td>
<td>1. Further development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Graduates taking control of their careers</td>
<td>a. Tables 23 and 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How far graduates think they have come in their careers</td>
<td>2. Protean orientation and boundaryless mindset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What aspect of graduates’ careers would they change?</td>
<td>b. Table 15: Percentage scores for protean and boundaryless sub-scales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What would help graduates further in their careers?</td>
<td>3. Career orientation and intended length of stay with current employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Where graduates see their careers taking them</td>
<td>a. Table 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The number of jobs graduates might have over the next ten years</td>
<td>4. Career orientation and transition success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Graduates’ career attitude versus personal values</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Advice from graduates to new graduates about careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Maximising the university experience</td>
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<td>11. Self-awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Personal planning and development</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Attitude to work and career plans</td>
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<td>14. Career preparation at university</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Merged conclusions to the core qualitative and supplementary qualitative findings