University of Cumbria

English, Lesley ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7111-8661 (2017) Mind the gap: using MOOCs to provide pre-entry skills support. In: NoWAL Conference 2017: Library evolution: developing academic libraries for the future, 20 July 2017, Lancaster University, UK. (Unpublished)

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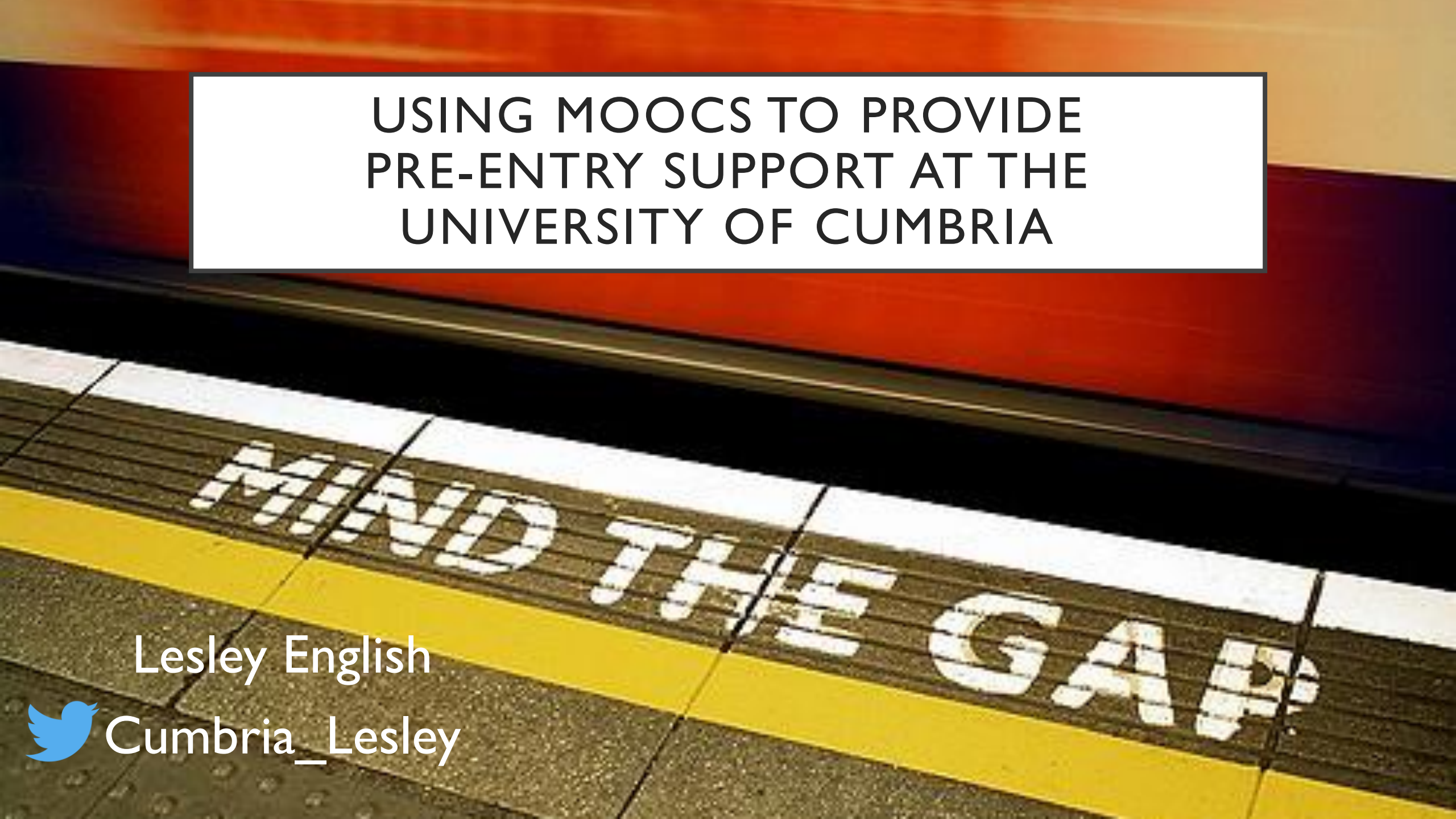
# USING MOOCS TO PROVIDE PRE-ENTRY SUPPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA




Lesley English

Cumbria_Lesley

# THIS SESSION WILL…

- Explore the challenges of academic skills delivery at the University of Cumbria
- Introduce the team and their skills set
- Present Head Start – our first pre-entry skills module
- Take you on a journey… from Head Start to MOOCs
- Report on small scale research
- Reflect on the benefits and challenges of creating + maintaining pre-entry modules
- Look at the future of our pre-entry portfolio

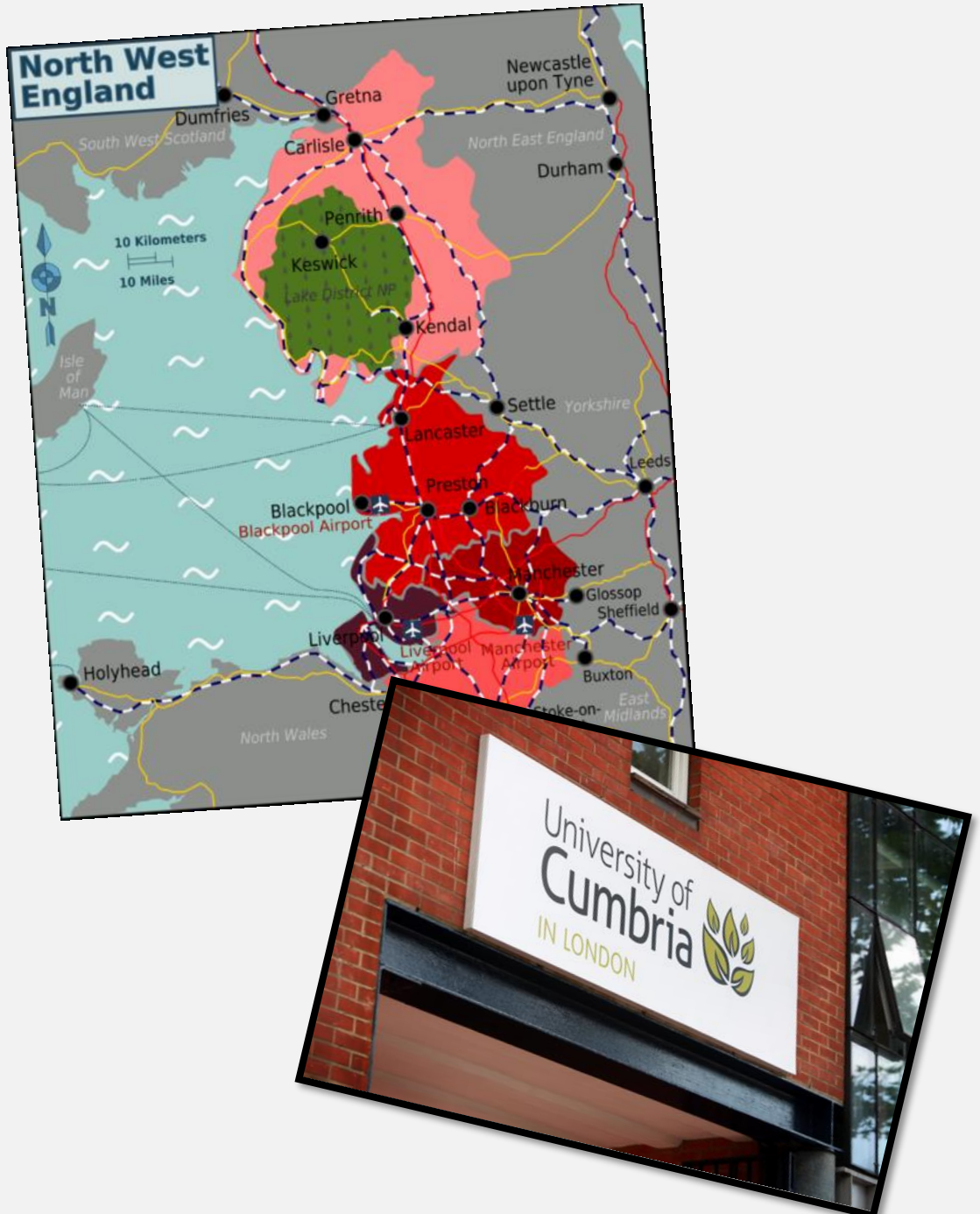
# OUR UNIVERSITY
# OUR STUDENTS

5 campuses + 2 gateway sites

Developing a curriculum relevant to the region e.g. nuclear power industry in West Cumbria

Many professional courses e.g. nursing, midwifery, counselling, paramedic practice. Students may not as strong academically but have strengths in their skills

(West, 2012)



**61-65%** of students classed as Widening Participation

41.3% from lower socio-economic groups

20.5% from low participating neighbourhoods

55% of postgraduate students are part-time

21% distance learning students

59% over 21 at the start of their studies

University of Cumbria

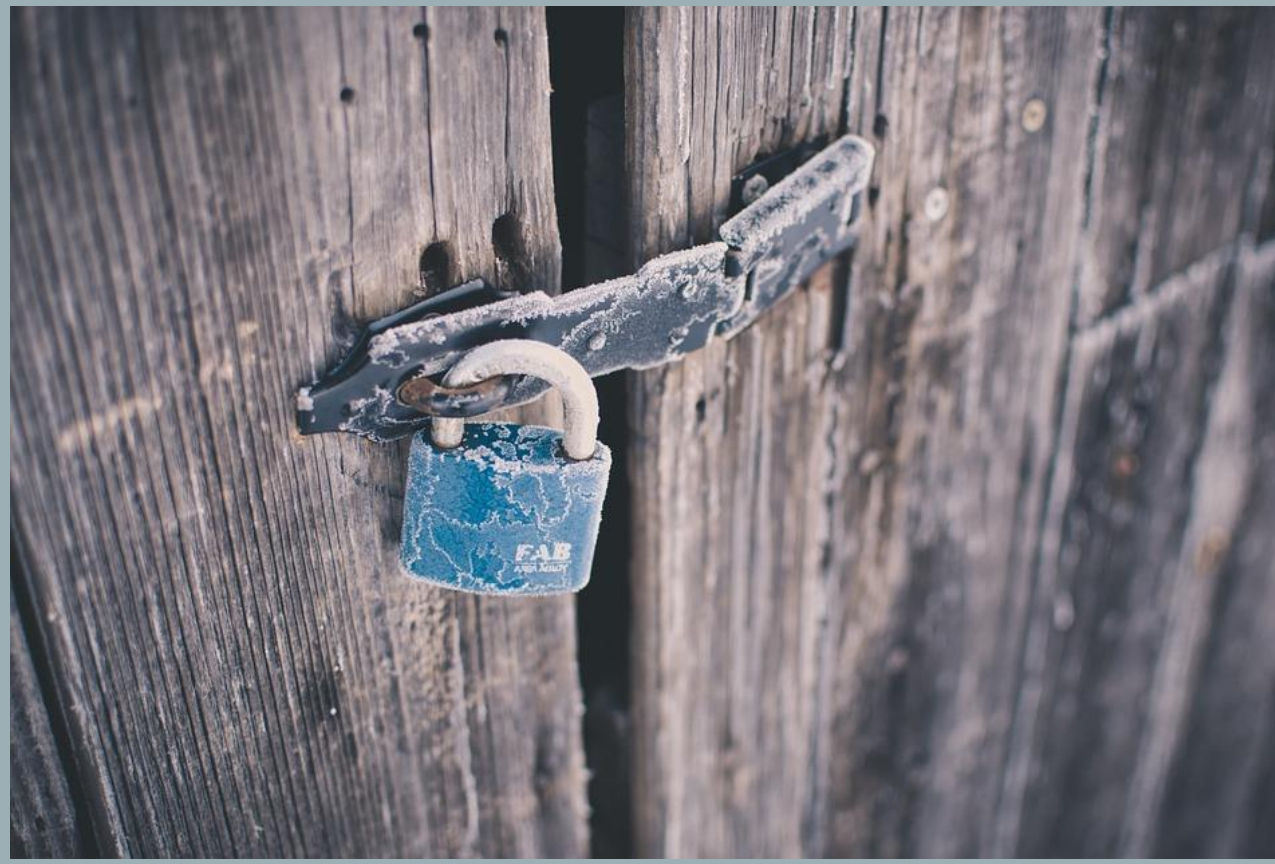
HESA, 2016

# SUPPORTING STUDENTS PRE-ENTRY

Lack of preparedness for HE is one of the main factors for students not completing their course (Murtagh, 2012)

Interventions at pre-entry stage can provide key information about the University ensuring students arrive with realistic expectations + can help to develop the students' own confidence (HEFCE, 2012a)

Most UK HEI's prioritise the area of transition + the 'first year experience' as they are recognised in improving student retention + success (Thomas, 2012)

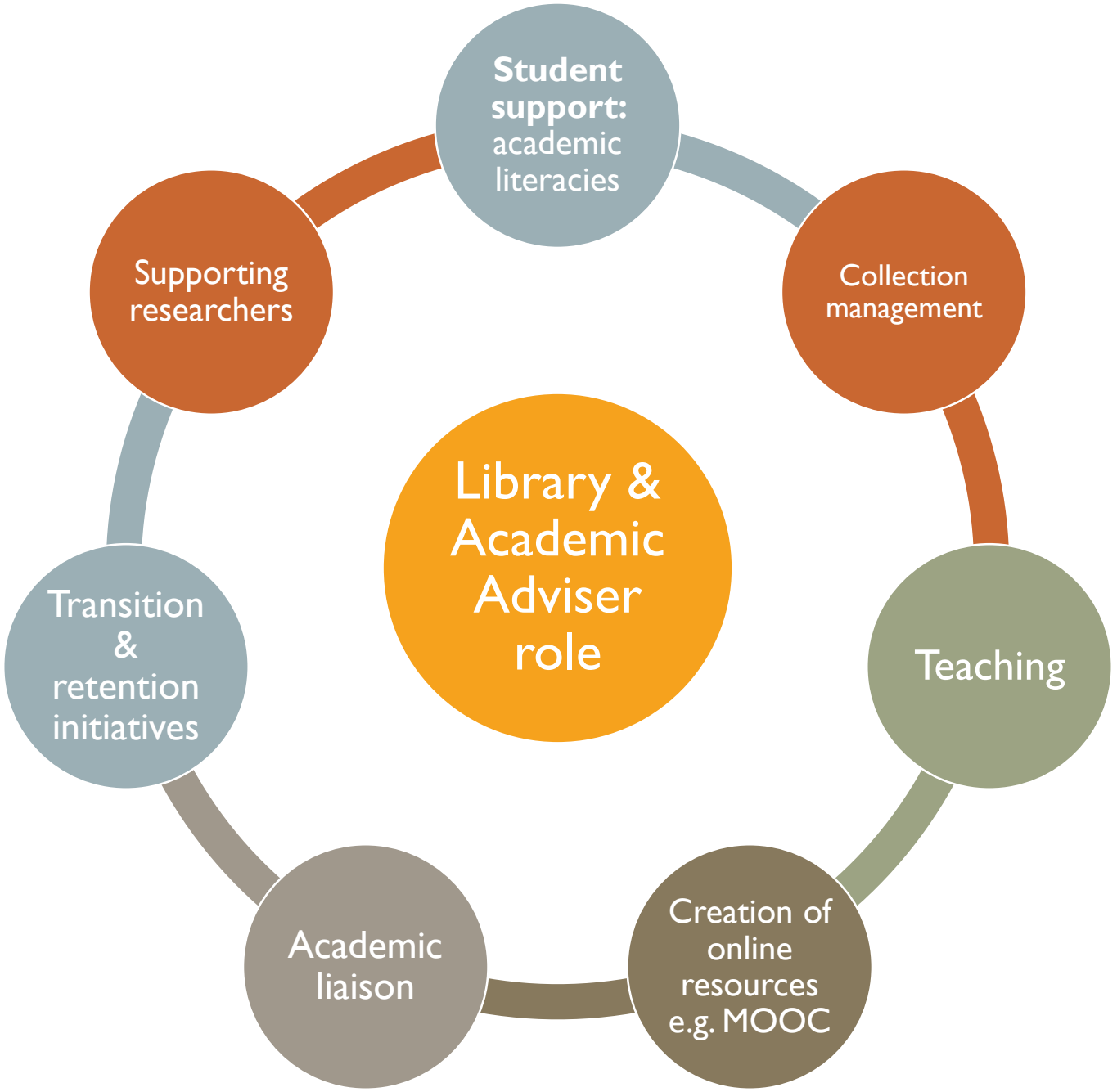


# INTRODUCING THE TEAM

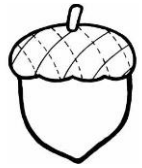
Collaborative work with Skills team, learning technologists + academics

Blended role of academic and skills adviser – skills set includes librarians, information literacy (IL) practitioners,+ learning development expertise

Create integrated IL & academic skills teaching & learning activities including online learning resources such as Head Start


Student support: academic literacies
Collection management
Teaching
Creation of online resources e.g. MOOC
Academic liaison
Transition & retention initiatives
Supporting researchers
Library & Academic Adviser role

# A TINY ACORN



- ✓ **Head Start** study skills module created as the first pre-entry module in 2012
- ✓ Transition to L4
- ✓ Available through the Blackboard VLE
- ✓ Key aim to "**raise confidence levels and in part prepare students for the demands of studying at university level**" (Fraser, Shaw & Ruston, 2013, p. 129)
- ✓ Offered to firm & insurance places from May onwards for September entry
- ✓ Originally developed as an accredited module
- ✓ 5 Head Start subject pathways

X Workarounds needed to ensure students are able to access VLE before registering

# ASSESSMENT IN HEAD START

All assessments are self-marking quizzes

Scores feed into Grade Centre in Bb

We can see when a student has passed, when they last logged on, etc.

# FEEDBACK FROM ADVISERS

"A significant proportion of students we taught had engaged with Head Start. In particular we found Head Start students to be notably more confident and appropriately vocal in sessions."

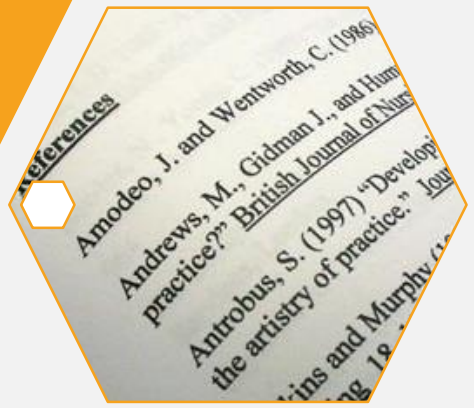
Kim McGowan, Information Literacy Award Winner 2013

# DATA SUMMER 2016

57% completed core element one

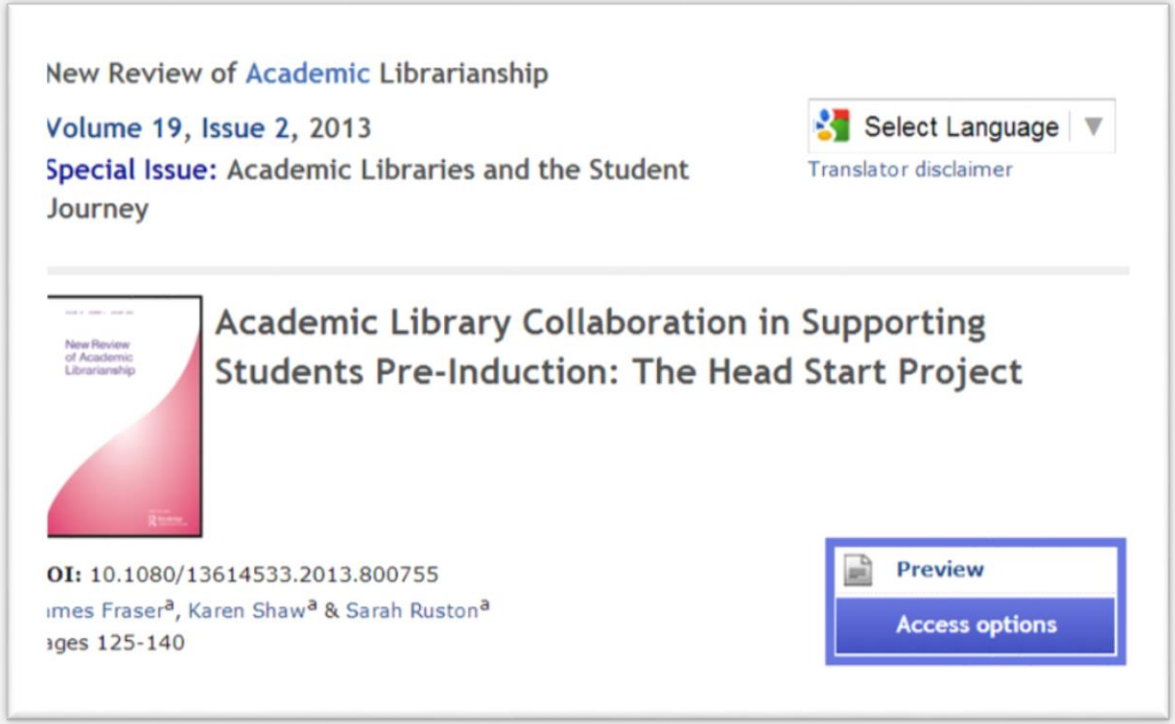
'Writing in HE'

41% completed core element two 'Referencing explained'




46% of students revisited Head Start since Welcome Week

# READ ALL ABOUT IT…



New Review of Academic Librarianship

Volume 19, Issue 2, 2013

Special Issue: Academic Libraries and the Student Journey

Select Language

Translator disclaimer



## Academic Library Collaboration in Supporting Students Pre-Induction: The Head Start Project

OI: 10.1080/13614533.2013.800755

ımes Fraser[a], Karen Shaw[a] & Sarah Ruston[a]

ages 125-140

Preview

Access options

# EXPANDING THE PORTFOLIO

Previous research highlights that transition at Masters level is ***particularly important*** for students studying on a more practical course (such as counselling, nursing or CBT) and that we should **not make assumptions** and expect postgraduate students to arrive with the study skills necessary for M-level study

(West, 2012; Tobell, O'Donnell and Zammit, 2010; O'Donnell *et al*., 2009; Watson, Johnson and Walker, 2005; Grotzer, 2005).

# FROM HEAD START TO MOOCS

- Requests for pre-entry modules at levels 5,6 + 7 for health students
- L7 module piloted with cohort of officers from Sandhurst Military Academy, incorporated discussion board monitored by army and academics
- L7 education version created for PGCE/ School Direct students
- Originally created in Blackboard but not sustainable with workaround to pre-register students prior to induction
- Launched University's first MOOCs in 2014 using Blackboard Open Education: Head Start Plus (L5+6) + Preparing for Postgraduate Study (L7)

# CREATING THE MOOCS

Articulate Storyline

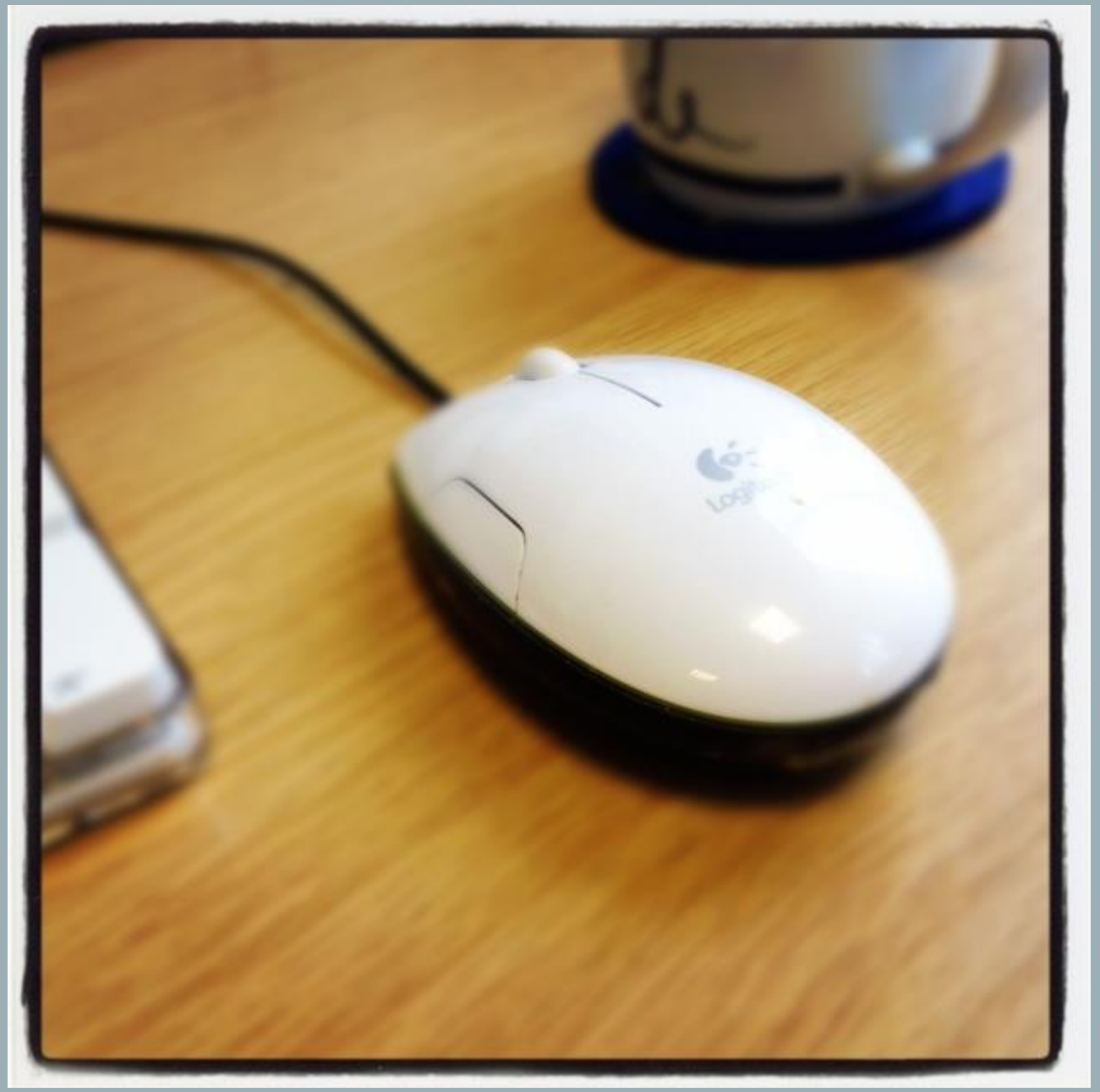
Interactive – includes videos, audio files, drag-and-drop, self-assessed quizzes and links to internal + external resources

Flexible format – menu allows user to select relevant sections

Referencing Explained module used across all levels

Bite size chunks

Expected to take 10-12 hours to complete whole module



"Key advantages of e-learning for the development of academic literacies are that it can facilitate deep learning, offers more flexible learning opportunities for students & provides instant feedback"
(Wingate, 2009, p. A16)

# SUCCESSES

THE LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT AWARDS 2014 WINNER

Outstanding Student Services Team

Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in Teaching & Learning 2015

**Lesley English**

is awarded a Vice-Chancellor's Award in Teaching & Learning for the contribution made to a teaching team.

These awards are made in recognition of outstanding work in relation to teaching and the support of learning at the University of Cumbria.

University of Cumbria

SHORTLISTED

THE TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT AWARDS 2016

OUTSTANDING LIBRARY TEAM

# SMALL SCALE RESEARCH

'Can an online study skills module be effective in preparing non-traditional health students for a Masters level programme of study?'

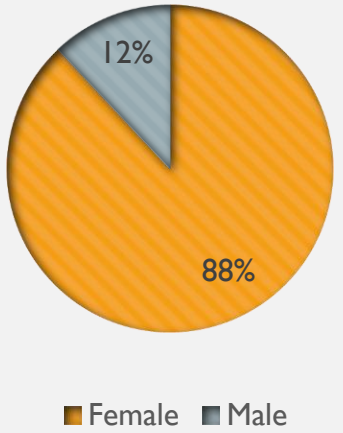
Measure the study skills competencies of the students accessing the course, using a self-assessed skills audit at the start and end of the module.

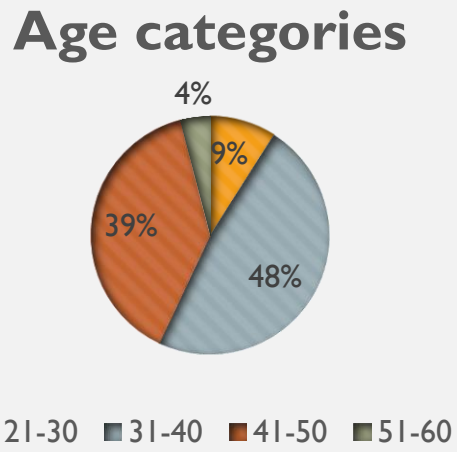
To investigate whether the students' confidence in their own study skills have increased through participation in the course.

To determine to what extent completion of the study skills module affect the student's overall pass rate on their programme of study.

# METHODS AND SAMPLE SIZE

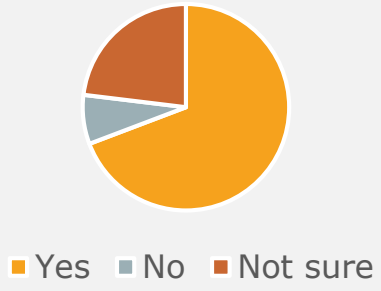
- 77 students across 3 health programmes
- Mixed methods study which included the use of a skills audit, online questionnaire and a focus group
- Grades of the 1st summative assessment compared of those who engaged with the MOOC and those who didn't



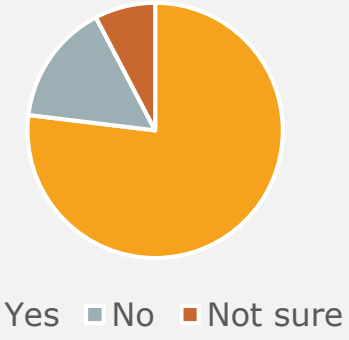



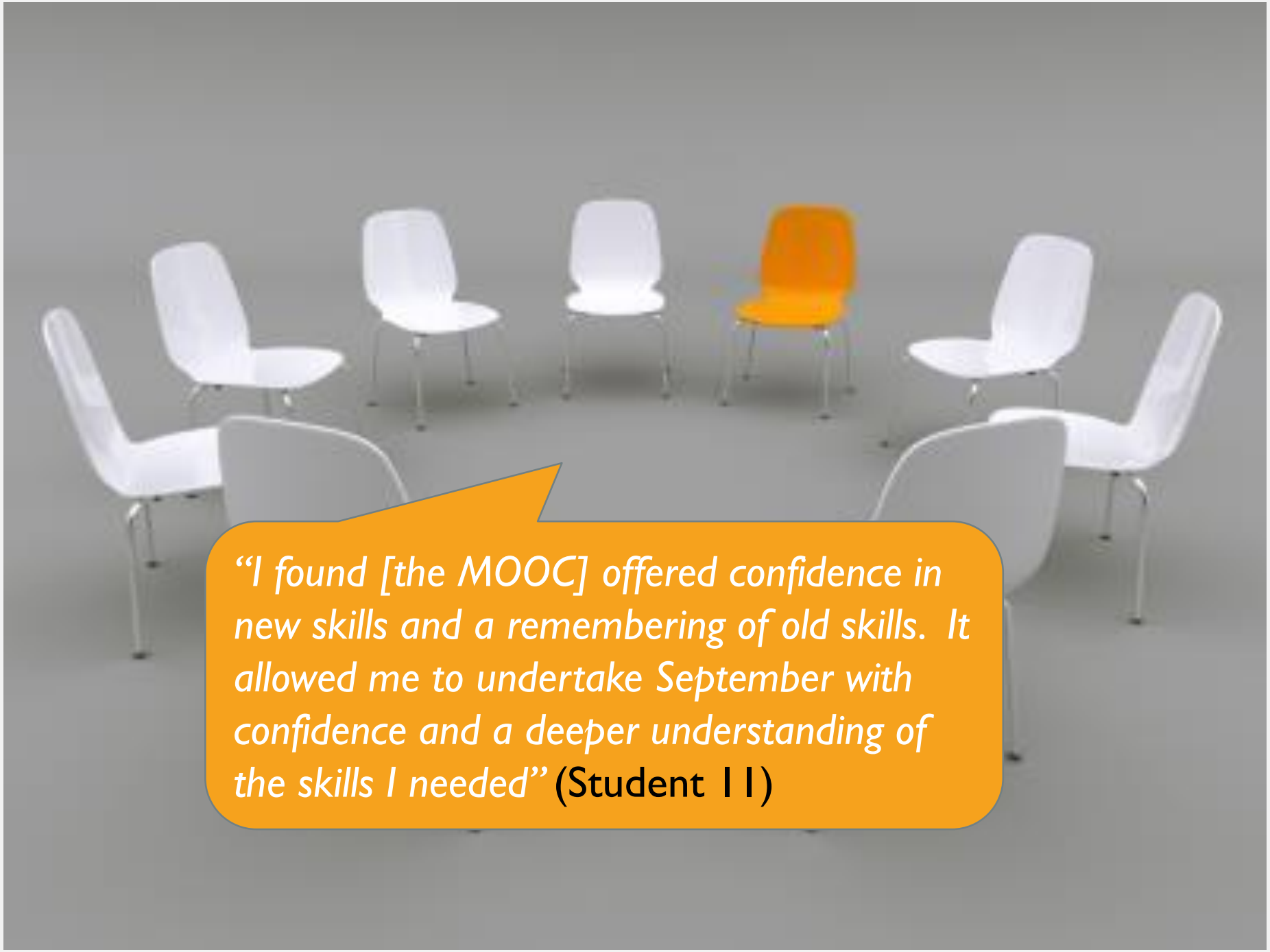
# KEY FINDINGS 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

Do you think that by accessing the MOOC you felt prepared for studying at Masters-level at the University of Cumbria?



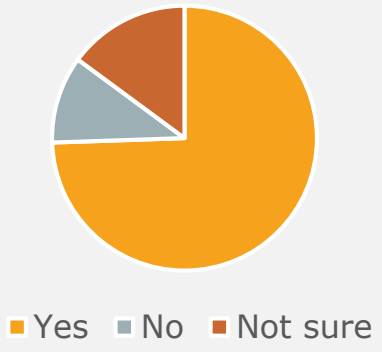

Do you feel that by accessing the MOOC you felt more confident about studying at Masters-level?



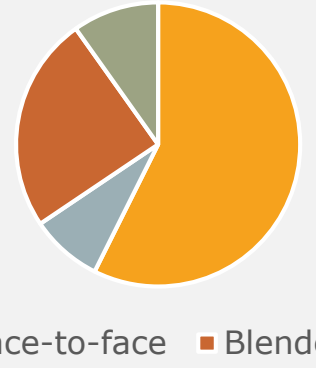

*"I found [the MOOC] offered confidence in new skills and a remembering of old skills. It allowed me to undertake September with confidence and a deeper understanding of the skills I needed"* (Student 11)

# KEY FINDINGS 2: QUESTIONNAIRE

Do you think that academic skills can successfully be delivered through a purely online course?



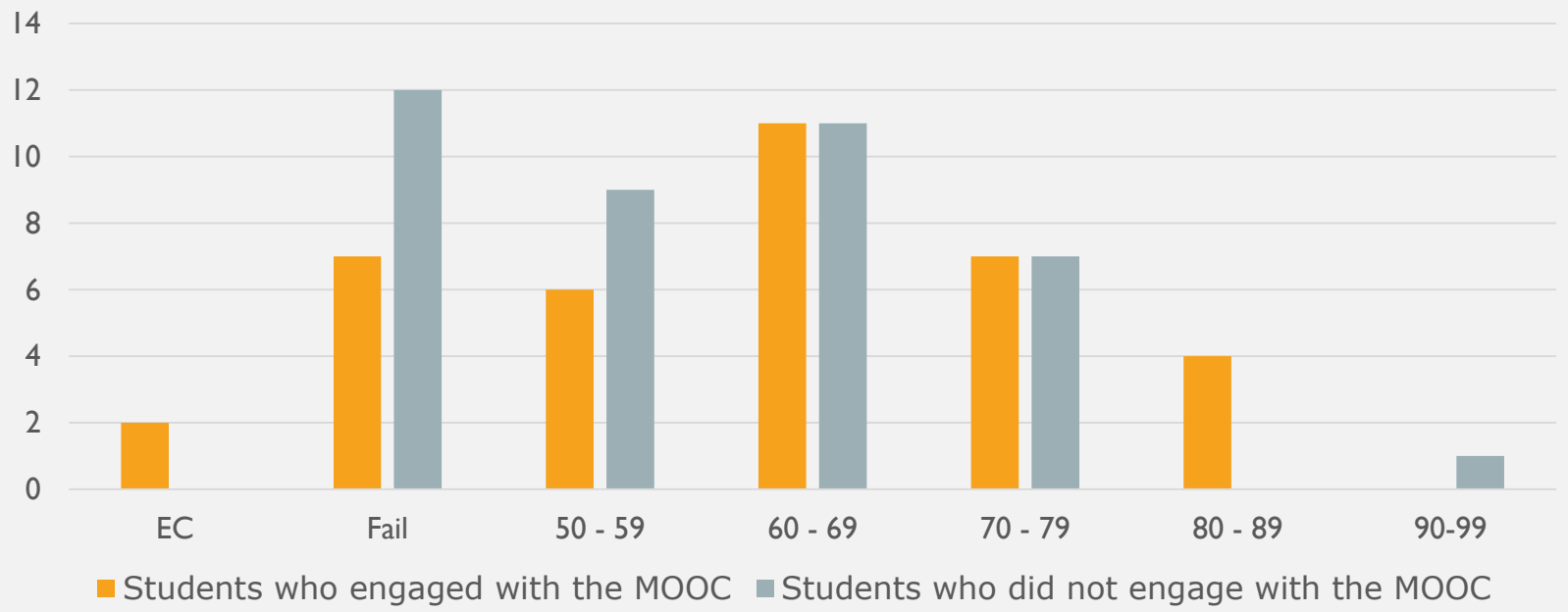

What is your preferred mode of delivery e.g. online, face to face or a blended model?



Many declared that a purely online course can be an effective method of delivering study skills.

However, they emphasised the need for some sort of **online forum** to be incorporated to develop an online community of learners.

# COMPARISON OF GRADES FROM 1ST SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT




Engagement with the MOOC seems to have had a positive influence on the grades for the first summative assessment. Students were less likely to fail the assessment if they had accessed the online skills module.

# **BENEFITS** + CHALLENGES

Sustainable and accessible package of pre-entry support helps with recruitment, retention and achievement

Build effective partnerships with learning technologists + academics

Individual sections can be used separately

Used alongside taught skills workshops to scaffold learning

Useful not only as pre-induction tool, but as the student progresses through the course

# BENEFITS + **CHALLENGES**

Using new software + lack of technical expertise in using Bb/ Blackboard Open Education/ Articulate

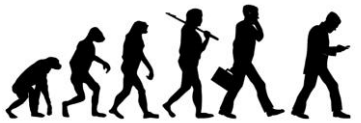
Enrolment issues in Bb

Can't be complacent – need to regularly evaluate, update + refresh content

Small team means that if there's a crisis there may be no-one to fix it!

Time…

# MOVING FORWARD



- Head Start module to move to Blackboard Open Education (one version with subject specific discussion boards)
- Head Start no longer seen as a conversion tool so will be launched in August + used as a retention tool
- MOOCs – introduction of reflective question at the end of each section will allow us to monitor engagement through the Grade Centre. Each completed section generates a badge + full set of badges = self-generated certificate
- Development of skills audits can provide a method of assessing the students' increase in skill level and confidence + motivate the students to learn (Verhey, 1999; Ivanitskaya *et al*., 2008)
- Introduction of discussion boards in MOOCs to encourage a sense of community in online learning (Shea, Li and Pickett, 2006)

# REFERENCE LIST

To access the reference list via Google Drive click on this link

# QUESTIONS