WARWICK

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED
TEACHING AND LEARNING

PHASE 1 REPORT

Improving students' wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

In order to understand more about the landscape of students' wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment at the University of Warwick, this project ran 13 focus groups between January and April 2018. The focus groups involved 120 participants, including undergraduate (UG), taught postgraduate (PGT) and research postgraduate (PGR) students, as well as staff members (from Academic Departments and Services) of the University of Warwick (see Data section below).

This report captures the results of these focus groups with the primary aim of understanding the current status of Warwick students' wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment, as well as identifying key themes that need to be addressed in order to improve it. In particular, this report sets out four key findings and defines some 'working tools' to ensure that students and academics are effectively supported.

One of the aims of the study was to understand student and staff interpretations of the concepts of 'wellbeing' and 'teaching and learning environment'. Hence, participants were encouraged to have an open conversation about what 'wellbeing' and 'the teaching and learning environment' meant to them.

Warwick focus group participants demonstrated an overall view of wellbeing that is largely comparable to what has been written in the literature. Interestingly, these views were often shaped and developed during the focus groups during the conversations among participants.

There are some aspects of wellbeing that need to be further explored by the Warwick community. In particular, it would be useful to promote further work that articulates the idea of holistic wellbeing and of the practices that can positively impact it.

It was also crucial to understand if Warwick students and staff see and/or experience a link between students' wellbeing and the teaching and learning environment

Once it was established by the participants that there is a reciprocal impact between wellbeing and the teaching and learning environment, the nature of this relationship was explored to capture the positive and negative aspects of it.

From the thematic analysis of the focus groups' discussions, four key themes emerged that describe the relationship between students' wellbeing and the teaching and learning environment:

1. Student-centred and student-focussed environments have a positive impact on Warwick students' wellbeing

2. A lack of intercultural and international integration has a negative impact on Warwick students' wellbeing

3. Emotional intelligence has a positive impact on Warwick students' wellbeing

4. The quality of personal tutor/tutee relationships has a significant impact on student wellbeing

Each key theme is described and addressed in this report, illustrated by a large number of testimonials from students and staff. Examples of excellent practices are reported alongside examples of practices that are recognised to have a negative impact on students' wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment.

In order to promote reflection and to initiate a conversation for addressing the issues related to each key theme at departmental, disciplinary, institutional and personal levels, we propose to utilise the questions and prompts contained in each 'What's next' part of the four 'Key Theme' sections as 'reflective tools'. The four sets of questions can be used alone, or in combination, with each feeding in to a wider discussion.

Our suggestion and aim is to utilise these questions as a backbone for reflective workshops with students and staff in different departments, across campus and at Warwick events, as we accomplished through our presentation at the Warwick Education Conference 2018.

This Warwick community work, accompanied by 'ad-hoc' scholarly research, will allow us to further capture excellent Warwick pedagogic practices and to identify additional solutions capable of responding to issues related to student wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment.

An action aimed at promoting the undertaking of further work with Warwick staff and students for the development of the concept of wellbeing is also recommended in the relevant section.

The results of this further effort in identifying possible solutions for enhancing students' wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment will be published in the Phase 2 report as recommendations, and these practices will be embedded in IATL modules and evaluated.

Introduction

Project Background Information

As reported in several national studies (e.g. Universities UK, MWBHE, 2015; Brown, P. 2016), UK universities are experiencing a crisis in student mental health and wellbeing that is growing each year. This includes the University of Warwick.

Dr Elena Riva (Director of Studies, IATL) and Victoria Jelicic (IATL) together with Sarah Ashworth (Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing Support Services), received support from the Warwick Innovation Fund for this project which seeks to identify and promote pedagogic practices that support students' wellbeing and mental health awareness, and that can be embedded in the teaching and learning environment. Dr Lauren Schrock (Teaching Fellow, Warwick Manufacturing Group) and Cameron-Tosh Özer (Final Year Undergraduate Student, Warwick Medical School) subsequently joined the research group.

Studying student and staff wellbeing in the context of the teaching and learning environment at Warwick is significant and relevant due to the increasing concern about the quality of, and support for, student mental health and wellbeing at University. For instance, Universities UK (2018) published a report evidencing an increase in the number of students disclosing a mental health condition: since the 2013-2014 academic year, the number of postgraduate and undergraduate students disclosing a condition doubled. Students accessing mental health and wellbeing services at their University has grown too: The Guardian (2016) reported a 50% increase from the 2010-2011 academic year to 2014-2015. As a result, the Universities minister is set to reveal a framework of best practice to support the mental health and wellbeing of students at University (BBC, 2018).

Students spend a large part of their lives in a teaching and learning environment when at University and therefore we believe that this study that specifically looks at their experiences in this context can offer an additional support for improving their wellbeing.

This research has two main aims for reaching project targets and generating valuable impact:

The first aim is to study and understand Warwick students' and staff members' perceptions and experiences of wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment through a number of diverse focus groups comprising of undergraduate (UG) students, postgraduate (PG) students, and staff (Phase 1). The results of these focus groups are captured in this report and will guide our subsequent 'ad-hoc' scholarly research and our work with the wider Warwick community to explore and identify possible pedagogic practices that are able to respond to identified issues and thus constitute possible solutions (Phase 2).

The identified pedagogic practices will be subsequently embedded in two existing IATL modules, 'Genetics: Science and Society' (UG) and 'Thinking Water' (PG), and in the new IATL UG module 'Understanding Wellbeing' (see below) that will constitute a benchmark for practically evaluating the effectiveness of our pedagogical proposals (Phase 3).

Our intention is to extend these pedagogic practices to all IATL modules (ca. 25 modules that enrol around 500 cross-faculty students) and to evaluate and disseminate the further findings to the wider Warwick teaching community. We aim to have a profound impact on the Warwick teaching and learning community.

The second aim is to support the IATL undergraduate module 'Understanding Wellbeing Theory and Practice' that will be open to all students cross-faculty and will run from the academic year 2018/2019. The module will be co-led by Sarah and Elena with contributions by other Warwick disciplinary experts. The module analyses the concept of wellbeing from the perspective of several disciplines (i.e. psychology, medical disciplines, sociology, business, and humanities) to help students to understand the complexity of this crucial topic and the relevance of a holistic approach to solve the issues related to wellbeing. The module will embed the pedagogic practices previously identified and will constitute a further platform for working with students on wellbeing-related problems and their possible solutions.

"The promotion of student and staff wellbeing is a key current issue across the higher education sector. Work is needed to understand how we can better integrate wellbeing into the fabric of universities – not only in terms of the provision of support services but also more centrally in thinking about how we embed wellbeing strategies into our ethos and everyday practices as well as the curriculum. I am very supportive of this particular study which is seeking to understand how we can integrate wellbeing considerations into both the content and the methods we use to teach our students."

Prof. Louise Gracia, Dean of Students,
In support of the Warwick Innovation Fund proposal

Methodology

The nature of this Phase 1 research is qualitative and uses focus groups to research students' wellbeing at Warwick. Focus groups were coordinated and facilitated by members of the Wellbeing in Teaching and Learning project team. The students' focus groups were composed of both undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG, both postgraduate taught and postgraduate research) students and focused on the students' understanding and experiences of wellbeing and teaching and learning environments, while the staff groups focused on the same criteria but with more emphasis on the support systems available through academic and professional services, such as the role of personal tutors.

Two interview guides (Appendix A) were used to structure each focus group: one for the student focus groups and the other for the staff focus groups. All participants were introduced to the purpose of the research and assured of confidentiality by the facilitators who read from a standard guide to ensure consistency across groups. To confirm their understanding, each participant read and signed a consent form (Appendix B) which is held securely in an archive at the University of Warwick. All participants were asked a set of open-ended semi-structured interview questions.

Ethical approval was granted by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Sub-Committee at the University of Warwick (application: 27/17-18 Wellbeing in Teaching and Learning). The data analysed herein was collected through audio recordings and transcribed anonymously. These records are held securely in the electronic archive at the University of Warwick.

Scope of Participation

In total, 13 focus groups took place on the University campus from March 2018 to May 2018 (Appendix C). Of these 13 focus groups, five were staff-only focus groups and eight were student-only focus groups (four PG and seven UG) representing each faculty of Warwick. The postgraduate student focus groups included students from PGT and PGR degrees. Students were invited to participate by the project manager/ researcher via the University's mass mailing system. A range of staff members were invited to participate in the staff focus groups, including professors, academic supervisors, tutors, librarians, skills advisors, administrators, and any other interested parties who directly or indirectly support student wellbeing and/or teaching and learning. The majority of these groups were attended by academics, but a proportion of the groups included professional staff as well.

The student and staff focus groups were held separately to permit participants to speak openly. Each focus group typically included six to eight participants and lasted for one hour and 15 minutes. In total, 120 participants participated: 27 PG, 47 UG and 46 staff. The size of the sample of students and staff is small in relation to the student and staff body as a whole. However, the findings are considered reliable as individual experiences have produced generalizable findings based on the interviews.

Data Analysis and Preliminary Findings

Each of the focus groups was recorded and transcribed. Following recognised practice, the transcriptions were then narratively analysed and coded separately by the four researchers who each produced a series of themes. These initial themes were then consolidated through a series of meetings between the researchers and brought together for comparison to produce a final agreed list of themes and overall narratives. As part of this process, analyses of the student focus groups were compared, and then compared to staff responses.

These key themes are reported below. Under each heading in the report, we have described the general narrative that emerged, from the synthesis of all the qualitative transcripts. It should be noted that within conversations many of these themes overlapped, repeated and were related to each other.

The first section of the report ('Warwick students and staff define the concepts of 'wellbeing' and 'teaching and learning environment') captures the definitions of 'wellbeing' and 'teaching and learning' environment' that emerged from the initial discussions among focus group participants.

Limitations

This was a qualitative research project that collected views and experiences from 120 Warwick students and staff, therefore, we cannot absolutely claim that it is a true reflection of the experiences of all Warwick students and staff. Further follow-up quantitative studies would be required for establishing this and/or additional participation in qualitative focus groups.

However, the participants represented a broad cross-section of the University of Warwick, both in terms of types of students (i.e. undergraduates, taught postgraduates and research postgraduates) and staff (i.e. academic and non-academic) represented and the experiences of the students and staff contributing. The key-themes reported here recurred repeatedly across different types of students and staff. The authors are confident that, had we continued to collect data from further focus groups, we would have continued to encounter similar experiences and narratives.

It should also be recognised that this report reflects the perceived experiences of our students and staff participants. While we recognise the truth of their experiences, to fully understand the causes and possible solutions to the problems they identify may require us to consider their evidence within a wider context.

Findings

Warwick students and staff define the concepts of 'wellbeing' and 'teaching and learning environment'

The concept of wellbeing

Before reflecting on the concept of wellbeing in higher education and its connection to the teaching and learning environment, it is useful to understand how Warwick students and staff define wellbeing, also in relation to the existing literature (Stewart-Brown, 2018 and references within).

Staff and students identified wellbeing as a holistic concept, 'recognising the interplay between the physical, mental and social self' (Stewart-Brown, 2018 and references within; see focus groups responses 1 to 7 below). Some participants also recognised a spiritual component in a holistic vision of wellbeing (see focus groups responses 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8 below).

A number of participants associated wellbeing to the mental health component alone, revealing a less holistic view (see focus groups responses 9 and 10 below).

> **1-** 'An equilibrium between mind, body and soul, so that feeling when everything is in tune with everything else, and you're not necessarily stressing or worrying about any wider impacts from life and studies and things like that.' (PG Student)
>
> **2-** 'I emphasised the "being" aspect and holistic as well, thinking about the mind, the body, emotions, spirit and relationships too.' (PG Student)
>
> **3-** 'As far as I understand it, it's physical, mental and emotional health - some people would say spiritual as well – and it's sort of about like being a well-rounded and balanced individual.' (UG Student)
>
> **4-** 'I guess I'd identify it as like physical, mental and emotional health and having positive coping mechanisms and support systems […] - a kind of a holistic approach built into our wellbeing experience.' (PG Student)
>
> **5-** 'I do think it extends beyond mental and emotional health, to physical wellbeing as well, because the two are entwined really. So, we're quite poor at self-care when we get too intellectually involved in what we're doing, and that goes for students and staff as well'. (Staff member)
>
> **6-** 'So, if I was describing what wellbeing, what someone's wellbeing is, I'd say it was, em, at least physical and mental stability, but I think it could mean more than that, could mean flourishing, could mean something…it does not need to mean just making, do or coping. It could be, as it ought to be…' (Staff member)
>
> **7-** 'I would say the positive end of the health spectrum, feeling good and functioning well, and holistic. [..] In policy circles, when talking about wellbeing, they mean mental, but I think it's actually mental, physical, relational, spiritual, if you go there.' (Staff member)
>
> **8-** 'It [wellbeing] could also be your mind-set, so, definitely, trying to find some inner peace.' (PG Student)
>
> **9-** '[Wellbeing as] Mental health because I feel it underpins quite a lot of the aspects that are mentioned, having good and calm mental health.' (UG Student)
>
> **10-** 'Well, since wellbeing generally is about mental health, if someone is unkind to another like repeatedly, that can affect their mental health in a negative way and therefore decrease their wellbeing.' (UG Student)

Some staff and students identified wellbeing as 'a state of feeling healthy and happy' (Cambridge English Dictionary definition of wellbeing), a view that, according to ancient Greek philosophers, corresponds to hedonic wellbeing (or subjective wellbeing in more recent terminology). These students and staff focussed on well-being as happiness and it is defined in terms of pleasure attainment (see focus groups responses 11 to 16 below) and pain avoidance (e.g. the concept of 'being safe'; see focus groups responses 14, 16, 17, and 18 below).

> **11-** *'I think of enthusiasm - if someone's well, they're probably going to be enthusiastic.' (UG Student)*

> **12-** *[Giving a definition of wellbeing] 'Satisfaction and happiness' (PG Student)*

> **13-** *'A state of contentness, somewhere comfortable, being satisfied and relaxed' (UG Student)*

> **14-** *'Feeling comfortable with the people around you but also with the environment that you're in, not being stressed about your, I don't know, financial situation, family situation of being under any sort of oppression.' (UG Student)*

> **15-** *'I think of wellbeing as being in a good place in your life, so think of your life being sort of stable. I think it's hard to…to be happy and have happiness if you are very confused and you feel stressed out about what's happening. I think that happens, but I think wellbeing is about being able to find your own stability amongst the craziness that's happening.' (UG Student)*

> **16-** *'Welfare, state of mind, and mental health. Yeah, I put mental health as well, and then emotional wellbeing, so safety, comfort, contentment.' (UG Student)*

> **17-** *'So wellbeing is feeling safe, and I think that's both for students and staff, kind of feeling safe in an environment that you're in, feel you can be yourself, be comfortable, you can speak up, or not speak up if you choose not to.' (Staff member)*

> **18-** *'I think [of wellbeing] to the point of feeling safe, it's physical safety, you know, on campus or wherever you live, but it's also safety in the sort of group you're in.' (PG Student)*

A number of students and staff reflected on wellbeing as functioning well, as much as feeling well, and therefore, going back to ancient philosophies' terminology, utilising a eudemonic approach to wellbeing (psychological functioning in modern terminology). They have reflected on personal characteristics and behaviours that can enable positive functioning and that can help in cultivating personal and social wellbeing. For example, self-acceptance (see focus groups responses 19, 20, 22 and 36 below), autonomy (see focus groups responses 23 and 24 below), personal growth (see focus groups responses 24, 25 and 32 below), positive relations with others (see focus groups responses 19, 21, 22, 26 to 30 and 40 below), engagement with (challenges of) life (see focus groups responses 25, 31 and 32 below), environmental mastery and agency (see focus groups responses 32 to 38 below).

> **19-** *''I think that also, em, being kind to yourself, accepting yourself. If you're not kind to yourself, you can't be kind and compassionate to others, and I think that being of sound mind and body, you can encourage other to be the same.' (UG Student)*

> **20-** *'I think taking time and having care for yourself, to look after yourself. So, sometimes, you just have to say…work, everything, I'm going to have a duvet day or whatever, if that's what it needs, but it's taking time for yourself.' (UG student)*

> **21-** *'I brought in kind of relationships with people as well, so kind of friendships and human connection as... I mean, you can be happy within yourself, but I think it helps to be happy with the people you have around you as well.' (UG Student)*

> **22-** *'It is definitely how you treat people because that impacts [on wellbeing], you know, and how you feel about yourself and how comfortable you feel about yourself and in opening up I think, and how the departments treats you and how they communicate to you' (PG Student)*

> **23-** *'Being able to manage stress and relaxation. Being able to keep – for example, hobbies can be a way of relaxing, and just sometimes being able to stop and breathe [laughing]. Managing, em, like understanding what is…what the stress factor is, and dealing with that, to keep a steady and stable mindset.' (UG Student)*

> **24-** *'Building your character by maybe being knocked back but finding mechanisms to cope…building that up to be able to get that kind of ultimate wellbeing, whenever that might be in your life, whether it's later on or just for certain aspects of mental health or physical health or whatever it might be.' (PG Student)*

> **25-** *'Wellbeing is, em, doing things that are significant for you, so to have a sense of fulfilment – for example, to train and to have a sense of getting better. But I think it's different for each person, like depending on their goal. For some people, wellbeing might be more being in a state of peace, not having too much stress, being with other people they care about. For others, it might be feelings that they…that they reach their limit every day. I think, em, for reaching their limit and feeling of progressing, a state of flow and growth, when you really feel into something, that it's really, em, the only thing you are caring about - for example, when you're playing a sport and you're really into it.' (UG Student)*

> **26-** *'Having support around you probably helps you be resilient because you've got people to support you through that, and then, the next time around, you're a bit more confident doing it yourself.' (UG Student)*

> **27-** *'Having and building a good social environment, a positive one, one that, em, encourages you to do positive things, em…somewhere that is… peaceful and not that many fights.' (UG Student)*

> **28-** *'So, just knowing that you're not alone. So, at university, sometimes, I think you think, because you're away from friends and family, that you're quite isolated and no one… When you're at home, you have your family to look out for you. You know someone's going to ask why you're not home or if you're okay. And, yes, the safety is just knowing that someone cares, I think.' (PG Student)*

> **29-** *'I think – and that's kind of why I wrote things relating to kind of mutual support and care because I think it's – wellbeing is often individualised, and like people are encouraged to think about it as like it's your own personal issues and you need to deal with it personally, but actually, I think that it has to be collective. I don't think there's any other option really.' (Staff member)*

30- *'I think wellbeing is broader than just good mental health. I think someone can have good mental health but not have very good wellbeing, and I think… I've only been at the University for a while, but it seems that a lot of students feel a sense of isolation, and, you know, that's not good for wellbeing, for example.' (Staff member)*

31- *'A sense of input, a purpose and engagement, and a slight caveat: I would always disagree about the sense of security. I don't…think that you need to feel secure to experience a sense of wellbeing, because think about the exhilaration of doing something exciting and slightly dangerous.' (Staff member)*

32- *'In the first term I would go out a lot and, em, not really go to my lectures, and, em, I…wasn't feeling that well because I felt like I didn't belong to university, to this University, to my course. I…eh…I wasn't…I didn't understand some things of my…of the modules I had, and, em, how do you say…yeah, I wasn't interested in that as well. Well, that's what I thought, until, in the second term, I started working a lot more and that actually shifted…shifted my mood. I had like regular little depressions in the first term, which, eh, that totally faded away in the second term because I started working and being productive, and, em, felt actually more part of the University. I…well, I felt better, physically.' (UG Student)*

33- *'I think I feel like my productivity is one part of my wellbeing. When I'm not being productive, I'm very unhappy. Because of that, it generally did happen to improve my wellbeing.' (UG Student)*

34- *'So, I guess it [wellbeing] is feeling, eh, that we're in the right place, that we belong here, em, yeah, that goes through, em, having a place in the University, in the flat, in the course, and doing well in general. Like grades are a factor as well, friendship, going out, eh, like relationships as well, em…yeah, em, health. (UG student)*

35- *'I put that you have to have and work towards a good work/life balance, healthy lifestyle, like there are things that you can do to contribute to your own wellbeing.' (PG Student)*

36- *'Coping with the…the unexpected, the extra workload, the…whatever life throws at you, em, and remember it's not […] all about me. It's not my fault that, you know, and there's probably perfectly logical explanations, em, you know, that that essay that I wasn't happy with the mark about, actually, I'd given it my best shot, em, and not to beat myself up about it, but to learn from the, em, from the feedback.' (PG Student)*

37- *'You can speak to people who have different roles at the University, em, and having guidance and…yeah, I guess support a lot, em, and understanding and build your approach to wellbeing.' (PG Student)*

38- *[Wellbeing has] something to do with an ease or way of coping with everyday stresses. It's that fine line before you tip into dysfunction, but with a sense of ease and resilience, because we're all going to deal with stresses of one kind or another, but it's…it's being able to deal with them in a functional way. (Staff member)*

A number of students and staff added the idea of 'positivity' and 'being positive' to the wellbeing discourse and they reflected on the impact that this has in terms of improving personal and social wellbeing (Stewart-Brown, S. 2018; see focus groups responses 39 and 40 below and 27 above). Some staff members reflected on the concept of 'flourishing' and 'thriving' in the context of personal wellbeing (see focus groups responses 6 above and 41 and 42 below).

39- *'I think positivity comes into it as well. I mean, if you have kind of a positive outlook, then you can face adversity and, em, kind of say, okay, well, we're learn from it, instead of being kind of beaten down by it. I think that leads to kind of being happy within yourself as well, being able to deal with stuff like that.' (UG Student)*

40- *'Once you are a positive person, you, em, it makes other people more positive, and in that sense, everyone would be able to move forward in a more motivated manner.' (UG Student)*

41- *'Wellbeing is more maybe what's going on inside. It's not just happiness, but it's a state of being, well, being well… And that could be… when things are going good, it could be when things are just ticking along, and it could be when things are going bad, but being able to…to thrive in all of those different circumstances as much as you can.' (Staff member)*

42- *'I put down "thriving" and, to me, that's one of the core words around wellbeing, and I think I would add… I think feeling safe is important, but maybe not just that, actually being able to rise to challenges, maybe when you don't feel safe, maybe when you're in, as we all are, difficult environments, kind of wellbeing is actually being able to meet those challenges and cope and survive and flourish.' (Staff member)*

Wellbeing in Higher Education

As demonstrated, the construction of wellbeing alongside the mental, physical, social and, in some cases, spiritual dimensions suggest that Warwick students and staff holistically identified states of wellbeing along these lines. Yet, there were also additional components related to wellbeing that were mentioned: self-acceptance, autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others, environmental mastery and agency, positivity, etc. Although the purpose of this research is not to provide definitions of wellbeing, these findings are aligned with the notion in the context of Higher Education. In fact, even though the existing literature refrains from writing a concrete definition of 'wellbeing', it researches and frames it in connection with mental (Brown, 2016; Houghton and Anderson, 2017; University of Birmingham, 2010; Universities UK, 2015) and physical wellbeing (British Active Students Survey, 2018; Holland, 2018; Warwick Sport, 2017).

When reflecting on the wider role of the institution, beyond the teaching and learning environment, students and staff agreed that there is (or should be) a relationship between the institution and students' wellbeing. Staff identified this directly and consciously, while it is established more indirectly in students' testimonies.

This comparison between students and staff is interesting in two ways: first, it acknowledges wellbeing as a construction, particularly from differences in educational identities. Second, this comparison highlights the difference in awareness between staff and students to the factors and forces that influence wellbeing in relation to the institution. For instance, staff considered wellbeing as a responsibility of the institution at a strategic and philosophical level and as a higher purpose of the University (Harward, 2016; see focus groups responses 43 and 44 below). In contrast, students identified this responsibility in a different way, reflecting on the quality and accessibility of the services offered by the University such as quality of food, equipment and physical spaces, etc. (see focus groups responses 45 to 49 below).

> **43-** *'I've spoken to students that feel like they're battling their department… they definitely feel they're in conflict with their department rather than in partnership, and that's not a good experience for a student, and definitely would impact, from my perspective, on their wellbeing, if I was in that situation. So I think the departments have got a role to play in that, enhancing wellbeing.' (Staff member)*

> **44-** *It has to be every single member of staff, every level, because, otherwise, it [wellbeing] doesn't work. It has to be part of the philosophy of the way everything is operated. (Staff member)*

> **45-** *'A lot of anxiety about coming to Uni, especially when it comes to term 3, is like not actually finding a space, like that can be so stressful, literally just wandering around, like for an hour, being like 'where can I sit?' (UG Student)*

> **46-** *'I was going to talk about the food choices that aren't healthy – it would be good to like have a healthy food court.' (PG Student)*

> **47-** *'What you eat impacts your wellbeing, because you know, what you eat changes your hormones and your mood and that sort of thing, so I think it's really a reaction kind of thing. Good food would be a good thing, and more options.' (PG Student)*

> **48-** *'I did access the counselling services, which you only get three sessions of, you know, and that's very little, em, particularly if you're self-funded. You already have to pay for accommodation and, you know, PhDs don't get paid much at all, so that's obviously a strain. And I think the wellbeing services are just really busy…There's loads of people who are ready to signpost you and say, "Well, you know, have you thought about this?" and I do this as well because I'm a coach and I mentor quite a lot of students, and I say to them, you know, "Would you like to access the services?" knowing quite well that they're probably going to have to wait forever to get access to this.' (PG Student)*

> **49-** *'Waiting time is crazy [referring to Mental Health and Wellbeing Services]. Just maybe try to employ some more, try to make some space…' (UG Student)*

The concept of 'Teaching and Learning environment'

After reflecting on the concept of wellbeing, staff and students were asked to give a 'definition of teaching and learning environment', on the basis of their experiences at Warwick. They identified that this environment includes, but is not limited to, the spaces in which teaching and/or learning takes place. This may involve physical spaces on and off campus (e.g. classrooms, laboratories, Warwick Library and cafes, PG Hub, the Oculus, their own house and bedroom, etc.; see responses to focus groups 50, 51 and 52 below) as well as virtual spaces (e.g. Moodle, MyWBS, Social Media, Library Encore, etc.; see responses to focus groups 53 to 55 below).

50- 'Lecture theatres, labs as well, labs, and offices. And of course the libraries and study rooms…that are not too many are not, and there's not enough space' (PG Student)

51- 'I do all my learning work at home. I do (s discipline of the Faculty of the Arts), so I guess it's a lot of reading, but the few times I have been in the Library, if you go and it's busy, it's really difficult to find space.' (UG Student)

52- 'So, even in the kitchen, for example, because my kitchen is fairly quiet and nobody tends to be in there, so that would be kind of my space, em, and then also, like you said, like the Library and then the study spaces around like the Maths building or somewhere, for example, so things like that.' (UG Student)

53- 'I was a Master's student, so we used Facebook groups to communicate with our groups quite a lot because 40% of most of my assignments were group work presentations so we had to use a lot of Facebook. Even though we did have space on My.WBS to work together, we actually preferred to use Facebook, to connect that way.'(PG Student)

54- 'I do work from home a lot…access to the library portal, being able to use articles online, all the different online sort of article sites that it connects to.' (UG Student)

55- 'If a tutor wants to connect to everyone, he sends just a message through hand we can just follow your, eh, any new information he wants to add or she wants to add, so I like Moodle.' (PG Student)

The teaching and learning environment may also involve the relational space between people, whether as teacher and student, between staff, or between students. Hence, environment is not only a physical location, but is also an immaterial space (see responses to focus groups 56 to 60 below).

56- 'The teaching and learning environment is about the culture more than the physical space, so it's about, you know, from the perspective of students, they feel comfortable to discuss things or, you know, raise that they're experiencing difficulties, whether that's academic or mental health or whatever it might be. So, the culture of that space rather than the physical space, from my perspective…' (Staff member)

57- 'I'd say it's something to do with the cultures that are enshrined, the values that are enshrined in that culture. So, I expect the Teaching and learning environment to be inclusive and humane and, em, to feel cared for, whether I'm a student or a member of staff, and that requires a degree of humility as well. So, I expect all of those things, but positive, in a positive way.' (Staff member)

58- 'I said, there's lecture rooms, seminar rooms, but, you know, you could also go over…like, even between students and in societies, you can be educated, like even in here [during the focus group], you could quite…be educated about anything, like drama for example, that kind of stuff. So, it really depends on the subject and like the topic.' (UG Student)

59- 'It must be like motivational. It makes me…must be an environment where I feel like I want to study more, and it's interesting, intriguing, it's organised and well-paced, and sufficient and accessible learning material. It can be anywhere.' (PG Student)

60- 'I sort of just said it involves lecturers, seminar leaders, researchers and students at a university or other place of study and learning, and I said it could be the physical room or building but also like the culture of the organisation.' (UG Student)

As observed analysing the concept of wellbeing in relation to the institution (see above), students and staff demonstrated some differences in evaluating the teaching and learning environment. Student responses reveal an additional, particular, focus and great interest in the physical qualities of teaching and learning spaces (e.g. brightness, noise level, accessibility, smell present in the spaces, etc.; see responses to focus groups 61 to 66 below and 50 and 51 above). This extended attention to an environment's physical qualities did not emerge during staff focus groups.

61- 'When you go downstairs [in the Library], like the first floor, second floor, it's all the time noisy, chatting, watching the movies, so you cannot concentrate.' (UG Student)

62- 'It's very, very noisy. It [Oculus] doesn't have quiet spaces. The rooms are used for lectures, most of the time, and there's practically, there's not any actual study area. It's nice if you want to have an informal meeting or want to do very practical stuff that you want to do in groups and you don't have to stay there for too long, but if you have to stay somewhere for too long, do something, you cannot do it in the Oculus, although it's a lovely building.' (PG Student)

63- 'I really like the PG Hub when it's quiet. When it's noisy, it's like I get so stressed, like why, why people [don't] respect other people who are trying to work. And I feel that sometimes, even like the people who are there to supervise, they don't do nothing at all.' (PG Student)

64- 'Like it [PG Hub] smells bad - that's why I don't go there very often, the PG Hub. Especially the individual rooms, you have to lock the door, then it's…it smells.' (PG Student)

65- 'It's very bright [the Oculus], which helps you…which helps your mental state, I guess. You feel happier when you're in there. But you cannot focus for too long due to the noise.' (UG Student)

66- 'In Life Sciences and Medical School, there are not many quiet places to actually be able to work, not even the offices, so that's…It could be very nice if there was something like that [quiet place, like PG Hub] in Gibbet Hill Campus as well.' (PG Student)

Establishing a connection between wellbeing and environment

When considering possible general connections between wellbeing and environment, some students and staff identified that the physical and social environment generally can have a significant impact on wellbeing (see focus groups responses below 67 to 70 and 27 above).

> *67-* *'Resilience has to do with maintaining the wellbeing. And this is where the environment can play a huge role because, especially when you're younger or you're…building character, you still need too much help from the environment and resilience just is something that you can evolve during your studies or during your life in general.' (PG Student)*

> *68-* *'But I think the environment [of a department of Social Sciences PhD offices] itself isn't really good for wellbeing. I really don't - I wouldn't be able to pinpoint why, but, em, you know, people kind of almost clock-watch who's coming in and who's [not]…"Well, she's only here for just an hour - she's not working hard enough." So, there's a lot of that kind of, you know, competition, where you feel peer pressure to stay longer or to stay shorter or to once in at like, you know, 7am in the morning because someone else is already in the office, or stay later. So even though we do have a really nice kind of open space, a very collaborative space, what should have been a collaborative space, it feels quite kind of heavy.' (PG Student)*

> *69-* *'Like yesterday, when it was sunny, and I was like studying in my office on the ground floor and we had the sun shining, and I was feeling very happy, and I was very productive, so…in that case, the connection between like the working environment and my...my wellbeing.' (PG Student)*

> *70-* *'I also integrate the environment [in the definition of wellbeing], the environmental aspect, and the settings where you are because, well, I believe that it also influences your mental state, your health, if you are in a correct environment.' (Staff member)*

Narrowing down the concept of environment to the 'teaching and learning setting', interestingly, all the participants in our focus groups identified that there is a link, a relationship between students' wellbeing and this specific environment.

The following parts of the report will analyse this connection and will identify the key ways in which it has an impact on students' wellbeing at Warwick.

What's next?

It is important to note that Warwick focus groups participants demonstrated an overall view of wellbeing that is largely comparable to what has been written in the literature. Interestingly, this view was often shaped and developed during the focus groups thanks to the conversation among participants. It was developed as the result of a construction favoured by open dialogue and it is reasonable to say that the majority of the participants have expanded their initial idea of wellbeing through this exercise.

There are some aspects of wellbeing that need to be further explored by the Warwick community, in particular it would be useful to promote further work which articulates the idea of holistic wellbeing and of the practices that can positively impact it. In addition, an exploration of the ideas expressed by the Warwick community that can be associated to the concepts of psychological functioning and subjective wellbeing would also be beneficial, introducing a theoretical underpinning and making explicit connections to it.

A very useful action would be promoting a wider debate about wellbeing and how important it is in the context of the University as, clearly, the initiation of a simple dialogue during the focus groups has created an opportunity for reflection and further exploration of this concept.

Working groups of staff and students should also work on defining the wider role that the institution should have in insuring the wellbeing of its students and which strategic actions should be taken, expanding the initial ideas that have emerged during these focus groups.

Key Theme 1:

Student-centred and student-focussed environments have a positive impact on Warwick students' wellbeing

From an analysis of the focus groups with UG, PGT, and PGR students, in addition to staff, the researchers identified a clear link between the participants' experience of wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment and the importance of their own role in their educational journey.

Students prefer an environment that is academically challenging and stimulating, where they desire to engage in active and collaborative learning experiences, and they seek learning opportunities that foster productive interactions between students and academic staff.

Therefore, the creation and the development of student-centred and student-focussed environment translates to students experiencing more positive wellbeing. The favourable impact of this type of teaching and learning framework is also recognised by staff.

Students and staff identify few characteristics of this teaching and learning environment that promote wellbeing. These characteristics are personalised; open, active, and engaging; authentic; and flexible.

Personalised

Students desire to be identified as persons, rather than as numbers or 'faceless' individuals throughout their learning experience (see focus groups responses 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 below). This learning experience includes time in the classroom as well as through the assessment and feedback process (see focus groups response 2 below and 22, 23, 24 and 25 in the section 'Flexible' below). When acknowledged as people, students feel valued and empowered, which improves wellbeing.

> **1-** *'It was really nice that she remembered our names! There were a lot of people that class (50 people) but it was really nice to be recognised as an individual rather than just 'a student'. It felt good.' (UG student)*

> **2-** *'You just get a grade on Tabula, and then sometimes there'll be general feedback on everyone's, but half the time, it's not very applicable to you, so you're always wondering well, what could I have done? I feel like they could do a bit more to just show that they've really engaged with the work that you've spent the time producing. I would feel more valued.' (UG student)*

> **3-** *'Sometimes I feel like the lectures are really massive and then like…so I wrote "impersonal", in the sense that you're just another student in the crowd. Sometimes it feels like that.' (UG Student)*

> **4-** *'I've found that the ones [lecturers] that learn your name and actually call you by your name in your lecture, that really makes a difference, makes me want to go to the lecture more, which I maybe wouldn't go like if it just was someone else who was like just talking to me for two hours or an hour. It makes me feel valued. So like, if they know my name, that kind of makes a different relationship, still respectful, but like it's a bit closer, also makes you feel like you can email them about something.' (UG Student)*

> **5-** *'It is really demotivating when they're [teachers] not really interested in… in you individually or the group really. So it's nicer when people know their stuff, they're passionate for their stuff, but they also kind of take the time to check-in.' (PGT student)*

From an analysis of the participants' responses, some elements of good practice include: identifying students by name and providing individualised feedback. Personalising the student encourages students to attend classes (see focus groups response 4 above), as well as improving their wellbeing.

Think about…
A significant learning experience

A time you learned something that made a lasting impression on you or changed you in some way.

- **Where** were you?
- **What** were you doing at the time?
- **Who** was there?
- **How** were you feeling?
- **Why** did that learning experience stay with you

...e minutes to reflect by yourself, make some notes on ...card, then share your story with your partner.

Open, active, and engaging

Fundamental to the teaching and learning environment is creating and giving Warwick students the opportunity to participate actively in the learning process (see focus groups responses 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 below). Active engagement provides students with a higher degree of control over their learning, which in turn leads to a higher level of wellbeing (see focus groups responses 9, 10 and 11 below). Control over learning also empowers students due to a mutual respect between the learner and teacher. This also manifests in an interdependence in the learner-lecturer relationship (see focus groups responses 7, 8, 9 and 10 below).

> 6- *'Openness, being understanding are what should be the characteristics of a good teaching and learning environment. Some place where you can feel confident to speak your mind, where you know you're being understood and your context or your diversity of skills are being understood and are being valued, and where you know that you can be open about the things that you think and you shouldn't just shut up and keep it to yourself.' (UG student)*

> 7- *'Being encouraged to kind of ask in the lectures as well, because I've had lectures where the lecturer will literally just lecture, and then I've had others where there will be audience participation, and I've noticed that I've done better in those ones just because we've been encouraged to kind of ask and to actually engage, more so than in the other cases.' (UG student)*

> 8- *'We PhD students don't have big lectures, we just have seminars, so it's basically discussion-led, but some professors tend to dominate the whole conversation, while others prefer to like hand over to us to discuss. So, yes, sometimes we feel quite pressured because the professor is talking all the time and not allowing us to interrupt.' (PGR student)*

> 9- *'If the environment is really open-mind and professor will encourage us to give our own opinions - there is not right opinions or wrong opinions - so in this kind of environment, we are more likely to talk about our ideas and feel good about it.'(PGT student)*

> 10- *'I usually suggest: ''Talk to the people next to you for a few minutes and discuss it there first'', because, obviously, in X (a department of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine) , the lectures are with 300 people, and so it is important having that kind of specifically planted few moments where students are actually not just completely isolated and staring at a board and panicking, "Oh God, I have no idea what this problem is saying and how to work this out!".' (Staff member)*

> 11- *'For me, the teaching and learning environment is about the culture, so it's about, from the perspective of students, if they feel comfortable to discuss things or raise that they're experiencing academic difficulties'. (Staff member)*

From the focus groups, some examples of good practice for creating an open, active, and engaging teaching and learning environment for students include: giving opportunities for students to speak and raise opinions, creating a comfortable environment to speak in, and encouraging students to engage in discussion.

This opportunity to actively engage in an open environment should be not forced upon students and they should not be pressurised into contributing. Participation is encouraged by creating an open and reassuring atmosphere, as reported above (see focus groups response 12).

> 12- *'Sometimes I feel a bit pressured in seminars to like say something and I get myself in like a flurry because the seminar tutor goes round in a circle and everyone has to say something, and that's what I kind of don't like. It is not good for how I feel. Because like, if I have something to say, I'll say it, but if I don't, then I'll just talk some utter rubbish.' (UG student)*

Many students recognised in peer or group learning and seminar or seminar-like work the opportunity of experiencing a 'wellbeing-positive' learning environment that possesses the characteristics depicted above (see focus groups responses 13, 14, 15 and 16 below).

> 13- *'It helps a lot because in X (a department of the Faculty of Social Sciences) we go through a lot of cases and things and it gets very dry and technical, so that one break in the middle, all of us can like have a breath of like relief, and then, sometimes it's really funny. For example, he [the seminar tutor] just puts on these videos from like the Seventies, so like, yeah, it makes the lesson just more engaging, more enjoyable, and you get to like talk to people next to you and it's nice because, as a Law student, I don't really do a lot of work with other Law students, we're just reading next to each other.' (UG student)*

> 14- *'Yeah, it definitely helps me because I find it much easier to approach them [the seminar tutors] in smaller groups than let's say like my lecturer at the end of the lecture because he'll just stand there and wait, but I find that kind of daunting.' (UG student)*

> 15- *'Because the room was dominated by so many other, you know, top professors, we felt like we couldn't really speak up, and people felt, you know, they were really worried about looking stupid in front of my professor, the group, and then there's the speaker. That was a really uncomfortable situation for PhDs, kind of made feel stupid or being worried about feeling stupid. So, what the group has started doing is, before we have a speaker in a seminar, they will put aside an hour where it's just PhD students with that speaker. So, all the professors would leave and we'd just kind of have a really informal session.' (PGR student)*

> 16- *'I would like it if we had more seminars because I feel like seminars not only are more effective to learn, I feel like they're also a super-good opportunity to meet and work with new people.' (UG Student)*

From the focus groups, it was clear that an active, open, and engaging environment also encouraged and improved relations between students as they had a chance to interact with each other. An increase in a positive relationship with peers (see focus groups response 16 above) can improve wellbeing.

Authentic

Students have a positive experience in a learning environment where they perceive that their future aspiration, their personal plan, and/or their best interests are taken into account (see focus groups responses 17, 18, 19 and 20 below).

The 'authentic' learning environment that considers the 'real world' application of knowledge allows students to feel that they are preparing for their chosen (or for choosing their) profession and this has a beneficial impact on their wellbeing (see focus groups responses 17, 8 and 19 below). This aspect has revealed to be particularly relevant for PG students.

> **17-** *'If you are not given the proper tools and, you know, it's included in how to apply [the knowledge] in the real world - how are you going to take all this book non-sense that you're getting and apply it to get a job? It's so frustrating.' (PGT student)*

> **18-** *'I think Warwick needs to do more of that, like experiential education, you know - I don't know, give project opportunities with local businesses and those sorts of things.' (PGT student)*

> **19-** *'I need to write a dissertation if I want to graduate, I think it can be more practical, like the professor or the University can arrange some internship, because I want to figure out what kind of job I can do as a student studying my major. I'm confused about my career and it's stressing me out.' (PGT student)*

> **20-** *'I've relied upon PhD students coming and helping with events for school kids, and there's still an enormous enthusiasm for that, but it's very difficult to get them out the lab, so… But they love doing it, so I would say it is not in the students' interest, as people, to stop them from doing a voluntary, philanthropic activity which they enjoy. I think it's a very difficult and unhelpful culture.' (Staff member)*

Flexible

A great level of anxiety is felt by students due to the stacking of assessment deadlines and the lack of flexibility in the assessment style and support (see focus groups responses 21, 22, 23 and 24 below). This obstacle to students' wellbeing is also recognised by staff (see focus groups response 25 below).

> **21-** *'When there are a lot of deadlines, you have a lot of stress and a lot of pressure and then there are times when there aren't deadlines. It does not make sense.' (UG Student)*

> **22-** *'Just like about the assignments, it would be good if they – in most modules, they just have a final assignment - would have like smaller deadlines, with maybe a couple of exercises or like some essay questions, depending on what you're doing, so you could kind of get some feedback whether you're doing well or not.' (UG Student)*

> **23-** *'The stress comes from the fact that I do not know if I'm doing well or not. There is no feedback, no mid-term tests, I have no idea. I'm writing four different essays in four different topics, and they're very open like with the topics, so they [lecturers] are just like, "Oh, choose an article and then write about it with the theories that we've seen in class". That's very raw. Well, it's stressing, like there's a level of anxiety. It's just like not knowing. I have no idea how I'm doing, and I'm just like hoping, hoping for the best.' (UG Student)*

> **24-** *'You literally get dropped into a pond of, okay, write an essay, this is your topic, go free. But you don't know what they [lecturers] expect of you, they do not have the time to talk to you, and you don't know how much effort you should put into it because then you have to also focus on your project, and it's just like a big overwhelming juggling...it doesn't make any sense so...' (PGT Student)*

> **25-** *'If you have a teaching and learning environment which is…doesn't encourage like collaboration, discussion, etc. etc., and which is, say, massively over-assessing students, which I think is something that we do here. That can have an impact on student wellbeing [...] and things like unnecessary over-assessing, or over-assessing in very specific ways that aren't necessarily particularly innovative and stuff, can have a detrimental impact on.' (Staff member)*

Another aspect of flexibility is associated with the possibility of learning in the virtual environment. While many students feel that the virtual learning environment cannot substitute the physical experience, and some do not identify it as a 'real' learning space (see focus groups responses 26 and 27 below), for many others it opens up an additional opportunity and it allows a flexibility that helps them to manage their own wellbeing (see focus groups responses 28, 29, 30 below).

> **26-** *'I don't find it [the virtual learning environment] the same as actually being in a specific place to learn something. It's useful sort of as an extra, if you're sort of... you miss something or you want to go over something, but, I find it, yeah, I prefer to actually be physically somewhere where I'm supposed to learn, rather than sat in my room.' (UG Student)*

> *'I think that the location almost gets you into the mind-set of learning or doing work, and I prefer working in kind of a learning environment, instead of just looking at a computer screen and then I could be wherever. It does not feel right.' (UG Student)*

28– 'I really started having a lot of difficulties in keeping up with the lectures. A few reasons: first, because just the sheer number of people in the room, I just find it very difficult and overwhelming. [...] The second was like I had difficulty in understanding the English. [...] I started to realise how ineffective lectures were basically for me because I was having a very difficult time, academically and emotionally. [...] I just stopped going for lectures and I just, em, would just sit at home or in the Library and just watch my Lecture Capture. In that way, I could slow it down, speed it up, according to my preferences. [...] Obviously, it takes a longer time, but I feel much more satisfied and I feel like I understand much more when I do that, instead of actually going to the lecture.' (UG Student)

29– 'I've noticed that many people like wouldn't even go to classes, only waited for the Lecture Capture, and would study at home. [...] But it's good because it's what she [a course mate] preferred. Like I would, I prefer to go to the lecture, but she preferred to stay at home, and I think it worked for her. So, they gave us the option, so that was good.' (PGT Student)

30– 'It takes a lot of discipline. I tried it last term [going to all lectures], but I realised that I'm the kind of person that needs to like balance it out, so I go to some lectures, and I know that I've scheduled to Lecture Capture certain modules, so that helps me to keep organised, because when I am backed up, that's when my wellbeing goes down because I feel really bad and kind of guilty about it. But, that sense of organisation, when you know what you're doing, like, okay, I'm going to go to this lecture, but I'm going to Lecture Capture the other one, which really helps me to feel ok.' (UG Student)

What's next?

What emerges from the analysis is the necessity for the Warwick student to be looked at as a whole person in the teaching and learning environment. This translates in the need to develop and deliver a student-focussed learning experience that considers the needs, desires, aspirations and talents of students. When the creation of such a learning environment occurs, a positive impact on wellbeing is recognised by students and staff; however, when there is a failure in this task, a negative influence on students' wellbeing is acknowledged.

While no educator who works with students should be surprised by these observations (Houghton and Anderson, 2018), it clearly emerges through our focus groups that there is still an opportunity at Warwick for consistently creating a student-focussed and student-mindful learning environment across the University.

Based on our observations and data, further research can be done to identify and reflect on best practices that currently exist or can be used in the teaching and learning environment at Warwick that improve student and staff wellbeing. To identify these practices, a next step is to ask students and staff the following:

How can we design a whole educational experience, from teaching space, to curriculum, to activities, to reading, and to assessment, that supports positive student wellbeing?

While responding to this question, it is important that considerations are made to the different types of practices that occur in small-group, large-group, and virtual teaching and learning environments at Warwick.

For example, one area of investigation is the translation of small-group in-classroom pedagogic practices to large- group in- classroom and virtual environments (e.g. an interesting question to ask would be: 'What is the equivalent of 'learning students' names' in the virtual teaching and learning environment or in a large-group class?').

Key Theme 2:

A lack of intercultural and international integration has a negative impact on Warwick students' wellbeing

Many students, including undergraduates, postgraduate taught, and postgraduate research, have identified the lack of integration between different cultural and international communities as an obstacle to their wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment and outside it (see focus groups responses 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7 below). The focus groups have revealed a series of complex issues associated with the presence of a stigma around different communities, cultural misunderstanding, and lack of cohesion in students and staff body (see focus groups responses 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 below).

Students identify the teaching and learning environment as a space where this integration is often lacking but where it can be fostered and facilitated (see focus groups responses 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7 below).

1- *'It's just as people form friendships, people form groups, but it's to the extent that you feel awkward if you just go over to a friendship group on your own, or that's how I feel anyway, and so I think that there's a big link with that and wellbeing because if you just feel uncomfortable, then there's lots of, em, relations between this and low self-esteem. I think or…I mean, for me anyway, but I also have a mental health disorder, so it might just be me. Maybe in seminars, if it's doing group work, maybe spend more time allocating people to different groups, rather than letting people choose their own groups, I think might be a good idea to help kind of diffuse that.' (UG student)*

2- *'Regarding the Chinese students, it's not about the nationality, I think it is because of the culture - they prefer to stay separately. Sometimes we're trying to involve them, invite them with us, but they prefer to stay on their own. Maybe it's a cultural thing. But…we have Chinese friends also, might be two or three people just joining us, but the rest, they want to stay on their own.' (PGT student)*

3- *'I would prefer to have more international groups because, in our case there are a lot of people like from one nationality, and when they [the lecturers] split into the groups, they're starting speaking in their languages and do not like to talk in English. You know, even the tutor tells [them] like 'speak English'…So, I think the tutors, when they split the teams, they need to take account that…to put like more students from different nationalities in one group, rather than to put everyone and one student of a different nationality into one group. It just feels so awkward and I stop talking.' (PGT student)*

4- *'I come from X (a department of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine)…there are so many people of my nationality [Chinese], in my class they will sit in the same group, and teacher won't locate the international students randomly…One thing I think is no good is that people will use their own language instead of using the English, you know, the international students…Although I want to speak English and I am here for improving my English but in my group there are all the Chinese people, so we use the Chinese. I sit there and I think I waste my time and I feel bad. I think the professor - if the professor can locate the people randomly, it will be more…good.' (PGT student)*

5- *'For someone who's just moved here, em, and is still learning, you know, sometimes it's quite difficult to settle in, and you jump to make certain assumptions, you know, this student doesn't want to work, or this group of French students only want to speak French and they don't want to interact with me, but, you know, it's not sometimes just because of that. Sometimes it's just cultural differences and its' kind of…it goes both ways. Obviously, people need to appreciate that you come from a different place as well, but it's just that patience I think and being a bit more reflective sometimes.' (PGT student)*

6- *'So, we see a lot of international students coming to us saying home students are kind of openly saying, "We don't want to work with international students in a group because there are kind of like communication issues and it's very difficult to understand them and therefore our group work suffers, and we don't want our marks to go down because of this." So, again, you can understand how someone might have those frustrations, that if it's really difficult for me to understand what this person is saying, it's going to be really hard for me to work with them, and that worries me because that will have an impact on my academic success. Whereas, from the international student's perspective, you can see how that's like quite a horrendous experience to go through. And we've seen, we actually, again, have that kind of example a lot with group work, in kind of like academic contexts, that there's a lot, seem to be a lot of wellbeing issues that crop up with that.' (Staff member)*

7- *'There is a perception from home students, because I've heard it said many times, that Chinese students don't want to mix, Chinese students keep to themselves, they just kind of like talk to each other, blah-blah-blah-blah. Now, that…that might have some elements of kind of like…kind of like, yeah, how it plays out in real life, but actually, if you speak to Chinese students, often what they say is, "We didn't actually come halfway across the other side of the world to just sit in a room full of Chinese people because we could have just done that in China!" And they are worried and frustrated for this. So, it's that kind of like…I guess trying to sort of like really facilitate and embed that into cultural awareness, I think is something that's really, really important, and obviously that's not just the role of kind of a teacher, because I think that's an institutional issue as well.' (Staff member)*

In addition, students and staff highlighted how this lack of integration and cultural understanding is an obstacle in terms of relationships between staff and students, both at academic and wellbeing levels (see focus groups responses 8 and 9 below). Suggestions for improvements were proposed by staff in including inter-cultural training (see focus groups responses 10 and 11 below).

8- *'He [the personal tutor] gave us his schedule and said, "Ah, we can have meetings where we can discuss things you are not likely to discuss with anyone else", so went there and we told him about the test, the things that were wrong about it, and he was like, "Okay, but this is the British system - I'm sorry if you don't get in line with our system" So, why do you have this guidance, this guy who is here to give you guidance and help you, and then his help is like, "I'm sorry if you can't adjust to our system", and you feel like helpless, lonely and stupid!' (PGT student)*

9- *'I notice that, for cultural reasons, students are wary of disclosing personal issues, and there's some work to be done around…around that. There are lots of reasons why talking to somebody else about a problem you're experiencing means losing face, and that's just simply not done, so… That's…that's an issue that comes up often.' (Staff member)*

10- *'I think the point about inter-cultural training, particularly, seems very timely, you know, when things like student experience are [at] the kind of… sort…quite [a pinnacle] really when it comes to being under the spotlight in a place like Warwick.*

Eh…well, I think it's, yeah, I mean, I guess I think it's about…coming back to that kind of issue of sort of embedding…' (Staff member)

11- *'I think inter-cultural awareness is not something we do very well at this University.' (Staff member)*

What's next?

From the focus groups it emerged that there is an urgent need to implement strategies and activities that can promote cultural integration and facilitate intercultural understanding. The lack of these was recognised as a significant hindrance to wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment.

The focus groups highlighted the necessity of acknowledging the cultural and international mix in the students' cohort as a key factor when planning and delivering the teaching and learning experience (e.g. preparation of lectures, module work and assignments, etc.).

As described above, students identified some pedagogic practices that could improve integration and enhance their wellbeing experiences in the classroom. Several focus group participants have identified in the allocation of culturally diverse students in class and for group work as a possible pedagogic practice for promoting intercultural integration.

A further identification and expansion, and a more systematic dissemination, of these pedagogic practices would be desirable.

Very desirable, also, for staff, is an expansion of the intercultural training offer at University. There are already some examples of these types of interventions at departmental level that were briefly mentioned during the focus groups and there is a clear need for an expansion of this provision.

In addition, students recognised that Welcome Week and other departmental induction programmes are/can be additional spaces for promoting this integration.

Based on our observations and data, a next step to identifying and reviewing current best practices and offering additional opportunities to increase intercultural integration in order to improve wellbeing is to discuss with students and staff the following:

How can Warwick promote intercultural integration and cultural understanding in the teaching and learning environment?

What pedagogic interventions, of any scale, could Warwick as a University, or in a department as part of the University, introduce for improving intercultural integration and cultural understanding as part of University life?

Key Theme 3:

Emotional intelligence has a positive impact on Warwick students' wellbeing

Focus groups across the University, including undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students in addition to staff, accentuated the value of human qualities and behaviours (to include care, kindness and compassion) in enhancing the wellbeing of students within the teaching and learning environment. Students focused on a need for these qualities in University staff that are directly involved in their academic journey at the institution, such as personal tutors, seminar tutors and lecturers. In addition, participants also conveyed a necessity to engage in self-care in treating oneself with kindness and compassion; thus demonstrating these very same attributes in relationships adopted with others at University but directed towards the self (see focus groups responses 3 and 4 below).

Directing care by employing soft skills, such as approachability, empathy, and showing a capacity for listening and communicating effectively in the teaching and learning environment resulted in positive wellbeing in the individuals receiving this care, kindness, and/or compassion (see focus groups responses 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, and 17 below). Staff members further articulated the core need to possess emotional intelligence in their interaction with students, and noted that a lack of human skills would in most cases lead to sub-optimal student wellbeing (see focus groups responses 3, 5, and 6 below).

1- *"I had like, em, an essay to write and I didn't feel comfortable writing it because I'm an exchange student so basically the requirement of Warwick is quite different from my home University. So I asked to have an appointment with the teacher, and she replied in, I don't know, like in two hours, and I could get the... the meeting was like... my essay obviously, but it helped me feel good and feel encouraged in my work.'* (UG Student)

2- *'When people are very energetic and they show the love that they have for what they're doing, they should not be…like they should be supportive as well. It's important that, no matter how deep they went to whatever they're studying, it's important to be able to answer very basic questions and not be like, "Okay, that's a very basic question - go and find it yourself". You have to be approachable as well.'* (PGT Student)

3- *'Well, in the sense that like, since wellbeing generally is about mental health, if someone is unkind to another like repeatedly, that can affect their mental health in a negative way and therefore decrease their wellbeing.'* (UG student)

4- *'So, it's [wellbeing] definitely how you treat people because that impacts, you know, how you feel about yourself and how comfortable you feel in opening up I think, and how the departments treat you and how they communicate to you.'* (PGT student)

5- *'If you aren't showing the compassion and caring, if, you know, when you have your kind of feedback and support hours, or office hours, whatever you like to call them in your department, if a student presents a problem but then you don't actively support them, or you don't put them in touch with, you know, kind of signpost and put them in touch with other services that can support them, then that's also going to knock somebody's confidence and their potential wellbeing, and how they interact, potentially, with the material going forward as well.'* (Staff member)

6- *'So, I expect the teaching and learning environment to be inclusive and humane and, em, to feel cared for, whether I'm a student or a member of staff, and that requires a degree of humility as well. So, I expect all of those things, but positive, in a positive way.'* (Staff member)

Relationships with peers, and a reliance on immediate support systems within existing family networks, emerged as integral for student wellbeing. As expected, student participants put significant value on friends and family as positive support systems (see focus groups responses 7 and 8 below).

Analysis of data implied that some provisions at the University were perhaps too 'clinical' in nature (see focus groups responses 9 and 10 below). Students sought 'friendly' and 'receptive' mentors to share their concerns with (see focus groups responses 9, 10, 11, and 12 below). Additionally, there seemed to be hesitance over how students would be 'judged' for presenting with their difficulties (see focus groups response 12 below).

Gender also seemed to be a factor in identifying members of staff who are supportive (see focus groups responses 11 and 16 below).

> **7–** 'Friends and family are like really important.' (UG student)

> **8–** 'Yeah I think, as a student, most of your support, you get from your friends, really.' (UG student)

> **9–** 'I think, with the whole personal tutor thing, the way it was set out at the beginning of the year was we'd have like a friend almost, but then mine was quite impersonal and he didn't have any contact with us. So, I made an appointment separately, and then, when I went, I was expecting like a really friendly, "How are you? You must be…", I don't know, like I thought he would start it, but then I felt like it was all on me. So, I'm not…it was probably just my personal experience, because I know other people have really friendly tutors, but, yeah, that didn't quite live up to expectations.' (UG student)

> **10–** 'My supervisor is really helpful about my project, but he's the kind of people who don't like to talk about some personal things. We have met for four times, also talking about my project. We even didn't have a word about the weather or something happened, like "How are you?" and he won't answer me...he is really helpful with my project, but he is kind of...do not like to share or have some personal talks with me.' (PGT student)

> **11–** 'Sometimes it's quite challenging to talk about pastoral issues if both of your supervisors are men…it might go both ways - you know, some women just don't connect either, and vice versa.' (PGR student)

> **12–** 'Sometimes, you may find yourself wanting to…discuss something, but, eh, you feel the fear to be judged by the person you're going to - say, personal tutor.' (PGT student)

The focus groups highlighted concerns from staff members in being able to execute the required skill-set in dealing with tutees.

> **13–** 'And although compassion is really important, on the other hand, this is not the training that most of the people in universities have received. You've received some training to do teaching or do research, but when it comes to how you treat someone that…who needs some support, even if you're interested and mean well, you don't really have the training or maybe the confidence to know that what you are going to do is actually going to benefit them.' (Staff member)

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Despite reservation from some academics about the appropriateness of training for pastoral roles, clear models of good practice by staff, which had positive impact on students' wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment and beyond, were also shared during the focus groups (see focus groups responses 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 below).

Yet, students valued opportunities to form relationships and to be part of groups for their wellbeing (see focus groups responses 14 and 18 below). These desirable activities include, for example, group workshops hosted by Counselling Services (see focus groups response 18 below), which allowed them to determine that their worries were shared by a vast number of others, and thus not unique to themselves (i.e. 'not alone'). Opportunities for group intervention can help students' foster self-kindness.

> **14–** ''For X (a department of the Faculty of Social Sciences) at least, we have a particular property lecturer who really, really cares, and she has these like drop-in sessions straight after the lecture, so if you're stuck on anything or feeling like you haven't caught up, because it can be really technical and difficult, then you can just see her one-to-one. And also, she's arranged these coffee mornings on Thursdays where it's really informal but there are staff and students, and you don't have to talk to the staff, but you can just go and have coffee and a biscuit, and then if you really want to talk to them, then, yeah, you feel free to do that. Yeah, that makes me feel like she genuinely cares about us and that… It can, I think, for X (a department of the Faculty of Social Sciences), if you're behind, you can feel really stupid sometimes, erm, but she doesn't - Yeah [laughing]. She doesn't let you feel stupid, and you know that other people are struggling too, so it's really helpful.' (UG student)

> **15–** 'My project supervisor, he always supports me. For example, even when we write the assignments, he always is like sending me email, come to talk to me, and we discuss if you're struggling with it. So, I feel, myself, very comfortable…he's helping with...scheduling my timetable when I write, when I need to do some job to be...to provide the project and assignments on time...and even sometimes you don't' send the emails, he is following you, checking are you okay, do you have any problems.' (PGT student)

> **16–** 'I do a lot of work in the Department to create more informal mentoring for women students by women academics because... X (a department of the Faculty of Social Sciences) is very kind of male-dominated, when it comes to PhD supervisors, so that has been, historically, a barrier for...for a lot of us to talk about wellbeing issues.' (PGR student)

> **17–** 'We have drop-ins, either in our café or in the undergraduate learning space each week. It also helps the students feel that we're actively listening and trying…trying our best to give them the best possible experience, even if it's not perfect.' (Staff member)

> **18–** 'The University counselling workshops are really good. So, they run stuff on procrastination, perfectionism, which was really, really good…So it's kind of like a training session, but it's also in a group, and it's a nice place to like pick up tips and also meet people. And just...a very important thing is not to feel like you're on your own or you're going through something that's just you. Going into that group, even if it's like three, two, three, four other people, you're like, okay, I'm not like...not going crazy just yet.' (PGR student)

Concurrent with student wellbeing: supporting staff wellbeing

In the focus groups, members of staff focused on their need to maintain their own wellbeing in order to effectively embed best practices, and to discharge their responsibility towards students' welfare and pastoral needs more effectively. It was determined that the holistic wellness of tutors enabled enhanced provision for students' needs. Students expressed repeated focus on the use of emotional intelligence and soft skills (e.g. listening, understanding, empathizing, etc.) by their academic personal tutors, seminar tutors and lecturers to enable them to feel 'valued as people.' However, staff members felt that to demonstrate these attributes, their personal and work-related needs must also be considered, particularly by the wider institution. From the focus groups, there seems to be wide-felt agreement that the support provision for staff members is minimal to non-existent, which has implications then on the abilities for staff members to maintain effective relationships with students in support of their wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment.

19- *'I've got a strong feeling that the best way to improve student wellbeing would be to pay more attention to staff wellbeing because I think… if we're fed up and pissed off because we're not feeling cared about, it does go into the classroom with us, at some level, or a lecture theatre, and I don't….. I don't have a sense that that is well-understood here.' (Staff member)*

20- *'The University doesn't really do much about the staff wellbeing, and I think it's directly through the staff that the students are going to experience teaching and learning, and their wellbeing depends on that, so maybe put some more emphasis on like a good work / life balance, good work conditions… I mean, [I can] talk about this, but I think that the University needs to support staff if they actually want them to be - I can only talk about my experience, that I find that, during term-time, I work consecutively for like 65 hours per week, like can go for five weeks like this, and even more, depending on what comes on the table. So, yes, I do want to care about my students, but I don't really have the time. But if I actually was working normal hours, then I could spare an hour to a student that comes and has a problem and wants to discuss it, and that would be better, obviously, from a wellbeing point of view.' (Staff member)*

21- *'But I agree with what you said about the University's values, and I think a more holistic approach to wellbeing is needed because stressed, overworked staff cannot help students. They haven't got the time, they haven't got the patience, because they're desperately trying to meet their next target. So, I think the University needs to look at the bigger picture and have some way of supporting staff. I know I can pick up the phone to Student Support and I can ask for advice on this student, but there isn't really any mechanism for staff to get help with their own wellbeing.' (Staff member)*

What's next?

This report has previously commented on the need for Warwick students to be viewed as whole people in the teaching and learning environment. This was from the perspective of developing and delivering a student-focussed learning experience, in accordance with students' needs, desires, aspirations and talents. This idea can be extended. There is a clear longing of Warwick students to be considered holistically as individuals, and not necessarily as service-users or clients. A need for 'genuineness,' 'connection' and a more 'personal' relationship between staff and students was a recurrent theme. Opinion held that care, kindness and compassion for one-another was supportive of wellbeing, not only for students but also for staff members. This vision for reciprocated care, kindness and compassionate interactions universally, at all levels of the institution, between senior personnel and staff members, between staff members and students, and also between students themselves, shone through as a leading necessity, conducive to all-round institutional wellbeing.

Based on our observations and data, a next step to identifying and reviewing current best practices and offering additional opportunities to improve the ways in which care, whether as self-care or care-giving, can support wellbeing in students and staff is to discuss with students and staff the following:

How can we, as individuals and as part of the Warwick community, practice care, kindness and compassion in the teaching and learning environment?

While responding to this question, it is important that considerations are made to the different types of practices that occur in small-group, large-group, and virtual teaching and learning environments at Warwick.

For example, one area of investigation is the translation of practices of care to large- group in-classroom and virtual environments (e.g. an interesting question to ask would be: 'How can we, as individuals and as part of the Warwick community, translate practices of care, kindness and compassion to the virtual learning and online teaching environment?').

Key Theme 4:

The quality of personal tutor/tutee relationships has a significant impact on student wellbeing

There has been recent debate on the Personal Tutor System (PTS) at the University of Warwick. This was followed by a review of the PTS by a Working Group set up in 2017 under the leadership of the Dean of Students Office. A report of findings (see University of Warwick - Personal Tutoring Review 2017 - PTR 2017) was published with a catalogue of recommendations due to be implemented for the 2018/19 academic period, approved by both Senate and Council. Though the advised interventions can remedy some of the concerns students and staff raised during our focus groups, it remains important to relay commentary on this domain, as our findings suggest that the relationships between tutors and tutees at this institution have a pronounced impact on student wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment.

There was concern raised by students over the quality of their relationship with personal tutors. Many felt they had not had opportunity to form positive relations enabling them to feel confident in accessing tutors (see focus groups responses 1, 2, 5, 8, and 9 below), often hindered by frequent changes in allocated tutor over the course of their degree programme (see focus groups responses 2 and 14 below). Additionally, students felt tutors were 'out of reach' for the most part owing to academic and wider-working commitments (see focus groups responses 6 and 8 below). Some felt tutors were merely fulfilling a procedural tick-box exercise. Doubt over the authenticity of personal tutors having a real desire for executing their pastoral remit was a continual finding (see focus groups responses 4 and 5 below). For PGT students, there seemed on occasion a complete absence of an allocated personal tutor (see focus groups responses 5, 6 and 7 below), whilst doctoral students felt they only had an academic supervisor for thesis related concerns (see focus groups responses 7 and 8 below): both these sets of the student population felt withdrawn and unable to access appropriate support.

1– ''So, I think a lot of it has to come from personal tutors, like trying to improve the relationships with the like tutees, rather than from, you know, the students themselves because it is quite intimidating, especially like just opening up, even if you do have a problem, like just opening up to someone that you don't really know can be quite stressful.' (UG student)

2– 'So, I'm first year, so it's been over the course of... however many months now, they've [personal tutor] changed like twice. I feel that's not great because you're meant to be building a relationship with them as you go through the year. It's not quite possible if they're changing them.' (UG student)

3– 'I think from my personal experience and friends that I know, a lot of the personal tutors try not to really engage with you if they don't have to.' (UG student)

4– 'They try like formally, but not really like... just because they have to, so they sort of tick the box, you know. So, they don't really provide you with the support that you might need.' (UG student)

5– 'He [the personal tutor] gave us his schedule and said, "Ah, we can have meetings where we can discuss things you are not likely to discuss with anyone else", so we went there and we told him about the test, the things that were wrong about it, and he was like, "Okay, but this is the British system - I'm sorry if you don't get in line with our system" So, why do you have this guidance, this guy who is here to give you guidance and help you, and then his help is like, "I'm sorry if you can't adjust to our system", and you feel like helpless, lonely and stupid! And he...it happened many times already...they don't know what my courses are, my modules are, they don't know what I have to do. I had to explain my course to him. And I was like... who is here to help me? Like I feel no one is here to help me.' (PGT student)

6– 'I have a personal tutor... He has nine students. He is really busy because he is a professor - he need to give course overseas every month. So…I can email him and he will email me with, eh, questions or answers, but I can't

meet him face-to-face. I only have saw him once as well. It's a kind of like group meeting, yeah, yeah, at the start of term, Term 1, yeah. My supervisor is a PhD student and he is kind and nice because he needs to supervise my project, so I'm closer with him as well.' (PGT student)

7– 'As PhDs, we have our supervisors, right, so we don't have a personal tutor, and then, as a Master's student, I don't think I was ever aware I had one...as PhD, you feel supported, but then that support is more academic rather than pastoral, and then, as a Master's student, you don't have any sort of support - like all the interaction you have is with the lecturers and seminar leaders, and then most of the support either comes from you or the people you're around.' (PGR student)

8– 'I think it's very important for like this [wellbeing] research that it's known that…when you're talking about trying to do work and then have…share like your personal feelings and whether they have the knowledge and training, or compassion and empathy. There's not a third party that you can speak to, like a personal tutor or a pastoral person, but even when they do, like it depends on the training for the department and... So I think it's [supervision/wellbeing] a wider systematic issues.' (PGR student)

Concerns over the tutoring system were also expressed by members of staff. Discontent was felt with respect to the appropriateness of training; given the complexity and diversity in the student population at the University of Warwick, staff members felt inadequately trained at times, owing to the potential breadth of problems, to be a point of contact for arising student issues (see focus groups responses 11 and 13 below). Staff reported many inter-departmental discrepancies in the value placed on the allocation of personal tutors to students, and the enthusiasm with which some discharge their pastoral remit. (see focus groups responses 9, 10, and 11 below). Although students themselves navigate towards certain individuals in departments, whom students may perceive to possess the necessary skill-set to better serve them, this leads to added pressures on those individuals, and evidently, resentment from said individuals towards other colleagues for not fulfilling their roles aptly (see focus groups responses 9, 12, and 13 below).

9– 'Where I despair is the extent, in my department, which, like one of the other speakers, is also a very large department, 1,800 undergraduates to give you some idea of the scale… Where I despair is the lack of availability of many of my teaching colleagues, that students can't find them, they can't get responses to emails, and so they tend to seek out either no one, which doesn't help, or the friendly face – it might be mine or some of the other usual suspects – who then have to get involved, and I've never understood how thinking beings such as academics can excuse themselves on the ground that they didn't know what to say or they don't know anything about that.' (Staff member)

10– 'My role as a personal tutor, which I suppose I've been told by my department is, well, is signposting, initial point of contact and signposting to people who know more about whatever comes up… students are reluctant to come and acknowledge or talk about something in the first place, particularly with some other personal tutors, where it's not really an effective relationship in that first instance. I think we've got a lot of work to do on personal tutoring overall.' (Staff member)

11– 'We certainly need to support, we need to signpost, we need to be there, we need to encourage, but fundamentally, it is an academic role and we're not qualified counsellors. You know, with the best intentions, we could be giving wrong advice, and we shouldn't be becoming experts in something which is outside our role of expertise. So, I do think we need to be able to set the boundaries there and make sure that students get professional support that actually does help them.' (Staff member)

12– 'Quite often you (the student) can't find a member of academic staff, or the personal tutor doesn't want to know, so we spend a lot of time sitting with students.' (Staff member)

13– 'I think if we [can put round] these things [all about] communication, then it's definitely going to be dependent on departments, how the culture is. So, we have tutors, then year senior tutors, then a director of wellbeing, but then we're also trying to make sure everyone knows who does what, so that it's not just send everyone to the director of wellbeing because there wouldn't be enough space in their office [laughs]. But I think then it comes back to, yeah, communication about good methods, and opportunities for training, I think is a good thought.' (Staff member)

Excellent practices were also shared by students at focus groups. These tended to speak highly of experiences where tutors had engaged regularly, by emails and in-person (see focus groups responses 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 below). Students felt that meeting tutors individually with an expectation to reveal distresses was intimating, and could often be helped through initial group meetings at the outset, where a tutor brought together all of their tutees (see focus groups responses 15 and 16 below).

14– 'I think the times that stand out for me in terms of like wellbeing with teaching, I think the personal tutor system is really good, because I was feeling a little bit overwhelmed in the first couple of weeks. I had like 10 books to read and an assignment, but like I spoke to a personal tutor and like he was really helpful and just like he goes like, "It's okay to feel like really overwhelmed." So, I think that meeting with them is like really important, so that worked really well.' (UG student)

15– 'I think a lot of students might be put off by a one-on-one meeting - it seems quite intimidating when you don't know the person. So, having a group meeting was a good way of easing into the... like the communication because again it would be a key part. But, em, I've been quite lucky with my personal tutor, I've kept the same one, but I know a lot of people in my department have changed their personal tutor multiple times now.' (UG student)

16– 'I have a personal tutor. Mine is good. I met him only once. He just invited us for…like snacks…For example, I met him, from October [focus group held in February], only once, and we met with a group. For example, he has around eight or nine students, so he is gathering us together and just tells that if you have any problems, you can just come and talk to me.' (PGT student)

17– 'With the personal tutor, we see ours every two weeks, so they help with like our essay plans sometimes or personal things and just any advice we need, what we found harder that week, they're just there to help us. So, I really love the personal tutor system as well.' (UG student)

18– 'I met my personal tutor, had talk, em, was asked about my wellbeing, educational progress and other…So I feel pretty comfortable with [him]…I wouldn't be so much comfortable to talk to them to everything that I really wanted to, you know, deep down, but, eh, other than that...I do feel welcomed by them, and I think almost any student in my department or that building pretty much feels the same, feel welcome.' (PGT student)

What's next?

An effective personal tutoring system can significantly enhance the wellbeing of students in the teaching and learning environment.

Extensive scrutiny of this provision has taken place at the University with recommendations due to be implemented in the current academic year.

In particular, following approval of all PTR 2017 recommendations in spring 2018, the Dean of Students' Office has been leading on developments in the personal tutoring space across the University. These include:

- the development and implementation of a programme of training for all Personal Tutors and Senior Tutors - for the latter this will include compulsory mental health training.

- inclusion of personal and senior tutoring work within the University promotion criteria.

- a review of workload allocation for the work of senior and personal tutors across all departments.

- the development and launch in 2018 of Warwick Awards for Personal Tutoring Excellence (WAPTE).

- introduction of a number of support resources to assist Personal Tutors – including PT checklists to support active engagement of tutors with tutees, guidance for tutors supporting PGR students and the development of the Dean of Students' Office website to include FAQ's for Personal Tutors and revised guidance.

- development of student resources to support tutee's active engagement with personal tutoring – including an online student guidebook to personal tutoring at Warwick; flyers in the bedroom packs of all new students and a FAQ's section for students on the Dean of Students' Office website.

Given the impact upon positive student wellbeing, and the evident merits of having an approachable and enthusiastic assigned personal tutor, this key theme's findings support and reinforce the necessity of the implementations of the recommendations set out by the Working Group led by the Dean of Students Office.

Based on our observations and data, a next step to identifying and reviewing current best personal tutoring practices and offering additional opportunities to improve in this crucial area is to discuss with students and staff the following:

How can we, as individuals and as part of the Warwick community, ensure that the role of the personal tutor has a positive impact on students' wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment?

What pedagogic innovations can be made to support the relationship between tutees and their personal tutor in order to build and maintain a collaborative partnership?

Final note:

As a general consideration, given the wellbeing concepts and ideas expressed by students (e.g. resilience, exploration of ways of working on their wellbeing, etc.), it would be important to balance any environmental change with approaches which help students with their personal development.

This should be kept in mind when thinking about possible solutions for addressing the 4 'Key Theme' areas and issues and adequate students support provision should be implemented alongside.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Guide: Students

Pre Focus Group:

1) Upon arrival UG students and PG Students will check in at the registration desk.

2) They will provide their initials next to their name on the sign-in sheet (this will enable us to issue the £5.00 Eating at Warwick voucher, following their participation).

3) They will move to their allocated and labelled focus group (1, 2, 3 or 4) and sit in a chair with a clearly marked speaker number.

4) They will complete their participation consent form and demographic information sheet which will be on their chair (and labelled focus group 1, 2, 3 or 4).

5) The observer will collect the form and sheet and file them separately into the envelopes marked by the numbered focus group and labelled 'Consent Form' and 'Demographic Sheet'.

Beginning of Focus Group:

The focus group facilitator will introduce themselves and the observer and briefly explain the purpose of the focus groups, ethical considerations and appropriate behaviour or 'ground rules.' For consistency, we ask that the following statement be read/used by all facilitators:

Hello, my name is X. My role is to facilitate the focus group. My colleague X is here as an observer to take notes and document today's session.

We firstly want to thank you for attending today's focus group. As you know, the purpose of our focus groups are to understand student and staff perceptions and experiences of wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment. This research would not be possible without you!

To confirm, as per the participation information sheet we sent via email and have asked you to review; our conversation today is strictly confidential and anonymous. As such, we ask that you refer to yourself and any speaker by the number indicated on the place card in front of each seat. The purpose of the recording is for transcription only. If at any time you no longer want to participant, you are free to excuse yourself.

Finally, we ask that everyone respects each other's opinions and experiences and ask that you kindly not interrupt when a participant is sharing. We also ask that you be cognisant of noise around you so please keep your voice at a reasonable tone. Due to time constraints, the facilitator will keep the conversation moving to ensure all questions are asked and everyone who wishes to speak has an opportunity to. Any questions or further comments are welcomed following the focus group

Any questions before we start?

During the Focus Group:

We have a few open ended questions for you to answer. Before we begin, we ask that you take a few minutes and think of what the concept of 'wellbeing' means? And what the concept of 'the teaching and learning environment' means to you? Please write the words you associate with wellbeing on the colour A post-it, and the words associated with the teaching and learning environment on the colour B post-it. Our observer will collect these from you and place them on the flip chart paper placed at the centre of the table.

Thank you for that. Now moving on to our guided questions…and please remember there are no right or wrong answers!

Focus Groups Interview Guide:

1. More specifically, how do you define wellbeing (Prompts: mental health, resilience, compassion, kindness, helpfulness).

2. How do you define the teaching and learning environment? (Prompts: social, small groups, online, classroom, study or learning spaces, library, accommodation, tutor or supervisory meetings)

3. Considering these definitions, have you had positive feelings and experiences in specific teaching and learning environments? If so, why and how?

4. Considering these definitions, have you had negative feelings and experiences in specific teaching and learning environments? If so, why and how?

5. Is there a link or relationship between your wellbeing and the teaching and learning environment? If so, how? (Prompts: Person/facilitator, supervisor, peers and group work, type of teaching or learning environment, physical (home/on campus, virtual).

6. Are there things already happening at the University that have helped your wellbeing in teaching and learning environments? If so, what and how?

7. Do you have any suggestions for improvement in terms of what the University can do to improve wellbeing in teaching and learning environments?

Post Focus Group:

Thank you everyone- this has been a really interesting and helpful conversation. If you have any further questions please email Elena Riva.

Focus Group Guide: Staff

Pre Focus Group:

1) Upon arrival staff will sign in at the registration desk by providing their initial next to their name on the sign-in sheet (this will enable us to track numbers).

2) They will move to their allocated focus group (1, 2 or 3) and sit in a chair with a clearly marked speaker number.

3) They will complete their participation consent form and demographic information sheet which will be on their chair (and labelled focus group 1, 2 or 3).

4) The observer will collect the form and sheet and file them separately into the envelopes marked by the numbered focus group and labelled 'Consent Form' and 'Demographic Sheet'.

Beginning of Focus Group:

The interviewer/focus group facilitator will introduce themselves and the observer and briefly explain the purpose of the focus groups, ethical considerations and appropriate behaviour or 'ground rules.' For consistency, we ask that the following statement be read/used by all facilitators:

Hello, my name is X. My role is to facilitate the focus group. My colleague X is here as an observer to take notes and document today's session.

We firstly want to thank you for attending today's focus group. As you know, the purpose of our focus groups are to understand student and staff perceptions and experiences of wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment. This research would not be possible without you!

To confirm, as per the participation information sheet we sent via email and have asked you to review; our conversation today is strictly confidential and anonymous. As such, we ask that you refer to yourself and any speaker by the number indicated on the place card in front of each seat. The purpose of the recording is for transcription only. If at any time you no longer want to participant, you are free to excuse yourself.

Finally, we ask that everyone respects each other's opinions and experiences and ask that you kindly not interrupt when a participant is sharing. We also ask that you be cognisant of noise around you so please keep your voice at a reasonable tone. Due to time constraints, the facilitator will keep the conversation moving to ensure all questions are asked and everyone who wishes to speak has an opportunity to. Any questions or further comments are welcomed following the focus group.

Any questions before we start?

During the Focus Group:

We have a few open ended questions for you to answer. Before we begin, we ask that you take a few minutes and think of what the concept of 'wellbeing' means? And what the concept of 'the teaching and learning environment' means to you? Please write the words you associate with wellbeing on the colour A post-it, and the words associated with the teaching and learning environment on the colour B post-it. Our observer will collect these from you and place them on the flip chart paper at the centre of the table.

Thank you for that. Now moving on to our guided questions…and please remember there are no right or wrong answers!

Focus Groups Interview Guide:

1. More specifically, how do you define wellbeing (Prompts: mental health, resilience, compassion, kindness, helpfulness).

2. How do you define the teaching and learning environment? (Prompts: social, small groups, online, Tabula, classroom, study or learning spaces, library, accommodation, tutor or supervisory meetings, assessment)

3. What do you see as your role in wellbeing in teaching and learning, if at all? (Prompts: pastoral, service oriented, tutorial, feedback, admin support, assessment)

4. Which roles as an academic or administrator include wellbeing?

5. Do you see a relationship between students' wellbeing and the teaching and learning environment? Can you describe the nature of this relationship?

6. Are there any positive examples or practices that have worked for you in terms of how you navigate wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment?

7. What can the University do to help you improve wellbeing in the teaching and learning environment?

8. (If time permits) How do the personal tutoring/pastoral care duties fit with your current role?

Post Focus Group:

Thank you everyone- this has been a really interesting and helpful conversation.

If you have any further questions or advice, please email Elena Riva.

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM *version II, 02/11/17*

Participant Student ID:

Title of Project: Wellbeing in Teaching and Learning

Name of researcher(s): Dr Elena Riva, Victoria Jelicic, Sarah Ashworth, Dr Debbi Marais
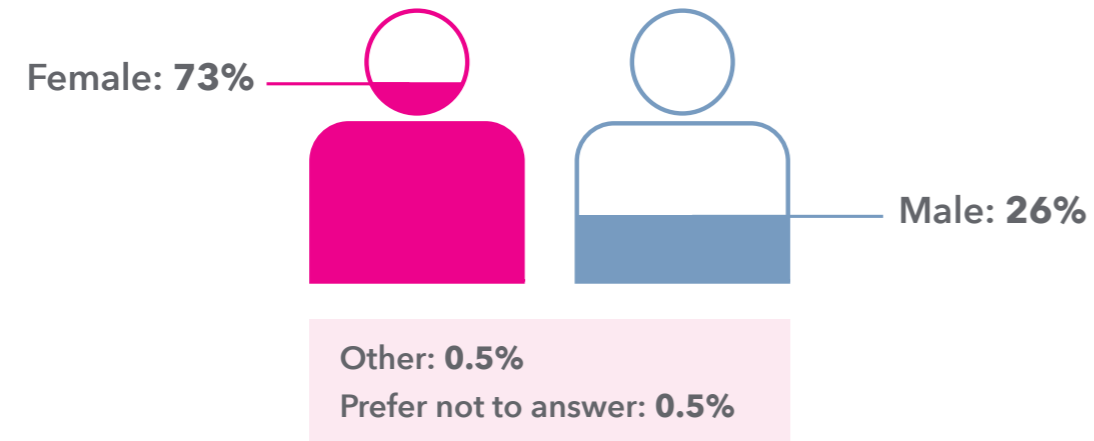
Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet *(version II, 02/11/17)* provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my medical, social care, education, or legal rights being affected.

3. I consent to audio recordings for the purpose of anonymized transcriptions and verbatim quotations in report writing and publications of the study.

4. I understand that my data will be securely stored for a minimum of 10 years, in line with the University of Warwick's Research Data Management Policy.

5. I agree to respect the privacy of other participants in the focus group.

6. I agree to take part in the above study.

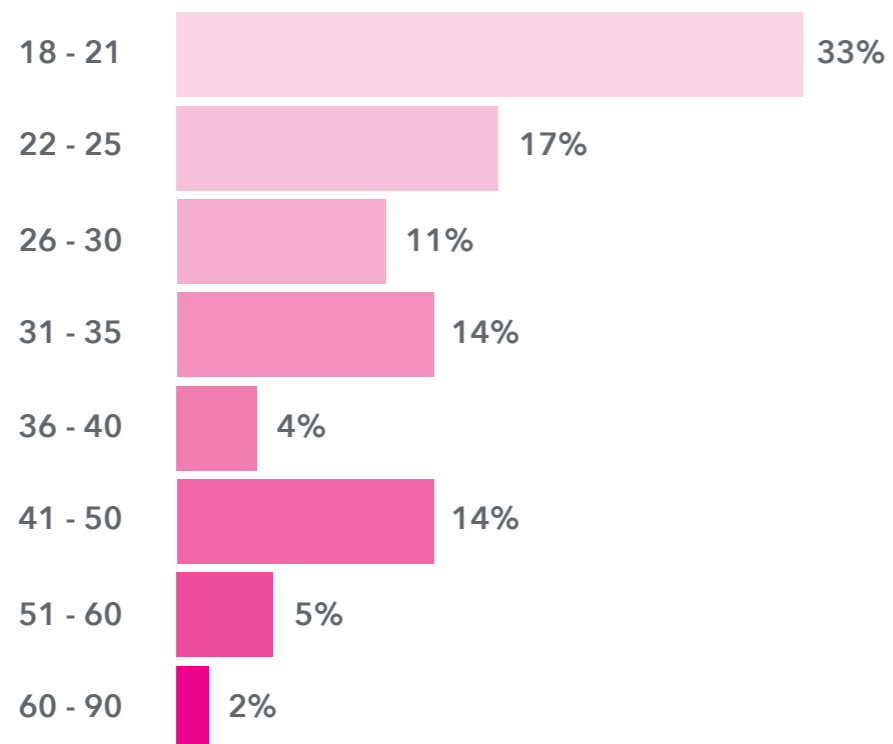_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
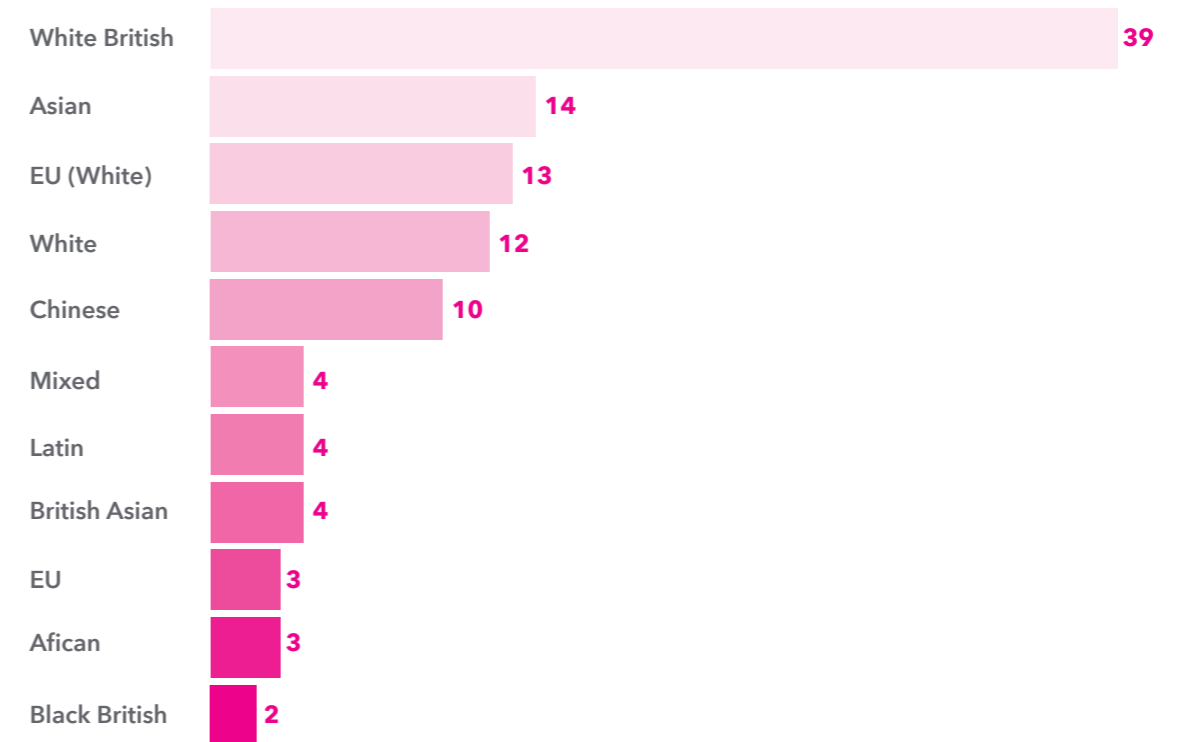Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

Appendix C

Participation by gender

Female: **73%**

Male: **26%**

Other: **0.5%**
Prefer not to answer: **0.5%**

Age range

Age	%
18 - 21	33%
22 - 25	17%
26 - 30	11%
31 - 35	14%
36 - 40	4%
41 - 50	14%
51 - 60	5%
60 - 90	2%

Participation by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Count
White British	39
Asian	14
EU (White)	13
White	12
Chinese	10
Mixed	4
Latin	4
British Asian	4
EU	3
Afican	3
Black British	2

Participation by population • Total 120 Participants

27 PG STUDENTS

46 STAFF

47 UG STUDENTS

Participation by department

Department	Count
Careers & Skills	2
Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL)	3
Centre for Education Studies	4
Centre for Life Long Learning (CLL)	5
Chemistry	2
Computer Science	2
Economics	5
Engineering	2
English	3
History	1
Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS)	1
Institute for Advanced Teaching & Learning (IATL)	4
International Student Office (Exchange Programme)	5
Law	8
Library	3
Life Sciences	6
Modern Languages	3
MORES	1
Politics & International Studies (PAIS)	3
Philosophy	3
Psychology	4
Physics	3
Recruitment Outreach and Admissions Service	1
Sociology	1
Statistics	4
Student's Union	1
Theatre Studies	5
Warwick Foundation Studies	1
Warwick Sport	1
Warwick Business School (WBS)	17
Wellbeing Support Services	1
Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG)	12
Warwick Medical School (WMS)	3

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For further information contact:

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Publication date: October 2018