Industry Placements in HE
Exploring the challenges

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Today's Session

My Role & Placements

Challenges

Research Aim

Approach & Methodology

Findings

Recommendations & Future Research

Q&A

My Role

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Intro to Placements

- Placements UoH Computing & Engineering / Team offering Extensive Support / 20 yr industry relations / STEM / MA Career Guidance & Development

- Placement / Internship / Sandwich Year / Industrial Experience / Work-based Learning

- What? 12 months / 3rd Year / Full Time / Degree-relevant work / live projects / make valuable contributions

- Why? Significant positive research demonstrates benefits to several stakeholders:
  - Students
  - University (increased metrics to perform well, GO, NSS)
  - Economy (Wilson Review, 2012)

Approx 30% placement students offered grad role

Theory into practice

Supports positive grad outcomes

Networking

*"Recruiters repeat warnings from previous years – graduates with no previous work experience are **unlikely to be successful** during the selection process for graduate programmes"* High Fliers, 2019

What do our returning students say?

Muhammad Dadu
Comp Sys Engineering.
Placement with
Appcelerator in California

"*The placement year showed me how a company operates and how to execute a great product. I was able to see how to manage a team and lead innovation.*"

Kris Entwistle
Mechanical Engineering.
Graduate Junior Aerodynamic Designer at Williams Martini Racing

"*My time at Huddersfield really **prepared me** for my career. My placement really helped me **stand out** and gave me experience that cannot be replicated in the classroom.*"

"*I learned a significant amount from my placement and it has subsequently me put in a strong position for my career.*" Computing Science undergraduate

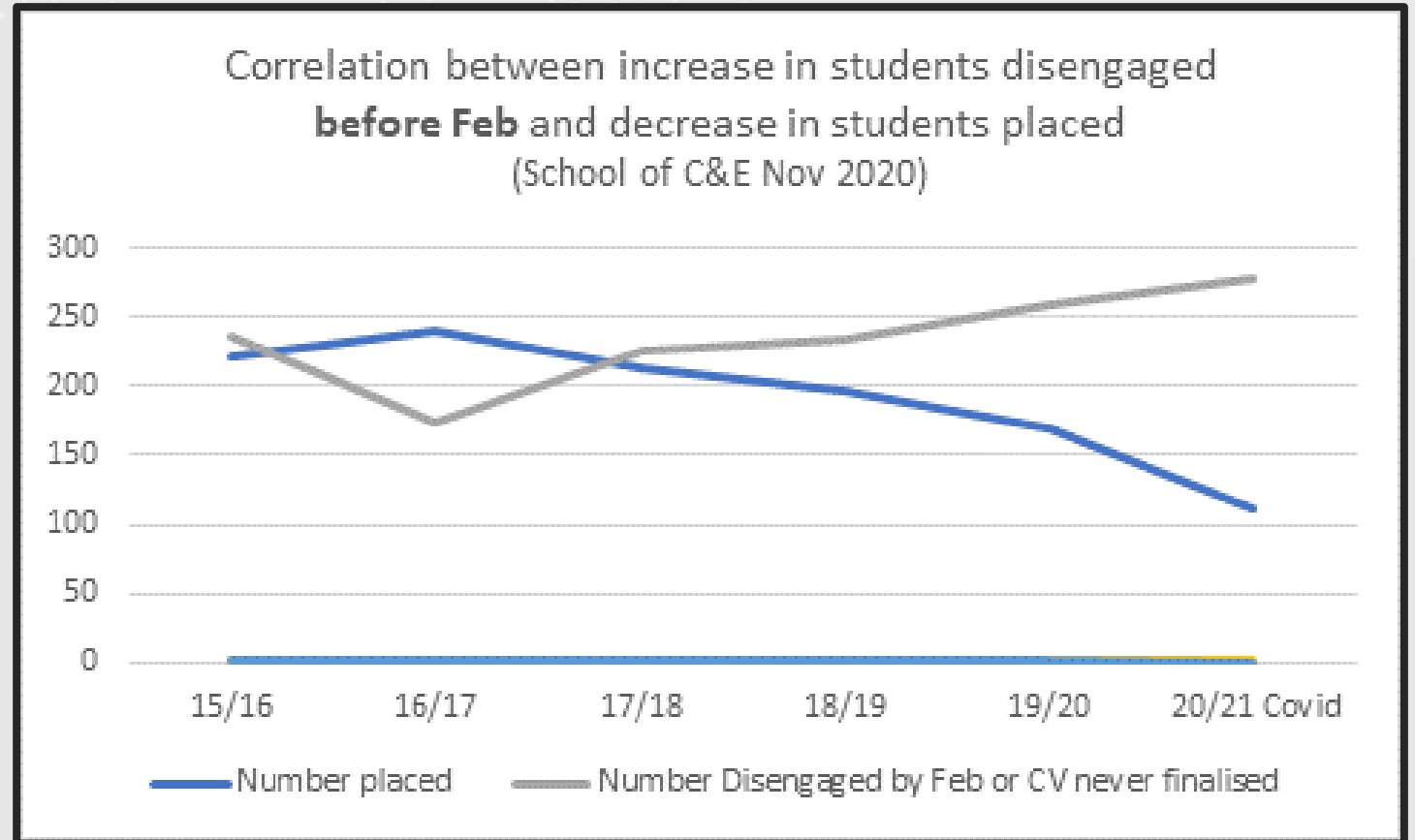However, despite the recognised benefits…

Challenges

Student Engagement with Placements

Increasing Barriers

Current literature identifies:
Student Barriers
Structural Barriers
Employer/Industry Barriers

Correlation between increase in students disengaged **before Feb** and decrease in students placed
(School of C&E Nov 2020)

Number placed   Number Disengaged by Feb or CV never finalised

Research

Exploring the factors/influences that affect students successfully securing industrial placements as part of Higher Education courses.

How has this impacted the emerging trend of a reduction in the number of students engaging in the placement process?
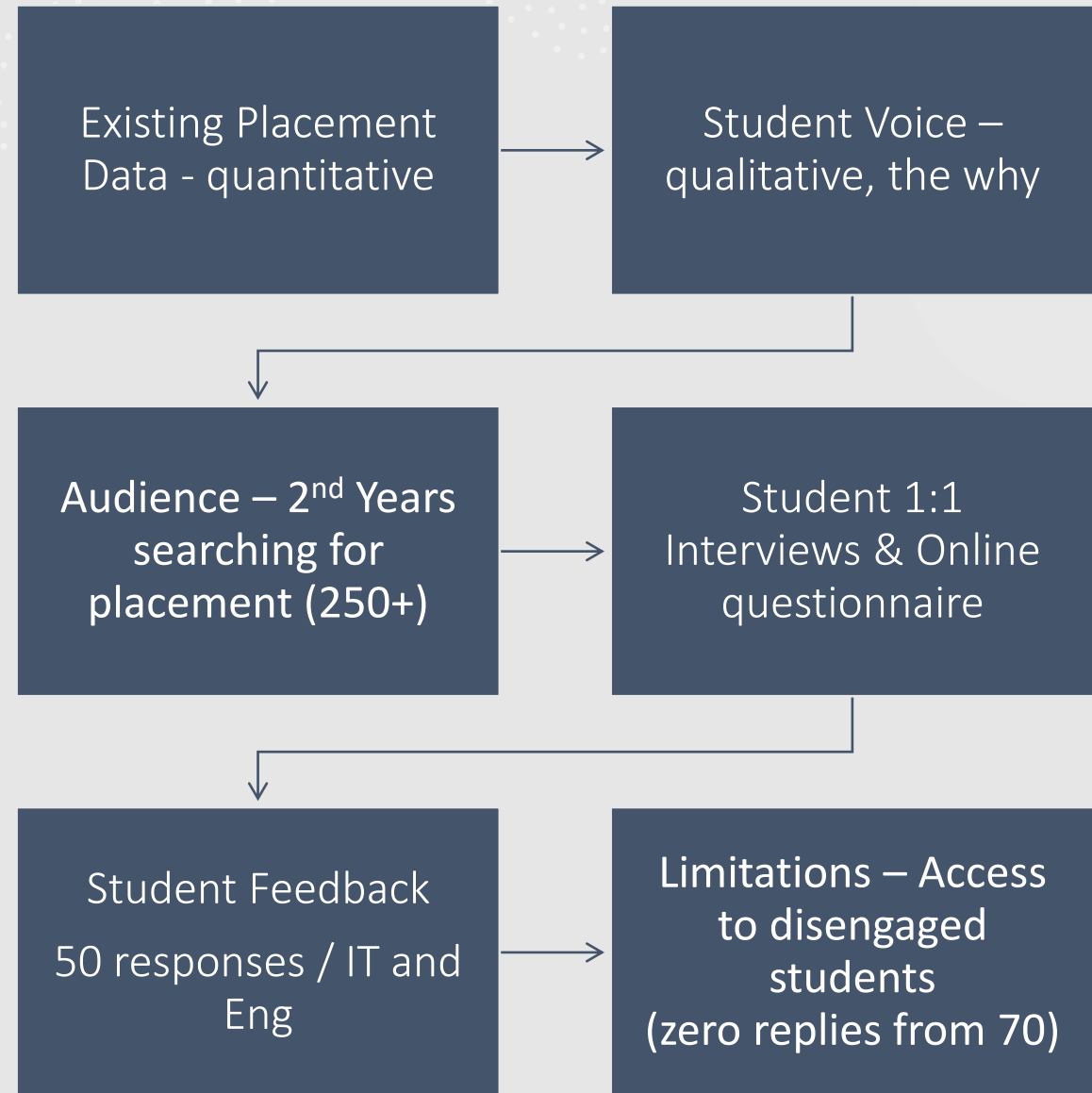
Research Aim

Investigate reasons for student disengagement in placement search and establish the barriers
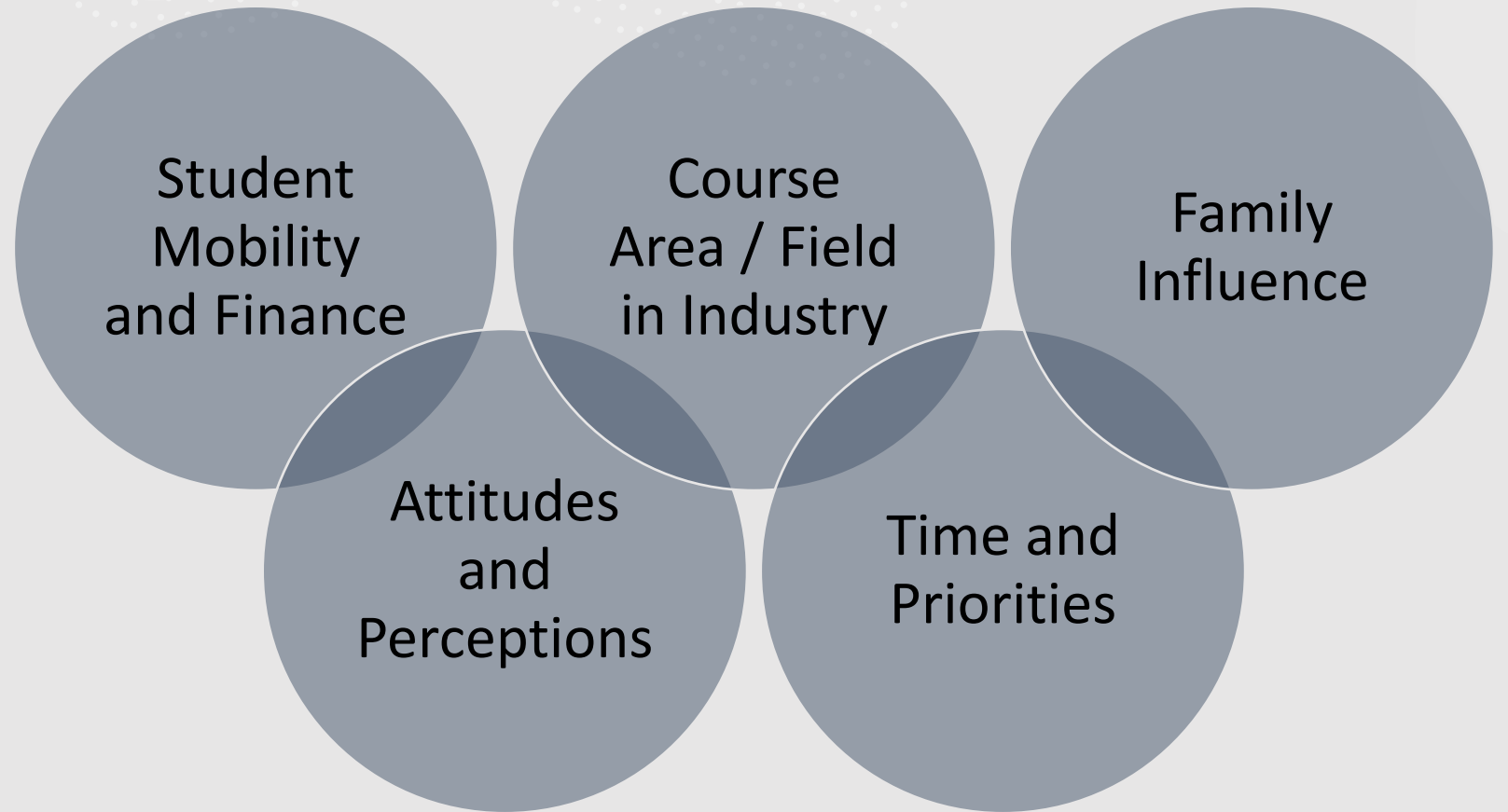
Make suggestions to help remove these barriers

Increase the number of placements secured in a post-covid landscape

Approach & Methodology

Existing Placement Data - quantitative

Student Voice – qualitative, the why

Audience – 2nd Years searching for placement (250+)

Student 1:1 Interviews & Online questionnaire

Student Feedback
50 responses / IT and Eng

Limitations – Access to disengaged students
(zero replies from 70)

Results and Findings

Student Mobility and Finance

Course Area / Field in Industry

Family Influence

Attitudes and Perceptions

Time and Priorities

Results and Findings

Student Mobility and Finance

*"Moving out to live next to your placement is **difficult and scary** for me personally and it'll be a **challenge to overcome"***

Finance was referenced by **39%** of participants as a barrier to placement, with **89%** of those respondents also citing location as a barrier.

*"**Responsibilities** at home and can't get a placement nearby"*

"The main problem is the salary. Although placements are about gaining experience, the reality is that we need to fund various things such as rent"

"Worried about moving and doing something new."

Results and Findings

Attitudes & Perceptions

*"**Fear** of failure, imposter syndrome, **lack of** confidence"*

"I think the requirements are quite daunting"

*"**Worrying** you might not enjoy it and the surrounding pressure to get one."*

"Lack of motivation to apply... depression after getting a few rejection emails"

"Intimidated by workplace environment and lack of belief in knowledge."

Results and Findings

Time & Priorities

"desire to get the degree done and get into industry faster"

"Too stressed with coursework to deal with writing CVs and attending interviews until everything had been submitted."

*"Waste time / is **better to complete the course** first too many opportunities after"*

"already being burnt out from studying so just wanting degree to be over with".

25% of respondents cited 'time' as a barrier to doing a placement. Worrying assumption evolved that finishing the degree earlier, without a placement, would be a quicker route into industry.

Results and Findings

Family Influence

"Pressure from parents to get the degree as soon as possible"

"Have a parent with disabilities and felt pressured to graduate and join the job market as soon as possible to support the family so opted to avoid placement".

"If I had to relocate it would have been a no straight away. My parents don't recognise the importance of a placement so convincing them to let me leave for a "gap year" would just be too difficult"

"I'm from this area and elected to attend University locally in case I was needed to provide support at home. As such my placement search area was greatly reduced - I was very concerned that I would have to miss out."

Published literature refers to family influence as a positive driver to help students in their placement search (Manning & Parrott, 2018). Findings identified in this study offer an interesting contradiction to this, with family being identified as a barrier in some cases, rather than a support

Results and Findings

Course Area / Field in industry

"doesn't appear to be a lot aimed at my course" Web Design

"A lack of interest in the fields represented by placement options" Maths Student

48% of participants refer to subject area and roles in industry as a barrier to securing a placement, some demonstrating lack of knowledge of suitable roles in industry and understanding of which roles they could apply to

"The type of job (Not knowing what i want to do in IT)"

Point of interest raised by Maths student's response is placements suitable for Maths are readily available, but that student did not recognise them as appropriate for their course

Recommendations

Future Research

What have we done so far?

Minimize Location Barrier:

- Recommendation: Review of local labour markets / Source Funding

- Outcome – Increased relationship-building with local SMEs who may not have considered HE placements

Improve industry awareness / career options:

- Recommendation: Careers professionals engage with 1st year in curriculum

- Outcome – Implemented first cycle of 'Joining the Dots' a placement focused y timetabled series to 1st Year STEM students, placement team collaborating with academics / careers / alumni to understand the path of 'studying a subject' to 'my job' and help students recognize the support and careers interventions on offer!

Address anxieties and manage expectations:

- Recommendation: Better prepare students with 1st year placement input, myth busting sessions

- Outcome: Implementation of 'Joining the Dots' encouraged 'safe space' to ask all questions around work exp (delivered as collaboration with current students) No question is too silly.

- Engaged final year students returning from placement to mentor / inspire 1st years through Q&A sessions.

What next?

Review impact of direct interventions / establish appropriate methods and sample / how, when and what?

Widen research across subject areas outside of STEM

Thanks for listening.

Any Questions?