

# **Evaluation of the Future Focus Programme (2023/24) for Year 11 and 13 students: A report to LiNCHigher**

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## Executive Summary

### ***Programme overview***

This report supplements last year's Future Focus Programme evaluation to LiNCHigher. The programme is delivered as part of the Uni Connect initiative funded by the Office for Students. It focuses on the views and experiences of students in Year 11 and 13 that have taken part in the programme in 2023/24, as there was a gap in the data last year for these two year groups.

### ***Evaluation approach***

The evaluation approach consisted of:

- The annual student outcome survey, that included questions on skills improvement, sent to all Year 11 and 13 students in LiNCHigher schools that participated in the Future Focus Programme this academic year.
- Year 11 and 13 student focus groups.
- Interviews with Career Leads.

The outcome survey, which was open from mid-March to the end of May 2024, received 194 responses from Year 11 students from Schools A to D and 12 responses from Year 13 students at School E.

In March 2024 the evaluation team spoke to approximately 75 students from two schools: around 60 Year 11 female students at School F and 15 Year 13 mixed gender students at School G.

### ***Limitations***

Despite the best efforts of LiNCHigher staff and the evaluation team, the data in this report is limited and does not have breadth or depth. This is due to a number of challenges encountered during the evaluation including, on the qualitative side, identifying schools that had a range of Future Focus sessions delivered to their Years 11 and 13 and then accessing the students. Therefore, the qualitative data is limited to the students and staff at two schools and covers just five of the Future Focus sessions.

In terms of the quantitative data, responses to the outcome survey for both year groups were much lower, and came from fewer schools, than anticipated. This was despite providing schools with plenty of opportunity to promote, circulate and complete the survey with their students, numerous reminders by the LiNCHigher team and providing the survey to schools both electronically and in hard copy.

### ***Key findings***

- More than half of all Year 11 students reported a good or strong improvement in three of the nine skills: communication, teamwork and problem solving. However, less than half reported a good or strong improvement in six of the nine skills. This was particularly marked for the ability to concentrate and for revision skills.
- In general, there was little difference in the responses received by Year 11 Uni Connect target learners and non-Uni Connect for the specific skills question. Uni Connect students were more positive about teamwork and independent research skills than their non-Uni Connect counterparts (62.8% versus 46.7% and 56.9% versus 40.8% respectively).
- Female students were more positive than male students that they had improved upon their study skills, revision skills and independent research. Whereas, male students were more positive about teamwork, problem solving and self-confidence.

- School D Year 11 students were more likely to say they had improved on their skills than students from the other two schools.
- The limitations of the data mean it was not possible to draw any conclusions about the impact of the programme using contact hours as a measure.
- Using contact hours as a measure, the Year 11 students that had taken part in more than three hours of activities improved in six of the nine skills the most; however, this group comprised all the students that had taken part in both the Future Focus *and* the Study skills Masterclass Programme.
- The majority of Year 11 students either agreed or strongly agreed with all five outcome questions. They were least positive about having gained knowledge of the benefits of Higher Education and graduate employment.
- There was little difference in the responses to the outcome questions when split by Year 11 Uni Connect and non-Uni Connect learners and by female and male students.
- Year 11 students would like the sessions to be much more interactive and delivered earlier in the school year, ideally before they make their college applications.
- Year 13 students welcomed the addition of the degree apprenticeship session, as this helped them better understand their post-18 options.
- Both year groups would like sessions to have more time for discussion.
- Overall, the Future Focus Programme worked well and was positively received by staff and students alike.

### ***Recommendations***

- Consider including in the programme more ways to help students improve their concentration.
- Continue delivering study and revision skills sessions as confidence in these areas is still lacking as evidenced in the survey data.
- Encourage schools that did not take up the 'Post-16 and Post-18 Options' session for their Year 10 students this academic year to deliver it to their students when they are in Year 11.
- Continue to ensure sessions are as interactive as possible and that there is time for discussion in sessions whenever possible.
- Strongly suggest to schools that Year 11 sessions are delivered as early in the school year as possible, especially in schools where there is no sixth form.
- Encourage schools to run the degree apprenticeship session with both Year 12 and, as early as possible in the school year, for Year 13 students.

## 1. Introduction

This report supplements last year's Future Focus Programme (FFP) evaluation. The programme is delivered as part of the Uni Connect (UC) initiative funded by the Office for Students. The report focuses on the views and experiences of students in Year 11 and 13 that have taken part in the programme in 2023/24. Unfortunately, last year (summer 2023) it was not possible to conduct focus groups with students in Year 11 and 13 because only a few FFP sessions were delivered to these year groups, mainly due to the programmes delayed start. In addition, very few Year 13 responses to the outcome survey were received which meant that little data were collected for this year group, either quantitatively or qualitatively. Therefore, the focus of the evaluation this year has been on Years 11 and 13.

### *Limitations / challenges*

Identifying schools that have had a range of FFP delivery to Years 11 and 13 and then accessing the students for these two year groups proved challenging. Schools with the most delivery, in terms of different types of sessions, were invited by the LiNCHigher team to take part in student focus groups as part of the evaluation. However, some did not reply to numerous LiNCHigher communications and others were unable to allow access to these year groups due to exams. Therefore, the qualitative data is limited to the students, one per year group, and staff at two schools and covers just five of the FFP sessions.

In terms of the quantitative data, responses to the outcome survey for Year 13 were limited to twelve from one school and were much lower than anticipated for Year 11 where 194 responses were collected. This was despite providing schools with ample opportunity to promote, circulate and complete the survey with their students, numerous reminders by the LiNCHigher team and providing the survey to schools both electronically and in hard copy. As the responses were primarily from a limited number of schools, the quantitative data does not have breadth or depth.

## 2. Quantitative data: Outcome survey

### *Outcome survey findings*

All schools that had either Year 11 or 13 students participate in the FFP were invited to take part in the outcome survey. The survey, which has been carried out annually since the academic year 2019/2020, was used this year specifically to evaluate the FFP for Years 11 and 13 as these were the year groups for whom little data had been collected in previous years. The survey was open from mid-March to the end of May and followed the same format as in the past. The survey asked students questions addressing outcomes based upon the NERUPI framework drawn from the NERUPI question bank<sup>1</sup>. In addition, students were also asked to select which skills, from a list of nine, that they felt they had improved on during the academic year. The survey included questions relating to demographic information such as the student's name, year group, postcode and gender. Details of which, and how many, FFP sessions students had taken part in were taken from the HEAT database.

The survey was implemented on Jisc, the online survey platform used by the University of Lincoln, and is included in appendix A.

The outcome questions were asked on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree and were as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Available from resources within the members section of the NERUPI website at [www.nerupi.co.uk](http://www.nerupi.co.uk)

- Question 1: Since September I have developed greater knowledge and awareness of the benefits of Higher Education (HE) and graduate employment (NERUPI Category A)
- Question 2: Since September I have gained a better understanding of the options available to me after I leave school (NERUPI Category B)
- Question 3: Since September I feel more confident to make decisions about my future for when I leave school (NERUPI Category C)
- Question 4: Since September I have developed the skills I need to succeed in the future (NERUPI Category D)
- Question 5: Since September I have developed a better understanding of the subjects/course I need to take and how they link to careers I may be interested in (NERUPI Category E).

The data were cleaned and analysed during June 2024. Table 1 details the participant information: year of study, gender and whether the student was a UC target learner or not (non-UC). Please note, as participant information questions were not compulsory fields in the survey, the total responses reported within a characteristic may differ from the total number of responses received.

Table 1: Characteristics of respondents by school year group

Characteristic	Year 11	Year 13	Total
Gender:			
Female	85 (44.0%)	6 (50.0%)	94 (44.4%)
Male	104 (53.9%)	6 (50.0%)	110 (53.7%)
Other	1 (0.5%)	0	1 (0.5%)
Prefer not to say	3 (1.6%)	0	3 (1.5%)
UC target learner:			
UC	87 (44.8%)	6 (50.0%)	93 (45.1%)
Non-UC	107 (55.2%)	6 (50.0%)	113 (54.9%)
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>206</b>

### Statistical analysis

Where there were sufficient responses, each of the five outcome questions within a year group were analysed by UC/non-UC learners, gender and school. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there were differences in the distribution of the medians of the groups. A  $p$ -value of less than 0.05 was the criterion for statistical significance.

It is worth noting that statistical significance is affected by sample size. Therefore, some differences, whilst looking greater than others, may not be statistically significant if the number of responses was low, and conversely some differences that might look small could be significant if the sample size was sufficiently large.

### Year 11

A total of 194 Year 11 responses were received from students studying at four different schools (table 2). It is worth noting that none of the schools have sixth-form provision and therefore all students will be progressing to different post-16 education providers in the next academic year, either to Further Education colleges or other schools within the county.

Table 2: Year 11 responses by school

School	Total responses
School A	1 (0.5%)
School B	70 (36.1%)
School C	92 (47.4%)
School D	31 (16.0%)
Total	194 (100%)

Fourteen students from two schools (Schools B and C) that participated in the survey took part in both the FFP and the Study Skills Masterclass Programme (SSMP) (evaluated separately). These students had participated in between one and five of the following FFP activities: student finance and budgeting, building your own personal brand, interviewing well, understanding the labour market, study skills and a careers fair; in addition, they had taken part in between four and six sessions of the SSMP. They were the only students that responded to the survey that had participated in more than three hours of LiNCHigher activities and so it is difficult to infer any potential impact of the FFP for these students.

Students were asked how much they felt they had improved on specific skills in the academic year (since September 2023) on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = 'I have not improved on this skill' and 5 = 'I have improved a lot' (figure 1). Overall, students had improved on problem solving, teamwork and communication the most (52.4%, 54.0% and 59.1% respectively answered either 4 or 5). Around a third of students did not think they had improved their revision skills or their ability to concentrate (30.7% and 35.4% respectively answered either 1 or 2). A large proportion (48.7%) of students answered in the middle (scoring 3) for an improvement in their study skills.

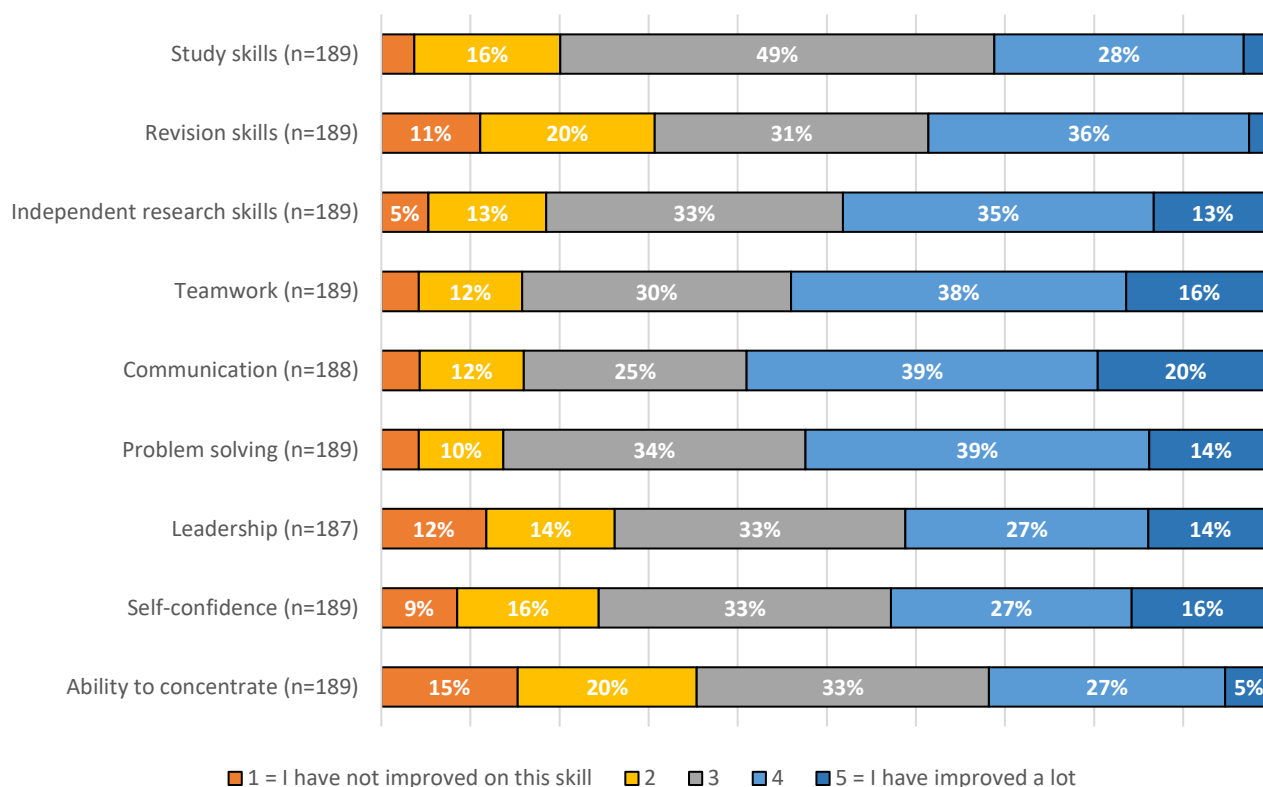


Figure 1: Improvement in skills – all students



Figure 2 shows how much students felt they had improved on these skills *excluding* the students that had taken part in the SSMP; figure 3 shows the improvement for just those students that had taken part in both FFP and SSMP. Having the additional SSMP sessions appears to have had a big impact on how much students reported these skills had improved. For example, half of these students felt their study skills had improved (compared with 29.2% of students that had not participated in SSMP). Similarly, the ability to concentrate was improved for 66.6% compared with 29.7% of students that had not taken part. However, the number of responses for those that had taken part in SSMP were low (n=12) and should not be taken as an indication of the impact of the SSMP overall.

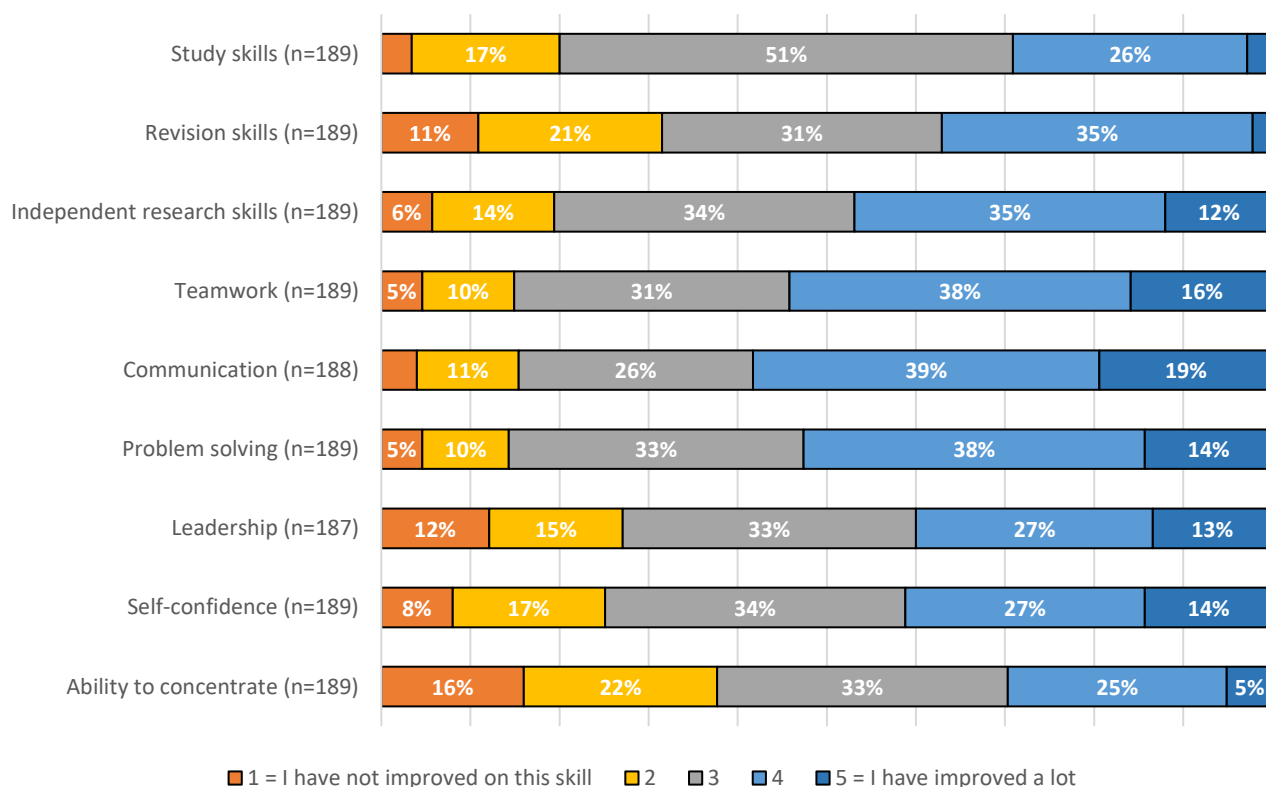


Figure 2: Improvement in skills – all students except SSMP participants

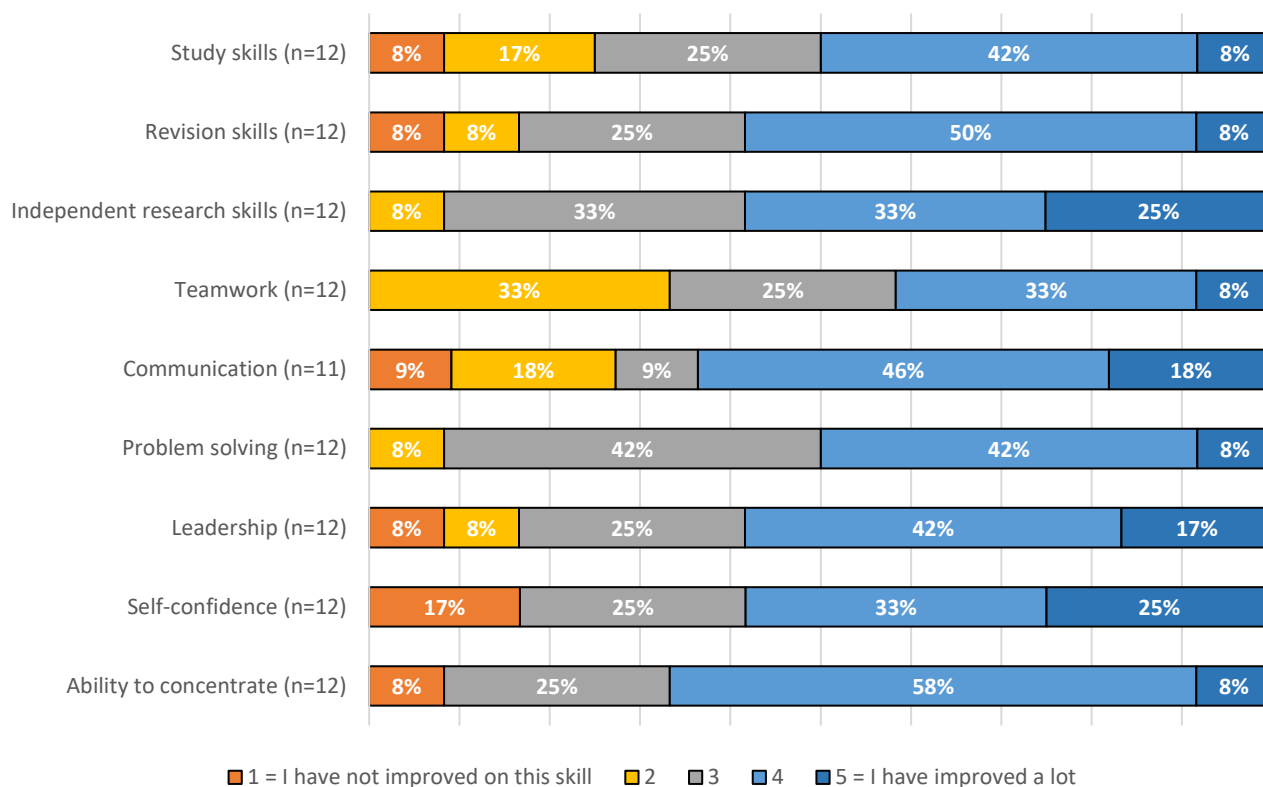


Figure 3: Improvement in skills – SSMP participants only

Other skills mentioned specifically by students that they had improved upon during the academic year were attendance, focus and motivation. When students were asked which skills they felt they still needed to work on or required help with, concentration and revision skills were mentioned 11 times each, confidence was mentioned eight times, communication six times and other skills such as time management and self-belief were also mentioned.

Students were asked to think about their future and on a star scale from 1 to 5, rate how useful they thought the FFP sessions had been in helping them to develop the skills that they need (table 3 below).

Table 3: Usefulness rating of FFP on skills development

Rating	Number of Students	%
One star	11	5.8%
Two stars	27	14.3%
Three stars	84	44.4%
Four stars	55	29.1%
Five stars	12	6.3%
Total	189	100%

Figures 4 and 5 show the responses to the skills questions split by UC target learners and non-UC, this is for all students including those that took part in SSMP as their numbers were too small to further split into two categories. In general, the two groups showed similar proportions of students that felt they had improved on the skills, i.e., scored a 4 or 5. UC students were more positive that they

had developed their independent research skills and their teamwork. More than half (52.3%) of UC target learners answered in the middle (scoring 3) for an improvement in their study skills.

The difference between the distribution of responses from UC and non-UC students was statistically significant for teamwork ( $p < 0.05$ ).

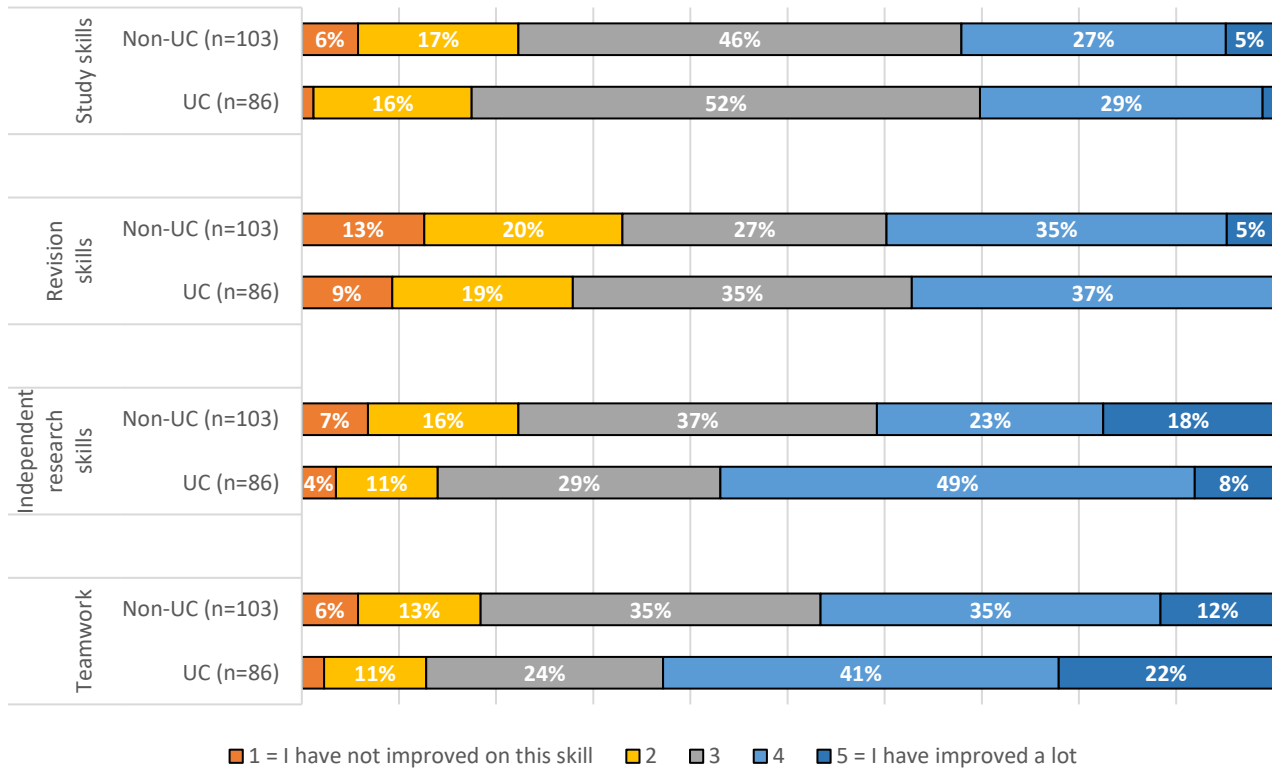


Figure 4: Improvement in skills (1-4) – by UC and non-UC learners

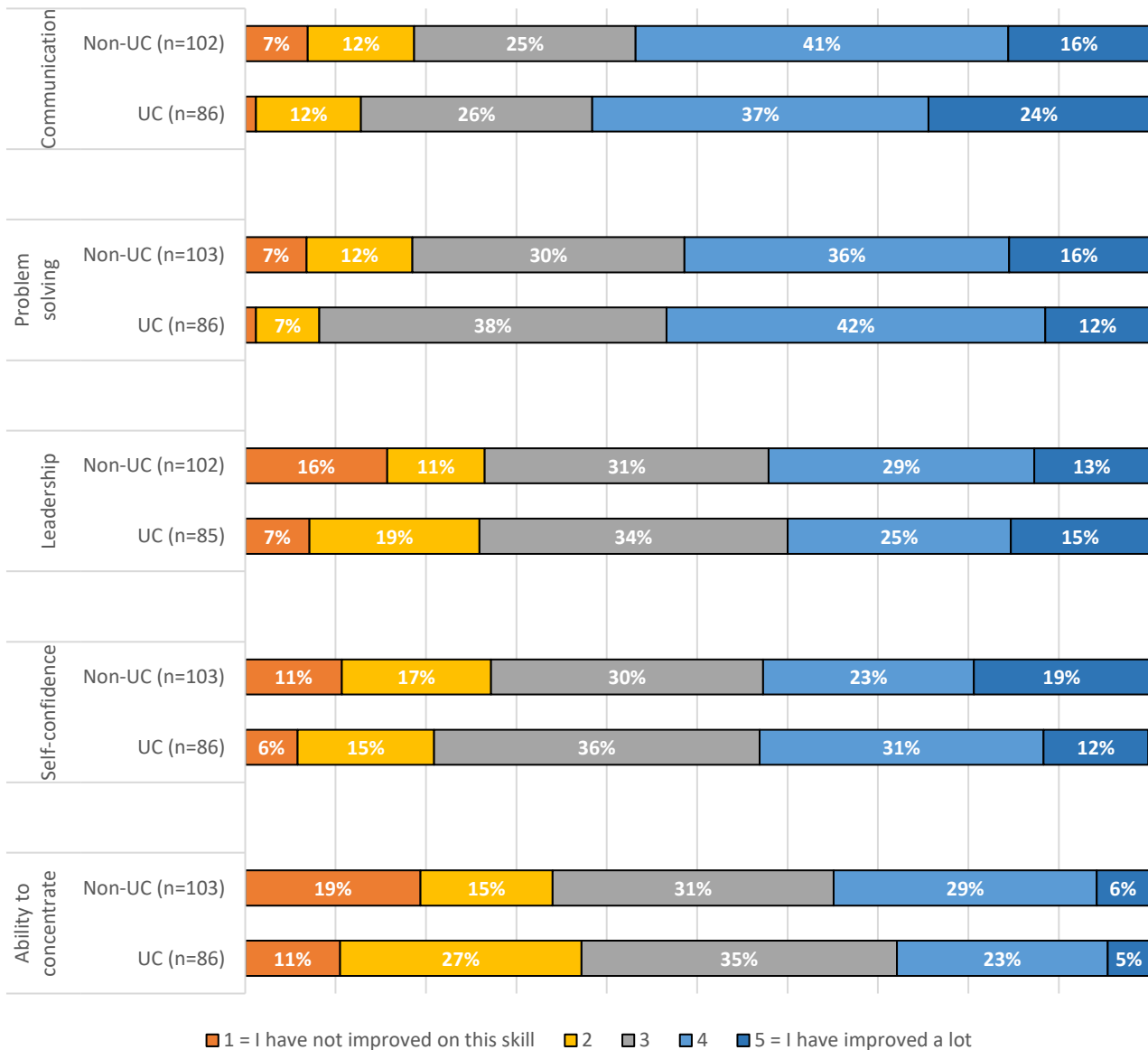


Figure 5: Improvement in skills (5-9) – by UC and non-UC learners

The responses to the skills questions split by gender are shown in figures 6 and 7, this is for all students including those that took part in SSMP as their numbers were too small to further split into two categories. Female students were more positive than male students that they had improved upon their study skills, revision skills and independent research (40.5% versus 22.0%, 50.0% versus 30.0% and 52.4% versus 42.0% respectively). Whilst male students were more positive about teamwork, problem solving and self-confidence (61.0% versus 44.1%, 57.0% versus 45.2% and 47.0% versus 35.7% respectively). Over a third of male students felt they had not improved either their revisions skills (37.0%) or their ability to concentrate (38.0%); additionally, over half (56.0%) of male students answered in the middle (scoring 3) for study skills.

The difference between the distribution of responses from female and male students was statistically significant for study skills ( $p < 0.05$ ), revision skills ( $p < 0.05$ ) and problem solving ( $p < 0.05$ ).

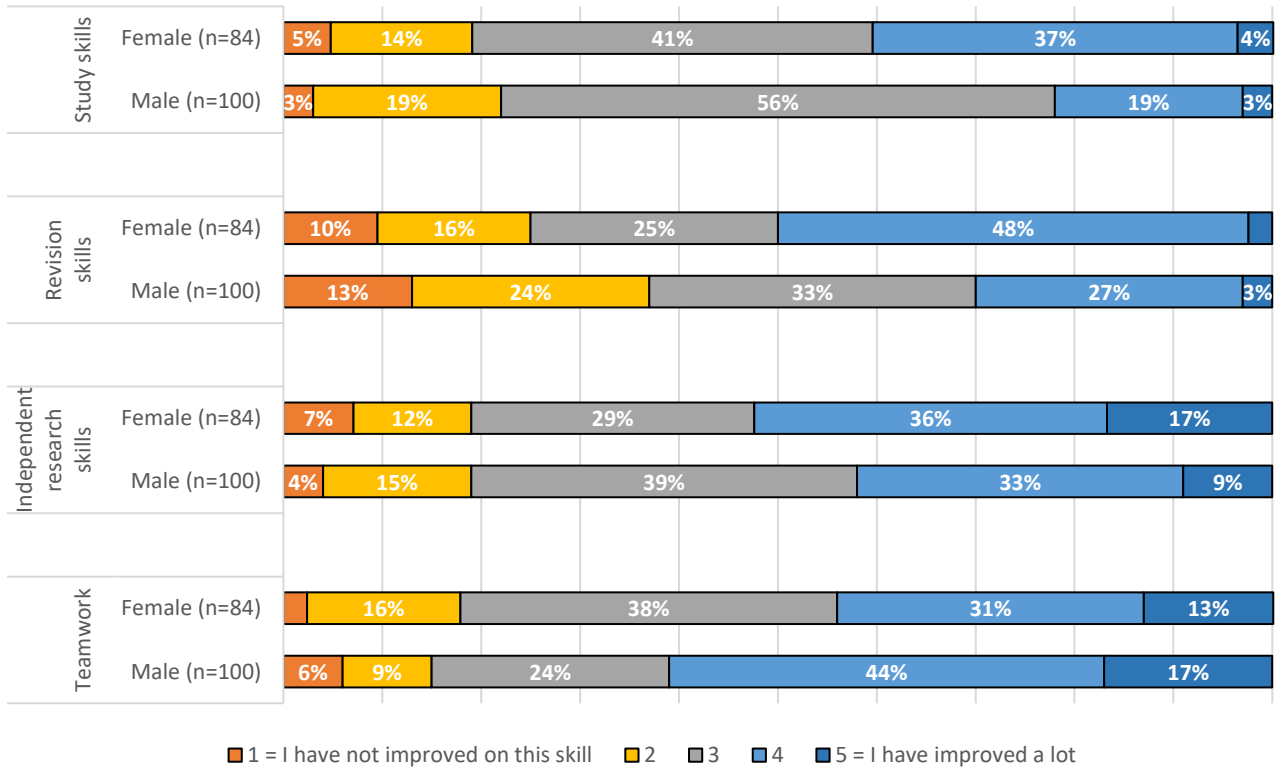


Figure 6: Improvement in skills (1-4) – by gender

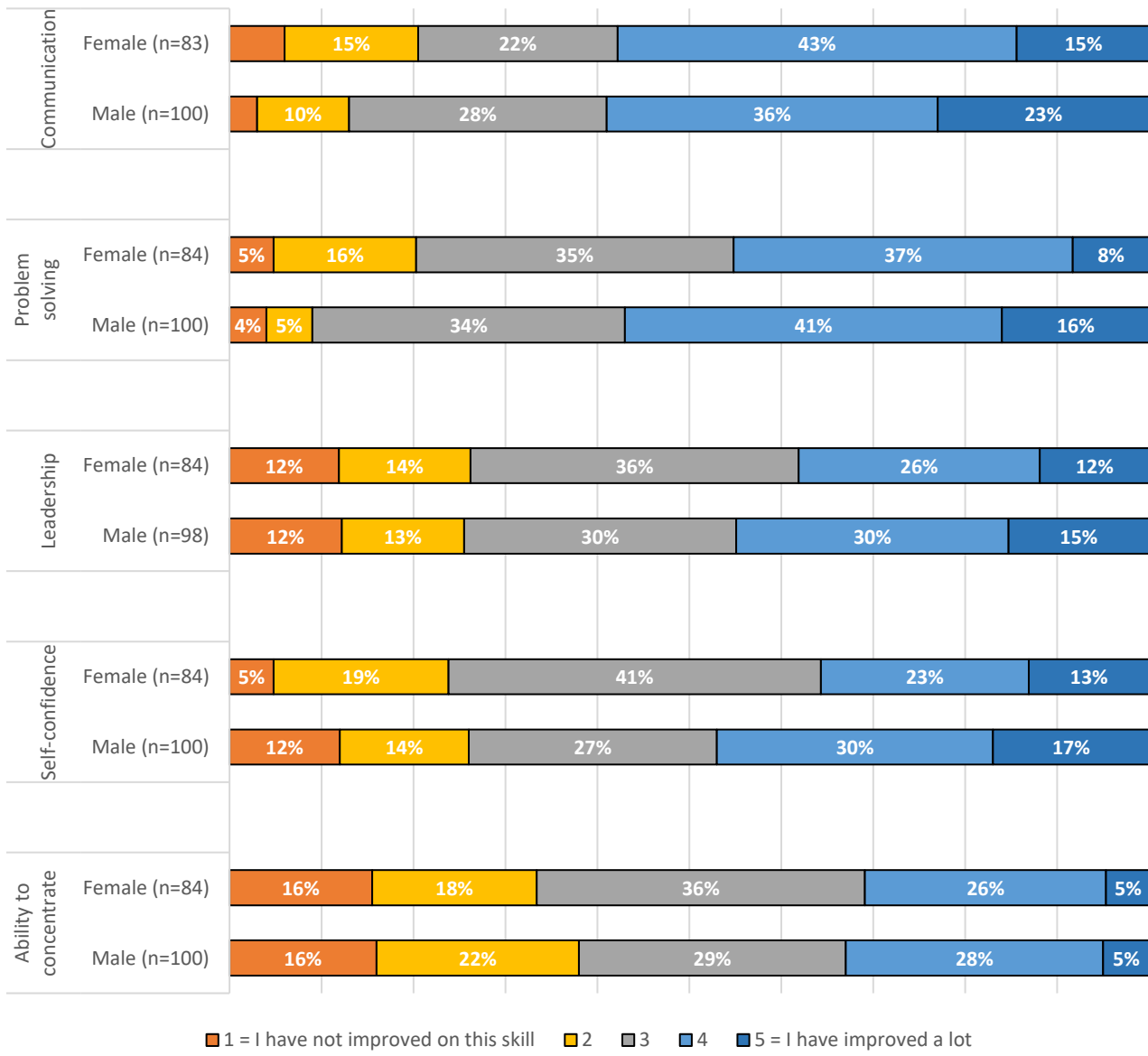


Figure 7: Improvement in skills (5-9) – by gender

Figures 8 and 9 show the responses to the skills questions split by school. For seven of the nine skills 50.0% or more of School D students felt they had improved and with the exception of one of the nine skills, School D students were more likely to say they had improved on their skills than students from Schools B or C. Around a third of School B students did not feel they had developed their revision skills, self-confidence or ability to concentrate (34.8%, 34.2% and 30.0% respectively answered either 1 or 2); although a similar proportion (35.7%) said that they had improved their concentration. None of the differences between the distribution of responses from students from the different schools were statistically significant.

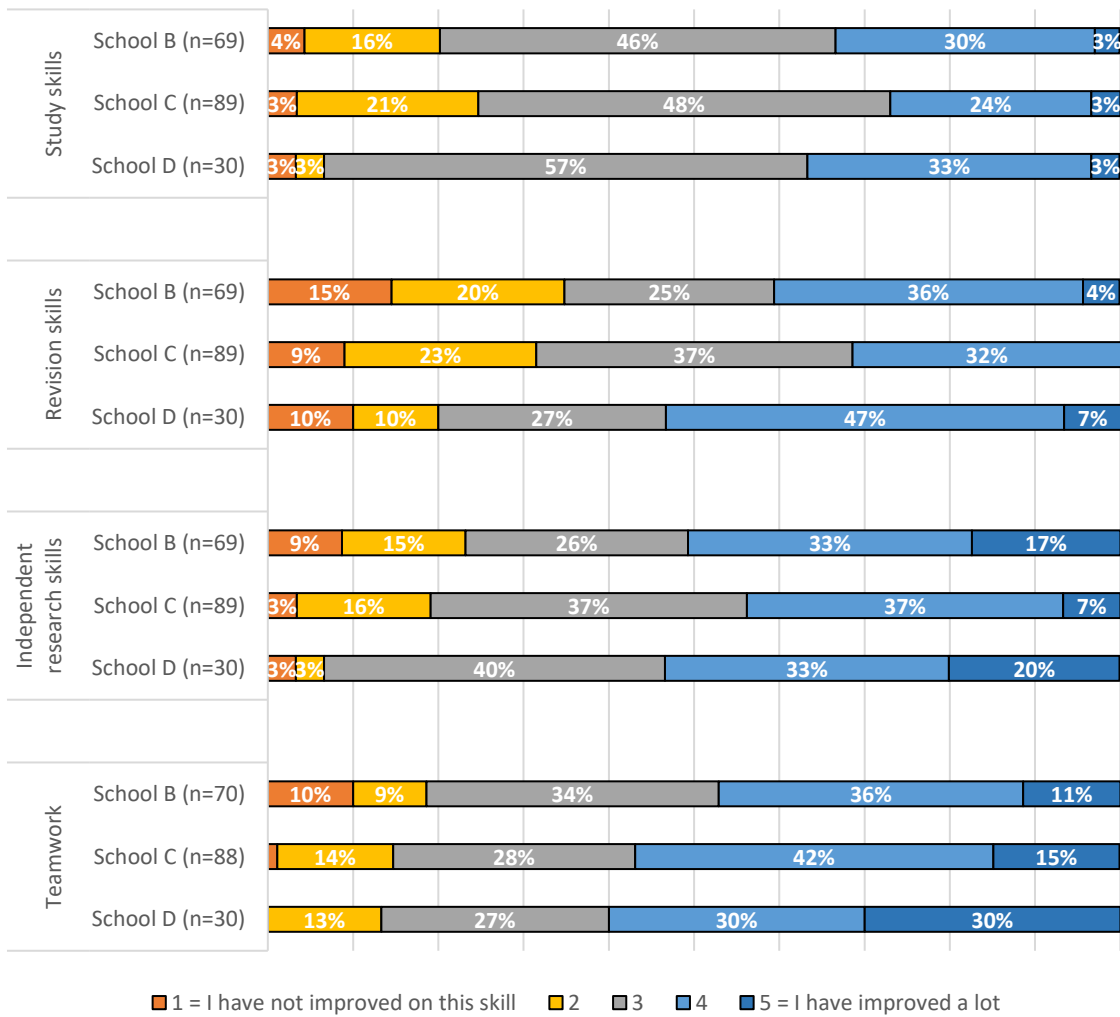


Figure 8: Improvement in skills (1-4) – by school

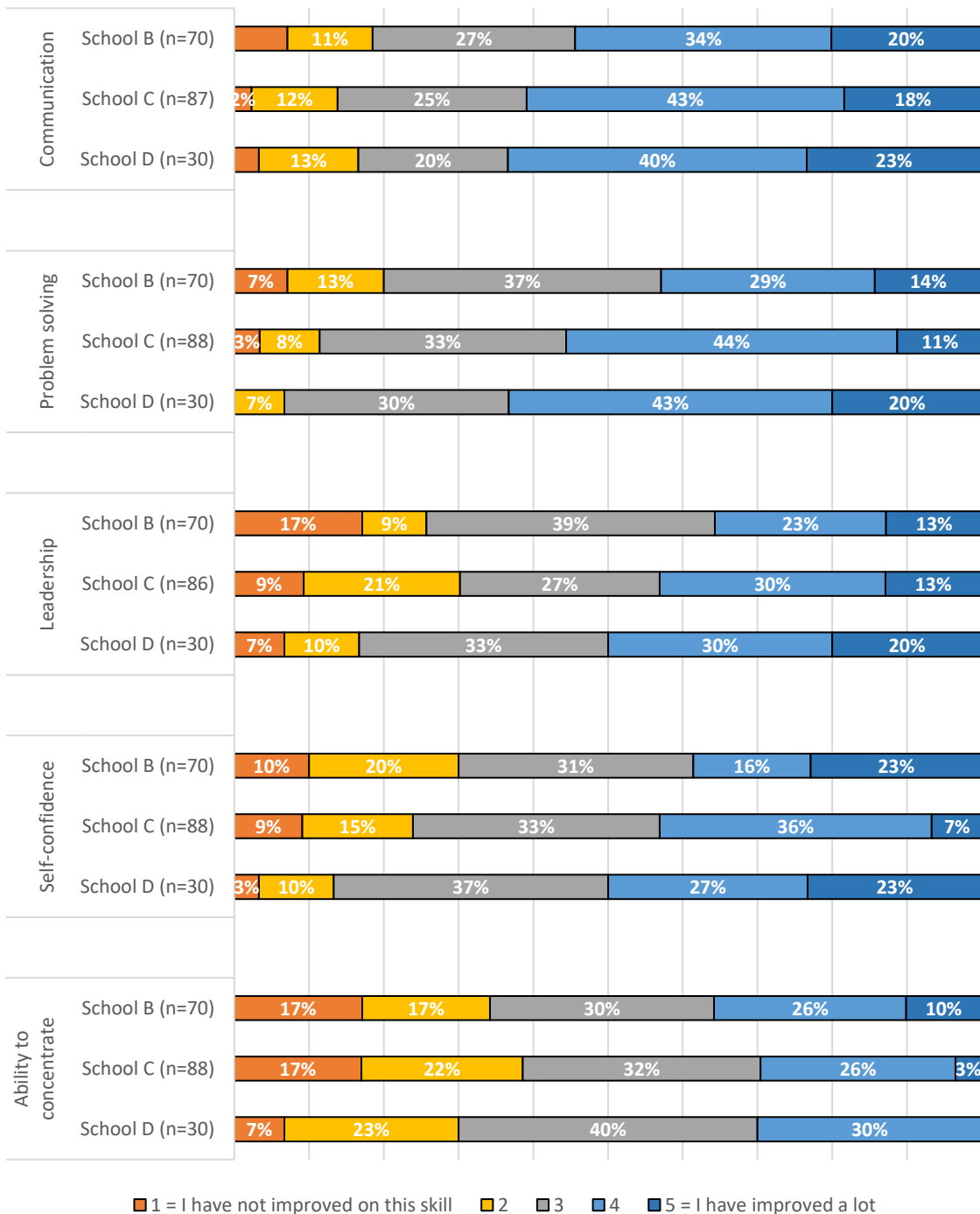


Figure 9: Improvement in skills (5-9) – by school

The majority of students either agreed or strongly agreed with all five of the outcome questions (figure 10 below). Students were most positive about their understanding of the options available to them after leaving school, 84.4% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. They were the least positive about having gained knowledge of the benefits of HE and graduate employment where 51.1% agreed or strongly agreed; over a third of students (38.5%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Similarly, over a third (35.8%) were unsure if they had developed the skills needed to succeed in the future.



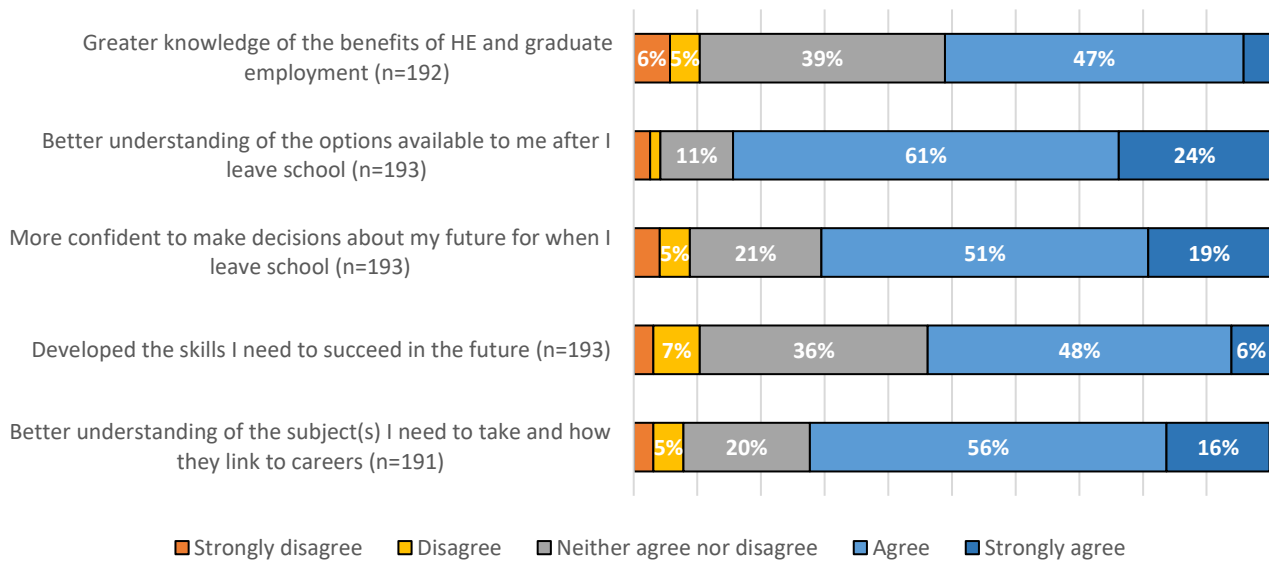


Figure 10: Outcome questions – all students except SSMP participants

Figure 11 and 12 show the responses to the outcome questions, firstly for all students excluding the students that had taken part in the SSMP and secondly for just those students that had taken part in both FFP and SSMP. Students that had the additional SSMP sessions were more positive across all five of the outcome questions despite the not all the questions relating to the programme’s intended purpose. The biggest difference between the two groups was for developing the skills needed to succeed in the future (76.9% strongly agreed or agreed compared with 52.3%) which is understandable as this question does align with the SSMP. Again, the number of responses for those that had taken part in SSMP were low (n=13) and should not be taken as an indication of the impact of the SSMP overall.

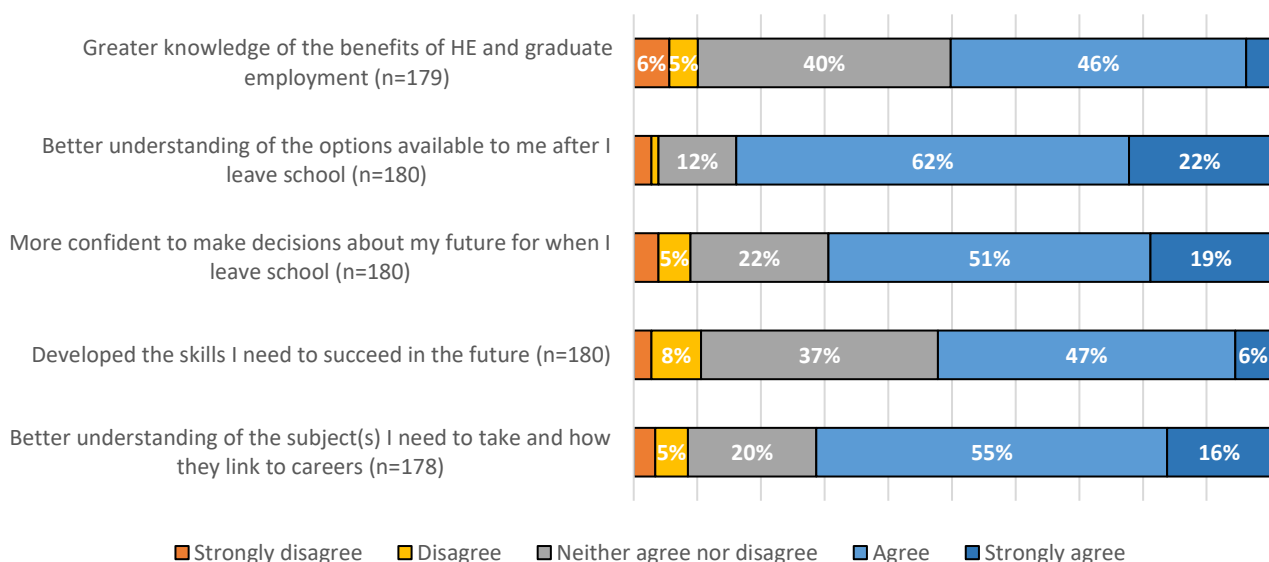


Figure 11: Outcome questions – all students except SSMP participants

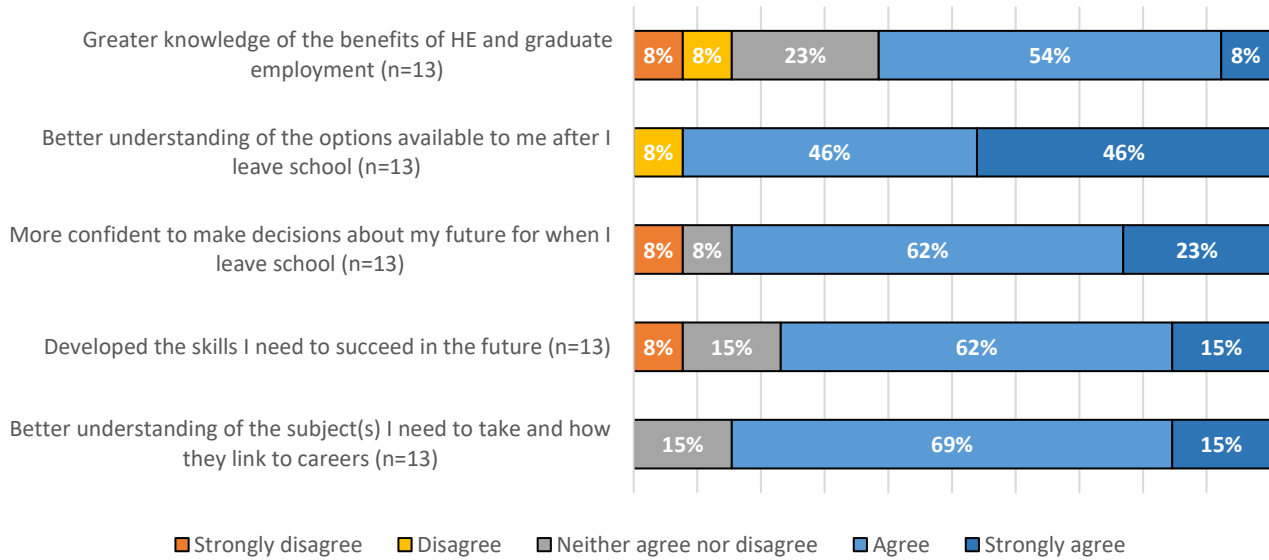


Figure 12: Outcome questions – SSMP participants

Figure 13 below shows the responses to the outcome questions split by UC target learners and non-UC. UC students were more likely to agree or strongly agree than non-UC with three of the five outcome questions. The largest difference was for being more confident to make decisions about the future where 77.0% of UC students agreed or strongly agreed compared with 65.1% of non-UC students. None of the differences between the distribution of responses from UC and non-UC students were statistically significant.

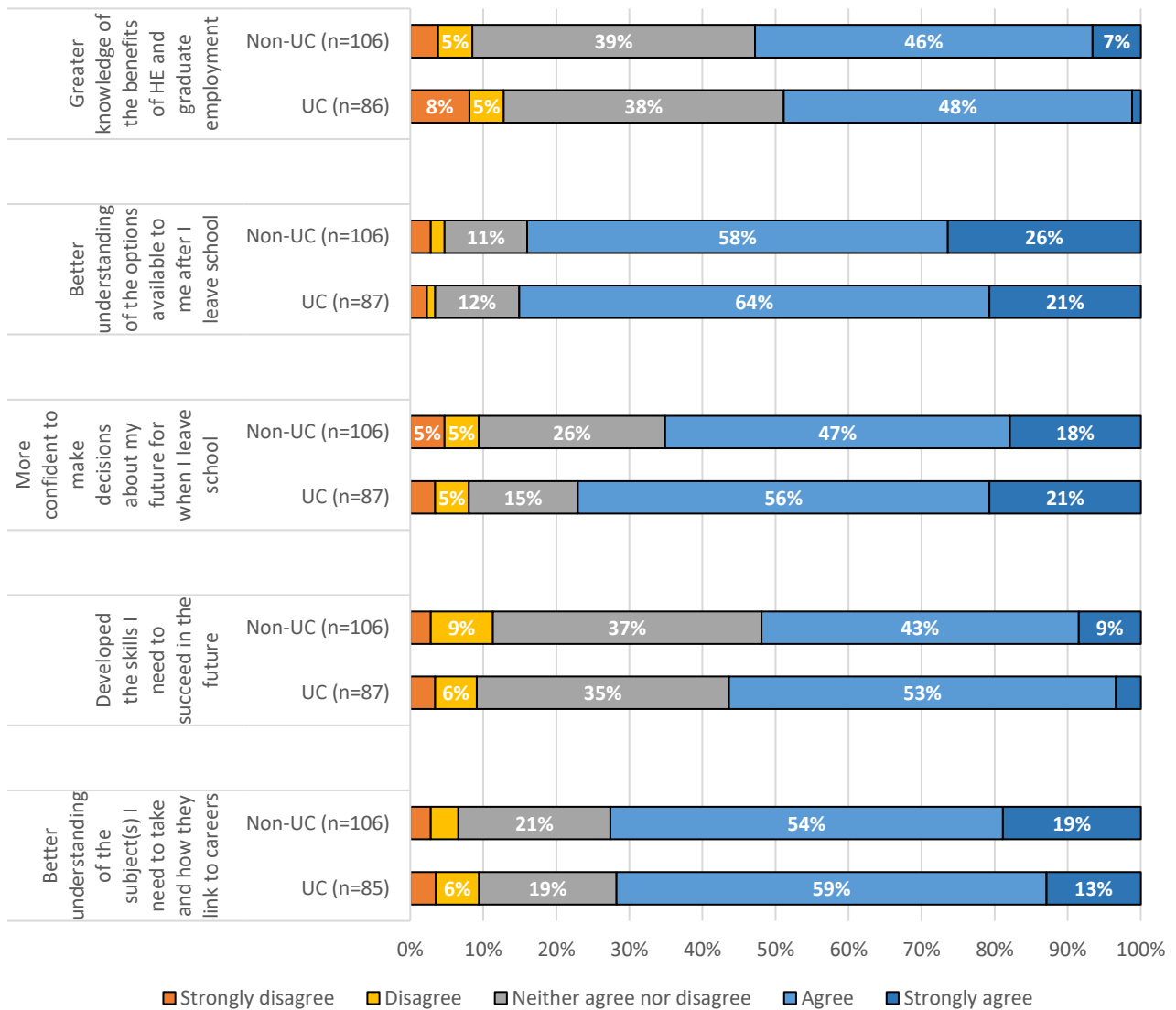


Figure 13: Outcome questions – by UC and non-UC learners

Figure 14 shows the responses to the outcome questions split by gender. Responses are shown from just female and male students as the two other categories did not have sufficient responses to include. Female students were marginally more positive for four of the five outcome questions. The largest difference was for better understanding of the options available after leaving school where 89.5% of female students agreed or strongly agreed compared to 80.6% for male students. For the two questions that received a large proportion of neither agree nor disagree responses overall, developing skills for the future and knowledge of the benefits of HE, female students were more unsure than male students. None of the differences between the distribution of responses from female and male students were statistically significant.

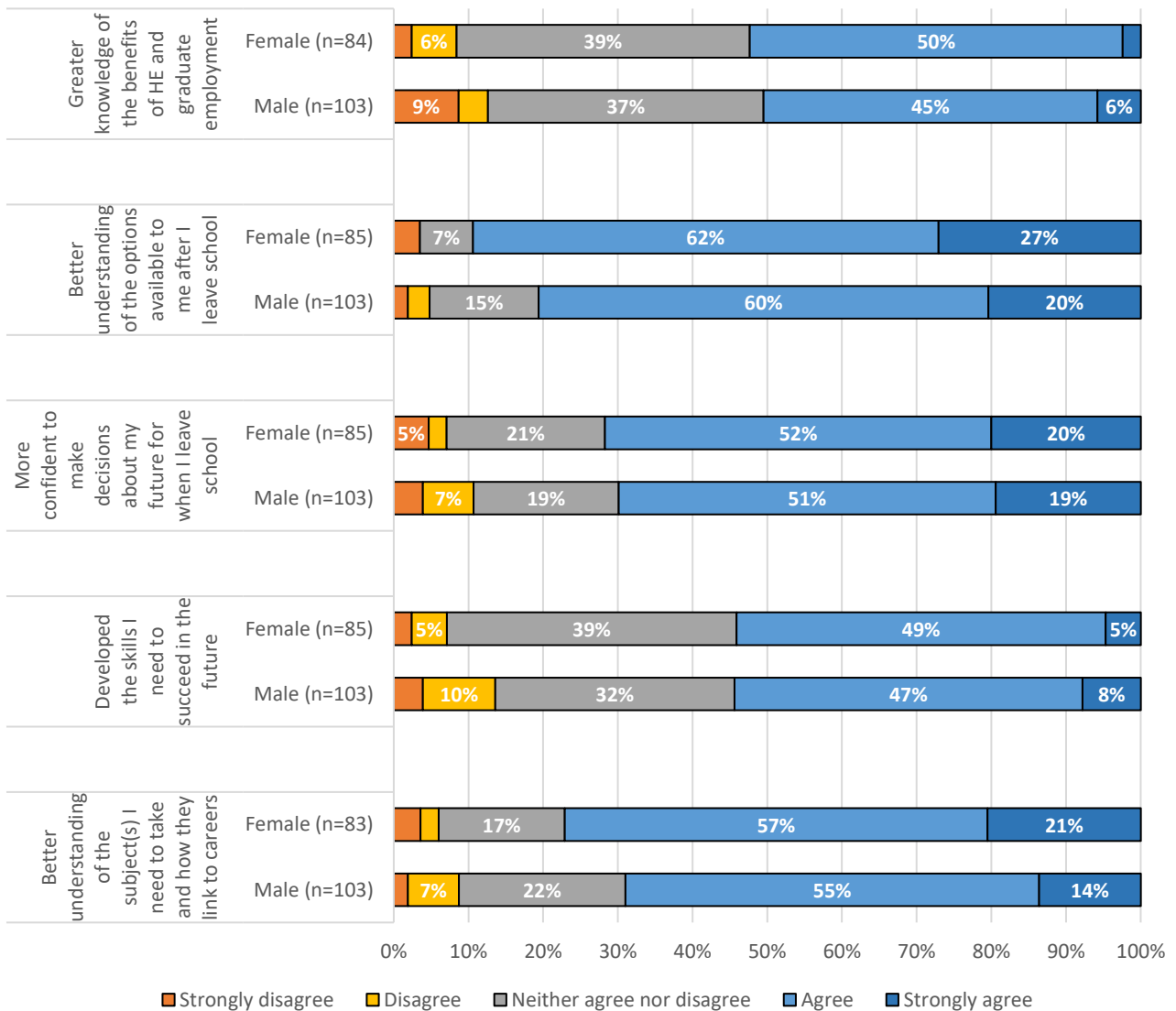


Figure 14: Outcome questions – by gender

Figures 15 to 19 below show the responses to the outcome questions split by school. In general, School D students were most positive about the outcome questions. Both School C and D had a large proportion of students that neither agreed nor disagreed that they had developed a greater knowledge of the benefits of HE and graduate employment (45.2% and 42.2% respectively). Similarly, a large proportion of School B students were unsure if they had developed the skills needed for the future (45.7%).

The difference between the responses from students across the schools was statistically significant for better understanding of the options available to me after I leave school ( $p < 0.01$ ) and developing the skills need to succeed ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Developed a greater knowledge of the benefits of HE and graduate employment

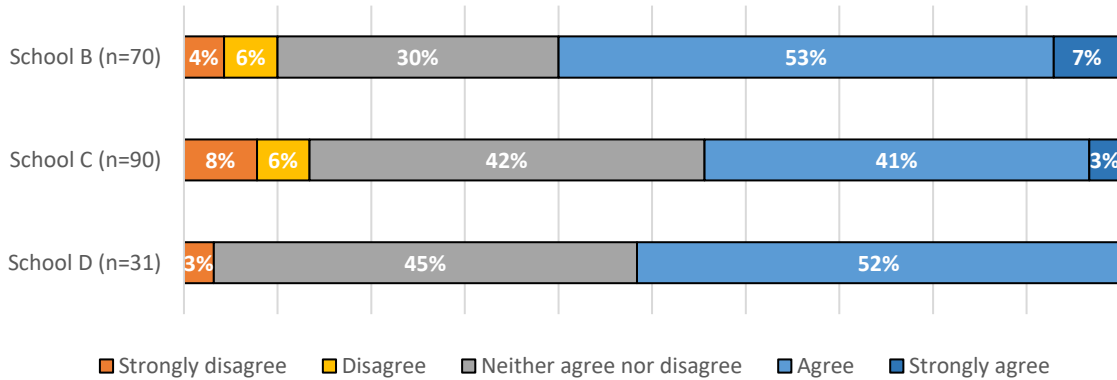


Figure 15: Outcome question 1 – by school

Better understanding of the options available to me after I leave school

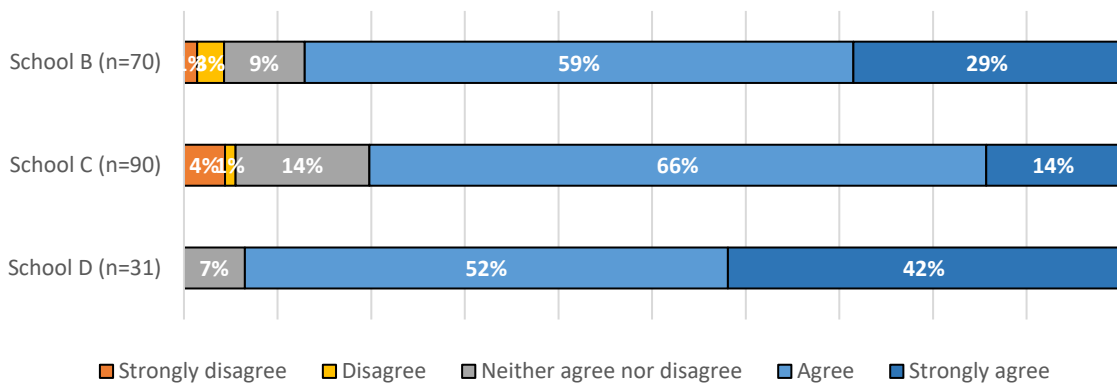


Figure 16: Outcome question 2 – by school

More confident to make decisions about my future for when I leave school

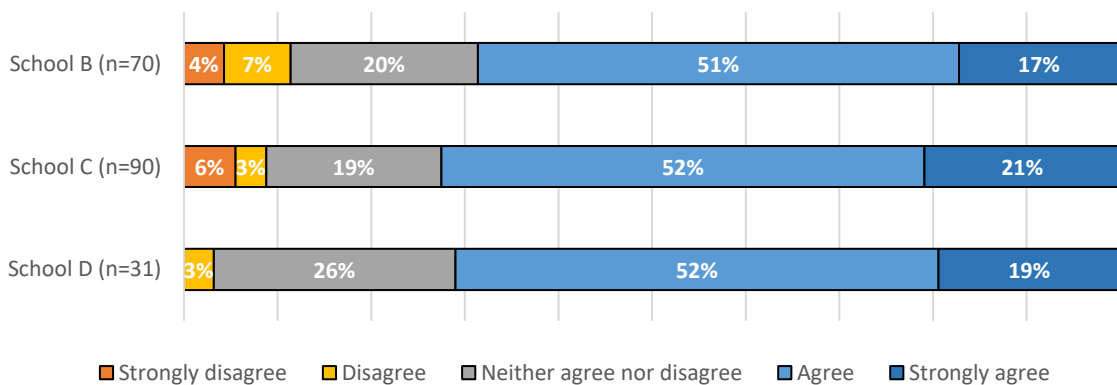


Figure 17: Outcome question 3 – by school

### Developed the skills I need to succeed in the future

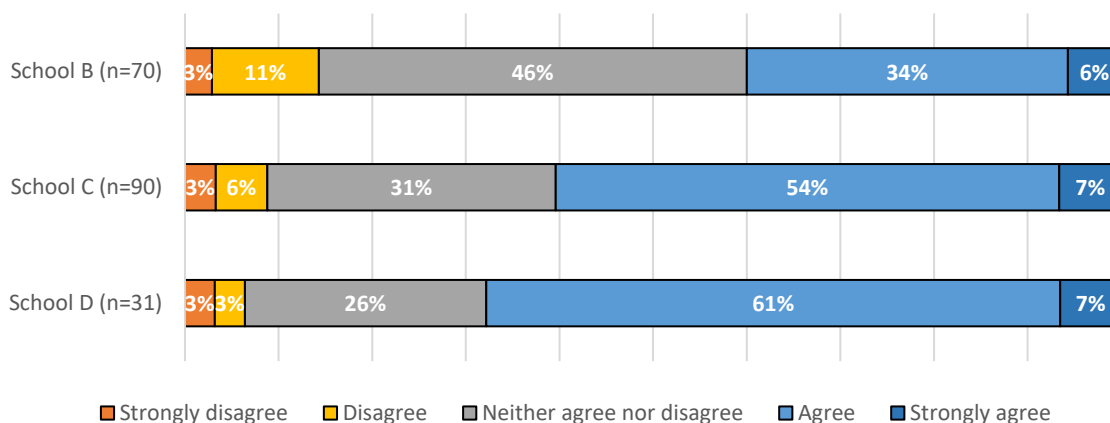


Figure 18: Outcome question 4 – by school

### Better understanding of the subject(s) I need to take and how they link to careers

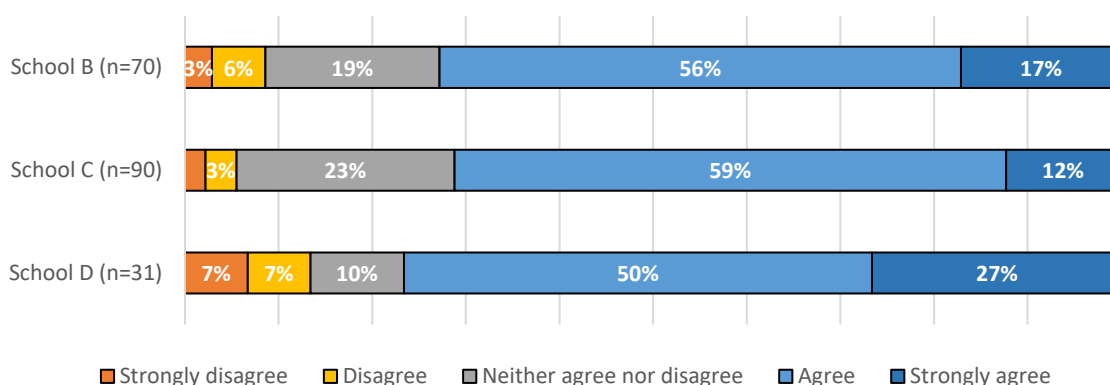


Figure 19: Outcome question 5 – by school

### Skills and outcome questions by contact hours (HEAT data)

Table 4 below shows the total time (contact hours) that Year 11 students took part in LiNCHigher/FFP activities; the average number of participation hours per student was 2.9 hours.

Table 4: Contact hours recorded on HEAT

Contact time (hrs)	Number of students
0	2 (1.0%)
1	13 (6.7%)
1.17*	30 (15.5%)
2	8 (4.1%)
3	127 (65.5%)
6	1 (0.5%)
7	2 (1.0%)
8	5 (2.6%)
9	6 (3.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>194 (100%)</b>

\* One school has a lesson time of 1 hour 10 minutes

The contact hours were grouped together to create three categories: one to two hours, three hours and more than 3 hours. The responses from students that had not participated in any activities were not included as there were too few. Table 5 shows the contact hours by school. Students from School D had only taken part in one activity, a FFP study skills session that lasted 70 minutes (the duration of a lesson at the school).

Table 5: Contact hours grouped into three categories – by school

School	Contact hours			Total
	One to two	Three	More than three	
School B	8 (11.4%)	55 (78.6%)	7 (10.0%)	70 (100%)
School C	13 (14.1%)	72 (78.3%)	7 (7.6%)	92 (100%)
School D	30 (100%)	-	-	30 (100%)

As previously noted, all 14 students that participated in more than 3 hours of activities took part in the SSMP and so it is difficult to infer any potential impact of the FFP for these students. As stated earlier in this report, these students had participated in between one and five of the following FFP activities: student finance and budgeting, building your own personal brand, interviewing well, understanding the labour market, study skills and a careers fair; in addition, they had taken part in between four and six hours of the SSMP.

Figures 20 to 28 show the responses to the skills questions split by the categories of contact hours. For six of the nine skills, students that had taken part in more than three hours of activities were more likely to say they had improved since the beginning of the academic year. The difference was particularly marked for ability to concentrate.

In most cases students that had participated in three hours of activities were less likely to have improved their skills than those that had taken part in just one to two hours. This is because most of the responses in the lower category were from students at School D, and as discussed previously these students were the most likely to say they had developed their skills.

The difference between the responses from students across the contact hours categories was statistically significant for study skills ( $p < 0.05$ ), revisions skills ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the ability to concentrate ( $p < 0.05$ ).

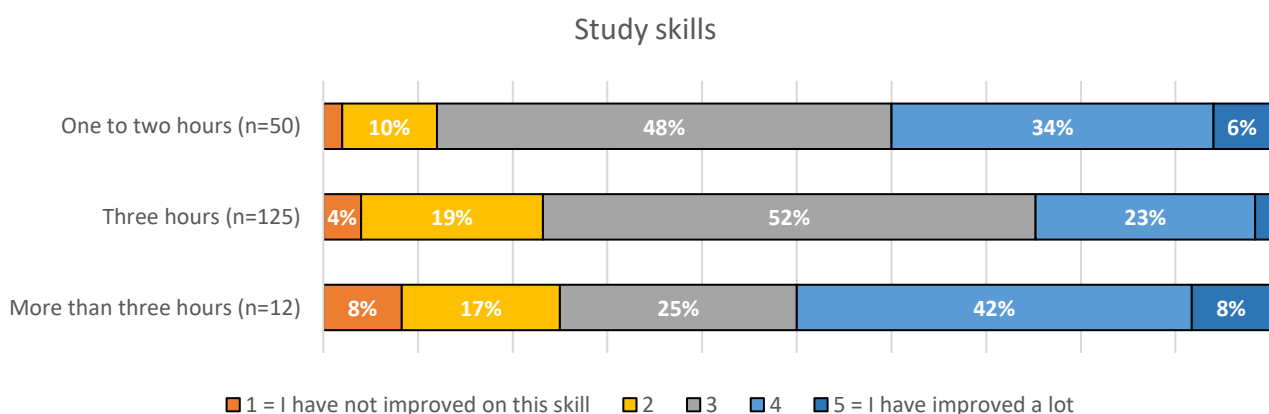


Figure 20: Improvement in study skills – by contact hours

### Revisions skills

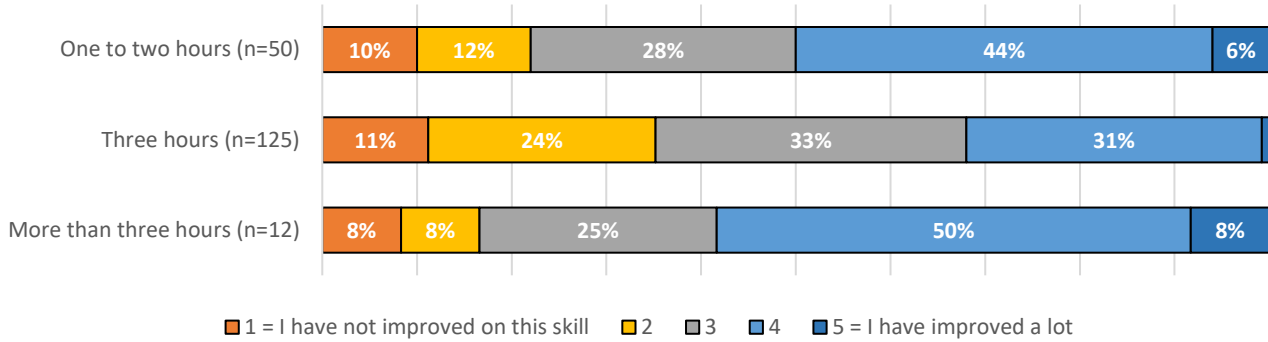


Figure 21: Improvement in revision skills – by contact hours

### Independent research skills

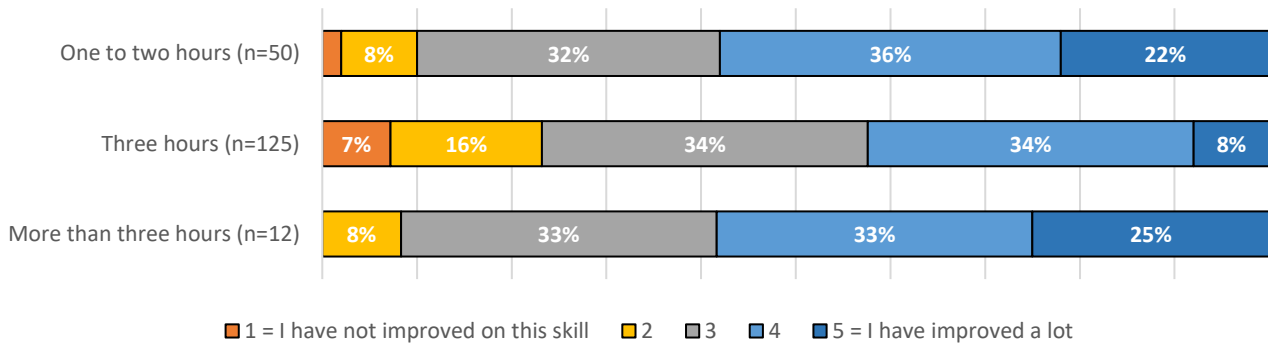


Figure 22: Improvement in independent research skills – by contact hours

### Teamwork

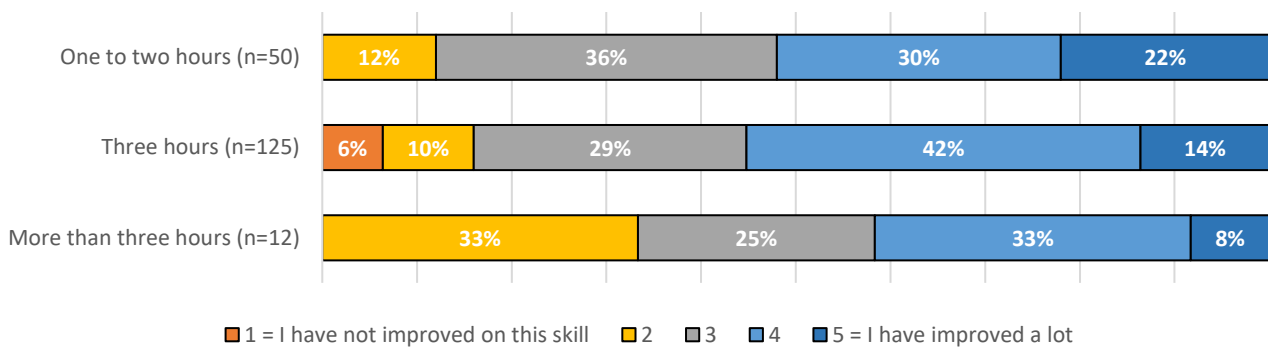


Figure 23: Improvement in teamwork – by contact hours



### Communication

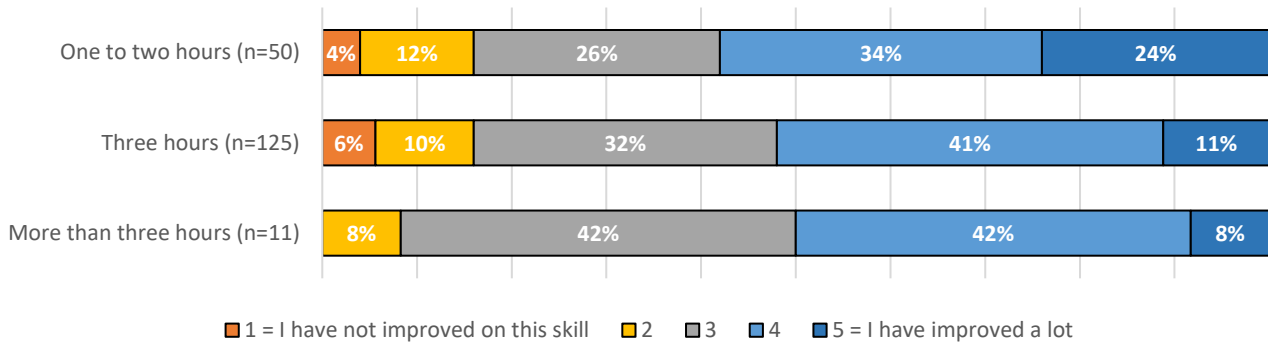


Figure 24: Improvement in communication skills – by contact hours

### Problem solving

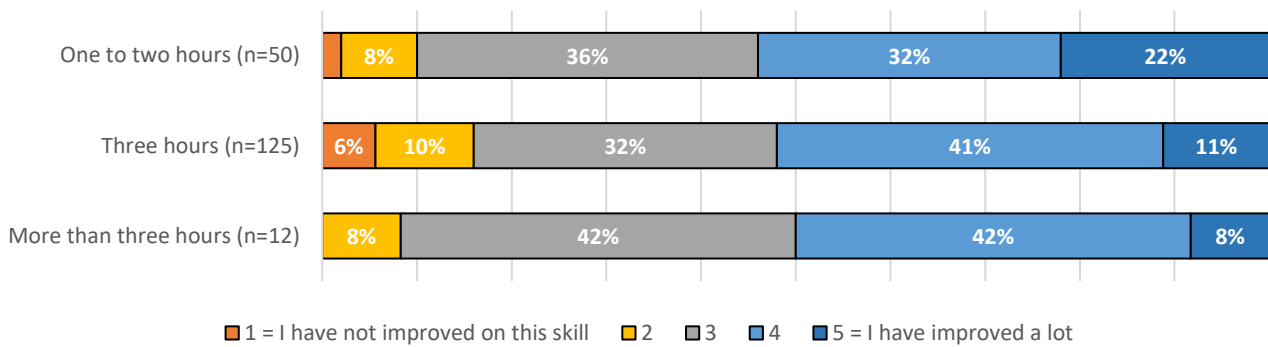


Figure 25: Improvement in problem solving skills – by contact hours

### Leadership

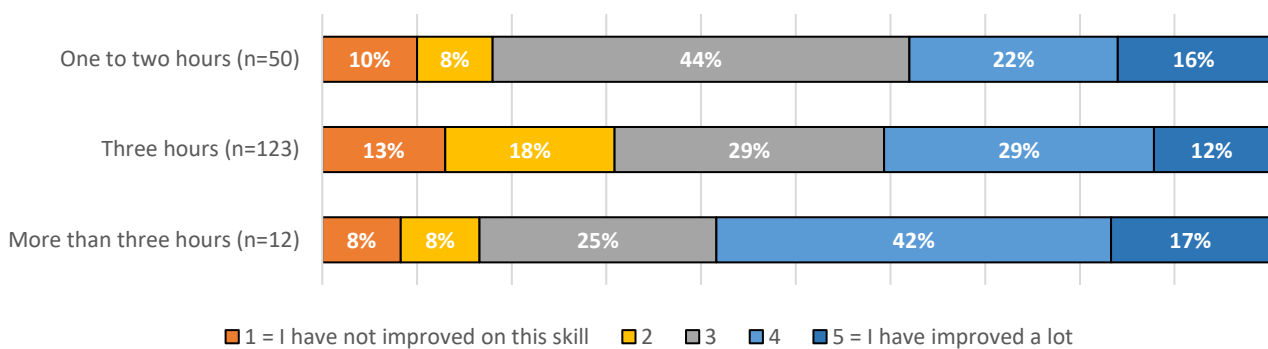


Figure 26: Improvement in leadership skills – by contact hours

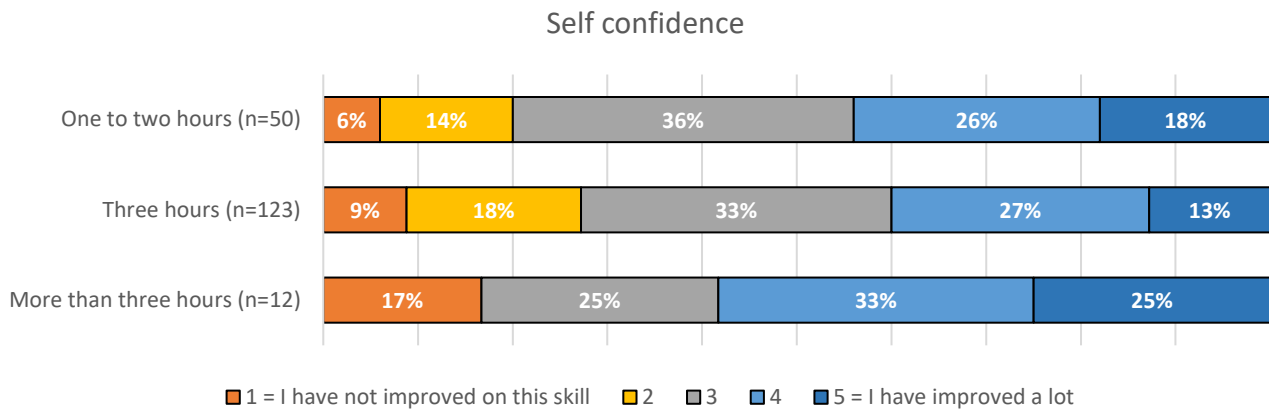


Figure 27: Improvement in self-confidence – by contact hours

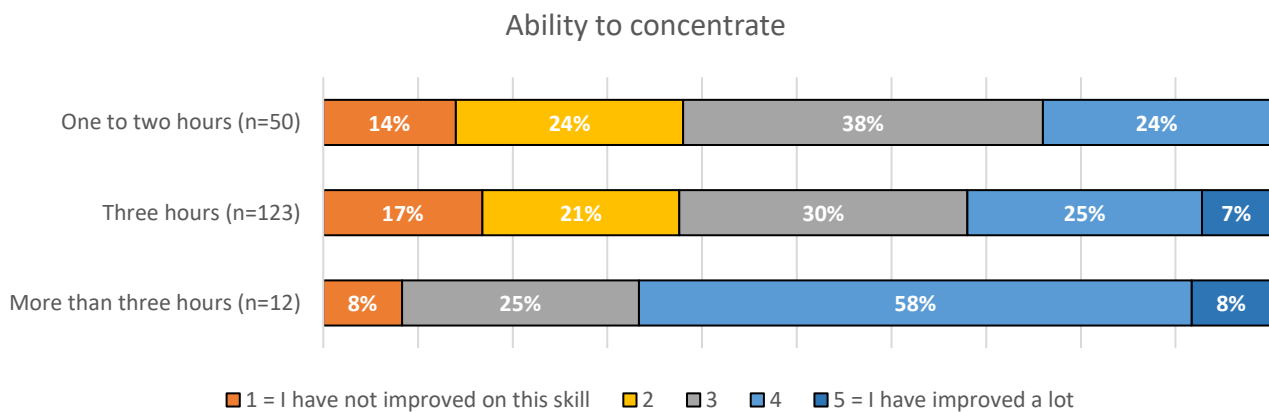


Figure 28: Improvement in ability to concentrate – by contact hours

Figures 29 to 33 show the responses to the outcome questions split by the categories of contact hours. Students were more positive about all five of the outcome questions where they had taken part in more than three hours of activities. The responses from students that had taken part in one to two hours largely reflects the responses from students from School D as discussed previously.

The difference between the responses from students for the outcome questions across the contact hours categories was statistically significant for better understanding of the options available to me after leaving school ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Greater knowledge of the benefits of HE and graduate employment

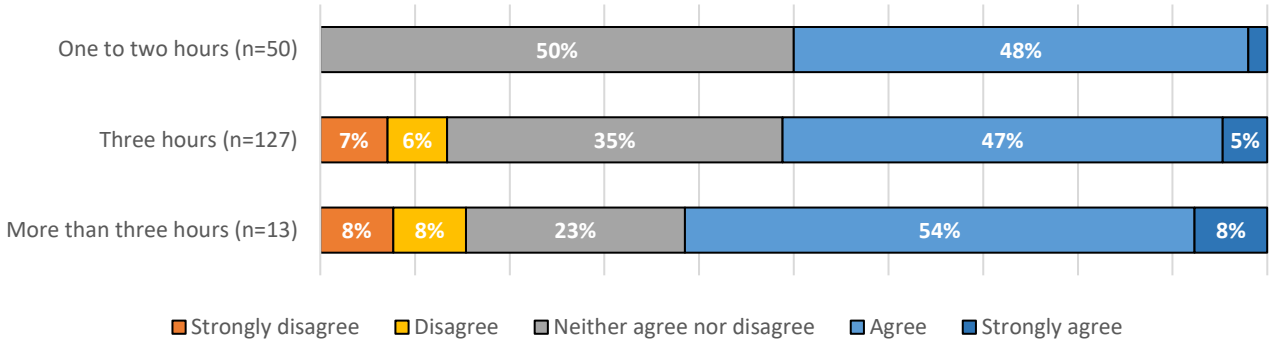


Figure 29: Outcome question 1 – by contact hours

Better understanding of the options available to me after I leave school

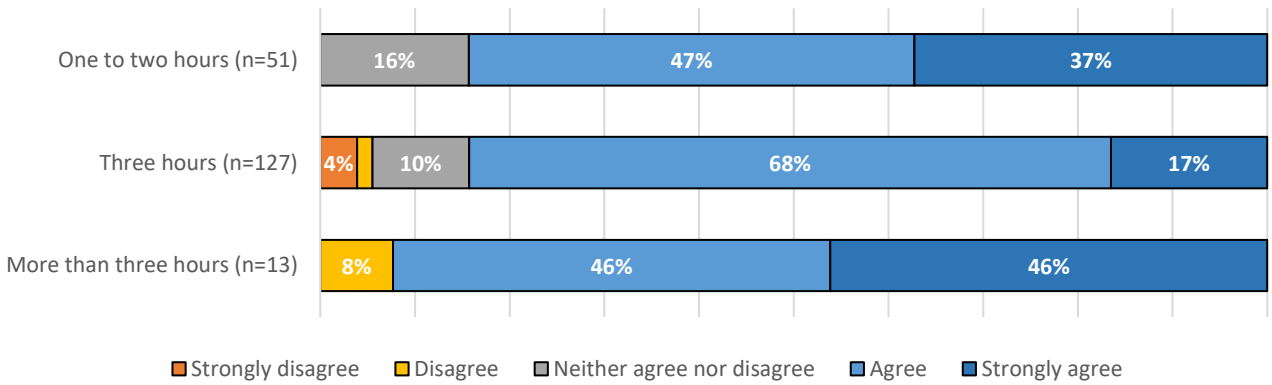


Figure 30: Outcome question 2 – by contact hours

More confident to make decisions about my future for when I leave school

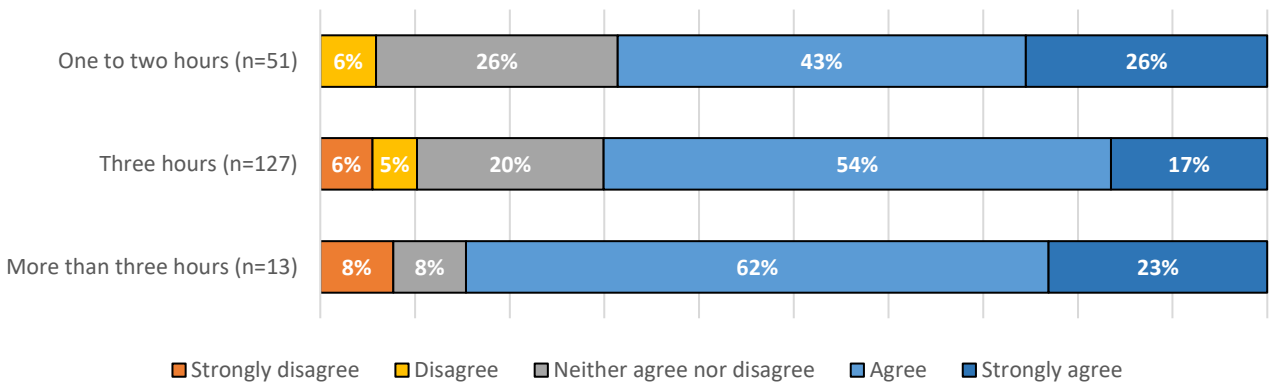


Figure 31: Outcome question 3 – by contact hours

Developed the skills I need to succeed in the future

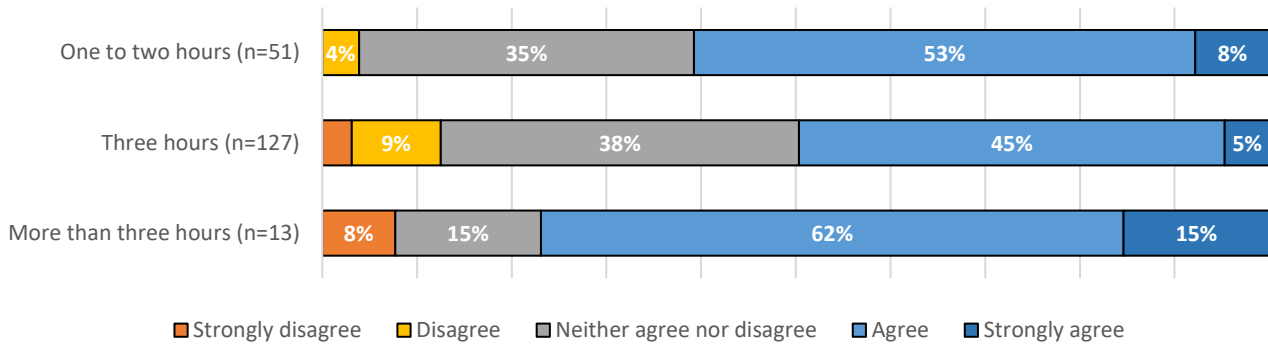


Figure 32: Outcome question 4 – by contact hours

Better understanding of the subject(s) I need to take and how they link to careers

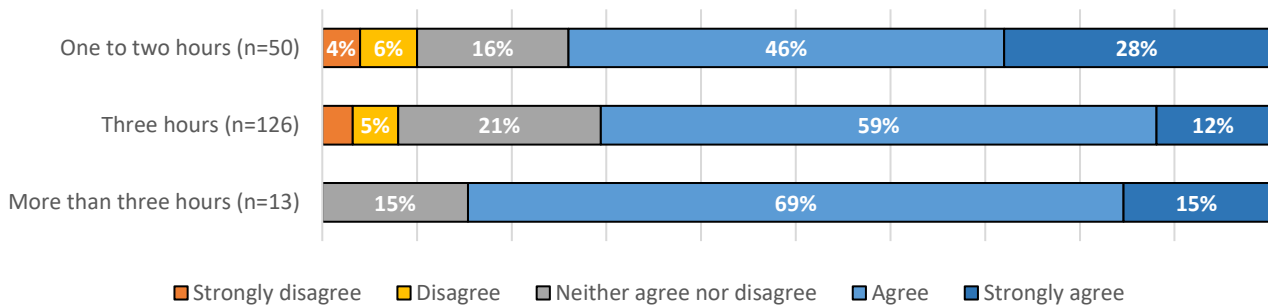


Figure 33: Outcome question 5 – by contact hours

Year 13

A total of 12 responses were received from students in Year 13 at School E. Due to the limited number of responses interpreting these data should be undertaken with caution.

Students were asked how much they felt they had improved on specific skills in the academic year (figure 34). Overall, students had improved on independent research skills, problem solving and communication the most (75.0%, 75.0% and 58.3% respectively). Like Year 11, a third of students did not think they had improved their ability to concentrate. Most were unsure if they had improved their leadership skills, teamwork or self-confidence (75.0%, 66.7% and 66.7% respectively answered in the middle (scoring 3)).

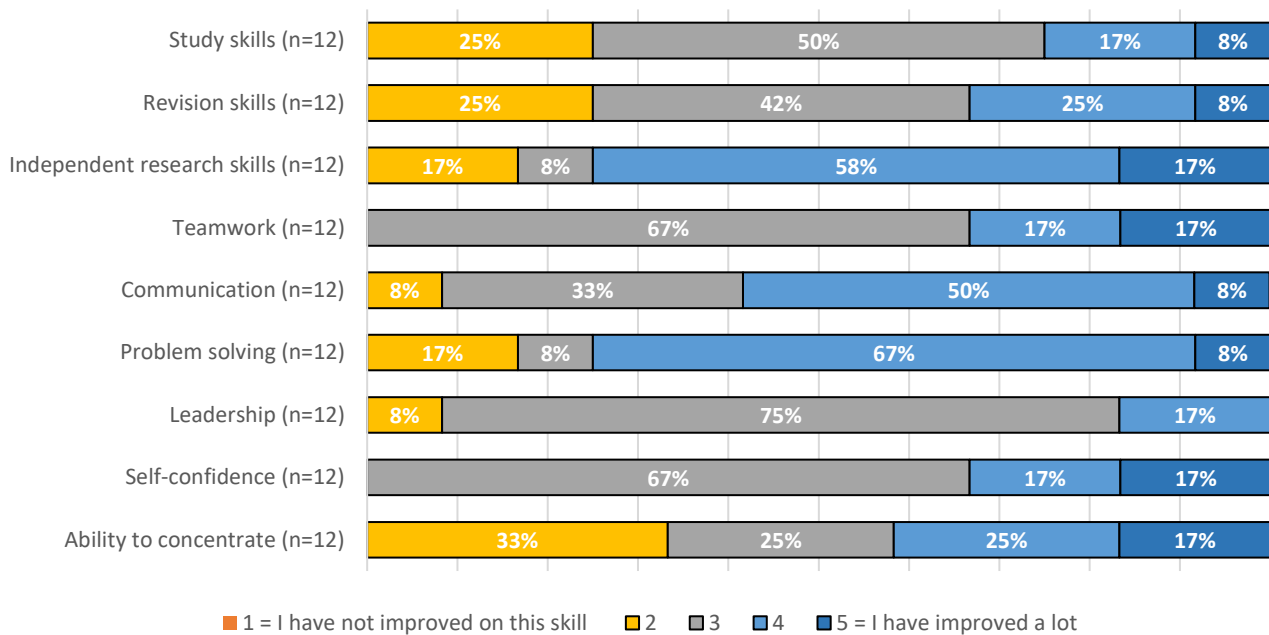


Figure 34: Improvement in skills – all students

When asked which skills they felt they still needed to work on or required help with, independence, becoming less nervous or stressed and public speaking were mentioned.

Students were asked to think about their future and on a star scale from 1 to 5, rate how useful they thought the FFP sessions had been in helping them to develop the skills that they need (table 6).

Table 6: Usefulness rating of FFP on skills development

Rating	Number of Students	%
One star	-	-
Two stars	2	16.7%
Three stars	5	41.7%
Four stars	4	33.3%
Five stars	1	8.3%
Total	12	100%

Most students agreed or strongly agreed with the outcome questions (figure 35). Interestingly, despite few being positive about the skills they had improved on (figure 34), 83.4% felt they had developed the skills they need to succeed in the future.

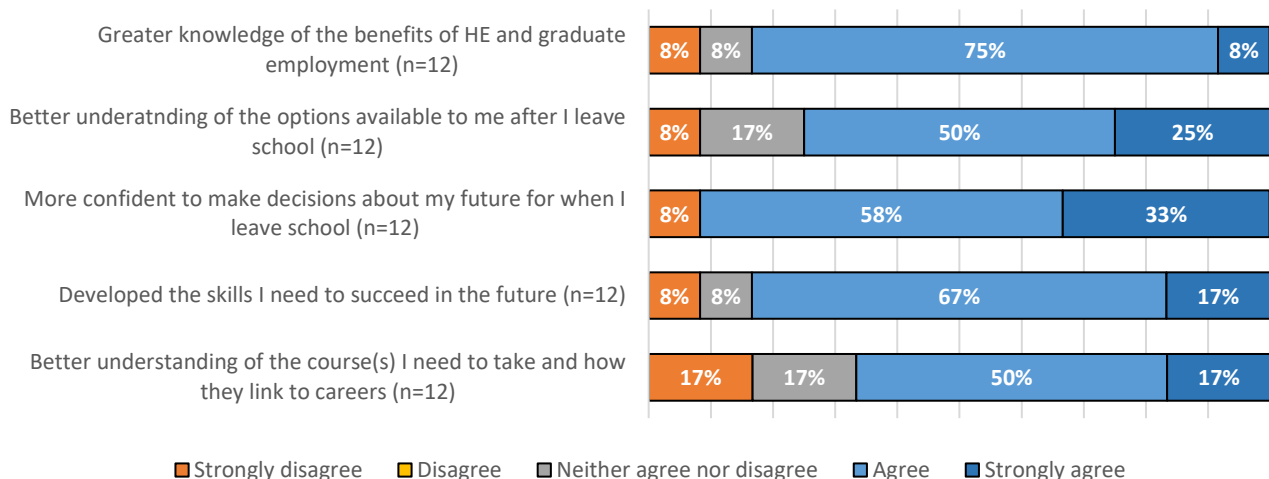


Figure 35: Outcome questions – all students

### Skills and outcome questions by contact hours (HEAT data)

There were insufficient data collected for Year 13 to include this analysis.

### 3. Qualitative data: Student focus groups

Three schools were identified for each year group that had received the greatest number of sessions and where the LiNCHigher School Engagement Officers (SEO) felt there was a good chance of getting into the schools to talk to the students. For Year 11 one school had received three sessions, two had received two. For Year 13 one school had received four sessions and two had received three. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of the SEOs, just one school from each year group agreed to take part in the qualitative aspect of the FFP evaluation: School F for Year 11 and School G for Year 13.

In total, the evaluation team spoke to approximately 75 students. In addition, there was one interview with the School G Careers Lead and the teacher at School F contributed to the class feedback. Two focus groups took place at School G in February with a total of 15 Year 13 students. In March 2024 the views of students in two Year 11 classes at School F were sought. These sessions were not audio recorded due to the high number of students in each group. For the second class the students were asked to work in pairs to discuss the programme and write their feedback on whiteboards, that the evaluation team then photographed and wrote up.

The FFP sessions delivered in the two schools were as follows:

- School F Year 11 – Understanding the labour market and Career profiling.
- School G Year 13 – Degree Apprenticeships, Career management and social media and Interviewing well.

#### *Focus group findings*

##### What the students enjoyed about the sessions:

Overall, the students found the sessions informative and interesting. They particularly liked the sessions that involved quizzes and would recommend the sessions to others.

The career profiling quiz had helped some of the Year 11 students recognise what type of personality they have and what kind of job they may be best suited to. These students had also found it helpful that the sessions talked about the grades they needed for university and for certain jobs as they had not really thought about this before.

One Year 13 student described the sessions as “*fun*” and the activities as “*really exciting*”. He liked that the sessions were “*interactive*”, having the opportunity to put ideas down in his own words and “*being able to put myself into the situation*”. Another Year 13 student said he liked “*the knowledge and insight it gave me into future prospects*”.

#### What the students did not enjoy about the sessions:

There was nothing specifically that the Year 13 students did not enjoy about the sessions. However, the main criticism of the sessions from the Year 11 students was that sometimes there was too much talking and not enough activity or time for discussion. Their tutor agreed, commenting that the understanding the labour market session, particularly, had involved a lot of talking by the SEO and had therefore required a lot of listening by the students. The tutor further commented that the session had contained a great deal of information for the students to take in. Some of the Year 11 students found the sessions repetitive and too fast-paced. One commented that the videos had not worked.

#### *Student views by session*

##### Understanding the Labour market (Yr 11 School F)

The students particularly liked the quiz and finding out which type of personality they were. They also felt this session had helped them to narrow down their career options. Student comments about the session included:

*Fun, because we looked at many jobs that we didn't know existed.*

*Finding out different types of jobs and how they work.*

*Good because it was informative and [we] got time to discuss with each other before sharing ideas as a class.*

##### Career profiling (Yr 11 School F)

The students enjoyed finding out about the different types of jobs available and possible future career options, especially those in new technology involving AI. Some felt the session had helped them narrow down their career choices. Students commented that the sessions had led to them “*learning about different careers and which suit me best*” as well as helping to “*...narrow down career choices that would suit us more*”.

##### Degree apprenticeships (Yr 13 School G)

The students and the Careers Lead both felt this was probably the most positively received and popular Year 13 session. Previously the students knew little if anything about degree apprenticeships. The session had helped inform the students about non-university options that they had previously been unaware of. The Careers Lead agreed that the school generally focuses on getting the students into university and “*we kind of disregard the apprenticeships*”. As a result of the session several

students were now considering a degree apprenticeship as their next step, with one student commenting “*I've considered degree apprenticeship since the session*”. Other comments on the session included:

*I knew what a degree apprenticeship was, but I didn't know what it consisted of, so it just helped a lot.*

*It gave me a more in-depth look at what I could do after school, that wasn't a particular linear path that people take.*

*...with the degree apprenticeship, that was like pretty cool, like it gave me an example of what I could do apart from university.*

*You can get paid and you don't have to go to university and still get a degree.*

*I was looking into the degree apprenticeships that are quite interesting, I don't want to get into debt with uni. I think that would be a better choice.*

*I didn't know they were a thing before LiNCHigher.*

#### Career management using social media (Year 13, School G)

The most memorable part of this session for the students was being shown how to put together their LinkedIn profile. However, some said they would have liked longer on this activity feeling that ten minutes was insufficient. Most of the students had not used their profile since the session with one student commenting:

*I remember making the profiles in the session, but I haven't needed to use it since because I've got a job at the moment.*

#### Interviewing well (Year 13, School G)

The students found the interviewing well session helpful. They learnt what people are looking for at interview, how to present themselves, to speak clearly, smell nice, smile, make eye contact and that it is important to know their “*stuff*” beforehand. As a result, they felt more prepared for interviews than before the session.

#### *How the sessions met the programme's overarching learning outcomes*

The Year 11 students did feel the sessions had, to some degree, helped them with all of the NERUPI key aims of the programme but they were unable to expand on exactly how. In particular, they had learnt more about their future job opportunities, post-16 options and their personality types. The sessions had helped some students confirm their future plans and understand the skills and grades they needed for their next steps. Comments included:

*It helped me with get a better idea of the skills and grades I need...*

*Helped us know what the positives and negatives of higher education are and help us to get a clear idea of post-16 options.*

Most students of the Year 11 felt the sessions had helped them to better understand the benefits of studying at university.

Year 13 students also felt FFP had helped them with most of the NERUPI key aims, to some extent. The degree apprenticeship session had given them a better understanding of their post-18 options



(NERUPI B – Choose) with one student noting that: *“before we just really focused on the university options”*. The students mostly agreed that the sessions had helped them identify not only their strengths but areas of weaknesses (NERUPI E – understand) that they needed to work on to get where they wanted to go and put them in a better position to make their own post-16 choices (NERUPI C – Become). Whilst they were less sure that the sessions had helped them understand the skills that they needed to succeed in the future (NERUPI D – Practice) they did feel they had a greater awareness of the benefits of further study and university (NERUPI A - Know), especially in terms of degree apprenticeships with one student commenting:

*There were some new things such as degree apprenticeships, obviously we know about apprenticeships, but you don't really hear a lot about degree apprenticeship. So, there were some new things that were brought up.*

### *Suggested improvements to the programme*

The main suggestions for improving the sessions came from the Year 11 students and were predominantly around more interaction. This is in line with the findings from last year. Both the teacher and the students felt the understanding the labour market session could have been broken up more with a quiz or an activity, such as individual research into a student's area of interest.

One group of Year 11 students said that in general, *“there was a lot of talking”* and that they *“lost interest after a while”*. Another group wanted *“...activities to make the definitions memorable”*. For the understanding the labour market session some students would have liked a quiz and for the career profiling some would have liked more information about the different employment sectors. Overall, the Year 11 students felt the sessions could be improved by having more discussion, fewer worksheets and if the sessions were more specific and personalised.

Some of the Year 11 students would have also liked the sessions to have been delivered earlier in the year, ideally at the start of Year 11 before they begin their college applications. However, they felt that the end of Yr 10 would have been too early. Interestingly, one student suggested they had the sessions at the end of Yr 9 to help them decide on their GCSE options.

The main improvements Year 13s would have liked was more real-life examples, more explanation of some of the points raised in the sessions and more information on student finances so that they can make informed decisions about further study. One student commented on student finances: *“I think not understanding how they work is one of the things has driven me to not want to go to uni”*. The Careers Lead felt more tasks to engage the students on some of the sessions would have been beneficial commenting the sessions could do with *“just that little bit of extra engagement to really capture them”*.

### *How well FFP went from the school's perspective:*

From school G's perspective, the sessions were described as being *“really informative”* and had met the schools' expectations by providing the students with the knowledge they needed. They had helped some of the Year 13 students decide on their next steps, and one student in particular, as the Careers Lead explained:

*So, someone of the Year 13s they didn't know what they wanted to do. So, for example, one student, he didn't know whether he wanted to do university or degree apprenticeships and he said when he came out of that session, he said he had made his mind up about what he*

*wanted to do. And so now we know he doesn't want to go to university. So, it helps us with our destination data and things like that...I think the sessions are great.*

The sessions had been easy to arrange, communication with LiNCHigher was said to have been good and delivery had gone smoothly, “*amazingly well*”. The students had appreciated having someone from outside of the school deliver the sessions. The Careers Lead felt it was a good thing for the students to hear from someone external as the students “*...don't want to listen to a teacher that they listen to all day*”.

The Careers Lead at School G was particularly keen to have the career management and social media session as she is a big fan of LinkedIn and wanted the students to experience it and encourage them to use it in their jobs in the future.

The degree apprenticeship session was selected because the Careers Lead felt “*...there's a lot of support out there for universities but not so much for apprenticeships*” and wanted to fill that knowledge gap and give the students “*...a bit of extra information to signpost them*” with their next step. The session was said to have been “*very popular with the students*”.

The main challenge to delivering successful sessions came from within the school, namely the difficulty of getting students to fully engage and talk, especially where sessions were scheduled for the mornings. This was seen as a school issue and not one of the programme *per se*. The sessions were reported to fit well with the schools existing Careers Education Information Guidance (CEIG) offer.

Overall, the Careers Lead at School G thought the programme was “*really good and really engaging for the students*”.

#### 4. Key findings and recommendations

##### *Key findings*

Survey data for Year 11 students was collected predominately from three schools. This meant that it was not possible to draw any conclusions about the impact of the FFP using contact hours as a measure. Thirty of the 51 students that had participated in one to two hours of activities were from one school (School D) and whose students were generally more positive than those from the other two schools. In addition, the group that had taken part in more than three hours was made up entirely with students that had also taken part in LiNCHigher's six-week SSMP.

For the specific skills question, the ability to concentrate was included in this year's outcome survey as an option as it was quoted as a skill students needed to improve upon in the open text section of the survey last year; overall, it was Year 11's least improved skill.

More than half of all Year 11 students reported a good or strong improvement in three of the nine skills: communication, teamwork and problem solving (59.1%, 54.0% and 52.4% respectively). However, less than half reported a good or strong improvement in six of the nine skills. This was particularly marked for the ability to concentrate and revision skills, where 35.4% and 30.7% respectively scored their increased improvement either one (I have not improved on this skill) or two. These proportions were further increased when the scores from the students that had taken part in the SSMP were removed (37.7% and 31.5% respectively). At least half of the students that had taken part in both FFP and the SSMP felt they had made a good or strong improvement in eight out of nine of the skills, ranging from problem solving (50.0%) to improved concentration (66.6%), the exception was teamwork (41.6%).

In general, there was little difference in the responses received by Year 11 UC target students and non-UC for the specific skills question, UC students were more positive about teamwork and independent research skills than their non-UC counterparts (62.8% versus 46.7% and 56.9% versus 40.8% respectively).

The skills question, when split by Year 11 female and male students, produced a seemingly gendered response. Female students were more positive than male students that they had improved upon their study skills, revision skills and independent research (40.5% versus 22.0%, 50.0% versus 30.0% and 52.4% versus 42.0% respectively). Whereas, male students were more positive about teamwork, problem solving and self-confidence (61.0% versus 44.4%, 57.0% versus 45.2% and 47.0% versus 35.7% respectively).

School D Year 11 students were more likely to say they had improved on their skills than students from Schools B and C. Interestingly, this was not an effect of the SSMP as School D Year 11 students had not taken part in the programme.

Using contact hours as a measure, the Year 11 students that had taken part in more than three hours of activities improved in six of the nine skills the most; this group comprised all the students that had taken part in both FFP and SSMP.

The majority of Year 11 students either agreed or strongly agreed with all five outcome questions. Students were most positive about the options available to them after leaving school, 84.4% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This is likely due to them being in their last year at their current school and as mentioned previously none of the schools from which the responses were received have sixth-form provision, meaning that at the time of taking the survey most would have had an idea of their destination for the next academic year. They were least positive about having gained knowledge of the benefits of HE and graduate employment (51.1%). None of the Year 11 students that responded to the survey took part in any LiNCHigher HE knowledge-specific activities this academic year which could explain why this was the questions they were least positive about.

There was little difference in the responses to the outcome questions when split by Year 11 UC and non-UC learners and by female and male students. When split by school, in general School D Year 11 students were more positive about the outcome questions.

Year 11 students that had taken part in more than three hours of activities (i.e., those that participated in both FFP and SSMP) were the most positive about all five of the outcome questions.

There are no conclusions that can be drawn from the Year 13 outcome data, as the responses were too few and were all from students attending one school.

In terms of the qualitative data, it should be treated with caution as the data is limited to just two schools and one year group per school, therefore, generalisations cannot be inferred.

However, the data tells us that Year 11 students would like the sessions to be much more interactive to increase their levels of engagement. They would also have liked the sessions to have been delivered earlier in the school year, ideally before they make their college applications.

Year 13 students welcomed the addition of the degree apprenticeship session, as this was a particular gap in their understanding of their post-18 options. Year 13 students would also like information on student finances to enable them to make an informed choice about whether or not they would like to go to university. They would like session content to include more real-life examples or for the sessions to be more personalised to their own areas of interest; they felt sessions were too generic.

Both year groups would like sessions to have more time for discussion. However, overall, the FFP worked well and was positively received by staff and students alike.

## *Recommendations*

- Consider including in the FFP more ways to help students improve their concentration. Perhaps a concept or a method that was used in the SSMP as there was a large difference between those that had taken part in SSMP and those that had not for this skill. The lack of ability to concentrate is a new finding, as it was not included as an option in the survey previous years.
- Continue delivering study and revision skills sessions, confidence in these areas is still lacking as evidenced by the improvement to the skills question, and encourage the take up of these sessions by schools.
- Encourage schools that did not take up the 'Post-16 and Post-18 Options' session for their Year 10 students this academic year to deliver it to their students when they are in Year 11. Almost half of the Year 11 students that completed the outcome survey did not have more knowledge of HE and graduate employment than they did at the start of the year.
- Continue to ensure sessions are as interactive as feasible to secure student engagement. Time for discussion should also be built into sessions whenever possible.
- Strongly suggest to schools that Year 11 sessions are delivered as early in the school year as possible. This will help ensure students have the information they need before applying for their post-16 placements. This is especially important in schools where there is no sixth form.
- Encourage schools to run the degree apprenticeship session with both Year 12 and early in Year 13 to students as this is an option that schools do not often cover but one that students are interested in hearing more about.

## Appendix A – Survey

Over the past school year you may have taken part in a number of LiNCHigher's Future Focus activities. We would like to ask you a few questions about how you have found the activities. Some of the questions are about higher education and further education which have been abbreviated to HE and FE. This is a short survey and will take you no more than 10 minutes to complete. All the information that we collect will be used for research purposes only. You can notify LiNCHigher at any time if you would like us to delete your personal data. [LiNCHigher@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:LiNCHigher@bishopg.ac.uk)

Your name (first and last name):

Your home postcode:

Your date of birth:

Are you:

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Which school do you attend?

Which year of study are you in?

- Year 11
- Year 12

Thinking about the Future Focus session that you have taken part in this school year (since September 2023), please select the most appropriate response to the questions below according to how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

(Scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

Since September I have developed greater knowledge and awareness of the benefits of Higher Education (HE) and graduate employment.

Since September I have gained a better understanding of the options available to me after I leave school.

Since September I feel more confident to make decisions about my future for when I leave school.

Since September I have developed the skills I need to succeed in the future.

Since September I have developed a better understanding of the subjects/course I need to take and how they link to careers I may be interested in.

Have you decided what you want to do next when you finish your current studies?

Yes

No

I am still unsure

Please tell us how much you think you have improved on the following skills this school year (since September 2023)

(Scale: 1 = I have not improved on this skill to 5 = I have improved a lot)

- Study skills
- Revision skills
- Independent research skills
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Problem solving
- Leadership
- Self-confidence
- Ability to concentrate

Are there any other academic skills that you think you have improved upon since September 2023?

Other than those listed above, what skills for the future do you think you need help/practice with?

Thinking about your future, on a star rating scale from 1 to 5, how useful do you think the Future Focus sessions have been in helping you to develop the skills that you need?

(Scale: 1 = not at all useful to 5 = very useful)