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Themed group interventions to enhance resilience

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Themed group interventions to enhance resilience

Enhancing student resilience through the provision of themed group interventions

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Overview

Our project aim was to pilot a programme of themed interventions (group workshops / support groups) targeted at students living in our university accommodation, with the aim of building resilience. Central to our approach was the development of a programme designed to address key issues at particular times during the year. Students who agreed to participate were consulted on the themes of the intervention workshops, and these were carried out between November 2017 and April 2018. We proposed to measure students' perceptions of their own resilience using an accepted evaluation tool prior to, and at the end of, the programme.

Background

The word 'resilience' slowly entered the higher education zeitgeist over the past decade, and has gathered momentum over the past five years or so. Much has been written exploring whether we can take steps ourselves to improve our capacity to manage challenges we may face in our life, and many have questioned whether we need to have a particular type of personality to build resilience, or whether we are all capable of doing this. There has been a growing argument within our sector, however, that by implying a person can improve their own resilience, we are in actuality increasing pressure upon our students to demonstrate yet another non-academic skill set, which might divert their energy from academic performance or, worse, might cause them to be unable to cope with competing demands whilst at university. Our project originated whilst considering these theories, and balancing theory with what was occurring in practice within our services.

At the University of Stirling, Student Support Services and Accommodation Services work very closely together and cross-refer students on a daily basis. It was debated that, with the exception of crisis cases (for example, students considering suicide, students self-harming, students who have experienced abuse), many of the issues for which students seek assistance from Student Support and Accommodation Services could potentially be resolved by the student themselves, if they felt better prepared or more able to utilise planning or coping strategies— or, put another way, demonstrate resilience. Some common issues reported by students throughout the academic year include the following:

- At the beginning of the first semester, the student feels like everyone with the exception of themselves is having a positive experience and making friends easily within their accommodation.
- Also at the beginning of the academic year, the student is missing home and feels that they are letting themselves and their family down. They perceive they will have

failed at what they feel is an important part of the university experience if they leave university accommodation.

- Throughout the course of the year, the student is finding it difficult to live with, and connect with, flatmates who they perceive as being different to them and live in a different way. Examples include flatmates who are noisy, flatmates who have substance use issues, flatmates who have Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Throughout the course of the year, but particularly in the second semester, the student is struggling with managing their workload. Accordingly, feelings of being overwhelmed with work manifest themselves in increasingly poor emotional wellbeing.

Students reporting these issues often require intervention from Accommodation Services, such as requiring to be moved to different accommodation, requiring mediation to be carried out with flatmates, and, exceptionally, being permitted to leave accommodation or university altogether. Almost all students reporting these issues required one-to-one support from Student Support services. This has impacted upon both time and resources for our services, which could be better used focusing upon improving our response to crises, and developing a robust proactive framework of support. It is with this in mind that our project aims were posed.

Project aims

The aim of the project was to build resilience within the resident student body by providing opportunities to participate in a series of themed group sessions (specified in the [Methodology](#) section) in the accommodation setting. These were to be facilitated by trained practitioners, who would encourage open dialogue about student experiences and emotional reactions to key events and transition points during the university year. These sessions would also provide participants with practical tools and techniques to help manage stress and negative emotional reactions, to cope with and bounce back from “failure” and difficult experiences, and— by encouraging peers to share their own experiences— would seek to “normalise” reactions to events such as arrival at university, living with new people from diverse backgrounds, examinations, completion of major pieces of coursework (for example, dissertation), and challenges arising from the formation of new relationships with peers. In addition, it was hoped that participation in the programme of sessions would also create an enhanced sense of community and peer support amongst participants, factors that are known to strengthen resilience.

In relation to the resilience factors, this project would support:

- **Self-management**— through the provision of a suite of tools / coping strategies to respond to stressful or challenging situations.
- **Emotional control** (the ability not to dwell on negative experiences or overreact to situations)— through the provision of tools / coping strategies based on positive psychology and a growth mindset, and by “normalising” the response to stress.
- **Social integration** (the extent to which respondents rate themselves as being integrated with some groups of other students)— through the creation of a peer support network and a community of shared interest / experiences.

- **Support networks** (the extent to which respondents feel they can turn to formal or informal support networks)— through the creation of a peer support network and a community of shared interest / experiences amongst participants.

The project would test and evaluate the impact of the intervention programme, both in terms of participant-generated feedback on impact, and also in relation to tangible factors such as progression and retention.

Methodology

Following Ethics approval in October 2017, a steering group was established to oversee the implementation of the project. This group comprised the following members:

- Head of Student Support Services
- Head of Accommodation Services
- Head of Student Guidance & Wellbeing
- Assistant Adviser (Wellbeing)
- VP (Communities), Students' Union
- Representative from the Student Reference Group
- Representative from the Stirling Graduate School
- Representative from the Accommodation Liaison Students
- Communications Manager
- Lead practitioners

The steering group agreed upon the means of data collection, and a communications / promotion strategy (see [Appendix 1](#)).

Data collection

Following investigation into the availability of well-established tools, we identified three different scales for measuring resilience:

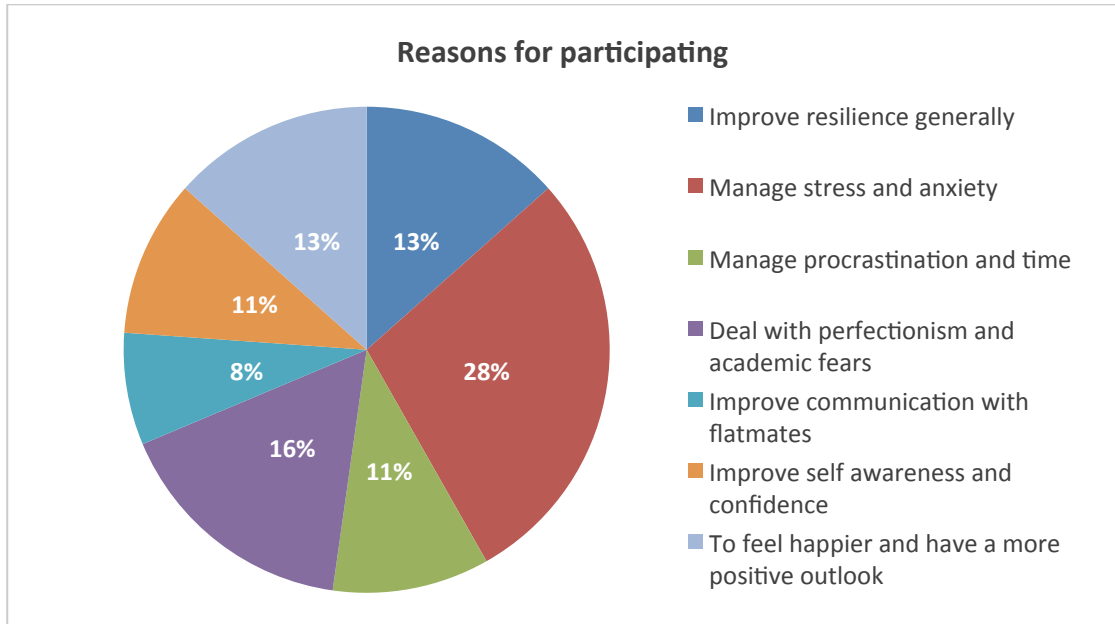
- [Resilience Scale for Adults](#)
- [Brief Resilience Scale](#)
- [MTQ48](#)

As a result of engagement with the sector, we received recommendations from both Abertay University and University of Bolton of the applicability of the MTQ48 psych test in measuring resilience. We noted that the MTQ48 is a well-respected tool with sound academic research to support its robustness and value in measuring resilience in an academic context. We engaged with Retinent Ltd, an organisation that was working with approximately 12 other universities operating a similar model, and agreed that they would run the MTQ48 in partnership with AQRI, the organisation that provided the software and hosted the data. Retinent would also provide support with analysis of test results. The original proposal from Retinent Ltd, together with a copy of the MTQ48 questionnaire can be found at [Appendix 2](#).

Recruitment of participants

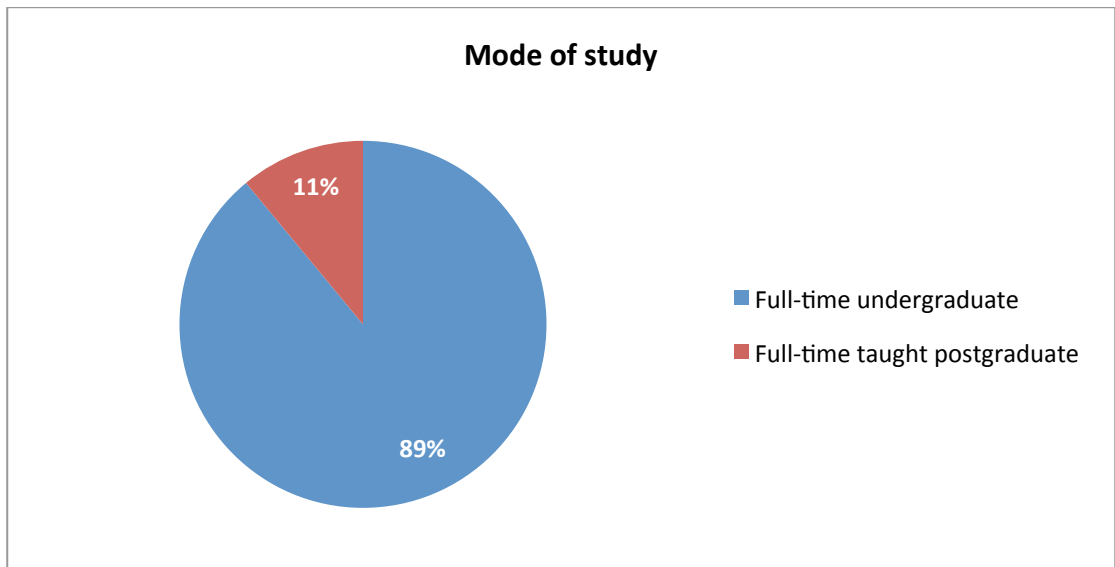
Students were recruited via the communications strategy outlined at [Appendix 1](#), and asked to complete an expression of interest form via Survey Monkey, which included a question asking why the students would like to participate in the workshops. A total of 32 students

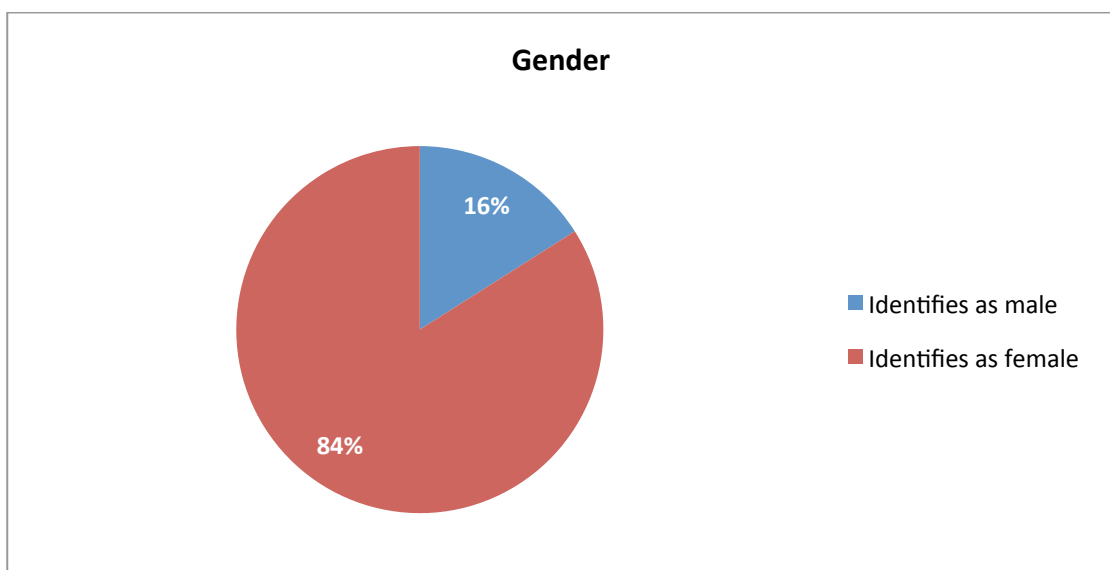
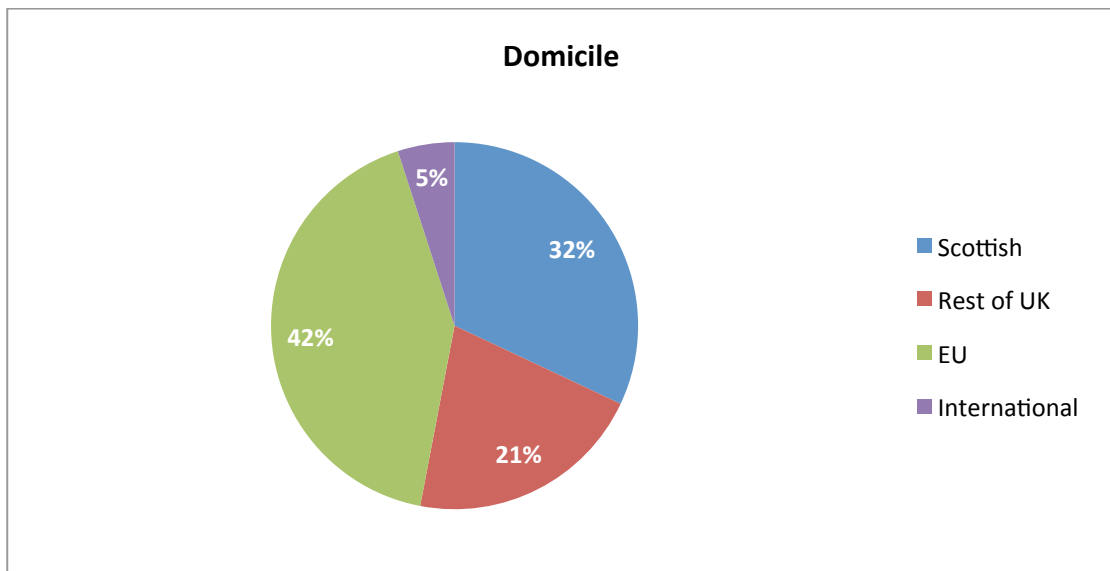
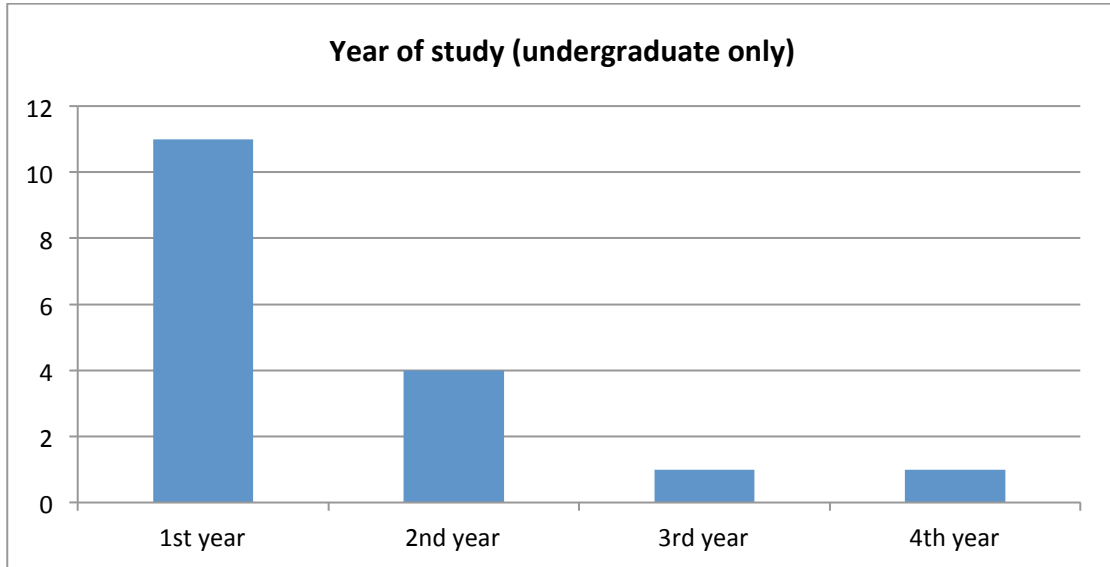
responded to the original expression of interest, and the reasons they gave for participating could be broadly split into the following themes:

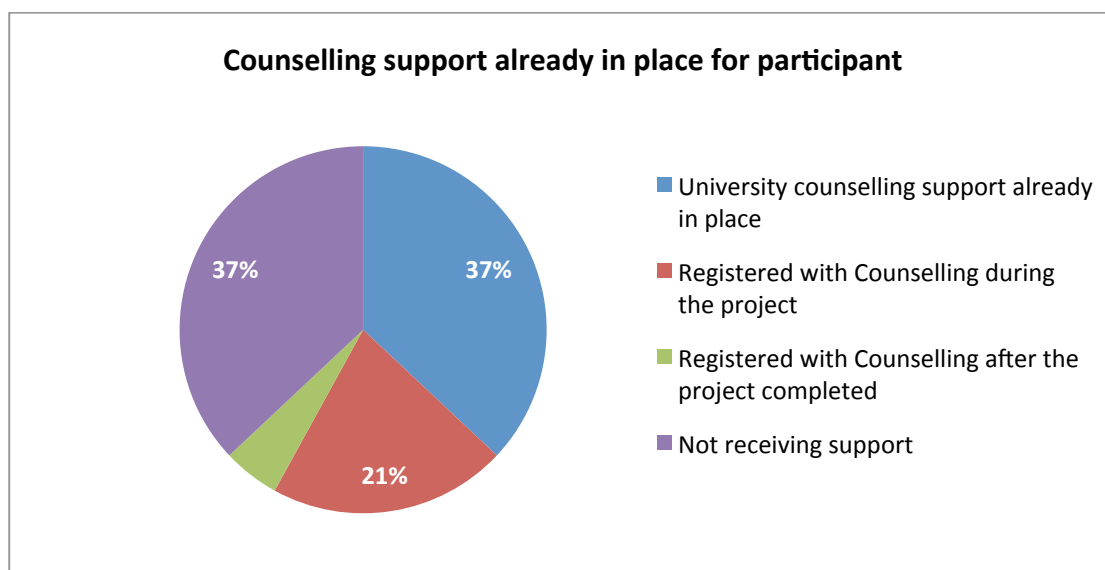


The 32 students who responded to the Expression of Interest form were then emailed further information, together with a consent form (see [Appendix 1.3](#)). Of those 32 students who expressed interest, 19 students provided consent to participate.

The demographic breakdown of the 19 students who participated is as follows:







As can be seen above, the majority of participants were first year full-time undergraduates and female, and were either in receipt of support or keen to accept additional support. This data is further analysed below in this report.

The MTQ48 questionnaire

The participants were emailed the MTQ48 questionnaire by AQRI (facilitated by Retinent, see [Appendix 2.2](#)) directly before the series of intervention workshops began. Completed questionnaires were then analysed by AQR software using an algorithm. The software then generated automatic 'Development' feedback reports, which were emailed to the participants and the university. These reports scored students on a scale of 1 to 10 on the following categories:

- **Mental toughness**— “Mental toughness is a quality which determines, in some part, how individuals perform when exposed to stressors, pressure and challenge. It can play a significant role in determining how an individual manages stress, as well as being a key factor in enabling individuals to perform to the peak of their abilities.”
- **Control**— considers how in control of one’s destiny the participant is. This is split into life control and emotional control.
- **Emotional control**— how well the participant can control their everyday emotions.
- **Life control**— how well the participant controls the direction of their life, whether it is their studies or work.
- **Commitment**— how much effort a participant is willing to give when obstacles may be in their way; whether a participant completes tasks or procrastinates, or blames obstacles that may be in the way.
- **Challenge**— how daunted a participant may feel when faced with a challenge. Do they see it as an opportunity, or a threat?
- **Confidence**— does the participant have self-belief, or are they self-critical?
- **Confidence in abilities**— explores whether a participant has belief in their own abilities in study, or the workplace.
- **Interpersonal confidence**— focuses on how well the participant works as part of a group; how much confidence they have to speak and be heard in this setting.

Participants were given some personalised development suggestions following each scoring category (see an example development report at [Appendix 2.3](#)). Participants were also reminded that the findings in the report merely represent a “snapshot in time” —mental toughness or resilience can be fluid. The data is hosted on the [AQRI assessment platform](#). Access to the system by AQRI and Retinent staff is necessary only for support. AQRI and Retinent staff are bound to retain confidentiality. Student Support Services were emailed the data reports following the conclusion of the project for further analysis.

Development of intervention workshops

Using the feedback from the original 32 students who expressed interest in participating, the six lead practitioners developed a series of intervention workshops. These were designed to take place at relevant points in the academic year. In this instance, circumstances relating to project approval and subsequent Ethics Panel approval meant that the initial workshop took place a month later than first intended. Although this does not appear to have significantly affected the outcome of the project, in future years, the intention would be to hold the initial transitions workshop as early as possible in the academic year.

It was agreed that the lead practitioners would facilitate the workshops in pairs, and that at least one of the two lead practitioners who facilitated the first workshop would be present at each subsequent workshop to provide consistency to the participants, and allow them to build trust.

All workshops took place in the same room at the same time each month (18:00 to 19:30) and participants were provided with food and refreshments.

The intervention workshops focused on the following themes:

- 1. Initial Transition to university life and dealing with change** (27 November 2017)
This workshop was facilitated by two of our Student Counsellors, and focussed on letting the group get to know one another, thinking about what change and transition means and how it feels, including the psychology of transition, focussing on the university transition in particular. The workshop also looked at ways in which participants can deal with change and manage transitions, and finished with relaxation techniques.
- 2. Stress reduction and management** (18 January 2018)
This workshop was facilitated by two of our Student Counsellors, and focussed on understanding stress, fight or flight response, the impact of stress on our bodies and thoughts, considering what is stressful for the participants, and thinking about self-help and suggestions for reducing and managing stress. The workshop finished with relaxation techniques and meditation.
- 3. Using the power of positive psychology and mindfulness** (15 February 2018)
This workshop was facilitated by one of our Student Counsellors, and one of our Mental Health Mentors. It explored visualisation, being proactive, building resilience, optimism, and mindfulness.
- 4. Managing procrastination** (15 March 2018)
This was facilitated by two of our Student Counsellors, and encouraged participants to explore attitudes and feelings towards procrastination, why we procrastinate, anti-procrastination strategies, and seeing the positivity in procrastination.
- 5. Managing relationships and social anxiety** (12 April 2018)
This session was facilitated by three of our Student Counsellors, including the two

Counsellors who facilitated the initial workshop. It explored how students view their important relationships, including those with flatmates, and how their perceived relationships can impact upon their own emotional wellbeing. The session also summarised and tied up the other workshops, and students were provided with a 'wellbeing kit', which included a wellbeing journal, a stress ball, lavender balm and some chocolate.

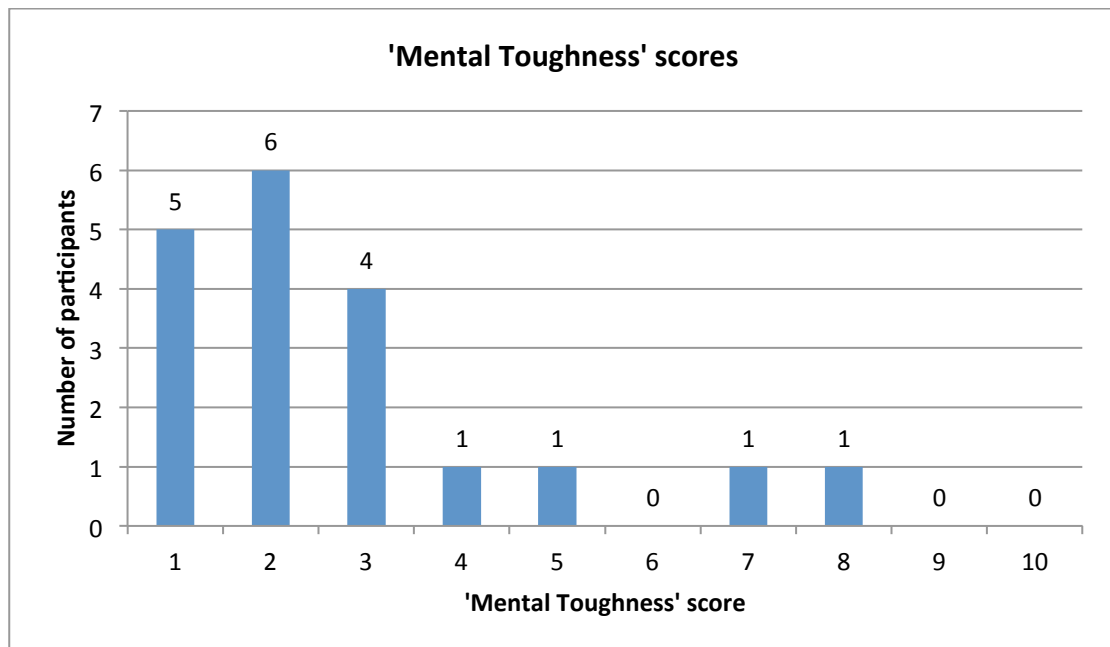
Although 19 students had confirmed attendance prior to the first intervention workshop, only 10 students actually attended the first session. Numbers fluctuated slightly over the course of the sessions, but there were never more than 12 students in attendance at any one workshop.

Key findings

Our key findings originated from the results of the MTQ48 questionnaires, verbal feedback provided by both the lead practitioners and participants, and participants via a Survey Monkey survey. We also explored general retention / progression rates of participants. Over time in longer-term projects, we recognise it would be valuable to chart retention and progress outcomes against the overall performance of the comparable student population.

MTQ48 test

Participants were scored on each of the nine categories as outlined above. Whilst not an average scoring, we have opted to base findings on the score for 'Mental Toughness' as it is indicative of a participant's general level of resilience. All scales range from 1 being weak to 10 being strong in that particular category. The following sten scores were recorded for the original 19 participants:



'Mental Toughness' scores and participants' demographics:

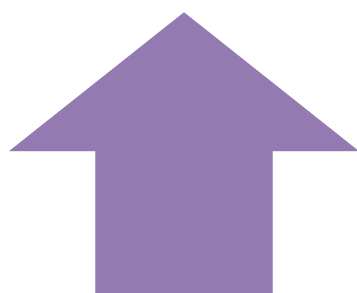
'Mental Toughness' score	Number of participants	Demographic of participants
1	5	All Scottish or rest of UK

'Mental Toughness' score	Number of participants	Demographic of participants
2	6	Mixture of Scottish, rest of UK, EU
3	4	Mixture of Scottish, rest of UK, EU
4	1	EU
5	1	EU
6	0	
7	1	International
8	1	
9	0	
10	0	

Following the final workshop in April, all participants were invited to undertake the MTQ48 questionnaire again, and a 'Distance Travelled' report was again automatically generated by AQRI software and emailed to the participants. The 'Distance Travelled' report shows sten scores from both MTQ48 questionnaires on a single sten graph (see an example of the 'Distance Travelled' report at [Appendix 2.4](#)). The report is careful to highlight, however, that participants learn and develop over time, and other influences and factors can also impact upon the participants' lives and scores, which can change their perspective.

Of the 19 students who completed the MTQ48 at the beginning of the project, only eight participants completed the MTQ48 again at the end and received a 'Distance Travelled' report. At least one of the original participants was on a study abroad semester and travelled back to their home country in December 2017, and one of the students transferred to another UK institution in January 2018.

Of the eight participants who completed the 'Distance Travelled' report, 50% obtained the same score in their 'Distance Travelled' report for their 'Mental Toughness' factor as they did in the original MTQ48 report, with the other half of participants improving their 'Mental Toughness' factor by at least one point.



As can be seen in the results table below, the categories in which there appeared to be the most positive progression for participants were 'Commitment', 'Life Control', 'Confidence' and 'Confidence in Abilities'.



The categories in which there appeared to be the least progression for participants were 'Emotional control' (although it should be noted that participants began with fairly high scores for this category), 'Interpersonal Confidence', 'Challenge' and 'Control'. These results will be analysed in the next section below.

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Distance travelled sten scores:

Participant	Overall mental toughness		Control		Emotional control		Life Control		Commitment		Challenge		Confidence		Confidence in abilities		Interpersonal confidence										
	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48	MTQ48									
	Nov 2017	May 2018	Nov 2017	May 2018	Nov 2017	May 2018	Nov 2017	May 2018	Nov 2017	May 2018	Nov 2017	May 2018	Nov 2017	May 2018	Nov 2017	May 2018	Nov 2017	May 2018									
FTUG RUK FEMALE	1	+1	2	2	+1	3	4	0	4	1	+2	3	1	+3	4	1	+1	2	1	+1	2						
FTUG HOME FEMALE	1	+1	2	1	+2	3	2	+1	3	1	+2	3	2	+2	4	1	0	1	1	+2	3	1	+1	2	6	-2	4
FTUG HOME MALE	1	0	1	2	0	2	2	0	2	2	0	2	1	+1	2	1	0	1	2	+1	3	1	0	1	5	0	5
FTUG RUK FEMALE	2	0	2	5	-3	2	7	-3	5	3	-2	1	2	+3	5	4	0	4	1	0	1	2	0	2	1	+1	2
FTUG HOME FEMALE	2	+2	4	2	+2	4	4	0	4	1	+3	4	4	+2	6	2	+1	3	2	+2	4	2	+2	4	3	+1	4
FTUG EU FEMALE	2	0	2	3	+1	4	4	0	4	3	+1	4	2	+2	4	2	0	2	2	-1	1	2	-1	1	3	-1	2
FTUG RUK FEMALE	3	0	3	3	0	3	2	+2	4	4	+1	3	5	+1	4	2	+2	4	2	+1	3	3	+1	4	2	+1	3
FTUG EU FEMALE	3	+3	6	3	+2	5	5	+1	6	1	+3	4	2	+5	7	3	0	3	3	+3	6	3	+3	6	4	+2	6

Qualitative data

Lead Practitioner feedback

The two lead practitioners who had attended all intervention workshops between them both advised that they noticed significant signs of cohesion within the group from the first session in November, to the final session in April. Pizza and other refreshments had been provided at each session, and the lead practitioners reported that they found participants arriving earlier each session, with some participants arriving together, suggesting friendships may have been formed during the course of the workshops.

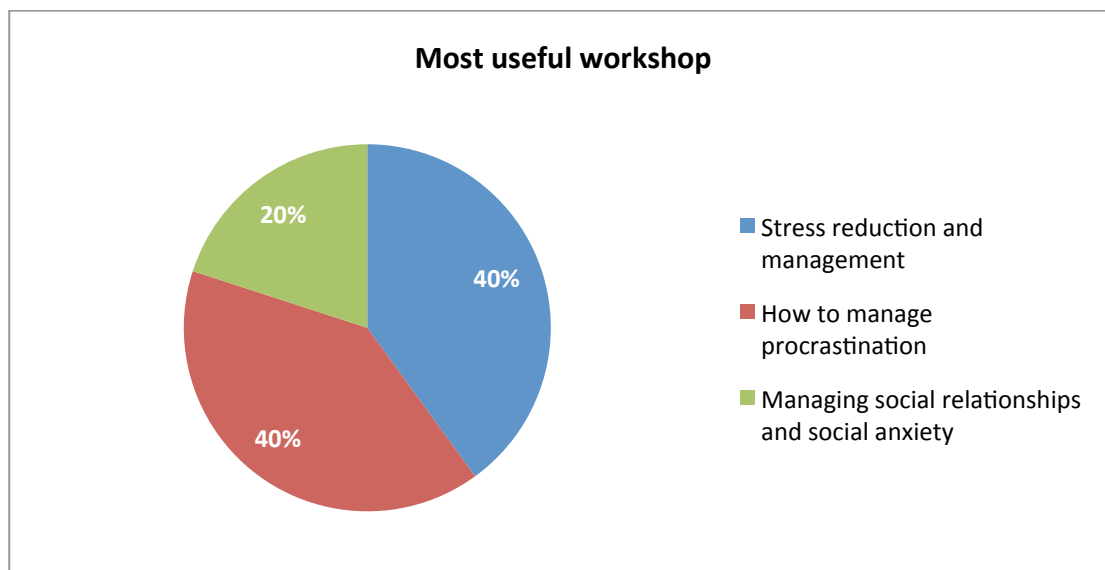
They also reported a noticeable shift in the willingness of participants to open up and discuss their own experiences from the earlier sessions to the final sessions.

All of the participants on continuing degree courses verbally advised Lead Practitioners that they would be keen to continue with the workshops throughout academic session 2018/19 also.

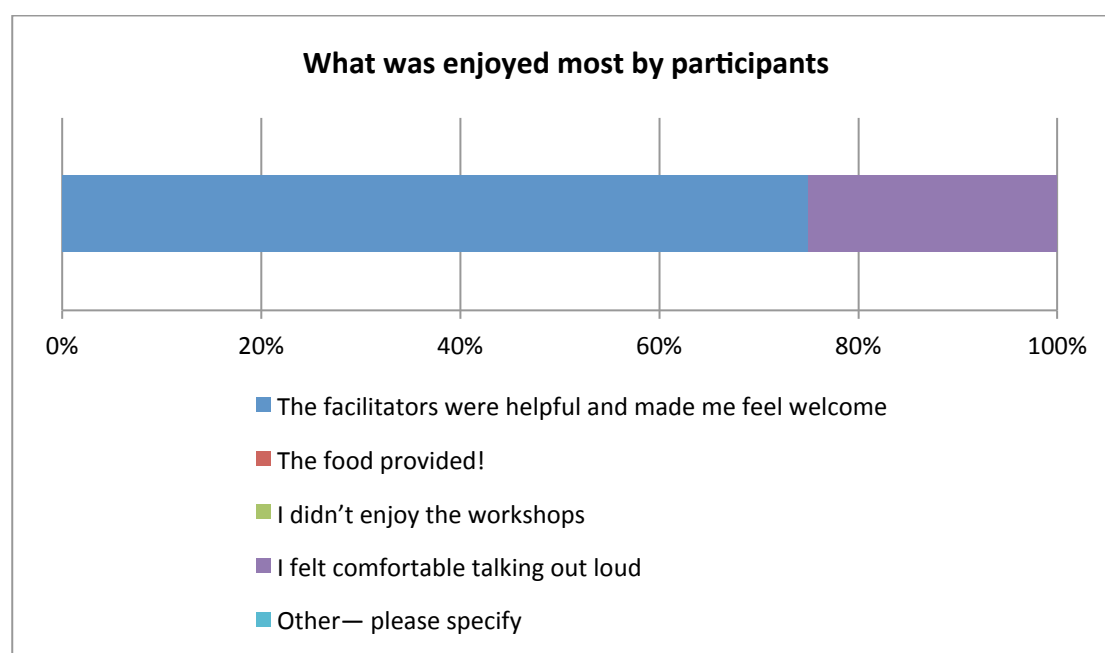
Participant feedback

Aside from the verbal feedback provided to Lead Practitioners discussed above, it has proven difficult to obtain concrete qualitative feedback from participants. A Survey Monkey survey was sent to participants with the incentive of a £20 Amazon voucher for completion, however very disappointingly only five participants responded to this.

All respondents to the survey attended every intervention workshop. When asked what workshop they found most useful, the results were as follows:



When asked what they enjoyed most about the workshops, they responded:



When asked what could be improved upon, 75% of respondents responded that they would have liked the workshops to have occurred more frequently, and be less spaced out. One respondent advised that they would have preferred less discussion time and more practical advice, but failed to specify in what area this would have been helpful.

All respondents advised they would attend again if we were to run the workshops in semester 2018/19.

When asked what they felt had gone well in the workshops, comments we received from respondents were as follows:

- “It was very well done, and I know it helped many people.”
- “I felt they were a great, helpful initiative run by very welcoming people.”
- “I really enjoyed it and I would be happy to attend similar workshops again.”
- “They were absolutely lovely, with the ones leading them, the food and the people there. I’d love to attend workshops like these again.”

Progression / retention data

Of the 19 students who completed the original MTQ48 questionnaire, only one undergraduate student (just over 5% of total participants) has withdrawn and moved to a different UK institution, and one (also undergraduate) has since successfully graduated.

15 participants are progressing very well, with at least four of the students excelling in their academic studies (on course for first class degrees), and two are progressing but with a little more difficulty. Whilst this is a positive result, it is difficult without further research to draw conclusions as to the correlation between the resilience programme and academic progress. It can be noted, however, that the withdrawal percentage is not dissimilar to average institution retention data: in the 2017/18 session our undergraduate student cohort had a withdrawal rate of 2.9% and our postgraduate cohort experienced a withdrawal rate of 4.95%.

Analysis

Correlation between demographic of participants and findings

It is important to consider the reasons for certain groups of students being drawn to the intervention workshops. It has been noted that the majority of participants were:

- First year undergraduate students
- Female
- Almost 40% of participants were already receiving support from our Counselling team at the university.

The most obvious reason for the majority of participants being **first year undergraduate students** is that the project was aimed at students living in university accommodation, which by and large appeals mainly to first year undergraduate students. In the 2017/18 session only 17% of total residents living in university accommodation were postgraduate students. It is also possible that those first years were attracted to the project to help them manage transition to university life.

A representative from the Graduate School at Stirling sat on our steering group, and the workshops were promoted to our postgraduate cohort, but perhaps the language used in the promotional information was perceived as being focused on the undergraduate population (“transitions and adjusting to university life”). With retrospect, two similar campaign themes running in tandem to ensure we properly targeted our postgraduate students would have been more appropriate than one single campaign.

84% of participants identified as **female**, with just 16% identifying as **male**. This is disproportionate compared to the volume of students identifying as male registering with our Counselling & Wellbeing service. During the 2017/18 session, 29.7% of our registered students identified as male, which is significantly higher than the proportional number of participants in the project. Much has been written of the challenge we have across the sector and beyond in engaging the young male population in mental health and wellbeing dialogue, and this data would appear to support this.

It is also interesting to note that the one participant we had who identified as male showed almost no positive progression in his sten scores, with the exception of moving up one point for ‘Commitment’ and ‘Confidence’. It is of course impossible to deduce any conclusions of value from such limited data.

It is interesting to note the volume of participants who either had already registered with our Counselling service, or who would register throughout the course of the year. Potential explanations for this could be:

- Students already invested in improving their emotional wellbeing are more likely to be drawn to such workshops.
- Workshops were recommended during the course of counselling by our Counsellors.
- In considering their own levels of resilience or mental toughness, it was recognised that extra support in the form of counselling would be valuable.

As higher education institutions across the UK examine ways to shift from traditional support such as one to one Counselling to more proactive support, which aims to empower our students to support themselves, this data would suggest a compelling case for a multifaceted approach to the support we offer our students.

Considering the domicile of our participants, it is striking that the slight majority (42%) of participants were from EU countries. Traditionally, less EU students engage with our Counselling services (for example, in 2017/17 only 12% of our students were from the EU).

Only 25% of participants from the EU had engaged with our Counselling service at the beginning of the series of workshops, with a further 12% registering during the year. By contrast, 67% of our Scottish participants had already engaged with our Counselling service at the beginning of the series of workshops, with the remaining 33% registering throughout the year.

This leads us to examine why less traditional support appears to be more appealing to our EU students. When we originally asked participants why they wanted to attend the workshops, the majority of EU participants who expressed interest provided objectives that appear to be based in more positive psychology-based support, such as:

- “to have a more positive outlook”
- “better managing stress”
- “to be more resilient”

It is important to consider the perceived pre-existing resilience of the EU participants, however. It takes a certain degree of bravery to study and live in a country that is not your home country, and further courage is demonstrated by those who immerse themselves in their new culture by engaging with projects such as this. In terms of scoring of ‘Mental Toughness’, however, we can see no real correlation between domicile and ‘Mental Toughness’ or resilience from our limited data.

Evaluation of intervention workshops

As we have seen, the areas that appeared in the MTQ48 ‘Distance Travelled’ reports to show most improvement for our participants were ‘Commitment’ and ‘Confidence’.

The ‘Commitment’ category focuses on how participants motivate themselves when faced with a task they find challenging. It is therefore interesting to note that the workshop that received the most positive feedback was on ‘Managing Procrastination’. This suggests that the content and theme of this workshop was useful to participants and produced tangible results. It is also interesting that participants’ general levels of confidence appeared to improve, and it is hoped that participants feeling comfortable and able to speak out in workshops may have been a contributory factor in this increase.

It can be surmised from feedback given from participants that the content of the workshops was useful and appropriate, however we must consider whether workshops are the right format at all for interventions such as these, given the disappointing numbers of students who expressed interest, actually participated, and then were willing to provide evaluation— even when there was perceived benefit for themselves in obtaining ‘Distance Travelled’ scores.

Traditional methods of engagement such as workshops have been on the decline in our sector for almost a decade. In this digital age of instantaneous gratification, we must consider whether workshops are now antiquated and have outgrown their use. It should be noted, however, that the few students who *did* attend all valued the facilitators— the human encounter— above all else. They also all advised that they would attend again, and that, if anything, the workshops should occur more frequently. So perhaps a more pragmatic approach would be to not simply dismiss traditional methods of support and engagement, but again examine how we can evolve and combine both traditional and more radical methods of engagement.

Evaluation of MTQ48 scale

Before any evaluation of the resilience scale is initiated, it should be borne in mind that resilience is extremely challenging to measure. It is fluid and can be impacted by life events. A person can be resilient and still experience a drop in their ability to face emotional challenges. The perceived advantages of using the MTQ48 questionnaire were as follows:

- External and impartial agency collecting the data so more likely to obtain honest responses.
- Provided analysis of results to participants and to the institution, which eased internal resources.

The assumed weaknesses of MTQ48 were as follows:

- The format is that of a survey, which can be tiresome for students who already suffer from 'survey fatigue'.
- It is a very broad measurement, and only measures resilience at two points in the year with a difference of five months. It must be questioned therefore whether this can be a reliable measure of a student's general level of resilience throughout the entire course of the academic year.
- It was sent to students at what could be perceived as difficult times: November, and examination period in April.

Recommendations

This project was not without its challenges in terms of volume of students willing to participate and evaluate the workshops, and the format of the workshops. The project was, however, very interesting for practitioners to lead, and has informed and influenced a shift in our own Counselling & Wellbeing team's direction. And despite the challenges outlined above, the students who participated did derive benefit from the workshops. To that end, rather than solely focussing upon reactionary traditional forms of support such as one-to-one counselling, our Counsellors are now exploring developing group work— both group therapy and workshops. We will use the feedback and experience of running these workshops to inform practice, and will take consideration of the following recommendations:

- That the workshops be less spaced out over the course of the year.
- That we should conduct the initial transitions workshop as early as possible in the academic year.
- That it would be valuable to chart retention and progress outcomes against the overall performance of the comparable student population.
- That it would be valuable to focus our questions on students' motivations for participating or for engaging with alternative support provided by the university (for example, were first year students attracted to the project to help them manage transition to university life? Why did participants register with Counselling during the series of interventions?) This would strengthen future evaluation and improvement.

- That we ensure we properly target our postgraduate, undergraduate and international student cohorts in general with similar but targeted advertising campaign themes running in parallel.
- That we should consider a blended approach to delivery of the course, given the apparent reluctance of a (not insignificant) proportion of students to engage in a traditional workshop setting.

It is clear that support services within higher education are now required to provide multifaceted support. While more dynamic digital forms of support should be embraced and encouraged, it is important to note that many students value human contact and more traditional forms of support like one-to-one Counselling, so these should not be forgotten or dismissed— especially for those who have experienced trauma.

In summary, our results show that it is difficult to both build and measure resilience over the course of a year. Our participants' "mental toughness" did not appear to dramatically improve over the course of the project, however their ability to manage procrastination, and general levels of confidence did increase, so the project was not without value.

Dissemination of findings

The findings of this project will be presented to the following audiences:

- The project steering group
- Mental Health Strategy group
- Health and Wellbeing Group
- Healthy Body Healthy Mind working group

We are also open to taking appropriate steps to share our findings amongst members of AMOSSHE, The Student Services Organisation, ASRA (Association for Student Residential Accommodation) and the National Union of Students. We will work closely with AMOSSHE to ensure that we use the AMOSSHE network, and that our individual dissemination activities complement other activities, including participating in appropriate sector conferences and events (AMOSSHE and, where appropriate, those run by partner organisations, for example, Universities UK).

Appendix 1: communication and promotion

The University of Stirling had recently successfully engaged the student body via [our campaign on sexual violence and misconduct](#). The strapline for that campaign was **#isthisok?** and this appeared to be well received by students. We therefore decided that using a similar strapline, which would then apply to a broad range of wellbeing initiatives, could have a similar impact. The steering group opted for **#howareyou?**, and the graphic below (Appendix 1.1) was used on plasma screens university-wide. This was advertised for five weeks. We also advertised in the 'Student News', and had a running advertisement on the Student Portal, which would be visible by students upon logging into their portal.

Certain key members of our steering group disseminated and promoted the campaign via their own networks, namely:

- Representative from the Accommodation Liaison Students
- VP (Communities) from the Students' Union;
- Representative from the Graduate School
- Communications Manager
- Our Counsellors and Mental Health Mentors

This was achieved via targeted emails advertising the campaign, and word of mouth.

Appendix 1.1: advertising graphic



Appendix 1.2: website information

The following information was available on our website:

#howareyou

Your emotional wellbeing matters to us.

Interested in strengthening your resilience and learning new skills and techniques to cope and thrive during this academic year? Living in University accommodation?

- What?** A series of free, informal workshops designed to help students living in university accommodation with **adjusting** to university life, **coping** with **stress** and **setbacks**, **managing relationships**, using **positive psychology** and **dealing with perfectionism**. Workshops will be facilitated by professional practitioners from Student Support Services and participants will have the opportunity to shape the workshop themes.
- Who?** You will be working with up to 20 students in a group setting, facilitated by a university mental health and wellbeing practitioner.
- When?** We are offering five workshops which will run between **November 2017** and **April 2018**. In order to fully benefit from the workshops we encourage you to attend all five. There is no charge. The first workshop will take place on **Monday 27th November 2017** from **6pm to 7.30pm**
- Where?** To be advised!
- Results?** We will ask you to rate your perceptions of your own resilience and coping skills before you participate and then again at the end of the programme. We want you to develop practical skills for university life and we'd like to find out how well this programme works for you! We'll share all results with you and you won't ever be identifiable from summary reports. Taking part in the research element of the programme is optional.
- How?** **If you are interested**, please complete the short expression of interest form by **Friday 10th November**. Places are limited to 20 participants for this opportunity and shall be drawn at random from the list of applicants: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/JDPNM2B>
We will contact you after the 10th November to provide more information and to tell you more about the benefits of taking part in the research element of the programme.
- Tell me more** Contact Student Support Services for further information: erin.russell@stir.ac.uk or **01786 466022**

Appendix 1.3: project information and consent form

Enhancing student resilience through the provision of themed group interventions

About the project

This project, which is run jointly by Student Support Services and Accommodation Services with the support and endorsement of the Students' Union, involves running a programme of themed, practitioner-led workshops targeted at students who are resident in university accommodation, to address key issues commonly experienced by students living in residences at particular times during the year. Themes covered during the workshops will include:

- Transition to university, adjusting to university life and dealing with change
- Coping with and normalising stress
- Coping with setbacks
- Managing relationships in university accommodation: bouncing back from difficult times
- Utilising positive psychology / coaching techniques to overcome challenge
- Perfectionism and procrastination

Workshops will typically last between 60-120 minutes and will be delivered on the university campus by trained practitioners from the Student Support Services team (typically student counsellors and coaches). We anticipate running at least five workshops between October 2017 and April 2018.

Students are invited to sign up to the programme of workshops and attend all five. There is a maximum number of 20 participants per workshop. If demand exceeds places, participants will be drawn at random from the list of applicants.

Before participating in the programme, participants will be asked to score their perceptions of their own resilience by completing a set of questions. They will then be asked to score themselves against the same criteria after each workshop and at the end of the programme.

In addition, they will be invited to:

1. Provide their reflections on the usefulness of the workshops and any techniques they were shown to help build resilience.
2. Provide examples of times when they used these techniques to cope with challenge or change.

Data storage, analysis and confidentiality

Participants will be asked to complete their pre and post workshops questionnaires via Survey Monkey. Completed questionnaires will be sent to the project team in Student Support Services and will be stored securely in a network folder that is only accessible to those in the project team.

Participating students will be allocated a unique reference number when completing their questionnaires so that data can be analysed but the team member undertaking the analysis will not be able to identify the individual students from the data they provide. No student names or ID numbers will ever be used in reports generated from the project, and it will not be possible to identify you or any other participant from these reports.

How the data from the project will be used

The overall findings of the project will be shared as a written report with university staff and with other staff in the university sector, via the AMOSSHE, ASRA and NUS networks. **It will not be possible to identify you or any other participant at any time from the report.**

Participants will all be provided with an individual report on their changing perceptions of their own resilience throughout and following completion of the project, based on their evaluation feedback. They will also be provided with a copy of the project report, key findings and recommendations. Participants will be invited to comment on a draft of the report before this is disseminated.

Support and self-care

Participating in this project will involve you taking part in workshops focusing on strengthening resilience amongst students. It will also involve you reflecting on your own resilience and scoring this before, during and after the programme of workshops.

All workshops will be facilitated by professional staff who are qualified in professions such as counselling, mentoring and coaching, and they will be on hand during and after the workshops to provide any necessary guidance or support to participants.

Participants will also be able to access 1-1 support from the Counselling & Wellbeing team in the Student Support Services if they feel this is necessary during the process.

Withdrawal

Participants may withdraw from the project at any time, or may choose not to participate in one or more workshops, by emailing or calling the project manager, Erin Russell, Head of Student Guidance & Wellbeing erin.russell@stir.ac.uk 01786 466202. However, please be aware that if you do not participate in all the workshops you may miss out on learning about particular tools and techniques for building resilience.

For more information on the project please contact:

Erin Russell

Head of Student Guidance & Wellbeing

erin.russell@stir.ac.uk

01786 466202

Participant consent form

I agree to participate in University of Stirling project "Enhancing student resilience through the provision of themed group interventions."

I understand that this involves attending approximately five themed workshops designed to help strengthen resilience amongst participants.

I understand that I will be asked to complete a questionnaire to score perceptions of my own resilience before and after the programme of workshops, and following each workshop delivered as part of the programme.

I understand that the data I provide via Survey Monkey as part of questionnaires will be stored securely in a university network folder, to which access will be tightly restricted only to members of the project team.

I understand that I will be given a unique code to use when completing my questionnaires rather than my name or student number, in order to help protect the privacy of my data.

I understand that I or any other participant will never be identifiable in any report produced by the university as part of this project.

I understand that the workshops will be facilitated by professional staff from or affiliated with the University of Stirling Student Support Services team, and that I will be able to access support and guidance from these staff as required during the project.

I understand that the key contact for the project is Erin Russell, Head of Student Guidance and Wellbeing, and that I can contact her with any concerns or feedback at any time during the project by emailing erin.russell@stir.ac.uk or calling 01786 466202.

I understand that I can withdraw from the programme at any time by emailing or calling Erin Russell as per the contact details above, and am aware that withdrawal may mean that I miss out on learning about particular tools and techniques for building resilience.

Name:

Student Number:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 2: MTQ48

Appendix 2.1: Retinent proposal



A better approach to managing student retention

Proposal for the University of Stirling

The issue

Student retention is a key issue facing UK universities. Students dropping out of courses represent an annual income loss of over £800M across the sector, and of course this is not evenly distributed.

The University of Stirling performs well on student retention, with a drop of rate of 6.6%, which equates to a loss of around £2 million a year.

Existing approaches to supporting students to mitigate retention losses are often somewhat passive, requiring students themselves to seek out the institutional resources. Where institutions are more dynamic in supporting at-risk students, this is often necessarily reactive rather than pro-active.

In the ideal world, an institution would be aware of the resilience of individual students at an early point, and for students not to have to “fail” (in attendance or assessment submission) for this to be identified. In this scenario, student support services could be actively deployed, in a targeted and prioritised manner, to give the best possible support at an early stage.

Better still, if the nature of individual sensitivities could be understood, students could be offered individualised support, which would develop and strengthen their capacities. The benefits go beyond simply avoiding dropping-out to enhancing their overall confidence and success.

The solution

The solution we are proposing delivers these objectives— a robustly constructed, academically sound mental toughness assessment, which has been used extensively in commercial environments in the UK and the US and delivers a thorough analysis of an individual’s capacity. The potential positive impact of this tool has been evidenced in sports, the commercial world and recently, in student performance and retention¹²³.

The MTQ48 Mental Toughness questionnaire allows us to assess an individual’s capacity to deal with stressors and challenges, and then to develop and deploy a range of interventions, which will help the student to manage and cope with situations which might otherwise lead to “drop out”.

¹ St Clair-Thompson, H. *et al.* (2015): ‘Mental toughness in education: exploring relationships with attainment, attendance, behaviour and peer relationships’. *Educational Psychology* 35:886-907.

² Stamp, E. *et al.* (2015): ‘Relationships between mental toughness and psychological wellbeing in undergraduate students’. *Personality and Individual Differences* 75:170-174.

³ Gerber, M. *et al.* (2012): ‘Are adolescents with high mental toughness levels more resilient against stress?’ *Stress and Health* 29:164-171.

The test focuses on identifying the student's strengths against four key areas:

- Challenge – identifies the extent to which people see challenges, variety, problems and changes as opportunities or threats.
- Control – how people are able to control their life and emotions.
- Commitment – identifies the extent to which someone commits to delivering what has been promised.
- Confidence – identifies confidence in ability and interpersonal confidence.

Experience shows that the vast majority (in the order of 85%, depending on the student body) of students that take the test will score at or above the concern thresholds in these areas. However, around 15% will have issues, and by identifying these students with the highest propensity to drop out, the university can focus resources on supporting these students.

The advantages of this approach are:

1. It can deliver immediate impacts on retention rates— hence with rapid payback.
2. The impacts are measurable.
3. It maximizes the effectiveness of the existing student support resources.
4. It provides a quantifiable and precise assessment of any resource gaps.
5. It empowers students to strengthen their personal profiles.

Our team of experienced university senior managers will closely support the university through the process of implementation, to allow the university to develop strategies to use existing student support mechanisms to interact with these students more effectively.

We will also undertake an analysis of existing university systems to allow for the better use of data in identifying warning signs of drop out from students.

Additionally, we are able to also offer advice and learning resources.

The process

When working with a university we are able to customise our support to meet institutional needs, based around the following process as an operational core:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1) Baseline audit & analysis | (a) Pattern of non-retention
(b) Student support systems & processes
(c) Induction processes |
| 2) Staff training | (a) MTQ underpinning
(b) Goals of interventions |
| 3) Questionnaire delivery | Student assessment undertaken |
| 4) Stage I follow-up | Immediate follow-up on results |
| 5) Stage II follow-up | Six / nine-month follow-up and impact analysis |

Mental toughness: its application in further and higher education

Background

Mental Toughness describes mind-set– the way people think when engaged with almost any activity. It is closely related to qualities such as character, resilience, grit, etc. Another common descriptor is attitude. The term Toughness is not about being “macho / aggressive”, it is entirely about “being comfortable in your skin”. It is the key to “being the best that you can be”. It is defined as:

“A personality trait which determines, in large part, how people respond to challenge, stress and pressure, irrespective of their circumstances”.

It is now very well evidenced academically. In addition to having a clear model and framework, work with Peter Clough, Professor of Applied Psychology at MMU has led to the development of a high quality psychometric measure– MTQ48 –which enables users to assess the mental toughness or mind-set of individuals (and groups).

Published research and case studies from around the world show that Mental Toughness generally is a major factor in:

Mental Toughness Scale	What this means ... what does MTQ48 assess
CONTROL	<i>Life Control</i> – I really believe I can do it
	<i>Emotional Control</i> – I can manage my emotions and the emotions of others
COMMITMENT	<i>Goal Setting</i> – I promise to do it – I like working to goals
	<i>Achieving</i> – I’ll do what it takes to keep my promises and achieve my goals
CHALLENGE	<i>Risk Taking</i> – I will push myself – I am driven to succeed
	<i>Learning from Experience</i> – even setbacks are opportunities for learning
CONFIDENCE	<i>In Abilities</i> – I believe I have the ability to do it – or can acquire the ability
	<i>Interpersonal Confidence</i> – I can influence others – I can stand my ground if needed

Mental Toughness is a fairly plastic personality trait, which means that it can be developed in individuals where it is beneficial so to do. Furthermore, it is possible to develop individuals without changing their mind-set but by showing them how to behave in the way that a mentally tough individual would. RETINENT has a comprehensive set of development programmes, which can be introduced to tutors, coaches, counsellors and employability guidance professionals.

Specific application in further and higher education

The framework and the measure is now used in almost 80 countries at every level of education. In further and higher education the main areas for attention are:

Retention and student drop out (sometimes including attendance)

Apart from the student welfare perspective there is a compelling reputational and economic argument for using the mental toughness model and questionnaire.

Work carried out over the past 10 years shows that the more mentally sensitive the student, the more likely the student is to drop out of a program of study— particularly where the change in environment and ways of working are significant. Moreover, retention can be improved with targeted early intervention.

A study with three Scottish further education colleges, funded by the Scottish Funding Council, looked at programmes with a high dropout rates— around 15%. Using the MTQ48 measure, they firstly identified which students were mentally sensitive, and then directing approximately one day of interventions (in three formats) they found that the dropout rate has reduced to around 8%. Moreover the payback period for the investment was a matter of a few weeks!

One International Business School routinely assesses its intake in their first week on campus. In that first week all students attend a half day workshop on the importance of mental toughness / mind-set. Those students whose MTQ48 results indicate mental sensitivity are directed to pastoral care services in that first week. The approach is pro-active and not re-active. Their retention rate is 98%+.

Whilst Head of Psychology at Hull University, Professor Clough used MTQ48 for assessing mental sensitivity of students and twice achieved nil dropout rates for an intake of circa 240 students each year.

In summary, students arrive at their institution with a mind-set or attitude that impacts on their behaviour and emotions, which in turn correlate strongly with retention or stick-ability. Early diagnosis and early intervention will reduce drop out significantly— economically the case is compelling.

Attainment

At every level of education there is a clear link between mental toughness and attainment. It is equally significant in supporting students who want to achieve a higher grade or classification. Their mental toughness will often be a significant factor. Two studies show that 25% of the variation in a student test performance can be explained by their mental toughness (as assessed by MTQ48).

A major Swiss study showed that mentally tough students performed better on final year exams than did mentally sensitive students. Moreover, the research showed that mentally tough students became more mentally tough, and mentally sensitive students became more mentally sensitive over their final year on course.

Student satisfaction and wellbeing

Again of increasing interest to academia, since the introduction of fees, students behave like customers as well as being students. Student satisfaction is increasingly reported and acts on the reputation of the establishment— which must have an impact on recruitment amongst other things.

Again the evidence is that providing mental toughness development to students is appreciated by students and is reflected in student satisfactions measures.

Whilst Head of psychology at Hull University, Professor Clough took the department to rank 4th amongst psychology departments in the UK. Mental Toughness development was a big contributor to that.

Now at MMU, the Psychology department in 2015 achieved a 95% student satisfaction rating— again mental toughness assessment and development has been a factor.

Employability

Globally, along with retention, this preoccupies most universities and colleges. Again the evidence is clear. The more mentally tough the student, the more likely (and quicker) they are to find a job and a job that they find worthwhile. This is essentially true for all people not just students.

The mentally tough possess greater self-belief and show it, show greater determination and tenacity, are less daunted by interviews and assessments centres, and are confident about their abilities. They appear to recognise the competitive aspect of finding a job: “I know there are ten people going for it, but its mine!” as opposed to: “If there are ten people after the job, I’ll never get it”.

In 2011, Stevenson College (now Edinburgh College) carried out a “working with attitude” study, funded by the SFC, to examine employability of graduates. It found that the more mentally tough the quick graduates found employment and found jobs that satisfied them. Interestingly they also found that the more mentally tough the graduate, the quicker they got up to speed in the new job.

Summary

RETINENT’s work means that we now have:

- The ability to define and describe an important aspect of our personality— Mental Toughness.
- A concept that is accessible to everyone and which helps to explain performance, wellbeing and behaviour.
- The first psychometric measure that measures an individual’s Mental Toughness — it is valid and reliable.
- Mental Toughness Development programme and materials, which delivers measurable results.

Appendix 2.2: mental toughness questionnaire

MENTAL TOUGHNESS QUESTIONNAIRE



Please complete all of the following section:

Name:	Age:
Job Title:	M/F:

Ethnicity:	Black	Bangladeshi	First Language:
White	- African	Chinese	English
Irish	- Caribbean	Other	Spanish
Indian	- Pakistan	Refuse to say	French
			German
			Dutch
			Other

Indicate your response to the following items by **highlighting** one of the numbers, which have the following meaning. Please complete **all** items;

1 = strongly disagree; **2** = disagree; **3** = neither agree nor disagree; **4** = agree; **5** = strongly agree

You can highlight your chosen number by clicking on your choice and then either clicking on the **bold**  key or the **highlight**  key on the formatting toolbar.

Please answer these items carefully, **thinking about how you are generally**. Do not spend too much time on any one item. It should take around 7 minutes to complete.

	Disagree			Agree	
1) I usually find something to motivate me	1	2	3	4	5
2) I generally feel in control	1	2	3	4	5
3) I generally feel that I am a worthwhile person	1	2	3	4	5
4) Challenges usually bring out the best in me	1	2	3	4	5
5) When working with other people I am usually quite influential	1	2	3	4	5
6) Unexpected changes to my schedule generally throw me	1	2	3	4	5
7) I don't usually give up under pressure	1	2	3	4	5
8) I am generally confident in my own abilities	1	2	3	4	5
9) I usually find myself just going through the motions	1	2	3	4	5
10) At times I expect things to go wrong	1	2	3	4	5

11) "I just don't know where to begin" is a feeling I usually have when presented with several things to do at once	1	2	3	4	5
12) I generally feel that I am in control of what happens in my life	1	2	3	4	5
13) However bad things are, I usually feel they will work out positively in the end	1	2	3	4	5
14) I often wish my life was more predictable	1	2	3	4	5
15) Whenever I try to plan something, unforeseen factors usually seem to wreck it	1	2	3	4	5
16) I generally look on the bright side of life	1	2	3	4	5
17) I usually speak my mind when I have something to say	1	2	3	4	5
18) At times I feel completely useless	1	2	3	4	5
19) I can generally be relied upon to complete the tasks I am given	1	2	3	4	5
20) I usually take charge of a situation when I feel it is appropriate	1	2	3	4	5

	Disagree		Agree		
21) I generally find it hard to relax	1	2	3	4	5
22) I am easily distracted from tasks that I am involved with	1	2	3	4	5
23) I generally cope well with any problems that occur	1	2	3	4	5
24) I do not usually criticise myself even when things go wrong	1	2	3	4	5
25) I generally try to give 100%	1	2	3	4	5
26) When I am upset or annoyed I usually let others know	1	2	3	4	5
27) I tend to worry about things well before they actually happen	1	2	3	4	5
28) I often feel intimidated in social gatherings	1	2	3	4	5
29) When faced with difficulties I usually give up	1	2	3	4	5
30) I am generally able to react quickly when something unexpected happens	1	2	3	4	5
31) Even when under considerable pressure I usually remain calm	1	2	3	4	5
32) If something can go wrong, it usually will	1	2	3	4	5
33) Things just usually happen to me	1	2	3	4	5
34) I generally hide my emotion from others	1	2	3	4	5

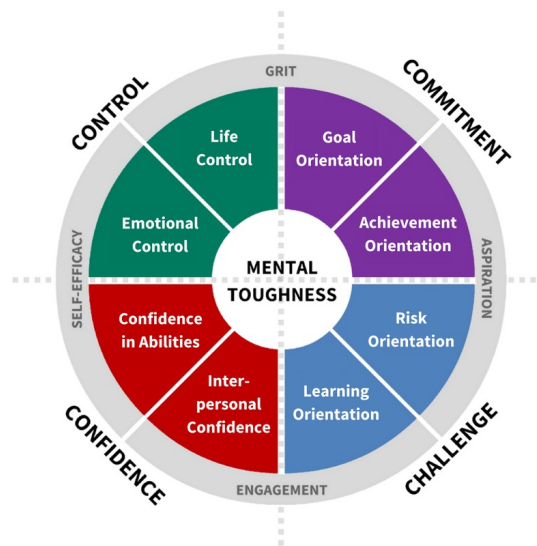
	Disagree			Agree	
35) I usually find it difficult to make a mental effort when I am tired	1	2	3	4	5
36) When I make mistakes I usually let it worry me for days after	1	2	3	4	5
37) When I am feeling tired I find it difficult to get going	1	2	3	4	5
38) I am comfortable telling people what to do	1	2	3	4	5
39) I can normally sustain high levels of mental effort for long periods	1	2	3	4	5
40) I usually look forward to changes in my routine	1	2	3	4	5
41) I feel that what I do tends to make no difference	1	2	3	4	5
42) I usually find it hard to summon enthusiasm for the tasks I have to do	1	2	3	4	5
43) If I feel somebody is wrong, I am not afraid to argue with them	1	2	3	4	5
44) I usually enjoy a challenge	1	2	3	4	5
45) I can usually control my nervousness	1	2	3	4	5
46) In discussions, I tend to back-down even when I feel strongly about something	1	2	3	4	5
47) When I face setbacks I am often unable to persist with my goal	1	2	3	4	5
48) I can usually adapt myself to challenges that come my way	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 2.3: MTQ48 development report

MTQ48

Development Report
Student Name 30 November 2017

Development Report



This Development Report provides the candidate with:

- Feedback on their MTQ48 scores
- Suggestions for their own development

Summary

OVERALL MENTAL TOUGHNESS



CONTROL



EMOTIONAL CONTROL



LIFE CONTROL



COMMITMENT



CHALLENGE



CONFIDENCE



CONFIDENCE IN ABILITIES



INTERPERSONAL CONFIDENCE



Mental Toughness Report for student name

How to use this report

The information used to generate this report was obtained solely from the questionnaire you completed. It represents only one source of information and it is important to recognise that other forms of evidence about your mental toughness will exist. The report should be interpreted within this wider context.

Its purpose is to give you developmental feedback on your mental toughness. This has been achieved by comparing your scores with scores obtained from a large sample of people in the general population.

The best way to maximise the usefulness of this report is to:

- Read the text with an open mind
- Consider the findings carefully. Factor in other information from other sources. For example you may wish to discuss the report with your manager, assessor, friend or member of your family. The report gives you a starting point - the discussion allows you to really get to the truth!
- Then choose to accept all, some or none of findings presented here. No questionnaire is infallible and you may feel that this report does not represent your mental toughness. That is fine! However, it should provide you a useful insight into one aspect of the way you interact with the world

The findings presented here represent a snapshot in time. Your mental toughness can be enhanced in a number of ways. In this report there are suggestions as to how you can develop some aspects of your mental toughness, if this is appropriate. They are presented in the sections on Challenge, Control, Commitment and Confidence. They are designed to give you some ideas, but you may know of many other ways of developing your skills - use these in conjunction with the ideas presented here.

Mental Toughness

Mental Toughness is a quality which determines, in some part, how individuals perform when exposed to stressors, pressure and challenge.

It can play a significant role in determining how an individual manages stress as well as being a key factor in enabling individuals to perform to the peak of their abilities.

Mental Toughness

1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

You may find it difficult to cope with stressful and really demanding environments and on some occasions you may suffer from a lack of self-belief. You probably focus on things that might go wrong.

You may find it hard to deal with criticisms and will probably take others' comments too much to heart. People will often get to you and you may overly dwell on their comments. In addition, you may be overly self-critical at times.

You may not be willing to push yourself forward, possibly as a result of worrying that you will not succeed. You may be too willing to credit others with your successes and also too willing to take the blame for mistakes!

On occasions, you may not speak your mind, even when you feel strongly about a particular issue. This will lead to you feeling frustrated. You may be slightly uncomfortable in groups and be a little apprehensive in social settings.

When facing problems and difficult circumstances, you may feel nervous and threatened. You may avoid some important challenging situations for fear of failure, and hence may not take all your opportunities for personal development.

You tend to worry about things, and may get problems out of proportion from time to time. You may find yourself worrying about worrying.

Unexpected events may completely throw you on occasions, and you will find it hard to regain your composure.

Control

1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

You may not really feel you are in control of your destiny, but rather you are more at the mercy of what is happening around you.

You may pointlessly expend energy trying to change those things outside your control, whilst too quickly giving up on those things that you could change.

Typically you will feel tense and/or anxious. Your doubts may transmit to others around you and in some instances you might unsettle them.

You may undervalue your contribution to the workplace and may be dismissive of your own achievements.

The challenge here is to recognise your strengths – and everyone has those! – and to work on any weaknesses.



Development options include:

- Try to take a more positive view about yourself. Identify at least 5 things with which you have been successful. Examine those to see if you can see why – and plan to apply these learning points in future.
- Clearly identify what you can control and those factors that you can't.
- Look at others – in work and outside – who appear to be successful. Identify what it is they are doing and seek to adopt some of those behaviours. This is an important way to learn – others often succeed not because they are more skilled but because of their attitude and tenacity.
- Try to plan out work given to you – particularly breaking it down into smaller more manageable chunks. Get someone to help you with this in the first instance.

Emotional Control

1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9 10

Whilst you may worry about important aspects of your life, you do not usually get this out of proportion.

You will normally remain cool, calm and collected but some of the time you may have difficulty in controlling your emotions.

Development suggestions:

- Use imagery to see yourself making a real difference.
- Remind yourself repeatedly that what you do really matters.
- Recognise the difference between the things that can be controlled by you, the things that you can influence, and the things completely outside your control. Don't try to control the uncontrollable.
- Relaxation techniques, for example breathing exercises, walking, yoga, progressive muscular relaxation, may help you cope effectively with very stressful events.

Life Control



You may not fully believe that what you do really makes a difference, sometimes feeling that you are simply "going through the motions".

You tend to think that what you do does not matter.

Commitment



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

You may become easily diverted from the task at hand.

You may find it difficult to complete tasks when facing significant adverse circumstances and you may consequently give up too easily.

You may become unwilling to sustain effort if you believe that you cannot overcome the obstacles in your way.

In general, you may find it hard to summon up enthusiasm for some tasks.

Development suggestions:

- Identify what really interests and motivates you and then ensure that you incorporate this into your planning of task
- When asked to do something take time to analyse it to identify how you can achieve. Use structured problem solving tools and techniques (5 whys', SWOT, mindmapping, etc)
- Always set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound goals.
- Try to be optimistic. There is a lot of truth in the old adage "If you think you can, you can. If you think you won't, you won't". Use Force Field analysis to identify blockages to success and how to tackle them.
- Ask others – your boss – for help and coaching.
- Don't give up too early. Give yourself a time-out to allow yourself to refocus.

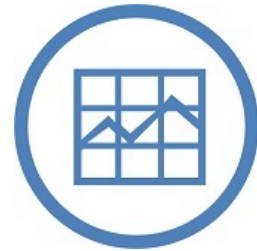
Challenge

1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

You may feel a little daunted when facing challenging situations. You may find big challenges overwhelming at times and may approach these with a sense that you won't do well rather than the sense that you have an opportunity to prove yourself. In fact, you might avoid them completely.

You will tend to be a little uncomfortable in unstable environments and are likely to try to minimise your exposure to change where possible. You may prefer to work where there is a significant degree of stability and where there are well established routines. You will probably perform best in this type of environment.

You have quite a strong preference for the predictable over the unpredictable, and may be quite slow to react to unexpected changes, on occasions. You will probably try to avoid risk when you feel very pressured. When exposed to significant and sometimes sustained levels of pressure and challenge you may find this is wearing and your performance and behaviour becomes adversely affected. Life and work are rarely totally predictable. Change does happen and unexpected challenges are quite normal. There will be a need to develop and adopt tools, techniques and approaches which enable you to deal with these effectively.



Development Suggestions:

- You may benefit by trying new things wherever possible. Try to maximise your exposure to change where possible.
- Take time out to consider what is happening around you. Change is inevitable. Try to understand what is happening – look at its features and benefits.
- Look at how others are responding to change. They really are no different to you terms of ability, knowledge and experience. Look at how they approach challenge and change.
- Talk. Find people you can trust and speak with them about your feelings. This can help to put things into perspective. Find out how they would deal with the situation at hand.
- Try to break down work assigned to you into smaller chunks so that each bit becomes simpler to grasp and is more achievable. This also helps to add structure to new challenges. You might ask someone to help you do this.
- Consider learning new ways of ways of relaxing. These include breathing exercises, progressive muscular relaxation, yoga etc.
- Think of change and challenges you have previously faced and handled effectively. What can you bring from that experience?
- Examine positive thinking techniques such as developing affirmations and reflecting on things you do well.

Confidence

1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



You are not particularly confident and may lack a degree of self-belief.

You may become very self critical and despondent.

You may tend to see things too negatively – tended to be too willing to take the blame. You will often rely on others to help you maintain and enhance your self belief.

You will typically have skills and abilities but you may underachieve and will avoid putting yourself forward for tasks and responsibility.

You may carry out work – to the issued instruction – but won't always communicate issues along the way which might mean that the work will not be completed satisfactorily.

You may wait to be told what to do next.

Development suggestions might include:

- Consciously seek to build up your feeling of self worth – seek out praise and recognition, don't dismiss it when it comes and learn to praise yourself.
- Learn to ask questions so that you understand better what is going on and what you are being asked to do. Understand your importance in the team.
- Consider training in assertiveness skills.
- Try to offer ideas and suggestions.
- Participate in teambuilding training and activities to build relationships with colleagues.

Confidence in Abilities

1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

You are not particularly confident and you may lack a degree of self-belief.

You may often expect things to go wrong, and this may lead you to avoid difficult tasks.

You may get mistakes out of proportion, worrying about them for a considerable period of time. You may have a tendency to be overly self critical, allowing negative self talk to dominate your thoughts.

Overall, you will often underestimate your abilities and contributions.

Interpersonal Confidence

1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9 10

You will tend to feel comfortable in groups, but you may not always speak your mind when you have something to say.

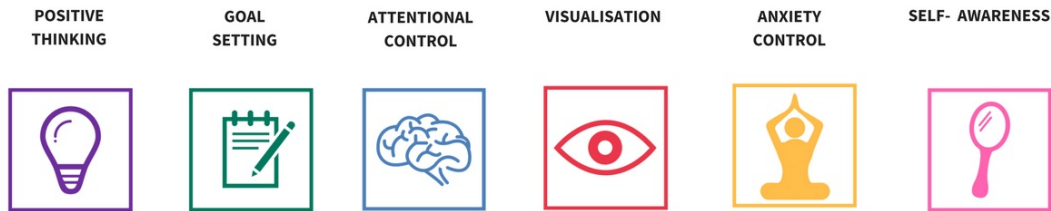
You will sometimes be willing to take charge of a situation, but on some occasions you may fail to act proactively.

Normally, you will play a significant role when working with other people, but you may be overly sensitive to what other people say and think.

Development suggestions:

- List 5 positives about yourself. Work with your manager, a friend, a colleague or family to identify these. In times of stress repeat them to yourself.
- Make sure that if you have something to say that you say it!
- Monitor your self talk – be aware of how many times you have negative thoughts about yourself – then simply tell yourself to STOP when you are about to think a negative thought. It is as easy to think positively than negatively – so choose the former.
- Get other people to tell you positives about yourself.
- Don't dwell on mistakes. Avoid over-generalising – one mistake does not mean that everything is wrong. Also avoid 'black and white' thinking – mistakes are not all bad. In fact they provide a very useful form of feedback which can be used to help improve your work performance.

SIX INTERVENTIONS FOR DEVELOPING MENTAL TOUGHNESS



WHICH INTERVENTION IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Cormack Consultancy Group

Appendix 2.4: distance travelled report

Distance travelled report

Student Name

Comparing Stirling Uni Re-testing Nov 17 to Apr 18 with Stirling Uni Trial Nov 17 _____

This report is created from data gathered from the same person at two different points in time. It shows on a single sten graph, the sten scores achieved on those two occasions.

The first original set of data is always shown on the left hand side of the pair of scales and the sten score appears in grey. The later set of results is shown on the right hand side of the pair of scales and the sten score appears in green.

The purpose is to show visually and quickly where there has been a change in the behaviour of the individual being tested.

The most usual application is to assess the impact of a planned and delivered intervention such as training, coaching, mentoring etc.

However the report should be examined with care. We may plan and execute a particular intervention but people learn and develop all the time.

There may be other influences and factors at work which also impact on the individuals adopted style. For example, a new line manager may present a new role model to the individual, events outside of the work place may change the individual's perspective on many things, etc.

Another application for this report is to seek to assess where an individual has changed, particularly where some degree of change has been observed through casual observation.

So any assessment from the report should be coupled with a discussion to identify as many of the factors as possible which could affect preferences and behaviour.

Sten graph summary for Student name

