Decisions of adult learners

Appendix

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**Kantar Public and Learning and Work Institute**

Contents

Appendix A: Overview of Methodology

We spoke with 70 learners and 16 non-learners across three stages of this qualitative research to address the research aims. Adults included in the research scope were:

- Level 2 and Level 3 FE learners, for instance studying a Level 2 qualification in Barbering or a Level 3 qualification in Management. These adults were aged 19 and over, had left full time education and had a period of non-learning of a least one year (excluding gap years).
- Level 4 and Level 5 FE and HE learners, for instance studying a Level 4 qualification in Counselling or a Level 5 qualification in Teaching. They were aged 19 and over, had left full time education and were either continuous learners or those who had left full time education and returned after a non-learning spell.

Figure 1 summarises the research stages.

Figure 1 Research method, scope and timescales
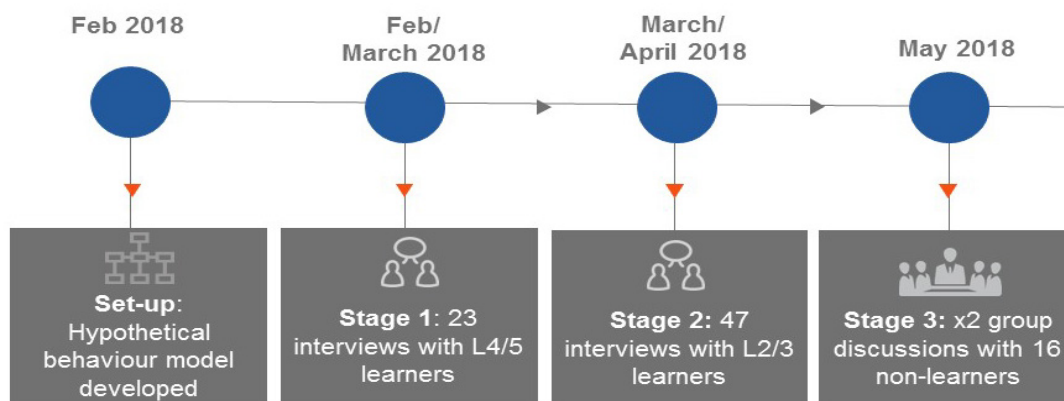
Approach

We purposively sampled Level 2, 3, 4, and 5 learners to achieve a mix of individuals, with quotas on: previous educational attainment; age; socio-economic group; employment status; reason for taking up adult learning; whether in continuous education; whether learning online; whether from an ethnic minority group; gender and location.

We also purposively sampled non-learners, adults that had not done any learning since leaving full time education, with the same quotas as above and with additional quotas on: would potentially consider adult learning; living arrangements and sector they are employed in. See Appendix G for achieved sample tables.

Level 2 and 3 learners were recruited from the Education & Skills Funding Agency's (EFSA) Individualised Learner Record (ILR) database, and Level 4 and 5 learners and non-learners were free found using a combination of our in-house recruitment team and a specialist recruitment agency. All prospective participants were screened, using a pre-agreed questionnaire, to determine eligibility to take part in the research (see the

Appendix). Interview participants received £50 and focus group participants received £60 as appreciation for their time.

We interviewed Level 2, 3, 4, and 5 learners in-person at their home or a public place of their choosing or by telephone in instances where a face-to-face interview was not convenient for the participant. Focus groups with non-learners were conducted in central locations in London and Leeds. All interviews and groups were audio-recorded with the permission of participants, for subsequent analysis. Researchers used a topic guide agreed with DfE to ensure consistency of topic coverage. The hypothetical behavioural model, and insights from previous stages, informed the development of the topic guides for the different stages.

Interviews with Level 2, 3, 4, and 5 learners included a journey mapping approach to support recall of learning experiences. The themes covered included:

- Background, including experiences of formal/informal education, parental education and employment, and job, career and family plans/history
- Attitudes towards learning and skills development
- Motivation and expectations of returning to education
- Triggers to returning to education
- Barriers and facilitators expected and/or experienced
- Key sources of support and/or information
- Recommendations for encouraging other adults to return to education.

Focus groups built on insights gained from interviews with Level 2-5 learners, and involved concept testing ideas from the earlier stages of the research. The themes covered in focus groups with non-learners included:

- Attitudes towards learning and skills development
- Approaches to considering a learning opportunity
- Barriers to learning
- Opportunities to get adults into learning by concept testing a mock prospectus

Topic guides and stimulus used in this research are included later in this Appendix.

Prior to the focus group, participants were given a 5-10 minute pre-task to complete. They were asked to imagine they had decided to study towards a new qualification of their choice and to make a note of the steps they would take to look up this course and how to enrol in a local college or other learning provider. The material from this pre-task formed the basis for the 15 minutes of focus group discussion, introducing key themes that were then explored in more detail during the remainder of the discussion,

While this is a large-scale study, the findings are qualitative and thus the research does not seek to quantify or generalise the overall population. Rather, the research reflects a range of attitudes and behaviours that give insight into the factors influencing whether and how adults decide to learn.

Appendix B: COM-B Model

Introduction to the COM-B model

The **COM-B behaviour model** was used to understand the barriers and facilitators of adult learning. Behaviour is complex and multi-faceted. The model highlights a range of automatic, non-conscious drivers to behaviour (emotions, heuristics and habit), rational drivers (judgement, capability and confidence), social drivers (culture, identity and norms), and finally the effect of external environmental factors (defaults, priorities and opportunities) which drive behaviour. **Developing a clear understanding of these drivers will expose opportunities for interventions to influence learners' behaviours** and thereby enable DfE to design policies and interventions to encourage further and higher education amongst adults

The way we use the model is premised on two things:

1. Most influences on decisions and behaviours are non-conscious, so if people are asked open questions about why they do what they do, they are likely to give surface level or post-rationalised responses rather than articulating the real reasons for their behaviours.

2. Good qualitative research unearths a wealth of information, and we need some way to understand and interpret it to derive insights that lead to conclusions about how to influence behaviour.

Our solution to the first of these challenges – getting beyond surface-level responses to open questions – was to identify the likely influences on people's decisions and behaviours in advance and explore these directly. Our solution to the second challenge was to map what we found in the research onto the model, to see which factors were or were not influential, and how those that were influential manifested themselves, and therefore what can be done to effect change. In short, we used the model to help us anticipate what to look for, and then to understand what we found.

A '**hypothetical model**' was developed (see below) that identifies ways in which we anticipated the model's factors would be influential. The topic guide (see Appendix C) approached each likely influence directly through asking targeted questions and enabling exercises that explored these often subconscious drivers or influences of behaviour.

Hypothetical Behavioural Model for DfE Decisions of Adult Learners

Below is the hypothetical behavioural model used during fieldwork.

Automatic drivers: Habit, heuristic and emotions - involving emotions and impulses that arise from associative learning and/or innate dispositions	Emotion – "I'm (not) really afraid of the repercussions of not retraining/my job becoming obsolete."	Emotion – "Taking control and learning for my future makes me feel good – I'm really motivated."	Emotion – "If I don't look after myself, no one will. I am in this alone and because of that I am taking courses."	Emotion – "This is something I've worked for – it's not fair that my career is ending without my having a choice."	Heuristic – "If it's possible it must be acceptable."	Heuristic (optimism bias) – "It will all work out in my favour in the end!"	Heuristic – "Over the years my affairs have become really complex – it's hard to keep track and know what is going on so if I'm honest I just ignore it."	Heuristic – "I'm too old to learn/ it's too late to learn"
Psychological capability drivers - the capacity to engage in the necessary thought processes - comprehension, reasoning et al. Includes confidence.	"I'm confident that I can manage life demands and studying because I've managed my responsibilities in such a clever way."	"I find it so confusing what I can do and should do that I don't really feel I can juggle it all – the offer of institutions are so complicated and ever changing, I can't keep up."	"I'll wait until there are bursaries or something, when it will be cheaper for me to study."	"I didn't recognise I was up to my neck in it at the time! My understanding of how my industry is changing wasn't that sophisticated."	"I am/not confident enough to learn"	"I will choose the level of education that is most clearly set out and defined to me" (E.g. drawn to ease of selection)		

Physical capability drivers – *the personal capacity to engage in the physical demands of a given action*	"I physically can't access classes because they don't have adaptions I need to attend."	"The institution doesn't have an equality and diversity unit to enable my participation."	"The professor gives me course notes in advance so I can get them translated to braille. It means I can effectively contribute to class discussions."	"The course is entirely online and I do not have the ability to access or navigate the platform."				
Reflective drivers: *Cost/benefit, legitimacy - involving evaluations and plans*	Cost/benefit – "I (don't) believe the benefits I do and will get from studying outweigh the short term frustrations or difficulties."	Cost/benefit – "I (don't) think I will lose my job if I stay in this career so retraining is the logical step to protect my future."	Cost/benefit – "The opportunities for me to change jobs without further education are growing / shrinking – this influences whether I will prioritise further."	Cost/benefit – "I know people who have ended up jobless because they misjudged their opportunities – I am studying to avoid that situation."	Cost/benefit – "I (dis) like my course, it's (not) fascinating! I will(not) keep up with it because I enjoy it."	"I'm self-employed so to learn, even part time, would mean I have to turn down work"	"I already have the right skills for my job – what is the point in further learning?"	

Social drivers: *Culture, Identity, and Norms – involving cultural milieu that dictate the way that we think about things e.g. words/concepts*	Social norms – "There are not people like me learning; it's awkward." "My employer suggested this course"	Social norms – "People I know [friends, family, colleagues] would (not) judge me for taking classes - they would (not) consider it normal for someone like me/someone in my position."	Social norms – "Most people like me/people I work with/friends and family are taking classes – it's typical."	Culture – "I don't really feel a strong sense of community or civic duty to be retraining." "The reputation of the qualification is important in my decision"	Culture – "I identify strongly with the institution I study at – I feel it's the right place for me to learn."	Culture – "I don't really think me retraining will make that much of a difference to my opportunities or my community."	Identity – "I am not a 'mature' learner; I am simply someone learning something new and I just happen to be older."	Identity – "I'm (not) worried about what being an adult learner says about me as a person."
Physical drivers: *Context/setting – involving physical environment*	Time - "I am too time poor to commit to learning." "I am not aware of courses that work with my schedule."	Cost - "I cannot afford the payments for courses relevant to my needs." "I can/not financially afford to prioritise taking educational courses."	Provision - "My nearby institution does/not offer what I want to study." "My institution does/not make it easy to work out what would work best for me."	Transport - "I can/t get to the institution – there is (no) public transport available"	Employer - "I can/t get time off from work to attend courses – my employer is/not flexible"	Social support - "I got support from [an institution] to help with my caring responsibilities so I can juggle that with coursework"		

Appendix C: Topic Guides

Stage1 and Stage 2

Research questions

Insight generated from this qualitative research will inform the development of the national retraining scheme and provide DfE with a clear set of conclusions about how more and different adults can be successfully engaged in further learning. The research findings will also help to inform DfE's review of Level 4 and 5 provision. The five research objectives are to explore the following:

1. What influences engagement (and non-engagement) in adult learning opportunities?

2. What factors facilitate or act as barriers to the uptake of adult learning opportunities, and whether these are consistent across sub-groups of the target population.

3. What information sources and networks are potential learners aware of and interacting with?

4. What practical levers exist to encourage more adults into learning? Where, when and with whom are they best to be employed to have most impact.

5. Alongside recommendations for practical levers, the contractor will also consider how these approaches to increasing the uptake of learning could be monitored and evaluated. Specifically this will include outlining the data requirements.

Key principles for researchers to follow throughout fieldwork

This guide is intended to be used with a variety of individuals with varying characteristics and backgrounds. As such, it does not contain pre-set questions, but rather lists the key themes and sub-themes to be explored with participants in each interview. Words or short phrases are instead used to indicate the study issues, and allows the researcher to determine the formulation of questions and how to follow up. This encourages the researcher to be responsive to the situation and most crucially to the terms, concepts, language and behaviours used by the participants.

It does not include follow-up questions like 'why', 'when', 'how', etc. as participants' contributions will be fully explored in response to what they tell us throughout in order to understand how and why views and experiences have arisen. The key areas for discussion are the same; the order in which issues are addressed and the amount of time spent on different themes may vary between interviews.

Questioning and probing will be framed to ensure we understand participants' situations as they view them. Researchers will adapt the approach, as much as possible, to suit the needs of each participant. Prompts are not exhaustive, but rather indicate the types of content we would expect to be covered – this may vary across participant groups.

There may also be elements of observation of interaction within the interview – researchers will make notes of observations straight after the interview, capturing any key themes related to the research aims and objectives.

Researchers will keep the COM-B Model in mind when exploring views and experiences. This helps to ensure responses sought from participants go beyond top of mind or immediate reactions to the discussion. The guide does not specifically prompt for the different attitudes captured by the model; rather, it is organised and the themes presented in an open way to encourage the emergence of a wide range of attitudes. An example of how we will likely capture elements of social norms and automatic drivers (such as heuristics) is from the discussion about parents' education, and participants' views of learning. An example of how we will likely capture physical drivers is when we explore motivations for course format selected, and so on. Researchers will use techniques to ensure we map all drivers, for example, asking participants whether influences they haven't mentioned yet are relevant to them to distinguish between what was omitted versus what is not influential. Subsequent analysis will view the responses through the lens of the model, to understand which attitudes emerged and the reasons for this.

Introduction (2 minutes)

- **Thanks & Introduction**: Introduce yourself and Kantar Public/L&W – independent research agency
- **About the client:** research on behalf of DfE
- **Reason for participation**: Explain that they have been selected to participate in this research because they might be able to help us understand more about people's attitudes and experiences of learning among adults
- **How their information will be used**: Their views and experiences will be looked together with views of others taking part in interviews. These views will be analysed by theme then a report written based on those themes. There will be no way of knowing what an individual said, and no one will be identified in the report.
- **Ethical considerations**: Anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation
- **Duration**: between 60-75 minutes
- **Reassurances:** No right or wrong answers - we are simply asking for people's views and opinions; comfort – let me know if you'd like a break at any time
- **Reminder about audio recording**: the discussion will be recorded so that we can accurately capture their views, and so researchers can listen back when analysing the data. The recorder is encrypted and only the research team will have access to the recordings
- Reminder about **voxpop** at the end, if consent and time
- **Incentive**: will receive a £50 thank you, either as a PayPal payment

- **Any questions/concerns?**
- **Start recording**: acknowledge consent for being recorded

Background and context (10 minutes)

Section aim: To warm up the participant to the tone/style of the discussion, and to capture spontaneous views about adult learning to explore unframed responses and provide context to journey mapping. RESEARCHER NOTE: Remember to keep the behavioural model top of mind, probing participants about what underpins the attitudes and experiences they share, and challenging them to comment on additional drivers they do not mention.

- What **matters most** to them these days
  - Job
  - Hobbies
  - Family/living arrangements
  - Formal/informal education
  - Whether/how **what matters most to them looked differently in the past**
  - Career history
  - Hobbies
  - Family planning
  - Formal/informal education

- **Parent/guardian education and employment**
  - Parent/guardian's education, incl. highest level attained
  - Parent/guardian's employment, incl. different jobs held and for how long

- Overview of **views on formal/informal education**
  - General attitude to learning and skills development
  - Views on learning as an adult
  - Benefits to adults undertaking learning/training
  - Reasons adults may be put off from learning
  - Challenges/barriers that may make learning difficult

- Overview of **experience of formal/informal education**
  - Previous experiences of formal/informal education
    - Whether continuous learner or had gaps in learning
  - Main reasons for choosing the previous education
    - Required by employer
    - Personal interest
    - To progress at work
    - To be able to support children's education
  - Overall reactions to previous experiences of formal/informal education
  - Emotional responses of the education
  - Purpose/relevance of the education
  - Value of the education – to them, others

  ○ Expectations for progression beyond current learning

Customer journey mapping (45 minutes)

Section aim: To explore in depth participant's decision making processes and their experience of taking up and experiencing further or higher education. The mapping will enable us to explore the journey to the current learning (for which participants have been sampled), including where it involves previous learning. For Level 2 and 3 learners (Stage 2) explores expectations and aspirations for future learning. For Level 4 and 5 learners (stage 1), explore this where time permits.

RESEARCHER NOTE:

Remember to keep the behavioural model top of mind, probing participants about what underpins the attitudes and experiences they share, and challenging them to comment on additional drivers they do not mention.

To use the map -

- Discuss from the point that the participant first heard about further/higher education through to now. Include any reference to informal learning.
- Establish rough timings for each stage and record this on the map. Include any breaks in learning.
- Fully explore all the participant can remember happening throughout the process, including people involved, key activities, what was going on in their life at the time, how they felt about developments - and record on the map.
- Keep the Behaviour Model in mind throughout, ensuring to probe for the all facets of the different drivers (automatic, psychological, physical capability, reflective, social, physical)

Introducing the journey map -

- Tell the participant that during the interview you will be creating a journey map together to understand their experience of taking up and experiencing further/higher education, starting at the beginning of the process through to the end. The map will be used to establish relative timings of key events and can be added to or amended throughout the discussion.

- **Experience of how they were introduced to idea of (re)entering formal/informal education or continuing in education (as relevant)**
- **How they became** aware of formal/informal education opportunities
  ○ Word of mouth
  ○ Institutional marketing and communications
  ○ Attended taster sessions or similar
- **Circumstances of becoming aware** of all formal/informal education
  ○ Timing – month/year
  ○ What was going on in their life at the time

- o Who was involved in their introduction – family, friend, colleague, employer
  - o Most influential person to their undertaking formal/informal education
- **Recall of what they learned** about what would be involved in the formal/informal education
- Learning format they were interested in, and why
  - o Classroom-based/other location
  - o Online (fully)
  - o Combination classroom/online
- Explore whether/what **support and/or information they sought** out, reasons
- **Initial assessment** of the formal/informal education
  - o Likes/dislikes, reasons
  - o Understanding of what would be involved
  - o Questions they had
  - o Risks/benefits

- Experience of **registering for formal/informal education**
  - o Circumstances of registering for formal/informal education
    - ▪ Timing – month/year
    - ▪ Requirements e.g. paperwork, payments
    - ▪ What was going on in their life at the time
  - o Who was involved in the process – family, friend, colleague, employer

- **Learning format they signed up for,** and whether/why changed

- **Motivations for taking up learning when they did**, instead of some other point in time
- **Triggers for taking up learning when they did**
  - o Conversation with manager/colleague/family/friends
  - o Advertisement/marketing of a course/programme
  - o Employment/education changes (e.g. new job)
  - o Family situation (E.g. new parent, child starts school, relationship breakdown, loss of a loved one)
  - o Living situation (E.g. move house)
- **Whether wanted to learn earlier but was unable to**, reasons
- **Motivations for choosing the subject/topic** they did instead of any other course
  - o Personal interest
  - o Employer suggestion
  - o Personal benefits – Health, family, career opportunities
  - o Accessibility – e.g. online, evening courses, part-time learning, duration of courses, ease of access

- **Motivations** for choosing the type/method of learning
- **Expectations** of what they would get out of the course
  - o Opportunities
  - o Challenges
- Relative timing compared to introduction to formal/informal education
- Steps taken following introduction to formal/informal education
- Ease of decision to register

- Feelings about decision to register
- What was going on at the time

- **Experience since undertaking the learning**
  - Explore **feelings** about their formal/informal education
    - What they enjoyed, reasons
    - Whether concerned at any point, reasons
  - **Support/contact accessed** since taking up course
    - Type/content, reasons incl. financial
    - Source – advisor, friend/family/colleague
    - Timing
    - Reactions to support

- Revisit key moments on the map to explore in greater detail the **FACILITATORS** expected/experienced. For each facilitator explore:
  - Exactly what facilitator was and when it was influential
  - Relative importance of the facilitator to the participant
  - Emotional response to facilitator
  - Whether facilitator became a barrier (or was expected to)
  - Main facilitator for them

- Revisit key moments on the map to explore in greater detail the **BARRIERS** expected/experienced
  - Exactly what barrier was and when it was influential
  - Relative importance of the barrier to the participant
  - Emotional response to barrier
  - How barrier was or was expected to be overcome
    - What did/does help look like
    - Source of help
    - Timing of help
  - Main barrier for them

- Support **received that wasn't actually helpful** – created more problems than helped

- **What else would be needed to help overcome** the barrier
  - What does help look like
  - Source of help
  - Timing of help

- Thinking ahead, explore their **expectations for progressing with learning** beyond current programme
- Explore **career aspirations** as it relates to learning needs and education

Suggestions for encouraging adults into learning (10 minutes)

Section aim: To understand type and extent of support, whether communication or otherwise, to best support adults into learning. RESEARCHER NOTE: Remember to keep the outer ring of the behavioural model top of mind, probing participants about what types of interventions might encourage adults into learning, challenging them to comment on intervention types they do not mention and to also be realistic (distinguish between ideal versus feasible)

- Discuss how **they would encourage their friends** into learning
    - Content of this encouraging message
    - Language they would use
    - Timing of encouragement
    - Support they would signpost their friends to

- **Generally, what adults like them need to stay in learning**

    RESEARCHER NOTE: The below lines of questioning reflect the outer ring of the behaviour model. You will not be able to cover all sections with all participants in the allotted time; prioritise probing around what participants respond to the bullet above, then choose 1 other line of questioning to explore in full. Alternate this across interviews so you avoid gaps in coverage.
    If participant is particularly positive and feels unable to provide suggestions then position questioning as devil's advocate; have them imagine their experience was not good and then comment on what they would need to change that.

- Discuss **communication and guidelines needed** to encourage adults like them into further learning
    - Type e.g. awareness raising, education etc.
    - Content
        - Information about provision
        - Information about potential benefits/advantages of learning
    - Source e.g. via friends/family, Government, Learning Institutions, Employers, other?
    - Channels e.g. email, phone, website, letter
    - Tone
    - Timing

- Discuss support related to the **provision of learning** to encourage adults like them into learning
    - Type e.g. creating more places to learn, offering more flexibility in learning opportunities (e.g. timing, mode), improving accessibility
        - If online offer: what their ideal online offer would look like
            - Purely online and completed at own pace
            - Online but to fixed timetable
            - Combination of online/classroom-based

- With access to a virtual classroom

  o Source e.g. via friends/family, Government, Learning Institutions, Employers, other?
  o Timing of this support in an adult's life – key milestones

- Discuss **financial support** to encourage adults like them into learning
  o Type e.g. course fees, childcare, loss of earning, travel, learning tools/equipment
  o Distinguish between whether barrier is income forgone or expenditure

- Discuss any changes to **how education is regulated** to encourage adults like them into learning
  o "For example, some people tell us they think there needs to be more comparability of arrangements across institutions, such as studying and break space; what do you think?"
  o "For example, some people tell us they think there needs to be a minimum standard of the quality of education all providers must offer; what do you think?"

Thanks and close (5 - 10 minutes)

Section aim: To wind down the interview, capturing any outstanding views/experiences, and bringing the interview to a close.
- **Final messages**
- Thanks, and **reminder** of confidentiality and anonymity
- Incentive reminder
- **Voxpop** recording, if willing. If so, ensure participant **signs media consent form**
  o *Logistics:* Film landscape, rule of 3rds, and fairly close to participant to capture good audio. Where possible, position them so the background is reflective of their personal circumstances e.g. if online learner and a laptop nearby place it near them. Give them a moment to consider their response before you ask them a question to respond to on camera.
  o *Questioning*:
    - Ask a focussed question relevant to what strikes you as unique to them so we get short/sweet clips e.g. "What are 2 tips you have for a [single person/parent/online learner/full time worker etc.] to get into adult learning?"
    - Or pretend they are talking to someone else and have them respond as though speaking to someone like them/family member/friend etc.
    - Or, get them to give advice about getting in further education to younger them

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Appendix D: Journey Map Template

DATES/ TYPE OF EDUCATION

AWARENESS

EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING

MOTIVATIONS

FACILITATORS

BARRIERS

KANTAR PUBLIC=

Appendix E: Stage 3 Topic Guide

Introduction (10 minutes)

- **Thanks & Introduction**: Introduce yourself and Kantar Public/L&W – independent research agency
- **About the client:** research on behalf of DfE
- **Introduce DfE colleagues** (if present): Explain reason for attendance – hear directly from participants, gain policy insights
- **Reason for participation:** Explain that they have been selected to participate in this research because they might be able to help us understand what could encourage more adults to start learning
- **How their information will be used**: Their views and experiences will be looked at together with views of others taking part in discussion groups and interviews. These views will be analysed by theme then a report written based on those themes. There will be no way of knowing what an individual said, and no one will be identified in the report.
- **Ground rules for the group**: Switching off mobile phones; everyone's opinion counts; respecting differences in people's views and experiences; speaking one at a time and not talking over each other etc
- **Ethical considerations**: Anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation
- **Duration**: approx. 2 hours
- **Reassurances:** No right or wrong answers - we are simply asking for people's views and opinions; comfort – let me know if you'd like a break at any time
- **Reminder about audio recording**: the discussion will be recorded so that we can accurately capture their views, and so researchers can listen back when analysing the data. The recorder is encrypted and only the research team will have access to the recordings
- **Incentive**: will receive a £60 thank you, either as a voucher or PayPal payment
- **Any questions/concerns?**
- **Start recording**: acknowledge consent for being recorded

Ice-breaker exercise (15 minutes)

Section aim: To warm up participants and get them used to talking in the group, to capture spontaneous views about adult learning to explore unframed responses.

- **Group introductions**: Ask participants to introduce themselves – name and how they like to spend their time

- **Introduce pre-task**: Remind group of what they were asked to do for pre-task

- **In pairs, discuss initial impressions of pre-task**

- **Feedback** to the group

  - How they approached the task

- Sources of information accessed
- What they expected to find
- The kinds of information they found on learning opportunities
- Challenges experienced during the task
- How easy/difficult it was to choose a course
- Whether they would be more/less likely to pursue learning opportunities
- Likelihood of checking job websites and/or learning websites if they were in unsatisfying/insecure job
- What other/additional information would they need to make decisions about learning

Barriers to learning (15 minutes)

Section aim: To discuss adults' barriers to learning to provide context for following group discussions and activities. To get initial responses to the barriers and capture attitudes towards adult learning. RESEARCHER NOTE: To ensure a natural development from ice-breaker activity, build on early discussions on challenges experienced, whether the information would encourage them to pursue opportunities, information they would require to make decisions etc.

- Invite participants to **suggest adults' barriers to learning**, which may be experienced by them or people they know. Write suggestions on a flip chart. RESEARCHER NOTE: Encourage a broad discussion of all potential barriers, thinking about the diversity of adults' lives and experiences. Prompt barriers listed below if necessary.
    - Cost
        - Course fees
        - Travel
        - Childcare
        - Course materials/equipment
    - Time
        - Work
        - Childcare
        - Travel
    - Attitudes
        - Too old to learn/learning is for young people
        - Negative experiences
        - Fear
        - Lack of interest
        - Not knowing where to start
    - Learning provision
        - Inconvenient time of day
        - Course is too long/short
        - Difficult to travel to/access

- **Discussion on the impact of barriers on different groups of adults**
    - Barriers that are most problematic/are deal breakers
    - Barriers that are least problematic/are most straightforward to overcome

- Groups of adults that are most/least likely to be affected by different barriers
- Cumulative effect of barriers – combinations of barriers that would be more/less problematic to overcome

- Using the flip chart, ask participants to **rank barriers** to establish hierarchy, from most to least problematic

Concept testing – what gets people into learning? (70 minutes)

Section aim: To test potential ways to make learning more attractive to adults. RESEARCHER NOTE: Remember to keep the outer ring of the behavioural model top of mind, probing participants about what types of information, messaging and presentation might encourage adults into learning, challenging them to be realistic.

- **Introduce session**: Imagining we are working in the marketing department of a Further Education college, thinking about the content that would be attractive to adults and encourage them to take up learning. Introduce prospectus [See Appendix F]. Interested in any ideas and solutions participants can think of, not just those included in prospectus.

- **In pairs, review front cover of the prospectus and discuss initial impressions (5 minutes)**
  - Whether content and images are likely to be attractive to adults
  - What information should/should not be on the front page

- **Group discussion on the potential impact of the front cover**
  - Likelihood of front page influencing adults' attitudes towards learning
  - How front page could be improved to encourage adults to consider learning

- **In pairs, review page 2 of the prospectus and discuss initial impressions (10 minutes)**
  - Strengths/weaknesses of current content and format
  - What benefits might encourage adults to consider learning

- **Group discussion on the potential impact of page 2**
  - Likelihood of information on benefits influencing adults' attitudes towards learning
  - What benefits are more/less likely to appeal to different groups of adults?
  - How the information could be improved to encourage adults to consider learning

- **In pairs, review page 3 of the prospectus and discuss initial impressions (10 minutes)**
  - Strengths/weaknesses of current content and format

- o What information might encourage someone who hasn't done any learning for a long time, and may not think learning is for them and/or may lack confidence?

- **Group discussion on the potential impact of page 3**
  - o Likelihood of testimonials influencing adults' attitudes towards learning
  - o How is it best to communicate adult learners' experiences?
  - o How the information could be improved to encourage adults to consider learning

- **In pairs, review page 4 of the prospectus and discuss initial impressions (10 minutes)**
  - o Usefulness of information for people considering learning
  - o What information is appealing or off-putting?

- **Group discussion on the potential impact of page 4**
  - o The extent to which cost is a barrier to learning, and how it can be overcome
  - o Whether benefits of learning (already discussed) outweigh/justify the financial investment
  - o Whether they would be more/less willing to invest in learning
  - o How the information could be improved to encourage adults to consider learning

- **In pairs, review page 5 of the prospectus and discuss initial impressions (15 minutes)**
  - o Strengths/weaknesses of current content and format
  - o What features/approaches to learning might be attractive to adults

- **Group discussion on the potential impact of page 5**
  - o Extent to which an online course would be attractive, and to whom?
  - o What would an online course for adults need to include? Why?
  - o Extent to which a work placement would be attractive, and to whom?
  - o What information would adults require about work placements?
  - o How could the work placements be structured in terms of time commitments (e.g. one block of time vs one day per week across whole duration of course)?
  - o Any learning formats that would work for you/people you know that aren't included on this page?
  - o Ideal provision for adults – consider mode (e.g. face-to-face, online, blended); location (e.g. education institution, home, workplace, community centre); provider (e.g. college, university, employer, training provider)

- **In pairs, review page 6 of the prospectus and discuss initial impressions (10 minutes)**
  - o Strengths/weaknesses of current content and format

- o What services should be available to adult learners and why?

- **Group discussion on the potential impact of page 6**
  - o Extent to which services might influence adults' decisions to take up learning
  - o What services might be more/less attractive to different groups of adults
  - o What services are more/less important to adults?
  - o Which barriers might different services help to overcome? (return to barriers noted on flipchart paper)

- **Group discussion on the prospectus as a whole (10 minutes)**
  - o How does the information sit together – does anything add to/take away from the impact of other pages?
  - o Extent to which prospectus as a whole is likely to influence adults' decisions to take up learning
  - o What other/additional information would be likely to encourage adults to take up learning?

Thanks and close (10 minutes)

Section aim: To wind down the interview, capturing any outstanding views, and bringing the session to a close.

- **Advertising learning**
  - o Where would you expect to see this prospectus, or other advertisements about learning?
  - o Where is most useful to see learning advertised?

- **Final messages**
  - o Best way to encourage adults into learning
  - o Extent to which discussions have influenced their attitudes towards learning as an adult – and why

- Thanks, and **reminder** of confidentiality and anonymity
- Incentive reminder

Appendix F: Stage 3 Stimulus

Pre-Task

Pre-task

Imagine you are not progressing or earning the money you would like to at your job, and you are worried about job security due to increasing developments in technology. You have been thinking about going on a course to improve your career prospects.

1) How would you find out about courses on offer in your local area? What information would you expect to find about these courses?

2) Now, go online and find a college near you that offers courses for adults. What information are you looking for? Please note any information that you cannot find.

3) Pretend you have chosen a course to sign up for. Tell us what you think you would need to do to register and prepare for that course.

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Figure 2: Pre-task

Prospectus

Your local college prospectus

A prospectus for adult learners

Figure 4: Prospectus page 1

The benefit of learning as an adult

70% of adults with a Level 4 Management and Leadership qualification got a **promotion** within 12 months of completing the course

There are over **500** vacancies for chefs. With a Level 3 Cookery course, you could earn **£25,000** a year

25% of adults who attended our access course went on to **university**

57% of adults reported improvements in **self-confidence** after only three months of their course

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Figure 3: Prospectus page 2

Testimonials

'I was so scared of going back into education, particularly after being a stay-at-home mum for so long, but it's been the best decision of my life. Not only do I feel more confident, I also have a new career as a nurse'

'People are working longer than ever before. Your local college offers courses for adults of all ages. It's never too late to learn and progress your career. You could do it too!'

The cost of learning as an adult

The average cost of a **Level 2** training certificate is **£300 - £900** for a year

The average cost of **Level 3** training certificates is **£500-£1500** for a year

Loans are available for all **course fees** for Level 3 courses. This loan is cancelled if you progress on to Level 4 education.

Cost doesn't have to stop you following your passion. Your local college is offering discounts in 15 courses this year.

Transport costs can put adults off from signing up to learning. This year, 10 courses at your local college come with a free bus pass.

Figure 6: Prospectus page 3

[images removed to protect privacy]

Figure 5: Prospectus page 4

We have course types to work with your schedule

Online only options: work around your commitments by participating in online classes. You will receive course material online, have the opportunity to take part in live online classroom discussions, be guided through reference material by our AI chat-bot, and catch up on lectures online if you've missed them.

Face-to-face learning: prefer it "old school"? We offer classroom learning too! It is outside of working hours to fit around your work schedule. We offer both day, evening and weekend classes to fit around you.

Want the best of both worlds? Go for the blended learning option: combining both online and face to face lessons to ensure maximum flexibility.

Work Placements: to ensure that you are employable in your new career once you have finished your training, we offer work placements so that you can gain experience in your chosen profession.

Figure 8: Prospectus page 5

How we support you

Student support services: It is hard getting back in to learning, so in order to support you, every student is given a learning mentor who they can turn to for support when needed.

Support with finances: we understanding that spending money on learning can represent a financial burden. We have financial advisors on-site who can help you manage your money and access bursaries or loans where they are available.

Flexible deadlines: We recognise that working and studying at the same time can be hard, so we offer the opportunity to *freeze your training to take a break when you need it. *only available on online course

Childcare options available: we have links with local nannies who offer shared services to look after students' children. This reduces the cost of childcare and leaves you stress free.

Figure 7: Prospectus page 6

Workbook

Your local college prospectus
A prospectus for adult learners

Imagine you are based in the marketing department of the college. What information would you put on the front page to appeal to adult learners? What information would you avoid putting on the front page?

Figure 10: Workbook page 1

The benefit of learning as an adult

70% of adults with a Level 4 Management and Leadership qualification got a **promotion** within 12 months of completing the course

There are over **500** vacancies for chefs. With a Level 3 Cookery course, you could earn **£25,000** a year

25% of adults who attended our access course went on to **university**

64% of adults **changed career** as a result of going on a training course

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What information would you want to see on this page when considering going back into learning?

What do you like/dislike about this page? Why?

Benefits that might encourage an adult back into learning	Like	Dislike

Figure 9: Workbook page 2

We have course types to work with your schedule

Online only options: work around your commitments by participating in online classes. You will receive course material online, have the opportunity to take part in live online classroom discussions, be guided through reference material by our AI chatbot, and catch up on lectures online if you've missed them.

Face-to-face learning: prefer it "oldskool"? We offer classroom learning too! It is outside of working hours to fit around your work schedule. We offer both day, evening and weekend classes to fit around you.

Want the best of both worlds? Go for the blended learning option: combining both online and face to face lessons to ensure maximum flexibility

Work Placements: to ensure that you are employable in your new career once you have finished your training, we offer work placements so that you can gain experience in your chosen profession

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If you were designing an online course for adults, what would you include in the offer? Why have you chosen these things?

Imagine you are designing a work placement scheme for adult learners, what would you need to think about? What options would you offer in terms of time commitments?

What do you think would be the ideal format of a course for adults?

Figure 12: Workbook page 3

The cost of learning as an adult

The average cost of a **Level 2** training certificate is **£300 - £900** for a year

The average cost of **Level 3** training certificates is **£500-£1500** for a year

Loans are available for all **course fees** for Level 3 courses. This loan is cancelled if you progress on to Level 4 education.

Cost doesn't have to stop you following your passion. Your local college is offering discounts in 15 courses this year.

Transport costs can put adults off from signing up to learning. This year, 10 courses at your local college come with a free bus pass.

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What information do you find appealing on this page? Why? What information puts you off going back into education? Why?

Appealing	Off-putting

Thinking back to the previous two pages on the benefits of learning, what do you feel about investing in education as an adult?

Figure 11: Workbook page 4

Testimonials

How would you communicate that learning is for adults too, and that everyone can benefit from learning, to someone who felt that they lacked the confidence to go back into education? Why?

'I was so scared of going back into education, particularly after being a stay-at-home mum for so long, but it's been the best decision of my life. Not only do I feel more confident, I also have a new career as a nurse'

'People are working longer than ever before. Your local college offers courses for adults of all ages. It's never too late to learn and progress your career. You could do it too!'

If you were in the marketing department and putting together some testimonials to encourage adults into education, what do you think would be important to communicate? Why?

How we support you

Student support services: It is hard getting back in to learning, so in order to support you every student is given a learning mentor who they can turn to for support when needed.

Financial advice: we understanding that spending money on learning can represent a financial burden. We have financial advisors on-site who can help you manage your money and access bursaries or loans where they are available

Flexible deadlines: We recognise that working and studying at the same time can be hard, so we offer the opportunity to *freeze your training to take a break when you need it. *only available on online course

Childcare options available: we have links with local nanny's who offer shared services to look after students children. This reduces the cost of childcare and leaves you stress free

Imagine you are designing student services for adult learners in your local college. What services would you offer? Why?

If the NHS built these services, what would they offer?

If IKEA built these services, what would they offer?

If the government built these services, what would they offer?

Figure 15: Workbook page 5

[images removed to protect privacy]

Figure 16: Workbook page 6

Appendix G: Statements to indicate what typology group a learner falls into

'Golden questions' are derived from segmentations based on quantitative data, where analysis leads to a mathematical prediction of which factors are most important for which segments. It allows the development of questions, the answers to which will predict into which segment any given learner will be placed. The qualitative nature of this study does not allow us to develop such questions. However, our understanding of these different segments allows us to formulate statements, the responses to which (on an agreement scale) would indicate to what extent any given learner might be allocated to any given segment. They could also act as a component of a new survey designed to gather data for segmentation. These statements would need to be tested, refined then trialled in a segmentation study to have confidence in them before segmenting the population for communications.

Life-long learner

- Learning is an important part of my life
- I'm pretty sure I'll complete any course I start
- Everyone should learn throughout their lives

Defiant learner

- You can only succeed in learning if you're determined
- Learning is tough, but it has to be done
- If you care enough, anyone can make learning work

Outcomes-focussed learner

- On balance, the career benefits of learning outweigh the costs
- It's essential to learn to get on in your career
- Learning is hard, but it makes me feel good, so I carry on

Tentative learner

- Sometimes, I'm not sure learning is worth it
- I'm just not smart enough to do the work
- My personal circumstances make learning almost impossible

Exhausted learner

- There just isn't the support I need to make learning work
- I wouldn't do another course, it's too exhausting

- Once I complete the course I'm on, I'm done with learning

Stuck in the status quo learner

- There's no way someone like me should start a new course
- My family can't give me the support or the space I need to learn
- I've got so much on my plate, I can't imagine going back to learning

Appendix H: Recruitment Screeners

Defined Quota Categories

Adults included in the research scope were:

- Level 2 and Level 3 FE learners, for instance studying a Level 2 qualification in Barbering or a Level 3 qualification in Management. These adults were aged 19 and over, had left full time education and had a period of non-learning of a least one year (excluding gap years).
- Level 4 and Level 5 FE and HE learners, for instance studying a Level 4 qualification in Counselling or a Level 5 qualification in Teaching. They were aged 19 and over, had left full time education and were either continuous learners or those who had left full time education and returned after a non-learning spell.

For Stage 1, we purposively sampled 12 individuals currently studying for Level 4-5 vocational qualifications, and 11 individuals currently studying for Level 4-5 Higher Education qualifications. For Stage 2 we purposeively sampled 18 individuals currently studying for a Level 2 vocational qualification and 28 individuals currently studying for a Level 3 qualification. Across stages 1 and 2 a mix of individuals were recruited, with quotas on: previous educational attainment; age; socio-economic group; employment status; reason for taking up adult learning; whether in continuous education; whether learning online; whether from an ethnic minority group; gender and location. For Stage 3 we purposively sampled 20 non-learners, adults that had not done any learning since leaving full time education and who would consider online learning. We also applied the same quotas as above and with additional quotas on: would potentially consider adult learning; living arrangements and sector they are employed in. Table 1 lists the screener questions that were used to achieve the quotas.

Quota	Relevant Screener question	Relevant answer options
Previous educational attainment	Which, if any, of the following qualifications do you currently have? Exclude any qualifications you are currently studying towards.	Comprehensive list of qualifications offered
Age	What age were you on your last birthday?	
Socio Economic Group (SEG):	What is/was the occupation of the chief income earner in your household?	

Quota	Relevant Screener question	Relevant answer options
Caring responsibilities	In an average week, do you spend 5 or more hours caring for someone else, either a child/children and/or an adult with care needs?	Yes - care for a child/children for at least 5 hours a week Yes - care for an adult with care needs for at least 5 hours a week No
Employment status	Which of these best describes your current work status?	• Working full time (30+ hours per week) • Working part time (up to 29 hours per week) • Not working – looking for work • Not working – have care responsibilities (for child(ren)/adult with care needs) • Not working – health reasons • Not working – Other SPECIFY • In full time education • Retired
Reason for taking up adult learning	What is the main reason you are studying for this qualification?	• I must complete the qualification to meet my current employment requirements • I have chosen to complete the qualification as it will help me secure better career prospects • I have chosen to complete the qualification as it is a personal interest
Online learning	Single coded Are you currently learning online, either partly online or entirely online? Regardless of whether you plan to continue studying further, would you ever consider learning online,	

Quota	Relevant Screener question	Relevant answer options
	either partly online or entirely online?	
Continuous education	Have you been in continuous education since school? If you've taken a gap year or had a break from education that lasted less than a year then we would consider that as being in 'continuous education'.	
Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME	How would you describe your ethnicity	
Gender	Which of the following describes you?	
Location	Which of the following best describes the type of area you live in?	• Urban • Sub-urban • Rural
Currently learning	Are you currently in full or part-time education, working towards either a vocational or higher education qualification?	
Consider Learning	On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is Definitely Wouldn't and 10 is Definitely Would, how likely is it you would ever consider going back to education as an adult learner (if needed: to work towards either a vocational or higher education qualification), regardless of whether you currently have any serious plans to do so?	1 1 - Definitely wouldn't 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 7 7 8 8 9 9 10 10 - Definitely would

Quota	Relevant Screener question	Relevant answer options
Sector of employment	Which sector do you work in?	1. Administrative Occupations: Finance 2. Administrative Occupations: Records 3. Secretarial and Related Occupations 4. Metal Forming, Welding and Related Trades 5. Metal Machining, Fitting and Instrument Making Trades 6. Vehicle Trades 7. Construction and building trades 8. Building Finishing Trades 9. Textiles and Garments Trades 10. Printing Trades 11. Other Skilled Trades 12. Housekeeping and Related Services 13. Sales assistants and retail cashiers 14. Sales Related Occupations 15. Process Operatives 16. Plant and Machine Operatives 17. Assemblers and Routine Operatives 18. Mobile Machine Drivers and Operatives 19. Other drivers and transport operatives 20. Elementary Agricultural Occupations 21. Elementary Administration Occupations 22. Elementary Sales Occupations 23. NONE OF THE ABOVE

Achieved Sample - Stage 1

Level 5 – N=11		Achieved
Previous educational attainment	Level 3	7
	Level 4 or more	4
		11
Age	19-24	3
	25-34	2
	35-44	3
	45+	3
		11
Socio Economic Group (SEG)	ABC1	5
	C2DE	6
		11
Other	Caring responsibilities	2
Employment status	Part time	4
	Not working due to ill health / caring responsibilities	1
	Not working (other)	1
		6
Reason for adult learning	Chosen to complete as will help secure better career prospects	9
	Chosen to complete as it is a personal interest	2
		11
Continuous Education	Have been in continuous education	3
	Not been in continuous education	8
		11
Online	Currently studying online	4
	Not currently studying online but would consider doing so	7
		11
Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME)	Ethnic minority	2
	White	9
		11

Gender		Female	6
		Male	5
			11
Location		Urban	4
		Rural / Sub-urban	7
			11

Level 4 – N=13		Achieved
Previous educational attainment	Level 3	8
	Level 4 or more	5
		13
Age	19-24	2
	25-34	3
	35-44	2
	45+	6
		13
Socio Economic Group	ABC1	5
	C2DE	8
		13
Other	Caring responsibilities	6
	Employment status	7
		13
Reason for taking up Adult Learning	Must complete to meet current employment requirements	1
	Chosen to complete as will help secure better career prospects	12
		13
Online	Currently studying online	8
	Would consider studying online	13
Black And Minority Ethnic	Ethnic minority	2
	White	11
		13
Gender	Female	9
	Male	4
		13
Location	Urban	7
	Rural / Sub-urban	6
		13

Stage 2

Level 2 – N= 18		Achieved
Previous educational attainment	Up to Level 1	6
	Level 2	8
	Level 3	4
		18
Age	19-24	3
	25-34	3
	35-44	5
	45-54	5
	55+	2
		18
SEG	AB	1
	C1	7
	C2DE	10
		18
Other	Caring responsibilities	5
	Employment status	5
Reason for taking up AL	Chosen to complete as will help secure better career prospects	15
	Chosen to complete as it is a personal interest	3
		18
Online	Currently studying online	3
	Would consider studying online	15
		18

Level 3 – N= 29		Achieved
Previous educational attainment	Up to Level 2	20
	Level 3	9
		29
Age	19-24	5
	25-34	7
	35-44	6
	45-54	7
	55+	4
		29
SEG	AB	3
	C1	10
	C2DE	16
		29
Other	Caring responsibilities	7
	Employment status	13
Reason for taking up AL	Must complete to meet current employment requirements	0
	Chosen to complete as will help secure better career prospects	20 *some participants coded as both which is why numbers add up beyond the quota
	Chosen to complete as it is a personal interest	19 *some participants coded as both which is why numbers add up beyond the quota
		29
Online	Currently studying online	8
	Would consider studying online	20
	Not studying online/would not consider	1
		29

Stage 3

Table 5: Achieved Quota Focus Group London

Focus Group 1 - London		Achieved
	Up to Level 1	3
Previous educational attainment	Level 2/3	5
	Level 4/5	2
		10
	19-24	1
	25-34	2
	35-44	2
	45-54	3
Age	55+	2
		10
	AB	2
	C1	5
SEG	C2DE	3
		10
Gender	Male	5
	Female	5
		10
BAME	BAME	5
	White	5
		10
	Full Time employment	6
Employment status	Part Time employment	2
	Not working	2
		10
	With parents	2
Living arrangements	Independently	3
	With partner – no dependents	2
	With partner – with dependents	3
		10

Focus Group 2 - Leeds		Achieved
Previous educational attainment	Up to Level 1	3
	Level 2/3	4
	Level 4/5	3
		10
Age	19-24	3
	25-34	1
	35-44	2
	45-54	3
	55+	1
		10
SEG	AB	0
	C1	3
	C2DE	7
		10
Gender	Male	4
	Female	6
		10
BAME	BAME	2
	White	8
		10
Employment status	Full Time employment	5
	Part Time employment	3
	Not working	2
		10
Online	Would consider studying online	9
	Would NOT consider studying online	1
		10
Living arrangements	With parents	3
	Independently	3
	With partner – no dependents	1
	With partner – with dependents	3
		10

Appendix I: Table of best practice provision and support cited by participants

- Tech Change: www.techchange.org.uk

- 2018 NOCN Level 3 Diploma in Funeral Celebrancy

- Salford University

- City and Islington College

- Greenwich University

- AAT Course - L1 & L2 private educator in central Birmingham

- ICT Course - Birmingham Adult Education College, Birmingham City University

- MathsWatch' videos: http://mathswatch.co.uk/

- FutureLearn resources and training: https://www.futurelearn.com/

- XERO free online accounting courses:https://www.xero.com/uk/training/s/accountants-bookkeepers/certification/1/

- Google Classroom

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