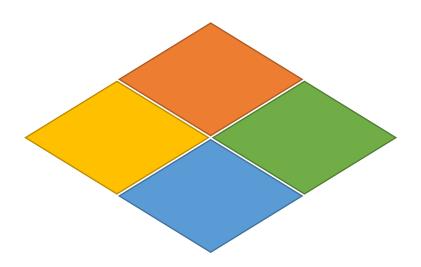


QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project

Social Induction Framework

Final Project Report April 2022



The Collaborative Team

Dr. Yvonne Skipper (Glasgow), Dr. Jill MacKay (Edinburgh), Dr. Jessie Patterson (Edinburgh), Amy Sampson (Falmouth) and Dr. Russell Crawford (Falmouth)

(Falmouth University; University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow)

with assistance from Dr Robert McQuade (Glasgow), Tash Murch and Camilla Kjaernet (Falmouth)

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Project Abstract

The Social Induction Framework project uses playful learning pedagogy to underpin a novel framework for universities providing a useful induction tool to familiarise students with their VLE, diverse learning environments and various learning platforms. The project emerged from our 2020 observation of an urgent need for clear orientation to online tools and behaviours underpinning students starting their studies in HE. In addition, there was a strong requirement within the sector as a whole during that time, to build on feelings of connection and inclusion within both real and digital environments to enhance student engagement within a retention-critical induction time period.

Working as collaborators, Falmouth, Edinburgh, and Glasgow Universities co-created a "social induction framework" and enhanced the core concept through incorporating playful learning approaches. Our project explored student and staff experiences in three different instances of its use, one in each university, during 2021/22 as part of our scheduled induction activities for incoming and returning students. This allowed us to explore reflections, perceptions and in some cases, efficacy of the approach across different universities and courses followed by optimisation and dissemination of our framework to other HEI's.

The Social Induction Framework was designed to be deployable in any environment (VLE or equivalent, digital and/or physical) and provide a scaffold to aid learners familiarising themselves with in-house learning environments using a social-based activities framework focussed on points of engagement. In this way, those adopting the framework incorporate their local specific educational tools or approaches, available in their various disciplinary and educational contexts (see diagram below).

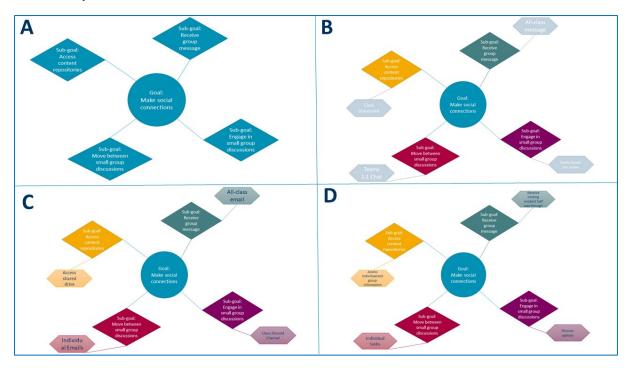
Introduction and Literature-informed basis underpinning the framework

The Social Induction Framework epistemology is firmly based on small group learning pedagogy and has been clearly linked to concepts of andragogy in the current literature (Nevin *et al*, 2014). The core concept behind the framework is a mode of engagement that allows participating students to experience events and scenarios through a playful narrative and linked to "investment" in a game-like experiential activity set (Oblinger, 2006). Ritterfeld and Weber (2005) identified 3 paradigms which we have created into the core of the Social Induction Framework, relating education and entertainment in gamified learning contexts:

- The motivation paradigm: where entertainment is the major motivator.
- The reinforcement paradigm: equating retention to rewarded to engagement.
- The blending paradigm: a continuum of acquiring knowledge equating to entertainment-based engagement.

These paradigms result in an overall positive learning process provided they place "play" in context, theme and are clearly goal-orientated. Successful application of these concepts is reported to develop a range of other transferable skills: leadership, team working, listening, situation awareness, decision making and other interpersonal skills (Haruna *et al*, 2018). Playful learning c also be immersive and has been linked with formation of a sense of belonging and positively correlates with observations of co-operation (Randi & Carvalho, 2013). The literature has also reported for over two decades that these transferable skills are easily re-applied to real life scenarios and have been closely linked with improved teamworking and communication skills (Vegt *et al*, 2015).

Core Concept: The Social Induction Framework:



As a brief worked illustrative example (full toolkits are available in the appendix), if an adopters VLE were located entirely within Microsoft Teams, their map may look like Panel B above. It is worth noting that within the framework, use of video or multimedia is a pedagogic decision left intentionally up to the educator to allow for inclusive digital practice to be locally considered. Equally, the framework can be spread across different learning environments, as illustrated in Panel C above. Finally, Panel D above outlines our vision of how the framework has been designed to ensure each social activity is aligned to the sub-goals and overall goal.

The Project Design

In planning the evaluation of this project, we used a qualitative mixed methods approach informed by an Action Research-based conceptual framework; meaning we designed the tool in the initial phase of the project followed by implementation of 3 different instances of the social induction framework, followed by mixed data gathering (surveys, designer reflections and user focus group discussions) which are analysed and discussed.

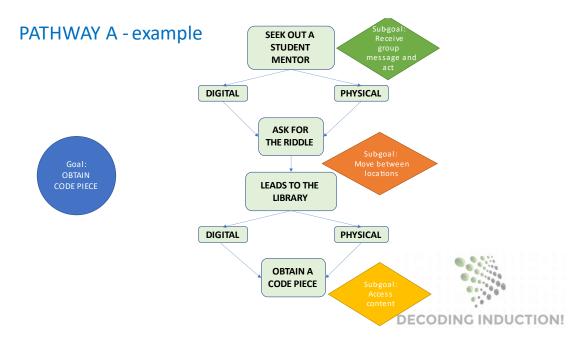
The initial phase of the project involved collaborative design and testing of the framework to ensure it would address the main needs of our three prototype induction instances, which were all implemented for the September 2021 intake of students from each collaborative partner institute according to their own set of induction activity needs. Using a combination of student surveys and focus groups analysed using mixed methods evaluation protocols, we coded and thematically analysed the impact of the framework alongside other developmental reflective feedback we collected as part of establishing the framework.

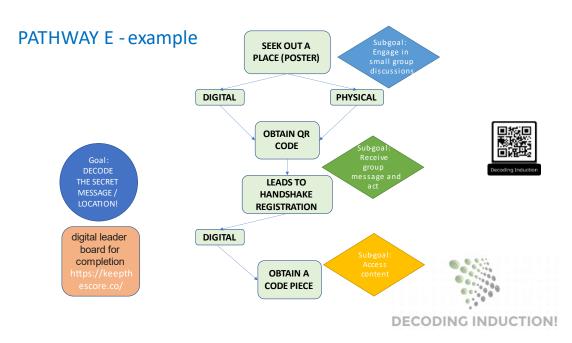
Each collaborative partner provides below a case study, which illustrates their application of the core social induction framework in their own contexts. Following these case studies, we will propose a set of recommendation aimed at supporting others to pick up and apply the social induction framework in their own learning contexts.

Collaborative Partner Case Studies

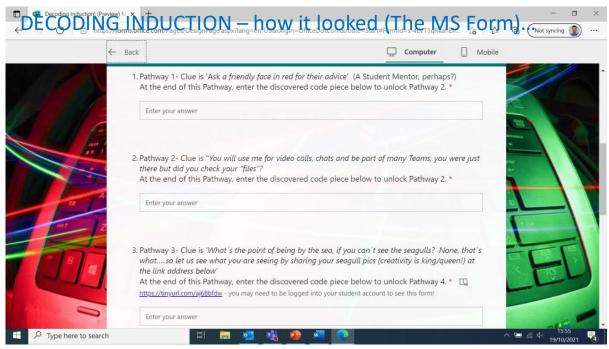
Case Study 1: Falmouth University - "Decoding Induction"

Falmouth University aimed to run their instance of the social induction framework fully online as Falmouth have two campuses (2 miles apart) so any location-based physical interactions would not be fully inclusive to all students. Falmouth used a "Decoding" theme in their instance, where students worked either alone or in groups to decode a set of "puzzles" to get to know their university and each other during the September induction period. For example, using the social induction conceptual framework describe previously, the illustrative examples below share two of their five code-based pathways which constituted their instance of the applied framework:

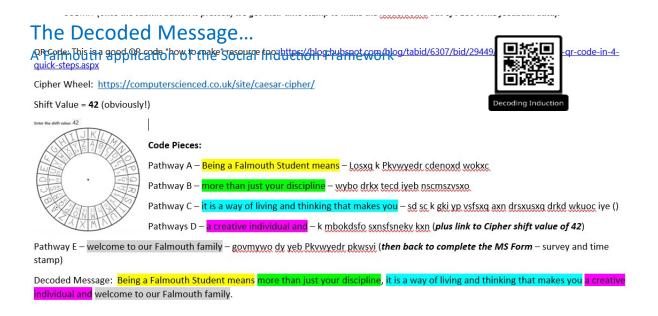




Falmouth's instance of the framework was implemented using an MS Form approach which had each pathway unlock as the correct code piece was found and entered into the form, illustrated below:



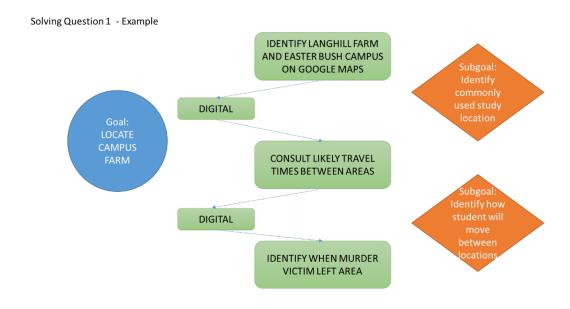
We used a cipher wheel to code a secret message that was partitioned into 5 pieces, each with its own short pathway (A – E) using the social induction conceptual framework to structure and breakdown as follows:



Case Study 2: University of Edinburgh - "There's been a Murder"

Collaborators from the University of Edinburgh utilised the Social Induction Framework to support their veterinary students during 'Welcome Week' in September. They also opted for a fully online approach in their instance and included aspects of familiarising their students with the campus, which is remote to accommodation sites.

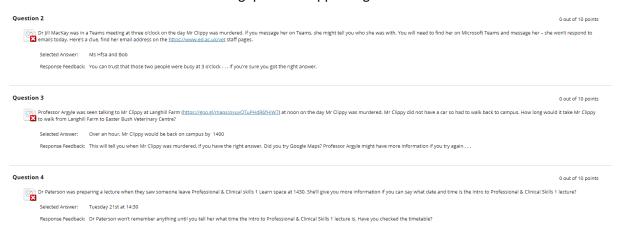
Adopting a different approach, the Edinburgh instance of the social induction framework utilised a playbased pedagogic approach to designing their interventions, preferring to adopt a central 'Detective Murder Mystery' theme. The thinking on adopting such an overt playful learning approach was contextualised by their experience as educators, knowing that the veterinary degree can often be highly stressful and therefore, they decided that their instance of the framework should be more whimsical in nature to counterbalance. Their murder "victim" was 'Mr Clippy' and their murder suspects were spread out over different locations around the campus. The overall session was introduced in a live (synchronous) virtual classroom (using Blackboard Collaborate) and their students worked in subgroups, working through a e-quiz (using Learn) to pose a series of questions to narrow down the list of suspects using deductive reasoning skills alongside collaborative social play. Each question had feedback supporting it, providing more information about how to do a task if any students got the answer wrong. In this way, the Edinburgh instance of applying the social induction framework was challenging and inclusive, which is a difficult balance to maintain given the diverse starting points, personal traits and variable starting skills present within a cohort of new incoming students. Below is an example image of the Edinburgh use of the social induction framework in action, using our semi-algorithmic approach to planning and scaffolding the social induction experience.



Murder mystery (how it looked) ...



...with some of the deductive reasoning questions appearing as below:



Case Study 3: University of Glasgow - 'World Changers Welcome'

The University of Glasgow utilised their instance of the Social Induction Framework to support MSc Psychological Studies and PGR students in the School of Education during September Welcome Week. The overall activity was introduced during induction sessions and ran without staff needing to have input other than sharing the link to the MS Form and placing students into small groups using the Zoom break out room function. A central aim of this element of induction was to help students to feel welcome and connected to the broader community on campus and to alumni. The introduction for the Glasgow instance reads:

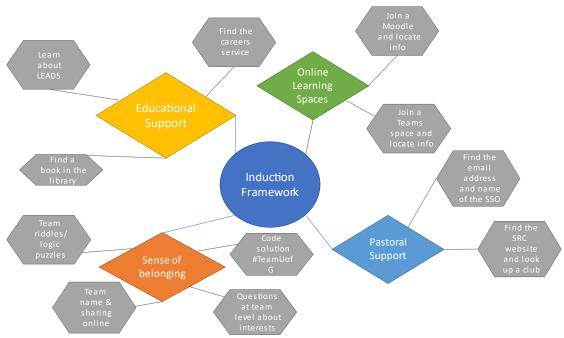
UofG has been part of the journey for many notable alumni. In order to join #TeamUofG, get to know some key information and systems and even more importantly to meet your fellow world changers we have created this online scavenger hunt. Your team will need to work together to find the details, solve the clues and earn your stripes.

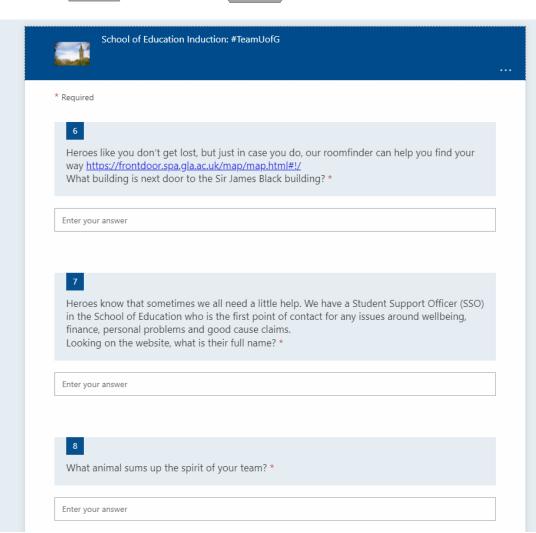
Ready?

Let's go!

In keeping with the tenets of the Social Induction Framework, Glasgow's instance was fully online and aimed at introducing students to key information and systems as well as encouraging students to get to know each other. This instance opted to use a "superhero" theme. We had a several pieces of information we wanted students to access and thought that presenting them in the form of an online treasure hunt, rather than just in slides would make it more engaging and easier for students to remember. Students also had to find and join MS Teams sites they needed for their course as well as joining course Moodles to find key information. When they found the information online they needed to answer questions, but we designed the questions so they did not just involve copying information from the website. Instead we designed questions where there was some discussion needed, for example, in the SRC website they had to find a club that the whole team would be interested in joining and when we asked about catering locations they had to share a food their whole team enjoyed. This meant that students needed to collaborate. We also included some fun riddles and logic puzzles for a similar reason.

In keeping with the Social Induction Framework having a clear inclusivity ethos, automatic feedback was provided to students after each question, again striking the balance between challenge and inclusivity in the various playful learning elements. At the end of the question lines, the answers from the quiz could be decoded to reveal our message 'World Changers Welcome'. The overall shape of the induction is outlined below, as is a screenshot of the project.

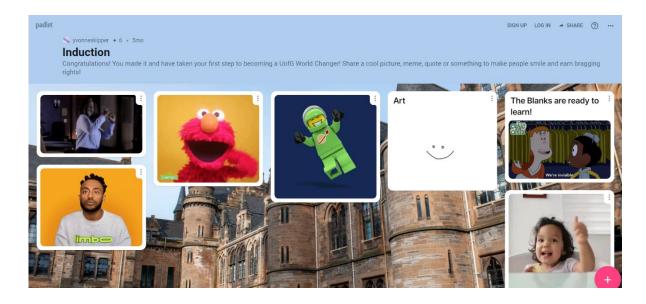




Some example questions from the Glasgow instance included:

- Heroes like you don't get lost, but just in case you do, our roomfinder can help you find your way https://frontdoor.spa.gla.ac.uk/map/map.html#!/
- What building is next door to the Sir James Black building?
- Heroes can't run on empty and need excellent snacks to refuel. Which of these locations serve food?
- Name a food that all your team members enjoy.

We also wanted students to share that they had completed the induction. This was a way to encourage others to participate and to create a community spirit. The Padlet image below shows some of the colourful engagement from those students. We also had a completion Tweet which students could share to show they had completed the induction.

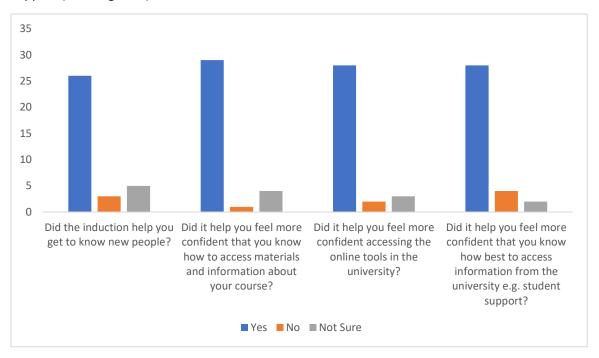




The Social Induction Framework - Data Collection and Analysis

Survey Evaluation

A short evaluation survey was made available to students from all three universities immediately after the activity and there were 34 respondents (Edinburgh n = 23, Glasgow n = 10, Falmouth n = 1). The majority (77%) felt the induction helped them get to know new people, that it helped them feel more confident accessing materials on their course (85%), more confident accessing online tools in the university (85%) and more confident accessing information from the university, e.g., student support (82%, Figure 1).



In feedback, students identified that the Edinburgh quiz settings did not allow for the answers to be shown until the full quiz was submitted, which will be adapted for future iterations. One student mentioned they would have liked more time to learn the resources. One student also requested the activity be run in person where possible, and four students mentioned that they felt entertained and engaged by the activity.

Focus Group Evaluation

Students also volunteers to take part in a series of three Focus Groups to discuss our social induction activity (with ethical approval secured from Falmouth University pre-data collection). The Focus Groups were audio recorded and transcribed and then anonymised to ensure there was no way to identify participants. The students were a mixture of Falmouth Years 1, 2 and 3 students from a mixture of academic departments who were asked to talk about their perspectives of the Social Induction Framework broadly (rather than the Falmouth instance specifically).

Thematic analysis of the Focus Group data revealed four major themes plus a set of improvements emerging from the Focus Group discussions. These four major themes were:

- Complexity
- Preparation
- Communication
- Impact

Complexity

Interestingly, complexity of the various social induction activities as a whole and in parts was a major theme emerging from our data collection. Participants agreed that there was little point in the activities being oversimplified (i.e., referring to elements of it defeating the point and damaging engagement motivation if too basic), sharing "I think that will just kind of defeat the point of it and just make it like a really simple throwaway activity". Interestingly, there is a balance to be considered here, as the groups then shared that some of the different activities seemed "quite complicated on paper" and whilst potentially overwhelming at first, concluded that "when you've got the steps physically (as in, the framework imagery presented earlier) in front of you, like broken down into the different pieces, it's probably a lot less overwhelming and more doable".

Additionally, groups valued clarity, which we interpret as the success metric on getting the complexity balance correct when planning activities in the framework, where participants shared their frustrations are seeing guidance given in the form of "walls of text", deemed this to be "less useful". This observation crosses over with another similar point we noticed emerging in relation to our different uses of MS Forms to curate activities, captured within another major theme, and explored more later.

A final critical variable within this overarching theme was our discovery of a lack of confidence in participants initiating engagement with the different social induction activities. Partly, we interpret this hurdle coming largely from a lack of familiarity with new digital systems, stating "they look at it, see it as a bit too complicated or that accessing systems (they) are not familiar with. They don't want to do it, and they see that as a reason not to do it rather than or reason to familiarise themselves with those things". This was an unexpected limiting factor for us as a collaborative group, as we had been working from a premise that engagement with key digital systems early would be valued by new students and seen as advantageous in the relatively "safe" context of the social induction activities. Clearly there is additional work reaming to explore elements and drivers of participant motivation more fully within the context of social induction activities and indeed, a risk to be managed to mitigate erosion of a key benefit of the framework being realised when implemented.

Preparation

Under the theme of preparation, we found that tutor/teacher pre-activity work was identified as being critical towards the success of social induction activities. Setting the actual activities themselves to one side, our findings showed us that awareness of the surrounding context (ie, other colleagues and students peripheral to the framework) was as critical as the framework elements themselves. Even down to the basic premise, the groups shared they "didn't really know where to start in terms of explaining it and now it makes a lot more sense what the pathways each mean and how they're supposed to each decoded part of a sentence. But that's not something that we were, I guess, briefed on (as senior student helpers)". The recurrence of this theme prompted us to reflect on the importance of "backstage" infrastructure needed to implement a successful social induction digital experience using the framework, especially when relying on others to interface with the activities. We would therefore suggest that those picking up and using the framework fully explore ways to brief both their participants and those others tangentially involved so they too have the wider view of the entire activity set.

Under this theme, two other equally valid and related points emerged from our findings. The first is around the purpose of the activities, where participants might decide to "rush through it and stuff to just quickly get that that code or whatever and then log out" which we feel would detract from the very point of the social induction side of the activities. The second is to do with breaking social

momentum that has organically appeared enroute to activity, with the groups sharing "we didn't actually really end up doing the event where we planned because we didn't want to interrupt them. Getting to know each other, and we asked them at the end. Would you have rather done the quiz that we planned, and they said no offense, but no, because it's been nicer to try and get to know other people". This places us back in a balance mindset when designing implementation of the framework to ensure that simple implementation does not stifle the very actions the framework is designed to facilitate. In future iterations of the framework, we are exploring thinking around having either jump-off / jump-on points or other built-in factors to allow for organic socialisation to be a part of the broader experience.

The final note under this theme relates to the MS form curation point for our codes (touched upon in the previous theme). Our selection of MS Forms in the various instances of the framework was intended to allow for a single open-access place where participants would track their progress through the activity pathways as well as onward signposting. What the groups shared was their perceptions that our choice of MS Forms for this was akin to "It felt like a test", qualifying this perception further with "Looks like a test. I just I don't know if anyone else feels this way, but to me it looks like I'm about to take an exam" and "Yeah, especially because some use MS Forms for feedback and stuff like that throughout the year it's not fun". Whilst very surprising for us to hear, especially in participants new to university, moving froward consideration should be given around the approachability side of any selected social induction interface as well as any baggage or stigma that selection might have come with it.

Communication

Perhaps a theme restricted primarily to the Falmouth instance (of the three, this instance was also at the whole institute level, which itself might indicate a scale factor) saw communications related to social induction activities being brought to the fore and a place we could explore teething issues of logistics, clarity, and timing more generally. Building on the previous point about adequately briefing colleagues that emerged in the preparation theme, groups shared that in the Falmouth instance, they sometimes had little visibility of what was, in our opinion, well described and widely shared activities. Comments such as "Where did new students see that there is a decoding induction?" and "students didn't know about this, I think there's just too many messages thrown at them, especially at the beginning of the year" mean that those picking up the social induction framework would be best advised to also consider the surrounding context disseminating of the social induction activities. As an example of this in action, Falmouth located all student induction materials (including their instance of the social induction framework) on a bespoke Student App, where this activity had its own tile on the front page and remained there for a period of 2 weeks. Further, they included links to the activity in their student-facing newsletter. These two dissemination routes together constitute these students' typical formal routes of university communication and in this case, they both had limited success in bringing large numbers of students to the activities.

There may be an element of "overload" at play in this observation, with comments such as "the app is a bit challenging. I mean, it's not the app itself, but at first you kind of just get used to everything. I think the apps really good (but) it's just like overwhelming at 1st and it takes" suggesting that there is a risk that activities are lost in the "noise" of the induction week events and those looking at similar applications of the framework at scale might therefore consider frequency and visibility of strategic reminders as part of their communications planning.

Impact

When the groups explored the benefits of engaging with the various social induction framework instances, participants highlighted several valuable perceptions and insights of how the framework was more broadly helping their induction. These views all grouped into one of two clear positives:

For Socialisation (and/or an icebreaker activity) — with comments shared such as "when we did explain that it was kind of like a scavenger hunt thing, the person that he had come with, they ended up getting closer because they were trying to figure out the clues" showing the framework was able to provide a social scaffold platform whereby students are able to meet, collaborate and socialise over the various tasks. Even speculatively, the group consensus was that they could all "imagine people going around and doing it together", also sharing "Definitely like a really good like icebreaker way to get to know each other" and "It could definitely be a good way for meeting new people", showing that at its core, the social induction framework is successful in its main intent.

Influencing Confidence and self-efficacy – One series of comments focused specifically on discussions around self-awareness of confidence levels in those taking part in the instances of the framework, hinting at students intentionally engaged in self-improvement rich activities using the framework as a catalyst to self-reflect. Comments such as "Like it wouldn't get me completely like confident with other systems and stuff, but it's definitely like a good kind of soft introduction" suggested to us that there was perhaps an application of the framework in sparking reflection in students as they engage, which could be a longer, slower but impactful self-development trigger at the very start of their studies and an idea we could explore longitudinally as we consider transition as a theme beyond just transition into HE, but also through their student journey. Our future work on this will explore the benefits of adopting the social induction framework to support student transition between levels of study.

Recommendations for adoption/adaption

Balance challenge with inclusivity carefully in early design discussions	Be mindful of the learning curve(s) associated with new digital systems (confidence and proficiency)	
Keep "text" to a minimum to maintain engagement and motivation	Brief those within and peripheral to your application of the framework before implementation	
Consider ways to limit "rushing through" or "disconnected" student experiences of the activities	Select your student interface with approachability and tone in mind, as well as functionality	
A focused and targeted communication /dissemination strategy is critical for awareness	Consider the intended (and unintended) benefits of your activities (confidence, self- efficacy, socialising etc)	
Consider wider applications of the framework between levels of study (i.e., not limited to Year 1 induction)		

Summary

Our own next step of applying and developing the social induction framework will explore refinements to the framework, based on the points and themes emerging from our findings and reflections on strengths weaknesses across our three instances of implementation. As that work proceeds, the appendices of this final collaborative project report are aimed at giving HE colleagues a useful and flexible toolkit for them to adopt and adapt the Social Induction Framework in their own contexts.

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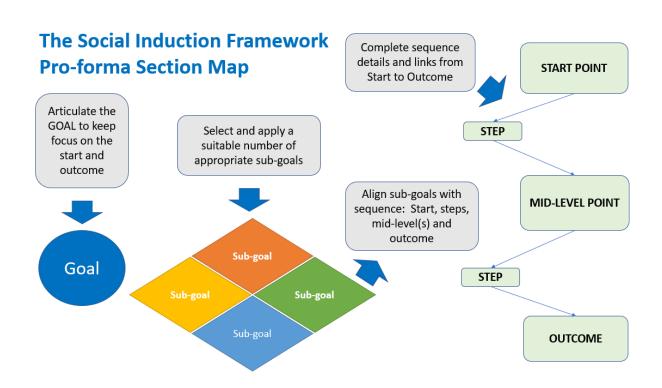
Vegt, N., Visch, V., Ridder, H.D. and Vermeeren, A., 2015. Designing gamification to guide competitive and cooperative behavior in teamwork. In *Gamification in education and business* (pp. 513-533). Springer, Cham.

Appendices: Toolkit Pro-forma of the Social Induction Framework with guidance

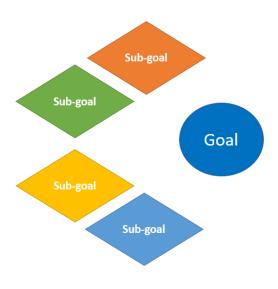
The Social Induction Framework is available as a separate editable document on the project page on the QAA website. Screenshots are also available below. Add link

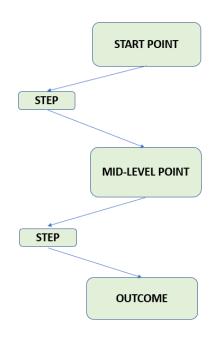
The Social Induction Framework Component Hierarchy



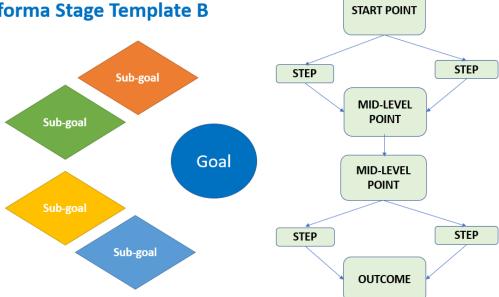


The Social Induction Framework Pro-forma Stage Template A





The Social Induction Framework Pro-forma Stage Template B



This document was produced as part of the <u>QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project – Student Induction Framework.</u>