What is learner identity?
Recent educational research defines learner identity as a ‘relational, socially negotiated process’

The relational nature of identity means that individuals are not the sole constructors of their identity, that identity is no longer viewed as an entirely internal process. Rather, identity is co-constructed with interested others (Reeves, 2009).

Who is the average University of Bolton Student?
UoB attracts learners of all ages from diverse backgrounds and many fall into the classification of ‘non-traditional’ students who do not possess the learner identity associated with those who typically progress to university.

For the purposes of this study, a non-traditional student has been defined as a learner who has entered higher education after their 25th birthday or from a socio-economic class not usually associated with attendance at University.

Literacy & Social Transition
A continuous theme in research surrounding literacy is its link to class structure and the concept of education as a form of social transition.

“What I can’t talk to the people I live with anymore … or them out there [academic friends at the university] cause I can’t learn the language” (Russell, 1991)

Habitus
Habitus is not a fixed state but one which can transform when exposed to cultural, social, symbolic and economic exchanges within new social spaces or fields. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

This suggests that, to enable those from non-traditional backgrounds to be successful in the transition into HE, attention needs to be paid to helping them negotiate the new experiences at the early stages and to adopt the necessary skills, including academic language and literacy, to enable them to develop a sense of belonging.

What is Academic Literacy?
Waters and Waters (1992) discuss that being academically literate means to be competent in a range of metacognitive skills and to be able to apply these skills appropriately in the context of the learners' individual discipline.

“Writing (2015) states that academic literacy is a “communicative competence” (ibid, p. 6); learners must possess not only skills such as critical thinking, reflective writing, reasoning and problem solving but should be able to use these within an “academic discourse community” (Swales, 1990, p.21).

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Lillis and Tuck (2014) discuss the need for academic assessment to embrace methods that recognise the identity of students from non-traditional backgrounds and value “different meaning-making resources, in terms of discourses, languages and language varieties”

Research Questions
With a mix of formal qualifications and experience in employment, University of Bolton students may have little knowledge of academic writing or the study skills needed to be successful in higher education.

1. To ascertain the identity of learners at UoB including what social class they perceive themselves to be.
2. To assess the extent that students arrive at the University prepared for the level of expected study of them and consider whether social background plays a part in this.
3. To examine whether of the current academic support services students are most aware of and consider to be of benefit.
4. To analyse whether student background should be a factor in developing academic literacy and study skills provision for students.

Conclusions
Focus group discussion suggest that the inclusion of study skills form “part of a broader process of personal, academic and professional development” (Colvin, 2001, p.44). Incorporating skill development within subject teaching through use of the ‘Academic Socialisation’ or ‘Academic Literacies’ models may be more beneficial for students, but previous research highlights that these models can place unrealistic demands on learners’ time.

The feedback obtained indicates that considering aligning student and academic staff expectations of the skills needed and focusing on developing independent learning would be a good starting point.

Qualitative Feedback
Learners were asked what was significant in their own development of academic literacy.

Academic source: Focus group discussion seems to indicate that only some students incorporate study skills into the course content, usually at head.

Support services: The theme considered services provided at the University following the study skills based workshops, 2009. Generally, the respondents agreed that when they had engaged with the study support services available at the University, the experience has been a positive one.

Communication: It may be argued that those who emphasized being aware of the support services available often at the time put forward to higher and lower (2009) but students are not well doing one anonymous comment because they do not know what the expects, and they expect to be in a similar situation as them in the State Income.

Independent learning: A number of students mentioned their own levels of confidence either with a non-traditional background, as a reason for the study support participation of all UoB, which encourage students from different backgrounds to seek out university, but there are some comments as the social and economic advantage have a further level below that level (Swales & Passeron, 1990).

References
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Development of academic literacy
Economic background. Only 39% of the £15-25,000 income bracket said they were happy with their current level of skills compared to 55% of the £26-60,000 group.
16% of the 17-24 age group (51% of the total participants in this age bracket) responded that they had found informal peer support group, either face to face or via social media, helpful.
Social Class Only 45% in the lower class agreed or strongly agreed that they were happy with their study skills.
Family and friends Education: Of those who agreed or strongly agreed that attending study sessions had been sufficient in developing their academic literacy and study skills, 37% of respondents had a family member or close friend who attended university.