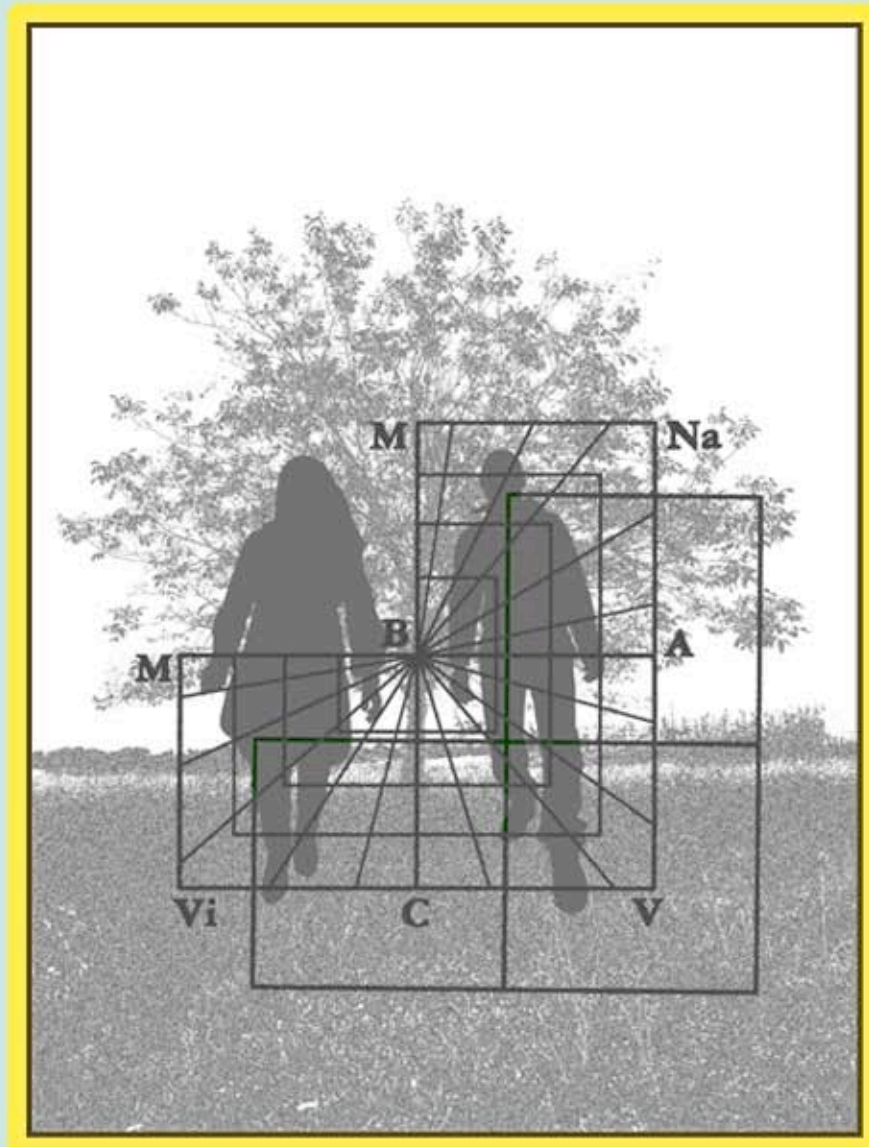


# United Kingdom - Comparative Report

Discussion paper 2012/7.6.

Muir Huston & Mike Osborne







Tertiary Higher Education for People in Mid-life (THEMP)

## **UK: Scotland - Comparative Report**

### **Discussion paper 2013/7.6**

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## 1. Introduction

Some of the main challenges of the ageing knowledge economy are said to be a constant upgrading of the skills of the active population; mitigating new and old social risks. In an ageing society and within a globalised *knowledge economy*, people in mid-life are increasingly exposed to social risks of exclusion from the labour market.

They are also excluded from formal Lifelong Learning (LLL), specifically Tertiary Lifelong Learning (TLL). The access of mid-life learners to TLL and their retention in the system have an increasing relevance for the socio-economic sustainability of the ageing European knowledge society.

Opening Higher Education (HE) for mid-life learners, designing flexible pathways from VET and professional experience to higher education, flexible learning arrangements conciliating family-work life and learning and the adaptation of didactical/pedagogical methods in HE are challenges to affront problems of the ageing knowledge society.

The European Project THEMP (Tertiary Education for People in Midlife) focuses on the education and training mission of the Universities and asks for the measures taken by the universities to expand their educational and training activities beyond the traditional students to a wider range of citizens and in wider range of learning environments.

The project aims to study tertiary life learning (TLL) programs at universities in 7 EU-member states (Germany, Italy, Spain, Hungary, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Netherlands) with respect to inclusion of mid-life learners and social impact. It provides a description of the landscapes of tertiary lifelong learning in these countries, but the core contributions are case studies of three universities in each country. Main focus lies in the analysis of the weak and strong points of the lifelong learning activities in the selected universities and their strategies in developing and implementing training programs.

In the UK, it was decided to select the three cases from Scotland. This approach while not representative of the UK, was adopted as the system in Scotland is quite distinct, at all levels of education (primary. Secondary and tertiary) and, given political devolution, is likely to continue to diverge from the rest of the UK.

The three cases were:

- The University of Glasgow with a specific focus on its BA Community Development programme located within its School of Education
- The Lifelong Learning Academy at the University of the West of Scotland which is responsible for its considerable part-time provision and with a focus on its programmes in the areas of IT, Business, and Health and Social Care
- The Open University in Scotland, a National Centre of the Open University with a specific focus on its provision in Health and Social Care and Community Education.

## 2. LLL and TLL in national context

### 2.1 Short overview of the post-compulsory educational system in the UK

The system of post-compulsory education within the UK consists of universities, higher education colleges (HECs), further education colleges (FECs) and private providers. In 2011, Table 1 shows the number of universities and of HECs. This latter category offers HE level courses, but many until recently have not been of sufficient size to merit the award of university status by the Privy Council. However a number of HECs were awarded the title of university in 2012 by Privy Council, with the minimum number of students required for this status having been reduced from 4000 to 1000 full-time equivalent students. Many of these new universities are private sector institutions, a trend being encouraged by the UK government in England.

	Universities	Higher Education Colleges
England	89	42
Scotland	14	5
Wales	10	1
NI	2	2
<i>UK</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>50</i>

FECs are providers of both non-advanced vocational below HE level and of short cycle Higher Education provision of one or two years, equivalent in the national credit frameworks across the UK of one or two years of the Bachelors offered in universities and HECs. Parry *et al.* (2012) detail their role in England, where some 349 FECs exist, the majority (283) offering some HE level provision.

Private providers of lifelong learning are something of a mystery, since little by way of data is collected. A recent report (Simpson 2009) suggests that there are over 12000 of these providers in the UK, but with a small number of large providers undertaking most of the work, most of which in non-advanced vocational provision.

### 2.2 General LLL and TLL-Strategy

This report does not seek to detail all the nuances of the other countries of the UK since education provision is the devolved responsibility of the Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly and the Department of Education Northern Ireland. The most important point perhaps to make is that there are different fee regimes in the four countries. Universities in England for example are able to charge the individual up to £9000 per year for Higher Education courses, whilst there are no fees in Scotland for its own residents, and other residents of the EU, England, Wales and North Ireland excepted. This difference is likely to affect decision-



making by students, including adults, differentially in the four countries.

Diversity and segmentation between HE providers is also a key contextual issue in relation to lifelong learning in HE. The major strand of lifelong learning in recent decades has been to widen participation for groups who do not traditionally enter HE including people from lower socio-economic groups and certain ethnic minority groups. There has been a considerable shift in focusing on this area in adult education in HE rather than the emphasis on liberal adult education for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the UK. It would appear that widening participation (WP) for adults is embraced more by some institutions than by others. While recognising that institutions would have their own strategies for widening participation, Woodrow (2000) worried about creating a dual sector - where some institutions would deal with access and WP, while others went on about their traditional research led missions. In support of Woodrow's fears, and in spite of the appearance of supportive comments in institutional mission statements, there is some evidence that there is a division among institutional types with regard to access and WP (SFC, [2009a](#)).

*Each institution has individual benchmarks representing the expected participation for each group, given particular characteristics (such as subject of study, age and entry qualifications) of the students it recruits. Post-1992 institutions generally perform at or significantly above their benchmarks while the English Russell Group institutions (16 of the most research intensive institutions) generally perform at or significantly below their benchmarks. (NAO, 2008: p.7)*

Those from higher social groups have greater than expected participation rates at Russell Group and Post-1992 institutions and their dominance in highly competitive subjects like Medicine and Dentistry continues (Bekhradnia, 2003; Thomas *et al.* 2005; NAO, 2008). This is highly significant for students' opportunities for progression in a range of careers as the final report, [Unleashing Aspiration](#), by the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions recognises.

One consequence of aspects of flexibility on diversity may be the reproduction of existing segmentation in the sector with a concentration of WP entrants in less prestigious institutions and in specific subject areas.

It cannot be said that there is a comprehensive national strategy for lifelong learning in any of the countries of the UK. Over the last two decades there have been a range of policy papers in the area. In Scotland the site of these cases, it is possible to observe a strong alignment by the mid-2000s between policy, structure and funding incentives. This was consolidated with an eye for the future in 2005, when the Scottish Funding Council published *Learning for All*, the results of a Scottish Higher Education Funding Council/Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SHEFC/SFEFC) working party's review of widening access policy and strategy. This document articulated the priorities for widening access in both FE and HE for the following five years and beyond. Further it suggested that whilst some progress had been made in the accessing FE and HE, it has been slow for individuals from the most deprived areas still unlikely to access HEIs.

### ***2.3 Institutional Setting and Regulations with respect to TLL***

There have been six subsequent iterations of Learning for All. Despite a range of funding incentives from the funding councils rather than legislation (see Osborne 2013) the statistics show that the proportion of those entering universities from the most deprived areas continues to be less than that from less deprived areas, and does not represent the nature of the population as a whole.

For many universities TLL is simply not a priority when set against undertaking research and mainstream teaching. It is possible to find pockets of provision that create flexibility for adults such as the use of Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and part-time or summer under-graduate programmes. However these activities tend to only be found in certain institutions, and typically not those that are research-intensive. The funding incentives for TLL are not great enough and there are few levers in place to force universities to focus on learners in mid-life.

### ***2.4 Relevance to the Labour Market and Middle-Age specific TLL-Activities***

That provision which exists and which is targeted to adults often is vocationally relevant. For examples in FECs there are a range of courses to prepare students for work-related degrees. There is little or anything which has been designed for those in mid-life specifically although as our cases indicate this group is often the beneficiaries of provision.

### ***2.5 Problematic Fields: activity level, institutional and regulational barriers***

We have already indicated the essence of the problem in the UK. The biggest challenge still appears to be to create true flexibility within the system. The paucity of provision in either full-time or part-time mode offered at times and locations that suit the needs of adults, including via the use of information and communications technology, and the lack of routes based on accreditation of learning achieved other than through formal qualifications, is evident despite notable exceptions including at the University of West of Scotland (UWS), Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) and the Open University in Scotland. For example, the long-standing Part-time Forum at UWS together with the OU has recently been focusing on flexible study for higher level skills development of the workforce, and GCU through the Scottish Centre for Work-based Learning offers a BA by Learning Contract for individuals, linking learning at work to credit within an academic programme. There are also smatterings of APEL in the system, but very much at the margins and only offered for limited amounts of credit at a small number of institutions. Despite having the mechanisms in place in the system such as the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, there are few incentives either financial or regulatory.

### 3. Case Studies and Methodology

#### 3.1 *Why case studies?*

The research approach adopted by THE-MP project is the Case Study method. This method is deemed to be particularly well suited to study contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, where the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated (Yin, 1994). More specifically, the project will adopt a Multiple-Case Study research strategy, which will compare different HE programmes oriented to TLL for >45 learners across a cluster of EU Universities. The study will be exploratory (rather than purely descriptive or fully interpretative) in nature, answering the following leading research question: ‘which are the conditions under which TLL programmes become viable instruments for mid-life learners to successfully pass through labour market transitions?’ It is important to note that the Multiple Case Study research design adopted by the project does not require the adoption of a probabilistic sampling strategy for selecting the cluster of programmes of interest.

The three cases studies were chosen on the basis of a *convenience* sample. Basically, the team approached their contacts and professional networks and asked for expressions of interest from those institutions featuring suitable programmes in relation to the three main THEMP criteria:

1. Programmes with a relevant presence of >40 adults (‘mature’ students);
2. Programmes designed and administered with a relevant contribution by Universities (i.e. those HE acknowledging LLL as third mission);
3. Programmes with a focus on employment (professionalization).

#### 3.2 *The selected Scottish (UK) Case Studies*

The three cases selected for analysis were:

- the Open University in Scotland ([OUiS](#)) a National Centre of the Open University ([OU](#)), one of the largest players in open access distance learning at tertiary level and our focus concentrated on undergraduate or sub-degree provision in the areas of Health and Social Care and Community Education, which attract large numbers of entrants who match THE-MP criteria;
- the Lifelong Learning Academy ([LLA](#)) at the University of the West of Scotland ([UWS](#)) which is responsible for all part-time provision at the university's four campuses located across the West of Scotland. Again, our focus was on students studying undergraduate or sub-degree programmes that attracted a considerable number matching THE-MP criteria and included IT, Business, and Health and Social Care;
- the [BA Community Development](#) programme in the [School of Education](#) at the [University of Glasgow](#). Not only did this programme seem suitable in terms of entry requirements and professional accreditation

in relation to matching THE-MP criteria, it was of interest given its entry, delivery and placement methods and, its situation within a generally selective research intensive cultural environment.

### **3.3 Methodology**

At the core of each case study stands an analysis of statistically available data, documentary analysis of institutional websites and documents in the public domain. In addition, a series of interviews were conducted with senior decision makers; lecturing staff on the programmes of interest; and, students who matched THE-MP criteria. Interviews were conducted between January 2012 and March 2013 either by telephone, Skype or face to face and lasted for between 45 minutes and one hour. All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. The following interviews were undertake

**Ouis:** 1 x Strategic Decision Maker and also Lecturer on programmes of interest; 2 x Lecturing staff with relevant experience on programmes of interest; ? X student interviews (problematic recruiting, however, have access to a number of research/evaluation reports conducted with students in Scotland and on programmes of interest – attempts will be made to undertake at least a couple of students interviews (discussions ongoing)

**LLA:** 1 x Strategic Decision Maker; 2 x Lecturing staff with relevant experience on programmes of interest; 1 x student on programme of interest and matching THE-MP criteria (as above attempts continue and we also have detailed academic/biographical transcriptions of suitable students)

**BA Comm. Dev.:** 1 x Strategic Decision Maker; 2 x Lecturing staff with relevant experience on programmes of interest; 9 x students on the programme of interest.

The interview protocol different slightly for each interviewee category and are included in Appendix 1. However it maintained the following general structure in order for us to compare responses and/or perspectives both within and across cases:

- General Information about the Institution and TLL-Strategy;
- Target groups;
- Decision Making;
- Implementation and Process Analysis;
- Didactical/Pedagogical Aspects;
- Evaluation and Impact;
- Social inclusion and social impact;
- Recommendations and future developments.

## 4. Description of Case Studies

### 4.1 University of Glasgow, College of Social Sciences, School of Education, BA Community Development

Founded in 1451, the University of Glasgow is the fourth oldest university in the English-speaking world. More than 16,000 undergraduates and 6,000 postgraduates from 120 countries worldwide study at the University each year which are broken down across the university's 4 Colleges in the following table:

	<b>Undergrad</b>	<b>postgrad</b>	<b>total</b>
<b>Arts</b>	3.576	684	4.260
<b>Medical, Veterinary &amp; Life Science</b>	4.411	1.097	5.508
<b>Science &amp; Engineering</b>	4.573	810	5.383
<b>Social Science</b>	4.356	3.655	8.011
<b>TOTAL</b>	<i>16.916</i>	<i>6.246</i>	<i>23.162</i>

It has a stated commitment to both widening participation in general, as the following quote suggests:

- help potential students from areas and groups where there is traditionally low participation in higher education to consider university as an option
- provide support for students once they have entered University to make sure they can complete their studies; and
- make our learning opportunities flexible.

#### 4.1.1 Context

The programme of interest is embedded within School of Education which has a Full-time equivalent (FTE) academic staff of around 90, augmented by a number of part-time and associate tutors. The School of Education is ranked 2nd in Scotland and in the top 15 in the UK for the volume of world-leading and internationally excellent research in education. It has 5 RKTG (Research and Knowledge Transfer Groups):

- Creativity, Culture and Faith
- Interdisciplinary Science Education, Technologies and Learning
- Professional Learning and Leadership
- Pedagogy, Policy and Practice
- Social Justice, Place and Lifelong Education

It is also host to a number of important research and development centres ([CRADALL](#); [Centre for Science Education](#); [Robert Clark Centre for Technological Education](#); [the PASCAL International Observatory](#); [STRADA](#))

*'The school or its predecessor, the faculty was formed from the merger of a former Teacher Education College, an existing Department of Education which was a place really for the study of theory and policy in education, and a long-standing Department of Adult and Continuing Education, DACE, which had been a centre for life-long learning for fifty years. There were a few other elements but these were all gathered up into the faculty with life-long learning as one of the unifying themes.'* Head of School

It was recently subject to a university wide restructuring which saw the following departments combined their international expertise in research education and teaching to form the School of Education in August 2010.

Staff come from a mixture of practice and academic backgrounds very much related to area or discipline. It has an operating budget of around £30 Million per annum. It delivers Access courses and has a very successful Open Programme offering classes in everything from Biology to Hieroglyphics within the following structure:

- Adult and Continuing Education
- Curriculum Studies
- Educational Studies
- Religious Education

The specific nature of the programme under consideration is to provide professional development opportunities to those engaged in paid or unpaid activity in the area of Community Learning and Development. The Student interviewees were a mix of long time volunteer and community activists looking to gain formal qualifications to either aid them in the search for more secure employment, to perhaps gain promotion in existing employment and to also provide better prospects in the Community Development labour market. Others were looking to new careers after changes in personal circumstances or changes in outlook. Given this focus and the nature of the employment and course materials, a strong element of social justice and issues such as empowerment and emancipation featured in the narratives. Most funding from traditional undergraduate sources (Student Loans) while employer support in relation to funding students is decreasing.

In addition to University regulations concerning academic awards, the Degree programme is validated/accredited by the Standards Council for Community Learning Development (CLD) in Scotland. Local Authorities, third sector and voluntary sector act as both stakeholders in and beneficiaries of the programme.

#### **4.1.2 Development of programme of interest**

The programme was originally developed as a result of demand from unqualified community work assistants and they were mainly in the Community Development Department of Strathclyde Social Work Department around 18 years ago:

*'It was, the very first impetus I suppose was, came from unqualified community work assistants and they were mainly in the Community Development Department of the Social Work Department and it was council workers. So they were getting leave to go on course and they were trying to, the council were behind it because they all wanted their workers to be fully qualified. So the bulk of the students were coming from that kinda background. And also, they also gave us a secondment of a community development worker to come and do some of the practise teaching on it. This is the very, very beginning. I'm talking about, you know, like eighteen years ago. And then we moved from that to expanding to other kinds of organisations. So we then had the voluntary sector coming in and it was very much the employer would either pay for the fees or pay for the support and there would have to be a negotiation for them to release the student for one and a half days. And then as time goes on, you know, there are much more, a much more diverse group of organisations in community development now to include things like asylum seekers support and, you know...'* (Lecturer, UoG)

#### **4.1.3 Organisation and cooperation**

There is multidisciplinary co-operation to some extent in relation to the academic background of staff and in terms of programme content for example sociology, psychology, adult learning/education. In addition, there are strong links with colleges who deliver HNC and HNDs in relevant areas to feed into direct entry. This degree programme provides a professional qualification to work in Community Development, Youth Work, Community Work and related fields, endorsed by the [Standards Council for CLD](#) in Scotland after a rigorous evaluation. 5 year approval before re-approval required. Stakeholders include Local Authorities, third sector including charities and voluntary organisations that sit on programme boards and also offer placement opportunities to students. As noted above, the main drivers are the Community Development staff at the university but in conjunction with demand from stakeholders and professional bodies.

#### **4.1.4 Origin and rationale of programme**

The course is designed to develop both the practical and analytical skills of the students to effectively work with a range of communities to bring about personal and social change. The programme is structured with a balance of 60 % academic and 40% practice based carried out on organised and assessed placements. The

programme is specifically designed for people who are working, paid or unpaid in the field. They attend classes a day and a half per week from September to May. Students explore a range of themes including social justice and equality, local and global contexts, social action, sustainable change and participatory approaches: all of these are linked back to the work they are doing in the community. A major component is the practice placement which provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate competence as workers in a different setting, thereby demonstrating the transferability of their skills. A range of placement opportunities are available by negotiation with the teaching team and in association with stakeholders mentioned above.

#### **4.1.5 Marketing and outreach**

In relation to marketing and outreach both supply (community workers) and demand side (stakeholders) factors can be identified. Marketing is a mix of official university marketing plus specific activities and events targeted at stakeholders and word of mouth recommendations from present and past students. In addition, there are as noted a number of links with specific Further Education colleges. Students are targeted due to the nature of entry requirements which require that entrants must have 12 -16 hours practice experience prior to starting course. Students are paid or unpaid workers, volunteers, or community activists and many have had previous careers:

*I would say that the majority of our class are older, or mature students, they're all mature students. Some of us have done degrees before, some of us have done education before, a lot of us have got children – so in some sense it's the fact that we're all almost in the same boat – that was quite supportive. So it's not a class... it's not a course that a long of young people just go into straight from school. It tends to be people who either have been working in the field or people like me that have come to, sort of, via other directions. (Student LW)*

Formal qualifications are not required for entry. The focus of the programme is on the provision of a professional qualification to work in Community Development, Youth Work, Community Work and related fields. In relation to branding, in keeping with the ethos of the programme there is a focus appropriate to the target group and ethos of inclusion, empowerment and social change

#### **4.1.6 Implementation of the process**

The programme is generally three years full-time (although direct entry to later years of the programme with advanced standing is possible and dedicated links exist) with 60% academic based and 40% practice elements directly linked with a specific area of employment; and indeed a specific form of professional practice – namely Community Development. The programme team work to create Innovation of the professional field through development and sharing of best practice updated as required to address social and



economic changes in field and as a requirement of accreditation.

Support for students is available through Programme, School, College and University level support systems and standard university regulations are in operation relating to suspension and resumption of studies. Students may also exit the programme and may use the acquired credit to transfer to other programmes. As noted above, dedicated lecturing staff (one full-time lecturer and 2 x 0.6 University teachers) have both academic qualifications and practice experience in the field. Teaching staff are well aware of the specific demands in relation to the target group:

*'Well there's two, there's kinda, I think there's maybe three differences. The first one is that we have to put extra effort into getting people who are on that kind of course who have no qualifications usually. ... To get them up to the scratch for that kind of level. And then there's also the fact that they're all working. Which means that there's extra pressure on them so we have to be aware of that and sensitive to that..... So we have to put in that extra effort and we've got to take coherence of the fact that they're working and they're actually, and I suppose it's quite unusual to be merging the academic thing with the professional qualifications.'* (Lecturer)

#### **4.1.7 The programme**

The course draws on traditions of adult education, community learning and development, social inclusion, empowerment and critical social theory with an emphasis on group work and interactive problem solving approaches to learning. It is generally of three years duration, to Bachelor level, but students can exit at year 1 or year 2 at either Certificate of Diploma level. Students are organised by Level and of mixed age and gender composition; although due to entry criteria there are few younger students and while in earlier years the intake was predominantly female, the gender balance in recent years has been more equitable. Entrants must have 12 -16 hours practice experience prior to starting the course. Students are paid or unpaid workers, volunteers, or community activists. Formal qualifications are not required for entry although all applicants are subject to interview and in some respects the entry route and attendance and placement requirements could be considered as irregular within the context of the University of Glasgow. Attendance is compressed into one and a half full days which makes it easier to fit in with employment, placement or volunteering commitments. The course is structured as follows:

- Year 1 – 1.5 days per week
  - Community development and social action models
  - Local and global contexts
  - Practice methodology for community development and social action
  - Social theories 1
  - Transformational practice.

- Year 2 – 1.5 days per week
  - Lifelong learning and social change
  - Empowerment strategies and practice models
  - Organisation, planning and evaluation
  - Critical practice for empowerment
  - Social theories 2
  - Critical practice.
- Year 3 – 1 day per week plus 12- 16 hours of practice
  - Social theories 3
  - Research methods
  - Research project
  - Practice placement.

The programme operates on a compressed model of attendance with one full day at university and 0.5 days on placement. It utilises a group work approach as appropriate for its focus on inclusion and empowerment. Some elements of traditional lecture style but minimal to facilitate group work and interaction. The course is supported by a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) – Moodle - allowing an element of blended learning. There are strong elements of work-based learning reinforced through assessed placements. Students are required to undertake a practice based/focused project in their final year.

There are no fixed groupings in classes. Students are allocated groups in each of their modules. Groupings are mixed; as a function of the course is dealing with diversity. As with all group work, there are issues of equal participation and voice. Tutors are aware of these issues and try and deal with where possible. Guidance is provided in relation to study choices and career paths and attempts are made to foster social networks amongst students.

There is the possibility of carrying out an overseas placement in the third year of the programme. In addition there are annual study trips which, although not part of the degree programme, are run by the course team and enrich the learning of students by exposing them to different cultures and alternative forms of practice. In recent years students have visited Kathmandu, Mumbai, New York, Amsterdam and Ireland.

#### **4.1.8 Evaluation and Impact**

In terms of evaluation, the programme is subject to University regulations and systems for student feedback which includes student representatives on programme committees and regular course and programme evaluations. In terms of assessment the programme has to satisfy university regulations in terms of matching assessment to learning outcomes and aims and objectives and all course are subject to internal scrutiny in the form of quality assurance regulations and externally for the purposes of accreditation.

*We have the same kind of external examining situation. We have the same kind of teaching marking and all the rest of it. Same procedures and principals that everybody else has for undergraduate teaching. (Lecturer)*

Assessments are a mix of group work, presentations, placements assessments, essays and a final year project. Assessment is based on 60% academic work and 40% on practice based assessment on placement and is marked according to the university grading system. The practice placement assesses the professional competences of the students. Students may exit with a Cert HE, but the expected award is a BA Community Development. Courses are credit rated and at each level, are based on the SCQF which allows translation in to ECTS points. Each module in the programme is generally worth 20 Credits, although the project is worth 40 Credits.

In terms of the impact of the programme on their career, both lecturing staff and students recognise its impact:

*Yes, job wise, uh ....., yea.... Well it does, uh huh,... It can make a whole difference, it can make a difference to the whole family actually because it propels people into being able to earn a middle class income, it's encouraging for the families ..... it's incredibly empowering because they feel as if they have come through something.  
lecturer*

And

*I, well, I think I'm more confident in knowing that I've come to this level on the course, that I'm able to pursue learning at this level .... SA*

*It has changed me, it has changed me. I was, I was shy but I got on with people right, but I was very quiet on first meeting, I would wait and gradually they'd get to know me. I'm still like that but I think...SB*

Staff are selected in the usual way and may come from either a practice or academic background – those from practice background would need to demonstrate ability to perform at required academic standard. Staff teaching on the BA Community Development programme have both practical experience in the field, and also academic qualifications at least to Masters level, and some are currently working toward doctorates. Staff have either masters level award in the teaching or adults or postgraduate award in teaching in higher education. Staff who teach on the programme are members of the School of Education and also belong to a Knowledge Transfer Research Group. Staff can take up opportunities delivered by the university in relation to CPD, but may also attend conferences and workshops in cognate areas. Staff are located within usual academic structures and are members of the Community Development group with responsibility for developments to the programmes under their control.

#### **4.1.9 General summary of the case study**

This programme provides a good example of how higher education can provide a route to professionalisation for under-qualified staff in the sector and as such is directly related to project aims. In order for provision such as this to be main-streamed, it needs to clearly identify a need in collaboration and partnership with external stakeholders. But the success shows that with appropriate teaching and learning strategies students

can be developed to a professional standard even for those starting with low, or no formal entry qualifications. It is argued that this programme through ongoing development and in conjunction with external stakeholders is subject to updating and improvement and claims to be responsive to students and external stakeholders feedback.

As noted, teaching learning and assessment regimes must be suited to the target group and dependent upon the aims and objectives of the course, and must be such as to demonstrate student achievement of intended learning outcomes.

In general this can be seen as a regional initiative (and indeed developed to cater for demand from local authorities in the West of Scotland. but also has national level input in the form of the Community Standards Board. However, it does engage with issues at the global level.

The target group is specifically focused on the professionalisation of community workers. Students chose to do the programme for various reasons mostly connected with continuing employment and professionalisation. The students were a mix of long time volunteer and community activists looking to gain formal qualifications to either aid them in the search for more secure employment, to perhaps gain promotion in existing employment and to also provide better prospects in the Community Development labour market. Others were looking to new careers after changes in personal circumstances or changes in outlook. Students progress in a cohort – there are possibilities to take breaks and re-enter the programme and it is possible to exit with an award at Certificate level. Students have an input into their learning trajectories through the choice of topics and the subject matter of the project in year 3.

The programme is designed to allow both the transfer of knowledge and the co-creation of knowledge through the use of group work, interactive sessions and reflections on practice. Key drivers are issues of social justice, empowerment and positive change in people's lives and communities. There are close connections between the professional body which oversees the field and the staff delivering the programme. While there is some staff involvement in EU funded programmes, this tends to be through projects and networks rather than accessing training activity.

This is a formal and accredited degree programme and is firmly embedded in the university's undergraduate provision and of three years duration. However, even though adult learning could be said to be embedded in the university, like other subject areas, it must justify demand and a market for courses and programmes. As noted above the programme is embedded in university provision and external partners play a major role in validation and design in conjunction with programme team. In addition to the accreditation and validation of the programme, it is subject to the usual quality assurance mechanisms and regulations for all undergraduate programmes.

In general students apply as individuals, but in the past, organisations, predominantly local authorities would send their staff to take the programme. However, there may also be connections between organisations in relation to practice placements and assessment. It could be argued that the end-users are the people in the communities where students and graduates of this programme work. But students are keen advocates of the programme in relation to word of mouth recruitment.

## **4.2 University of the West of Scotland, Lifelong Learning Academy (Programmes of Interest: IT, Business, Health and Social Care)**

The institution was founded in 1897 as a College of Technology - granted university status in 1992 as University of Paisley; and merged with Bell College Hamilton, to form the University of the West of Scotland in 2007.

Founded in 1897 in Paisley as a College of Technology it has always maintained close links with local and surrounding industry including engineering and textile design and manufacture. It was granted university status in 1992, and merged with Bell College Hamilton, to form the University of the West of Scotland in 2007. This encompasses four campuses with Ayr, Dumfries, Hamilton and the main campus in Paisley. It has a long standing tradition of widening participation and adult learning through the delivery of vocationally relevant programmes. It has the highest proportion of part-time students in Scotland. The University is organised into 3 faculties and 8 academic schools (Business, Education, Social Sciences, Engineering, Science, Computing, Creative and Cultural Industries, and Health, Nursing and Midwifery). UWS is currently home to 17000 undergraduate and postgraduate students with around 35 % being part-time. It has a tradition of vocationally relevant and career focused degree programmes often in collaboration with local industry. More recently it has diversified into media, technologies and gaming. However, it maintains its links with business and public and third sector organisations.

Its vision suggests:

*For UWS to have a transformational influence on the economic, social and cultural development of the West of Scotland and beyond, by producing relevant, high quality, inclusive higher education and innovative and useful research.*

### **4.2.1 Context**

The Lifelong Learning Academy (LLA) is the latest incarnation of what started out as a Department of Continuing Education at the University of Paisley, and then in a period of restructuring and change in focus became the Centre for Lifelong Learning, before finally in part as a result of the recent merger which resulted in the creation of the University of the West of Scotland became the LLA. The LLA has responsibility for part-time students who comprise at least a third of all students. It operates a team of Educational Guidance Advisors (EGAs) which are responsible for assisting students in all aspects of the programmes of study.

*Flexibility in the delivery of our programmes, excellent student support, and help with funding – with over 20 years experience in delivering part-time programmes, we understand what's really important to our students. At UWS, you'll find an inspiring environment and a range of career-focused study options designed to enable you to develop personally and professionally. Professor Anne McGillivray, Dean of Students*

Academic staff are almost all located in Faculties and Schools. The LLA is a University Department with responsibility for all part-time provision and comprises Academic related and Administrative and Clerical Staff. Overseen by Dean of Students (Academic) and Director (Academic related) the LLA comprises around 40 staff with 13 Educational Guidance Advisors (EGAs), five Lifelong Learning Coordinators and three Lifelong Learning Coordinators.

Financial support for students is mostly through the Scottish Funding Council but CPD, service agreements and initiatives with public, private and third sector providers. Individual students in the LLA use a mixture of SAAS, Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) in some instances employers will provide some support, but in the current climate this is declining.

Students are a mix of those seeking professional qualifications to further chosen career (BA Childhood Practice/Studies; BSc Health Studies), or to gain new qualifications to advance in present career, or provide them with more options and opportunities (BSc Information Technology BA Business Studies).

In relation to provision, courses are offered across the University's campuses and portfolio, it also promotes flexible day, evening, off-site and online study options with qualifications from Certificate in Higher Education to Degree and MSc level and thrice yearly entry with intakes in September, February and June. As with mainstream provision, all part-time programmes are subject to university quality assurance procedures which include University wide student evaluation surveys and a student representative system. Academic provision is subject to UWS Regulations concerning academic awards within the SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) and EGAs are active in providing opportunities for credit transfer.

#### **4.2.2 Development of programme(s) of interest**

The Lifelong Learning Academy originally started life as the Department of Continuing Education offering flexible part-time degree routes through its Combined Awards Degree which allowed students a real choice in the construction of their degree programmes.

The LLA works with a diverse range of private and public sector organisations including: Marks and Spencer, Strathclyde Police and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Dependent upon provision, for example in areas of CPD or employer and community engagement, this may be stakeholder or industry led. Main provision is university led albeit in response to demand.

The LLA also has responsibilities for Employer and Community Engagement, CPD, Widening Participation and a specific team for Health and Nursing Studies and provides students support, guidance and information services to part-time students. The guidance and advice team are in constant negotiation with discipline and subject areas to increase and expand part-time study opportunities and there are links with colleges who deliver HNC and HNDs in relevant areas to feed into direct entry. However control of content remains at subject level. The LLA as noted has a dedicated Business Development team and also a resident researcher in addition it also benefits from university corporate activities and support.

Students on programmes of interest (Business, IT & Computing, Nursing, Health and Social Care) meet the criteria of the THEMP project in terms of their expectations and aspirations in relation to labour market expectations and issues of career entry, progression and change. For some professionals there may also be requirements in relation to CPD. Financial aid and access to funding is dependent upon circumstances although many students will qualify for some form of aid. In addition, there may in some cases and in some instances be some form of employer support. Student transcripts provide evidence of a number of elements of flexibility in operation.

The programmes of interest all have flexible entry with dedicated individual support and guidance in planning of individual programme of study available from an allocated EGA and much of the focus of provision is on Widening participation, social inclusion and up-skilling (Europe 2020). Students in general can be seen as non-traditional in terms of previous education – the majority are adults with many meeting THEMP criteria for inclusion and with aims aligned with TLL.

*Yeah, yeah, I think wider access and part time provision are very much the things which UWS is spectacularly good at and which sits apart from other of the other universities and I think it's something that should be... it should be commended for 'cause again, all we hear in the press is the struggle that other universities have to actually... but because it's heavy going and you're getting very often a type of student that requires far more mentoring, far more care, but in the long run, you know, we're producing a finished product. (Lecturer, Business School)*

#### **4.2.3 Organisation and cooperation**

The LLA also has responsibilities for Employer and Community Engagement, CPD, Widening Participation and a specific team for Health and Nursing Studies and provides students support, guidance and information services to part-time students. The guidance and advice team are in constant negotiation with discipline and subject areas to increase and expand part-time study opportunities and there are links with colleges who deliver HNC and HNDs in relevant areas to feed into direct entry. However control of content remains at subject level. The LLA as noted has a dedicated Business Development team and also a resident researcher in addition it also benefits from university corporate activities and support. The LLA also maintains strong links with FE colleges and offers direct entry with advanced standing to some course and programmes for example in IT and Business Studies.

#### **4.2.4 Origin and rationale of programme(s)**

In relation to the project aims and objectives, the activities of the LLA seek to provide opportunities for access and widening participation, with a considerable number of mid-career adults matching criteria for TLL in relation to supply, and demand in relation to Business Development initiatives with public, private and third sector stakeholders and marketing of CPD provision.

The flexibility on offer would appear to be a major driver for students who can study at their own pace and choice of time and also allows them to take breaks and then resume studies while continuing to build credit towards an award. Students are a mix of those seeking professional qualifications to further chosen career (BA Childhood Practice/Studies; BSc Health Studies), or to gain new qualifications to advance in present career, or provide them with more options and opportunities (BSc Information Technology BA Business Studies).

This flexibility and the range of provision, means that much of the provision and many of the students served by the LLA meet THEMP project criteria and many of the students are seeking new and improved career opportunities, professional recognition and/or CPD. The LLA operates an inclusive environment with a strong focus on access and widening provision but with associated academic and professional focus.

#### **4.2.5 Marketing and outreach**

In addition to targeted marketing at adults interested in part-time opportunities, the LLA is supported by UWS corporate communications and marketing professionals. As already noted, the LLA maintains strong links with public, private and third sector organisations and in some areas (Health and Social Care for example) is involved with relevant professional or sectoral organisations or bodies. Past and present students are also seen as positive ambassadors for UWS in general and the LLA in particular.

In addition to general marketing, some focus will be specific to each campus depending on specific aspects of provision. This will also include community engagement and links with local authorities and other stakeholder organisations. As noted above, access and flexibility are crucial to part-time programmes and the ability to study at their own pace is welcomed by students. The EGAs are also proactive as noted above, in applying APEL, or APL, to allow students to claim credit and use it in support of entry. There are also access and introductory courses to help students with little recent educational experience to gain academic study skills to help them succeed in tertiary level study.

*They gave me a lot of guidance. They were sitting with me and they said “this is what you can do, this is what you brought over and those experiences you have, you can combine it and follow these courses which... they are to follow up with your experiences and also with your previous studies.” So it was, you know, like build them up. (Student)*

In relation to attracting students, there is a focus on developing new skills and/or upgrading existing skills, the possible benefits in relation to new careers, or career progression or promotion in existing employment, and, personal development are all seen as possible outcomes for targeted students. Each of these possible benefits can be seen in individual student transcripts analysed for the case study.

*Especially in the management level, I have a Finance and Economy you know background, I studied psychology as well. So that was, you know, we're sitting in*



*an office and working with paper, the interaction with people was very little. So I combined that with the Management so that will help me, you know, to have a better communication skills with people. And the management part as well.*  
(Student)

#### **4.2.6 Implementation of the process**

Degree programmes are generally under the control of the relevant School although in Business, Computing and Health/Social Care and Nursing there are programmes which are specifically designed for direct entrants from FE and which are also scheduled to allow the flexibility part-time students require. Lecturers are located in Schools. Access courses and other provision is organised and delivered through the LLA but with School and Faculty support. CPD is organised by LLA with teaching staff either in house or 'bought in' from Schools.

In relation to duration of courses, provision is from short CPD provision to post-graduate degree provision with flexible entry and delivery. The EGAs make wide use of RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) and APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) as part of their role and this is conjunction with flexible modes of study on individual modules and programmes that allows students a degree of choice in when and where to study and also provides support in the transition to Higher Education. The LLA also deliver courses with professional recognition for example in areas of Health and Social Care and also in relation to Industry Certification (Microsoft, Cisco, etc.).

In relation to the professional development of the learners, this is dependent upon area of study, but obvious examples are Child/Social Care and Health and Nursing provision in relation to degree study, often allowing adults already employed in the sector to widen career and life opportunities; other examples are Microsoft, Oracle and Cisco IT Academy qualifications.

The LLA takes students from all stages of educational attainment and has provision such as First Steps at University (a Credit Bearing Access Course) completion of which guarantees a place on a part-time programme. It also actively promotes the use of credit accumulation and transfer and the Recognition/Accreditation of Prior or Experiential Learning.

There is CPD provision in areas of Computing and Health/Social Care but a major focus of the LLA is part-time undergraduate higher education based on the provision of informed and quality pre-entry, on-going, exit- guidance and support for students. Under the guidance of EGAs, individuals build credit towards awards from Certificate in Higher Education to Ordinary and Honours level and also to Masters level. As mentioned and as student transcripts attest, entry may be at Access level or first year level and especially in IT, Business and Nursing advanced entry with either prior credit or articulation agreements with Further Education colleges.

Students are given some flexibility and changes to programmes can be made although there are some boundaries although there are options for general degrees in IT and Business with appropriate guidance and information provided by EGAs.

#### 4.2.7 Programmes

The selected programmes of interest can be seen as offering opportunities for career development and/or change through the provision of a wide range of flexible course and programmes. As noted there is vast range of provision, but in relation to THEMP we concentrating on part-time degree students in areas of Childcare, IT, Business, and Health and Nursing as these tend to attract a number of students who match project criteria in terms of age and background.

In relation to the organisation of the programmes, courses are offered across the University's campuses and portfolio with flexible day, evening, off-site and online study options and three intakes in September, February and June. The university uses the Moodle platform as its VLE and in addition, the LLA maintains a Facebook page to keep students informed and as a networking platform. The LLA also operates Learning Links at each campus which provides drop-in support and guidance.

Generally students are separate due to the flexible scheduling requirements of part-time students (especially if employed) and usually attend classes in the evenings, at weekends and over the summer, although part-time students may also study with full-time in mainstream daytime provision.

EGAs help design an appropriate programme of study, taking into account an individual's needs, career plans, timescale and availability. EGAs will consider any prior credit and experience when discussing options. At each stage of their programme of study EGAs provide further advice to ensure that their choice of modules is building towards an appropriate award. EGAs also act as personal tutors, giving support and addressing any questions and issues that may arise throughout studies including future study options.

EGAs assess any existing credit, based on prior qualifications and/or professional experience. Entry requirements tend to be flexible, although some courses/programmes require formal pre-requisites. Individual learning trajectories are decided after dedicated personal guidance support and allocation of a Personal Tutor (EGA). In addition, those without relevant recent educational experience may be admitted after interview, or may be advised to enrol on one of the many focused Introductory Modules. These include:

- First Steps at University
- First Steps in IT
- First Steps in Digital Media
- Introduction to Career Planning

In relation to content and delivery, workshops or lab sessions are dependent upon subject area and requirements; projects are used alongside a range of assessment methods but generally are a component in a number of final year courses. The traditional lecture has a role, but group work is commonly used. There are opportunities for Work based learning, one example being *Work Based Opportunity* (20 Points SCQF Level 8)

*This module is designed for employees within the workplace and you will be required through reflection to explore your own role within the organisation and to take account of the roles and responsibilities of yourself and others with regard to the culture and structures under which you operate.*

Hands on training is available in some areas including Health, Nursing and Child/Social Care in relation to undergraduate provision and for example computer industry standards (Microsoft, Cisco, Adobe, Oracle, etc.) delivered as stand-alone certificated modules.

#### **4.2.8 Evaluation and Impact**

Courses are subject to regular evaluations by students with feedback possibilities during and at the end of the programme. All programmes are subject to university systems for student feedback and also student representatives on programme committee.

Lecturers are generally positive about students who match THEMP criteria. Lecturers noted the commitment and motivation of older students;

*Well, I mean, the older students... yeah, I mean, their attitude is far better, they're far more focused, they're... (overtalk). They're more socially adept, you know, they're quite happy to come and chat to you, to talk about issues. A lot of the younger ones are just are in and out, you know? (Lecturer)*

while students mentioned the flexibility but also the personal guidance and support from EGAs from pre-entry to exit.

*My first module at UWS was First Steps to University. I would say this was invaluable to me as it helped me with the foundations of studying at university. I chose to study at UWS as it has a good reputation and offered me the flexibility I needed to fit around being a mum and working part-time. I am now studying towards a BA Business degree. The guidance and support I have received with my module choices has been excellent. I would, and have already recommended UWS. (Student)*

The programmes under consideration appear to be successful in providing flexible routes through higher education for adults who match THEMP criteria. EGAs also provide guidance in relation to further study and career planning.

Students are assessed pre-entry in order to allocate prior credit and all degree programmes are assessed according to university regulations. Professional certification and accreditation may apply in relation to areas of professional or technical competence or practice. Some provision is stand alone, while much is focused

on qualifications from degree to MSc level. All credit is mapped onto the SCQF which allows transfer to ECTS.

Academic staff are recruited through standard university procedures, while Part-time tutors are often previous or current students. The EGAs have guidance or career development backgrounds as well as at least graduate qualifications and often to post-graduate level. Lecturer's professional background is dependent upon programme and discipline, but generally, all programmes of interest have people with both practice (Childcare/Health/Nursing) or industry (Business/Computing/IT) and academic experience. As noted all staff will have at least undergraduate or Masters level degrees, and in a number of instances again dependent upon programmes doctoral status. Academic staff are located in Faculties and Schools, the LLA is a university department.

All academic staff will either be Fellows of the Higher Education Academy, or have a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education. All new academic staff who do not have such are required to undertake as condition of employment. Requirements of In-service education will be dependent upon both university regulations and practice requirements. Staff development opportunities available – other activities may also occur on annual basis

The LLA operates as a distinct unit, but interacts with all other units in the university and also directly with Faculties and Schools. Staff have specific roles: Educational Guidance/Personal Tutor, Lifelong learning coordination, lifelong learning tutors, business development, careers guidance. The LLA could be said to require coordination and communication with a mix of staff across the university and also outside with professionals and other stakeholders.

#### **4.2.9 General summary of the case study**

The LLA in operation at the UWS provides a range of programmes which are aligned with project targets both in expected outcomes, and also in terms of age, motivations and labour market transitions. The creation of a dedicated information guidance and support department to deal with all part-time students and which comprises pre-entry, ongoing and exit-guidance are seen as crucial to the continued success of the Academy in attracting part-time students and offer UWS a particular niche in competition with three other universities in its immediate vicinity.

As noted key to this is the role of flexibility in allowing students to engage where, when and at their own pace within a guided programme of study.

*So when I went to Lifelong Learning, I hear about Lifelong Learning and it was perfect for me because I'm married, I have three children, at that time the kids were very little. So for me it was perfect to come in the evenings. Sort everything out at home, come back here to study for three hours, two to three times a week and sometime including the Saturday mornings. And it was perfect. So that's why I completed it that way. (Student)*

This case study suggests that such programmes can be improved and implemented effectively. What is required is support at both strategic and managerial levels, and also support from relevant staff at Faculty and School levels. As has been stressed the role of EGAs in providing not only guidance, career planning and information but also acting as Personal Tutors to students is crucial and the importance of this dedicated and personalised study support and guidance on the transition to study at higher education has been outlined above.

Marketing and outreach is a mixture of general marketing but also specific marketing depending on provision focused to some extent to provide opportunities and widen participation to a range of adult participants although as noted the LLA also has a dedicated Business Development team for work based and industry specific training.

Students choose to enrol for a variety of reasons including those relevant to THEMP but also for personal satisfaction, self-confidence and self-esteem.

While the LLA operates within the university strategic plans and mission, it maintains a clear identity in relation to access and widening participation while still recognising that academic requirements have a role. In relation to employer and community engagement, the target group may well have considerable input. As has been noted, dependent upon programme there is collaboration between university and other stakeholders and in the case of employer and community engagement the initiative may be from stakeholders. Given the university's four campuses the programmes have both local and regional relevance.

Access and introductory courses are aimed at widening participation and students generally make a personal decision to enrol in the programmes of interest and the mix may vary dependent upon programme and individual circumstances. Current and past students are seen as good for 'word of mouth' marketing

Again dependent upon programme both the transfer of knowledge and/or the co-creation of knowledge can occur – examples include professional programmes in Childcare and Health/Nursing where professional standards of practice apply. The LLA offers a range of designated programmes of varying duration and level which attract a number of entrants who match THEMP criteria. There are accredited university awards although the LLA also offers short credit bearing provision in for example Computing, Creative and Cultural Industries and Nursing/midwifery.

Due to the inherent nature of the flexibility available individuals study at their own pace and may well take time out during study but may also study on different modules with some of the same students. There is some scope for students to plan out programmes of study under guidance of EGAs. Both Business and IT offer generic and named degrees.

Adult learning is clearly embedded within the institution with the LLA as the vehicle to deliver its mission of access to vocationally relevant course and programmes.

### **4.3 Open University in Scotland (Programmes of interest: Health and Social Care, Nursing and Community Education)**

The Open University in Scotland (OUiS) is a National Centre of the Open University (OU) founded in the late 1960s with specific responsibility for the provision of higher educational opportunities to those unable to access traditional provision. It is truly Open Access and a leading global player in distance learning. In relation to provision, the case study focuses on areas of Community Development (and Engagement) and Health and Social Care, all of which attract a substantial proportion of students fitting the THEMP criteria.

*The OU was founded to open up higher education to all, regardless of their circumstances or where they live. We have students of all ages and backgrounds: school students wanting experience of university-level study, school leavers who choose to begin their careers while they study for a degree, people wanting to develop or update their skills, or change career entirely, and retired people wanting to explore new interests and keep mentally active.*  
(<http://www.open.ac.uk/about/main/the-ou-explained/the-ous-mission> )

The OU is the largest academic institution in the UK, in terms of student numbers. It has: more than 240,000 students, close to 7,000 tutors, more than 1,100 full-time academic staff and more than 3,500 support staff. They are the largest provider of higher education for people with disabilities, 45% of students had one A level or lower qualification at entry and 71% of OU students work full or part-time during their studies.

Open University students are not just in the UK. Most courses are available throughout Europe and some are available worldwide directly from the OU. Many more courses are available through our partnerships and accredited institutions.

At its core, the Open University operates a system of Open Supported Learning based on five key elements:

- high quality teaching materials;
- locally-based learning support;
- first class research and scholarship;
- highly professional logistics to deliver and support courses;
- and most of all, commitment from the students.

#### **4.3.1 Context**

The OUiS is a National Centre in the OU structure. It is organised around faculties, schools and research institutes. Faculties include:

- Arts
- OU Business School
- Education and Language Studies

- Health and Social Care
- Law School
- Maths, Computing and Technology
- Science
- Social Science

University regulations apply concerning the award of academic credit and awards in line with the SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) and in specific cases professional accreditation or recognised CPD. In general all provision will be accredited in some form. The arrangements for assuring the quality of academic provision, standards of awards and quality of the student learning experience in the Open University are outlined in a series of fact sheets entitled Quality & Standards in the Open University and cover such areas as: Framework for Academic Quality and Standards; Assessment and Qualifications; Collaborative Qualifications; Student Support and Guidance; and Accountability to Stakeholders.

Student funding is a mix of personal finance, Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), and Scottish Funding Council (SFC) grants. In addition, for some courses in areas of CPD or professional areas there may be some employer support. In relation to community engagement, third sector and other stakeholder involvement, some activities receive stakeholder and/or central/local government support. 53% of OU students in health and social care are sponsored by their employers.

*... the vast proportion of our income is through the, well primarily through the teaching grant from the Funding Council, and then increasing over the last three, or four years, and particularly now with the outcome agreement regimes in, a certain amount of strategic funding for specific policy objectives. ....*

*... I mean it's interesting we're getting—we get about half a million pounds a year at the moment for... 'cause we put a proposition that we could make a distinctive contribution to reconceptualising the relationships between the HE study and the workplace.... We also do get a certain amount of sponsorship funding, but main—it's interesting these days, it's almost entirely public sector, and I mean it runs, there's about—I think it's running at about nine per cent now. ... within the public sector it's very much in local authority health service... And, even within that it's predominantly within the social work actually. (Director OUiS)*

The Open University in Scotland has 116 staff and 526 part-time Associate Tutors supporting the 16,000 local students. Associate tutors have responsibility for specific courses and groups of students, organised generally by area. It is a recognised National Centre of the UK Open University, with some degree of autonomy given the different educational system in Scotland and distinct qualification system in comparison with England.

### 4.3.2 Development of programme(s) of interest

General university provision is delivered as a National Centre of the OU, although community engagement, third sector and workplace and trade union engagement is dependent upon local and regional and Scottish Government demands and priorities. However, this is all within the basic OU ethos and mission of open access for all to develop individual potential and increase opportunity.

*Our modules are developed by multi-disciplinary course teams. These include respected academics from other universities working alongside OU colleagues; educational technologists and media specialists contributing pedagogic and technical expertise; and external assessors to ensure academic standards are consistent with other universities. This model has helped to build the University's reputation for academic rigour and quality and has since been adopted by distance teaching institutions worldwide. (OU, [2013](#))*

There is some degree of multidisciplinary cooperation. For example Maths is taught across a range of programmes and indeed 85% of all part-time HE maths provision in Scotland is delivered by the OUIS. However, it is generally discipline specific, and linked to relevant faculties, schools and institutes.

While not formal *cooperation* as outlined above, a number of students may gain initial credit and then progress to a traditional face to face institution and as noted there are a number of links and agreements for student articulation with FE colleges. Moreover, there are other outreach initiatives of relevance to THEMP.

*So there's folk who are involved in widened participation, there's folk that are involved in articulation routes with FE, with HE, there's folk involved in employability, we're involved in a third sector internships project with a funding council so somebody sort of does that. And then there's a wee team of us who have been funded to look at developing work based learning. (Learning Development Coordinator/Associate Tutor)*

In addition, there are obvious examples of cooperation between professional bodies and relevant academic and administrative personnel in relation to provision and this may extend to links with public, private and third sector in addition to local authority social work and community education departments.

*I think probably the most, the best example is what is our biggest faculty in Scotland, which is health and social care. Where our tutors include you know, range from directors of nursing of you know the big health board.*

*Mm hmm.*

*To, people who are you know kinda shop-floor practitioners.*

*Yeah.*

*And, just about every kinda role in-between. It does mean that, I think that's really*



*good for the students actually because then it means we get a lot of really interesting feedback into the relevance or otherwise of the way we produce the curriculum as well. But that's true to some extent in other areas as well. (Director OUiS)*

### **4.3.3 Organisation and cooperation**

Dependent upon provision for example in areas of CPD or employer and community engagement provision may be stakeholder or industry led or a mix of both as outlined above in the areas of Community Development and Health and Social Care. Main provision is university led albeit in response to demand. The OUiS operates with a range of Third sector and public and private bodies including trade unions employers and local authorities.

*..... areas that I've put a lot of time into over the last three, or four years is we've got a very strong partnership with Scottish Union Learning, you know the learning arm of the STUC (Scottish Trades Union Council) ..... and sometimes more organised I mean we've got—we've now got about fifty shop floor workers at Rolls-Royce in ?? (overtalk) for example, studying on Bachelor of Engineering degrees, and that was always from the beginning a kind of tripartite thing between the OU, Unite – the union – and the employer. (Director OUiS)*

Provision is open access generally distance learning with dedicated student support through its Supported Open Learning system which provides:

- support from a tutor or online forum to help with module material, activities and assignments
- student advisers and study facilities in their own region, and
- contact with other students at tutorials, day schools or through online conferencing, online social networks, informal study groups, and events.

It also has agreements with a large number of Further Education (FE) colleges, schools as part of outreach activity and also with local authorities and voluntary and third sector organisations. The depth of the partnership working includes working with employers via consultancy services and the development of courses tailored to employer's needs. In addition it also validates courses for other organisations:

*Through its approval and validation activity, the OU makes higher education awards available to the students of organisations that wish to offer OU awards. Following their initial approval, institutions are re-approved on a regular basis to ensure that they continue to meet the OU's criteria in terms of procedures and resources for teaching, learning and assessment, staffing and staff development, academic organisation and internal quality assurance systems. (OU Partnerships)*

#### **4.3.4 Origin and rationale of programme(s)**

In relation to the project criteria, the ethos and mission of the OUiS aligns well with issues of widening participation and the creation of opportunities for adults through true open access to higher education. It works closely with stakeholders and in response to local and Scottish government actions and priorities in relation to social work and health and social care provision.

In its response to the Government consultation document, Building a Smarter Future, The Open University in Scotland put forward the case for part-time study playing a central part in a 'Scottish solution' to the funding of higher education given the vital role it plays in economic recovery, workforce development social mobility and serving remote communities.

*The Scottish Government's Skills Strategy Update has found that "The Open University in Scotland (OU) is very much in the skills business. It is working to achieve the objectives of Skills for Scotland by providing part time, flexible learning opportunities for people wherever they live in Scotland. This is equipping OU students with the higher levels skills both they and the economy need." ([OU Online](#))*

The selected programmes and staff are based around areas of Community Development and Health and Social Care which is one of the largest areas of provision for OUiS and also attracts students well matched to THEMP criteria. Courses are available at a number of levels but the structure is premised on the accumulation of credit to allow the achievement of awards at degree level, although as noted there is a range of provision including work based learning, and a range of related professional areas of practice through its flexible open access distance learning model.

#### **4.3.5 Marketing and outreach**

The Open University is a global brand, and its mission, since its inception has been to provide higher education through open access, distance learning to those who could not otherwise fulfil their potential. In order to do this it has been at the forefront in the development of quality distance learning materials. It could be argued that its original mission and its evolution is closely aligned to the general tenets of THEMP and would appear to have been able to continue to address this mission while becoming a global player and well respected provider of quality higher education using its model of Supported Open Learning.

At one level its marketing reach is global. However, through its regional and national centres, its reach is also local. It has access to and utilises extremely effectively online, print and news media, television, either generic or aimed at specific sectors and careers to relevant target groups at both the national and regional levels. This means for example, that given the devolved responsibility for education in Scotland, as noted earlier, some OUiS provision in relation to certification and accreditation differs from the UK offer and is

marketed accordingly. As noted, it also has significant partnerships and the good will of a large number of satisfied students to stimulate demand.

In relation to the target market for Ouis provision in general, and more specifically in relation to the programmes of interest to THEMP, Ouis students are traditionally mature (average age of new undergraduate students is 31) although in recent years, the number of traditional age students has increased and there has been a slight reduction in average age. In addition and relevant to THEMP criteria, more than two-thirds of OU students work full or part-time during their studies.

It also focuses on access and widening participation, employees wanting to up-skill, employers wanting employee training, individuals wanting new or improved opportunities are all catered for. In addition, as noted it is expanding its work in areas of policy delivery, community engagement at all levels and partnership with trade unions and employers.

#### **4.3.6 Implementation of the process**

Academic staff are a mix of generally full-time and linked to faculties, or by far more numerous are the part-time associated tutors who are recruited in relation to demand in relevant or cognate subject areas.

*The OU draws on the rest of the higher education system to help present its courses and support its students. Staff from other institutions serve as associate lecturers and examiners, and other universities and colleges provide premises for study centres, residential schools and examinations. ([Teaching and Learning at the OU](#))*

Associate tutors have academic and/or practice experience and qualifications directly relevant to the course they support; and, some may also have other roles within the OUIS as is the case for the academic staff interviewed for the project.

*Well I have two roles at the OU. I'm Associate Lecturer, for two modules, and I'm also a Project Officer for Work Based Learning.*

Degree programmes will be organised and implemented at school or faculty level, although other programmes as noted may well be in partnership with other stakeholders. Provision ranges from short introductory courses, taught undergraduate and postgraduate and also post graduate research degrees. In addition, as noted there are also specific professionally accredited courses, work-based learning and community engagement provision. Where provision is credit rated, this will be mapped on the levels of the SCQF.

A major attraction of the Ouis is the quality of its support and its ability to have true open access within a supportive learning environment which allows them to succeed.

*Our Openings courses are designed for people who may feel daunted by the idea of university-level study. This range of short courses aims to build confidence and study skills and prepare students for the challenge of our regular undergraduate courses. (OU [Mission](#))*

The most obvious examples of the professional development of the learners in relation to the selected programmes are in the areas of Health and Social Care. For example:

*Social care services are changing rapidly - increasingly services are delivered by multi-professional teams and staff involved in supporting vulnerable adults and children need a greater range of knowledge and skills. Organisational changes are also increasing the demands on support staff.*

*In response to changes in the sector, we have launched a new [Diploma of Higher Education in Social Care \(Scotland\)](#). The diploma has a strong emphasis on working across professional boundaries – with clients, service users and patients placed firmly at the centre. ([Social care \(Scotland\)](#))*

#### **4.3.7 Programmes**

The Ouis is able to deliver a vast range of provision but for the purposes of the THEMP project we concentrate on programmes in Health and Social Care and, Community Learning and Development although as noted there is also other relevant provision in the areas of for example community, workplace and employer engagement.

The Ouis operates a modular credit based system for national academic awards linked to the SCQF. Professional regulations and competences also apply in areas of CPD. As noted, modules are generally delivered by distance learning accessed at a time and place of student's choosing. Workshops may be a component of WBL or community/third sector based learning.

Material is delivered through a mixture of online technologies normally delivered as video-casts or in other forms of media. This may be supplemented by optional face to face tutorials. They also make extensive use of a VLE which allows sophisticated online interactions to encourage peer learning and support and are at the forefront of the development and application of such technologies.

*... yeah, so I mean so there's face-to-face and it can vary from sort of two or three tutorials but the tutorials are generally optional.... I mean I've always found with the tutorials is, it's always a very different experience for the folk that are there in that quite often it's, you know, what they like about it is the fact that they're, they get to see there's other folk doing this course beyond them. (LC/AL)*

Target group would probably be a majority in a range of OUIs provision and groups would reflect overall composition, maybe some provision where gender or age imbalances do occur but normally by chance rather than design.

*Most of my students tend to be mature students. I get a handful, I was sorta saying a group of 25, I might just get something like, I think 4 or 5 that would come, you know, would be under 20. That sorta 18, 19 category. Most of the, most of them are mature students. (AL)*

No formal entry requirements exist and pre-entry support and guidance is provided while opportunities exist for the recognition of prior credit and learning, and transfer/progression arrangements with FE colleges.

*Working in partnership with locally-based organisations we are able to offer programmes that reach out to potential students in their communities. And we are also working to make sure that these students receive the support they need to succeed in their studies. ([OU Widening Participation](#))*

Study options mean that entrants can study anything from short programmes for personal interest to PhD and everything in between. But a core interest is access.

*we also have a lot of access students who—that we've got a suite of access courses, which actually end up at SCQF level seven, so they are kind of first year level..... But they're very heavily—although they're subject based they're very heavily geared towards getting your skills up to study at his level... .. These are smaller modules these access courses but the approach is very similar, and we... I mean the last few we had four figures for, which was 10/11, we had I think one 1650 students studying those modules in Scotland (AL)*

There are no real time constraints to award of degree – although there may be issues with 'currency' and many OU students engage over considerable periods of time. 90 year old graduates are not uncommon.

#### **4.3.8. Evaluation and impact**

University systems exist for student feedback and representation and surprisingly perhaps given the lack of face to face contact, the OU is regularly voted among the top 3 universities in the UK in relation to student satisfaction in National Student Survey (NSS). In relation to assessment procedures while these must satisfy university regulations and or relevant regulatory requirements for industry or professional practice; a range of options are in operation:

*The nature of the assignments will be quite variable and then you would probably have to engage in a lot of different kinds of things. So, you know in some subjects there will be quite a high degree of kind of essay type responses. But, there is quite a variety of different kind of assessment tasks within an assignment. .... What we don't do much of is the kind of more group-based... or, you know, or groupwork ....although we've tried those kind of things in the past it's a very small proportion of what we do..... We do less exams than we used to, although typically the total assessment on the module will be fifty per cent continuous assessment..... Then some kind of summative one, you know ..... for end of module .... That end of module assessment might be project based, and it might be exams, and there are more projects, and less exams than there used to .. For the exams you still have to turn up somewhere, although we've ..do offer, you know to people who have got mobility problems. We send examiners in, you know invigilators. (Director, OUiS)*

Lecturers frequently comment upon the motivation and commitment of OU students who as noted earlier are likely to be in employment as well as studying; and, students appreciate the quality of provision and the support that goes along with it. Associate tutors also note the change in students as they progress:

*And, it's quite an experience from an AL perspective when you see, you've seen the student journey with them the sort of, you know, right at the beginning from, you know, I've got a long journey ahead of me, I don't know how to write an essay, and in, in fairness it's, it's because of their, some of it's related to their previous study skills or that fact that some kind of disability hasn't, you know, like dyslexia hasn't been picked up fairly early on. But certainly by the time we get to TMA, I'm looking at the K101 here, by the time we get to TMA sorta 5, the confidence, .... You see the progress and you see the, you can see it when you, when you talk to the students you can hear their liveliness, "I'm doing really well", you know, and passing and "I didn't think I'd get there". And it is, it is good to hear, it's good to hear. (AL)*

The OU and OUiS brands itself on the contributions that learning makes to students career and life opportunities. A great deal of provision and the very ethos of the OU could be said to align with THEMP criteria and priorities.

As noted, the majority of contact with students is done by Associate Lecturers, who are experts in their field and with relevant academic qualifications and if required may also have industry or practice based experience as well. Associate lecturers are subject to specified in-house training and professional development in order to maintain the high levels of support expected by Open University students, and this is

often cited in surveys which ask why students chose the OU rather than a more traditional experience. Many of them have considerable experience.

*Yeah, I started as a tutor twenty-six years ago, and started working full-time for the OU in 1994 I think it was, as a category of staff that doesn't exist anymore called senior counsellor which was... a... an academic role but one—a generic academic role that's geographically based. So, I—initially I had all the students in Scotland north of Dundee basically..... I mean there's always turnover but some people have been with us for, you know – in fact in a few cases – for thirty, forty years. But, it does mean that in a lot of areas we've got a really interesting mixture. (Director, OUIS)*

The OUIS is a registered university by statute in Scotland and while in part reliant on the OU for provision it has a role in the development of the curriculum specifically for Scotland and operates its own development team which has a focus on both research and new course initiatives.

*I mean I organised something called the learning development team that kind of does developmental stuff – both practice based research, and development of new initiatives in partnership with other people across faculties. And, we work with the small number of full-time academics, and the part-time staff in Scotland. And, that's a—that's been a very successful model in Scotland. But it's the—Scotland's the only place in the Open University where it operates.. (Director, OUIS)*

#### **4.3.9 General summary of the case study**

It could be argued that the provision of the OU and OUIS in general, and also specifically the programmes and areas of focus in the case study align closely with THEMP criteria and aims. They are a re leading brand in distance learning not only nationally but globally. They operate what might be seen as 'true' open access (although in some instances funding may be a barrier or constraint) and have been in the forefront of developments in the delivery of high quality technologically sophisticated distance learning. As noted earlier collaboration will be in part dependent upon programme but there is collaboration between university and other stakeholders and in the case of employer and community engagement the initiative may be from stakeholders. Moreover, as recognised above, collaboration does exist with other HEIs in a number of areas.

A key to their success is a long-term investment in systems and procedures along with technological innovation aligned with quality in relation to pedagogy and student support. The OU would argue that they are constantly seeking to improve the effectiveness of their provision. The creation of high quality training and support for part-time Associate Tutor system and creation of a quality learning and support environment appropriate for distance learning is a key driver in their success. However, as noted it must also be adaptable and aware of changing trends and demands. Evidence of this has been noted above with initiatives in work-based learning and partnerships with both trade unions and with employers. It has developed links and

partnerships with local authority provision in areas of social care and social work and a number of programmes in these areas attract a considerable number of students who match the THEMP criteria.

*Yeah, yeah... So your typical OU student these days is probably a woman in her early-thirties working probably in the health and social care sector..... On a very low wage basically, but also for all kinds of reasons both personal and—but often regulatory ones, you know you want to stay in the job or move on in the job, then you have to have certain kinds of HE credentials.(AL)*

In relation to targeting specific groups, the focus is both general in terms of overall recruitment yet targeted in specific areas as outlined above. All students choose what to study, to what level, at their own pace and where they choose with the support and guidance of experienced staff. Dependent upon areas and programmes, there are examples of both solving problems as noted in the involvement with Scottish Government policies and initiatives, and also the development of new and innovative programmes.

Provision is offered a range of levels, including access, taster and introductory courses in addition to certificated provision. As has been noted, employer support is high specifically in areas of health and social work/care. Other examples of stakeholder engagement also exist. All content is embedded and there is no distinction in the case of adult learning and although open access with no formal entry requirements, quality is maintained through university regulations and requirements plus any other specific professional requirements

Courses are of a specific length and have associated credit ratings but flexibility is key which means that

*students choose to learn at own pace which means self-choice and to some extent an individual trajectory; but they may share modules and thus cross paths with fellow students following similar routes of study.*

*Students are seen as active creators of their own learning trajectories with guidance and support available at all times.*

This can be seen as a national initiative within the OU UK framework but it is cognisant of regional and local needs and requirements especially in areas of social care, health and community development/third sector engagement where it has its own development teams. However, given the nature of provision it can also be seen as both regional and also local. In addition to the usual means of recruitment at a UK and National level, there is both local and regional targeting and marketing and specific outreach activities and third sector and employer engagement.

Learning is mostly formal but some non-credit bearing tasters and introductory courses exist in addition to community engagement and third sector provision. In addition, there are still a considerable number of students whose primary motivation is personal interest.



## **5. Comparison of the three cases noting both commonalities and differences**

### **5.1 *The Institutions***

The institutional settings and context of all three case studies share one similarity – they are all for purposes of regulation and operation classed as universities with all that entails in terms of degree awarding powers and all operate as charitable organisations. However, the way in which each has developed illustrates a degree of differentiation in what in Scotland is a competitive market for higher education. As the case study reports, all are involved with partners and stakeholders in the public and private sectors as well as being involved with community and voluntary organisations and other actors in the third sector. This engagement as the case study reports note, is dependent upon the type of programme and whether or not it is in area where professional regulation or standards are in place. As noted though, a number of examples in relation to the selected programmes of interest have been identified.

There are however quite distinct differences in the way in which the three institutions position themselves within a competitive market and this can be linked with overall institutional ethos, mission and historical development.

The case of the Ouis, it is argued, most closely matches or could be seen as an 'ideal type' in relation to the focus of the THEMP project. Since its inception, its stated aim has been to provide true open access and opportunities to participate in higher education for those who for whatever reason have been unable to follow the traditional academic pathway to higher education. The 'parent' OU is a global leader in distance learning provision.

The case study at the University of Glasgow is distinct from the other two cases, as while it makes positive noises in favour of widening access and adult learning this can cause tension in an institution which is in the top 150 universities in the world in terms of research, and has ambitions to climb these world rankings further. Thus the BA Community Development programme selected as the case study could be seen as an interesting example of how this and some other adult learning provision maintains a foothold which in part is a result of its long history and tradition of adult learning provision (Hamilton, 200?).

The third case study is the part-time provision of the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) delivered through its Lifelong Learning Academy. UWS is a multi-campus site and operates as noted above in a crowded environment and for many years one of its successes in this environment was its part-time provision. The Lifelong Learning Academy is as noted a fairly recent development in the ongoing evolution of part-time provision and has responsibility for all UWS part-time and flexible provision which although currently standing around 35% has been as high as 50% of the student population.

## **5.2 Social reach of programmes**

It could be argued, that with the exception of the UoG case study, which targets a very distinct group of potential participants, the two other cases target broadly similar groups of people. Both are interested in widening access and participation to under-represented groups. Both offer provision in the areas of health and social care for example which aim to provide opportunities for those already working in the sector to gain professional accreditation or recognition which in many instances is essential for progression and in some cases for continued employment. The selected case at Glasgow as already noted traditionally recruited among working class communities from individuals already operating in those communities as volunteers or community workers or activists; although in recent times there has been some shift in the intake partly as a result of economic and social changes in the areas of community learning and development.

It could be argued that both UoG and UWS also target more mainstream traditional face to face school leaver entrants and for UoG this is its main undergraduate market, although this is less of a market for UWS which has generally had an older age profile in its full-time students. The OUiS in contrast, although attracting slightly younger participants in recent years remains committed to part-time distance education.

*Overall though, the selected programme(s) of interest at each case study are clearly linked to the development of adult potential and the provision of opportunities for adults to access higher education in order to aid career development as such provide good examples of the provision the THEMP project aims to investigate.*

## **5.3 Curriculum development**

In relation to curriculum development, there are some similarities in the way the three cases respond to the needs of their target markets which in many cases, particularly in the true open access environment of the OUiS; in the relatively flexible environment of the LLA and also in general and historically in relation to UoG, attract potential entrants with little or no recent academic experience or qualifications. However, all must operate within university academic regulations for the award of degrees, and in addition, adhere to the standards required for accreditation of professional recognition where necessary.

The OUiS has long developed the concept of supported open learning to enable those with no formal qualifications to succeed academically in higher education. In terms of academic support each individual is assigned a personal tutor who will also be an academic teaching or tutoring on the programme in question. In addition, they have a global reputation in study support materials and resources and in the provision of quality distance learning.

The role of the EGAs in the LLA also provides a supportive environment with extreme flexibility in delivery of provision and with personal academic guidance and support. However, there are unlikely to be any real differences in pedagogy beyond the personal preferences of individual lecturers, as the university operates a

policy of equivalence in provision which means that there should be no difference in the academic experience of a student on a particular module no matter at which campus or in which mode (full-time/part-time) or the time of day on which it is studied (day/evening/weekend).

The other case, UoG uses a model that operates a form of day-release to allow students who are unlike the other two case full-time, to fulfil their employment, voluntary or community based commitments. In addition, it use a pedagogy which draws on the notion of Freireian Circles an interactive and dialogic pedagogy where an element of co-creation of knowledge operates and which features group work and peer learning. Again, it must be stressed that students at each case, no matter individual academic experience or attainment on entry, are supported in learning to enable success.

It should also be stated that each of the cases offers provision that is also externally accredited and/or recognised by relevant professional regulations or standards and as such in addition to academic requirements there will also be complementary practice requirements although this will depend upon the specific sector and associated regulatory framework.

#### ***5.4 Training and learning aspects***

In each of the three cases, all teaching staff are educated to at least degree level in the subject are in which they teach and at both UoG and UWS, all academic staff are required to gain a post-graduate qualification in academic practice. The Ouis as noted provides its own training programme (check) to Associate Lecturers who are the main point of contact and support for their distance learning students. In addition, at each case study, many will have Master's level qualifications and some will have doctorates in the area of the selected programmes or related discipline.

For those programmes which are linked to areas of professional practice – which feature in all three case studies, for example in the areas of Health and Social Care and Community Education and Development, teaching staff will in probably a majority of cases at least some practical and practice experience in the field in which they teach.

One contrast from mainstream academia may be found in programmes where there is an element of practice (as noted in the case study reports) involving the placement of the student in an outside organisation in order to demonstrate their competences. This placement practice will be assessed by in part by those mentoring the student during the placement.

#### ***5.5 Assessment of the impact of programmes on the participants***

The selected programme(s) at each of the case study appear to be successful in providing opportunities for adults seeking to either gain professional accreditation to allow them to consolidate their existing positions, to allow entry to a regulated profession or in some cases allow career progression in their existing role.

Each routinely undertakes research and evaluation on its students and uses testimonials from successful

students in marketing and promotional material. Individual interviews at each case site with current students also attest to the impact of the programmes and provide support for continued support to allow adults to access such provision.

Most of the selected programme(s) tend to produce graduates of whom many are either already employed in the public sector, or perhaps in community related programmes in the voluntary and charitable sectors or, are seeking to enter . However as noted, both the UWS and OUiS work closely with employers, trade unions and other organisations to create learning opportunities beneficial to both individuals and organisations and although the selected programme at UoG is specifically focused on a particular target group, it requires the support and continued engagement of stakeholders in order to be able to offer its students placement opportunities.

### ***5.6 Continuities and discontinuities with the overall aims and objectives of the THEMP project***

It is suggested that each of the three case studies selected for national comparison in Scotland may perhaps to the ill-informed eye illustrate a vibrant adult learning sector. In one sense this is a position that could be defended although with some caveats. At present there are opportunities for adult learners meeting the THEMP criteria to access higher education. However, funding at both an individual and institutional level is always s in a state of flux and as such especially in the current imposed austerity is vulnerable to cuts.

Moreover, many of the policy initiatives previously delivered by the third sector are also under threat and this will have a knock-on effect on the agencies and organisations that recruit many of the graduates from the selected programmes at each of the case studies.

However, we can note some common conditions across the case studies and especially in relation to UWS and OUiS. As noted, Associate Lecturers and Educational Guidance Advisers play a crucial role in providing a dedicated guidance and support system and that this requires a substantial investment in people and resources. Although both OUiS and UWS have taken different routes, each recognises the importance of quality information and guidance at pre-entry, ongoing and post exit to allow adult learner seeking to enter higher education to allow individuals to not only succeed but to take ownership over the pace, timing and direction of their study programmes.

In addition, the UoG case also highlights a programme targeted and accessed by a significant number of entrants who as the interviews attest meet THEMP criteria and it is is of interest because of its situation within what can at times be a challenging environment. However, as with all the selected programme(s) its survival is ultimately dependent upon attracting students or putting 'bums on seats' and also to the availability of worthwhile and sufficiently reimbursed employment opportunities.

## 6. Concluding remarks – Recommendations

It has long been recognised that Europe is facing a number of socio-economic and demographic challenges. Increasing globalisation, rapid technological change and an ageing population and the demands of a more knowledge- and skills-intensive European labour market, have resulted in the need to provide adults with opportunities to increase their skill levels in order to meet these challenges (European Commission, 2010).

A comprehensive study carried out by CEDEFOP (2008) confirmed structural change in labour markets at both the European level and also at the level of individual member states. This is characterised by an increasing shift away from agricultural, extractive and manufacturing industries towards a more service orientated knowledge driven economy; accompanied by a recognition that these trends will continue over the coming decades. Subsequent CEDEFOP briefings (2010a; 2010b) suggested that jobs for those with higher level qualifications are expected to increase from 29 per cent to 35 per cent; while those requiring low levels of qualifications are expected to fall from 20 per cent to less than 15 per cent.

A principal way to meet these challenges is to widen participation in higher education (HE) among adults. This is an area in which the European Commission has a long standing interest. The 1991 Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community called on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to support an increasing knowledge driven economy and society through widening access to higher qualifications and to create opportunities for updating and renewal of qualifications, increase preparatory courses and also to do more to recognise prior learning and experience.

These measures were affirmed by the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty and calls to increase participation by adults in higher education were given further impetus under the terms of the Lisbon Strategy (2000) which aimed to make Europe one of the most competitive knowledge economies in the world; and this is reflected in the 2001 Communication Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality. It was decided that by 2010, Member States would aim to: improve the quality and effectiveness of EU education and training systems; ensure they are accessible to all; and, open up education and training to the wider world. In addition, and specifically related to higher education, the Lisbon Strategy implied that in order to achieve these objectives, it would be necessary to: enhance quality in HE across Europe; remove barriers to teacher and student mobility; promote lifelong learning and guidance; and, encourage language learning. Moreover, Member States agreed to raise participation of adults in education in general to 12.5 per cent in 2010 and 15 per cent in 2020. Finally, and directly relevant to this proposal was the aim that by 2020, 40 per cent of the cohort aged 30-39 should possess a tertiary level qualification. (Osborne, Broek and Buiskool, : pp82-3)

Very recent, persistent, turbulent and fluctuating conditions in global markets of competitiveness and an extremely low rate of growth in EU regions provides a sharpened and more urgent need to ensure: that universities, as major sources of highly skilled, knowledge intensive human capital, embrace the modernisation agenda; that Europe continues on its trajectory towards becoming *one of the most competitive knowledge economies in the world*; and to ensure this occurs, current and future generations of adults are

provided with opportunities to expand, deepen and modernise their skills in environments where they can successfully do so.

However, in the UK as elsewhere in the EU a neo-liberal agenda has emerged which promises nothing but austerity in order to address the results of the global financial crisis. In a period of increasing inequality and decreasing living standards for many of those who are mentioned in the EU communiques cited above, mean that the expected positions in the public and third sector are disappearing and the private sector shows little sign so far of providing the impetus for growth that EU Finance Ministers repeatedly state.

In summary, while the picture in Scotland as reported in the case studies provides a relatively vibrant environment for adults to enter higher education and therefore obtain access to professional and more secure employment, any analysis of the impact of the current crisis must conclude that this is unlikely to continue. However, a major factor in the role and status of adult participation in higher education will be whether the Scottish people vote to adhere to the neo-liberal economic dogma of the UK or decide that independence offers a more collective response to economic austerity. Finally, it could be argued that the THEMP project has been overtaken by economic circumstances and seeks to respond to a socio-economic context that no longer exists and the much vaunted increases in degree level employment outlined above is unlikely to materialise under the current neo-liberal hegemony that dictates social and economic policies of austerity.

## 7. Typology of Case Studies

	<b>OUIs</b>	<b>UWS LLA</b>	<b>BACD UoG</b>
<b>Institutional Setting</b> (University centred, outsourced entity, Knowledge transfer etc.....)	<i>University National Centre</i>	<i>University Unit</i>	<i>University Department</i>
<b>Target</b> (Unemployed, At risk, Employed, high Potentials)	<i>Open</i>	<i>Flexible</i>	<i>Specific</i>
<b>Access to the Program</b> (University degree, open to everybody, degree and professional experience etc.....)	<i>Open</i>	<i>Flexible</i>	<i>Restricted</i>
<b>Construction of the Program:</b> (Incidental, Stand alone, Structural, Integrated)	Flexible and responsive to need (Access to PhD)	Flexible within programmatic boundaries	Stand alone but linked to postgraduate provision
<b>Didactic Orientation:</b> (Programme, Teaching-Learning, Activities, Practice Orientation) Perspectives of learning Degree of Openness Degree of Flexibility Orientation	Almost unlimited flexibility, true open access; supported learning environment with both personal and professional orientations	Flexible provision, personal guidance and support, mix of face to face, blended and distance opportunities.	Mix of academic and Practice orientation – use of groupwork, and practice placements
<b>Outcome:</b> Award/certificate/degree type or professional recognition	<i>Various with expectations of ongoing study, but all options exist</i>	<i>Generally Degree; some with professional recognition</i>	<i>Degree accredited by professional body</i>
<b>Intended Impact:</b> (Career maintenance, Career development, Improved practice, Changed practice)	Individual choice	Career maintenance, Career development,	Professional accredited qualification for specific area of professional practice
Generic or specific career pathways	Both	Both	Specific
<b>Evaluation (measured in what ways)</b>	Credit rating mapped onto SCQF plus professional accreditation and validation if relevant.	Credit rating mapped onto SCQF plus professional accreditation and validation if relevant.	Credit rating mapped onto SCQF plus professional accreditation and validation. University wide

	<b>OUIs</b>	<b>UWS LLA</b>	<b>BACD UoG</b>
	University wide evaluation systems	University wide evaluation systems	evaluation systems
<b>Impact (measured in what ways)</b>	Retention, progression and completion. Sector wide KPIs	Retention, progression and completion. Sector wide KPIs	Retention, progression and completion. Sector wide KPIs
<b>Social inclusion:</b> (human capital, social capital, cultural capital)	Social inclusion and personal capital as key part of university mission and ethos	Social inclusion and personal capital as key part of LLA mission and ethos	Social inclusion, social justice and empowerment through personal capital development key to programme ethos
<b>Quality of Life?:</b> (labour market status; Economic security, Knowledge and Intellectual development, Social relations, Balance of time)	General assumption and evidence to support improvements in: labour market status; Economic security, Knowledge and Intellectual development, Social relations, Balance of time	General assumption and evidence to support improvements in: labour market status; Economic security, Knowledge and Intellectual development, Social relations, Balance of time	General assumption and evidence to support improvements in: labour market status; Economic security, Knowledge and Intellectual development, Social relations, Balance of time
<b>Future prospects</b>	Viable and sustainable	Viable and sustainable	Some tensions with University Strategy but as long as demand maintains should be sustainable



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