

College to University: part-time learner journeys

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UALL: 11-13 March 2015

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Life-changing Learning
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Outline

- Background and context
- Statistical overview
- Understanding the transition experience
- Some examples of impact

Background and Scotland context



Why focus on this group of learners?

- HE students – 18% are studying in colleges (SFC, 2012)
- Colleges have the highest proportion of HE students from the most deprived SIMD quintile
- Policy: Improving articulation/progression from college to university is a key part of widening participation policy
- *Putting Learners at the Centre* (Scottish Government, 2011)
- Efficient learner journeys

- The Open University in Scotland (OU)
 - 16% of undergraduate entrants have a Higher National (HN) qualification

Student studies

Aim: To improve our understanding of the transition experience of current students with an HN background

- Scottish OU undergraduate students
- Qualifications on entry – HN or equivalent
- Mixed method: questionnaire and follow-up interview
- 2013/14 study - 1500 students received questionnaire
 - 293 responses
 - 13 interviews



Statistical overview

- Tend to be older than the general OU population
- Male:Female ratio is 43:57
- Scottish Index of multiple deprivation (SIMD) – 16% from most deprived quintile
- Known employment status of 75%
- Study gap of 8 years(median) between HN and OU study
 - For the first time the highest proportion commenced study within 0-4 years

College to university transition



	College	University
Motivations	Employment and career	Employment/career and personal development equally important
Study mode	FT:PT (44:56)	Combine work and study
Subject choice	Narrow vocational	Personal vocational
Level of study	HE credit	Repeat levels

Understanding credit transfer



- 36% claimed, 64% did not
- Reasons for not claiming (survey responses)
- Subject choice
 - Preferred to **start fresh** as one of the motivating factors for returning to study was to experience **depth of understanding** with the subject. Not just passing the subject.
 - I didn't seek any credit for the course. Mostly because I didn't want to **cut any corners** when it was a subject that I hadn't previously studied
- Study gap
 - Previous learning was **outwith timescale** requirements (disappointing)
 - It was **too long ago** to be of any relevance and I wanted to study different things for my own personal interest
- Process
 - Found the process to be **quite difficult** and also feel that as my HNC was some time ago a refresh and compete the whole degree with OU will benefit me.

Understanding credit transfer

- Motivating factor
 - Yes, that was part of the **condition of getting on the course**, was that I could use, I had a credit transfer from my HNC and SVQ. I had to have that before I was allowed to apply for the course through my **sponsor agency**. I skipped the first year of university and went straight into year two (I1).
 - I got 90 credits towards my first year so it was really good. I just needed to do 30 credits and then that was my first year over so it was really quite good. Yes I was able to do Level 1 and Level 2 in my first year (I2).



Understanding the study gap



Personal factors

- Life
 - *I think **life kind of overtook me** and it was something that I would have really liked to have done but **never got round to.**(I11)*
- Work
 - *I had been **working full time.** I am thirty eight and I have been working fulltime for twenty years.(I6).*
- Finance
 - *I **couldn't afford to go,** to leave college and go to university. I didn't have the money, I couldn't afford to do it. I had to go out and get a job. The job, the statutory role that I was in I knew I was going to have access to university through that but I was **thinking about it** literally all of the way through my jobs, to do the access course to do the social work degree.(I1).*
- Employer
 - *After college I was working, still working in an engineering field. It was engineering design but the **company** was very small and it really wouldn't partake in the course of training.(I10).*

Understanding the study gap



Academic factors

- Skills

- *There were seven years between completing my HND and starting my study with OU, so I felt like I had to almost re-learn how to study. (Survey Response)*

- Rigour

- *[At college]No requirement to hand in an academic or scientific paper on a regular basis or at all. I had to learn how to compose an academic paper and to research and cite relevant data. (Survey Response)*

- Mode of study

- *It [college] was a full time course, with a lot of continuous assessment, but because it was full time, my study/work/life balance was very different. Having to fit study around a full time job is a very unique experience, and I'm not sure there's much that could prepare anyone for that. (Survey Response)*

- Independent learning

- *Obviously at college, when you are there fulltime for the day, you are seeing others face to face. You are able to talk and discuss things; there is an element of socialising with them. When you come to the OU courses it is not... you are sort of... you sometimes feel that you are on your own to some extent but what can be very useful is the online forums that they have (I10).*

Impact on working life



- Career development

My OU study has enhanced my skillset to enable me to progress in my original job & now find new employment. (Survey response)

- Transferrable skills

The skills I use as a student are transferable to my work in school: prioritisation of tasks, time management etc. and key linguistic concepts around my subject (English) are invaluable in providing support to children in the classroom. Equally, the practical experience I am getting is excellent preparation for a future trainee teacher, so work and study are mutually beneficial for me. (Perfect!) (Survey response)

- Career change

I currently work as a sessional worker for [a] Social Work Dept. and as a Children's Services Practitioner for Action for Children in a residential unit. Having never worked in this area before, the OU not only helped me secure these jobs but is also benefitting me by furthering my knowledge to hopefully in time progress in this field (Survey response)

- Improving working practice

Probably in the last four jobs that I have been in more involved in the decision making process with regard to engineering projects. That has been, if not a result, has been helped by the studying at Open Uni. (I12).

Personal impact

Lisa

- *Peace of mind and knowing that I **can do it**. Actually knowing that no matter what, through the tough times you can actually do something that is **worthwhile** and **enhance** your life (I3).*
- *It has made me more **confident** when I am speaking with people because you are getting more knowledgeable and also it made me realise no matter who you are, **whatever your background is**, that anybody can actually do it if they put their mind to it (I3)*

Mike

- *It has **broadened some of my engineering knowledge**. By nature I do design work on a daily basis and I deal with production on a daily basis but it has probably broadened some production techniques, some newer design techniques. It would be nice to try and work towards their sort of philosophy(I10)*
- *I am hoping that it will allow me to continue my career development and continue to work more across the engineering and marketing discipline, It is an area the company can see an advantage in and me working at, and I can see an advantage there as well. Personally **I think I missed out** and this has given me a chance to show I can do it myself(I10)*



Any questions?

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