

UNIVERSITY OF PAISLEY, SCOTLAND

Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL)

The University's Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL) evolved out of the institutional Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme, which was established in 1990. The key underpinning motivation has always been the aim to develop flexible modes of study on both individual modules and programmes which would allow students to build on credit for previous learning and to learn at a pace appropriate to their circumstances. Whilst the Centre deals principally with part-time students it's work on both Access and retention also has implications for and helps inform the university's development of its full-time provision.

The University has been outstandingly successful in widening participation and recruiting students from previously under-represented groups, being ahead of the benchmarks set by SFC for recruitment from social classes IIIM, IV and V and from low participating neighbourhoods. It has responded to the changing balance between study and paid employment by improving the flexibility of programmes through recognition of prior learning (RPL), credit accumulation, the development of distance learning programmes, more flexible generic degree programmes and more varied attendance patterns.

The University recognises that a student body with a broader range of educational experience and a wider spread of previous academic achievement requires systems to meet the more diverse learning needs whilst providing a stimulating learning environment to a range of students from different educational backgrounds and a wide range of experiences.

The University has a number of projects developed and co-ordinated by CLL working on specific initiatives designed to meet the needs of the University's acknowledged diverse student population, all of which will contribute to the University's ability to achieve SEQLT goals.

Supporting the Transition to Higher Education – Transition Initiatives

The transition to Higher Education whether it is directly from school, FE, work or unemployment, into full or part-time study presents institutional and student challenges and needs sustained support.

The University actively participates in a wide range of initiatives developed by the West of Scotland Widening Access Forum (WSWAF) which are designed to:

- improve recruitment of students to Higher Education from those areas and groups where there is low participation
- facilitate progression of students from programmes of Further Education to Higher Education with the maximum feasible credit transfer
- improve retention of such students in Higher Education and to maximise the achievement of students.

A summary of the WSWAF activities is included in Appendix 1. The initiatives that involve University of Paisley staff members on project steering groups some of which are led by the University, are highlighted indicating our extensive involvement in preparing students to make a successful transition to HE, and our commitment to addressing retention and maximising their achievement. (The impacts of the initiatives are available in the WSWAF Annual Reports.)

CLL provides a central focus for:

- All the current widening participation and social inclusion activities;
- Part-time and flexible provision on a set of award titles developed by the Schools;
- Provision of educational guidance for prospective part-time students;
- Ongoing guidance for part-time students or students changing from full-time to part-time and vice versa;
- Continuing personal and professional development activities for students.

In the case of educational guidance for part-time students the Centre is unique in having a team of Education Guidance Advisors who support students in course-choice pre-entry and continue to support them throughout their studies. The key role of guidance in the recruitment and retention of students was recognised early in the development of the institutional CAT scheme and this function has become firmly embedded in the Centre's work.

CLL continues to build upon its existing strengths, taking account of ongoing reviews and evaluations of its range of diverse activities. Four areas of activity will however have greater prominence in the three years ahead:

- Flexibility (improving evening, weekend, day, distance, work and community based and blended learning opportunities)
- Student experience (greater understanding the needs of our student population)
- Access, progression and retention (responding to student needs and facilitating access routes and changing modes of study and appropriate learning patterns)
- Continuing personal and professional activities for students (including work-based learning opportunities, RPL and employer links).

Education Guidance Advisors (EGAs) in CLL have unique strengths combining their abilities to provide educational guidance with their expertise and up-to-date knowledge of RPL and the SCQF framework. There is continual development in related areas and their expertise is enhanced by their knowledge and understanding through evidenced based research in social inclusion, adult learning and the 'non-traditional' student experience. The CLL team are involved in many external committees and continue to develop relationships with Local Authorities, Scottish Enterprise, Chambers of Commerce, Learndirect, Careers Scotland, University Association of Lifelong Learning etc and involve the University on a variety of funded projects (SFC, WSWAF, ESF, EQUAL etc.) related to widening participation, employability and lifelong learning.

CLL is a 'one stop shop' and the first line of contact for part-time students. It has strong links with Schools and the other central Services. The team of Education Guidance Advisors (EGAs) provide educational guidance for prospective and continuing part-time students. Pre-entry guidance is considered to be a most important transition point in the new student's learning journey. The University has an established Personal Tutor system (3.2.5) to support all students. The EGAs are normally the personal tutors to the part-time student population, helping them e.g. make informed decisions about module options on an ongoing basis, and are pivotal to the success of our part-time students. The majority of part-time students attend in the evenings and therefore educational guidance is provided both during the day and in the evenings and across all three

campuses. The educational guidance underpins the University's success in recruiting and retaining part-time students. A part-time student handbook is provided to part-time students.

CLL is involved in a number of initiatives specifically designed to encourage school leavers or adults to consider University and to prepare them for University life. Some examples follow:

Greater Opportunities of Access and Learning with Schools Project (GOALS)

GOALS was developed by the West of Scotland Wider Access Forum. Its purpose is to increase participation of groups who, to date have not taken advantage of the HE resource that the West of Scotland has to offer. GOALS uses current students to raise awareness and build motivation. The University of Paisley is the lead institution for the University Experience (UNEX), the S4 element of GOALS designed to give school pupils a taste of real University life through a week spent in the University each October. During this week, students matriculate, attend lectures, make subject choices, visit an employer, socialise and graduate. (UNEX 2005 video, and University Experience brochure available). There has been an increase in pupil participation within GOALS schools. The ongoing review and evaluation of activities has led to an ever improving fit with the needs of pupils at all stages, from raising awareness in early years to preparation for transition later on. The University of Paisley had its first GOALS cohort of honours graduate in July 2005.

Access to Primary Education

The "Access to Primary Education", project co-ordinated by CLL and funded by Glasgow City Council is a collaborative project involving the University of Paisley and the University of Glasgow. It aims to assist secondary pupils interested in a career in primary education, from schools in Glasgow where there is low uptake to HE, gain access to university primary education courses. The University had its first graduates from the Project in 2004. Students currently studying towards their degree help as student mentors to the pupils at the residential weekends, which provide study skills, note taking in lectures, essay writing techniques, placement experience and support to help pupils achieve their ambition of becoming a primary teacher.

Step UP to University for School Leavers

Choosing the right course has been identified as a key factor for retention and this pre-entry course is designed to prepare students for success and aid retention. The Centre for Lifelong Learning is piloting the delivery of "Step UP to University for School Leavers" to over 100 final year pupils in two schools in Paisley. The aims are to provide learners with the necessary study, personal development and decision making skills to ease the transition to University and make the most appropriate choice. Delivery incorporates u-decide workshops specifically designed to assist students in decision making about courses that will help them progress. Graduate employment opportunities and salaries are investigated and students are encouraged to assess their own transferable skills and look at ways they can develop the skills employers value. Blackboard is used extensively and Personal Development Planning is a key element. Session 2005/06 delivery will be evaluated and students' future pathways tracked.

Transition Modules for Mature Students

Within the Lifelong Learning LTC other well established transition modules, especially designed to prepare students for success, embed personal development planning,

employability and key transferable skills. To provide maximum flexibility they are available at each campus, during the day, in the evenings and at weekends and can be delivered off-site. In addition to adults using them as a stepping stone to return to learning the modules are now also included as core modules in some of the Schools' Programmes. The LLL external examiner consistently remarks on the high standard of work produced by the students. (LLL external examiner reports).

There are a number of students who have successfully completed their degrees starting out with one of the level 7 first steps modules. (First Steps at University, First Steps in Business and First Steps in Science, Engineering and Technology). Five students graduated in 2005 after starting with a first steps module as long as eight years ago. Over the last two years two 'first steps' students received adult learners awards in National Adult Learner's Week.

A level 8 module aimed at FE direct entrants called "Next Steps for FE students" is offered to all direct entrants during the summer programme prior to commencing their programme of study. Many of our direct entrants enter full-time study at levels 8 and 9. An evaluation of this module demonstrates high student satisfaction as well as its impact on retention, progression and performance (Knox 2005). However, it is only a small percentage of direct entrants who have participated on the module and the LTC members are currently engaging with staff and students from the FE colleges to consider alternative timing of delivery to encourage greater participation in the module. Evidence indicates that HND entrants in the University are less likely to progress to honours (McGillivray and Knox, 2004) and module content is being adapted and will include information about graduate career destinations.

Career Planning Module

The University is aware of the strong link between individuals' goals and success in courses. Many of our part-time adult students are participating in the University's Career Planning Module (level 7), which was developed in partnership with Careers Scotland. The Lifelong Learning external examiner has been extremely complimentary about its delivery, and student feedback indicates its value to students. The module is incorporated as core in two of the School of Computing Certificate of Higher Education programmes.

Summer Schools

Summer Schools have been in operation in the University since 1999. Originally this was only for applicants to the Social Science Programme who were just short of the required entry qualification. In 2003 the Summer School was extended to include the Paisley Business School and the former Faculty of Engineering and Science. The summer activity has since developed and is further developing. Each activity is evaluated and the performance of students who do progress to University of Paisley programmes is tracked. There were four main summer activities evaluated during June – August 2005 and will inform future developments.

The Summer Programme (Module Delivery)

The Summer Programme co-ordinated by CLL, ran between June and August across all three sites. Credit rated modules were delivered (largely in the evenings). It has become a popular option for many of the current part-time students and has also proved to be an extremely popular option for those 'starting out', or for CPD attracting new learners into the University.

The International Summer Programme

This was co-ordinated by the International Office within Corporate Marketing and the School of Engineering and Science and the School of Computing.

Summer School in Paisley

CLL works in partnership with the School of Social Sciences and the Paisley Business School to provide a two week full-time Programme targeted to applicants who may not have the necessary entry qualifications (e.g. Highers at C grade). Their entry to the full-time course therefore becomes conditional upon passing this non-accredited, assessed summer school delivery and is therefore co-ordinated in conjunction with the University's clearing activities.

The Crichton University Campus Summer School

The Pre-University Summer School ran with Arts (Glasgow), Business and Computing/IT streams. It was aimed at prospective full-time students. The course was full-time with day and evening timetabling and could be a condition of entry.

Cross School Guidance Sessions

The Centre has a key role to play in helping students experiencing difficulties in their studies to plan a way forward. For some time the Centre has been proactive in contacting discontinuing students to offer them advice on returning to study. Many former full-time students who had discontinued their courses have benefited from this and have for example been able to complete their courses and gain awards through part-time modes.

In September 2005 students who were able to progress but required educational guidance and counselling were invited to come and meet with CLL Education Guidance Advisors and School staff to discuss their best way forward. This was seen as a 'transition' for many of the students, some changing pathway within the same subject area, some changing direction altogether and others changing from full-time to part-time study. The evidence indicated that this was a valuable session, which improved progression by assisting students who may have otherwise left to stay on-track or to follow new pathways.

The Part-time Forum

The Part-Time Forum was established by CLL to provide an opportunity for part-time students, policy-makers, practitioners, researchers, other interested professionals to meet and discuss issues of importance to all involved in the provision and promotion of part-time study in higher education. November 2004 Forum's feature was 'The Student Voice' where students from across the UK provided input on their experiences as part-time students. The November 2005 Part-Time Forum included both a report on UK wide research into withdrawals amongst working class students and a more detailed discussion of the issues for part-time students with staff and student delegates from FE and HE and as far as Brighton and the north of Scotland. From 2005/06 CLL and CLT are collaborating with respect to the Forum's arrangements. This will facilitate an enhanced understanding of the needs of part-time students and how learning and teaching practices might be enhanced to meet their needs more effectively. Engagement with the wider sector on such issues is of critical and strategic value to the University with its absolute commitment to widening access and social inclusion.

Appendix 1

Summary of WSWAF activities

The University is actively involved in those that are **highlighted** and such initiatives are closely related to meeting the University's Strategic Objectives.

Activity	Strategic Objectives met through specific activity
On Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate progression of students from one programme of Higher Education to another with the maximum feasible credit transfer. • To improve the retention of such students in Higher Education. • To maximise the achievement of such students.
Research Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish baselines in the areas of data/information held on recruitment, retention and achievement. • To establish baselines in the provision of widening access initiatives. • To set timed targets for quantified improvements in the areas identified above.
GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the recruitment of students to Higher Education programmes in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland from those areas and groups where there is low participation in Higher Education.
FE/HE Staff Exchange Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate progression of students from one programme of Higher Education to another with the maximum feasible credit transfer. • To improve the retention of such students in Higher Education. • To maximise the achievement of such students.
Udecide (Decision Making and Student Progression in Transition) Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the retention of students in Higher Education programmes in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland from those areas and groups where there is low participation in Higher Education. • To maximise the achievement of such students.

Ad-dition Project (led by SWAPWest)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the recruitment of students to Higher Education programmes in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland from those areas and groups where there is low participation in Higher Education. • To improve the retention of students in Higher Education programmes in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland from those areas and groups where there is low participation in Higher Education. • To maximise the achievement of such students.
REMIT Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the recruitment of students to Higher Education programmes in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland from those areas and groups where there is low participation in Higher Education. • To maximise the achievement of such students.
Open University Diverse Routes to HE Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the recruitment of students to Higher Education programmes in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland from those areas and groups where there is low participation in Higher Education. • To improve the retention of such students in Higher Education. • To maximise the achievement of such students.
Scoping Study on Transition Support for Students with Mental Health Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish baselines in the areas of data/information held on recruitment, retention and achievement. • To establish baselines in the provision of widening access initiatives. • To set timed targets for quantified improvements in the areas identified above.
Older Adults' Engagement in FE and HE: Tracking Educational Journeys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish baselines in the areas of data/information held on recruitment, retention and achievement. • To establish baselines in the provision of widening access initiatives. • To set timed targets for quantified improvements in the areas identified above.
Tracking GOALS Students in Transition Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish baselines in the areas of data/information held on recruitment, retention and achievement. • To establish baselines in the provision of widening access initiatives. • To set timed targets for quantified improvements in the areas identified above.

START-IT Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate progression of students from one programme of Higher Education to another with the maximum feasible credit transfer. • To improve the retention of such students in Higher Education. • To maximise the achievement of such students.
College Student Network Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate progression of students from one programme of Higher Education to another with the maximum feasible credit transfer. • To improve the retention of such students in Higher Education. • To maximise the achievement of such students.
Engaging with Employability Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish baselines in the areas of data/information held on recruitment, retention and achievement. • To establish baselines in the provision of widening access initiatives. • To set timed targets for quantified improvements in the areas identified above.
SWAPWest Guidance Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the retention of students in Higher Education programmes in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland from those areas and groups where there is low participation in Higher Education. • To maximise the achievement of such students.
National SWAP/ Customised Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate progression of students from one programme of Higher Education to another with the maximum feasible credit transfer. • To maximise the achievement of such students.
National FE/HE Bridging Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the retention of students in Higher Education programmes in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland from those areas and groups where there is low participation in Higher Education. • To maximise the achievement of such students.