



Student Transitions: Example of Transitions Practice

Title: Taking learning to the workforce: innovative approaches to work-based learning

Transition(s) the practice supports: The development of learning opportunities for part-time and non-traditional learners in the workplace.

Abstract: The Open University (OU) holds a unique place in terms of developing the Scottish workforce. The commitment to work-based learning extends beyond the curriculum offered, to include development of innovative learning models in collaboration with employers and unions to meet the needs of a diverse student groups. The work-based learning provision includes short modules; non-accredited workshop based courses and structured pathways through to degrees or intermediate qualifications, thus supporting access to different learning opportunities. The OU supported distance learning model enables an appropriate pedagogical approach that provides the right support to learners in the workplace. Therefore, our work-based learning models are a key way of supporting transitions.

Description: As detailed in our outcome agreement, The Open University in Scotland (OUiS) is committed to the development of work-based learning, which cross-cuts the University's widening participation strategy. With nearly 70% of its students in work, the OUiS holds a unique place in terms of developing the Scottish workforce. It has a significant influence in the provision of opportunities for people in the workforce to develop and update their skills.

- **Working with Unions and Employers**

The OUiS works with numerous trade unions and hundreds of Scotland's leading employers to deliver a relevant and responsive curriculum, meeting the needs of students, the economy and more broadly, society. For example, the OUiS delivers 22 work-based qualifications designed and developed in collaboration with employers to provide a range of learning opportunities in the workplace. Furthermore, through a strategic partnership with the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and Scottish Union Learning (SUL), we have built on our community outreach model to offer higher education in the workplace in partnership with unions.

Whilst in some cases such opportunities link directly to the experience of individual learners at work, this is not always the case. There are many examples where students choose to study for access, as part of a pathway to further study, or for personal development reasons. This Enhancement Theme example of practice will focus on two initiatives to highlight the different approaches to work-based learning support of student transitions.

- **Taking Learning to the Workforce: Focus on Scottish Union Learning**

SUL is part of the STUC and works to support skill development, learning opportunities and a developed workforce. Keen to support access to work-based learning in the Highlands and Islands by workers with varying levels of education and experience, in November 2014 a collaboration between OUiS and SUL resulted in SUL Highlands and Islands students successfully completing a two-year Certificate in Higher Education Open (SCQF Level 7). The course of work-based learning modules was aimed at aspiring managers and practising line managers, and covered a broad range of management and interpersonal skills. The OU supported distance learning model was developed to provide additional tailored support to union members from various unions and different places of employment who came together as a multi-union study group to complete the two-year certificate.

- **Taking learning to the workforce: focus on ASDA**

Dementia care remains a public policy priority for the Scottish Government and the OUiS has supported the development of dementia education through the provision of non-accredited workshops, such as the programme of *Living well with dementia* workshops delivered to Health and Social Care departments within local councils and the NHS. More recently the focus has turned to developing work-based learning opportunities within non-care organisations in which staff interact with people with dementia.

Through a partnership with ASDA and the OUIS, an innovative work-based learning initiative has been developed in which ASDA Community Life Champions in Scotland undertake workshop-based training to develop dementia awareness and staff skills. The focus of the training is to raise staff awareness and understanding of how to support those who experience dementia, whether they are customers in store or members of the broader community with which ASDA Community Life Champions engage.

The OUIS work-based learning models draw on existing expertise and the established supported learning model to offer access to education, learning and development opportunities within the workplace, where learners can study within familiar learning environments, existing peer support networks or identifiable study groups, thus supporting transitions into new learning experiences.

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