



Skills for Learning Professionals

A SECTOR SKILLS AGREEMENT FOR THE LIFELONG LEARNING SECTOR

STAGE 1 – SKILLS NEEDS ASSESSMENT (SNA)

SCOTLAND

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skills
FOR BUSINESS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary, along with the full report and associated annexes, represents the main outputs of an extensive programme of both primary and secondary research undertaken between May and November 2006. The research forms the first and foundation stage of the Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) process for the lifelong learning sector – the skills needs assessment. It was undertaken by independent consultants SQW, in collaboration with Lifelong Learning UK, the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the lifelong learning sector.

Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) is the SSC representing five key constituencies, which together make up the lifelong learning sector:

- community learning and development (CLD)
- further education (FE)
- higher education (HE)
- libraries, archives and information services (LAIS)
- work based learning (WBL).

The lifelong learning sector occupies a unique position within the ‘Skills for Business’ network. Its employers provide services which meet the workforce development needs of other employment sectors, and it is an employment sector in its own right, with its own workforce development needs.

The Sector Skills Agreement process was developed by the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) in order to ensure that businesses are equipped to meet the realities of the modern working environment and that the workforce is able to offer the right skills in the right places at the right time. The SSA comprises five key stages, with the fifth resulting in a final agreement of how the SSC and employers will work together with key partners to secure the necessary supply of appropriate training for the future.

In addition, because of LUK’s key role in supporting employers delivering lifelong learning and because of the extent to which the skills needed by the lifelong learning workforce will be shaped by the workforce development needs identified within other employment sectors, Lifelong Learning UK will undertake an additional stage. This will comprise an **‘Impact Review’** of the SSAs produced by other SSCs, the purpose of which is to consider the effects and demands that the SSAs will place on the lifelong learning sector, both now and in the future.

Methodology

The research undertaken for Stage 1 of the Sector Skills Agreement necessarily adopted a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, drawing on a range of existing secondary data sources and primary data collection. This included:

- a comprehensive review of relevant existing literature
- the identification and analysis of existing standard (including the Labour Force Survey) and sector-specific secondary data sources from various sources
- the design, collection and analysis of a range of new primary data:
 - 22 key stakeholder consultation interviews of which 6 were from Scotland
 - a large survey of sector providers/employers with 689 analysed responses of which 76 originated with providers/employers in Scotland
 - seven future scenarios workshops, of which two were in Scotland.

The profile of the lifelong learning sector

Various existing secondary data sources have contributed to the development of an estimate of the total workforce within the lifelong learning sector, which, in Scotland is at least **80,500** not including volunteers and those involved in youth work (estimated to be 40,000).

Estimates also suggest that HE, FE (known as Scottish colleges sector) and CLD are the largest constituencies in terms of their paid workforce, with LAIS being the smallest.

Examination of the characteristics of the existing workforce, based on a range of existing secondary data sources, reveals that:

- The majority of the lifelong learning workforce in Scotland is **female** (58%), but that female employment is limited in the more senior or professional employment categories.
- The majority of the workforce is **aged between 35–54 years**.
- The workforce is predominantly employed within **professional** roles, which is higher than for other sectors or the economy as a whole.
- **Full-time, permanent employment** is the norm.

These findings suggest particular challenges for the lifelong learning sector. For example, older workers, who make up much of the sector (53%) and have not benefited from recent reforms to the compulsory education system, are likely to have different skills needs and qualifications than their younger colleagues. This also has implications for future 'succession planning' and renewing the workforce (particularly the professional workforce) within the sector.

Drivers of the demand for skills

The sector exists to support and deliver lifelong learning. Therefore **UK and devolved government policy** in a range of areas plays a considerable role in influencing the development of the sector and the future demand for skills within its workforce.

Strengthening economic prosperity, productivity and social justice, to which the development of skills within the population as a whole is expected to contribute, is a key theme within policy across the UK. The Scottish Executive has established high-level indicators, which set out clear targets for improving the education/training attainment of young people and improving adult skills levels.

Moreover, the way in which the lifelong learning sector responds and develops, in order to meet the demands placed upon it, is also largely governed by policy development. In common with other UK home countries, Scotland has generally implemented policies aimed at:

- setting standards for service delivery and professional practice
- developing capacity within the lifelong learning workforce
- developing responsive and flexible services offering greater choice and personalisation to meet the needs of employers and individuals
- strengthening partnership working, collaboration and service integration, which involves employers and individuals in determining service provision

- reducing bureaucracy and inefficiency within the system and service delivery infrastructure.

It is also worth considering the range of **policy drivers specific to Scotland** which help to progress the current and likely future developments within the lifelong learning sector. These are described in more detail in chapter 4 below but the following paragraphs provide a flavour.

Scotland's labour supply is considered as one of the country's economic strengths; previously skills shortages reported by employers have been uncommon. Skills gaps, on the other hand, have been concentrated among people in low-skilled jobs, where market failure in the provision of training was evident.

The Scottish Executive's strategy for lifelong learning centres on ensuring that;

- Scotland is a confident, enterprising and creative country
- there is demand for and delivery of high quality learning
- skills and knowledge are recognised, used and developed in the workplace
- people are given sufficient support and advice on learning decisions
- there is equality of access to lifelong learning, irrespective of background.

Young people and adults are to be encouraged into WBL and applied (vocational) qualifications. Continuing Modern Apprenticeships will address market failures in the development of vocational qualifications at the intermediate level. In addition to these measures, there will be more targeted regional interventions, to promote balanced growth and social inclusion across the whole of Scotland.

Scotland's enterprise strategy focuses on giving individuals transferable skills, providing quality learning and training for young people, encouraging individuals to continue skills development once in work (with businesses offered incentives), and generally to reduce economic inactivity.

Significantly in 2005 the Scottish schools and colleges sector was allocated more than £40 million over three years to increase college activity for school pupils, facilitate more fee-waivers for pupils from state schools, enhance training for college teaching staff, and improve the careers advice and guidance services offered to pupils.

In 2006 the Scottish Executive presented a strategy to eradicate the problem of 35,000 young people not in education or training (NEET) throughout Scotland (13.5% of young people). This emphasis on reducing the NEET group has several implications for the lifelong learning workforce in Scotland. For example, there are plans to offer financial incentives to encourage young people to enter into education and training, a commitment to expand the range and quality of options available to young people, and a need for services including education to work more closely together to offer a more personalised service for young people who are in the NEET group.

There is also a policy goal of helping 66,000 adults in receipt of working-age benefits into work. Tackling issues around skills and education is a key element of this, as part of a holistic solution, which will address issues such as health, childcare and homelessness. Literacy and numeracy skills are identified as being key to closing the opportunity gap in Scotland, with a focus on CLD provision to help to achieve this.

Another aspect of the Executive's 'workforce plus' strategy looks at improving applied (vocational) skills in two ways: by aligning vocational skills programmes with business needs

and by increasing the vocational element in existing programmes. Finally, the strategy makes a commitment to widen access to both FE and HE.

With regard to the LAIS constituency, there is a proposed new model for Scotland's cultural infrastructure, which includes the creation of 'The National Collections for Scotland'. This will involve the National Archives Scotland and the National Library of Scotland in the development of minimum standards for service delivery.

The lifelong learning sector has begun to respond to these policy drivers with a series of system reform plans and initiatives. These include; generally improving the integration and collaboration of the lifelong learning workforce and service delivery; maintaining a focus on adult literacy, numeracy, transferable and management skills; improving careers' services generally; expanding e-learning in the post-16 education sector; supporting the merger of the FE and HE funding councils; placing workforce development at the heart of quality improvement in post-compulsory learning; refreshing the range and quality of ESOL provision in response to changing demographics in Scotland; widening participation, especially by improving retention rates and providing vocational pathways.

Expenditure on lifelong learning is also acknowledged as both reflecting and being a significant driver of change, and is itself closely linked to policy development. Analysis suggests that, whilst total funding levels are likely to remain healthy and stable in the near future, this will not necessarily affect individual constituencies equally and increasing investment by employers and individual learners will be required. The sector will need staff skilled in securing and sustaining funding from an increasingly diverse range of sources, as well as staff skilled in offering provision that responds to the needs and demands of 'paying customers'.

Demographic change clearly has implications for **trends in participation** in lifelong learning and participants' specific demands and needs. Contrary to trends in the three other UK home countries, the population in Scotland is predicted to decrease by 8% between 2004 and 2054. As in the other three countries it will be an increasingly ageing population. Hence, demand for lifelong learning amongst older learners may increase – this is already apparent within the HE constituency, for example. Older participants in lifelong learning may have very different needs, preferences and behaviours, compared with the more traditional, younger users, with whom lifelong learning staff may be more familiar. This may require an updating of staff skills and approaches to service delivery.

The increasingly **global economy** will place an increased premium on skills within the workforce as a whole. New industries, occupations and working practices will require new skills and knowledge, with associated demand for 'replacement skills'. The implications of this for the lifelong learning sector will also become clearer as a result of the LLUK 'Impact Review' of the skills needs identified by the Sector Skills Agreements undertaken by other Sector Skills Councils.

Migration is another important facet of globalisation. Inward migration potentially increases demand for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision, as well as requiring lifelong learning staff to work with an increasingly diverse population. The migration of skilled workers (both inwards and outwards) also increases the need for internationally comparable standards for skills and qualifications. The development of the proposed 'European Qualifications Framework' would also enable and potentially result in increased competition for students between lifelong learning providers in Scotland and those overseas.

Finally, **technological change** has considerable implications for the development of skills across the workforce as a whole, thus influencing demand for lifelong learning provision. Developments in technology also shape the delivery of that provision and hence the skills

needs of the lifelong learning workforce. Skills will require continual updating in order to keep pace with rapid technological innovation.

The competitive position of the sector

There are significant difficulties in measuring the impact of a complex and varied body such as the lifelong learning workforce, in terms of its competitive position, performance, success and productivity. Unlike sectors that produce tangible products (and consequently have an impact on GVA), the lifelong learning sector lacks a single, standardised scale, which can be used to measure its success and productivity.

However, the **HE** sector in Scotland has identified some **productivity measures**, which conclude that HE generated at least £38 million of export earnings (based on overseas revenue among others) and a further £46 million off-campus in 2004.

Various sources indicate that increasing participation in lifelong learning could result in **benefits to the Scottish economy**. The net economic benefit from Scottish colleges, for example, through improved qualification levels is estimated at approximately £1.3bn. Moreover, the college sector turns £1 into an asset worth (at least) £3.20 in a particular year.

Within the UK, **trends in participation** also provide an indicator of the success of the sector, as in an increasingly commercially oriented environment potential participants 'vote with their feet'. Continued increases in the number of participants in lifelong learning suggest that the perceived benefits or value of participation still outweigh the personal investment increasingly required. **Participant satisfaction** surveys also support this finding.

Levels of success experienced by lifelong learning participants provide another indicator of the success of the sector, as well as potentially influencing levels of future participation. For the college sector, where data was available, success rates have increased between 1997/98 and 2003/04, exceeding targets by 2%.

International comparison of the lifelong learning sector is similarly complex, with each country collecting the relevant data in different ways. However, some indicators have been identified as producing robust comparison between 30 OECD and 37 EU (and associated) countries and these can be used to measure the UK lifelong learning sector against its worldwide counterparts.

It has already been stated that **female employees** make up a high proportion of the lifelong learning workforce in Scotland. However, the predominance of men within academic roles in HE, which has already been noted, was less marked within the UK as a whole than in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Switzerland. Moreover, of these countries, the UK saw the biggest increase in numbers of female academics between 1998–2004.

Similarly, whilst the issue of an **ageing workforce** remains, the UK has a lower proportion of staff aged more than 50 years employed in delivering tertiary education, compared to many other countries, including Norway and Italy.

Average **academic salaries** in tertiary education in the UK were second only to those in the United States (after taking into account the cost of living) and considerably higher than those in Sweden.

A large part of the **expenditure on colleges in Scotland** is provided by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), with £400m being contributed by the SFC in 2004-2005 for general

operations and £50m from the Scottish Council for the provision of bursaries to students in the UK.

Within UK, expenditure on tertiary education represents 1.1% of GDP, and is the same as that in France and Japan, but considerably lower than that in the USA (2.7%). However, more is spent within the UK on primary-, secondary- and post-secondary non-tertiary education (3.9% GDP), ranking it 13th amongst OECD countries.

In terms of **learner outcomes**, the proportion of 25–64 year olds which had attained upper-secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (57%) was higher than the OECD average of just 44% in 2002, and had remained stable since 1998.

And finally, the UK has a fairly high **rate of return**, a measure of the benefits of education over time, relative to the costs of the investment in education, and analogous to the percentage returns from investing in a savings account. Of the nine countries where data existed, only Finland and Hungary had better rates of return.

The current skills profile, skills needs and priorities in the lifelong learning sector

Skills can be a problematic term to define and measure, particularly in a sector so diverse as the lifelong learning sector. Nonetheless there are several means by which the current profile and needs of the sector can be assessed. These means often but not always include the use of qualifications as a proxy for skills.

In addition, there are challenges in terms of identifying and comparing skills and qualifications at different levels as a range of different qualification frameworks are currently in operation across the different lifelong learning constituencies and UK home countries. However, the majority of the sources on which this report draws (including the Labour Force Survey and the Leitch review of skills) are based on the five level National Vocational Qualifications (S/NVQ) framework. For this reason, although the existing Scottish Qualifications Framework (SCQF) has 12 levels, S/NVQ levels are used throughout this report for ease of comparison across the UK.

It has already been stated that the lifelong learning sector in Scotland is made up of a high number of senior and professional occupations. It is not surprising, therefore, that a **high proportion of the workforce hold qualifications equivalent to S/NVQ level 4 or above**. Moreover, between the years 2001–2005, **the numbers of the lifelong learning workforce holding an S/NVQ level 4 or above qualification has increased** across all home countries of the UK.

However, against this backdrop of already high and increasing skills levels within the workforce, especially among professional and support/associate professionals, the demand for such high-level skills continues to outweigh supply. Employers across the UK lifelong learning sector face **difficulties in recruiting staff as a result of skills shortages**, with applicants for vacant posts not having the required skills, work experience or qualifications. There is also evidence of **an even greater challenge in terms of the numbers of existing staff with skills gaps**, individuals lacking the skills required for the successful performance of their role.

Skills shortages were responsible for more 'hard to fill' vacancies within lifelong learning than the all-sector average in Scotland. Skills shortages were faced, particularly at **S/NVQ level 4**, for **managers and professional occupations** and comprised predominantly

occupationally-specific **professional/technical/ practical skills**, followed by **transferable skills**.

Skills gaps involved considerably higher numbers of cases than skills shortages. However, the proportion of employees within the lifelong learning sector deemed to have skills gaps was lower than the all-sector average in the UK home countries, where comparative data was available. Of the UK home countries Scotland reported the highest proportion of skills gaps in lifelong learning establishments. As with skills shortages, skills gaps were most commonly reported at **S/NVQ level 4**, for **managers and professional occupations** across the UK as a whole.

In addition to the priorities resulting directly from these skills shortages and skills gaps, stakeholders interviewed identified **leadership and management**, and **transferable and wider employability skills** as particular priorities across all lifelong learning constituencies within the UK. Some particular skills priorities within individual constituencies were also identified.

Future skills needs in the lifelong learning sector

Future trends forecasts, based on the Labour Force Survey, suggest that within the UK:

- The lifelong learning workforce, already comprising a high number of professionals, is expected to become even more increasingly dominated by **professional occupations** – reaching 56% by the year 2014, an increase of 3%.
- Overall, **almost 300,000 new recruits will be required** in the lifelong learning workforce by the year 2014 to satisfy both predicted expansion and replacement demand. The lifelong learning sector (reflecting its age profile and high incidence of professional occupations) has a high replacement demand – raising considerable issues in relation to skills development, career progression and succession planning.
- An increasing proportion of the lifelong learning workforce is expected to work on a **part-time** basis – 38% in the year 2014, an increase of 2%.

It is perhaps not then surprising to learn that employers anticipated increased demand for skills at S/NVQ level 4 and above, and also at S/NVQ level 3, and that increasing the skills levels of the existing workforce was more important to them than increasing the workforce within particular sector occupations. Higher-level professional skills are, therefore, a priority for lifelong learning sector employers, but transferable and wider employability skills are also recognised to be important for a wide range of lifelong learning occupations in the future.

Lifelong learning employers across the UK identified the following overall priority future skills needs:

- increasing demand for professionals and support/associate professionals, especially in FE, HE and WBL
- increasing demand for particular professional/technical/practical skills for professionals within individual constituencies, such as teaching and supporting learning in FE and HE; records management and librarianship in LAIS; and occupational competence for WBL trainers and assessors

- increasing demand for transferable and wider employability skills, such as ICT and customer service skills, and especially leadership and management skills, across most constituencies
- increasing integration between lifelong learning constituencies resulting in growing demand for overlapping job roles and multi-skilled staff, and partnership skills.

The future scenarios workshops also provided participants with an opportunity to speculate on and envisage what the future lifelong learning sector might look like. In line with some of the drivers of the demand for skills already identified from the review of relevant literature, participants identified three broad themes, which they believed would have a significant impact on the sector and its workforce in the future:

- globalisation
- integration
- responsiveness.

They also identified specific priorities for the future related to individual constituencies within the UK.

Future priorities

The final chapter within the report draws together all the findings from all of the previous chapters to suggest the future priorities for:

- the lifelong learning sector in Scotland
- specific constituencies within the lifelong learning sector
- Lifelong Learning UK as an organisation.

In relation to the **lifelong learning sector in Scotland**, priority issues for the future relate to:

- the policy context
- improving education and training participation and attainment among young people aged 14–19
- improving literacy and numeracy and increasing qualifications levels in the working-age population
- increasing social inclusion and improving individuals' employability
- lifelong learning system reform and quality improvement
- the changing social, economic and technological context
- the changing global and international context
- major trends across the lifelong learning workforce
- an ageing workforce
- a predominantly female workforce, except in the more senior and professional roles
- a highly qualified workforce in predominantly professional roles
- an increasing need for high level skills, rather than an increase in numbers within particular occupational groups
- a high 'replacement demand' within the workforce, with implications for future workforce succession planning.

Key priorities for the future identified in relation to **individual constituencies** within the lifelong learning sector in Scotland include:

In **CLD**:

- Increased demand for tutors of literacy and numeracy.
- CPD for graduates, as well as manual staff, and management development.

- Stronger skills in demonstrating accountability for public funding.

In FE:

- Demand for professional and support/associate professional and technician occupations will increase in the future.
- Lecturers in colleges will need to develop broader pedagogical skills, as well as other skills related to meeting the needs of employers.
- Demand for lecturers due to an aging workforce.

In HE:

- The role of technicians as demonstrators will broaden to include a greater emphasis on teaching and directly supporting learning.
- Academics will require management development and stronger entrepreneurial skills.
- Support staff will require management development.

In LAIS:

- Technology is driving change, making CPD a necessary requirement for effective personal practice.
- Librarians will need CPD, in order to support learning, help users interrogate information and provide enhanced customer services.
- There will be greater demand for para-professionals to work in archives and records management and they will require training to achieve full occupational competence.

In WBL:

- There will be closer collaboration between WBL and FE, with the result that WBL tutors will need to acquire lecturing/tutoring qualifications relevant to FE roles.
- Demand for trainers generally and specifically those working with higher-level learners will increase.
- Demand for middle managers and administrative staff will also increase.

In line with responses from participants in the future scenarios workshops in Scotland, respondents to the employer surveys in Scotland identified growing demand for support/associate professionals and professionals over the next 5–10 years. However, compared to sector employers in other parts of the UK, a smaller proportion of employers in Scotland felt there would be increasing demand for professional/technical/practical skills, particularly in the CLD and HE constituencies. In contrast, respondent Scottish employers also anticipated an increase in demand for transferable skills across all constituencies, but more so in CLD than in others. In addition, relatively more WBL employers in Scotland anticipated future need for transferable and employability skills than WBL employers in other parts of the UK, who reported professional/technical/practical skills to be most important.

In conclusion, it can be said that skills priorities across Scotland are showing a strong sense of modernisation. Traditional patterns (of student/teacher; librarian/user relationships) are gradually merging into a ‘contemporary paradigm’, where lifelong learning institutions are expected to function as businesses and the workforce will need to be armed with **agility, competence and business acumen**, in order to be able to liaise with service users as customers in the modern world.

Finally, the production of this report of the first stage of the Sector Skills Agreement for the lifelong learning workforce has identified some **future priorities to be addressed by Lifelong Learning UK** as an organisation.

A programme of LLUK research projects has already been proposed, commencing in 2007, to collect new primary data, which will go some way towards addressing the remaining gaps in the evidence. These research projects will focus on the:

- archives and records management workforce across the UK
- CLD workforce across the UK (including strand-level data for community learning and development, development education; family learning, parenting; adult and community learning and youth work)
- qualifications of FE staff in Northern Ireland
- WBL workforce across the UK.

It is acknowledged that this report has not been able to address some issues relating to the individual constituencies and, more particularly, to individual strands or component parts of lifelong learning constituencies at a fine level of detail. This was recognised particularly by stakeholder reviewers of the report within the CLD and LAIS constituencies. Other issues, which were identified but similarly not possible to address in detail within the scope or remit of this research, include:

- measures and indicators of success and productivity within the sector
- lifelong learning service user satisfaction
- the effects of the introduction of HE fees outside Scotland
- the effects of the introduction of e-learning
- issues relating to private and voluntary-sector provision of lifelong learning services
- issues relating to the volunteer workforce and SMEs within lifelong learning service delivery.

There are, therefore, further decisions to be taken within LLUK about the extent to which additional and more detailed research work focused on individual constituencies, parts of constituencies and specific issues can and will be prioritised for action in the future.

Skills for Business is an employer-led network consisting of 25 Sector Skills Councils and the Sector Skills Development Agency. Through its unrivalled labour market intelligence and insights from employers in all sectors of the UK economy, the network identifies change needed in policy and practice relating to education and skills development. With the influence granted by licences from the governments of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and with private and public funding, this independent network engages with the education and training supply-side, such as universities, colleges, funders and qualifications bodies, to increase productivity at all levels in the workforce.

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