

**A SECTOR SKILLS AGREEMENT
FOR THE LIFELONG LEARNING SECTOR IN SCOTLAND
STAGE 5 – THE AGREED COLLABORATIVE ACTION PLAN**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The agreed action plan, which will meet the priority skills needs
of the sector workforce, both now and in the future*

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“OUR VISION IS THAT THE UK LIFELONG LEARNING WORKFORCE SHOULD BE THE BEST IN THE WORLD. THAT VISION DEPENDS ON ENSURING THAT EMPLOYERS IN THE LIFELONG LEARNING SECTOR CAN RECRUIT, RETAIN AND DEVELOP HIGHLY SKILLED AND EFFECTIVE STAFF.”

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'D. Hunter', followed by a long horizontal stroke.

David Hunter, Chief Executive Officer,
Lifelong Learning UK

LIFELONG LEARNING

This is the Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Agreement for Scotland. A Sector Skills Agreement is essentially a three-way agreement between employers, education and training providers and organisations that plan, fund or support education and training. The aim of this agreement is to reach a consensus on how employers will work together with key partners to secure the necessary supply of training for their workforce in the future.

Skills for Scotland notes that ‘a skilled and educated workforce is essential to productivity and sustainable economic growth’. While Scotland’s skills profile has been improving faster than the rest of the UK, Scotland has not matched the UK economic growth rate despite its skills profile.

If the UK is to remain competitive over the coming decades, then it must raise the skills levels and skills utilisation of its entire workforce. This applies to all sectors of the economy, including the lifelong learning sector (colleges, universities, and other providers of lifelong learning). Not only do they have to continue to improve their own skills levels, but the lifelong learning sector will also be in the front line of raising the level of skills in other sectors of the economy. This sector includes five broad ‘constituencies’ of employers:

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

Our research shows that in all four nations of the United Kingdom, the lifelong learning sector has gaps in its skills base that must be addressed. This sector skills agreement is a major step towards making this happen within Scotland. Similar agreements have been developed for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The agreement has been developed through a formal five stage process:

1. the skills needs assessment
2. a review of current training provision
3. analysing the gaps in current workforce development activity, and priorities to be addressed
4. engaging employers to invest in skills development
5. the final agreement of how the SSC employers and partners will work together to secure the necessary supply of training.

This document is the output of the fifth, agreement phase of the process. As shown in more detail below, it:

- describes the characteristics of the **workforce** in Scotland, and the **policy drivers** that shape the development of skills provision
- establishes the **key skills issues** (‘overarching themes’) in the sector
- describes the agreement on the **solutions** and specific **actions** needed to resolve them

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FUTURE WORKFORCE CHARACTERISTICS AND POLICY DRIVERS IN SCOTLAND

Education has always been devolved in Scotland, leading to clear differences between provision in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK. Lifelong Learning UK's remit includes all provision that delivers or supports learning and knowledge management (outside schools) for young people over 14, adults entering the labour market, those learning for personal development and those in work.

Scotland's lifelong learning agenda which encompasses learning from cradle to grave places social inclusion and achieving sustainable economic growth as the main drivers underpinning the skills policies. An attempt to ensure that all of Scotland's working age population has access to sustainable employment and that communities are thriving underpins increasing productivity, competitiveness and attractiveness to inward investors. A focus on encouraging a culture of lifelong learning, combined with a strong commitment to meeting learner needs and improving the skills and skills utilisation of the whole population at all levels to support social inclusion and economic development, runs through all current policies and guidance published in Scotland.

Scottish Government and UK Government policy play a considerable role in influencing the future development and the demand for skills within the lifelong learning workforce in a variety of areas. Promoting social inclusion, strengthening economic prosperity, productivity and social justice are key themes within government policy, to which the development of skills within the population as a whole is expected to contribute. The Scottish Government's strategic priorities are to achieve a Scotland which is Greener, Safer and Stronger, Healthier, Wealthier and Fairer and Smarter.

Consistent themes across all the policies in Scotland are the drive towards being learner-centred, increasing the success rates for learners and increasing skills at all levels. Utilisation of those skills in driving up performance and economic prosperity in Scotland is an increasing expectation recently expressed in *Skills for Scotland: A lifelong learning strategy 2007*. There is also a strong theme of supporting partnership and multi-agency working using a social practice model so as to provide better, more holistic and learner-focused services.

Policies in Scotland, focused on libraries, youth services and community learning and development and priorities of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC), have explicit references to the needs of the workforce, and in particular, a focus on widening recruitment and improving training and development opportunities. There is also a clear theme identifying the need for leadership and management support, particularly given the new ways of working. Continuous quality enhancement, as well as capacity, is another strong theme across all the Scottish policies in support of existing learners and users of lifelong learning services.

Research to date through the Stage 1 and Stage 2 SSA process shows that the lifelong learning workforce will increasingly be dominated by professional occupations and, to a considerably lesser extent, by support/associate professionals in the coming years. It is also anticipated that a growing proportion of this workforce will be employed part-time. The very high level of replacement demand for professionals reflects the age profile of the workforce.

OVERARCHING THEMES ACROSS THE LIFELONG LEARNING SECTOR

Using Stage 1 and 2 evidence, initial gap analysis papers were developed for Scotland for each constituent part of the lifelong learning sector. As this work developed and further consultation was carried out with employers and stakeholders it became evident that a series of themes relating to skills issues is common across the lifelong learning sector. LLUK has used these themes to develop a framework for the SSA and to identify areas for collaboration on the development of solutions across the lifelong learning sector. The skills issues within each of the nations were mapped under the following overarching themes.

Skills related to learning delivery including pedagogy and information learning technology (ILT)

As the deliverers of lifelong learning, skills related to learning delivery, including pedagogy and ILT, are some of the most important skills needs across all constituencies. However, the specific skill set related to learning delivery is different in each constituency ranging from further developing and using a range of teaching and learning techniques in Scotland's Colleges to the increased demand for ILT within higher education (HE) and libraries, archives and information services (LAIS).

Leadership and management

Leadership and management skills at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 8 have been identified as a skills need across various constituencies in Scotland. The enhanced and changing role of the community learning and development (CLD) sector; the lack of people with advocacy skills and with top level strategic skills in libraries, archives and information services (LAIS); the difficulties of attracting young people and external managers to work based learning (WBL) due to image and salaries; and the challenges of operating in an increasingly internationalised market within HE have resulted in the requirements for real institutional strengths in leadership, governance and management within Scotland. HMIE has identified leadership and management as an issue in some of Scotland's colleges.

Learner engagement and customer care

Skills needs related to learner engagement and customer care have been identified in most parts of the lifelong learning sector in Scotland. Catalysed by various policy initiatives focusing on widening participation and tackling social inclusion, the need for enhanced learner engagement skills has been identified by Scotland's Colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as requirements in these constituencies. As well as having to be proficient in the use of technology, library staff are expected to play an important role as educators, drawing on a wider range of customer engagement skills in order to establish user needs and provide support, advice and guidance to users. Within WBL, learner and customer engagement skills have been identified as a need in relation to dealing with a diverse range of learners. This will mean that providers have the skills to ensure that learners' experiences in WBL match their way of learning, their learning goals, their personal development and their career aspirations.

Recruitment and retention

Skills shortages and recruitment and retention difficulties were highlighted to varying degrees in all parts of the lifelong learning sector and reinforced through the Stage 3 consultation work in Scotland.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Skills needs for ICT have been identified within the LAIS and WBL constituencies in Scotland. Technology is having a major influence in the LAIS constituency, particularly ICT, digitisation and remote access to services. Moreover, users expect LAIS staff to be highly skilled in the use of ICT and to be able to provide advice and guidance on its use.

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PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND ACTIONS

All of the proposed solutions are based upon partnership working with employers, stakeholders and learners and emphasise the existing good practice upon which further action can and should be built.

- **Explore the options for ‘professionalising’ all parts of the lifelong learning workforce** – LLUK is currently involved in a major area of activity working towards the development of UK-wide National Occupational Standards (NOS) for learning delivery. LLUK is working across the 4 nations with key government departments to consider the potential for a UK-wide approach to developing standards for lecturers, teachers, tutors and trainers. LLUK recognises the different standards which currently exist in each of the four nations, such as the Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland’s Colleges and the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education, and seeks to map existing underpinning standards in order to develop national standards which will embrace and complement the different standards and practices already in existence. It does not seek to change or replace standards already in existence.
- **Develop an integrated CPD framework and model for the lifelong learning sector where appropriate** – LLUK identifies an aspiration that the lifelong learning workforce in all 4 nations and across all constituencies has access to an integrated Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework. Although a substantial amount of good practice exists in relation to CPD in parts of the sector, feedback gained through Stage 3 consultation work with employers and stakeholders in Scotland has identified a need for a more consistent approach to the application of CPD across the whole of the sector. This was particularly the case with CLD.
- **Develop a ‘skills for learning professionals’ framework** – Developing a ‘skills for learning professionals’ skills and qualifications framework to sit within the Sector Qualification Strategy (SQS) could act as an introduction to working in the lifelong learning sector. This would provide the structure for standards and qualifications in the sector. Identified areas for potential development through SSA Stage 4 and 5 consultations are Employer Engagement, Information Learning Technology, Learner Support/Customer Care and Multi-agency/Partnership working.
- **Promote collaborative working across the lifelong learning sector to recognise and disseminate good practice** – Partnership working is a strong characteristic of the way in which the sector works in Scotland and is a key component of Scottish Government policies which underpin the development of the lifelong learning agenda and a cohesive learning system. Partnerships have long been established between Scotland’s colleges and universities and between the pre- and post-compulsory education sectors. There is a wide array of best practice material available in this area. This solution looks at the option of enhancing partnership working across constituencies in Scotland, and possibly nations, building on and disseminating good practice already in existence. It takes into account the Scottish Government’s drive to simplify the landscape by encouraging partnership working and clustering of organisations.
- **Support lifelong learning employers in the move towards more learner-centred demand-led learning and training opportunities** – Prior to the publication of the Scottish Skills Strategy (Scottish Government, 2007), Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning Fiona Hyslop stated, ‘*Our Skills Strategy will recognise that – while Scotland already has a skilled workforce – the country’s future prosperity and success will depend on matching the skills of our workforce with the changing needs of business and employers*’. In her foreword to the Strategy she notes ‘*We need a system for developing skills that meets everybody’s needs and aspirations and equips individuals with skills that are flexible enough to meet the needs of today and respond to the demands of tomorrow*’. This culture change will have a huge impact on the staff in the lifelong learning sector, ranging from how learning is delivered to how courses are funded. There is a need for a programme of support to assist lifelong learning employers across the sector to continue to make this transition in Scotland to develop and nurture skills relating to employer engagement.
- **Develop sector-wide career pathways** – There are currently no clear progression routes or career pathways that map across the whole lifelong learning sector in any of the four nations. This area of activity is based on the creation of a framework outlining career pathways in the lifelong learning sector.

- **Develop a knowledge bank for Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) professionals and others to support new entrants and existing staff in the sector** – It is important that LLUK works with the sector and partners to develop a knowledge bank of support for IAG professionals within the sector and also available to those career guidance professionals who are in a position to attract new entrants. The re-configuration of providers such as Learndirect Scotland and Careers Scotland will need to inform work practices.
- **Recruitment programmes to address specific shortages in the lifelong learning sector** – Targeted recruitment programmes are needed to encourage people to move across the lifelong learning sector or consider it as a career choice. Across the lifelong learning sector there is a demand for a variety of recruitment programmes to encourage a range of people to consider the sector as an attractive career option.
- **Develop a UK-wide leadership and management strategy** – There is a plethora of provision in leadership and management across the sector but there is no overall cohesive approach to leadership and management training and take up. There are certainly areas of good practice but there is no overall clear picture. As with the other three nations, in Scotland there are numerous initiatives and bodies working on the issue of leadership and management in lifelong learning and LLUK wishes to work with partners sector-wide to ensure the availability of a framework of appropriate leadership and management training programmes. Work has already begun on the leadership and management standards in Scotland and across the UK.
- **Develop the business case and resources to support the use of technology in the sector, particularly relating to ILT** – New technology is transforming the way learning is delivered across the UK. It is essential that the lifelong learning workforce is equipped to keep up with the pace of change presented by technology in terms of supporting users in using ICT, learning delivery through technology and up-skilling staff in the use of new and emerging technologies using, where appropriate, e-learning and blended learning approaches

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