

Widening access to higher education, rurality and social mobility

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Focus on mature, part-time and lifelong learning

Overview of the OU in Scotland

Some key issues from research

1st

for student
satisfaction

16,000

students

86%

mature
students



OU in Scotland students

43%

live in
low-income
households

25%

don't have standard
university entrance
qualifications

17%

from
SIMD 20

Transitions to formal learning

1,200

students studied
an OU *Openings*
module



Openings

15

credit
modules

20

weeks

6

hours
study
per week



OU in Scotland students

43%

live in
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don't have standard
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qualifications

17%

from
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Rural Scotland

Approximately 3500 students in rural
Scotland

Supported Open Learning

- high quality materials
- personal tutor
- adult learning pedagogy with emphasis on feedback (and forward) on assessment
- access to support services and online library



Context and connectedness

WP programme aims at long-term sustainability

Importance of multiple local partnerships with schools, colleges, third sector organisations, unions and employers

Dual identity student/partner



Research: WP and rurality

Two nations project - comparative study of HE policy and practice in rural Wales and rural Scotland

Based on literature review, interviews with key individual from across the sector



Key findings

Differential rates of access to the Internet across space and between social groups can lead to already excluded individuals becoming more excluded

While physical locations and connectivity are important, digital inclusion is about more than rural broadband

	Remote Rural	Accessible Rural	Rest of Scotland
Higher Education	35%	38%	36%
Further Education	21%	27%	28%
Training	2%	4%	6%
Employment	32%	18%	19%
Voluntary Work	1%	1%	0%
Activity Agreement	1%	0%	1%
Unemployed Seeking	7%	10%	10%
Unemployed Not Seeking	1%	1%	1%
Unknown	1%	0%	0%

Source: *Destination of Leavers from Scottish Schools, 2010/2011*
(Based on school leaver's home address and Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification, 2009-2010)



Key findings (2)

From HEIs

- Frustration with short term project based approaches

...I mean the lack of continuity is the key factor... we'll run a successful course and do really well. And then, you know, because the funding's used up, you know, you get six enquiries because people have heard about it and you can't run it again, because it was just a pilot.

- Focus on physical location and space although recognition of UHI and OU approaches
- Recognition that successful widening access initiatives need to involve partnerships

Questions for discussion



The Open
University

- From your experience and/or institutional perspective are there particular issues for students who come from a rural background?
- How does your institution work with distance learners who live in rural Scotland.