

## Value Case Study – UK 2010

### UK UNIVERSITY COURSES FOR VOLUNTEERS / VOLUNTARY SECTOR

#### Background

In 2007 as part of the EU-funded MOVE project (Mutual recognition of skills and competences gained through volunteering) the University of Liverpool carried out an audit of UK Universities' course provision for those engaged in volunteering or working in the voluntary sector.

It excluded courses run only for students in universities, who were engaged in some form of volunteering.

A presentation based upon this audit made at the final MOVE conference in Brussels, May 2007 can be found on the MOVE website (hosted by the European Volunteer Centre – CEV) at [http://www.cev.be/80-move\\_presentations-EN.html](http://www.cev.be/80-move_presentations-EN.html)

In 2007 it was found that most of the courses were full awards with a few universities allowing study of individual modules from those full awards. Some were at Foundation degree level (starts at pre 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate level). There was a limited offer of individual short courses, some of which did not carry any academic credit.

The audit identified gaps in the provision and at the MOVE conference in Brussels we invited discussion of some questions, including the following:

- do the gaps matter?
- what do universities need to do?
- what does the voluntary sector need to do?

#### Updated audit 2010 - Progress since 2007

In 2010, as part of the EU-funded VALUE project the University of Liverpool updated the audit and the attached pdf file shows the findings. Web-links in the spreadsheet signpost to the individual university websites with further information.

Some overall reflections on the findings include:

- The complexity of managing volunteers needs to be recognised in University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) as volunteering isn't one-dimensional. For example a volunteer may also be a user or sponsor of the service as well as a volunteer. Managers need to be aware of this in order to manage them effectively.
- There is a growing recognition in the courses offered by UK ULLL for the sector and volunteers of the demonstrated need for not just generic management style competences but very specific applicability of ULLL for those managing volunteers. So whereas in 2007 most of the management modules on offer to those in the voluntary sector in the UK were very generic type 'business school' style, now some universities appear to be developing modules tailored with more specific applicability to the voluntary sector e.g. Lampeter, Roehampton, Winchester, Durham

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VOLUNTEERING & LIFELONG LEARNING  
IN UNIVERSITIES IN EUROPE

- More Foundation degrees or UK first year undergraduate Level are now on offer for the sector – so there is growing acknowledgement that not all volunteers and/or their managers are ready for or wanting to study at Masters level.
- The UK ULLL offer is still weighted in favour of managers of volunteers rather than volunteers themselves, except where there are specialist centres e.g. Birkbeck, Lampeter
- Higher Education (HE) can encourage reflexive competences for volunteers – allow them to value learning, and there seem to be more opportunities for this now than in 2007.
- Community learning and the different contexts for volunteering are increasingly appreciated – e.g. see Dundee

## Conclusion

Since 2007 there appears to be an increased offer of UK ULLL courses for those engaged in the voluntary sector or who are volunteering. At the same time, within this expanded portfolio there is some recognition of the complexity of this sector and so programmes of study are in some cases becoming more tailored to suit specific needs.

The ability of UK ULLL to provide suitable courses and learning support is further complicated by the fact that those who 'volunteer' may not always recognize that they are in fact volunteering. For example, do they just see it as a continuum of life experience, especially when they are not 'formally' volunteering i.e. not doing it within an organisational context. In those very informal volunteering cases (eg helping in the neighbourhood) it is likely that those undertaking the voluntary role do not reflect at all on their personal learning. So the questions remains - How can ULLL help them to do this? So universities need to provide ULLL support for informal volunteering – i.e. reflective small steps (e.g. possibly non-accredited or accredited short courses and counselling) – see UEL and Open University for examples of this.

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