# Lifelong Learning

## The challenge

For individuals, Lifelong Learning implies all learning activity undertaken throughout one's life. It includes any activities that aim to improve knowledge, skills and competence, across personal, employment-related, civic or social perspectives[1].

For higher and further education institutions, Lifelong Learning tends to cover a range of different strategic priorities:

1. Public Engagement
2. Employer Engagement and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
3. Work-Based Learning (WBL)
4. Social Mobility and Inclusion
5. The Student Experience
6. Adult and Community Learning (ACL)

By extending educational opportunities, the UK seeks to ensure a future which is economically competitive and socially cohesive.

An increasing number of students are benefiting from education later in life, bringing diverse experiences, skills and needs and adding value to employers and society.

In this context, educational institutions face a variety of challenges:

- Recognising and accrediting prior learning and experience
- Sharing learner achievement records securely
- Supporting remote/distance learners
- Assessing performance and professional development
- Managing mutually beneficial partnerships with employers and community groups

Jisc helps institutions address these challenges through innovative approaches to technology, processes and systems, outlined in more detail in the following pages.
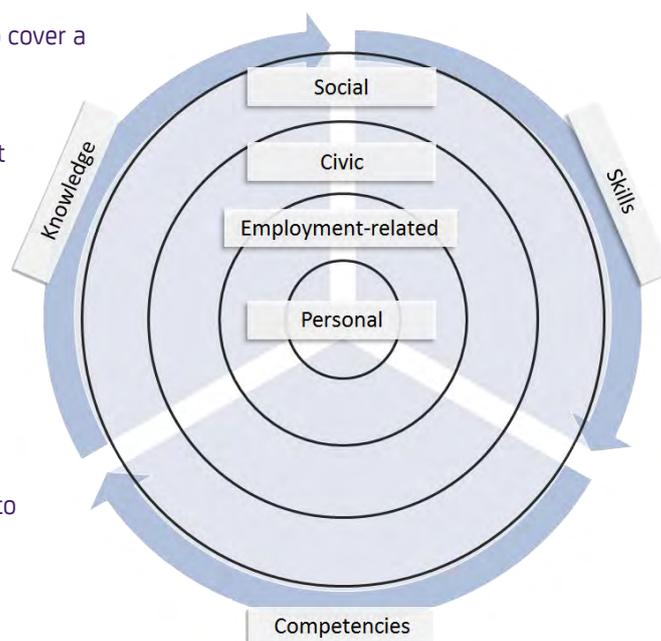


## Expected benefits

- Better support for learners
- Effective assessment, feedback and accreditation
- Stakeholder engagement and sustainable partnerships
- Responsive curriculum design
- Flexible curriculum delivery

"...education should not stop when a person leaves school. The opportunities and enjoyment it offers should be available to people throughout their lives in different forms: full-time and part-time; academic and vocational, whatever will help them achieve their goals at that stage of their life.

Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011

1 Engaging in Lifelong Learning: Shaping Inclusive and Responsive University Strategies: http://bit.ly/zPvI48

# Jisc Business and Community Engagement Programme
# Lifelong Learning

**JISC**

## Addressing the challenge

Jisc has funded a range of programmes[2] and projects[3] to identify how technology can best support Lifelong Learning across Higher Education, Further Education and Skills.

### Topics covered in Jisc work to date:

- The development of learning environments that support the seamless movement of learners between and across sectors and institutions
- Exploring the role technology has to play in attracting and retaining diverse groups of learners
- Improving the access of employers and work-based learners to institutionally owned systems, services and knowledge
- Understanding how technology can support the process of APL/APCL/APEL[4]
- Exploring the pedagogical nature of e-learning

- Investigating the ways in which technology can provide a more personalised learning experience; and the ways in which technology can support the more sophisticated administrative processes needed for that provision
- Developing digital literacies by helping colleges and universities to embed core digital skills into the curriculum
- Effectively managing course data, especially important for joint provision between employers and learning providers

## Case studies

The following case studies demonstrate how Jisc have helped in some of these areas.

### Shared architecture for employer, student & organisational networking (SAMSON)

**The University of Nottingham** piloted a low-cost technical infrastructure to support postgraduate students going into companies on placements, and employees entering universities to study for continuing professional development (CPD).

The project:

- reduced universities' costs by developing a shared service for both Nottingham universities to target student placements into SMEs, using federated technology
- improved the matching of placement students to companies
- freed up time for tutors to give more feedback to students on research project placements

- enabled employers to provide formative feedback on placement projects, contributing to student learning and increasing the benefits to their company
- achieved 98% take-up of an e-portfolio by students on project placements, without the incentive of assessment
- provided a portal enabling company managers to view progress data from more than one university, about employees taking CPD courses
- achieved substantial efficiency gains for university administrators, e.g. 75% less time taken to process a placement opportunity from advertisement stage to completion of recruitment

http://bit.ly/PMeLDc

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2 Jisc Programmes relating to Lifelong Learning: http://bit.ly/NAR3Wu
3 Jisc Projects relating to Lifelong Learning: http://bit.ly/OQ7Itq
4 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning (APCL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

## Co-generative Toolkit (Co-genT)

The **University of Gloucestershire** has created an online resource which supports the development of cogenerated Higher Education courses by universities and employers.

The project created a resource that helps to develop courses using language and terminology that is familiar to employers – and the employees who would be acting as learners – whilst also satisfying the quality assurance requirements of Higher Education institutions.

http://bit.ly/RbrJK9
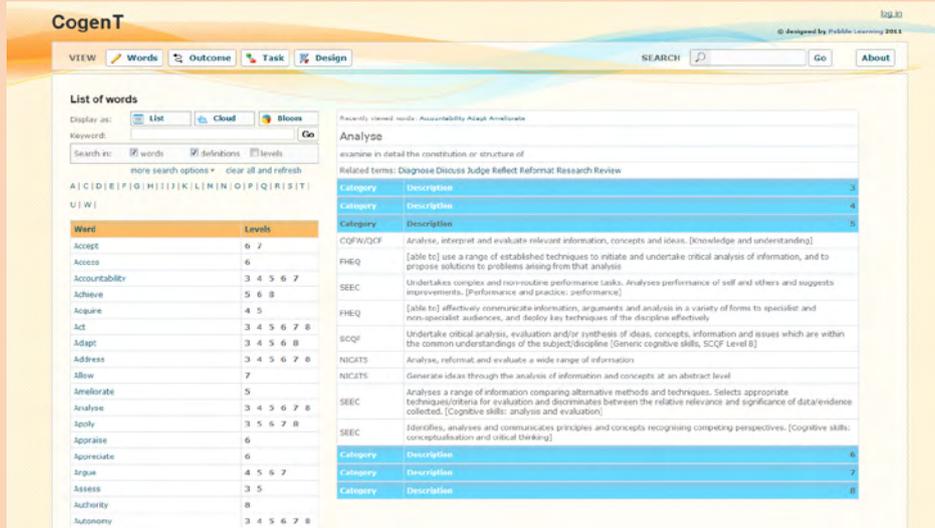


> The added benefit of this project to the wider community has been the flexibility of the Cogenerative Toolkit for use in other areas of higher education, such as accreditation of prior learning and employer-based training accreditation.

Phil Gravestock, Head of Learning Enhancement & Technology Support, University of Gloucestershire

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## Supporting Responsive Curricula (SRC)

> Without EQAL it would have taken a great deal longer to have arrived at this point. Although employability wasn't the main thrust of EQAL, a lot has been achieved in terms of forging links between curriculum design and graduate prospects. I suspect that EQAL and the changes in documentation it has introduced have had a big part to play in raising awareness of employability at MMU.

Penny Renwick,
Pro Vice-Chancellor,
Quality and Development

**Manchester Metropolitan University** underwent a huge transformational change involving the redesign of the entire undergraduate curriculum. They focused on employability by embedding an Employability Curriculum Framework within the whole curriculum.

Organisational infrastructure was a key element to the successful delivery of this project, improving the effectiveness, efficiency and integration of systems underpinning student-facing processes.

Another key element of the project was to ensure a seamless, personalised student experience.

Key benefits in this area were derived from developing the organisation's infrastructure but also from the

introduction of a new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

A "mash-up" of information was provided to students through the VLE that allowed



*http://youtu.be/Loz8kyabmy8*

them to view the curriculum, assignment information, personalised timetabling and other systems from a single point.

http://bit.ly/RbrJK9

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## Benefits and impact

Jisc has helped UK Higher Education, Further Education and Skills to share existing knowledge regarding the innovative use of technology to enhance Lifelong Learning[5].

Learning in a Digital Age[6] is Jisc's most recent publication to provide guidance for those involved with Lifelong Learning.

Jisc has also helped Universities and Colleges to meet their own specific needs, for example:

- **Birmingham City University** radically changed their institutional practices to actively engage stakeholders in curriculum design.
- **University of Bradford** offered pre-entry online induction sites to facilitate a seamless transition into Higher Education.
- **University of Wolverhampton** used its e-portfolio system to effectively deliver bespoke units (each worth five credits) to a range of local SMEs. The units can be combined into different awards offering learners and employers choice and flexibility.

> "
> Our innovative use of social media pre-entry has enabled us to develop meaningful and lasting relationships with students.
>
> Becka Colley, Dean of Students, University of Bradford

## *Technology* can offer more specific benefits, such as:

### Support for lifelong learners

- Improved access to up to date institution and course information
- Faster response to initial enquiries and streamlined online application processes
- Access to institutional services from mobile devices, from any location
- Enhanced support for transition into higher education

### Responsive curriculum design

- Responsive programmes that meet learners' and employers' needs
- Easier engagement with stakeholders, particularly employers, in curriculum design and delivery

### Flexible curriculum delivery

- Learner choice in the timing and location of study
- Flexible ways of delivering the curriculum and assessment and providing learner support

### Assessment, feedback and accreditation

- Opportunities to extend higher education to new markets by distance and online learning
- Increased opportunities for learners to demonstrate a range of achievements and prior attainment
- Efficient assignment-handling processes
- Rapid and timely feedback that prompts reflection

### Stakeholder engagement and sustainable partnerships

- Improved data collection and transfer across processes
- Online integrated points of access to institutional services for practitioners, learners and other stakeholders such as employers