

# **The University and Lifelong Learning: Forging a special relationship**

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# Outline

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- **Political impetus towards lifelong learning in Europe - why should universities care?**
  - **How to strategically upgrade lifelong learning provision at European universities?**
    - Focus on organisational aspects of lifelong learning provision in universities
    - Drawing insights from the US on the case of the Division of Continuing Education, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University
  - **Final thoughts – the LIFELONG University**
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# Political impetus towards lifelong learning in Europe - why should universities care?

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- Contributing to knowledge-based society
  - Accounting for social and demographic shifts
  - Fostering social dimension in higher education
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# How to strategically upgrade lifelong learning provision at European universities?

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## □ Key lessons learned

- understanding lifelong learner's profile
  - providing for flexible learning
  - making lifelong learning affordable
  - thinking globally, acting locally
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# Understanding university lifelong learner's profile

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- Motivations for participating in LLL:
    - Related to employment (professional courses for career advancement; degrees for (re)entry into the workforce) – seeking employment-related skills and qualifications.
    - For personal enrichment (often liberal arts courses).
  - Lifelong learners life situations usually include extensive work and family obligations, and high pressures on time and finances – expect QUALITY.
  - Special outreach strategies needed.
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# Providing for flexible learning

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- Diversity and professional relevance of **courses, programs and degree structures.**
- Flexibility in **admission requirements** and **recognition of prior learning.**
- Trend towards interactive and real-time **distance learning**, although 'learning community' aspect important in retaining learners.

**HOW CAN SUCH FLEXIBILITY BE ACHIEVED in universities' complex and often complicated decision-making apparatus?**

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# Making lifelong learning affordable

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- Who should pay for lifelong learning at universities?
    - “education assistance plans” (financial assistance plus leave) for career advancement
    - government assistance for education for (re)entry into the workforce through employment agencies
    - Considering individual’s rates of return for continuing education
  - How much will universities charge lifelong learners?
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# Thinking globally, acting locally

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- A Local/Regional University: understanding the local/regional social, economic particularities and the educational needs of local population.
  - “[It] would seem to be the duty of every institution of learning in this country to use its resources for the benefit of the surrounding community” (A. L. Lowell, Harvard University President, 1909).
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# Few facts on the Division of Continuing Education [DCE]

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- Comprises three academic units:
  - University Extension School (1909)
  - Summer School of Arts and Sciences (for secondary school students as preparation for HE, English learning and study abroad) (1871)
  - Institute for Learning in Retirement (social and educational opportunity) (1977)
- Division within FAS, however acting as an independent School
- No institutional connection to the 10 Harvard Graduate and Professional Schools
- Professional study/academic and ~~career/graduate school prep advising service~~

# Examples from the Harvard DCE

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## □ **Learners' profiles:**

- Majority HUES students (85%) are educated working professional attending who do not study for a degree: 13,394 students registered for 24,071 courses in 2006/07 (7/11% increase); 56% female, 44% male; median age 30 and mean 33; 74% had already at least BA; 82% from MA (18% from abroad)
  - 550 retired professionals in ILIR
  - 5920 students enrolled in the summer school in 2006/07 (1300 in secondary school program, 600 in English language program, 427 in study abroad; geographically more diverse with 29% international)
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# Providing for flexible learning

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- Diversity of program/award options:
    - 623 courses in 65 subjects
    - Liberal arts undergrad program with concentration in 20 fields including pre-med, pre-law, pre-MBA ,and teacher prep options and earning professional citations
    - Professional graduate certificate and degree programs
    - Vital subject areas such as environmental management, information technology, and biotechnology
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# Continued

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- Admissions for degree programs
    - 3 required courses passed with B and over
    - Credits can be transferred from accredited institutions elsewhere and count towards degree
  
  - 100 on-line courses offered including 23 Harvard College courses, decrease in residency requirements for degrees
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# Making lifelong learning affordable

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- HUES course tuition rates are among the cheapest in Boston (an average undergrad course costs \$550)
  - Harvard Tuition Assistance Plan (cost per course at HUES \$40 and at graduate schools 10% of the course cost, non-Harvard courses reimbursed 75% of course cost in degree program; in 2006/07 1,876 Harvard employees enrolled in 3,181 courses)
  - In 2006/07 \$6,546,639 in financial aid (special scholarship schemes for Boston teachers, high school students and City of Cambridge employees)
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# Serving local community, thinking globally

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- ❑ Established to serve the “many people in our community”
  - ❑ Majority of students from MA, 34% from Cambridge and Boston, other New England States well represented.
  - ❑ Special financial aid arrangements with a number of local institutions: Harvard University, Cambridge City Council, local schools.
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# Final thoughts – the **LIFELONG University**

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- Catering for learning/educational needs of an individual at different stages of his/her life -> university as **an education continuum**
  
- BUT:
  - Should every university provide LLL?
  - Should university combine LLL programs with traditional ones and, thus, mix lifelong learners with traditional students or not?
  - How to combine different priorities: top-level research, catering for lifelong learners...