

**Executive Summary of
Final Report**

Diverse routes

2005-2008



www.diverseroutes.co.uk

Diverse Routes into higher education in Scotland

Diverse routes into higher education Executive Summary

'Diverse Routes' was a national project funded jointly by the four Scottish Wider Access Regional Forums (SWARF) between 2005 and 2008 and managed by The Open University in Scotland.

The aim of the project was to create a resource pack which would provide a coherent overview of information and support available to encourage new and settled migrants, as well as black and minority ethnic groups including refugees and asylum seekers, to explore the benefits of higher education.

The 'Diverse Routes into higher education in Scotland' pack and website (www.diverseroutes.co.uk) was designed to complement the work of the Scottish Refugee Council and initiatives such as New Roots Scotland¹ to encourage the integration of new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland, through education, employment, enterprise and training.

The pack and website, designed to be used by practitioners working with the target groups as well as by individuals, contain general information about accessing higher education, including:

- financial support
- credit transfer and recognition of prior learning
- professional development
- courses on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

¹ New Roots Scotland is the Scottish coordinating body for the economic integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The Group's overall aim is to help asylum seekers and refugees integrate into Scottish society and enable them to play their full part in the economy.

There is also local information about access and English language courses, as well as information and contact details of local agencies providing further advice and support.

During the period 2005-08, three editions of the information pack 'Diverse Routes into higher education Scotland' (www.diverseroutes.co.uk) have been produced by The Open University in Scotland. A total of 13,500 packs have been distributed across Scotland and by March 2008 the website had received over 240,500 hits.

Development of the 'Diverse Routes' materials involved collaboration with a wide range of organisations across the whole of Scotland. Throughout the life of the project there was a strong emphasis on feedback and evaluation and this activity has informed the development of the pack and provided important insights into the needs of the target groups. A particularly valuable feature of the materials has been the use of case studies illustrating learning journeys.

Initial research by a range of agencies and early feedback on draft versions of 'Diverse Routes' from educational providers, national organisations and local agencies working with new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, as well as from clients and learners themselves, confirmed the need for a resource of this type. Throughout the project, the evaluation process has also confirmed the need for accessible information, advice and guidance (IAG) that crosses sector boundaries, foregrounds the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF), and is easy to access by agencies; something that is different from a database of courses. The 'Diverse Routes' project delivered on both accounts.

In the light of feedback and the evidence of the continuing need for support for refugees and new migrants, the project steering group, which included representatives from all four wider access forums, recommended that the 'Diverse Routes' materials became an established resource. However, by the end of the project funding on 31 July, 2008 it had not been possible to find a mechanism for ensuring the continuing maintenance of the website and updating of the materials. As a result, the North Forum took the initiative to provide a small amount of funding for one further year to cover care and maintenance and allow The Open University in Scotland project team to continue to seek a long-term solution.