

UHI Investing in Recovery IMPACT REPORT

Project participant destinations



Executive Summary

The University of the Highlands and Islands Investing in Recovery project, supported by the Highlands and Islands, Scotland, European Social fund 2007-2013, successfully supported 2,074 participants over its three year period. An evaluation of the early impacts of this investment, six months after project completion, indicates encouraging results for the region.

Combining the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Destination Leavers Higher Education (DLHE) statistics for the university with the returns of an independent survey undertaken by the European and International Development team (EUID), demonstrates a very optimistic outcome for the project's participants. A 53% respondent sample return affords some level of confidence to be applied to the data's authenticity, notwithstanding the acknowledgement of non-response bias. A summary of the key results of the impact evaluation returned the following statistics:

- The results equate to a total of 92% of the project respondents being in either employment or education and training post project.
- More than three quarters (83%) of the respondents who were in full time employment declared that they were employed in the Highlands and Islands, with a further 13% employed in the rest of Scotland.
- Two-thirds of employed respondents (66%) reported being in full-time employment with permanent or open-ended contracts.

Introduction

The University of the Highlands and Islands Investing in Recovery (IIR) project was a three year European Social Fund (ESF) supported strategic project, designed to ease the effects of recession in the region, developed in response to the European Commission's Recovery Plan.. This was achieved by providing funding for additional full and part time student places, above Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) funded numbers within key sectors. With a total project budget of £12.4m, ESF grant of £7m, additional places were provided in academic years 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13. The project was funded through a standard scales of unit cost model for ESF, the first unit cost pilot used in Structural Funds in the Highlands and Islands, paving the way for the new simplification approach. The EUID team undertook an evaluation of the participant destinations six months after the end of the project.

The evaluation incorporated the data from the HESA DLHE returns for the three associated years and an independent survey of the participants not included in the DLHE sample. The combined results returned a 53% sample to inform this impact report.

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Methodology

To ascertain the participant destinations required contacting previous and continuing students of the Investing in Recovery project direct, to enable them to advise their status beyond the project funding period. The methodology adopted incorporated both primary research and secondary data. It was identified that the HESA returns from the DLHE would provide a percentage sample for reporting and reduce the number of students that required to be contacted directly.

The HESA sample surveys the activities of successful students after they leave a higher education provider, with data collected approximately six months after a student leaves. The sample is derived from the university's student returns to HESA, and is determined by algorithms and parameters agreed by the sector. All universities must survey the students in their identified DLHE sample. The university's DLHE returns for project participants in years 2010/11, 2011/2012, 2012/2013 were analysed and segregated from the full project participant list. Where students were returners within the three years, their duplicate entries were removed to ensure participants were only reported once. It was decided that all of the project participants who had not been contacted in the DLHE sample would be contacted in a full population census to try to gain as comprehensive data as possible.

The remaining participants were invited to participate in the survey using their email addresses held on SITS, the student record system. As an impact survey should be undertaken six months after project completion the 31st January 2014 was the date applied to the students who were surveyed beyond the DLHE returns. Reminder emails were issued, however returns from the initial email survey were low and a high percentage of the emails were returned undelivered. A further attempt to reach participants was undertaken with letters posted to the non-respondents of the email survey.

It is important to emphasise that the returns from the DLHE and the survey constitutes sample figures, i.e. only a proportion of the total participants, and therefore an element of non-response bias potentially means that the results may not be representative of the whole project population. A further data limit should be acknowledged, in that HESA changed their employment status category in the 2011/2012 DLHE, Our impact survey questions mirrored the 20/11/2012 and 2012/2013 questions, however this left a mismatch in the 2010/2011 questions. To address this change and ensure data integrity, all full time employment status categories have been aggregated into simply full-time and part-time employed.

A light touch comparison is also referenced to the original data that was collated from the participant survey undertaken by the project team in the early project stages, which returned a 47% sample.

The initial findings speak to very encouraging outcomes for the ESF UHI Investing in Recovery project.

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Findings

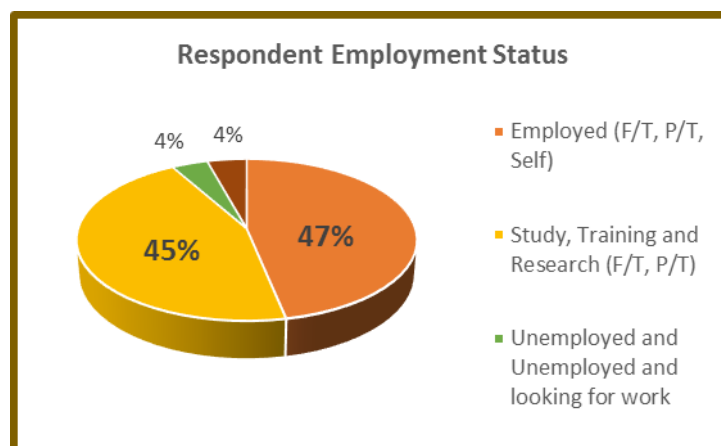
The results of the combined DLHE and impact survey returned more than half of the participant population and revealed very favourable results. With a combined return of a 53% sample of the 2,074 participants, the data can be presented with a high degree of confidence. The initial DLHE surveys returned 961 responses out of the 2,074 population (46%). The impact survey resulted in a further 138 responses (7%)

Participant characteristics collected from students at the commencement of their study, revealed that only 3.86% were employed or self-employed prior to the start of their course. Other key statistics from the initial participant survey highlighted 12% of students with disabilities (255) and also 11% with family/caring responsibilities (243).

Respondent Employment Status

Results for project participant employment status were extremely positive.

- Of the 1,099 respondents in our survey almost half (47%) declared that they were employed, either full-time, part-time, or in self-employment.
- A further 45% were occupied in full-time further study, training and research.
- The results equate to a total of 92% of the project respondents being in either employment or education and training post project.
- 3% were unemployed and looking for work, and only 1% declared themselves unemployed, with the remaining 4% due to start a job in the next month, engaged in travel, or had ticked the something else category.



(Please refer to the data table in Annex 1 for further information)

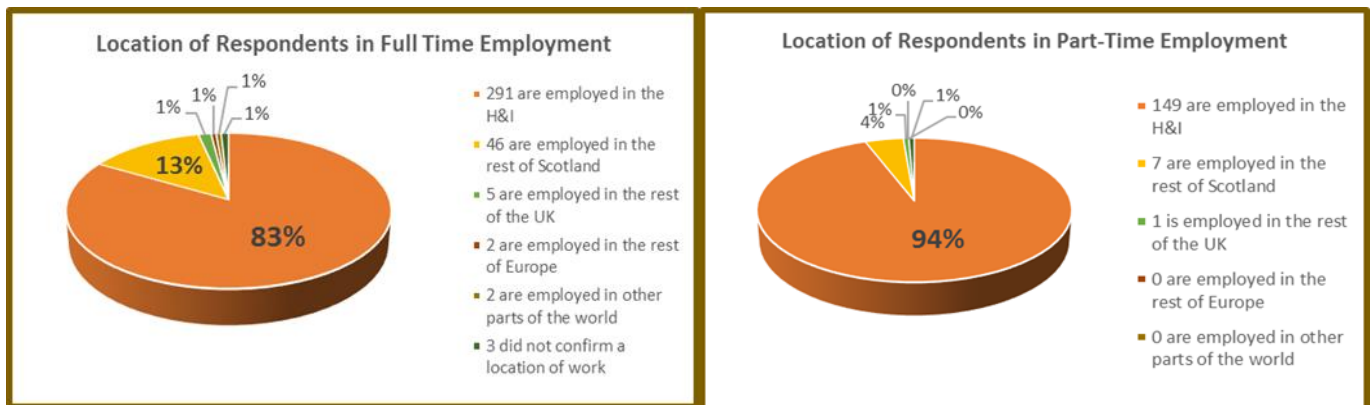
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Respondent Location of Employment

Indications for retaining project participants in the Highlands and Islands in the initial stages post study were particularly promising.

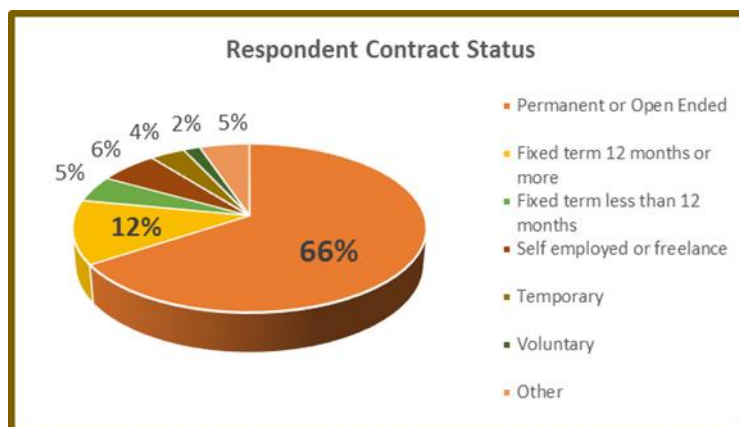
- More than three quarters (83%) of the respondents who were in full time employment declared that they were employed in the Highlands and Islands, with a further 13% employed in the rest of Scotland.
- Almost all respondents (94%) in part-time employment were employed in the Highlands and Islands, with a further 4% employed in the rest of Scotland.



Respondent Employment Contract Status

The employment contract status of respondents was also extremely encouraging.

- Two-thirds of employed respondents (66%) reported being in full-time employment with permanent or open-ended contracts.
- A further 12% were full time employees in fixed term contracts of 12 months or more.
- 5% of respondents were in fixed term contracts of less than 12 months.
- 6% stated that they were self-employed or working freelance.



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Conclusions

The University of the Highlands and Islands Investing in Recovery (IIR) project was established with the aim of easing the effects of the recession on the region. The first pilot standard scales of unit cost project in the Highlands and Islands, the three year European Social Fund (ESF) funded strategic project successfully supported 2,074 participants. The results of this initial survey does afford very positive indications of the impacts of the ESF supported project.

The methodology adopted incorporated both primary research and secondary data. A good sample return rate of 53% affords a degree of confidence in the data reported, although an element of non-response bias must be considered before relating any statistics to the whole project population.

The responses from the combined DLHE returns and the impact survey responses provides a very optimistic outcome for the project participant destinations. The 53% respondent sample of the project population affords some level of confidence to be applied to the data's authenticity.

- Almost half (47%) declared that they were employed, either full-time, part-time, or in self-employment.
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Annex 1

IIR Survey Response - Respondent status on 1st January 2014

1,099 Respondents (53%)

Status	H&I	Rest of Scotland	Rest of UK	Rest of Europe	Int	No employer postcode	Grand Total	
Engaged in full-time further study, training and research	89	4			1	334	428	39%
Full-time Employment	291	46	5	2	2	3	349	32%
Part-time Employment	149	7	1			1	158	14%
Self employed	6		1				7	1%
Part-time Study	27	1	1			38	67	6%
Unemployed and looking for work		1				30	31	3%
Unemployed						12	12	1%
Something else	4					30	34	3%
Taking time out to travel		1				7	8	1%
Due to start a job in the next month	2					3	5	0%
Unknown						975	975	
Grand Total	568	60	8	2	3	1,433	2,074	100%

Of the 349 in FT employment	
291 are employed in the H&I	83%
46 are employed in the rest of Scotland	13%
5 are employed in the rest of the UK	1%
2 are employed in the rest of Europe	1%
2 are employed in other parts of the world	1%
3 did not confirm a location of work	1%

Of the 158 in PT employment	
149 are employed in the H&I	94%
7 are employed in the rest of Scotland	4%
1 is employed in the rest of the UK	1%
0 are employed in the rest of Europe	0%
0 are employed in other parts of the world	0%
1 did not confirm a location of work	1%

Of the 514 employed	
Permanent or Open Ended	338
Fixed term 12 months or more	63
Fixed term less than 12 months	26
Self employed or freelance	32
Temporary	19
Voluntary	9
Other	27

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