

University of Aveiro (PT), 05-07 June 2019

## *University Lifelong Learning to Live a Better Life – Continuing Education for Sustainable Quality of Life in Europe*

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### ***The centre of continuing education as an instrument of the University of Lleida that contributes to the University's corporate social responsibility***

As its first institutional value and as one of its strategic pillars, the University of Lleida's Strategic Plan 2013/16 stipulates the promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility, which is understood from the viewpoint of the University being a public body at the service of people.

In order to increase the number of actions promoting the Corporate Social Responsibility of the University of Lleida's Centre of Continuing Education (CFC, as abbreviated in Catalan) and of the University itself, the CFC implemented an education programme for unemployed people for the very first time in the 2018/19 academic year. The education intervention was aimed at university graduates or people with some type of vocational training who were actively seeking employment.

The selected course format and its title were "Specialisation Course in Resources and Information for (Re)Integration into the Labour Market", attracting 10 ECTS credits. It was taught on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings for four months.

The CFC organised and met the cost of the course. However, it was decided that students should pay a token amount of 10% of the cost of enrolment so that they would value the education offered. They also had to pay for the course certificate to be issued.

The programme objectives were:

- To offer tools, strategies and skills to facilitate integration into the labour market.
- To empower them to reinvent themselves as far as work is concerned, gaining confidence and self-assurance.

Regarding the content, courses offered by different institutions in our most immediate environment were analysed and it was found that all of them worked on interpersonal skills but none of them dealt with intrapersonal skills. Our course was therefore designed to include both aspects to complete the following modules:

- Module 1. Socio-emotional competencies.
- Module 2. Leadership and leading teams.
- Module 3. Personal positioning.
- Module 4. Successful experiences.
- Module 5. Entrepreneurship, law and working practice.
- Module 6. CV enhancement: professional training pathways.

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A theory-practice-reflection methodology was used. The face-to-face sessions were complemented by individual tutorials in which each student and the course coordination supervisor established a three-month work plan for them to follow on completion of the course, after studying each CV in a personalised manner and agreeing with each student the objectives, actions and steps to take to design their plan for (re)integration into the labour market. The development of this plan and attendance at and participation in various sessions and tutorials were considered evaluative elements.

There was a broad mix of students on the course and some had been unemployed for a long time. There were two men and 14 women aged 25 to 57. Seven were not Spanish nationals and eight had university degrees although some were waiting for the homologation of their qualifications.

The students' assessment of the course was very positive, and the following were considered its merits:

- the combination of content for developing intra and interpersonal skills;
- the variety of teaching staff selected to teach the different topics;
- accompaniment throughout the course by coordinators to clear up any doubts, overcome any fears, etc. that arose while the students were actively seeking work;
- personalised tutorials and the agreed work plan adapted to their interests, motivations, real possibilities, etc.;
- being awarded a university qualification and doing things in a university environment, since the effect it had on students was one of empowerment rather than one of stigmatisation that courses run by other organisations usually have;
- the quality of interpersonal relationships established between and among the students, who helped one another to look for work, exchanged job offers and provided encouragement. We found that such practices continued after the course had ended, among other aspects that were worthy of note.

Regarding the outcomes of the programme, which ended last February, 14 of the 16 people enrolled passed the course. As far as work is concerned, two of the students found work in the first fortnight, so they were unable to put their integration into the labour market down to the effectiveness of the course. During the course, another four people found work (two of them with hourly contracts) and, once the course had ended, a further four people found work. In addition, one student set up her own business. After giving some thought to the pros and cons of their CVs in the tutorials and the personal improvement plan, other students decided to take a fresh approach. As a result, three people embarked upon new postgraduate or equivalent studies to expand their possibilities of securing employment or self-employment, and now they have jobs in sectors different from those in which they had professional experience