Experience of delivering an online MSc in Sustainable Mountain Development

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Context

- Rapid changes in rural and mountain areas
  - environments, economies, societies
  - need for innovative, integrated approaches

- Demographic changes
  - need to keep younger generations
  - need to ‘upskill’

- Sparse populations
  - value of education using ICT
  - interdisciplinary UHI BSc degrees from 1994
Rural and mountain degrees

- Rural and Mountain areas
  - similar issues

- Rural students
  - practitioners in rural development (Local authorities, NGOs)
    - many have ‘drifted’ in: need for interdisciplinary expertise

- Mountain students
  - practitioners
  - educators
  - career shift
  - mountaineers
  - ‘mountain people’
Rural and mountain degrees

- 2004: initial validation: UK
- 2007: revalidation: Europe
- 2009: UNESCO Chair
- 2012: revalidation: Global

  - part of wider MSc programme including MSc Developing Low Carbon Communities / Sustainable Energy Solutions
Rural and mountain degrees

- **Specific core modules**
  - Mountain: Environmental & social issues in mountain areas
  - Rural: Communities and Nature

- **Other core modules**: rural / mountain assessments
  - sustainable development (mountain core)
  - policy analysis (mountain core)
  - developing communities (rural core)
  - local economic development (rural core)

- Possible to leave with Postgraduate Certificate
Rural and mountain degrees

- Optional modules: mountain/rural assessments
  - biodiversity management
  - Geographical Information Systems
  - sustainable land use and energy
  - water management
  - developing potential through placement
  - research methods and techniques
  - sustainable tourism
  - sustainable deer management
  - elective

Possible to leave with Postgraduate Diploma or continue to MSc (15,000 word dissertation)
Module tutors

- Mountain
  - Perth College UHI

- Rural
  - Lews Castle College UHI

- Other modules
  - Moray College UHI
  - Inverness College UHI
  - Orkney College UHI
Developing knowledge and understanding

- Virtual learning environment (Blackboard)
  - weekly academic foundations
  - discussion board
  - videos
  - lectures

- On-line resources
  - UHI: e-journals, e-books, etc.
    - available 24/7
    - student-located

- Students’ experience
Where the students live
Graduates/awards since 2004

• MSc: 30
• Postgraduate Diploma: 10
• Postgraduate Certificate: 17

• Sustainable Deer Management module: 29
Marketing

• University website
• Listed on other websites (e.g., ‘find a Masters’, Mountain Partnership, University of Alberta)
• Adverts in publications
• Brochure at professional meetings, mountain film festivals, etc.
Thanks for your attention!