



INTEGRATION PATHWAYS

IMPACT REPORT 2023

by Hylton Bergh, Integration Pathways Manager

OVERVIEW

When the UpLearn project was brought under the same management as Employment Access and Skills Hub in late 2022, we set about creating an overarching identity with a common goal for the programme. With our organisational strategy front of mind, and many hours of discussion and reflection behind us, we decided on a new name: **Integration Pathways**.

Why Integration Pathways?

The new name communicates our holistic approach to facilitate clients' journey into employment and economic sustainability, promoting personal agency, independence and leadership. Integration Pathways comprises of:

- Employment Access – the entry-point to resources and support for jobseekers;
- Skills Hub – focuses on development and capacity building people on the move; and
- UpLearn – in partnership with Southern New Hampshire University and Global Education Movement – provides the infrastructure and academic support to prepare independent learners for the economic sector.

Welcoming new team members

In 2023, our team grew - we welcomed five more employees into our Integration Pathways programme. Excitingly, an UpLearn graduate is completing a year-long leadership programme in partnership with the HCI Foundation and is serving as a Project Coordinator.

Professionalising our workplace

We underwent building renovations so all team members in our programme could work together in a shared open-plan office. The upgraded space facilitates closer collaboration among team members and across projects.

Our new, dedicated reception area enables us to assist clients more efficiently and effectively. Welcoming visitors into an inviting and professional space reflects our commitment to clients' success.



Exciting developments

In Q4 of 2023, UpLearn students democratically elected their five-person Student Representative Committee to act as their collective voice and help lead the project's evolution.

Our newly appointed English Facilitator improved the structure of WhatsApp classes, with greater focus on grammar and ensuring learners acquire necessary skills to progress to the next level. We will provide support and mentorship as the WhatsApp teachers learn to integrate this approach.

The Help Desk at Employment Access rolled out an AI chatbot to assist with writing professional CVs. The digital solution enables the team to complete and update CVs with greater speed and accuracy, ensuring clients receive the best service in the shortest time.

As part of post-course training, we offered entrepreneurs a media kit to assist with marketing their business, including refining their business cards or flyers and providing a professional photographer to portray their products and/or service offerings. After we introduced the 'How to Develop a Business Idea' course, we noted some aspiring entrepreneurs struggled to acquire equipment to start their businesses. This year, we will give starter packs to those who successfully complete the course to help with the initial phases of the business. Starter pack items vary according to needs but have included delivery bags for scooters, acrylic or gel nail packs, and decorative materials for event planners.

Skills focus

Exploring Opportunities - a workshop developed to enhance clients' agency - has been a huge success in changing mindsets and increasing clients' independence.

The UpLearn project further developed students' self-discipline and independence. Examples include students taking ownership of their own academic planning and introducing a priority matrix in academic advisory sessions to help students who are struggling with time management and prioritisation.

We carried out an extensive review of our Continuous Learning Space (CLS) – a bridging course for students to complete before enrolling in the UpLearn project and degree programme. We have since introduced an in-person module on Google Workspace to assist with digital literacy skills. We have noted that CLS attendance is a strong predictor of students' future academic success. Analysis of retention rates showed:

- Of the 66 students who did not attend CLS, 29% withdrew from their academic journey.
- Of the 56 students who completed CLS, 60% were successful in their academic journey.

In 2023, we updated the Job Readiness curriculum to include goal setting, professional workplace etiquette and having an up-to-date CV. The facilitator is able to adjust the focus, pitch and methodology of the training to suit participants' needs and interests.

To improve clients' digital literacy, we have:

- Launched our new Microsoft Word Essentials course
- Redesigned our Foundational Computer Literacy course
- Refined our Smartphone Digital Literacy course to increase internet safety

By completing these courses sequentially, our clients gain confidence to use computers in personal and professional settings. This year we had 264 learners successfully completing our digital literacy courses.

Business development training has helped entrepreneurs forge their business identity, creating vision boards of what their future business looks like. Key to this focus has been honing participants' presentation skills for that all-important sales pitch. Established businesses were shown how to refine their logos and build their brand.



HIGHLIGHTS

Celebrating successes

We believe that honouring goals and milestones is an important part of the learning journey and further creates a sense of community. Here is a selection of our celebratory moments in 2023:

- The English School hosted three end-of-term graduations for students where they were able to read their poetry and give speeches.
- Our World of Words Café provided students with fun and learning as they played English games and activities and participated in reading clubs.
- UpLearn hosted a gala graduation ceremony during World Refugee Month in June 2023, with 46 graduating from their programme or advancing from the Associate of Sciences degree to a Bachelor of Arts degree.
- The end-of-year party gave students a chance to relax together, playing games, sharing food and reflecting on their achievements during the year.


Additionally, the Foreign Professionals Desk at Employment Access concluded the second phase of the SAQA Pilot Project – in collaboration with the South African Qualifications Authority and World Education Services.

Over three years, we have assisted 49 clients with SAQA verification of their professional qualifications, with 28 clients receiving evaluation certificates, enabling them to pursue further studies and secure employment in their chosen fields.

Not only have clients been able to progress in their qualifications, but many others have also demonstrated greater agency, critical thinking and analytical questioning evident in the increase in clients notifying Employment Support of suspicious job advertisements and employment scams.

EMPLOYMENT ACCESS

IMPACT

149 

EMPLOYED OR INCREASED INCOME

1167

HELP DESK CONSULTATIONS



689

NEW CVS CREATED



17

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

63



FPD SAQA APPLICATIONS AND REGISTRATIONS

SKILLS HUB

1724

CLIENTS PARTICIPATED IN SKILLS HUB TRAINING



502

English School



697

Job Readiness Training



264

Digital Literacy



118


Small Business Training

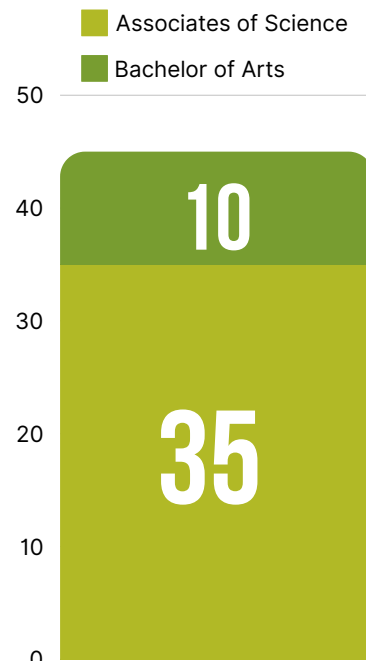


143

Vocational Training (Sponsored)

UPLEARN

45 GRADUATES 



56 NEW STUDENTS

89



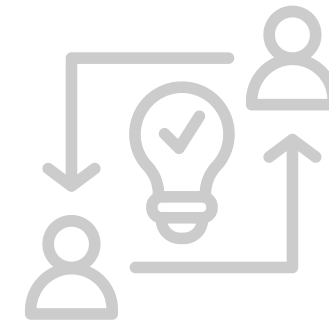
COMPLETED CLS

1759

INDIVIDUAL COACHING SESSIONS

40

GROUP COACHING SESSIONS



TEACH OUTS

320 STUDENTS / 48 SESSIONS



SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES: EDUCATION AND INTERNSHIPS

Qascalinne's story showcases the journey of someone driven by a desire to help others and determined to overcome obstacles. From a young age, she knew she wanted to work in the NGO sector, but financial challenges threatened to derail her plans. Qascalinne found her way to Scalabrini's UpLearn programme, where she pursued her studies and gained valuable experience through a Scalabrini internship. Her journey is a reminder of the importance of seizing opportunities and staying committed to your goals.

"IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME TO BE ABLE TO HELP PEOPLE."

Qascalinne always knew that she wanted to work in the NGO sector and be part of a team that makes a real impact on people's lives. "It is important to me to be able to help people. Growing up, my family received so much help and I would not be where I am today without it." This dream was solidified after a volunteering stint in Grade 10 at a psychiatric hospital and propelled Qascalinne in the direction of studying psychology.

After school, she was accepted to study at the South African College of Applied Psychology. She now needed to find the money to cover her fees. Growing up with parents who were both business owners, hard work and determination were in her genes.

To raise the fees, Qascalinne and her mother started selling items, door-to-door. "We were raising funds, but I could only get enough for the registration fees. I really didn't know what to do." This brought Qascalinne's plans to a halt. Until her uncle received an email about UpLearn and sent it to Qascalinne to apply.

"FROM THEN ON, IT'S BEEN A BEAUTIFUL JOURNEY WITH SCALABRINI"

Qascalinne was accepted to study a BA in Healthcare Management through Scalabrini's UpLearn programme and graduated in 2023. UpLearn is the Scalabrini Centre's higher education initiative and forms part of Southern New Hampshire Global Education Movement (SNHU-GEM) tuition-based academic scholarship programme for people who are refugees, migrants, and South Africans.

While Qascalinne was studying, she interned at Ikhaya le Langa - another step towards working in the NGO sector. Following graduation, the UpLearn team encourages students to apply for the internships available at Scalabrini, Qascalinne explains. "I wanted to continue in the NGO space so that I could grow and build my career. That is what motivated me to apply [for the internship]. The internship was a way to help build my skills and network. I wanted to put myself out there!"

"IT MADE ME FEEL LIKE I AM GROWN – I AM DOING BIG PEOPLE THINGS"

Qascalinne took on the role of Skills Hub Intern. This is a dynamic role, which allowed Qascalinne to facilitate workshops, work reception, conduct client consultations, run events and more! "I never thought I would be facilitating big groups of people, and clients who were older than me. I had to learn how to approach them and get them engaged. That was a big deal for me! It made me feel like I am grown – I am doing big people things!"

Qascalinne speaks about all the many ways that the internship helped her develop, personally and professionally, while being held by a supportive team. From improving her communication, and setting boundaries, to building her confidence, Qascalinne has gained valuable skills to take with her into the workplace. "I have worked hard to build my foundation. Scalabrini has helped me grow professionally, build my skills, and grow in areas that I did not place enough importance on before."

Qascalinne reflects on her internship being an "introduction to the work-life; how you are expected to behave, how to carry yourself and how to stand up for yourself." The internship helped boost her "work confidence." This is why Qascalinne would like to encourage all students to apply for internships; "even if you have six months left of studying, apply!" she says.

Coming full circle, from receiving help to helping people, Qascalinne keeps moving herself closer to her childhood dream. She says that she looks forward to applying all that she learned during her internship in her new role as Project Coordinator at RWS Africa.



LOOKING FORWARD...

The Foreign Professionals Desk aims to collaborate more closely with professional bodies to address systemic barriers that prevent skilled workers from realising their full potential in South Africa. We will also facilitate clients' access to information, resources and networks to help them navigate the complex regulatory landscape, acquire necessary licences and qualifications, and secure employment opportunities that match their skills and expertise.

Employment Access and UpLearn will prepare students for the world of work through career advising, interview preparation and leadership training. Additionally, the programme will engage institutions and organisations to place students and graduates into internships and work experience roles.

The English School at Skills Hub will launch two beginner in-person classes in the first term of 2024, having already enrolled 40 learners.

Our Vocational Skills Project aims to increase the number of training provider partners that will accept clients with irregular documentation status. This is in response to clients being unable to seek work or attend vocational training as they wait for the Department of Home Affairs to work through the backlog of asylum seeker and refugee visa applications.

Our new Professional Growth Workshops will empower clients with personal and professional skills such as effective communication, teamwork and advanced problem-solving. The aim is to bridge the gap between self-awareness and career competence.

In 2024, UpLearn will update its recruitment process by evolving its call for applications and engagement with partners, looking to extend its network of NGOs and schools working with people on the move.

Our learning-centred advising approach in our one-on-one academic advisory sessions will grow students' self-knowledge and self-awareness, improve their reading comprehension and memory skills, enhance self-advocacy and critical thinking to foster academic, professional, and personal growth.



The centre is registered with the South African Department of Social Development as a non-profit organisation (021-079 NPO), as a youth and child care centre (C7569) and as a Public Benefit Organisation with the South African Revenue Services (930075335) and governed by a Trust (IT2746/2006).
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