



## The GULL Story Part 2: Pathways

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Global University for Lifelong Learning  
*Enabling YOU to make a difference in OUR world*

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### Overview

The purpose of this second article in the series is to profile the GULL pathways for work and community-based learning and to outline some of the innovative ways in which they can be used to facilitate on-going development aligned with professional certification. GULL offers three generic pathways, each with five steps (or certification points) to professional Bachelor, Master and Doctor degree. This framework is available to organizations for community or in-house learning solutions (e.g. an own brand corporate business/enterprise school) that map organizational priorities and inputs with GULL pathways and certification points.

There are many ways of using the GULL system and so we have designed an easy to use 'Getting started' package that enables organizations to link the expected outcomes of their training and other kinds of development activity to GULL's professional certification system. If you lead or represent an organization and you would like to use the GULL system, you can affiliate directly with GULL from the 'Affiliate' section of the website. It is an automated process based on an affiliation form which includes GULL's code of practice. Further details can be found in the third article in the series: Part 3: Affiliation.

GULL uses three generic pathways to provide lifelong learning frameworks to communities and organizations:

#### Professional Bachelor pathway

Typical entry profile: 17-25 years of age and those in this age range and older with limited literacy skills.

The Professional Bachelor pathway is for those who are younger in age and with relatively limited life and work experience. It is also for participants in this age range and older who have not had the opportunity to learn to read and write in their own language. Participants in this second category can attain Professional Bachelor levels 1 Entry and 2 Certificate based on oral evidence of learning. Beyond this, participants must develop basic reading/writing skills in their own language in order to attain Bachelor level 3. All activities and levels can be customized for full integration with any on-going work or community activity.

Foundation levels: Bachelor level 1 Entry and level 2 Certificate

Progression levels: Bachelor level 3 Diploma; level 4 Associate degree and level 5 Professional degree.

#### Professional Master pathway

Typical entry profile: 26-35 years of age holding senior work or community roles. It is also for those aged 26 and above who have completed the GULL professional Bachelor degree.

The Professional Master degree pathway is for those in senior work or community roles (no other qualification is required) and for those aged 26 and above who have completed the GULL professional Bachelor degree. The GULL professional Master pathway should not though be used as a 'fast track' development route for young graduates with an academic Bachelor degree. This is because experience and seniority are the essential entry criteria on which the pathway to professional mastery is founded. All activities and levels can be customized for full integration with any on-going work or community activity.

Foundation levels: Master level 1 Entry and level 2 Certificate

Progression levels: Master level 3 Diploma; level 4 Advanced Diploma and level 5 Professional degree.

#### Professional Doctor pathway

Typical entry profile: At least 30 years of age but ideally for those in their 40s and 50s who hold leadership roles in the workplace or the community. It is also for those aged 30 and above who have completed the GULL professional Master degree.

The Professional Doctor degree pathway is for work and community leaders (no other qualification is required) and for those aged 30 and above who have completed the GULL professional Master degree. The GULL professional Doctor pathway should not though be used as a 'fast track' development route for young post graduates with an academic Master degree. This is because maturity (the ideal age profile is late 30s and beyond) and a leadership role are the essential entry criteria on which the pathway is founded. All activities and levels can be customized for full integration with any on-going work or community activity.

Foundation levels: Doctor level 1 Entry and level 2 Certificate

Progression levels: Doctor level 3 Diploma; level 4 Advanced Diploma and level 5 Professional degree.

## Review and certification

The 'Getting started' package is based on GULL's narrative format and all awards are ungraded and certified at 'Pass' level. This is because the narrative format is broader-based than GULL's differentiated awards (with Pass, Credit and Distinction categories) as defined by GULL's comprehensive marking and grading criteria.

GULL encourages self-directed action learning so as to build self-confidence and independent lifelong learning skills - right across the age and life stage spectrum. GULL's awards are outcomes-based and it is only possible to issue certificates when sufficient evidence of attainment has been assembled by the learner and verified by a facilitator. This is because GULL's primary role is to certify evidence of learning and application and it is the responsibility of each and every GULL participant to capture their own evidence in an appropriate and/or specified format. If the evidence assembled by the learner is incomplete, he/she does not 'fail' but must continue the process until there is sufficient evidence of attainment to merit the award of a certificate at any given level. On completion of levels 1-4, participants can either pause or progress immediately to the next level. At level 5 (the professional degree) for all three pathways (Bachelor/Master/Doctor), the participant's portfolio of work and evidence of learning and application is approved and signed-off by an experienced facilitator and additionally verified by an experienced independent professional. The workplace or community verifier should discuss the candidate's output work with the participant in the presence of the facilitator so as to ensure that the candidate is the author of the work and that the criteria for 'sufficiency' have been met. If not, the candidate must continue until any gaps have been addressed.

There are two certification options for all level 5 awards. These are: Bachelor/Master/Doctor of Professional Studies (Specialism) where the specialism is determined by the context, the inputs (as appropriate) and the applications OR Bachelor/Master/Doctor of Management (a generic award).

For further details and resources, please see the 'Affiliate' and 'Getting started' sections at the GULL website.

## Using the GULL system for in-house learning applications

The GULL system is purpose designed for organizations to use as the core component of an own brand in-house corporate business school (CBS), enterprise school/academy or similar entity. Aside from dramatic cost savings, greater convenience and customization benefits, a compelling reason for investing in a CBS framework is made by Reg Revans, a pioneer of action learning. He explains why the rate of learning (organizational and individual) must be equal to or greater than the rate of change. If not, the organization (and its people) will not keep pace. He also explains why formal teaching and training can actually slow down the rate of learning. You can view video footage of Reg Revans in the Media/Briefings & Events section at the website. A similar point is made by the futurist Patrick Dixon in his book 'Futurewise' where he argues that the only way to cope with a changing world is to keep on learning.

The GULL website case studies provide examples of what can be accomplished when action learning is aligned with the goals of the organization and human resource development.

Reference:

Dixon, Patrick, *Futurewise: Six Faces of Global Change*, Harper Collins, London, 1998.

The best case for adopting an own brand approach is made though by those who have actually done it! The rationale is especially convincing when GULL system users can see for themselves the difference that their own CBS is making. The following testimonial is taken from a speech made by the Regional General Manager, Value Hospitality Group, at the GULL Malaysia CBS launch event on 28 April 2008.

### Case example: Value Hospitality Group, Malaysia.



John Augustin  
Regional General Manager  
Value Hospitality Group, Malaysia

My name is John Augustin and I am the Regional General Manager for the company in East Malaysia. We manage nine hotels at the moment - ranging from four star to two star properties. We are in the people business. We employ 850 staff in our hotels and it is a very labour intensive industry. We have come to realize that the people we hire typically leave school as soon as they can and, unable to find job openings in other industries because they lack qualifications, discover that they can work as a bell boy or train to become a chef. At this point, they start their journey in the hospitality business.

The industry has grown rapidly in Malaysia, so quickly in fact that there has been a shortfall in manpower of around 50,000 people since about 1985. Due to the shortage, hotels are constantly searching for staff with a basic educational background and/or prior knowledge and experience of the hotel industry. The problem is so great that there are many managers in executive positions who have few if any qualifications.

Our company has many initiatives that are not typical of the hospitality business. We operate a quality circles quality control system and a six sigma programme coupled with an innovative problem diagnosis system. When we launch projects like these, it is a slow and difficult process – mainly because of the comparatively low levels of educational attainment in our workforce. But then we heard about GULL and we sat and talked to their representative about this challenge. Value Hospitality views its employees as assets and we are always ready to invest in ways that will assist with their development. We are in the business of dealing with people and so we need our people to be as effective as possible in this regard – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We have sent people away for academic study in the past (at Bachelor and Master degree levels) and they came back and told us that they had learnt a lot of things, but not many of these were related to the industry or to our business. The GULL system offers a different way. I have come to realize that our work environment *is* the place where our people should be able to learn and with GULL the agenda is related to the things that they do every day at work and in their life. The advance is to do this in a systematic way so that our staff can test and apply the things that they already know and make changes where necessary to ensure that our business operates as effectively as possible.

The former Minister of Tourism encouraged us to use local people in the frontline roles. But we have a problem with our own local people because they don't aspire to be receptionists or waiters, let alone a bell boy. The problem is even worse for Value Hospitality: we are at the bottom of the preferred list of prospective employers because the hotel school graduates want to work for Shangri La, Hyatt, Mandarin Oriental, Sheraton and the other big international brands. So, returning to our partnership with GULL, we can see that there is an opportunity to improve the prestige and appeal of our company. I have a cadre of executives who are very good at what they do – they possess the technical knowledge and experience, but they lack the certification. Today, we are embarked on a programme that will give this group of managers the opportunity to advance their learning and professionalism, to be certified and to hold a certificate that confirms that they know what they are doing. I'm happy because many of our people are progressing on either the professional Bachelor or Master degree pathway and I can see that their performance in the company has improved – they have raised the bar!

The CBS concept is all about putting to better use the things that we all know – and that's exactly what we want for all our employees. Now that we have our own corporate business school, we can help our staff to be truly expert professionals with the prospect of securing a job anywhere if they choose to leave us. We guarantee employability – not a job for life - we cannot operate like a social welfare institution.

Human resource is a huge challenge in my industry – the turnover rates are very high, but with our own corporate school, we hope that we can become a preferred choice employer in the near future. We really believe in the GULL system and approach.

## Customizing organizational learning

You may be wondering: Is it difficult to create an in-house corporate school using the GULL system? The answer is that it isn't difficult but it *is* different in every situation. This is because the GULL starting point(s) should reflect the organization's unique mission, culture and priorities and align with these realities and imperatives from the outset. In order to use the GULL system effectively, the customization process involves some preparatory steps.

### (1) Identify pathway options for linking training and other activities to action learning

The first step is to list on-going training and other activities (designed to equip participants with personal and professional skills) and then to note the key learning outcomes that participants should have attained. If for example, an employee has received customer service training, how is the employer monitoring the effectiveness of this training? If the trainer has specified the anticipated learning outcomes, then it should be possible for the trainee to review their own performance and record their progress. GULL provides an easy to use format for documenting the outcomes and if employees have completed a development process and can provide evidence of learning, then these outcomes can be linked to an accelerated pathway.

As GULL pathways and awards focus on learning outcomes, it is always possible to integrate current and on-going training with GULL's output formats. If for example, new employees are given a structured introduction to the organization (e.g. induction training, health and safety training, etc.) the user organization can make use of the GULL system and its output formats to link these input activities to desired outcomes and applications. This helps to maximize the value of training and development and, via GULL's award system, to recognize the impact of sustained active learning by employees. Finally, the user organization can customize the GULL output format specifications (as appropriate) so as to ensure that inputs (e.g. training) and outputs (e.g. documented evidence of learning) are as closely matched as possible.

### (2) Align typical entry with the appropriate pathway

GULL's typical entry criteria are designed to reflect the relationships between age and maturity (life, work and/or community experience) as it is difficult to demonstrate 'professional Mastery' in management or a specialist field without extensive work or community experience as a manager or as a specialist. This is why for example, entry to GULL's professional Master pathway is reserved for those with more life and work experience – typically 26-35 years of age at the time of entry.

However, GULL accepts that user organizations may need to establish their own criteria for exceptional entry in order that development opportunities can be offered at exactly the right moment for specific groups of people. Typically this relates to succession planning and career progression, but it applies in other settings too. For example, in a community where young people have not had the opportunity to complete their studies at school, a corporate school type structure can be used to provide a practical skill development framework with entry to the Bachelor level pathway at 16 years of age (B levels 1, 2 and 3) so that by the age of 18, disadvantaged groups can commence B level 4, by building on two years of skills acquisition, development and application.

### (3) Identify the most appropriate ways of capturing evidence of learning

It is our firm belief that any learner (no matter how disadvantaged) in any situation or circumstance (no matter how difficult) is capable of sustaining his or her active learning journey – with a minimum of facilitation and specialist support. Why is this? Simply because GULL’s approach to action learning works and no single individual carries their burdens alone! If the learner is willing to commit to a learning journey and to our process for learning, then they can accomplish more than they might imagine for themselves and for others. They will work as a member of a small group of fellow action learners who are travelling together – at the same pace – and in support of one another. The aim is to demonstrate the distance travelled on their journey in the form of tangible, trackable learning outcomes and applications.

The GULL system includes formats for individual reflection and for individual and group projects. Our goal is to enable user organizations to forge a natural form of integration between work and/or other activities and active on-going learning. It is for this reason that all our formats can be adapted to fit the circumstances, the learning objectives and the anticipated learning outcomes. Although most learners will provide written evidence of learning and application, there are circumstances in which a written format is not the best mechanism to use. The following case study illustrates this point and explains why a photographic portfolio of evidence would be a more appropriate method.

#### Case example: Joy to the World Community Services, Malaysia

Joy to the World Community Services (JWCS) Malaysia was founded by Pastor Joseph Tang and his wife in the early 1990s. It began without any funds or resources and although Joseph pastors three small churches, he knew that his congregation could not afford to support a wider ministry to orphaned children. Today, JWCS cares for more than 100 people and the work is expanding rapidly. It now encompasses the elderly and people with special needs and learning difficulties.

From the outset, Joseph sought to address the funding problem by developing a unique social enterprise model. He calls this ‘TSR’ – training, service and revenue. Joseph, his family and team are dedicated to providing a firm foundation for the disadvantaged people in their care. But it doesn’t stop there!

As the children reach their mid-teens JWCS supports career development in many ways. Some eventually go to university, others are found placements in factories or offices and some learn the skills to start their own businesses. Joseph wants to turn these fledgling businesses from a mini market to a hyper market of talented, enterprising youngsters. Joseph has established a video production team and helped to secure commercial contracts for his learners to work on. Craft and Jewellery-making is also popular and here, professional volunteers pass on their skills. The two girls below (left and right) are sisters. Up until the age of 13 they had hardly been to school as they were compelled to care for their disabled mother and baby brother. Now they are ready to start their own business!



Joseph has a bigger vision though. He wants to develop a fully-fledged enterprise school so that many more disadvantaged teenagers can learn the practical and technical skills needed to start their own businesses. GULL in South East Asia is now working with Joseph to help him create his own corporate school. His TSR philosophy of social enterprise (training, service and revenue) underpins the desire to see each and every disadvantaged person equipped with as many life, practical and technical skills as possible. The objective is to raise self-esteem, confidence and a sense of purpose and optimism.



JWCS believes in active, practical learning and, via the GULL system we can relate the practical learning outcomes (e.g. a photographic portfolio of the development of skills in jewellery-making) to professional certification at Certificate or Diploma level. As we can SEE the learning outcomes, we don’t need those with learning difficulties to capture their learning in conventional written outputs. The important point is the tangible, trackable evidence and the fact that Joseph’s learners can DEMONSTRATE their learning outcomes. The JWCS corporate school reflects GULL’s core mission to recognize learning in the community and among the poorest and disadvantaged.



## Using GULL to recognize and certify learning outcomes

The GULL system provides all the resources needed to set-up and manage your own in-house corporate school and run customized pathways to recognized professional awards at Bachelor, Master and Doctor levels of attainment and certification. We know that GULL can help you because every user organization (no matter how large or small) takes ownership of the GULL system and runs it with their own core team. It does not require specialist qualifications, skills or resources to do this either. All you need is: a commitment to the principles of action learning, a desire to help people to learn, the ability to work with people and facilitate professional development and at least one team member with good organizational and administrative skills. When you launch, you will do so with the knowledge that your customized GULL pathways are unique. They will be deeply rooted in your organizational realities and priorities and to ensure you start well, GULL's officers work with you from the outset and provide on-going support as and when it is needed.

GULL's approach blends working and learning so that these two activities (so often separated) are fully integrated. It is quite possibly the only way to retain, develop and sustain learning for all your employees and to foster, facilitate and recognize skills development and attainment. Furthermore, it is an approach that guarantees high performance at low unit cost and it enables everyone to participate in a holistic, practical and transformational approach to human development. How can we make this rather bold assertion? Because GULL's action learning approach is universally appealing – it works wherever it is applied – whether in the board room or a rural village. It causes the participants to think deeply about learning and about what they would like to accomplish for themselves, their families, communities, companies and for even for their Nation. It yields optimism, enthusiasm for life and for learning, fresh confidence, improved self-belief and a desire to keep learning and to share the discovery of a lifetime with others!

GULL is ready to provide YOU with a practical, systemized approach to lifelong learning that helps people to work more smartly, to feel better about themselves and to sustain their own active learning and development.

## How can my organization get involved?

Thank you for reading this article. Do please think about what you can offer and how you might inspire others in your organization to get involved. Together, we can bring hope and opportunity to the many people around the world who do not have access to lifelong learning. GULL works with organizations that share our vision for universal access to learning in the workplace and in the community. If you would like to affiliate with GULL's network movement, please review the 'Affiliate' section at the GULL website - [www.gullonline.org](http://www.gullonline.org) There are no membership fees or other barriers to participation - we'd like to work with you to harness all the skills and abilities that your organization can offer in order to help others to learn, grow and develop. Please note though that GULL does not have the resources to support individual learners and it is for this reason we can only correspond with organizations via their nominated representative(s).

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GULL website address: [www.gullonline.org](http://www.gullonline.org)



Dr Richard Teare is President, Global University for Lifelong Learning. Richard has been committed to work and community-based learning since the mid-1990s and he has helped to create learning and development applications for a wide variety of organizations in different parts of the world. Prior to this, he held professorships at four UK universities (Bournemouth, Surrey, Oxford Brookes, Derby). In 1988 he founded and then edited for 20 years, the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. He is now the Managing Editor of *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*. Emerald Group publishes both these journals. His academic publications include 20 co-authored and edited text books on aspects of service management, marketing and organizational learning. In 2007, he co-founded the Global University for Lifelong Learning with Edward Mooney, GULL's Chairman.