EUCEN Conference
University of Graz

Learning in later life: what can Universities do?

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Overview

- Some aspects of population ageing
- The nature of later life learning and its connections to lifelong learning
- How Universities might respond to demographic change through lifelong learning

Who is ‘older’?

- No real agreement
- ‘Post-work’ no longer appropriate
- Age 50 as a baseline
- BUT people’s lives diverge as they grow older

Population ageing

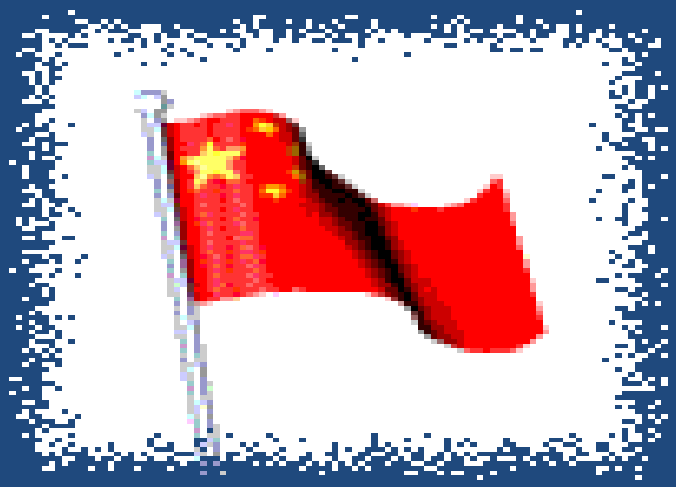
- In less than 10 years, older people will outnumber children worldwide

- Between June 2007 and July 2008, the estimated change in the world's older population was more than 10.4 million people

Kinsella & Wan He (2009)

‘Oldest’ populations

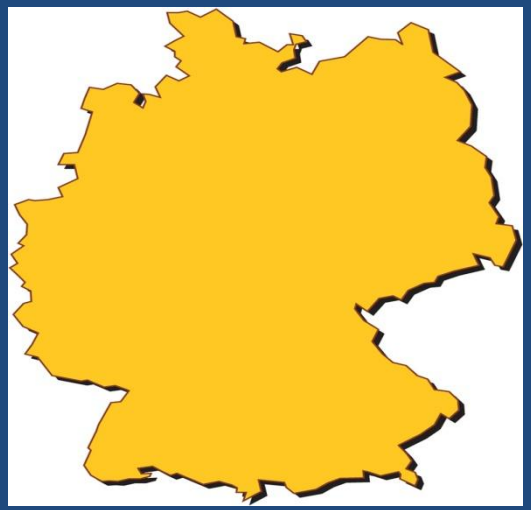
China has the world’s oldest population (106 million in 2008)



Japan has the highest % of people over 65

‘Oldest’ countries

Apart from Japan and Georgia, the world’s 25 oldest countries are in Europe. Italy & Germany have 20% of people over 65.



European population predictions

- Numbers of Europeans over 65 expected to increase by 45% between 2008 & 2030
- Likely to be over 30% of population of Member States by 2060
- Those over 80 are the fastest growing age group

Where do they live?

- Most people over 65 live in western Member States

- But population ageing will shift towards Eastern Europe by 2040

Life expectancy

- At birth, 82 years in Singapore and Japan
- Exceeds 80 in France, Italy and Sweden
- Women can expect more than 20 years of life after retirement in France, Italy, Spain, Finland, Australia

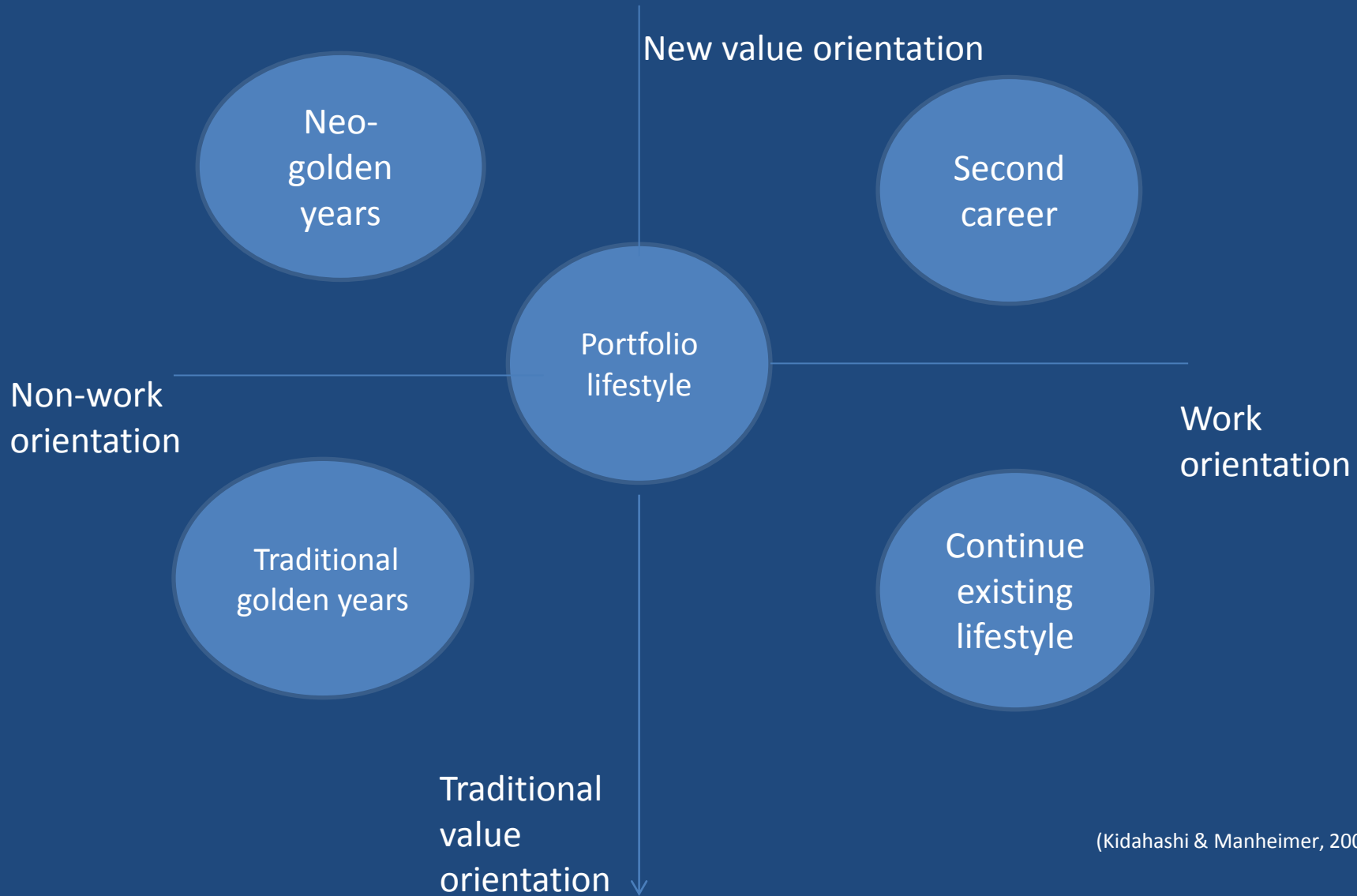
BUT

- consider impact of gender, ethnicity, health status, cognitive abilities, socio-economic circumstances
- consider how ideas about age and growing older vary between cultures

Challenges ahead

- Changes in patterns of consumption?
- Greater involvement with civic, environmental, leisure activities?
- Redundancy/early retirement for some?
- Working longer for others?

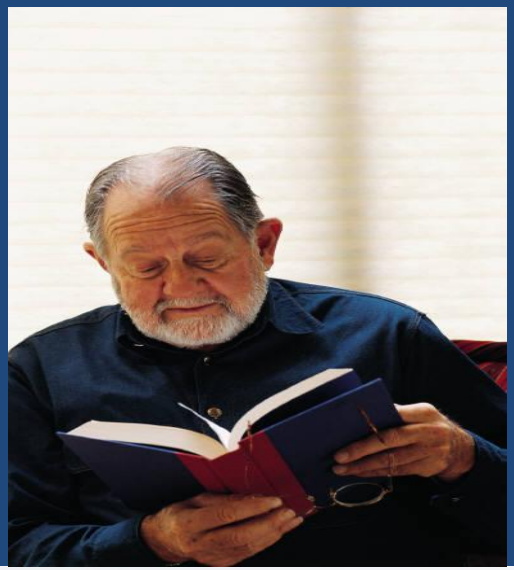
‘Positive life models in later life’

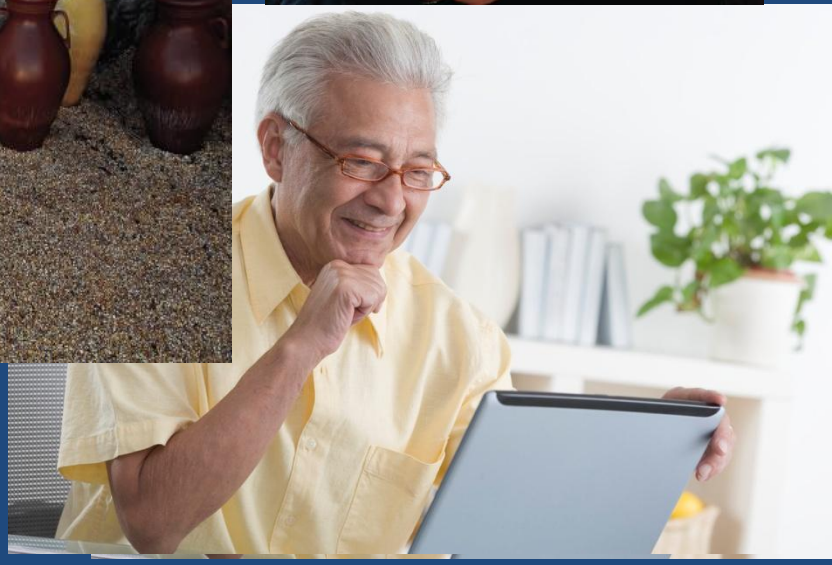


(Kidahashi & Manheimer, 2009)

Later life learning and the link with lifelong learning

Active ageing





Lifelong learning

- No single definition
- Occupies a place in the policy agendas of, for example, WHO, UNESCO, the EU (Lifelong Learning Programme 2008-13)
- We need to examine the gendered, classed and racialized nature of lifelong learning policies (Findsen and Formosa 2011)
- And gain a better understanding of people's diverse range of learning practices (Edwards et al, 2002)

“Longlife” learning?

- A broader conceptual framework within which to explore different aspects of later life learning in different countries
- Include older people who are frail or have poor literacy skills
- Investigate the outcomes and impact of learning for learners, their families, communities, regions, countries

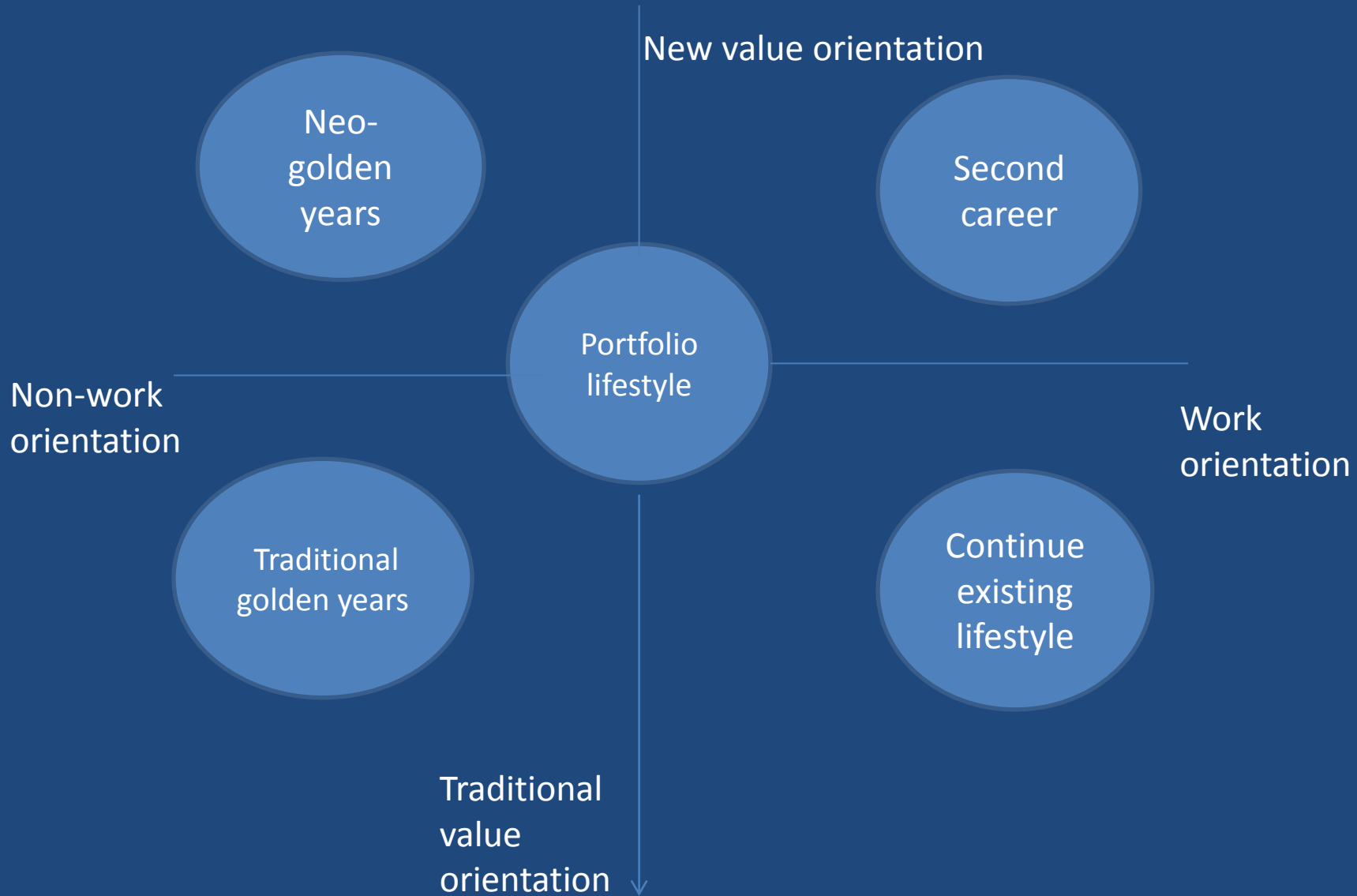
(Withnall 2010)

How can Universities respond to demographic change through lifelong learning?

The potential

- Older people's needs and aspirations largely ignored
- Lifelong Learning Departments offer experience of working with adult learners
- More freedom to link with other academic Departments
- Experiment with new forms of teaching and learning
- Participate in research-led development work

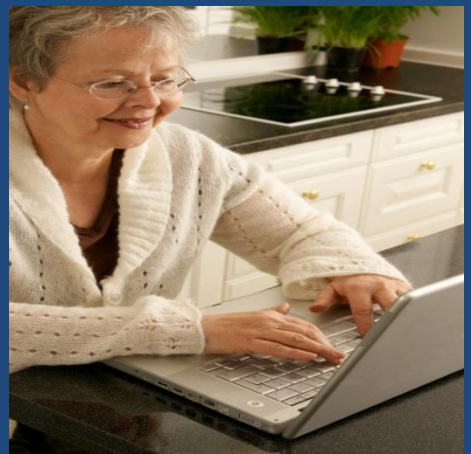
‘Positive life models in later life’



Employment-related courses/programmes and professional development

Extension **of mid-life career**

Second careers (especially women)



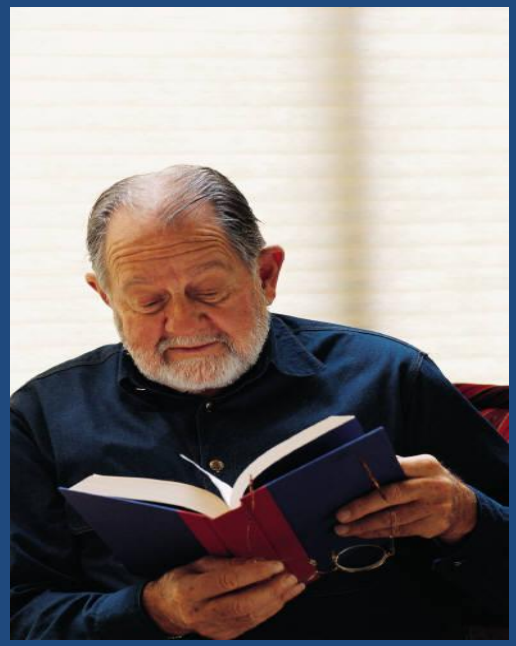
Portfolio lifestyles (part-time work)

Personal development programmes

- **Neo-goldens**

  Acquire skills for participation in civic life

- Build upon their interests/develop new ones: liberal adult education



Personal development programmes

- **Traditional golden years**

May eventually decide to take up an activity or develop a hobby sometimes with spouse or partner.

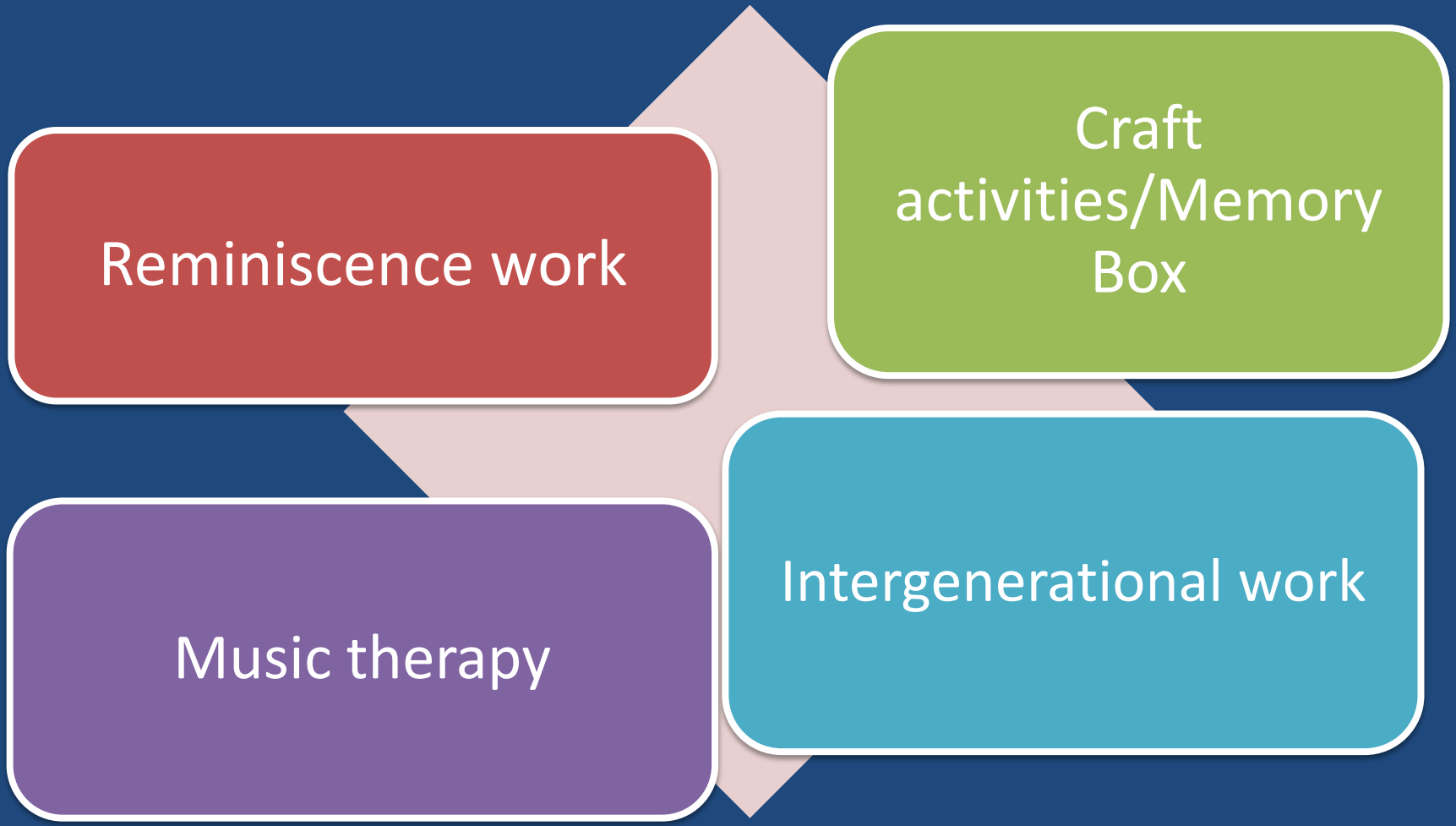
Use of new media.

Outreach programmes

For housebound or frail older people living in residential care

Learning in the Fourth Age

Training for health and social care professionals



Older people as learners

Some issues to remember

Classrooms and seating arrangements

Visibility

- Lighting

- Text size

AAAAA

- Computer screens

Hearing

Quiet supportive learning environment

Able to see faces of speaker and other learners

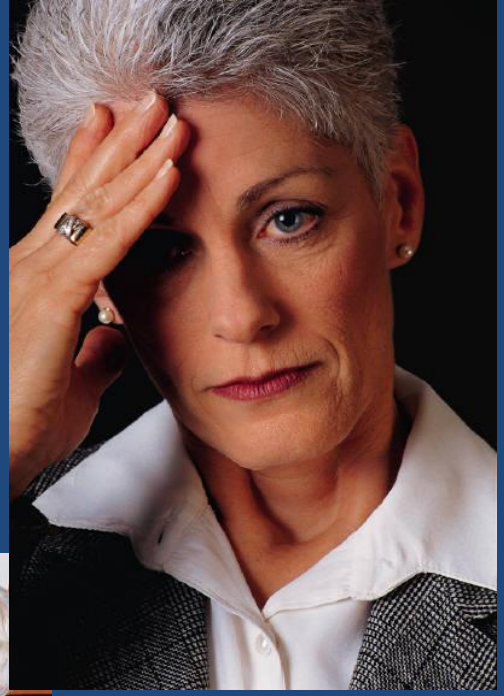
Challenging older learners

Older learners can benefit from help with:

- **Solving problems**
- **Being helped to grasp new concepts**
- **Techniques to improve memory**
- **Practising new skills**
- **Understanding how to organise material**
- **Relating knowledge and skills to their life experience /learning with and from younger people**
- **Learning in small groups**

(Withnall *et al*, 2004)

And finally……

The ageing of populations presents a unique opportunity for Universities to ensure that learning is not just lifelong but that they recognise the reality of

long life