



TLG Bulletin, May 2022 – Reflecting and looking ahead

Welcome to the TLG Bulletin - your quick guide to the activity of the Theme Leaders' Group (TLG). Please feel free to share this with any colleagues who might find it valuable.

Photo credit: Clare Parks



Our current Theme, Resilient Learning Communities, is now almost at the end of its second year. In May, the TLG had its final meeting in the current session and we spent time reflecting on activity over the past 12 months and looking ahead to year 3. Professor Clare Peddie, Theme Leader, took us through an exciting summary of the highlights of year 2 activities and details of the most recent developments are provided below. The HEI year 2 reports will be submitted soon and we are really looking forward to updates on the varied activities (on some 80+ projects) that staff and students have been progressing in session 2022-23. We are very much looking forward to

understanding the impact the work is starting to have. Debra Macfarlane (QAA Scotland Theme Lead) provided an outline of the year 3 Theme structure, which will be very similar to year 2. The projects on the Anti-Racist Curriculum, Recognition of Prior Learning, Micro-credentials and Student Wellbeing will continue. There will be a new topic for the Student-Led Project and we will continue to work closely with sparqs and students on this activity. The Theme evaluation odyssey will continue, both in terms of supporting capacity and developing and piloting the Universal Evaluation Framework.

The Anti-Racist Curriculum project has focused this year on promoting and piloting the Guide resources produced in session 2021-22. With the support of external consultants and facilitators, we have run four thought-provoking workshops exploring how the resources can be used in different broad subject areas, as well as three workshops with specific institutions. Alongside this work, Edinburgh Napier University have continued to facilitate discussion among academic developers, and have appointed student interns who have done amazing work. We will be publishing outputs from all these activities over the summer.

This year, the **Student-Led Project** focuses on **Promoting the Equity of the Student Learning Experience** and will consider how students and staff can support equity for diverse student communities to allow students to get maximum benefit from their learning opportunities in a more blended teaching environment. The first output, which is a piece of [desk-based research](#) collating a set of key existing theory, practice and resources related to equity in learning and teaching, includes a shared set of definitions for equity that reflect and support the diversity of the student population. A 'Top Tips' document on how to break down barriers related to equitable learning and teaching will be published very soon.

Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning (RPL) and Experience – revision of the RPL Framework for Scottish Higher Education is progressing well. After an in-person workshop in early April 2022, the lead writers went away to refine their first drafts. There is some work to do to bring the four updated section drafts together into one coherent document – with an aim to publish the finalised Framework in the summer. Work in this area has attracted interest from a number of areas and Marty Wright (Glasgow Caledonian University) and Ann Cotterill (QAAS) presented the work on the Employers and Professional Bodies section to the QAA PSRB Forum in May 2022. Members of the Expert Group have also been invited to share experiences with South East Technological University in Ireland. It is hoped that a tertiary sector RPL Community of Practice Activity can be convened next year to promote RPL and encourage the use of the revised Framework.

Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland – there has been significant activity on this project with an international micro-credentials [webinar](#) held on 9 May 2022 that considered perspectives from Malaysia and Australia. Closer to home, Siobhán Wilson (City of Glasgow College) has written a [blog](#) about micro-credentials in the college sector. The third meeting of the Network took place in Perth on 26 May 2022. The in-person gathering enabled robust discussion around the definition of micro-credentials and how an approach in Scotland can meet a range of differing hopes and expectations. Three volunteers from the Micro-credentials Network have produced a draft micro-credentials glossary which, after some comments from the Network, will represent a key output of the first year of the project. The glossary is intended to support a shared micro-credentials

language to aid understanding amongst key stakeholders (including students, employers and PSRBs). The Perth meeting served to demonstrate the importance of language in the micro-credentials debate and it was agreed to work towards a framework for micro-credential programmes during 2022-23 to start to help develop the portability of these qualifications, noting that further discussion is required to consider credentialing of existing skills and 'mastery' as well as potential for digital badges.

Our **Theme evaluation** consultants, Professor Stella Jones-Devitt and Dr Liz Austen, have continued to lead on our major evaluation activity. In addition to reaching out to Themes colleagues past and present, to discover more about the impact of 20 years of the Enhancement Themes, they have been supporting colleagues evaluating the current Theme. Their [Sensational Surveys: basic elements for success](#) online workshop helped colleagues with a really 'hands-on', practical approach. Stella and Liz will offer more capacity building activity in session 2022-23. The evaluation Expert Reference Group met again in April 2022 and welcomed proposals to start development of a digital Universal Evaluation Framework over the summer, which will be piloted in session 2022-23.

At the April 2022 informal TLG networking session we heard from a team of University of Aberdeen staff and students about their co-creation of a non-credit bearing course for students to help them develop resilience. The presentation and discussion on '[Moving from Surviving to Thriving](#)' really captured the imagination. TLG members have welcomed this informal way of sharing ideas and learning from colleagues and a programme of TLG networking sessions will continue in year 3 of the Theme.

In addition to completing work on Resilient Learning Communities, 2022-23 will also mark an important milestone in the Scottish sector as we reflect on, and celebrate, 20 years of the Quality Enhancement Framework including [12 Enhancement Themes](#). We will have a programme of work to support that and we spent some time at TLG thinking about we might engage the sector in developing 'assets' which reflect staff and students' views on what meaning the Themes have had to them. The evaluation work will be central to informing our future Theme developments and this will support how we engage the sector in selecting the topic and scoping out the next Theme. In June 2023 we will be sharing our learning from the current Theme, reflecting over 20 years of Themes and launching the new Theme at an exciting international Enhancement Themes Conference! We hope to be able to confirm dates for this early in the autumn.

But for now, it's almost time for our Enhancement Themes Conference (on the [8 and 9 June 2022](#)). We are looking forward to welcoming you to two days of networking, presentation, discussion, and lively debate on two key topics: Resilient Learning Communities; and Inclusive, Flexible and Accessible Learning. We are delighted that we will be meeting some

of you in person at our first hybrid conference. Our Theme activity calendar on the [Resilient Learning Communities](#) home page will help you plan attendance at other forthcoming events.

We would like to thank all our students/student representatives and staff who have been engaged in Themes work. Many of our student representatives may be leaving their roles and/or studies. The success of the Enhancement Themes depends on your commitment, enthusiasm and goodwill and we have seen that in abundance, and benefitted from that, over year 2 of Resilient Learning Communities. Thank you!

Our final words in this Bulletin go to [Ondrej Kucerak](#), our year 2 Student Theme Leader from the University of Aberdeen. A huge thank-you to Ondrej from all of us at QAA Scotland, the Theme Leadership Team, TLG, and colleagues across the sector for his great contribution to Themes work, particularly the Student-Led Project, and the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC). Ondrej's parting words during TLG highlighted how much he had enjoyed the experience and working collaboratively with staff and students. We will be seeking a Student Theme Lead/Deputy for 2022-23, the final year of the RLC Theme. If you are an interested student, or you know of students who may be interested in the opportunity, please do get in touch with us. We will be publishing details over the summer.

TLG is a group central to delivering the Resilient Learning Communities Theme. The group leads, supports and evaluates the work undertaken for the Theme. Please get in touch with your TLG [institutional staff and student representatives](#), [Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee](#) representative or [QAA Scotland](#) if you want to know more and get involved in Enhancement Theme activity.