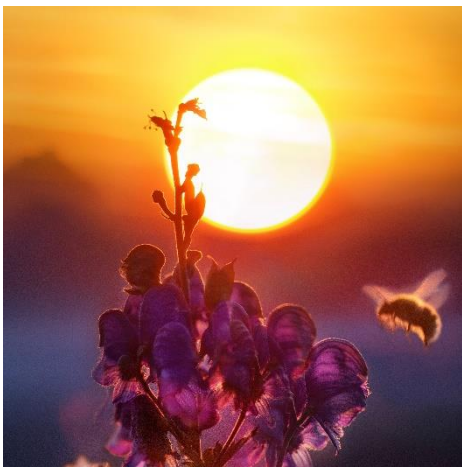




TLG Bulletin, June 2021

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



Towards the end of June our Theme Leader, Professor Clare Peddie, welcomed everyone to our third and final TLG event in session 2020-21. With many of us still working from home, we were delighted to have so many staff and students join us for an extended session online. TLG colleagues were encouraged to join the TLG Yammer group, which provides an informal forum for sharing ideas and receiving updates from QAA Scotland on Theme activity. Clare shared with TLG some of the successes and highlights of the first year of Resilient Learning Communities. Significant progress had been made across all elements of Theme activity and colleagues emphasised

how well the Theme is supporting institutions over a period of continuing challenge and uncertainty.

- [Anti-Racist Curriculum project](#): the level of engagement and momentum generated by the Working Group has been a strong indicator of the relevance and urgency of this work, which will continue into the next academic year. The 'Getting Started' resources will be published by the end of July and they are promising to be useful and thought-provoking - some of them will be difficult to read/watch, but that is a further indicator of the importance of the project.
- [Recognition of Prior Learning](#) and [Addressing the Digital Divide](#) projects will both be publishing scans of international practice within the next four to six weeks, which will support ongoing discussions in the sector about both of these topics.
- [Student-led Project](#) – the concluding event, 'Innovations in Digital Student Communities,' was expertly chaired by Alex Hedlund. With over 60 participants, there was lots of energy and enthusiasm sharing and exploring the challenges and success stories from the past year - resources are now on the Theme web pages.
- [Collaborative clusters](#) – a record seven clusters have been running in the first year of the Theme and they continue to be a really effective way to involve a greater number of colleagues in Theme activity. We are really looking forward to seeing the clusters' varied and exciting outcomes and outputs, which will be published over the summer. The clusters will provide insights on a range of key sector topics,

and with some work continuing into year 2 we are already looking forward to another year of sharing and collaboration with colleagues.

In our regular 'Air and Share' opening activity, colleagues had the chance to share with each other their successes in, and challenges faced, in the first year of the Theme. We welcomed the positive feedback on the year 1 reporting format and to hear from enthusiastic students about their Theme internship work. Seed-funding small local projects has been a successful way for some HEIs to increase the reach of the Theme across their communities.

In a planning activity, institutional teams spent some time brainstorming ideas around priorities for year 2 of the Theme. A [Padlet](#) helped us record all HEIs' contributions, and we hope this supports TLG members working on their year 2 institutional plans.

We heard from four of our collaborative clusters on their work.

[Student Mental Wellbeing within our BAME and LGBTQ+ Learner Communities](#) – Rachel Simpson provided an informative overview of the cluster's work. We were reminded that some learner communities are at disproportionate risk when it comes to mental wellbeing. The cluster's webinar series has proved to be very popular, with over 600 attendees across four sessions. Webinar presenters and participants have shared their ideas and explored ways that curriculum design can help BAME and LGBTQ+ learner communities. The cluster work will be completed by the publication (end of August) of a suite of curated resources and a report including nominal group work to determine the key barriers and facilitators to the development of resilient learning communities and sense of belonging for BAME and LGBTQ+ students.

[Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community \(PARC\)](#) – Luke Millard presented on the PARC cluster work, which involves six partner institutions. The focus of the work is personalising support for students coming into higher education after a period of significant disruption to learning. While each of the cluster partners is implementing its own approach, the principle of the work is that students complete a self-diagnostic prior to entry (covering areas such as academic skills, numeracy, wellbeing, digital confidence) that helps to identify strengths and areas for development. Following this, tailored support is provided to students to help build skills and confidence. Abertay University is providing the support through a series of microcredentials, one of which is being delivered by the Students' Association. In addition to running a sector-wide event in June, the cluster has also produced four thought-provoking challenge papers and a recording of the session which can be accessed via their cluster webpage.

[Programme Leadership: Strengthening Resilience, Supporting Learning Communities](#) – Martha Caddell's presentation gave us a great insight into the critical role of the programme leader, describing them as, 'invisible superheroes'. We heard from Martha on the sphere of influence of programme leaders and their working domain; the nexus between the HEI and individual student support. The cluster has explored how a more appreciative HEI context could be created for programme leaders including examining recognition and reward approaches. Nine action learning sets have provided a means to advance and deepen discussion and a way to reconceptualise the programme leader role, particularly the aspect of resilience. A key point emerging from the cluster work, which began in 2018, has been a shift in the value of the programme leader role, which has been emphasised and strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[*Decolonising the Curriculum in the Time of Pandemic*](#) – Catriona Cunningham and Marita Le Vaul-Grimwood gave a joint presentation which highlighted the necessary but often uncomfortable and uneasy conversations around decolonisation. A shared ambition among the cluster participants to engage in this challenging dialogue has brought together many voices in a safe, principled space, which has been important in moving thinking forward and continuing to constructively challenge. A key message from the cluster's work was the importance of privilege and experience in decolonising conversations. The cluster has employed four student interns who have made significant progress in a short time-frame. Resources will be published on the cluster's web over the summer.

The TLG session ended with an opportunity for Q&As and topics were raised including: future collaborative clusters; feedback from colleagues participating in cluster activity within institutions; and autumn evaluation workshops.

We said a fond farewell to Alex Hedlund, who has supported Enhancement Theme activity as Student Theme Lead over the past two years. Alex left us to ponder one of his favourite quotes from Rufus Jones: "I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles in which vital and transforming events take place."

Looking ahead to session 2021-22 we will be continuing with some existing work and exploring some new topics. QAA Scotland will be planning for the start of the next session over the summer and look forward to working with you on year 2 of Resilient Learning Communities.

We recognise that session 2020-21 has been a huge challenge, with continuing uncertainty and staff and students working under enormous pressure. Despite this, there has been a massive commitment to the Enhancement Theme activity and so much valuable and creative work has been delivered over the past 12 months. We appreciate the time, effort, energy and enthusiasm that staff and students are continuing to invest in the Themes. We hope you are all able to enjoy some restful and restorative leave 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.