EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR

An evaluation of the impact of the Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience Enhancement Theme

Date: December 2017

The Quality Assurance Agency

Purpose: Invitation to provide an expression of interest.

1. The Quality Assurance Agency invites expressions of interest for the provision of an evaluation of the Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience Enhancement Theme.

2. The evaluation project will run for the duration of the Theme, which started in June 2017 and will finish at the end of July 2020.

3. This document provides information on the Quality Assurance Agency and sets out its requirements. The document is in five sections:

    Section 1 provides information about the Quality Assurance Agency
    Section 2 summarises the background of the Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience Enhancement Theme and its context in Scottish higher education
    Section 3 provides the contract specification
    Section 4 details the instructions for the submission of the expression of interest
    Section 5 sets out the information required from the applicant.

4. The document is designed to ensure that all estimates are given equal and fair consideration. It is important, therefore, that you provide all the information requested in the format and order specified in Section 5 (paragraph 40).

Section 1: The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

5. The Quality Assurance Agency is an independent, not for profit organisation. The QAA works across all four nations of the UK to protect the standards and improve the quality of higher education. QAA tailors the way it works across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, in order to meet the needs of each nation. This approach is essential because each nation has devolved responsibility for education, different higher education sectors and differing funding and policy contexts. The QAA also uses its expertise to support the development of quality assurance systems worldwide.

6. 'Building on World-Class Quality' is the QAA's 2017-20 strategy. The QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered around the world. Its vision is to provide world-leading and independently assured UK higher education. The QAA's values are collaboration, innovation, expertise, accountability and integrity. Further information on QAA's strategy is available through the [QAA's web pages](#).

Section 2: Scottish higher education and the national Enhancement Themes programme

7. The Scottish higher education sector takes a unique approach to assuring quality and enhancing higher education. To best meet the needs of students and providers in Scotland, QAA has a dedicated team, QAA Scotland, who ensure that the approach meets both Scotland's distinctive needs and delivers UK-wide comparability.

8. QAA Scotland's work is enhancement-led, in line with the [Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF)](#) which has been in place since 2003 and continues to develop under the guidance of the Universities' Quality Working Group (UQWG). UQWG membership includes all of the partners to the QEF: Universities Scotland, the National Union of

Students (NUS) Scotland, Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs), the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Academy and QAA Scotland.

9. Our work covers a broad range of review and enhancement activity aimed at inspiring excellence and promoting a high quality student experience. A strong feature of QAA Scotland's work is partnership. We work closely with staff and students throughout the higher education sector.

10. Engaging with students is integral to what we do. Our review method (Enhancement-Led Institutional Review – ELIR) includes a full student member on every review team. Students are also represented on all our working groups and committees. We work closely with NUS Scotland and are one of the partners in sparqs.

11. We aim to ensure that our work is informed by international perspectives and contributions, including developments in the Bologna Process and across the European Higher Education Area. We deliver many events in Scotland including, periodically, a major three-day international conference, and many one-day or half day events, symposia and conferences. We commission work that seeks to learn from the best of national and international practice and regularly receive visitors from universities and quality assurance agencies from around the world.

12. Our national programme of Enhancement Themes encourage academic staff, professional services staff and students to share current good practice and collectively generate ideas and models for innovation in learning and teaching. The Themes are part of Scotland's commitment to excellence in higher education and to providing an outstanding student learning experience. The following Enhancement Themes have been completed:

    - Student Transitions (2014-17)

    - Developing and Supporting the Curriculum (2011-14)

    - Graduates for the 21st Century: Integrating the Enhancement Themes (2008-11)

    - Research-Teaching Linkages (2006-08)

    - The First Year (2005-08)

    - Integrative Assessment (2005-06)

    - Flexible Delivery (2004-06)

    - Employability (2004-06)

    - Responding to Student Needs (2003-04)

    - Assessment (2003-04).

    Details of all Enhancement Themes, their work and the resources associated with them can be found on the Enhancement Themes website.

13. The following provides further background material on Enhancement Theme activity:

    - the 2008 Evaluation of Enhancement Themes reports (an independent research piece evaluating the impact of the Enhancement Themes)

- the [Student Transitions report on overall and year 3 evaluation](#) (PDF, 440KB)

- Theme Leadership Team paper on analysis of Theme launch activity

- recent TLG papers (overview of the Theme TLG-18-1-02, overview of institutional plans TLG-18-1-03, programme of sector level work TLG-18-1-05).

Further background information on the Enhancement Themes is available in our [Overview of the Enhancement Themes booklet](#) (PDF, 466KB).

14. **Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience** is the current Enhancement Theme, running for three academic years from June 2017. This is an ambitious and comprehensive venture focusing on what information is useful to help us identify and understand what we do well and what could be improved. This information, which includes qualitative and quantitative evidence, can be used to identify the issues that would benefit from intervention, help prioritise interventions for improving the student experience, and evaluate the effectiveness of those interventions including reporting on the ways in which the student experience has been improved.

15. During the Theme, each of the 19 Scottish higher education institution takes forward a plan of work that both supports and informs the work of the Theme.

16. The Enhancement Theme work is managed by QAA Scotland, working with the Theme Leaders' Group, which comprises staff and student members from each higher education institution in addition to observers from our partner organisations. This Group is chaired by Professor Karl Leydecker, University of Dundee, who is the Theme Leader. He is supported by two Theme Deputies, Professor Nicky Andrew from Glasgow Caledonian University and Dr Martha Caddell, from Edinburgh Napier University and also Mr Matt Adie, from the University of Stirling, who is the Theme's student lead. The Theme Leader, Deputy Leaders and Student Leader comprise the Theme Leadership Team.

17. The Theme Leaders' Group (TLG) is central to delivering the Enhancement Theme. TLG comprises one staff and one student representative from every higher education institution in Scotland. TLG staff representatives usually also co-ordinate their institution's work on the Theme, through an Institutional Team. In addition, representatives of key stakeholder organisations and agencies have observer status on the Group, principally the Scottish Funding Council, Universities Scotland, the National Union of Students Scotland, the Higher Education Academy and sparqs. QAA Scotland officers participate in TLG meetings as part of their role in supporting the management and delivery of the Theme.

18. To support the sector in continuing to develop the use of Enhancement Themes this evaluation work is being commissioned.

Section 3: Contract specification

19. QAA Scotland is looking for an individual/group to develop a model/framework/approach that will evaluate the current Theme and consider the impact of previous Theme activity.

20. More important than considering Theme activity itself, we want the evaluation to focus on identifying the impact of the Theme activity on the student experience so that, at the end of the Theme, it is possible to identify the ways in which the student experience has been improved. We expect the approach to incorporate qualitative and quantitative

evidence. The approach needs to inform the work of the Theme in a longitudinal way so that we can share learning from the activities on an ongoing basis. The approach needs to be developed in consultation with the sector.

21. We are seeking an individual/group to take forward the work outlined above. You must be able to provide strong evidence of the following:

- have the ability to develop a thorough understanding of the work for which you are tendering, which includes the enhancement approach in Scottish higher education, the operation of the Enhancement Themes, and partnership with stakeholders

- have a proven record of: analysing and distilling complex information; independent work; and excellent organisational skills

- have the ability to produce high quality work to budget

- have demonstrated expertise in research methods including qualitative and quantitative techniques

- have demonstrated expertise in evaluation and measuring change and impact

- have substantial experience of writing up results and presenting these effectively in a range of ways to different audiences

- have the ability to engage with key stakeholders across the Scottish higher education sector to ensure the final outputs reflect the depth and breadth of the Enhancement Theme impact

- have the ability to attend regular meetings at the QAA Scotland office to inform staff of progress, and attend other meetings, such as the TLG, as deemed necessary.

While residence in Scotland is not essential, a good, current knowledge of the Scottish higher education sector, along with the capability to engage with it through meetings and events, will be required.

Potential applicants should note that travel and subsistence is included within the fee for this work.

Key aims

22. The key aims are to:

- develop a framework/approach/model, in consultation with the sector, that will measure the impact of the Theme on the student experience

- use the framework to measure impact within institutions and across the wider sector

- use the framework to measure the impact of the different elements of the Theme and related activity

- use the framework to measure impact on a longitudinal basis so that learning from activities can be shared on an ongoing basis

- identify how the framework could be used or modified to measure the impact of future Enhancement Themes.

Methodology

23.   While it is the responsibility of the individual/group to fully describe their proposed methodology within their submission document it is expected that the work will include:

- undertaking desk-based research and analysis of existing publically available documents and institutional plans/reports produced in support of the Theme, to better understand the key aims of this commissioned work

- developing a robust framework/model/approach for measuring impact of the Theme on the student experience using a range of qualitative and quantitative metrics. This framework should be sustainable and be able to be customised in future years

- engaging with a cross section of staff and students from across the 19 Scottish institutions, and QAA Scotland partner organisations, to ensure the approach is developed in partnership with key stakeholders

- preparation of progress reports and use of appropriate data visualisation techniques to keep the sector informed of ongoing learning and present key findings in an engaging manner

- presenting work at appropriate QAA conferences and events

- developing evidence-based recommendations to enhance the work of the Enhancement Themes and inform thinking on the next Theme

- attending meetings including with QAA Scotland staff and meetings of key sector groups, as required.

24.   The work will be managed by QAA Scotland staff, supported by the TLG for Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience. Clare Parks (c.parks@qaa.ac.uk) will be the main point of contact.

25.   Reports on progress of work activities must be provided for SHEEC and TLG meetings, which the author(s) may be required to attend.

26.   There will be an option for the contract to be terminated at any stage by giving 28 days' written notice by either party.

27.   QAA Scotland will provide further guidance and support to the appointed individual/group.

Fees/budget

28.   The fee for this work will be up to £50,000, which is inclusive of any VAT, travel and subsistence. This fee will be paid in instalments upon satisfactory progress in delivering the work. Applicants will be expected to provide a proposed total cost for their proposed project work, as well as a detailed cost breakdown over the three years of the evaluation.

Section 4: Instructions for submission of the expression of interest

29.   Please do not hesitate to contact Clare Parks if you require further information. Contact details are:

Dr Clare Parks
QAA Scotland
18 Bothwell Street
Glasgow G2 6NU
e-mail: c.parks@qaa.ac.uk
Tel: 0141 5723447

Timetable and administration arrangements

30.   Initial timescales are outlined in the following table:

Activity	Timescale
Return of expressions of interest	9 February 2018 by 1700 GMT
Applications reviewed and scored	12-14 February 2018
Interviews with applicants (if required)	15/16 February 2018
Expected date of award	19 February 2018
First meeting between selected individual/group and QAAS to discuss the project Agree broad timescales for key project deadlines	21 February 2018
Receive signed contract from chosen individual/group	2 March 2018
Individual/group attends TLG meeting	8 March 2018
Submission of an end of year report on the project work	Prior to 31 July 2018

31.   Key deadline dates will be incorporated into the contract once the methodology has been presented by the individual/group and discussed with QAA Scotland and the Theme Leadership Team.

Evaluation criteria

32.   The expressions of interest will be evaluated fairly to ascertain which represents the best value for money in terms of the criteria.

33.   Your response to our requirements will be evaluated under the following headings:

• evidence of your capability, skills, capacity and experience to deliver the requirements of the work

• how you will deliver the work within agreed parameters of quality, budget and timescales

• evidence of your understanding of our business

• how you will ensure value for money

• how you will ensure depth and breadth in stakeholder engagement across the sector.

(Please note that the order in which the criteria are listed does not imply relative importance.)

Administration arrangements

34. Submission of expressions of interest - the expression of interest should be submitted by email to etadmin@qaa.ac.uk by 1700 GMT on 9 February 2018.

35. Receipt of expressions of interest - expressions of interest will be received up to the time and date stated. QAA Scotland does not undertake to consider any expressions of interest received after that time.

36. Acceptance of expressions of interest - by issuing this invitation QAA is not bound in any way and does not have to accept the lowest, or any expression of interest.

37. Confidentiality - all information supplied by the QAA to you must be treated in confidence and not disclosed to third parties except insofar as this is necessary to obtain sureties or quotations for the purpose of submitting the expression of interest. All information supplied by you to the QAA will similarly be treated in confidence except that references may be sought from banks, existing or past clients, or other referees submitted by the proposer.

38. Please respond to the requirements within this document fully and as concisely as possible. All expressions of interest should be made using the appropriate order and format specified in paragraph 40. Expressions of interest received which are not within this order and format will be rejected.

39. QAA will not reimburse any costs of preparing any expression of interest.

Section 5: Information required from applicants

40. It is important that you provide all the information requested below. Please provide it in the order and format indicated.

    Part 1   Information about you/your organisation
    Part 2   Details of the service and details of the individual/group who would be working on the project
    Part 3   Breakdown of prices and rates
    Part 4   Quality monitoring
    Part 5   Additional information

    You must use the application form provided in appendix 1. Expressions of interest submitted in any other format will not be considered.

Evaluation of the Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience Enhancement Theme

Call for expressions of interest - application form

Part 1: Details about you/your organisation

Main contact and leader		
Title	**First name**	**Surname**
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Post	Click here to enter text.	
Institution/organisation (if applicable)	Click here to enter text.	
Address	Click here to enter text.	
Telephone	Click here to enter text.	
Email	Click here to enter text.	

Please include here information about your organisation including; number of staff, management structure, a description of the nature of the work carried out by your organisation, and any other information which may be of assistance in considering your tender. Please also indicate any European or British quality standards achieved or being sought.
Click here to enter text.

Part 2: Details about the service and the individual/group who would be working on the contract

1   Give details of the resources you expect to use to service the contract, including the number of staff you expect to use for providing the service.
2   Indicate in each case whether you expect staff to be drawn from within your organisation, be newly recruited or sub-contracted.
3   Please enter the names, position held by, and experience of, key staff involved in the contract. (If applicable – copy the staff details table below for each person.)

Resource details
Click here to enter text.

Staff details		
Title	**First name**	**Surname**
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Post	Click here to enter text.	
Institution (if applicable)	Click here to enter text.	
Experience	Click here to enter text.	
Newly recruited or sub-contracted	Click here to enter text.	

Please provide evidence of your expertise in/examples of:

- the areas of work:
  - evaluation/evaluation of impact
  - research methods (qualitative/quantitative)
- undertaking this type of work: developing evaluation models/approaches
- ensuring delivery of completed project work to deadlines.

Maximum of 500 words per question

Demonstrate your knowledge and expertise in the areas of work by providing a short outline of your background and interest in these areas.
Click here to enter text.
Demonstrate your expertise in evaluation approaches and reporting of findings.   In addition, please attach three example texts that you have already produced to publishable standard.
Click here to enter text.
Provide evidence of having successfully run project work to required deadlines.
Click here to enter text.

PART 3: Breakdown of prices and rates

Insert here your breakdown of prices and rates (pounds sterling). This should include an overall cost for the contract and specific details of costs, for each year, for:

- professional services
- administration
- travel and subsistence
- meetings

Click here to enter text.

PART 4: Quality monitoring

Set out your proposals for the monitoring and reporting on the quality of the services delivered including the performance checks you will carry out, their frequency and scope, and who will perform them.

Note: your quality monitoring will not itself form part of the contract, but any elements within it which the parties agree to be essential to the delivery of the service will be incorporated within the contract specification and form part of any contract resulting from your expression of interest.

Click here to enter text.

PART 5: Additional information

Set out any additional information you think would be helpful in support of your proposal, including any additional facilities not included in the specification you could or will offer that will add value to the service that you will provide.

Click here to enter text.

Please return this form no later than **1700 GMT** on **Friday 9 February 2018**.

To apply, please email the completed form to etadmin@qaa.ac.uk using the subject line: **Enhancement Theme Evaluation Project – Expression of Interest**.

Launch event analysis for Theme Leadership Team

You will have seen the Theme Launch Analysis for delegates paper that was distributed on 26 October. This paper provides additional detailed analysis of delegates' views on the day.

I'm providing you with the additional detail to help support our thinking as we continue to develop the detailed scoping and a programme of work for the Theme. I've got a phone call with Karl on Monday 30 October during which it would be useful to agree the immediate next steps.

The detailed analysis is in the appendices to this paper – with thanks to Clare Parks who worked on this.

Key areas I'm asking Karl, Martha and Nicky to consider are set out in these first three pages.

Creating a programme of work for the Theme

1. In commenting on what success would look like, delegates identified a number of points that are useful to keep in mind while designing a programme of work for this Theme (more detail on p14 of this paper):

    Narrower focus. Something more in depth. Some more focused bigger ticket outcomes (eg not just a repository). Do less but better - avoid over-proliferation of outcomes

    Let's not always focus on issues. Celebrate good stuff.

    Prioritised areas of Theme that are most relevant to each HEI.

    Let's not have all institutions doing the same, not re-inventing the wheel or at least re-inventing it together

    What's learned from things that didn't work.

    Need to tie this Theme back to Transitions Theme

    Longitudinal approach (but with appropriate early intervention where necessary).

2. What I take from these comments is a desire to achieve a step change and to avoid over-proliferation of smaller activities. We have less 'control' over the HEI plans of activity but do have control over the sector-level work where we can deepen the focus on a smaller range of activity, perhaps supplemented by the collaborative clusters.

3. I see considerable interest in the strand around optimising the use of evidence/data. Clear demand for skills-based activity and also interest in considering the actual data being gathered. There is definite excitement around evidence relating to student engagement. I wonder if our 'big ticket' activities should sit around these areas?

4. A plan of work might look like this:

    - Deep focus on small number of big sector-level projects, such as:
        - skills development around using data for staff at different levels and students, eg could we create training/development materials or events that would work across the sector and/or that could be used by HEIs in their own activities?
        - student engagement which could have two angles, one around optimising existing data and the other around student engagement with evidence

    - Wider focus on HEI current and planned work where TLG and related communications provides the opportunity for HEIs to share their practices and learn from each other

    - Collaborative clusters on more bespoke activities of immediate interest to smaller groups of HEIs but with the potential for whole-sector learning/sharing on their completion

5. What are your observations on the analysis and what factors would you like QAAS to take into account in creative a programme for the Theme?

6. We clearly want to involve TLG in agreeing the overall plan but I'm conscious that it doesn't meet until early December and it would be expedient to progress some areas of activity where there is a clear desire for action. This would allow us to present TLG with some actual progress as well as other areas where we will still be seeking their views. Would you agree with this broad approach?

Position of learning/learner analytics

7. From the launch event feedback, it's clear that most HEIs are interested in exploring this area. We do need to be clear about what we'd be seeking to achieve in the Theme in relation to analytics – and we need to avoid duplicating work that might be going on elsewhere. Given the number of HEIs who have identified this, it seems this should be part of the sector-wide work rather than being left to a collaborative cluster – but I'm keen to hear your views.

8. What are your views on how a focus on LAs might be achieved?

Developing an evaluation framework for the Theme

9. We have previously indicated that evaluation should be put in place for all three years of the Theme and that it should have a deeper focus on impact, not only the operation of Theme activity.

10. The development of an evaluation framework for the Theme could also be connected with the idea of defining 'a good student experience' and/or optimising the data we use to evaluate the student experience and student success.

11. What are your views on this? Do you have any other comments on evaluation of the Theme that QAAS should take into account? Given timing, it would be good to draw up a plan for the evaluation so we could invite tenders. If we wait for the TLG meeting, we are unlikely to get this out before Xmas and therefore we won't have an evaluation team in place until the New Year. However, you might consider such a delay is a price worth paying to have the fuller involvement of TLG in agreeing the structure and intended outcomes of evaluation.

Collaborative clusters

12. As you'll have seen from the summary version of the analysis, the three most frequently cited topics were either aligned with the main Theme strands or learning/learner analytics. Other than those three, a range of other topics were identified. There are more topics than we (and possibly the sector) can support – we are probably looking at a total of three. QAAS can pull together an invitation to bid and a set of selection criteria. Do you have comments at this stage? Some questions it would be useful to consider are:

   – do you have views on which projects might provide most benefit to the sector?
   – do you have suggestions for selection criteria? (eg should we prefer at least one cluster with a clear student focus, should we select a cluster that links to previous Themes around employability?)
   – would you like to be involved in making the selection?

Next steps

13. We will need to consider how to manage TLG – the agenda topics and also how that (quite large) group can best be managed on the day. I'm happy to make suggestions but I'm conscious that you may wish to develop your own views on this.

14. We now have a set of actions to take in advance of the TLG meeting on 7 December. Before that, you are coming to the QAAS office on 21 November.

15. Are you able to give me views on at least some of the points in this paper to allow QAAS to make some progress before then? **Will I find a date for another telephone meeting in advance of the 21 November session?** I'm conscious of how challenging diaries are to manage.

Theme strands current and planned work

Optimising existing evidence

Current work

- Centre for Academic Development - using learning analytics to statistically analyse determinants of NSS (etc) survey outcomes – Aberdeen
- NSS and student demographics – Dundee
- Macro, meso, micro framework. Surveys and metrics working group. Learner experience framework. NSS improvement framework – Strathclyde
- Benchmarking sector data. Contextual data analysis. Analysis intervention data – Abertay
- Mapping student experience (including belonging). Patterns in honours classification profiles – Glasgow
- Creating new data, mechanisms to respond to key priorities identified through data. Effective relationships and communication - RGU

Planned work

- Learning Analytics Group - already engaged in determining ethical guidelines determining use of data, next stage use of data eg attendance to identify groups of students for whom we can help engage.
- Library analytics to inform campus development. Survey work to better understand and manage student expectations – Glasgow
- Enhancing effective teaching through student feedback – Dundee
- Improving analysis and dissemination. Communicating and utilising evidence from student representation - HWU
- Implementing new reporting tool Tableau to look at data from multiple sources – RGU
- TEF - St Andrews

Student demographics and success

Current work

- Transitions work group, continuation, progression, success – Glasgow
- Evidence from learning and teaching, KPIs, surveys, Go Global – HWU
- Integrated Course Portfolio Analysis, traditional PIs but sufficiency and joining data for new insights – RGU
- NSS, DLHE, retention, KPIs, SUNBIRD business intelligence system. Learning analytics Learner Experience Framework, Graduate Level Apprenticeships, QA Annual monitoring – Strathclyde

Planned Work

- Understanding and responding appropriately to changing student demographics (eg international student numbers rising, GLSs – Dundee
- Mapping student journey, choices and transfers between degrees in traditional Scottish structure – Glasgow
- New learning and teaching strategy (and University strategy), new learning and teaching academy, HWO Global Graduate 2023 – HWU

- Adding value to existing data, linking data sets. Triangulation, contextualisation and presentation of data eg infographics. Learning and teaching space. Delivery responsive to changing student expectations and engagement (optimising evidence) – St Andrews
- Strathclyde Online – cross cutting data around mode of delivery and demographic.

Student engagement

Current work

- Enhancing the student voice – closing the feedback loop. How does AUSA impact on representing academic interests? How are students using our feedback, incorporating into student partnerships – Aberdeen
- Student voice – student perception of how their feedback has been acted on (closing feedback loop). SPA agreement extended to include School level SPA action plans. – Dundee
- Assessment and feedback interns – improve A and F NSS results. Course evaluation and EvaSys. Relaunch student voice. NSS mapping. Problems of community especially PGR, PGT, Ug and how we solve these - Glasgow
- Using evidence to communicate enhancement in a way students value. Assessment and feedback work – GSA
- Student representative structures global – HWU
- Student intern opportunities engaged in design of solutions. Data instigated project strands stemming from feedback analysis (assessment and feedback, benchmarking ODL. Looking at data in different cuts and sets eg gender, disability - RGU
- MEQ visual overview and teaching quality factsheets linking to optimising evidence. Student involvement in decisions and outcomes – St Andrews
- Learning analytics – USSA student parliament, Student congress, student representation system, SPA – Strathclyde

Planned work

- Qualitative understanding – belonging, reasons for withdrawal. – Aberdeen
- Working with student on planning/changing practice – TEAL spaces. Student engagement in tutorials. – Glasgow
- Co-creation in learning and teaching and wider university life. Communication and utilising evidence from student reps. – HWU
- How do we engage whole student body. Student use of evidence. How do students use it. What do they hear/tell and what do they do. – Napier
- Discussions on learning- infrastructure analytics eg library, Moodle, service usage. Analysis of new data arising from enhancement. Responding to student voice – new Sem 1 student questionnaire (linked to partnership agenda) – RGU
- Golden ticket scheme – St Andrews.
- Unpacking the student voice. Opportunities for using data to inform and influence engagement with USSA – Strathclyde

Sector level enhancement of practice

Areas were identified by institutions where the sector as a whole could enhance its practice or where activities could be more effective at sector level rather than managed by each HEI individually.

Optimising existing evidence

- School planning process - KPIs set at institutional level for retention, employability, assessment, teaching quality etc, currently scoping dashboard of key information - Aberdeen
- Understanding sector level especially retention. Sector performance. Potential benchmarking (including by different demographics). LEO data. DLHE at HEI and sector level – Dundee
- Data capture and sharing, less work in silos – HWU
- Better data definitions and common understandings – RGU
- Understanding what data is collected and why – St Andrews

Student demographics and success

- Understanding complex reasons for poor outcomes, by groups (eg wider access) – Dundee
- Better measures of employability and placements – Glasgow

Student engagement

- Data on student disengagement with their studies, warning sign before, understanding complex reasons for dropout – Dundee
- Engaging with TNE students. Support for online/distance learners – Glasgow
- Colleagues' preparedness for evidence based enhancement – staff development piece, driving impact from data. Non-traditional PIS emerging expectations – RGU
- Engaging taught postgraduates – St Andrews

Activities/support HEIs requested at sector level

Eight area where institutions wanted to see activity or support offered at sector level.

Optimising existing evidence

- International experience of using/reporting data – USA/Australia/|England (TEF) – Aberdeen
- Ireland's learning analytics model – national Forum for the Enhancement of learning and teaching in HE – HWU
- More events like today. Joint learning/sharing opportunities. What else is happening in RUK with respect to use of data as evidence. Bring back into QMU as facilitators – QMU
- Common evaluation for all Enhancement Theme projects. NSS and module survey data integrated into quality monitoring processes. Meetings accessible by video conference - UHI
- Preparing and interpreting data. Training for student unions/associations – Dundee
- Learning analytics. Qualitative and quantitative evidence. Teaching methods, contact hours, student outcomes – St Andrews

Student demographics and success

- Support for online and distance learners and staff. Develop effective personal tutoring and advising for changing student demographics – Glasgow

Student engagement

- Guidance about how to engage wider student body (other than reps) in the Theme and shape it in an accessible/simple manner.

Additional comments on dialogue sheets

The dialogue sheets included additional comments that were not assigned to particular questions. These additional comments are set out here. The first suite of comments can be aligned to the Theme main three strands. A further set of comments (below) are not attributed to one of the strands.

One interesting comment made by the University of St Andrews is emphasised in red font. It associates analytics to performance of resources rather than students.

Optimising existing evidence

- Learning from approach of other countries eg RUK practice in context of TEF. KPIs, impact measures, data gaps – GCU
- What can we learn from the USA on analytics. Space utilisation and optimisation. Training on current data. Sharing approaches to data management – St Andrews
- Identifying evidence on the impact of teaching. Communicating evidence inclusively – GSA
- Sharing practice in using/trusting data – Napier
- Upskilling student associations – Orgs
- Upskilling staff. Streamlining data collection and sharing so used effectively. Review QM process – UHI
- Sharing evidence with students. Common way of understanding how and when projects succeed or fail – OUiS.
- Course Review and Enhancement Development; consistent review of data and intervention – Strathclyde
- Optimise use of MyJourney – UWS
- Modern apprenticeships – SRUC
- Student and strategic planning data dashboards. Data warehouse review (digital transformation) – Edinburgh
- Hope internal and external evidence greater student satisfaction. SFC Outcome Agreements. Programme analysis - feedback, engagement with data. Course completion rates - including two plus years for more useful measure of student success. Employability - DLHE - different in creative sector. What is good measure of success. Bridge gap between data and practice - how does data inform practice - RCS

Student demographics and success

- Doing more sophisticated analysis eg on gender, ethnicity and feedback into evaluating success – Aberdeen
- Student enhancement Action Plan – improving use and understanding of data, more integrated data, stratified data on demographics such as disability/gender), contextualised admissions. – Glasgow Caledonian
- Building relationships with data between programme teams and university wide approaches when data sets are growing in type and range – GSA
- Who is engaging with what? Sector to evidence impact of widening access/employability at national/regional levels – Napier
- Scottish government focus is more on retention and completion. SFC and Scottish government have data expertise, upskilling students re learner analytics – Orgs
- Learning analytics – predictive modelling to deliver proactive interventions. Identifying vulnerable cohorts. Analysis dashboards at module level – OUiS
- Understand demographics better. Purpose driven dashboard – QMU

- Increasing data capture on employability. Scoping gender balance in subject areas for gender action plan. Subject level attainment rates between subject areas and demographic groups. Domicile retention rates. Learning analytics to direct staff development. Transparent personal performance data for students – Stirling
- Evaluation of learning gain. Evaluate use of Quality/Sustainability (QS) grids to refocus resources to enhance student experience – UHI
- Engaging staff and students on MyJourney – relaunch benefits and different uses. Know who our students are – UWS
- Modern apprenticeships. Interrogate existing data. Developing ways to measure the impact on retention and success of students who receive personal, learning, financial support – SRUC
- Learning analytics, policy, procedure, governance. 17-18 thematic review of mature students including parents and carers. Employability and enterprise supporting data. Lecture recording evaluation. Widening participation strategy – Edinburgh
- Rich portfolio of development work to support equality and diversity. Need to embed consistent practice. Need proper understanding of graduate employability and interventions contextualised to local factors – Abertay
- What is success - longitudinal research. Protected characteristics in creative arts - ECU ethnicity project, creative industry. Mutually constructed feedback. Disseminate good practice through school management meetings - RCS

Student engagement

- Student Experience Action Plan 2020 – GCU
- Communicating with students on change pre-enrolment. Use of more teaching staff in communicating with students on change – GSA
- Can we measure student sense of belonging/community/engagement across the sector as a whole. What do we want to learn from this data. Need to move from evidence at HEI level to evidence for sector as a whole. Why is data collected from students on gender and sexuality? – Orgs
- Open Learning Champions – pre-entry community focused student engagement. Personalisation of student support using analytics, early alert indicator projects targeted contact. Open personalised learning – OUiS
- Better communication and ongoing dialogue among staff and students – QMU
- Implementing Canvas analytics. Increasing data capture on employability Closing the feedback loop on student feedback. Early intervention on academic writing skills. Triangulating student survey data – St Andrews
- Establish student-led group, with student majority, chaired by student president reporting directly to university court to take an evidence based approach to improving student experience UHI
- MyJourney – learner analytics platform. Personal tutoring – student engagement in programme design and development – UWS
- Revision of ILR to give greater emphasis on student engagement throughout whole process. Monitor student engagement with their learning. Enables early interventions an impact positively on retention/achievement – SRUC
- Student voice fora. Student charter/new SPA. ATLEF – Abertay
- Student contact - increase transparency, case communication between student and tutor. Learning agreements. NSS - feedback, student voice – RCS

Comments not attributed to a Theme strand

Current work

- Co-curricular engagement and academic achievement – link to terms of engagement, outcomes, satisfaction. Students with disabilities, widening access - St Andrews

Planned work

- Wish list in hearing all student voice. Supporting all stakeholders to understand big and small impact. Impact – track Cognos users. Blogs, diaries. Rich evidence, understand, act, impact cycle. Staff development objectives through MyContribution. Enhance and make visible existing work. Bring in new stakeholders. Skills confidence and trust in using evidence. When and how we use evidence and make changes based on it. Diversity of evidence – social media. Community and engagement – what/whose student voice and feedback. Sector level what do institutions do to bring in diverse staff (librarians, admin) – Napier
- Co-curricular engagement and academic achievement – link to terms of engagement, outcomes, satisfaction. Students with disabilities, widening access - St Andrews

Text unattributed to Theme Strands

Question 1

- Evidence from/in learning and teaching KPIs, surveys. Class and school reps, committee structures, representation. Building global representation structure – HWU
- Student portal launched online (info on attendance, mark, timetable). Electronic registration of attendance. Similar staff portal development - QMU
- SPA themes voted on annually as part of HISA election process. Non-continuation strategy group chaired by Depute principal analyses evidence and provides strategic direction. Quality monitoring process – UHI
- Race equality charter mark. Athena Swan. Lead voices Network. Contextual admissions and access thresholds. Revised student survey system. Student voice fora. Learning analytics – improving student support (including mental health and wellbeing). Annual reporting – improved management information. Employability. Digital tracker. NSS analysis/focus groups - Abertay
- Review and revision of annual monitoring process to focus teams/dept more strongly at KPIs. Similar revision of ILR. Business intelligence project initiated (wide representation). Data warehousing – SRUC

Question 2

- HWU Global Graduate 2023 – new university and learning and teaching strategy. Will need to be evidence based at every stage – HWU
- SPA on student surveys (Improve engagement, circulation of outputs) – SRUC
- Breadth of assessment and link to student attainment – Protected characteristics analysis. Morse systematic analysis. Real time and retrospective data. SA more open focus – heightened engagement – interpretation and practice. Student partnership working with use of evidence - Abertay

Question 3

- Sharing best practice of recording and presenting data. Measuring deprivation – better measure than SIMD for rural areas – Aberdeen
- Data capture and sharing (benchmarking larger sample size for analysis/modelling). Being less silod within and across institutions - HWU
- Has NSS lost some value – reach and focus. Importance of dissemination and action as a sector on evidencing student experience - SRUC

Question 4

- International experience of using/reporting data USA/Aus/England (TEF) – Aberdeen
- Ireland's learning analytics model – National Forum for the Enhancement of learning and teaching in HE – HWU
- More events like today – joint learning/sharing opportunities. What else is happening in RUK with respect to data as evidence – QMU
- Meetings accessible by VC. Common evaluation for all ET projects. NSS and module survey data integrated into quality monitoring processes – UHI
- Events, workshops and webinars – SRUC
- SFC to provide leadership in analysis and presentation of sector level data – Dundee

What will success look like?

Notes on methodology:

Delegates were assigned to one of 20 groups, representing one of six institutional role functions, as undernoted, plus an organisations group (comprising representatives from the Scottish Government, Scottish Funding Council, Higher Education Academy, sparqs, NUS Scotland):

1. Vice-Principal level learning and teaching (3 groups)
2. Dean level quality enhancement/quality assurance or learning and teaching (2 groups)
3. Learning and teaching practitioners and academic developers (5 groups)
4. Students (4 groups)
5. Planning (3 groups)
6. Quality Managers (2 groups)

Data were missing for one group of students (dialogue sheet not returned/captured). Two groups did not record any information on the dialogue sheet (organisations and one group of Vice-Principal level learning and teaching). A separate sheet of five question prompts accompanied the dialogue sheet:

- what outcomes should the Theme seek to achieve? and what form would outcomes take, eg shared understanding, series of skills materials for staff & students?
- what improvements would we see in the student experience and in student success?
- what evidence would we look for to demonstrate improvement/enhancement? how will we evidence change in the student experience?
- are there new things the sector would be doing?
- are there things the sector would have stopped doing?

The dialogue sheet was bisected horizontally with a year 1 to year 3 timeline, with responses to two questions to be recorded above and below the timeline, respectively:

- what activities will you be doing in your HEI and the sector as a whole? A
- what will be improved and what evidence will demonstrate improvement in the student experience and student success? O

The dialogue sheet text was initially coded as outcomes for anything written above the horizontal timeline and action for anything written below the line. Text was also assigned a code (year 1, 2 or 3) depending on where it was written in relation to the timeline. In reviewing text content it was clear that outcomes were not necessarily written below the line and vice versa re activities. The table below is the result of a review of the text to collapse repetition and to present text more clearly as either outcome or action. Reference to years has been removed. There is an indication of which role groups recorded text against each topic header. The original, detailed text coding is available, on request.

	VP L and T	Dean	Practitioners	Planners	QA/QE managers	Students
Stakeholder training and development	x	x	x	x	x	x
A baseline of data/evidence literacy skills (analysis, presentation, legislation) for a range of staff (academic and professional services support) and students. O						
Increased staff engagement with data/evidence. O						
Staff and students using data/evidence confidently, critically and effectively. O						
A piloted CPD programme that increases data/evidence literacy. A						
Development opportunities for staff and students including practical experience of data/evidence analysis and collection. A						
Empower autonomous staff use of data/evidence to effect change. A						
Sector body activities to address request for additional data/evidence skills training. A						
Defining and understanding a good student experience		x	x	x	x	
A shared, nuanced definition/understanding of student experience and what qualifies it as 'good'/'successful'. O						
Widen the student voice to understand what is important to measure. A						
Develop a teaching and student experience data portfolio. A						
Defining and understanding the (nature of) evidence	x	x	x	x	x	x
More sophisticated, consistent, contextual, shared understanding across the sector of appropriate data/evidence to inform decision-making. O						
Establish principles and transparency of data/evidence use around definitions, collection methods and governance of 'good quality' data/evidence. A						
Identify how data/evidence can support enhancement through personalised and evidence-based intervention. A						
Identifying what data/evidence we need and what the purpose of that data/evidence is. A						
Identify what we should be doing at institutional, sectoral and collaborative cluster level. A						
Sharing good practice between disciplines on data/evidence to use and methodology. A						
Establishing a baseline and learning from others			x	x		x
Knowing our own sector data/evidence and from elsewhere. O						
Audit of practice across the UK sector and elsewhere. A						
Pinpointing existing data/evidence sets which could be useful and also gaps. A						
Data ethics and governance		x		x		x
A shared vision/strategy regarding the ethical and effective use of data/evidence. O						
Keeping all stakeholders informed and educated on the laws around data protection and ethical use of data particularly in relation to learner/learning analytics. O						
Ensure governance and quality of data (note General Data Protection Regulation). A						
Evidence approaches		x	x	x	x	x
Have stopped gathering data that is not useful (gather the right data once). O						
Improved ways of using data that HEIs already have. O						
Triangulation of data/evidence. Holistic use of student data/evidence. O						

Increased use of qualitative data/evidence from a range of sources. O						
Systematic approach to qualitative data/evidence analysis of (stories behind the numbers). O						
Finding different methods of data/evidence collection, eg student officers actually going out and speaking to students (reduction in survey fatigue). O						
Less resource intensive way of using data/collecting data/evidence. O						
'Meta analysis' of methodologies to establish and develop approaches - evidence hub. O						
Connect numerical data (eg HESA) and the 'softer' data to have greater insight into student experience. A						
Use current data/evidence more effectively and making connections between data sets/VLEs. A						
Expand range of analyses to more from overarching measures (eg retention) to more contextualised analyses. A						
Tying together qualitative and quantitative data - contextualisation. A						
Use evidence/data as basis for ongoing dialogue. A						
The text below was around operation of the Theme itself:						
Lighter reporting processes. Narrower focus. Something more in depth. Let's not always focus on issues. Celebrate good stuff. O						
Prioritised areas of Theme that are most relevant to each HEI. O						
Let's not have all institutions doing the same, not re-inventing the wheel or at least re-inventing it together. O						
Some more focused bigger ticket outcomes (eg not just a repository). O						
What's learned from things that didn't work. O						
Need to tie this Theme back to Transitions Theme. A						
Do we get data/evidence first or act and then provide evidence? A						
Working out activities and areas of Themes that institutions want to focus on. A						
Identify infrastructure challenges. A						
Longitudinal approach (but with appropriate early intervention where necessary). A						
Do less but better - avoid over-proliferation of outcomes. A						
Evidence approaches - specific	x	x	x	x		x
NSS measure - Q25 increase in student voice score and assessment and feedback and organisation and management. O						
More reflection on student survey data. A						
Other processes - outcomes agreements, REF, TEF, DLHE, LEO etc. A						
Teaching awards data analysis/analysing themes in student-led teaching award nominations. A						
Evaluating the Theme	x	x		x		x
Evaluation and impact framework (target interventions which are evaluated at a strategic level). O						
Evaluation of process. A						
Ask colleagues how do you know what you do is making a difference. A						
Engaging students with the Theme						
Communication of the Theme to students in an accessible way. O						
Ensure transparency for students. A						

Partnership between university and students union to engage students with theme, from the outset, in accessible, easy way and support cross-institutionally. A						
Responding to student questions - FAQ. A						
Scoping out what students want the Theme to focus on. A						
Asking students for solutions to issues which come out through data/evidence analysis. A						
Impact on students			x		x	x
Engaged stakeholders in data gathering and implementation of changes. O						
Student representative structures are effective and efficient and Student Associations/Unions are listened to. O						
Showing students how their feedback is being used/analysed to actively close feedback loops and make changes. O						
Well rounded individuals rather than just graduates. O						
Support relationships with graduates. O						
Improved student engagement, retention, completion and employability through HEIs understanding student needs to a greater extent. O						
Meaningful data, better able to address students' anxieties. O						
High quality individual experience and support for those students most in need. O						
Determining appropriate intervention. O						
Use what HEIs know about students, eg demographics to tailor student experience. A						
Student experiences - student engagement with co-curricular activities. A						
Data presentation/visualisation including dashboards			x			x
Better contextualisation and presentation of data tailored to different data/evidence. O						
A special visual identity for enhancement – involvement of creative industry student internships. O						
Work as a sector to curate/distil data in an accessible form with accessible outcomes. O						
Common methodology across HEIs. O						
Case studies of institutions who have developed 'dashboards' to help us reflect on the student educational experience. O						
Tangible data sets like the NSS etc. O						
Opportunities for shared procurement of systems in future. O						
Finding creative/fun, appropriate ways to display, visualise data/evidence eg infographics/videos. A						
Collaborative working intra-institution	x	x	x			x
Integration of student voice into decision making. O						
Relevant communication to stakeholder context. O						
Collaborative working practices - planners/academic development/students/quality, cross-institution using evidence to address common interests. O						
Universities sharing more data with their student union (agreements in place which facilitate this (ie student partnerships). O						
Understand our connections to, and support for, programme/course outcomes - supporting institutional practice and sharing learning. O						
Using Theme to drive better systems and communication between stakeholders to get better student outcomes. A						

Co-creation of services/systems with students and staff. A						
Communicate clearly with staff on 3/4 year achievements. A						
Building communities within institutions between staff and students. A						
Building a data sharing community across HEIs in Scotland and sharing best practice. A						
Cross-sector collaboration	x		x		x	x
Institutions sharing more data/evidence across the sector and experiences in using data/evidence. O						
Changes in institutions to bring together stakeholders in evidence and data to work together more effectively. O						
Improved communication taking account of complexity, tailoring data, audience. O						
Staff and student co-creation of data/enhancement initiatives. A						
Keeping all stakeholders informed. A						x
Working collaboratively with HEIs on approaches to similar Theme-related activities. A						x
Attending focus-led events and institutional enhancement Themes group to assist in planning activities collaboratively. A						x
Students speaking with each other about how comfortable they are with the use of their data/evidence. A					x	
Specific student groups		x	x		x	x
Contextualised data to demographic groups. O						
Better evidence about international student experience - in Scotland/distance learning/overseas campus. O						
Improving feedback from postgraduate students. A						
Use of data/evidence to help in resource allocation - timetabling/space use/meeting needs of part time/distance students. Challenges of rural areas (eg Aberdeenshire), mode of delivery, transport, different entry points. A						
Learning analytics		x	x	x	x	x
Establish a sector wide consortium for learning analytics, which might provide a framework for HEIs to implement the JISC project. O						
Identify current practice and clusters of institutions who share approaches to learning analytics/improving the student experience. A						
Involve students in conversations about learning analytics to understand their perspective on ethical issues. A						
Sector ambitions	x	x	x	x	x	
Scotland is recognised as the UK sector leader on evidence based enhancement. O						
The Scottish approach to evidence based enhancement is clearly defined. O						
Take advantage of unique Scottish context of collaboration to influence practice beyond Scotland. A						
Develop a sector wide approach to engage students in looking at, understanding and using data/evidence to enhance their overall educational experience. A						
Use the Theme to drive more immediate, short term improvements balanced against longer term sustainable actions. A						

Develop systematic and robust evidence based practices that demonstrate impact and build trust. A						
Present a core data/evidence set for the Scottish sector, which could be 'basket of measures' to identify 'teaching excellence'. A						
Culture change				x	x	x
A culture shift emphasising use of data/evidence as enhancement activity and a springboard for change and not a monitoring tool to expose shortcomings. O						
Less focus on the data and more focus on how the evidence has changed the culture. A						
External influences				x		
Take account of the impact of Data Futures, Brexit, on student experience. A						

Brief background on the launch event

The Theme launch event attracted 110 delegates from 19 Scottish higher education institutions and partner organisations (HEA, NUS Scotland, Scottish government, SFC, sparqs).

Delegates took part in two dialogue sheet activities. The first activity was aimed at supporting institutions in their thinking and planning around Theme activities and developing institutional plans.

Dialogue sheet 1 questions were:

- Question 1: What Theme-related work are you currently doing in your HEI? And where does that best fit with the three Theme strands? Please highlight practice you would be willing to share.

- Question 2: What Theme-related work are you planning? And how do those plans best fit the Theme strands? Please highlight topics or practices you would like to develop.

- Question 3: Are there areas where the sector as a whole could enhance its practice? Or where activities could be more effective at sector level rather than managed by each HEI individually?

- Question 4: What kinds of activity or support would you like to see offered at sector level? For example, commissioning studies, learning from other countries, developing skills, events and workshops, webinars?

- Question 5: Would you like to progress work as part of a collaborative cluster? If so, which topics would that work involve and what would it seek to achieve? Which HEIs would you particularly like to collaborate with? And are you willing to lead or contribute to a collaborative cluster to develop policy and practice?

- Question 6: Please highlight your top priority for this Theme from an HEI and a sector perspective.

The second activity split delegates into seven functional groups and was aimed at identifying what success in the Theme would look like and what actions would be needed to get there. A series of question prompts supported delegates in this task.

NVivo software was used to support qualitative analysis, helping group similar dialogue sheet text.

Feedback from the event plenary sessions has informed this report.

Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience

Purpose

1. This paper provides an overview of the Theme 2017-2020, updated following the October launch event. It is intended to support the discussions on later agenda items (institutional plans, collaborative clusters and sector activity) by providing an outline of the Theme as a whole.

Recommendations

2. This paper is primarily for information but Theme Leaders' Group (TLG) members are invited to raise any questions or make observations.

Further information

3. Further information is available from Ailsa Crum (a.crum@qaa.ac.uk).

Scope of the Theme

4. The Theme will consider:

    What information is useful to help us identify and understand what we do well and what could be improved? This information, which includes qualitative and quantitative evidence, can be used to **identify** the issues that would benefit from intervention, help **prioritise** interventions for improving the student experience, and **evaluate** the effectiveness of those interventions including reporting on the ways in which the student experience has been improved.

5. The Theme will cover three main strands:

    i.   Optimising the use of existing evidence, for example
    - o   sharing current institutional approaches
    - o   supporting staff and students to use and interpret data
    - o   identifying data that would enable the sector to understand its strengths and challenges better

    ii. Student engagement, for example
    - o   Student engagement in learning and factors underlying the student voice
    - o   Using the Theme to consider concepts where there is no readily available data, such as student community, identity and belonging

iii. **Student demographics, retention & success**, for example
- o Considering the range of evidence used to identify, evaluate and improve retention, attainment and employability
- o Using learning analytics to support student success

6. During 2017-18, the **Focus On: Feedback from Assessment** project will run. It will explore student views of the feedback they receive and how students can most effectively engage with that feedback. It will also follow up the findings of the initial Focus On: Assessment & Feedback project run in 2014-15 to consider how institutional policy and practice has progressed, notably around the use of technology to support staff and students in giving and receiving feedback on assessed work.

Programme of work

7. Theme activity will be planned and operate at three main levels: within institutions, collaborative clusters and across the sector.

Institutional activity

8. Institutions are asked to submit a plan for the current year plus an indication of ideas for the total duration of the Theme, followed by an end of year report.

9. Institutions are expected to share the outcomes of their Theme work but the precise format (case study, multi-media etc) will be for each institution to determine. Institutions will be contracted to engage constructively with the sector including engaging with the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) and TLG, and to work in partnership with their students. Otherwise the contractual obligation is streamlined to meeting their own (institutional) plans for the Theme.

Collaborative clusters

10. The Theme will include groups of institutions working collaboratively on matters of mutual interest which have the potential to add value to the whole sector once complete. Institutions have been invited to bid for financial support from QAAS to carry out the work which will be led by those in the sector. Progress will be reported to TLG for information-sharing and coordination purposes.

Sector activity

11. There will be a programme of work which is designed to be relevant across the whole sector and, although engagement is not compulsory, it is hoped that this activity will engage all institutions to some extent. Students and staff will work in partnership to progress the Theme. In addition, there will be a student-led project which will be supported by QAAS and sparqs.

12. Careful thought is being paid to evaluating the success of the Theme and evaluators will be commissioned to work across all three years of the Theme to help identify the improvements to the student experience that arise from this, and potentially previous, Theme activity.

Leadership of the Theme

13. Professor Karl Leydecker (University of Dundee) was elected by the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) to lead the Theme. He is supported by a student leader, Matt Adie (University of Stirling) and two deputies, Dr Martha Caddell, Edinburgh Napier, and Professor Nicky Andrew, Glasgow Caledonian. TLG provides a forum for institutions' staff and student leads to meet and share information about the Theme, as well as providing leadership for the shape and progress of the Theme.

14. SHEEC oversees the Enhancement Themes and is chaired by Professor Peter McGeorge (University of Aberdeen) and Dr Alastair Robertson (Abertay University) is Vice-Chair. Its membership includes all Scottish higher education institutions through the vice-principals (learning and teaching) or their delegated colleagues and there are four student members, along with representatives of the sector

partner agencies (sparqs, NUS, Universities Scotland, Scottish Funding Council and the Higher Education Academy).

15. Given the focus of this Theme and its potential links to reporting on institutional and sector performance, it is anticipated that SHEEC members will pay close attention to its progress and findings. We will also want to work closely with our sector partner agencies and established groups (such as the Scottish Planners' Forum and the Scottish Higher Education Developers forum) to deliver a successful Theme that will enhance the student experience and help to promote positive student outcomes.

Evidence for Enhancement:
Improving the Student Experience

Overview of Institutional Plans

Purpose

1. This paper provides an overview of the information presented in Enhancement Theme institutional plans for Session 2017-18.

2. The plans will help to inform work on the sector-wide Theme strands and collaborative cluster activity. The plans will also help institutions identify areas of mutual interest and potential areas of collaboration and collegiate working outwith the formal collaborative cluster activity. To aid discussion at the Theme Leaders' Group meeting, the full plans have been provided as a separate bookmarked pdf file.

Recommendations

3. In groups, TLG members are invited to share ideas and discuss the planned institutional work. There will be time for a plenary session.

Further information

4. Further information is available from Clare Parks (c.parks@qaa.ac.uk).

Background

5. Eighteen institutions have submitted their first year plan and these will be posted on the Enhancement Themes web pages.

6. Institutions have reported that this Theme aligns well with current and planned activities. Within most institutions there is significant current and planned work in re-developing elements of institutional strategy. The Theme comes at an opportune time when institutions will be using evidence to support and evaluate these strategic developments. Beyond the evident business need, the plans show an enthusiasm and real interest for the Theme. Some institutions are also using this Theme to link to the Student Transitions Enhancement Theme work, looking at the impact of Transition interventions.

Institutional teams

7. The composition of institutional teams varies in number of members and members' roles. In some cases members' details are to be confirmed and it is likely that team memberships will change over the course of the first year of the Theme. Students are well represented; there are 36 students as team members from a total of 179 team members; students comprise 20% of institutional teams. Team members are drawn from a range of functional areas including: senior managers; academic areas; academic development; quality; planning; data/statistical analysis, careers, human resources, support

services. Academic roles contribute the highest number of team members, at 41. Some institutional teams also include members from overseas campuses.

Proposed activity

8. The table in the appendix shows the main areas of activity proposed by each institution, identified under the three Theme strands, areas of interest in collaborative cluster work and activity relating to the Focus On: Feedback from Assessment project. The information in the plans supports the potential cluster topics identified at the Theme launch event. A number of institutions are interested in assessment and assessment feedback work and this will help to inform this year's Focus On activity. Much of the activity is inter-related, for example there is potential for overlap between the three strands, the cluster activity and the Focus On project. We are conscious of the need to ensure that the work is joined-up, avoids duplication and shares learning effectively so that project outcomes inform each other. TLG will play a key role in coordinating and sharing information between and across institutions.

Dissemination of work

9. A variety of actions are planned by institutions to communicate and disseminate work internally and externally and are summarised, as follows:

    * establishing a communication strategy or plan

    * using existing management, communication and committee structures (with Theme work as a standing agenda item) and also establishing new groups

    * working closely with student union/association and communicating through student publications

    * running a range of internal events (seminars, workshops, symposia, conferences, staff development sessions) that will focus on staff or students or both and engaging other institutions or co-hosting with local institutions

    * participating in sector events/activity such as the Theme Leaders' Group meetings and Enhancement Themes conference

    * using paper and electronic ways of sharing work and communicating; journal articles, social media (Twitter, including co-badging Tweetchats with QAA Scotland), wikis, podcasts, VLEs, Sharepoint, web pages (institutional and QAA Scotland), e-publications, video-conferencing

    * using named contacts to champion the work of the Theme and help the flow of information/communication

    * appointing new staff to undertake aspects of Theme work

    * using Theme branding to effectively promote Theme work

    * extending external reach through institutions' alumni network and engaging with discipline related organisations and bodies

    * thinking of creative ways to tell the individual, human stories behind the data/evidence (for example a comic/graphic novel or a play).

Wider inter-institutional collaboration

10. Beyond the collaborative cluster work there is an enthusiasm among institutions to work with each other, on areas of mutual interest, sharing ideas and working in other collegiate ways, in a manner similar to the Student Transitions Theme. Several key sector organisations are highlighted where linkage would be very valuable: Scottish Planners Group; Teaching Quality Forum; Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching Committee; Higher Education Academy; UK Council for Graduate

Education; Vitae; and Staff and Educational Development Association, Scottish Higher Education Developers.

Supporting staff and student engagement

11. Institutional plans show a range of ways for supporting staff and student engagement. These include:

    For staff and students:

    - opportunities for formal and informal interaction, including sharing practice

    - funding opportunities to develop new activities and attend sector-wide events

    - investing resource in effective publicising of sector and institutional training and development events

    - linking to strategic activities which already have student and staff buy-in

    - ensuring a core aspect of each project will be staff and student engagement activity

    - providing training and development opportunities

    - creating easily accessible resources, drawing on infographics and other visualisation-based approaches

    - Institutional Team members providing or brokering support

    - drawing on colleagues with expertise who will then also be local ambassadors for and change agents of the proposed activities

    - posing open questions that are relevant to all members of the community and providing mechanisms for them to respond in a way that suits their learning and creative preferences.

    For staff:

    - providing administrative support

    - recognising time commitment by, for example: defining involvement with the theme as scholarship activity for staff on T&S contracts

    - allocating time spent on Theme activities in the workload model.

    For students:

    - using Open badges to recognise and reward work by students

    - making student involvement with the theme part of extra-curricular awards

    - working closely with student/union association which could be through the Student Partnership Agreement

    - piloting the employment of Student Voice Support Officers assigned to Schools.

Evaluation

12. Institutions are working on this aspect of the Theme in two ways:

    - identifying the reporting and monitoring structures (committee and groups) that will provide the mechanism for monitoring and tracking progress

- developing approaches to measuring change and impact.

13. In terms of the latter, institutions are working on overarching approaches (evaluation plan or framework, logic model) which establish outcomes, a means of measuring these and associated deadlines. Institutions are interested in qualitative and quantitative measures. Institutions are engaged in thinking about measuring aspects of Theme process (stakeholder engagement, use of Theme resources, volume and reach of Theme activities) and also measuring actual impact of the student experience. Institutions are also thinking about the Theme in the context of existing processes (such as annual monitoring, subject review, strategic planning and student partnership work) and how these can be used to help deliver and/or evidence Theme impact.

Appendix

Sector/Institution Work	Optimising data	Student Demographics, Retention and Attainment	Student Engagement	Collaborative Cluster	Focus On: Feedback from Assessment
Abertay University	• Better data integration between systems • Better use of data in annual monitoring and portolfio review processes	• Learning analytics • Retention • Attainment • Graduate employability • Evaluating Student Transitions initiatives • Evaluation of new learning spaces	• Evaluation of student voice initiatives	• Students as partners in evidence based enhancement • Learning analytics (willing to lead) • Targeted interventions • Attainment, retention and employability either with regional Universities or Post-92s • LEO data (willing to lead)	
University of Aberdeen	• Making better use of evidence (specific interest in PGT experience) • Student and staff upskilling	• Learning analytics • Exploring use of technology to enhance student experience (what aspects of the VLE have most impact on learning)		Willing to lead on : • Fostering a sense of community • Online learning • Rural learning • Employability	• Encourage students to make better use of the feedback they receive and monitor how this improves performance
University of Dundee	• Develop systematic approach to reviewing evidence across entire student journey • Staff and student upskilling/support	• Widening access (as part of the student journey) • Impact of Student Transitions initiatives • Attendance monitoring and retention • Work based learning	• Maximise responsiveness to student voice	• Evidence for creative disciplines	
University of Edinburgh	• Data access including dashboard developments	• Widening participation • Learner analytics	Seven projects including analysing teaching awards and	• Student voice	

			enhancing student representation	• Data skills for non-specialists (quantitative and qualitative) • Student surveys (what works) • Learning analytics (beyond retention) • Sharing evaluation expertise	
	• Mature students • Employability • Lecture recording				
Edinburgh Napier University	• Making data accessible and useable where it can make most impact • Upskilling staff • Embedding evidence in quality processes	• Exploring learning analytics	• Engaging with student voices	• Communicating data to help staff 'make a difference' • Sharing approaches to building evidence-informed practice • Supporting Programme Leaders • Student Voices: Creative approaches to listening and responding to students • What evidence 'works' for the creative industries? • Learning Analytics	• Amplifying learning from innovative engagement of students with assessment feedback
Glasgow Caledonian University	• Internal and external student surveys	• Stratified and differentiated student groups • Widening participation	• Culture, identity, belonging, community, student voices		
University of Glasgow	• Optimising the use and reporting of existing evidence on student performance, progression, attainment and	• Enhanced understanding of the student population and their needs, to target support and interventions	• Enhancing understanding of the student experience • Strengthening and diversifying the	• Mental health services • Widening access • Employment • Graduate apprenticeships	• Currently developing an Assessment and Feedback Toolkit

	outcomes (use of data visualisation techniques) • Enhancing evidence used in annual monitoring and subject review	concerning transition into, through and out of study (e.g. cohort analysis of direct entry students, widening participation students, students from FE or other pathways)	ways in which the student voice is captured annual monitoring and subject review processes • Supporting students' use of evidence through more consistently and clearly closing the feedback loop following student evaluations of teaching	Effective interventions	
Glasgow School of Art	• Building capacity with existing evidence and building new creative forms of evidence	• Employability		• Evidence for creative disciplines	• Review and renew GSA's Code of Assessment
Heriot-Watt University	• Enhance analysis of student surveys	• Student retention			
University of the Highlands and Islands		• Linking feedback to progression • Linking evidence to learning	• Linking student representation to enhancement and belonging	• Not identified – TLG will help inform position	• Linking feedback to progression
Queen Margaret University	• Gain better understanding of evidence • Improve staff and student use of evidence (including dashboards) • Improve use of NSS/survey data • Building on output of Student Transitions Theme	• Widening access, inclusion, retention • Learning analytics		• Learning analytics • Impact of student services, and using data for intervention • Widening access • Direct entrant support • Online learning • Graduate apprenticeships	
Robert Gordon University	• Phased roll-out of a new business intelligence reporting tool	• Learning analytics • Employability	• Closing the feedback loop	• Willing to lead a cluster on "student voice" Interested in: • Learning analytics	

				• Understanding data/data methodologies • Graduate Apprenticeships • Widening Access • Online learning/learners • Impact of student services	
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	• Developing a shared language of learning and teaching	• Build understanding of student perceptions of success	• Effectiveness of student support mechanisms (mental health) – link with Student Transitions	• Evidence and creative disciplines	
Scotland's Rural College	• Strengthening core quality processes through improved use of evidence	• Exploring apprenticeship delivery models using evidence based approach • Assessing digital technologies in curriculum delivery		• Sense of community, dispersed HEIs and rural learning; and • Graduate/Technical apprenticeships	
University of Stirling	• Data usability and access • Staff upskilling	• Student retention • Learning analytics • Employability – develop a new approach to personal development planning		• Employability (DLHE/LEO)	
University of St Andrews	• Improved understanding of what data is currently collected, and the aspects of student experience enhancement that might be informed by it • Focus on improving postgraduate student satisfaction • Use evidence to improve the design of learning and teaching space (improved	• Use evidence to improve the design of learning and teaching space	• Analysis of student-led teaching awards	• Preparedness of students entering university (especially regarding modern languages) • Use evidence to improve the design of learning and teaching space • Student survey design	

	teaching and student satisfaction)				
University of Strathclyde	• Using data effectively (focus on Programme Directors) and staff upskilling • Development of data collection/collation methods in support of "an outstanding student experience"	• Learning analytics		• Learning analytics	• Assessment and feedback
Open University in Scotland	• More effective sharing of learning from evidence based practice • Staff and student skills development	• Retention, employability, career progression, success	• Community	• Keen to collaborate in areas of mutual interest	
University of the West of Scotland	• Ensuring that data gathered is used effectively in programme portfolio curriculum design decisions • Developing staff to make sense of learning analytics and other data sets • Identify gaps in data collection	• Retention and success as focus of institutional work	• Enhancing student representation • Ensuring that data gathered is acted upon	Interested in: • Widening access • Sense of community Impact of student services, using data for intervention	

Evidence for Enhancement:
Improving the Student Experience

Sector level programme of work

Purpose

1. This paper outlines proposals for sector-level work for the Theme and includes an update on the Focus On: Feedback from Assessment project which is also running in 2017-18.

Recommendations

2. TLG members are invited to discuss the proposed plans in groups and feedback at a plenary session. In particular TLG members are asked to give views on:

- the projects and delivery timescales for the Optimising the Use of Existing Evidence strand

- the options for a student-led project to run during 2017-18. TLG members who are interested in contributing to activity on the project, are asked to take part in a virtual project working group

- the aspects of practice/evidence that should be explored and prioritisation with respect to the demographics, attainment and retention strand

- the links between the Theme and the Focus On: Feedback from Assessment project.

Further information

3. Further information is available from the QAA colleagues identified for each area of work below.

Optimising the use of existing evidence

The lead QAAS officers for this work are Pam Sinclair (p.sinclair@qaa.ac.uk) and Alison Eales (a.eales@qaa.ac.uk).

Five projects are proposed under this strand of the Theme. They could be run in combination or in an adapted form. TLG members' comments are welcomed to inform project planning.

Project 1: Establishing the capability baseline

(Year 1 and 3) - Use HESA's Data Capability Toolkit to help institutions (and the sector) gain an understanding of individual and Scottish sector data capabilities. A follow-up exercise in year 3 would help to gauge distance travelled over the three years of the Theme. This could be aligned to the Theme evaluation activity.

Project 2 Sector event

(Year 1) A one day event combining invited plenary speakers and breakout sessions. The aim would be to support the sector in the short term while gaining valuable pointers as to how to develop continued support over the duration of the Theme. A scoping exercise would be completed by the end of 2017 with an event held in 2018. The event would:

- allow for sharing of examples of good practice (what are we good at?)
- help set priorities for staff development in years 2 and 3 of the Theme (what do we need?).

Project 3: Publications

(Commence in year 1 and ongoing) One aspect of work would involve updating the ELIR 3 cycle Thematic report on institutional data – at the end of each year of the Theme providing a summary of developments relating to the contents of the report.

(Commence in year 1 and ongoing) A second piece of work would be to create and maintain a web page for this strand of the Theme. Content could include:

- HESA recommendations in relation to the Data Capability Toolkit

- resources relating to the Higher Education data and Information Improvement Project

- SHEILA project updates

- good practice shared by institutions

- sector event resources (see project 2).

Project 4: Links to the Focus On: Feedback from Assessment project

(Year 1) Carry out an analysis of NSS results relating to assessment feedback in Scottish institutions. This work would link with the 2017-18 Focus On (see below) supporting it and providing an example of practice for the Theme.

Project 5: Building a knowledge and development base

(Years 2 and 3) Following identification of the skills development priorities in year 1, design and deliver a programme of activities and resources. Along with the web resources (project 3 above), these would contribute to an online knowledge and development base that would be a legacy outcome of the Theme. Six 'units' to be delivered in each of years 2 and 3, which would comprise a webinar (20 minutes of delivered content plus 10 minutes for discussion), a factsheet and a short quiz). Topics would be determined by sector need and curated to ensure that they appeal to a range of stakeholders, cover a range of evidence types and form a cohesive programme of work. As part of this we would explore the potential for an Open Badge system of recognition (already in use at some institutions). This would have a two-way benefit; participants would gain simple online rewards, while the number of badges awarded would contribute to evidence of the Theme's impact.

Student engagement

The lead QAAS officer for this work is Emilia Todorova (e.todorova@qaa.ac.uk).

Based on views gathered at the Theme launch event, six projects were identified as potential student-led activity. Through further consultation with the four SHEEC student members and sparqs, the following three projects are proposed as possible year 1 work.

Project 1: Using evidence and data from *Teaching Awards* to understand and analyse student experience trends

This project would focus on cross-sector development of how the use of data coming from Teaching Awards, or similar activities, can be used to enhance students' association and institutional understanding of what makes a positive student experience. What do students value in learning and teaching and how can we use this data to improve the student experience within the institution? There are already examples of this activity in a small number of institutions. It is intended that the project can be used to share successful examples of this being done in practice and produce a toolkit for institutions and students' associations interested in taking this forward.

Project 2: Using evidence to improve student representative structures

This project would focus on producing a guide for students' associations and students around using data and evidence to support and improve student representative structures. As this is an area that a few Students' Associations are currently working in, it would allow for sharing of practice and knowledge amongst student officers and lead to the production of resources to support the work of students' associations in the area of student representation.

Project 3: Closing the feedback loop on evidence-based enhancement

The aim of the project would be to explore practices around closing the feedback loop in institutions and students' associations. With many changes brought about by supportive evidence, it is important to inform students of how their feedback has influenced their students' association and institutional activity. This project would aim to identify good practice from the sector and develop a set of principles, which can be adopted by students' associations and institutions to effectively close the feedback loop when change takes place.

Student Demographics, Retention and Attainment

The lead QAAS officer for this work is Clare Parks (c.parks@qaa.ac.uk).

Thinking in this area is at an earlier stage, given the importance of linking any sector work with institutional plans and, potentially, any collaborative cluster proposals. Institutional plans identify interest in the following areas related to strand:

- retention

- learning analytics

- specific aspects of practice (attendance monitoring, use of technology, lecture recording, apprenticeship delivery models, personal development planning, student transition interventions)

- students with specific characteristics (mature entrants, widening access entrants)

- employability, career progression and success

- work based learning

- students' perceptions of success.

QAAS is aware of the benefits of working in partnership with SFC, notably drawing on existing statistical analyses. QAAS is also exploring possible opportunities to draw on the expertise of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the HE business intelligence tool, HEIDI Plus which allows colleagues to gain insights about higher education provision and patterns from existing data.

In this part of the Theme, we anticipate the focus being on the range of evidence used to identify, evaluate and improve aspects of the student experience – both considering data that is currently used as well as

reflecting on the extent to which that data is the most effective or complete. Given Scottish Government priorities, it is likely that initial priority will be given to evidence around retention but this could extend to attainment and employability.

Focus On: Feedback from Assessment project (2017-18)

The lead QAAS officers for this work are Debra Macfarlane (d.macfarlane@qaa.ac.uk) and Amanda Park (a.park@qaa.ac.uk)

What is Focus On?

Each year, we choose a topic for the Focus On project based on findings from Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR). We invite all Scottish higher education institutions and students' associations to tell us how we can best support them on the topic. This guarantees what we do will be useful and relevant.

Why Feedback from Assessment?

Feedback from assessment was an area for development in nine reviews in Scotland during the last review cycle (ELIR 3). The things the ELIR teams thought could be better were: timeliness of feedback, helping students to use feedback to understand grades, consistency of feedback across different subject areas and the quality of feedback.

Focus On: Feedback from Assessment

We consulted with Scottish institutions and students' associations to see where they thought we should focus our work on feedback. As a result, we will work on the following areas to try to improve students' experiences of feedback from assessment:

- Feedback from assessment: what do students think?

  We want to look at what students think about the feedback they receive. What's helpful and what isn't? We want to work with a wide range of students at all stages of study in a variety of institution types and look at what the evidence might be telling us (for example student-led teaching awards and student surveys such as the National Student Survey). We hope that what we find will feed into policy and practice.

- Following up on Feedback: where are we now?

  In 2014-15, we ran a Focus On: Assessment and Feedback project. We want to look at how the sector has progressed since then, particularly in institution-wide approaches to improving feedback from assessment and exploring how developments in technology can help to support staff to provide effective feedback as well as supporting students to use the feedback they receive.

Sharing practice event

On 22 March 2018, we will have an event to share some of our work so far. We will also invite colleagues to share what they are currently working on. Details of the event will be available on the Focus On webpages in the New Year.

Related resources

Further information on assessment and feedback is included in Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) reports. Full reports, and analysis of these, are on the ELIR webpages. In particular, we produced a Thematic Report on Assessment and Feedback, which summarises practice highlighted during the last cycle of ELIR (2012-2016). That report is available on the QAA website here http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Thematic-Report-ELIR-Technical-Reports-Assessment-Feedback-14.pdf

Links between Focus On and the Enhancement Theme

Our Focus On work will help with the 'Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience' Enhancement Theme. As part of Focus On, we will be thinking about the questions below and sharing our findings with the Theme Leaders' Group.

- How do students use feedback on their assessments now, how can we help students to make better use of the feedback they receive and how can we improve student satisfaction with feedback from assessment?

- How can we use institutional evidence gathered about the student experience to enhance feedback from assessment processes?

- How has the use of technology enriched the evidence we have about effective feedback from assessment? How can we use that evidence to make future improvements?