



Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience

Enhancement Theme 2017–2020

At its meeting on 18 September 2017, SHEEC agreed the strands of the new Theme as outlined in this paper.

Scope of the Theme

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.*

The Theme will operate at three levels:

- i. Sector-wide strands to include an explicit student focus
- ii. Collaborative clusters for self-selecting HEIs with outcomes relevant to whole sector on completion
- iii. Institutional activity

Sector strands:

As a way of managing the Theme, sector work will be taken forward in three strands. The launch event will provide an opportunity for institutional colleagues to identify how work they are undertaking or planning will link to this – what are the ways in which sector activity can help institutions and student associations? The three strands proposed are:

- **Optimising the use of existing evidence**, for example:
 - sharing current institutional approaches
 - supporting staff and students to use and interpret data
 - identifying data that would enable the sector to understand its strengths and challenges better
- **Student engagement**, for example:
 - Student engagement in learning and factors underlying the student voice
 - Using the Theme to consider concepts where there is no readily available data, such as student community, identity and belonging
- **Student demographics, retention & attainment**, for example:
 - Using learning analytics to support student success
 - Incorporating a focus on equalities
 - Impact of wider contextual factors such as Brexit and curricular changes like the introduction of Graduate Apprenticeships

These strands should be relevant for the whole sector and, although engagement is not compulsory, it is hoped that the strands would engage all institutions to some extent.

In line with previous practice, staff and students will work in partnership to progress the Theme. In addition, students will be able to identify a student-led element and some suggestions have been proposed during a sparqs event in July, for example guidance on gathering and using valid evidence.

Alongside the Theme, in 2017-18, there will be a Focus On: Assessment and feedback project.

Collaborative clusters:

It is proposed that the Theme should include groups of institutions working collectively on matters of mutual interest which have the potential to add value to the whole sector once complete, eg creative/specialist institutions have expressed interest in working together to identify the kinds of information or evidence that is valid for them.

Institutions would be invited to bid for financial support from QAAS to carry out the work which would be led by those in the sector. Progress would be reported to the Theme Leaders' Group.

Institutional activity:

Soon after the launch event, each institution will be invited to contract with QAAS on a streamlined model.

Institutions will be asked to provide:

- a plan for the year plus an indication of plans/ideas for the total duration of the Theme
- an end of year report to a simplified template

Institutions 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 SHEEC and the Theme Leaders' Group, and to work in partnership with their students. Otherwise the contractual obligation is streamlined to meeting their own (institutional) plans for the Theme.

Leadership of the Theme

Professor Karl Leydecker, University of Dundee, is the Theme Leader. He is supported by two Deputy Leaders: Dr Martha Caddell, Edinburgh Napier, and Professor Nicky Andrew, Glasgow Caledonian. A Student Theme Lead will also be identified.

There is a Theme Leaders' Group, the membership of which includes one member of staff and one student representative from each Scottish higher education institution.

The Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) oversees the Enhancement Themes. SHEEC 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.

