

SCOTTISH HIGHER EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

Enhancement Theme 2011–2014: Developing and Supporting the Curriculum

SUMMARY

The Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) is committed to maintaining the high standards and value of higher education (HE). It does this through seeking and developing new ideas both nationally and internationally and by challenging current thinking, through its Enhancement Themes. The Theme *Graduates for the 21st Century* (G21C) is coming to an end: the next one will be **Developing and Supporting the Curriculum**, running from summer 2011 for three years. Like the current Theme, it will rely on institutions developing work in the context of their own missions and students' needs. **The Theme will examine how graduate attributes are best developed: How is the curriculum, in its broadest sense, shaped and delivered? Who is it for – how is the student body changing? What support is required for staff?** Consistent with the Scottish Government's 2010 Green Paper *Building a Smarter Future* this Theme is committed to making the learner journey more effective for students and more efficient for staff and the public purse, with a strong focus on quality.

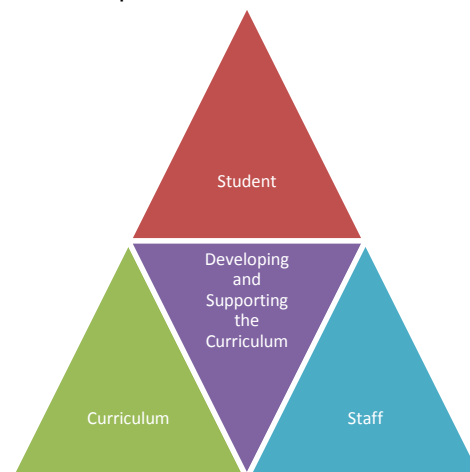
Aims and Objectives

Higher education has a vital role in the intellectual, cultural, social and economic life of Scotland. We work in an uncertain economic climate, against a background of global changes in HE. The diversity and technological sophistication of students and their learning needs continue to grow and there are increasing expectations of HE and its students. The Green Paper *Building a Smarter Future* provides one useful reference for our work. It highlighted pressing issues: making the learner journey *more effective for learners* at the same time as making it *more efficient for the public purse with a strong focus on quality*. It challenged HE to consider the nature of flexible provision, reward and recognition, research-teaching links, international contribution, student support and quality. All are topics previously embraced in Enhancement Themes and will continue to be developed in this one.

Developing and Supporting the Curriculum will allow the sector dedicated time, space and resource to consider and shape the nature of the Scottish HE experience, complementing work already going on within institutions. In G21C we considered what attributes graduates should have when they complete their first degree. Now we will consider how students arrive at this point:

- **How is the curriculum, in its broadest sense, shaped and delivered?**
- **Who is it for – how is the student body changing?**
- **What support is required for staff?**

The new Enhancement Theme will inform and help shape the HE learning experience and consider how to deliver HE effectively and efficiently to a diverse population of students. It will maintain and build on international links, as previous Themes have, enabling us to absorb innovation from around the world and demonstrate globally our commitment to delivering the best HE.



Enhancement Themes

The way forward

Developing and Supporting the Curriculum will run for three academic years, from summer 2011. Introductory discussions at the annual Enhancement Themes Conference in March 2011 and at the May and June G21C meetings have preceded this. The Theme will have three phases:

- **Phase 1: March 2011 to June 2012**

This Phase includes the introductory discussions. During the early summer 2011, each institution will be invited to nominate a member for the Theme steering committee; nominations for student membership will also be sought. Each institution will be asked to set up an institutional team. Guidance will be provided about the constitution of teams and about ways of engaging academic and student populations. To provide continuity with the work of G21C, Professor Philip Winn (University of Strathclyde) will remain as chair for the new Enhancement Theme until June 2012. These arrangements will ensure that the steering committee and teams are ready for the start of academic year 2011-12.

During 2011-12, the steering committee will identify key areas and topics on which the sector will want to focus which may include **forecasting the type and range of future learners; how the structures of programmes and curricula are developed; the effective and efficient delivery of HE; and the staff support needed for this**. At the same time, national and international contributions will be sought to inform this activity and institutional teams will be setting and making progress with their institutional Theme related work.

- **Phase 2: July 2012 to December 2013**

The general programme of work identified collectively by the steering committee in Phase 1 will be undertaken, operating at three levels:

Institutional: Having institutional teams with a nominee on the steering committee allows institutions to take ownership of the Theme and develop it throughout this time according to institutional aims while having sight of work across the sector through the committee.

Areas of Shared Interest: The key areas and topics identified in Phase 1 will be led by working groups of the steering committee, which will commission activities as required. The identified topics may also be considered in disciplinary groupings.

Sectoral: This Theme will continue the sector-wide discussions developed in G21C – through the annual conference, sector symposia, institutional events, and steering committee sessions. National and international contributors will inform these activities. Contributors to date have included Professor Michael Sterling (Chair, STFC), Professor Christopher Smith (Director of the British School in Rome), Professor Anne Glover (Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland), Mr Graeme Waddell (Director of Energen Biogas), Professor Páll Skúlason (University of Iceland).

- **Phase 3: January 2013 to June 2014**

The concluding Phase will have a focus on outcomes, evaluation and the assessment of impact. Further detail for this final phase will be delivered in future Theme briefings following plans developed by the steering committee.

CONCLUSION

We know that the next three years of Enhancement Theme work will be set within an increasingly challenging environment. Nonetheless, the new Theme will provide the means and opportunity for the sector and wider communities to engage with, develop and positively influence, the nature and shape of Scottish higher education.