

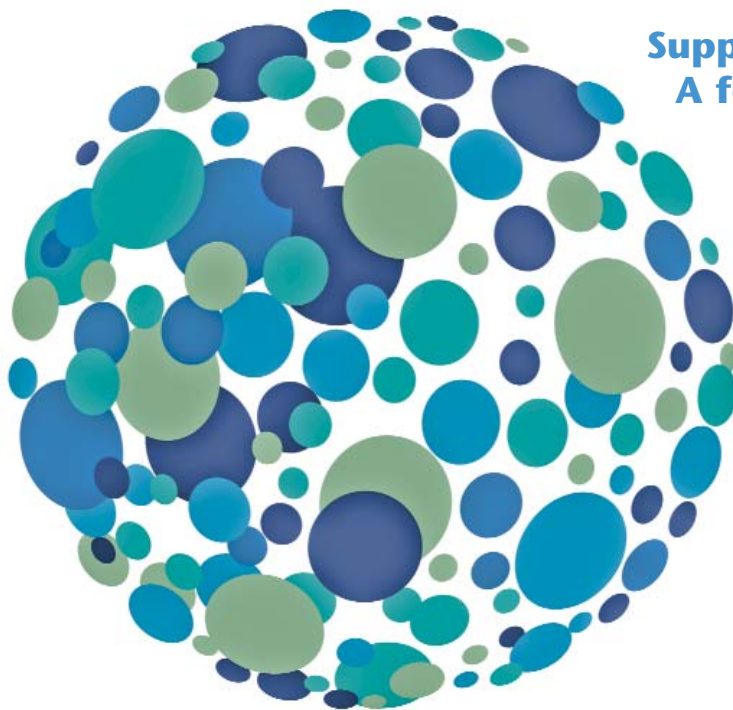


**QAA
Scotland**

Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee
International Benchmarking Working Group

**Supporting student success:
A forward-looking agenda**

Final report
April 2009



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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the final report from the International Benchmarking: Supporting Student Success project.

This work forms part of a suite of outputs from the International Benchmarking project, which include case studies collected from Scottish institutions, an exercise scoping international practice and a national conference on Supporting Student Success held in November 2008. The latter involved sessions by Dr John Walsh and colleagues from the University of Guelph-Humber, Ontario, Canada.

The project was commissioned by the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) who assigned the work to a working group chaired by myself, then Pro Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching at Glasgow Caledonian University. Membership of the group included experienced colleagues in student support from a variety of different areas from Scottish higher education institutions. The working group was supported by officers from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Scotland and by a consultant, Jane Denholm from Critical Thinking.

There are many interesting messages that have emerged from the work, not least that in many ways Scotland can be proud of the practice that has developed to support students, both before, and as a result of, this exercise. The work gave the sector an opportunity to look beyond its borders, look at practice elsewhere and form new and potentially exciting links with international colleagues from which much will be learnt in the future.

This work did not stop with the production of this report. SHEEC has asked the working group to continue to investigate practice in more depth in several areas and a study visit to Sweden and Denmark was organised in June 2009. The outcomes from both these exercises will be published on the Enhancement Theme website (www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk).

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the project, including my fellow working group members, those who provided case studies and attended the Supporting Student Success conference in November 2008, Jane Denholm, and my colleagues at QAA Scotland.

Caroline Macdonald

University of Teeside

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The Working Group thanks sincerely the many contacts in institutions who provided advice and information to inform this report, and is particularly grateful to the following for their assistance with the international benchmarking process:

- Andrew Boggs, formerly Higher Education Quality Council, Ontario; Rachel Barreca, Student Services Manager, Queen's University (Canada) in the UK; Michael Skolnik, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto; and Jason Laker, Associate Vice-Principal and Dean of Student Affairs Queen's University, Canada - all provided references, contacts and advice on practice in Canada
- Andy Gibbs at Edinburgh Napier University, a Bologna Expert, circulated around 150 European contacts
- John Jennings, Director of the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, provided references, contacts and advice on practice in New Zealand
- Karen Jones, Quality Reviews Manager, Irish Universities Quality Board, provided references, contacts and advice on practice in Ireland
- Colin McCallum, Vice President, GCU Foundation and Director of Development, Glasgow Caledonian University, provided references, contacts and advice on alumni practice
- Mary J Sorrentino, Vice President, Client Relations, Grenzebach Glier and Associates, Chicago, provided references, contacts and advice on alumni practice in the USA
- Kevin Ward, Student Representative Coordinator, Glasgow Caledonian University Students' Association, provided references, contacts and advice on student association activity in the UK regarding volunteering, skills and careers
- Trevor White, The WHITEGROUP Pty Ltd, St Kilda, provided references, contacts and advice on practice in Australia.

In addition, a range of organisations circulated their members with a request for information:

- Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE) executive
- ESU
- National Union of Students (NUS) UK
- Australian Universities International Directors' Forum (AUIDF)
- Confederation of Student Services of Ireland (CSSI)
- the interactive website of the Quality Assurance for the HE Change Agenda (QAHECA) project, coordinated by FEDORA (the European Forum for Student Guidance). <http://fedora.plexus.leidenuniv.nl>

1 Executive summary

Introduction

The Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee's (SHEEC) International Benchmarking Working Group was established in April 2008 to consider and benchmark ways in which institutions in Scotland and beyond are 'supporting student success'. This overarching report is one of several outputs from the project, which is ongoing with follow-up activity planned to June 2009.

The overall aim of the work was to help support the Scottish higher education sector in comparing with, and learning from, practice outwith Scotland. The project was charged with establishing a range of useful resources, contacts and links for use by institutions, students' associations and practitioners. This work is also a pilot of a methodology for supporting the higher education sector in Scotland in international benchmarking more generally. The Working Group has prepared a separate report on the generic lessons for future benchmarking exercises.

Scope

The Working Group agreed that it was primarily interested in benchmarking **those services, practice, systems and facilities that could be described as 'supporting academically-related student success'**. Traditionally, higher education institutions have tended to separate the functions of student services, academic registry and learning and teaching support, but the Group acknowledged that this project would be likely to reach into all of these areas.

Methodology, outputs and deliverables

The time available to undertake the benchmarking exercise was short and the Working Group undertook a number of concurrent and interlinked activities. Between April 2008 and March 2009 the Working Group:

- held eight meetings to scope out the area of work, agree definitions, develop and monitor the approach and conduct, and then report on, the benchmarking
- considered and developed working definitions for the key concepts of 'benchmarking' and 'academic-related student support services'
- devised an organising framework of 14 theme areas within which to present its findings
- held a working conference on 20 June 2008 to further clarify the scope of the benchmarking and the issues to be addressed
- commissioned an international scoping exercise (including the rest of the UK) detailing around 70 examples of practice drawn from around 35 institutions in 12 countries, focusing on key developments in the rest of the UK and internationally
- invited the Scottish higher education sector to self-select up to three examples of practice each institution considered useful to share with the rest of the sector, and collected these on a website
- held a major conference on 14 November 2008, with around 100 attendees, which was very positively evaluated

- facilitated networking and established a network of practitioners deliberately drawn from across the different services and professions related to supporting student success
- created dedicated web pages on the Enhancement Themes website¹
- evaluated and analysed all of the different information resources it had collected and determined a way ahead considering in depth six theme areas
- reported to SHEEC in January 2009 and April 2009 and received agreement to focus on six in-depth theme areas until the autumn of 2009
- provided a range of workshop presenters, through contacts established as part of the project, from Scotland, the rest of the UK and Ireland, for the annual QAA Enhancement Themes Conference, March 2009.

The Scottish and international reviews were resource limited and, as such, could be neither exhaustive nor comprehensive. Nonetheless, they managed to identify a general picture of what emerged during the process as a very wide range of practice.

Typology and practice examples

As an organising framework for its thinking, the Working Group used the 'learner journey' - from pre-entry to alumnus. Into this it has incorporated some specific dimensions such as support aimed at different types of students and ways of supporting staff. This has resulted in 14 theme areas although, of course, there is considerable overlap and linkage between these. This report considers and discusses practice under each of these, drawing on the Working Group's consideration of Scottish, other UK and international practice in supporting student success, and on an analysis of participants' evaluations of the November conference. The Working Group was interested in practice - big or small, widespread or localised - that supports student success. For each aspect, the Group was seeking to identify interesting and developing thinking, initiatives and practice within Scotland and internationally, with a view to making comparisons. The benchmarking was concerned with not only established practice but also with examples of new, and perhaps not yet fully implemented, practice.

The theme areas are:

- A Strategies and policies for student support
- B Support for students prior to entry
- C Academic/campus orientation
- D Library and information resource services
- E Range and balance of services
- F Engaging students: building student communities
- G Academic peer support and mentoring
- H Students' associations/unions
- I Use of technology
- J Life and study skills
- K Careers and employability support

¹ www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/themes/SHEECIB

- L Service learning - volunteering and the co-curriculum
- M Support for alumni
- N Staff training and development

Conclusions

The Working Group drew a number of conclusions.

- Approaching this theme by using the broad definition of 'supporting student success', agreed by the Working Group, has been fruitful and is in tune with other UK and international developments.
- Globally, there is a significant trend away from focusing on the activities of individual 'service silos' towards a more holistic definition and approach to student support services.
- Support staff in different professions do not necessarily routinely network outwith their professional areas and they welcome the opportunity to discuss and address generic student support issues collectively.
- The theme is timely - internationally and in Scotland - and many of the institutions surveyed have given recent attention, or are giving attention currently, to the concept of supporting student success.
- There is already a developing role (and potentially room for growth) for student services centrally to work with academic staff in helping them to help students.
- Consequently, there are a lot of new ideas and fresh thinking and subsequent piloting and trialling going on.
- Context is key and what works for one country, area or institution may not for another - fortunately there are very often many different models and approaches to essentially the same issues to consider as examples of practice.
- Many initiatives have started small and grown bigger, and many initiatives evolve or roll out to other areas, once their potential is established.
- Scottish institutions have already been giving attention to a holistic approach to supporting student success through various Enhancement Theme routes, among others. This could be built upon.
- Students are a huge resource in offering services to their peers. Students like helping other students and students like being helped by students, and sometimes respond better to this means of assistance and support than to institutional services. Academic peer-helping could be considered and developed further in Scotland.
- Following from this, student-run organisations are often the most appropriate and credible means of delivering certain services to students and further consideration could be given to this.
- Students like to volunteer and structured volunteering schemes benefit all parties. Some of the more challenging issues regarding recognition and credit have been tackled and there is a range of examples of schemes and approaches that could be considered by the Scottish sector. This theme dovetails with current policy and practice priorities - including employability and the work of the Burgess Implementation Group.

- While acknowledging the delicacy of matters relating to alumni, further work could be undertaken in considering generic ways to support and engage with alumni in a manner unrelated to fundraising.
- Staff buy-in is crucial to any changes that institutions, or the sector as a whole, might wish to make in supporting student success. A consideration of the needs and challenges associated with the other identified themes could be undertaken to underpin and complement this work.

Outputs

The Working Group embarked on an ambitious and challenging agenda. It has stimulated the formation of networks, encouraged cross-service debate in the sector and provided opportunities for discussion using the internet and in person. It has delivered a range of resources and contacts for use by the sector, as well as working definitions and a typology for considering a wider-ranging and complex set of issues. It has met its overall aim of helping support the Scottish higher education sector in comparing with, and learning from, practice outwith Scotland.

Next steps

Between January and autumn 2009 the Working Group proposes to fulfil its other aim of providing an assessment of where Scotland is now, how it compares, and where it might want to do more work. To do this in a meaningful way, it is prioritising activity on six theme areas. These are:

- Strategies and policies for student support
- Academic peer support and mentoring
- Students' associations/unions
- Service learning - volunteering and the co-curriculum
- Support for alumni
- Staff training and development.

In taking forward this work, the Working Group will engage existing networks and also contact wider networks. It also intends to liaise closely with relevant Enhancement Themes - particularly Graduates for the 21st Century - and other initiatives. In each of these six theme areas, the Group will identify in more depth the particular needs and issues that practice examples seek to address and achieve; the challenges and problems faced in implementation and delivery, and the lessons learned.

2 Introduction to the benchmarking exercise

Introduction

This is the final, overarching, report of the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee's (SHEEC) International Benchmarking Working Group on 'supporting student success'. The Working Group was established in April 2008 to oversee a project benchmarking the provision of student support services in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Scotland with practice internationally, including in the rest of the UK. Membership and terms of reference for the Working Group are attached as Annex A. This report is one of several outputs from the project, which ran until December 2008, with follow-up activity planned to autumn 2009. An interim draft version of this report was approved by SHEEC at its meeting on 23 January 2009. Details of the programme of work undertaken are attached as Annex B and selected references are given as Annex C.

Aims

The Working Group set itself a challenging agenda, which it had to refine as work progressed in order to be manageable within the resources available. The overall aim of the work was to help support the Scottish higher education sector in comparing with and learning from practice outwith Scotland. The project was also charged with establishing a range of useful resources, contacts and links for use by institutions, students' associations and practitioners.

In addition, the work on 'supporting student success' is being considered as a pilot of a methodology for supporting the higher education sector in Scotland in international benchmarking more generally. The definition of 'benchmarking' has therefore been particularly important as it will have wider application in future. A separate report on the generic lessons for future benchmarking exercises was prepared by the Working Group.²

Methodology

The time available to undertake the benchmarking exercise was short and the Working Group undertook a number of concurrent and interlinked activities. The Working Group:

- considered and developed working definitions for the key concepts of 'benchmarking' and 'academic-related student support services'
- devised an organising framework of 14 theme areas within which to present its findings
- called for and collected case studies of examples of practice in supporting student success in Scotland³
- commissioned an exercise scoping international practice⁴
- held a conference - Supporting Student Success - involving international and Scottish speakers (attendance c.100) in November 2008
- evaluated and analysed all the different information resources it had collected and reported to SHEEC in January 2009
- sought and received agreement from SHEEC to focus on six in-depth theme areas until the autumn of 2009.

² Available at: www.enhancementThemes.ac.uk/themes/SHEECIB

³ *Student Support Services: Scottish Institutional Case Studies*, available at: www.enhancementThemes.ac.uk/themes/SHEECIB

⁴ *Supporting student success: Scoping other UK and international developments*, available at: www.enhancementThemes.ac.uk/themes/SHEECIB

The Scottish and international reviews were resource limited and, as such, could be neither as exhaustive nor as comprehensive as the Group had initially hoped. Nonetheless, they managed to identify a general picture of what emerged during the process as a very wide range of practice. The Scottish case studies in particular were self-selecting and limited to three per institution and the Group is aware that there is much more going on in terms of relevant practice that could have been included. These are referenced in the sections below, where appropriate, as is practice which emerged during discussions at the conference in November. The international scoping work was not a systematic analysis either and consisted of a self-generating rolling programme of leads and contacts.

Definitions

What do we mean by 'benchmarking'?

Jackson and Lund (2000) suggested a working definition for benchmarking in UK higher education which encompasses both development and accountability:

'...a process to facilitate the systematic comparison and evaluation of practice, process and performance to aid improvement and regulation.'

They add that benchmarking is:

'...first and foremost, a learning process structured so as to enable those engaging in the process to compare their services-activities-processes-products-results in order to identify their comparative strengths and weaknesses as a basis for self-improvement and/or self-regulation. Benchmarking offers a way of not only doing the same things better but of discovering 'new, better and smarter' ways of doing things and in the process of discovery, understanding why they are better or smarter.'

The Working Group embraced this definition, particularly the emphasis upon learning from the process. In the context of its work, the Group defined benchmarking as **identifying, considering, comparing and learning from developing practice** in Scotland and internationally, and set about actioning this. As such, the Working Group has started to conduct an 'appreciative inquiry' into the issues. The Working Group also agreed that, to be of most value, the work should be concerned not just with current established practice, but also with learning from innovation, ideas and developing thinking in the provision of student support services even if not completed and implemented. Similarly, the Group agreed that, to be of most use, the work should take a forward-looking approach - one that includes consideration of the likely future needs, aspirations and expectations of a changing student population.

What do we mean by 'student support services'?

Learning Reconsidered: a campus-wide focus on the student experience (the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and the American College Personnel Association, January 2004, p3), states that:

'Clearly, learning is far more rich and complicated than some of our predecessors realised when they distinguished and separated learning from student life. Seeing students as their component parts (body, mind, spirit), rather than as an integrated whole, supported the emergence of fragmented college systems and structures - academic affairs to cultivate the intellect, and student affairs to tend the body, emotions, and spirit.'

The original remit of the Working Group was to 'focus on "student support" services but in particular...on the more "academic aspects" of student support' and the Group spent some time considering, defining and refining what was meant by this for the purposes of benchmarking. One definition would be those services traditionally labelled 'student support services' within institutions, but the Group rejected this approach for several reasons:

- it is too broad and insufficiently focused on supporting academic success, incorporating other services and activities such as health, counselling, accommodation, finance, chaplaincy, sports, catering and so on
- a focus on student support services departments and units could inadvertently result in a remedial-focused notion that 'student support' is 'an emergency service' for certain students at times of particular need or difficulty
- student services are being redefined and reorganised in practice with convincing arguments being made for the 'integrated use of all of higher education's resources in the education and preparation of the whole student'⁵
- there is, anyway, no commonly agreed set of elements comprising student support services in institutions - support services are organised differently in different institutions.

The needs of students change and develop as they progress through the student life cycle from pre-entry to alumni. In addition, the changing nature, and increasing diversity, of the student body gives rise to new issues and student needs. 'Students' can be full-time and part-time, undergraduate, postgraduate and research, commuting, campus-based and work-based, home and international, straight from school and 'mature'. Each will have individual needs and expectations and seek a different blend of services. International students, for example, may have different expectations of what is provided in terms of pastoral care. Part-time students (and, increasingly 'full-time' students with part-time jobs) may need to call on services at times other than 9am-5pm or within term time. Students want services tailored to them as individuals, available at times and places that meet their needs.

The Working Group resolved that what it wished to do was take an inclusive and student-centred approach to supporting success for **all** students. In looking at the institution from a student's point of view, the Group agreed, **all** services provided across the institution are essentially concerned with 'supporting student success'. Indeed, in the broadest sense, academic staff, in teaching and facilitating learning, are delivering a service to the student. The Working Group acknowledged that attempting to widen the scope of the project very far into the academic domain was inappropriate and would render the project unmanageable. The Group agreed, however, that it was important that the benchmarking process acknowledged that, increasingly, academic staff, who are often at the 'front line' in terms of addressing student needs day to day, are also delivering more support, advice and similar services to students.

Clearly, the definition needed to be refined, so the Group agreed that it was primarily interested in benchmarking **those services, practices, systems and facilities that could be described as 'supporting academically-related student success'**. Traditionally, higher education institutional structures have tended to separate the functions of student services, academic registry and learning and teaching support, but the Group acknowledged that this project would be likely to reach into all of these areas.

⁵ *Learning Reconsidered: a campus-wide focus on the student experience*, p 1.

Typology

One output from the work of the Group is the typology it developed as an organising framework to present its findings. Following much consideration, the Working Group used the 'learner journey' - from pre-entry to alumnus - incorporating some specific dimensions such as support aimed at different types of students and ways of supporting staff. This resulted in 14 theme areas. At the same time, the Working Group recognised that, of course, there is considerable overlap and linkage between these areas. The theme areas are:

- A Strategies and policies for student support**
- B Support for students prior to entry**
- C Academic/campus orientation**
- D Library and information resource services**
- E Range and balance of services**
- F Engaging students: building student communities**
- G Academic peer support and mentoring**
- H Students' associations/unions**
- I Use of technology**
- J Life and study skills**
- K Careers and employability support**
- L Service learning - volunteering and the co-curriculum**
- M Support for alumni**
- N Staff training and development**

The Working Group was interested in practice - big or small, widespread or localised - that supports student success. For each aspect, the Group was seeking to identify interesting and developing thinking, initiatives and practice within Scotland and internationally, with a view to making comparisons. As indicated above, the benchmarking was concerned with not only established practice, but also examples of new, and perhaps not yet fully implemented, practice.

3 Supporting academic-related student success: practice in Scotland and beyond

The Working Group considered a wide range of examples of practice in Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally. The Group was clear that such a broad study could not assess the impact of, and therefore could not make value judgements about, practice. It could, however, point to where there appeared to be interesting practice or emerging themes where the Scottish sector might do some work. The Working Group proposes to SHEEC that the Group should follow up on six of the 14 themes it explored and which, it agreed, merit further attention. The Working Group also hopes that Scottish HEIs will use all of this report, and the other outputs from the exercise, as a tool against which to benchmark themselves, as their own priorities and circumstances dictate.

The following sections consider practice in Scotland and internationally by the learner journey themes A to N.

A Strategies and policies for student support

The Working Group acknowledged that this theme area was materially different from the others it had identified and, initially, would have liked to establish a general overview of student support service strategies and the ways in which services are structured within higher education institutions in Scotland to compare with practice elsewhere. However, this could have formed a project of itself as it is likely that all HEIs would, in one form or another, have strategies for supporting student success since it is, after all, what they are there to do.

The Group therefore concentrated on identifying **specific** policies and strategies aimed at directly impacting on student success - where these feed directly into the whole of institutional activity. A number of examples of institutions which have developed these emerged from the scoping work. These institutions define their own values and the attributes they expect to see in their graduates. They make these explicit and use them to help delineate their own distinctiveness and niche and to inform students about what they will gain from their education in terms of skills development and becoming a graduate of the particular university. As one interviewee put it, 'the key is to give life to what some consider to be generalisations'.

University of Leeds, England, for example, has developed 'Leeds for Life' which combines a philosophy, a strategic approach, a series of initiatives and a website full of information for students and staff and covers a whole range of practice and activity including the introduction of 'a more consistent personal tutoring model within and across schools'. The University's values are set out, linked to associated skills and attributes, as 'a guide to the way we work, teach and learn'.⁶

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, also identified the attributes its graduates should have in its Strategic Plan 2005-2015 and subsequently systematically implemented a series of measures across the institution to ensure these are fully embedded. The process is managed via a Student Experience Group which seeks 'to consider the services provided to students from an undifferentiated perspective, regardless of where in the university they are situated'.

⁶ <http://leedsforlife.leeds.ac.uk>

At **Queens University Belfast, Northern Ireland**, the Student Employability and Skills Policy 2008-2011 identifies the skills which a QUB graduate should be able to acquire. The policy is derived from a number of drivers for change, principally set by Government policy in the way in which graduates are equipped to supply the skills of innovation, enterprise and leadership for the economy. The policy is being enacted through embedding skills development in the curriculum, compulsory engagement with personal development planning supported by a structured personal tutor system, and many other changes (see also section E).

In addition, there are several examples of strategic approaches to student services generally and the scoping work found that some institutions deliberately choose the 'learner journey' as a framework for conceiving and considering student support needs. While one small, relatively new, institution is able to house all of its student-facing functions in one place and work to a common set of policies and principles, others are addressing the issues of the development of 'service silos' that inevitably occur in long-established, complex institutions. Cross-cutting 'student experience committees' are used by several institutions to overcome any potential barriers to coordination.

The **University of Guelph-Humber's, Canada**, student transition and mentoring programme (STAMP) deliberately conceives of students from 'cradle to grave'. All new students are assigned an upper year mentor, before they have even started their course. Contact is made and maintained over the summer before the course starts and continues through the student's first year. Support is maintained at different and appropriate levels throughout the student's academic career and continues beyond graduation. To make this effective, the registry, student life, careers and alumni services are all colocated and have similar approaches - an unusual combination. Students see the administrative face of the institution as a single team in a one-stop shop.

The **Open University's, United Kingdom**, overarching model of Supported Open Learning incorporates a Learner Support Framework which is used by the University's Student Services to support students from first registration to completion and complement the support provided by students' tutors and study advisors. Again, a set of key activities are mapped onto the learner journey and form the spine of the Framework, from enquiries and requests for advice through to proactive post-course contact. Resources for learning and teaching are 'skewed towards students in the early stages of study' so that they are equipped 'to self-manage their learning...as they continue their studies'.⁷

The **University of Sheffield, England**, launched its 'Magnificent 8' strategy in 2006-07. This represents a strategic approach to the development of student support services, an area where, the interviewee considered, 'year-on-year operational planning is more common than holistic strategic thinking'. The strategy is the context for an array of developmental projects to create innovation and deliver improvement across the range of services that support student success.

The Working Group believed it important to acknowledge that although these examples are all considering similar things, each is doing it in a way that suits its particular circumstances.

⁷ Taken from *OU Learner Support Framework* - a private paper provided to QAA.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- University of Edinburgh: review of academic and pastoral support
- Edinburgh Napier University: creation of a Student Affairs Department
- Edinburgh Napier University: re-engineering student induction: the week 1 project.

Conclusion

The Working Group is aware that, in the context of the Responding to Student Needs and First Year Experience Enhancement Themes in Scotland, Scottish institutions have already been giving attention to 'integrated co-ordinated activity between services, faculties, departments, student associations and students'⁸ in order to coordinate the first-year student support effort. Those Enhancement Themes concluded that 'to be most effective, such frameworks need to be embedded in the policy and strategic plans of institutions, with achievable outcomes - including regular evaluation and reporting cycles - and clear lines of accountability'.⁹ The Group considers this approach might be extended beyond the first year to the whole student experience and that there may be practice in Scotland, and there certainly is practice elsewhere, that might be built upon. **The Working Group will take forward more work in this area.**

B Support for students prior to entry

The student journey arguably starts prior to entry to the institution, that is, before the student is formally 'a student'. As the First Year Experience Enhancement Theme concluded: 'transition to the first year requires not only support through a strategic and coordinated approach by HEIs, but support that starts well before entry to university and continues throughout the first semester and indeed the first year'.¹⁰ The scoping work uncovered many ways in which institutions seek to engage students before they begin their studies.

Some institutions seek to engage students even before they have formally accepted a place and technology is being harnessed by institutions to engage students before they formally start studying - this can range from simple email contact and mailings, to blogs, groups on social networking sites, online activities, assignment of a mentor online, pre-course materials, and sometimes quite a sophisticated blend of several of these. One interviewee from the University of Guelph-Humber considered that 'significant friendships and engagement in on-campus opportunities...grow out of [such]...participation'.

Once a prospective student applies, the **University of Guelph-Humber (Canada)** invites them to join the online community which enables them to chat with current students, staff, and other applicants on a message board and discuss life at the university.

The **University of Bradford (England)** also engages students considering, or having recently accepted, a place through Develop Me, a social networking (Ning) site where students can sign up and connect with other potential students, and where some Schools have put pre-entry learning materials. There is a pre-enrolment portal where students can check/update personal information before confirming enrolment status and pre-allocation of computer accounts to avoid first-week hiccups.

⁸ Gordon et al (2005) *Responding to Student Needs: Student Evaluation and Feedback Toolkit*.

⁹ Gordon et al (2005) *Responding to Student Needs: Student Evaluation and Feedback Toolkit*.

¹⁰ Whittaker, R (2008) *Quality Enhancement Themes: The First Year Experience: Transition to and during the first year*.

Each year, the **University of Guelph (Canada)** launches START Online, an online community, just after the deadline for accepting offers of admission. Each new student is assigned to a volunteer and receives an email once per week during the summertime, inviting them to participate in online activities and providing an update on recent news/activities.

Pre-entry activities can also feature campus visits and some include attendance at the institution to undergo personal development (for example, study skills) courses and to meet staff and other students. Some universities target pre-induction activities to benefit particular groups of students. In some cases, activities that were focused on specific groups have been refined and transferred to others.

The **University of Winchester (England)** developed an intensive pre-entry three-day course offering anxious students study skills, life skills and a social programme. This has been so successful that it has been developed into a new induction experience offered to all students.

Growing out of START Online, the **University of Guelph (Canada)** has also developed a START programme for international students.

The scoping work found that 'students who have managed it themselves' make good mentors for intending new students. In addition, some institutions involve families in pre-entry activities.

The **University of Guelph-Humber (Canada)** runs Kick Start, a one-day on-campus summer orientation programme for incoming students and their families. Incoming first years are assigned mentors who are in contact with them in the summer preceding the start of the course as well as throughout their first year at UGH.

Pre-entry activities are particularly important to international students.

The **University of Chester (England)** offers a package of pre-entry and on-programme support to international students as part of an integrated 'Culture Shock' programme facilitated by international mentors. Pre-entry students are sent a comprehensive information pack about the university and UK culture (see also theme F).

James Cook University (Australia) developed 'Happy Landing', a pre-departure, interactive tool offering a collection of resources for international students providing a friendly, attractive web interface.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- University of Aberdeen: pre-sessional academic online induction
- University of Dundee: online access course
- Queen Margaret University: QM Advance
- Robert Gordon University: Degree Link.

Conclusion

The Working Group noted the interesting practice in this area and commends the examples to the sector for consideration. The Group acknowledged that work is ongoing in Scotland under the Enhancement Theme activity, which has thoroughly covered this ground. **The Working Group proposes to do no further work in this area.**

C Academic/campus orientation

Again, earlier Enhancement Themes activity has identified and considered a range of practice designed to orient and engage students as part of the First Year Experience recording that 'in Scotland and in many other HE systems...there is currently considerable interest in more fully understanding and enhancing students' experience of the first year.¹¹ It is widely agreed that effective orientation to the institution and academic life is a key way to set the foundations for subsequent student success and the work for the Theme, as well as the scoping for this project, confirmed that many institutions worldwide are engaging in this.

The Working Group found that, while the social and information-imparting sides of induction remain important, institutions are increasingly using induction to impart more sophisticated messages and information, including personal skills development. Some institutions create synergy by combining academic and social induction programmes together in a structured manner. Some of the more comprehensive programmes aim to help students integrate more quickly, provide a cohesive framework across year groups, and enable commuting students to make friends more easily.

Many interviewees pointed out that academic orientation is increasingly important and, as well as generic institutional activities, several hold some induction activities in faculties/departments/schools where students tend to congregate and are therefore a good place to focus activity.

The **University of Sydney (Australia)** undertakes two parallel and complementary streams of orientation activity - the Sydney Welcome Orientation and Transition (SWOT) Program provided by the University and O-Week which is run by the **University of Sydney Union (Australia)** and primarily involves the student organisations, Sydney Sport, clubs and societies and bands and other social events. Faculties are crucial in the orientation and support of students and many have developed welcomes and social 'mixers' to assist their students meet staff and senior students, as well as other incoming students within the faculty. SWOT information and activities are organised under four themes: creating a platform for academic success; adapting to life at Sydney; creating freedom and independence; and making friends and contacts. Orientation Week at the **University of Guelph (Canada)** offers a combination of social, co-curricular and classroom activities coordinated by the Centre for New Students and documented in an Orientation Guide/Handbook for New Students available in hard copy and online.

At **Griffith University (Australia)**, the First Year Advisor is responsible for coordinating a minimum half day of academic orientation for new students, including clarifying student expectations of higher education and the university, providing clear and accurate information about the programme in which they have enrolled, requirements for satisfactory progress, and so on.

¹¹ Gordon, G (2008) *Quality Enhancement Themes: The First Year Experience: Sector-wide discussion: the nature and purpose of the first year.*

The Momentum programme at the **University of Guelph (Canada)** is intended to help new students - particularly those most 'at risk' - to more quickly engage in academic activities by creating a seamless transition from the well-established programmes covering summertime, to Orientation Week, to regular academic life. The programme aims to shift the perception of orientation as a discrete collection of events occurring during the first week of September to an ongoing process designed to equip new students with the tools they need to make successful transitions throughout the first year. Momentum aims to: create an atmosphere where academic success is realistically appraised, valued and discussed openly by new students; provide new students with the tools to chart their way through the academic transition from high school to university learning; strengthen problem-solving, assertiveness, self-reflection and effective information-seeking skills; increase familiarity with campus resources that support learning success; increase proactive (rather than reactive) use of programmes and services by new students; and improve help-seeking.

Dedicated web pages are often used to guide students through orientation and beyond. Ensuring students have the right information at the right time and are not bombarded with it all at once is a challenge recognised by many institutions, and participants in the workshop at the November conference acknowledged this issue. Induction can be a short, time-limited event or a longer series of activities throughout first term or even first year.

At the **University of Sydney (Australia)**, intending students are directed to the SWOT website, to coincide with their High School Certificate results. This information is regularly updated and the majority of visitors to the site bookmark it as a resource to return to, and may continue to use the information with this link beyond the lifetime of the SWOT site being updated. At this point, students are directed to the Orientation pages of the Student Administration and Support site for clarification about any newly emerging orientation issues. SWOT is therefore seen by the University as being part of the whole first-year student life cycle, beyond O-Week. Ongoing activities for first-year students, both centrally and within faculties, run throughout the academic year. In the second semester, SWOT (Re)Orientation is held to assist students who may have missed out on SWOT earlier in the year, who may require 'booster' information about resources, or who may be part of the mid-year intake to access the resources and transition information.

It is possible to target certain types of, or additional, induction activities at particular groups of students to their benefit. Certain forms of induction can be two-way as they can help the institution identify 'at-risk' students early. Several institutions use older students as guides and as ongoing mentors. One interviewee from the University of Winchester commented that there were 'notably talented student guides, acting over and beyond their remit to make the new students feel welcome and included'.

From the pre-entry course for anxious students, mentioned above, the **University of Winchester (England)** has developed Headstart - a new form of induction process including all first-year students. Each new student is allocated to a team of 30, headed by two student guides recruited from second and third year. Over three days, the student guides escort their students through a series of events which include registration, a campus trail, an assignment planning session, role play sessions and fun activities. Headstart incorporates study skills, 'socialising' aspects (for example, life skills sessions including role plays for living and working together) and fun sessions.

All first-year students at the **University of Western Australia** are assigned a mentor as part of an integrated suite of five programmes (UniStart, UniMentor, UniDiscovery, UniAccess, UniSkills) designed to promote student success, particularly commencing students.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- University of Aberdeen: mentoring first-year students
- University of Abertay Dundee: unregulated use of Facebook and Bebo, support around social side, induction days¹²
- University of Dundee: long, thin induction module in academic skills¹³
- Heriot-Watt University: systematic approach to identifying first-year students at risk of non-progression
- Edinburgh Napier University: Re-engineering Student Induction: the week 1 project
- Robert Gordon University: Student Ambassador programme
- University of St Andrews: Orientation Programme for all entrant students
- University of Stirling: Student Diary project
- University of Strathclyde: Student Advisory and Counselling Service: First Year Advisor
- Strathclyde: Academic Diary.¹⁴

Conclusion:

As with theme B, the Working Group noted the interesting practice in this area and commends the examples to the sector for consideration. The workshop at the November conference concluded that 'orientation is not just about one week, but the whole first year'. The Group acknowledged that practice is already changing in Scotland, partly as a result of ongoing work under the Enhancement Theme activity, which has thoroughly covered this ground. **The Working Group proposes to do no further work in this area.**

D Library and information resource services

Libraries and information/learning resource centres are important buildings for higher education institutions and often considered to be 'the heart of the campus'.¹⁵ The learning resource centre can also be a 'student owned' space which can encourage use of its many resources (see also theme H).

The **University of Auckland's (New Zealand)** brand new Kate Edger Information Commons was deliberately sited across the road from the library and adjacent to the Students' Association and the Student Services building. This part of the campus was 'already a hub for students' and the University aimed to capitalise on this by adding to the complement of student-related facilities. These services are 'linked by crossovers and plazas'. From its opening day, the Information Commons has been 'immensely popular with students'.

¹² From November conference workshops.

¹³ From November conference workshops.

¹⁴ From November conference workshops.

¹⁵ Scottish Funding Council (August 2008) *Space collaboration*, p 35.

The library/learning resource centre is considered by several institutions to be a good place to site visible academic support and help. The learning resource centre can also contribute to providing more formal, timetabled, study skills groups and sessions.

The **University of Guelph (Canada)** Learning Commons is a partnership model which brings together a range of services (learning, writing, research, numeracy and use of technology) in one location (the library) to improve the quality of learning on campus. In addition, Learning Commons' staff work with academic staff and teaching assistants to help them enhance learning in their courses.

As well as providing access to deskpace, computer terminals and printers, the **University of Auckland's (New Zealand)** Kate Edger Information Commons houses the University Library's short-loan collection, the Student Learning Centre and the English Language Self Access Centre. It aims to be a 'student-centred' and 'student friendly' facility.

Several institutions use student guides/peer helpers in the learning resource centre.

Peer Helpers are a strong feature at the **University of Guelph (Canada)** and the Learning Commons uses a cadre of highly-trained Peer Helpers, described by the University as 'academically successful students selected to reflect a wide cross section of University disciplines', to deliver several of its services. The University is currently piloting a discipline-specific approach in which four new Learning Peer Helpers will be recruited, trained and hired to work specifically with Engineering students.

Student helpers are employed to roam the **University of Auckland's (New Zealand)** Kate Edger Information Commons and answer questions.

Southampton Solent University (England) uses 'library ambassadors' to secure longer opening times, in response to demand from students for longer and late-night library opening. The Learning and Information Service trained 20 'library ambassador' students to provide front line support for other students during these times.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- Robert Gordon University: development of library services to distance learning students
- University of the West of Scotland: Spaces for Learning project
- Glasgow Caledonian University: Saltire Centre.

Conclusion

The Working Group noted the interesting practice in this area and commends the examples to the sector for consideration but agreed that this was not a priority area for sector-wide attention by the project. **The Working Group proposes to do no further work in this area.**

E Range and balance of services

There is a huge range of different models for the ways academically-related student services are structured within the higher education sector. Higher education institutions have developed different models, with a different balance of roles and responsibilities for central and departmental support services, academic staff and the students' association. As with theme A, the Working Group had been initially keen to identify the widest possible range of models which sought effective balancing of faculty/school-centre/institution-wide services (investigating what are considered discipline-specific and what are generic issues); academic and personal tutor systems, looking at different models and roles of tutors and how these integrate with other services, support training and development for academic tutors and the extent of roles of tutors systems; and developments which address the importance of an ongoing personal point of contact for the student and how this can best support student success. Again, as with theme A, a systematic and representative study would have formed a project in its own right and by so doing would have precluded consideration of the other themes. The Group, therefore, opted to consider just a few in-depth examples. Many of the other themes, however, contained elements relating to this one and the Working Group has been mindful of this in its deliberations.

The Working Group took a clear message from the scoping work and November conference that students should not need to understand an institution's structures to receive a service. While the 'backroom' can be demarcated as necessary, the frontline should be straightforward. The Group noted that several institutions seem to be re-conceiving what are considered to be 'student services' and physically reorganising them beyond the traditional model to incorporate some academic-related services.

Bournemouth University (England) is currently restructuring its Academic-related Services and Student Services - from around 15 different departments to a single 'Student Experience' unit of around five departments.

Following a review of student engagement, the **University of Bradford (England)** reorganised into two directorates. The more 'administrative' student service functions, such as accommodation, admissions, registry and student finance joined the Academic Administration Directorate. The new Learner Support Services Directorate now comprises the more directly student-facing support services: the library, IT services (including Management Information Services), careers, counselling, disability, Learner Development Unit, Teaching Quality Enhancement Group, Graduate School and staff development. It now represents an example of 'super-convergence' - the integration of library services with other areas of student support.¹⁶

At the **University of Winchester (England)** Student Services incorporates enrolment, induction, study skills and all support services. It is also integrated into the academic side of the University, overseeing the personal tutor system and careers within the curriculum. The Director of Student Services chairs the Enrolment Strategy Group whose role it is to plan the enrolment and induction of all new students to the University. All reporting on enrolment and induction is passed to the Senior Management Group, Learning and Teaching Committee and the Student Affairs Committee.

¹⁶ Society of College, National and University Libraries (Spring 2006) *SNOUL Focus* 37, p 49.

At **Queen's University (Canada)** the Coordinator of Community Service-Learning reports jointly to the Associate Vice-Principal and Dean of Student Affairs and to the Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning. The opportunity for the Coordinator to report to senior people, and to traverse Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, is unusual and brings a range of benefits to the way that community service learning can be conducted. The Coordinator is able to frame a range of different projects in the best possible context for all involved, for example, projects can include a research-intensive element and be carried out in the context of an academic course. The interviewee considers this provides a broader range of options than traditionally structured community service learning units would be able to offer and also reduces fatigue on community organisations as they are dealing with a single officer in the University.

The **University of Hong Kong** reformed its student support services from a 'highly administrative' service into a more developmental range of services, more closely allied to 'whole person development'. The University revamped its brand, so that the external image portrayed was one of education, service and support for students. A (physical) help desk, amalgamating all the departments, was introduced, as was a unified website. Significantly, the final aspect for the reforms involved the Department of General Education integrating with Student Affairs/Services into the one-stop Centre for Educational Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS).

As recorded at theme A, others are using overarching 'student experience committee' arrangements to ensure that separately organised directorates communicate and offer a coherent service or joint staff or 'communities of practice'.

At the **Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand)** most traditional student services and the library are managed within the remit of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. However, to ensure that all services which affect students are considered coherently, the University established a more broadly-based Student Experience Group (SEG) which comprises representatives from Information Technology, the International Office and the Students' Union. The SEG meets every month and is involved in a number of initiatives, including taking forward the University's aim to help students gain key skills and attributes.

In addition, several institutions have recently revamped their personal tutor systems, or are currently reviewing arrangements. Some institutions consider academic staff to be the key point of contact, while others consider professional advisers to be the best approach. There are central, devolved and hybrid models in operation.

The **University of Leeds (England)** introduced a new unified approach to personal tutoring in 2008. The aim was to develop a 'distinctive Leeds model' to meet demands of a new era of higher education. A key aim has been to reflect the strategy and values of the University by embedding the University values within the personal tutoring system. In this model, the academic tutor is placed 'at the centre of the delivery of personal tutoring'. Students had expressed 'a clear need for an individual academic as their first point of contact' although staff are invited to refer students onto a more appropriate source of guidance where necessary.¹⁷ The new approach specified some minimum requirements: the personal tutor will be an academic member of staff; the personal tutor will play a distinctive core role

¹⁷ Taken from: University of Leeds, Learning and Teaching Board Paper: Personal Tutoring.

in the delivery of personal tutoring, aimed at supporting the student's general academic and personal development; the personal tutor will hold one-to-one meetings with tutees; and the one-to-one meetings will be scheduled at regular points of the academic year. The minimum is intended to be adapted by local schools to suit their circumstances. Personal tutoring at the University is fully embedded within the wider 'Leeds for Life' initiative (see theme A) and personal tutors are expected to use the resources on the 'Leeds for Life' website and to both draw students' attention to them, and work jointly with students using some of the tools and resources.

Following a reorganisation at **Southampton Solent University (England)** the personal tutor system was replaced by the establishment in each faculty of a Student Support Network Officer. The Officer reports in at Associate Dean level, acts as a front line for students and provides an overview back to the University of 'how are we supporting students?'. The Learning and Information Service (LIS) runs the network and senior student support services staff sit on the network committee. The University sees this as 'a bridge to link LIS to faculties'. LIS operates a drop-in advice centre for all students but also has links to faculties so can refer students back to their faculty, where necessary. LIS works closely with the students' union in these activities.

As the largest university in Ireland, spread over two campuses, **University College Dublin (Ireland)** has a highly decentralised system for supporting students. Of the team of 13 student advisers, 10 are located around the campuses and are attached and embedded in one of the five academic colleges. Two specialist advisers providing other support services are based with the Director of Access and one adviser is based in the International Office. Formally, the student advisers report to the relevant college principals or their nominee (most report to the Vice-Principal for Teaching & Learning in the College). They are paid from the College budget and derive their own budgets from the College. This leads to buy-in from staff and students who feel ownership of the adviser. They also have 'a dotted line reporting relationship' to the Vice-President for Students. Student advisers act as the first point of contact - academic staff are not formally involved in advising students, although some academic programmes assign personal tutors to students.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- Edinburgh University: Review of Academic and Pastoral Support
- Glasgow Caledonian University: The Base
- St Andrews University: Support Services Link project with School of Physics and Astronomy
- UHI Millennium Institute: Supporting UHI Students Community of Practice
- University of the West of Scotland: Centre for Lifelong Learning
- University of the West of Scotland: Tomorrow's Learning Spaces Today project.

Conclusion

The Working Group noted the interesting practice in this area and commends the examples to institutions in the sector, but considered that this was a matter for individual institutions and that it was neither appropriate nor feasible for the project to consider such issues on a sector-wide basis. **The Working Group proposes to do no further work in this area.**

F Engaging students: building student communities

The Working Group was keen to identify and explore approaches to creating a sense of belonging among students regarding being part of, and being connected with, a wider community. The scoping work found some interesting initiatives underway to help some specific groups of students to engage with higher education. Clearly there are many other groups of students and many other initiatives underway to help them engage and integrate with one another and more widely. The groups identified were students with disabilities, international students and students at risk of dropping out ('at risk') students.

The Working Group found practice that suggested that even apparently small services and activities can make a difference to the experience (and presumably success) of students with disabilities.

Research demonstrates that the incidence of dyslexia is far higher among art students and the **Arts Institute at Bournemouth (England)** has a high proportion of students with dyslexia and specific learning difficulties (116 of 994). Most of these students' difficulties have gone undiagnosed throughout the students' compulsory education. The Institute proactively identifies students with dyslexia through comprehensively screening all incoming students. This enables the Institute to provide support for students at the earliest opportunity, while also avoiding the damaging and demoralising scenario of waiting until students are struggling before referring them for support.

In addition to the general support offered to students with disabilities, **Leicester University (England)** has several other measures in place. The University supports students from the point at which it knows that they have a disability, not just from the point that their Disabled Students' Allowance is invoked - for example, through one-to-one support, note taking and so on. The University also has a project focused on the employability issues which arise for disabled students, including a work placement scheme.

As outlined at theme B, pre-entry activities are particularly important to international students and several institutions offer a tailored version of their induction and orientation activities for international students, including specific sessions where issues can be raised. Some institutions use students, trained as international mentors.

The **University of Chester (England)** offers a package of pre-entry and on-programme support to international students, including the 'Culture Shock' programme of social events facilitated by international mentors. These are international and UK home students trained to provide mentoring and support to international students. Pre-entry, students are sent a comprehensive information pack about the University and UK culture. On arrival, international students are offered a meet-and-greet service followed up by the 'Culture Shock' programme.

The social programme is supported by a fortnightly drop-in session where students have an opportunity to talk with the International Student Welfare Officer and other international students about any issues they are facing.

START International, at the **University of Guelph (Canada)** is a half-day programme offered on the Friday prior to general residence move-in. It is coordinated by the Office of Intercultural Affairs and is designed to help around 100 international and exchange students acclimatise ahead of the arrival of all new students. The scheme delivers practical information and exposure to a range of campus services and provides the opportunity for some social networking.

Some institutions offer students at risk of dropping out additional help with orientation, personal and academic development skills. Some institutions assign student mentors to 'at risk' students. The Working Group noted that targeted study skills assistance, triggered when students fall below a certain average of attainment, can aid retention.

The 'Bounce Back' programme, at the **University of Guelph (Canada)** takes place in the winter semester and is designed to assist first-year students with a fall semester average of below 60 per cent. Participants are paired, one-on-one, with a senior student or staff member and support entails a detailed assessment of challenges, goal-setting and strategies for achieving goals in the coming weeks. The programme pays particular attention to those students who are most at risk of being placed on academic probation or of being required to withdraw at the end of their first year at the University. It also specifically encourages involvement from first generation students.

Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand) runs a programme called 'Campus Coaches' which is designed to help new students make a smooth transition to University life. It employs senior volunteer students to be Coaches and they are assigned particularly to students who are in the first six weeks of their University study, since this is identified as a period where there is the greatest risk of them abandoning study. Any first-year student can ask to have a Campus Coach.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- Glasgow Caledonian University: Student Single Session Therapy
- Heriot-Watt University: systematic approach to identifying first-year students at risk of non-progression
- Edinburgh Napier University: Re-engineering student induction: the week 1 project
- Open University: all 'vulnerable' students contacted by phone to check if they have questions¹⁸
- Queen Margaret University: Academic Disabled Student Coordinator
- Robert Gordon University: Degree Link programme
- Robert Gordon University: development of Library Services to distance learning students
- Robert Gordon University: Student Ambassador Programme

¹⁸ From November conference workshops.

- Scottish Agriculture College: Agriculture and the Environment: the Generation of Responsibility
- University of Strathclyde: Looked After Children project
- UHI Millennium Institute: Moray College Early Intervention scheme.

Conclusion

The Working Group noted the interesting practice in this area and commends the examples to the sector for consideration but agreed that this was not a priority area for the project. **The Working Group proposes to do no further work in this area.**

G Academic peer support and mentoring

The Working Group was particularly interested in considering practice and models of organisation in using students as a resource in assisting other students. This is another big area, and the breadth of much of the terrain was covered by the First Year Experience Enhancement Theme, particularly in the report on *Peer support in the first year*,¹⁹ and by the Responding to Student Needs Enhancement Theme.²⁰ With this in mind the Working Group focused its investigations on academic-related activity and aimed to find support that went beyond the first year (although mentoring did arise in other examples). The scoping exercise uncovered numerous examples of institutions valuing and utilising their students as an intellectual resource, involving them in structured academic mentoring, advising, tutoring and facilitating roles. The use of peers to support other learners is common practice in North America and Australia in particular where there are some very large-scale schemes in operation, but there are also some large, well-established schemes in England.

The Peer Helper Program (PHP) at the **University of Guelph (Canada)** comprises more than 200 peers working in 30 different units. The University claims that it is 'the largest university-based para-professional helping program in Canada'. The PHP coordinates the selection and general training of students to work side by side with professionals to offer a diverse range of support programmes and services for students. Peers are primarily undergraduate students who perform a range of duties and responsibilities including: working with students one to one; developing and presenting workshops; planning programmes and events; creating resources; and referring students to campus and community resources.

The Faculty of Law at the **University of Bergen (Norway)** makes use of peer mentors in its undergraduate curriculum. There is a strong practical element to the coursework and each module ends with a final examination. The annual intake of approximately 350-380 students is divided into groups of 10. In the first two years they have an 'older' pedagogical trained law student as their group leader, in the third year the students have to manage themselves. Students write approximately 30 papers during each academic year and in the first year have one-to-one feedback on individual bases with the peer mentor. In addition, each group selects a member who meets the professor responsible for the module twice during the module, for two hours, where they discuss all activities in the module from learning outcomes to lectures and literature.

¹⁹ Black, F and MacKenzie, J (2008) *Peer support in the first year*.

²⁰ See Gordon et al (2005) *Responding to Student Needs: Student Evaluation and Feedback Toolkit*.

In Australia, the Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) programme is led by trained and accredited staff, and students work together to consolidate understanding, reinforce key concepts and develop effective study strategies. The **University of Wollongong (Australia)** supports every faculty with PASS. This consists of weekly one-hour, non-compulsory sessions led by peer leaders, students who have excelled at the subject in the past. PASS is provided for all students who want to improve their understanding of course material and improve their grades. The University is the National Centre for PASS in Australia, and offers training for other institutions.

The **University of Manchester (England)** uses and benefits from two complementary peer support programmes: Peer Mentoring and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS). Both programmes encourage partnerships between students and staff. The University of Manchester predominantly uses PASS to support the first-year student experience. Trained, higher-year, volunteer students (PASS leaders) facilitate collaborative, exploratory discussions, encouraging deeper conceptual understanding of fundamental academic principles and increasing academic confidence rather than superficial strategic learning. PASS does not replace any form of interaction between staff and students but instead provides additional opportunity for all students to interact with their peers. The University of Manchester is the National Benchmark for PASS/Supplemental Instruction (SI) and is developing the UK SI/PASS National Centre that will provide training and support to institutions and practitioners.

RMIT University (Australia) introduced Student Learning Advisor Mentors (SLAMs) in 2005. Since then the programme has grown into what the University considers to be a 'sustainable and valued service by both staff and students'. Through this scheme, students in second and third years provide academic support to first-year students in a designated SLAMs room at scheduled times. There is a feedback loop to academic staff. Based on this success, the University has begun a pilot project offering learning support to a targeted group of students in one particular discipline. This is embedded into the curriculum - as a combined effort between SLAMs, Study and Learning Support and academic staff.

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) at **Bournemouth University (England)** is now a well-established scheme that has been running since 2001. Trained second-year undergraduates, called PAL leaders, facilitate regular, weekly, timetabled sessions with groups of 15-30 first-year students. PAL sessions are intended to be planned, structured and purposeful while being, at the same time, supportive and friendly. There is an emphasis on cooperative learning and collaborative group discussion. It aims to help first-year students: adjust quickly to university life; acquire a clear view of course direction and lecturers' expectations; develop their independent learning and study skills to meet the requirements of their course; improve their understanding of the subject matter of their course; and prepare better for assessed work and examinations. For the academic year 2008-09, the PAL scheme is available to approximately 1,700 first-year students at Bournemouth, supported by 150 PAL leaders. When the scheme first started, attendance at PAL sessions was voluntary. However, this resulted in low levels of take-up. Now, PAL sessions appear in first-year students' timetables alongside their lectures, workshops or lab sessions. There is some demand from second-year students to receive PAL assistance from third or fourth-year students. However, these students are involved in industrial placements and dissertations and the University does not want to distract them from this.

The Learning Commons at the **University of Guelph (Canada)** also supports a series of weekly review sessions attached to traditionally difficult courses. These are facilitated by a peer helper, who will have previously undertaken the course and obtained an 'A', and are provided for any student in the first to third year who wishes to improve their understanding of the course materials.

Queen's University (Canada), with an overwhelming proportion of the first-year population staying on campus, is using the 'Dons' (assistant students who live in halls of residence) proactively to communicate with students about learning styles and strategies within the residences.

As well as offering one-to-one peer tutoring support, the **University of Guelph-Humber (Canada)** has a cadre of Learning Support Peers (LSPs). These are current students trained to assist and support newer students as they make important decisions that relate to their academic career. LSPs assist in the delivery of learning skills workshops, Career Service information sessions, and a variety of other learning support workshops.

The scoping work found consistently that peer helping schemes of all kinds are popular, often with more students wanting to participate as peers than there are places. Ensuring high quality peers are appointed is crucial to success and most of the examples would consider that rigorous selection procedures and training are essential to ensure a smooth-running scheme. Being clear about the role and function of the peer helpers is also important, as are boundaries and assuring the quality of the advice and support provided by peers (which one of the workshops at the November conference considered). One scheme found that the quality of student tutors was highly variable so it has settled on a role where peer helpers are facilitating rather than teaching. The role of peer helpers in relation to academic and professional staff is also important and the Working Group notes that many schemes, as well as defining boundaries, actively involve staff.

At the **University of Guelph (Canada)**, PHP is coordinated centrally and the Program Office approves all peer helper placements, is responsible for core training and orientation for all new peers, and administers the payment of peer honorariums. Unit supervisors hire peers for their unit, provide them with training and support throughout their placements, conduct performance reviews, and provide letters of recommendation.

Bournemouth University (England) operates PAL as a partnership between Academic Services and the academic schools. Input from Academic Services focuses on initial and follow-up training for leaders, coordination of recruitment, general support, observation of PAL sessions together with formative feedback to leaders following observation, and advice to staff and course teaching teams. The academic schools are responsible for paying the leaders, timetabling the PAL sessions into their courses, and providing support to leaders through a Course PAL Contact whose role is to fine-tune the general principles upon which PAL is based and contextualise PAL to the specific requirements of the course.

Various reward models exist. The Working Group has concluded that it is not necessary to pay students - though many schemes do - and academic credit, or at least acknowledgement, is given in many cases. Cadres of peer helpers often form networks and support groups and sometimes also social networks of their own. One example

noted that peer helpers themselves are increasingly being mentored by former peer helpers, now in the final year of their studies.

At the **University of Guelph (Canada)**, peer helpers have the opportunity to register for a notation on their official transcript acknowledging their involvement in a service learning programme. Peers also receive a modest honorarium each semester in recognition of their contributions. Additional incentives include access to computers and office space and subsidised training programmes. In many areas peers may be promoted to Senior Peer Helper roles and in some units they can participate in a practicum experience for academic credit. Peers are also recognised each year for academic excellence and community participation through the presentation of several awards and scholarships.

At **Manchester University (England)**, PASS leaders benefit by developing their skills and employability, giving them the opportunity to reflect, review and re-evaluate, and rewarding and recognising their contribution.

At **RMIT University (Australia)**, the SLAMs themselves get academic credit.

PAL leaders at **Bournemouth University (England)** are paid (currently, around £8 per hour) for their work in the sessions, with additional payments made for preparation and review, and attendance at follow-up training sessions which build upon the two-day initial training programme. Leaders are also paid to attend regular meetings with a member of the teaching team from the course who contextualises PAL to better suit the needs of students on the course. Academic credit is not given for this work although it is possible to gain separate accreditation as a PAL leader.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- University of Aberdeen: mentoring first-year students
- University of Dundee: peer connections
- University of Edinburgh: M-Power - four strands of academic, social, personal and professional²¹
- University of Edinburgh: mental health monitoring
- Heriot-Watt University: international student peer mentoring scheme
- Open University: online peer support²²
- Queen Margaret University: QMConnect student mentoring programme
- Robert Gordon University: Student Ambassador programme
- University of Stirling: STEER - student mentoring project²³
- University of the West of Scotland: Buddy Project.²⁴

Conclusion:

It is clear that students like helping other students and peer mentors gain a lot from their experience. In addition, as the research considered by the Responding to Student Needs Enhancement Theme attests,²⁵ students like being helped by other students and

²¹ From November conference workshop.

²² From November conference workshop.

²³ From November conference workshop.

²⁴ From November conference workshop.

²⁵ Gordon et al (2005) *Responding to Student Needs: Student Evaluation and Feedback Toolkit*, p 54.

sometimes respond better to this means of assistance and support than to institutional services. Academic peer helping seems to the Working Group to be activity from which everyone benefits and, furthermore, it lends itself to a range of models to suit individual institutional circumstances.

No Scottish institutions submitted case studies relating to **academic** peer support to the project but, through the November conference and other work, including the relevant Enhancement Themes, the Working Group is aware that there is much peer helper activity underway in Scotland, both academic and otherwise. The Working Group considers that there is a great deal of practice in Scotland and beyond, which has been formed and shaped by experience. **The Working Group will take forward more work in this area.**

H Students' associations/unions

Continuing the theme of students running services for themselves, the Working Group was particularly interested in exploring examples of the role and activities of students' associations and unions in student support and welfare. Many students' associations and unions complement their social role with a range of other support and welfare activities. The research uncovered some examples - all in the UK - of some key activities run solely by the students' association or jointly with the institution.

The **University of Bradford (England)** is currently developing a new partnership with the University Students' Union whereby funds are allocated to the Students' Union in return for meeting agreed key performance indicators (for example, relating to training for student course reps, volunteering/society/sports opportunities for students). The University commentator also reports very close working between the Students' Union and the Learning Support Services. The Head of Learner Development and Student Engagement is the key liaison person between the Students' Union and University senior managers.

Enterprise SU, at **Queen's University Belfast (Northern Ireland)** is an enterprise and employability unit located at the entrance to the **Queen's University Students' Union**. This location was deliberately chosen to 'interrupt the attention' of students as research indicates that approximately 90 per cent of students use the Students' Union on a weekly basis. The unit is open-plan and designed as a space that reflects its users, that is, the students. Plasma screens with information on employability and enterprise opportunities operate 24/7. A variety of organisations and employers use this space to promote opportunities linked to enterprise and employability for students. Internally, academic departments within the University and student clubs and societies also make use of it to engage students outside of the lecture theatre.

Enterprise SU was developed as one means of delivering the University's wider skills and employability strategy (see theme A). Entrepreneurship has been embedded in the undergraduate curriculum for science and engineering subjects, and in 2007-08 entrepreneurship has been rolled out to students in humanities and social sciences. As a result of student engagement within the curriculum, a demand was created for students who wanted to engage in enterprise at the next level. The purpose of the Unit is to help students develop essential employability skills such as creativity, leadership and entrepreneurship. The Unit hosts events, seminars and activities associated with these topics and brings in external experts to support student

needs, such as business advisers from Local Enterprise Agencies (and so on). There are strong links with the curriculum - the Teaching Fellows who deliver the Certificate in Entrepreneurship Studies encourage their students to attend and participate in the co-curriculum activities offered through Enterprise SU, for example, business idea competitions and networking events. In turn, the Unit can complement the academic curriculum by hosting activities on particular themes being focused on within the classroom (for example, social enterprise or fair trade). The Unit acts as a portal to encourage students to engage in extracurricular activities that will help develop their enterprise and employability skills and encourage them to seek formal accreditation for their work through the Degree Plus initiative. The Unit manager is a member of the Students' Union staff within the Student Plus Directorate but is fully integrated into the appropriate parts of the University, including being a member of the Employability and Skills Implementation Group, Widening Participation Implementation Group and Learning and Teaching Support Group. Being employed by the Students' Union however, allows the Unit and staff involved to ensure that events and activities are primarily student-led and realistically meeting the needs of the students.

The Works was established in 2005 and is a 'one stop shop to provide all **University of Exeter (England)** students with access to jobs, training and opportunities'. It is funded by the University (through the block grant) and directly by the University Careers and Employability Service, and run by the University of Exeter Students' Guild. The Works operates a drop-in centre, signposting students to skills-development courses and part-time casual, temporary and vacation job opportunities as well as volunteering opportunities. The Careers and Employability Service retains responsibility for graduate and career employment. Students register with The Works - generally out of a need to find part-time employment - which means The Works has them in its database and 'they get the employability email add-ons'. There is an online portal for advice to complement the drop-in centre. The Careers and Employability Service uses The Works' accommodation to run courses and seminars. Prior to 2005, many of these activities had been carried out by the Careers and Employment Service, but this is based outside the centre of the campus and consequently had a low footfall. Together with the Students' Guild, it initiated The Works which takes advantage of its location in the Guild (and proximity to the popular Ram Bar). The Works Manager is an employee of the Guild, but the staff are all paid students. Recruited annually, the interviewee considers these to enable the service to be 'in touch' and credible with students. Being sited within the Guild allows the service to move more quickly than the University (for example, if a leaflet is needed). The Works communicates using an informal style and direct presentation of information, which students appreciate, but which the more formal structures of the University 'wouldn't get away with'. A Steering Group comprising The Works Manager, two student sabbatical officers, other Guild managers and University managers, including the Director of the Careers and Employment Service, meets three times per year to discuss strategic issues. An Operational Group meets monthly to discuss interface with the University and other relevant matters.

Around 2002, the Students' Union at the **University of Surrey (England)** established DAVE (Development, Accreditation, Volunteering and Employability). Based on a (now discontinued) idea from the National Union of Students UK (NUS UK) - the National Student Learning Programme - DAVE took the materials and adapted them for Surrey students. DAVE is a student training and personal development programme that offers a three-tier award - Bronze (basic), Silver (intermediate) and Gold (advanced). Combining core and optional sessions (the latter known as DAVE Extra and Pick and Mix) on themes such as time management, assertiveness, leadership and so on, students can build towards a DAVE award. In the past, NUS accredited the courses, but now the Students' Union does this itself, presenting certificates to the successful students at the end of the academic year. Much of the training is done by specially-recruited student trainers who themselves are recruited and trained by the DAVE office. A typical trainer would run one session every two weeks. Trainers are unpaid but applications are high as it is a popular activity. Using students as trainers is considered to be a strength of the initiative. It helps students to think 'I can do that'. There are also strong links with the Careers Service and the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTre), both of which deliver DAVE Extra courses. In addition, the library markets some of their academic support sessions through DAVE. External agencies also participate (for example, the Samaritans on 'how to listen'). DAVE is funded via the Students' Union subvention and receives a proportion of this funding, earmarked for membership services initiatives.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- Edinburgh Napier University: Engaging Students in Student Support.

Conclusion

As with peer helping, the Working Group notes that students like delivering services to other students, and in certain cases they are the most appropriate and credible means to do this. There were also several examples of the location of the students' union being a critical factor in the siting of key services. Proximity to, or siting within, the union helps students to feel the service is for them and also results in maximum footfall, visibility and consequent use of the service. Where services are run by students' unions/associations there is a sense that they 'can get on with it' - in that they can move more swiftly than the university. They can also 'get away with it' - in that they can be less formal and more accessible to students in a way that universities are not able. Continuing its interest in the overarching theme of the role that students and student-run organisations can play in supporting other students, **the Working Group will take forward more work in this area.**

I Use of technology

The Working Group was keen to explore the potential for technology in terms of delivering services and supporting students. Higher education institutions worldwide are experimenting with technology in a range of ways to suit their circumstances in terms of delivering both education and services. Technology also has the potential to help the institution customise the services it offers to each individual student's needs. Although largely concerned with learning and teaching, the *Personalisation of the first year* report under the First Year Experience Enhancement Theme touched on this in quoting a workshop participant: 'personalising provision means exploiting technology but, nevertheless, not losing sight of the individual student. Technology is not the whole solution'.²⁶ There have been some interesting developments in the UK designed to improve access to information for students using the internet. Institutions are using technology to convey more information to more students in a more efficient way than is possible to do face-to-face.

Cardiff University (Wales) is currently developing an approach in which students can have access to information via new media, including video-based and other web-based information services accessible from anywhere and at any time. The University is addressing the challenges of meeting the needs of a large and diverse student population in a large multi-site institution. With their experience of social networking sites, students have an expectation about being able to find information when they need it and in a format, style and language that they want to use and the University is making use of Facebook, among other tools, to communicate with students.

The Student Resources Network at the **University of Southampton (England)** is the 'gateway to all the help and support needed as a student at the University. The physical and virtual provision of services and information is only a click or a call away'.²⁷ It is a collaboration between the library, Information Systems Services, Student Services and academic schools, and delivers physical and virtual support resources across all campuses. The website information contains links, contacts and information about all the support services available to students. It is intended to give students enough information to know which service they require and how to get in touch with them. The portal links to a range of internal websites so that students get the original source of information or service to ensure the best service possible. Students can use the online Network to pay fees, check timetables, make room bookings and check the progress of their enquiries at the Student Services Centre, as well as browsing the array of information at any time of the day, wherever they are based. The web presence is only one aspect and the custom-built Student Services Centre and School Offices are used well by all students and face-to-face interactions continue to rise year on year. The University is particularly interested in ensuring the Network is attractive and relevant to postgraduate and international students and students on remote campuses to build on its success with undergraduates.

The 'Leeds for Life' website of the **University of Leeds, England**, (see also theme A) is a resource for students in all years of study, helping them identify and reflect on their skills development and providing information and outlining a range of opportunities, including links to individual programme specifications and the

²⁶ Knox, H and Wyper, J (2008) *Quality Enhancement Themes: The First Year Experience: Personalisation of the first year*, p 23.

²⁷ www.soton.ac.uk/sais/virtualservices/srn.html

co-curriculum offer. Students are expected to use the site in conjunction with their personal tutor as well as on their own. The next phase of the project will include a means whereby students can save information they have gathered and work they have done through using the 'Leeds for Life' website, within the site itself. The next phase will also evaluate and recommend tools for students and their personal tutors to facilitate development and reflection on their portfolio of skills and attributes.

Lecture streaming - whereby lectures are captured digitally then transmitted live, and/or made available to students to view online or download as podcasts - is a significant practice in some higher education institutions, particularly those which offer a lot of distance learning and/or which operate over different time zones. In addition, lecture streaming is commonplace in some parts of the world and interviewees confirmed that a service which has often been aimed largely at distance learning students has become an additional and convenient resource for home students too, as students like to be able to access information at their leisure. Offering learning materials on the web enables an institution to cater for different learning styles.

At the **National University of Singapore**, students can watch lectures live via 'NUScast' and some of these are also open to the general public.

Edith Cowan University (Australia) is currently rolling out its 'FlexiLecture' project across 40 teaching spaces.

The **University of Western Australia** aims to provide a 'high tech, high touch' educational experience and developed 'Lectopia'²⁸ (now 'Echo') which is now available as a commercial product.

Curtin University (Australia) started implementing 'iLectures' in 2005 in an attempt to enrich the learning experience of students by providing online access to digital audio and video content which is captured in lectures. This material is made available to students through the virtual learning environment, as part of their normal programme. The unit recordings can be made in one of the fixed facilities and portable digital recording equipment is also available for lecturers to use in almost any setting. The University believes that the majority of students use the system as a refresher or additional resource to back up their notes, but there are also instances where students use the iLecture resources in place of attending lectures. A key benefit is that students can go back and review lectures as many times as they want or download them to a portable device and watch them at their leisure. Particularly challenging material is available in a resource that students can review multiple times or single frame which helps their understanding of complex issues. In 2005, the University had five active facilities with 419 recordings that were viewed approximately 8,000 times. By 2006 this had grown to 15 facilities which captured 689 records that were viewed approximately 15,000 times. In 2007 they expanded to 30 facilities which captured 1,325 records that were viewed 40,000 times. The University is again expanding in 2008-09.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- University of Edinburgh: Bibliotherapy
- Scottish Agriculture College: 24-hour availability of learning materials

²⁸ www.lectopia-service.uwa.edu.au/about

- UHI Millennium Institute: Networked Student Support
- University of the West of Scotland: Spaces for Learning project.

Conclusion

The Working Group noted the interesting practice in this area and tentatively concluded that many services which are currently delivered face-to face could be delivered more effectively online. Students should not have to always 'come in' to a central, physical place for advice, for example, advice might be offered 24/7, perhaps by using FAQ online approaches and online counselling. The Group also acknowledged that students have high expectations of online services and the quality of interfaces, given their experience with commercial companies. There was one example of highly sophisticated tools for student use conveyed by the web, supported by appropriate assigned staff.

The Working Group noted the interesting practice in this area and commends the examples to the sector for consideration. **The Working Group proposes to do no further work in this area.**

J Life and study skills

The Working Group has noted that many institutions in many countries are considering explicitly how to encourage their students to become confident, independent learners, inculcating in them the range of skills that are necessary to negotiate higher education. As part of this, many institutions make it clear to students what their expectations are, and specify the skills and attributes the students will have the opportunity to acquire during their degree. Drop-in centres/sessions in key areas of study skills - for example, literacy/numeracy, both referred and self-referred - are commonly-used models. One of the workshops at the November conference discussed this issue in depth, concluding that organisational mission and commitment has a significant impact on the work of academic skills development. Without it, much of the work is invisible and carried out by academic staff who feel they have no particular mandate or authority to provide such services.

The **University of Western Australia's** Learning, Language and Research Skills team mission is to foster effective, independent, articulate learners. The team offers a range of expert services in person, by web resources and in peer groups to improve study and assignment skills. As well as physical resources such as drop-in sessions, workshops and peer learning groups, its 'Study Smarter' initiative collects and coordinates a range of resources and services on its website including: 'Jump Start' which links together tips and resources on a range of study skills themes, updated weekly during semester; Survival Guides offering advice on all the essential skills of communicating, succeeding at assignments, managing projects and research, critical thinking and reading, and generic study skills; downloadable templates for time management, project and group work, or exams; Study Smarter workshop sessions available by podcast; Discussion board; and networks, blogs and chat forums. Students are encouraged to sign up for a weekly newsletter providing study tips and details of upcoming events and information about Study Smarter programmes.

When it established its new Information Commons, the **University of Auckland (New Zealand)** sited the Student Learning Centre therein. The Student Learning Centre in its early days in the 1990s was perceived by students, at least to some

extent, to be a remedial service. In 2000, it was given the responsibility of providing central skills support for postgraduate students and in 2006 combined with the School of Graduate Studies and the Academic Practice Group to provide a full skills programme for all doctoral students. The programme includes a compulsory induction module. In 2005, the Student Learning Centre became a constituent section of the Centre for Academic Development along with the Academic Practice group and an e-Learning Design and Development Group. Although retaining its title and its base in the Information Commons, the Student Learning Centre benefits from this integration and wider remit. Postgraduate students are offered good quality courses to help them attain high-level skills and this perceived cachet has transmitted to other activities.

A simple idea, the **University of Guelph-Humber (Canada)** issues all incoming students with a '4 Year Plan' document, which contains information on key services and a planner with checklist of things to think about during each year of study. The aim is to encourage students to think strategically, from the outset, about where they are going and to widen this thinking out beyond their immediate studies.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- University of Aberdeen: Foundation Skills for Life Sciences
- University of Dundee: Academic Skills Unit
- University of Dundee: long, thin induction module in academic skills²⁹
- University of Edinburgh: Bibliotherapy
- Glasgow Caledonian University: Student Journey Staging
- University of Strathclyde: Maths Skills Support Centre.

Conclusion

The Working Group noted that many institutions are putting effort into defining and helping students acquire study and life skills. Examples considered under this theme (and also under themes F and G) suggest that, in many institutions, 'study skills' has moved from being a remedial service to being a proactive service aimed at all students and tailored to individual needs (in actuality and in terms of perception). Workshop participants at the November conference considered that, for engaging academics, a 'graduate attributes' approach may be more appealing and therefore more fruitful than a 'skills' approach. The Working Group noted the interesting practice in this area and commends the examples to the sector for consideration. It noted that this had received consideration under the Research-Teaching Linkages Enhancement Theme and that it was likely to become a priority area for sector-wide attention in Scotland under the forthcoming Enhancement Theme of Graduates for the 21st Century. **The Working Group proposes to do no further work in this area.**

²⁹ From the November conference workshops.

K Careers and employability support

The Scottish higher education sector has been collectively engaged with employability issues for some years, both under the auspices of the Employability Enhancement Theme and through the Scottish Higher Education Employability Enhancement Network (SHEEN). All Scottish higher education institutions have employability strategies. Facilitating student employability has undoubtedly become a more explicitly addressed aim in recent years in many countries and institutions. In particular, many institutions are making skills and attributes acquired on courses more explicit. Some employability skills are acquired through coursework and others through extracurricular opportunities provided by the institution.

The **University of Melbourne (Australia)** 'encourages Departments and Faculties to employ students for casual and short-term roles'.³⁰ These roles are usually over summer periods or at busy times during the University year. The University offers a substantial range of opportunities to students to work in a variety of roles on campus (for example, tutors, demonstrators, retail and catering roles, and so on). Care is taken to ensure that students from the faculty or faculties in which they are studying are employed in a different faculty or areas to avoid conflict of interest. Students are assigned roles which do not involve any tasks which are regarded as 'student' sensitive, for example, examinations, student records and so on. Confidentiality agreements are signed by the student as part of the recruitment process.

As previously mentioned at theme D, **Southampton Solent University (England)** trained 20 'library ambassador' students to provide front line support for other students during extended opening hours. The process of selection was thorough - applicants had to participate in a formal process akin to applying for a job and there are clear expectations of the role of library ambassador. The aim of this formal approach was to impress upon the students the need for commitment and reliability and so boost their employability skills and experience.

The **University of Udine (Italy)** runs the 'Brief Reports on Nursing Research' (BREN) initiative - an empowerment programme for Bachelor nursing students. The University had found from research that new nursing graduates felt stressed and disempowered. BREN allows students and new graduates, before they start work, to take the small research projects they would be doing anyway as part of their course (and which will be considered by a University Commission) and present them first to clinical nurses. Then there is an open debate, chaired by an expert, on the relevance of the topic. The project aims to close the gap between academic and clinical practice setting and gives the nursing students a practice run at presenting their research project and fielding unknown questions, in a supportive and professional environment, prior to facing the University Commission.

Since 2000, **Edge Hill University, Liverpool Hope University and the University of Liverpool (all England)** have participated in 'Outlook' - an award-winning mentoring programme. The initiative has been designed to support and improve the employability of students from groups at a proven disadvantage in the graduate recruitment process/labour market. The programme is aimed at black and Asian students, disabled students, those aged 30-plus on entry to university, and those

³⁰ University of Melbourne, Policy 4.13, Guidelines for the Employment of Students, in the *Personnel and Policy Procedures Manual*.

who are in the first generation in their family to go into higher education. The scheme runs over two years and supports students through direct links to employers via workshops and one-to-one mentoring. Around 140 employers and over 300 students across the three universities participate.

In addition, e-Portfolios have evolved to support the recording of employability skills (see also theme L). A recent survey involving 66 UK HEIs, by the UK Centre for Recording Achievement, found that almost all claimed that personal development planning (PDP) had now been implemented in their institution and over three-quarters of these were using some form of electronic tool to support the process. Just over half of HEIs surveyed claimed to have an e-Portfolio tool or system.³¹ Various definitions exist of the term e-Portfolio. The JISC e-Portfolios Infokit proposes that the 'term encompasses both product and process' defining it as 'a purposeful aggregation of digital items - ideas, evidence, reflections, feedback etc, which "presents" a selected audience with evidence of a person's learning and/or ability'.³²

The Faculty of Education at **Griffith University (Australia)** has introduced, implemented and reviewed e-Portfolio approaches with teacher education students in several courses. The University considers that e-Portfolio approaches are becoming very important for teacher education students and provide a powerful multimedia means by which students can portray their information and provide evidence of deep learning. The University is now considering how e-Portfolios could be developed as a means for teacher education students to demonstrate evidence of their meeting the official professional standards required for teacher registration purposes. Through e-Portfolios, students would be able to provide evidence for the standards and include rich multimedia evidence to support the more traditional written application and interview selection processes.

More generally, the Australian e-Portfolio Project (AeP), funded by the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, is a research project being undertaken by four universities: **Queensland University of Technology**, the **University of Melbourne**, the **University of New England** and the **University of Wollongong (all Australia)**. The project team also draws on a range of international connections to strive to position Australia on the international e-Portfolio scene and to help inform the development of relevant strategic policy. The project seeks to investigate e-Portfolio practice in the higher education sector in Australia, in order to provide strategic and practical guidance about the use of e-Portfolios in academic institutions.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- University of Stirling: Scotland Insight/Scotland Connect projects
- University of the West of Scotland: Employability Link project.

Conclusion

The Working Group noted the gulf between study and work and agreed that institutions can do much to help bridge it. Clearly, the process of becoming employed by the university as a student - either as casual staff or as mentors/peer helpers, and so on - is useful experience for the students involved. The Working Group noted the interesting

³¹ Centre for Recording Achievement (2007) *A survey of e-pdp and e-portfolio practice in UK higher education*.

³² From JISC InfoNet, quoting Sutherland, S and Powell, A (9 July 2007) Cetus SIG mailing list discussions, available at: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/archives/cetus-portfolio.html

practice in this area and commends the examples to the sector for consideration as part of the ongoing work on employability which is already receiving sector-wide attention in Scotland. **The Working Group proposes to do no further work in this area.**

L Service learning - volunteering and the co-curriculum

Some institutions offer a vast range of co-curricular opportunities to students. Again, North American and Australasian institutions provide a particularly rich range of examples of service learning and co-curricular opportunities. There are, however, some UK examples explicitly aimed at providing students with the opportunity to augment their degree. These are often linked with civic engagement activities and, indeed, student volunteering has been cited by Universities UK as a benefit of having students in the community as a counterbalance to the other challenges associated with 'studentification' of neighbourhoods.³³

The **University of Western Ontario (Canada)** strongly promotes 'service learning' - experiential education in which students engage in structured activities that are intentionally designed to enhance student learning and civic responsibility, while addressing community needs - for example, volunteering or working for community organisations. The initiative allows students the opportunity to critically reflect on the meaning of the service experience. Service-learning at UWO occurs both in and outwith the context of an academic programme. It can therefore be curriculum-based (part of the programme and therefore attracting credit) as well as co-curriculum-based (not part of the programme but UWO is considering whether they may eventually be validated by the University and included on a co-curriculum transcript). UWO is an institution where co-curricular activities are fundamental. Although they are optional, they are a strong part of the package that the institution offers to students.

The **Macquarie University (Australia)** recently reviewed its teaching programmes and a new curriculum will be taught from 2010. As part of this, all students must undertake some form of 'participation'. The University is taking a very broad view of what falls under this definition: everything from participating as mentors in (existing) Peer Assisted Learning Programs, through work-integrated learning, to an elite form - the Global Futures Program, which will support students to participate in aid projects in regional Australia, the Pacific and South East Asia. Students will receive academic credit, not for the actual participation but for a piece of reflective work written about their participation programme. Credit will vary between 2, 3 or 6 credit points, according to the demands of the assessment (based on the length of the participation).

Queen's University (Canada) has developed its strong, service learning programme to incorporate student community work into programmes/courses for academic credit. By 2009-10, the University aims that every student should have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful service-learning project with academic credit (for example, the 500 new first-year students in the Faculty of Applied Science are each required to undertake a practical course. They can choose to build something in the lab in a traditional manner or, now, undertake projects at the request of the local community which will be assessed and count towards their degree. The second option is far more popular). Credit is not given for the concept

³³ Universities UK (2006) *'Studentification': a guide to opportunities, challenges and practice.*

of service but for the learning and the outcomes from the service (for example, 'did it achieve what it was supposed to?'). The management structure (see theme E) facilitates this type of development by linking student affairs and academic affairs.

The **University of Guelph (Canada)** offers a cluster of programmes dedicated to promoting civic engagement through its Leadership and Community Engagement unit. Project Serve is designed to expose primarily first-year students to the range of volunteer opportunities available to them in Guelph and Wellington County. During a Saturday in late September, over 400 students travel on buses to over 40 volunteer sites across the city. They volunteer for the day, in teams led by a senior student, and return to the campus to reflect on their experience. Volunteer placements include the Donkey Sanctuary of Canada, Women in Crisis, the Guelph Food Bank, and Meals on Wheels. Over 80 per cent of Project Serve participants consistently report that they will volunteer again as a result of their experience. Project Serve was awarded a national innovation prize by the Student Affairs and Services arm of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services.

Each February, during the winter semester Reading Week, Project Serve Canada enables students from the University of Guelph to connect with students from other Canadian and American universities and communities. Together, these students serve in collaboratively designed four or five-day volunteer placements in one or more communities. A variety of learning opportunities are integrated within these experiences. Education and reflection components are implemented to raise awareness of critical social issues and to encourage the development of a lifelong sense of responsible citizenship in students.

The Guelph Global Learner Program was established in 2005 as a means to further develop in students a strong sense of responsibility as global citizens. The University partners with NGOs (for example, Canada World Youth, Free the Children, and Solidarity in Action) which provide all of the logistical support (that is, they firm up the service sites, ensure that visa requirements are in order, and deliver pre-departure training). Service sites have included India (2007), Peru (2007 and 2008), Costa Rica (2006, 2007, 2008), Ecuador (2007) and El Salvador (2007), and placements have ranged from teaching in primary and secondary schools to greenhouse projects, alternative education programmes, and building/reconstruction projects. Students receive eight weeks of pre-departure training and preparation involving faculty and staff. A professional staff member serves as project 'lead' on the ground, and conducts regular reflection sessions throughout. Upon return to campus, participants take part in a Global Learner showcase where they offer highlights of their learning and experience to other participants and interested campus and community members. Student demand is high and the University plans to integrate these international service experiences within Guelph courses over the next two to three years.

The Working Group also noted the development of a number of 'degree plus' schemes. These are awards earned concurrently with study but assessed and awarded by the university, sometimes outwith the student's degree. These activities are often linked explicitly to an institution's employability strategy. They can be more or less integrated with, and related to, the actual degree.

The 'York Award' at the **University of York (England)** has a strong reputation as an established extracurricular programme of personal development. It provides a framework for students to acquire transferable skills supporting development at university and employability.

Since 2005, **Southampton Solent University (England)** has offered Curriculum Plus as an option for students. Curriculum Plus is intended to afford students the opportunity to broaden and enhance their learning and achievements beyond their core discipline. All undergraduate degree courses must provide students within the course structure with the opportunity to choose an option from the Curriculum Plus programme. Curriculum Plus units allow students to: do something different from the rest of the course; learn extra valuable skills; and get credit points that count towards their qualification.

In order to ensure the implementation of the Student Employability and Skills Policy, **Queen's University Belfast (Northern Ireland)** recognises the benefit of rewarding entrepreneurial behaviour among its students. From 2008-09, all new undergraduate students at the University are being encouraged to take part in Degree Plus. Degree Plus aims to provide official recognition and formal accreditation of a student's acquisition of employability-related skills from extra-curricular activities and achievements. Activities that count towards Degree Plus are widely drawn and include experience as a course representative, part-time job, voluntary work, holding office in clubs and societies, and so on. Participants are encouraged to use their PDP e-folio to record their achievement, develop their action plan, and assess their skills. Students will receive the Award upon graduating as it appears as an additional accreditation on their degree transcript.

From 2008-09, **Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand)** is also offering its students the chance to participate in and obtain a Victoria Plus Award. The three key aims of the scheme are to: raise awareness and understanding of social responsibility, leadership and employability; develop skills to help in the student's future life and work; and enable the student to gain recognition from the University for their contribution. Students must participate in a range of approved programmes and activities at University or in the wider community; they are required to attend a minimum of six workshops/presentations with at least two from each category from: Leadership and social responsibility, Skills development and Career development; and record and reflect on their experiences using the CareerHub folio. A minimum of 300 points over two years needs to be accumulated to apply for the Award (for example, helping new students settle in as a Campus Coach attracts 40 to 60 points; providing Peer Assisted Study Support attracts 60 to 100 points). Successful completion of the leadership programme leads to an award certificate and ceremony, and is acknowledged on the student's academic transcript.

Scottish examples, drawn from the self-selecting case studies and the November conference, include:

- Heriot-Watt University: student volunteering
- Robert Gordon University: Student Ambassador programme
- University of the West of Scotland: Student Volunteering Renfrewshire Partnership project

Conclusion

The Working Group is in no doubt that students are enthusiastic volunteers and will take up opportunities that universities offer. In addition, structured volunteering schemes bring a range of benefits: students gain skills and experience and complement their academic studies, the institution benefits from goodwill, and the community materially benefits from the activity. Many schemes offer academic credit or otherwise recognise the contribution the student has made - usually requiring the student to reflect on their experience. As with peer helping (as at theme G) there is a range of models to suit individual institutional circumstances. **The Working Group will take forward more work in this area.**

M Support for alumni

Notwithstanding the fact that many alumni appreciate being able to stay in touch with their former institution, the Working Group was interested to find examples of institutions providing support for alumni beyond the magazines and newsletters many send out.

The **University of Birmingham (England)** offers alumni a lifelong programme of support including opportunities to meet with old friends and develop new professional contacts. The University organises professional networking events - usually themed by employment sector - which provide alumni with the chance to meet a wide range of people at all stages in their industry or profession. In response to alumni demand, the University has developed a portal for a new online alumni community called your.bham. The university views this as a tool for alumni to use in whatever way is most appropriate to them (they can post and find jobs, track down friends and classmates, make new business contacts and network online, seek advice from others, and so on). This service also allows alumni to view and update their contact information so that they can continue to remain in touch with the University and their friends.

Oregon State University (USA) has a well-established Alumni Association. As part of a strategy to involve the families of alumni in activities, the Association purchases blocks of tickets for theatres and major sporting events in areas where there are known to be concentrations of alumni. These are then sold to alumni who attend the event knowing they will have something in common with fellow attendees. The Association also organises clinics with sporting stars (usually former students) for young people. Although all former students are part of the alumni community, the Association also promotes several tiers of paying membership which entitle members to various benefits and discounts.

The **University of Guelph-Humber (Canada)** believes that 'it is as important to support students out as in' and graduating students have strong contact with the careers service. A 'last lecture' event for graduating students (an initiative of some of the students) also brings closure to the experience. As a new university with only a few hundred alumni, events and traditions for alumni are being devised.

Scottish examples: are being sought in this theme area.

Conclusion

The Working Group notes that alumni value the opportunity to stay in touch with their former institution. As well as issuing newsletters and magazines, many institutions use alumni to inform and inspire their existing students through, for example, lectures, meetings, workshops and web profiles. From the scoping work, the Group notes that there are fewer examples of institutions providing actual 'no strings' support for alumni, yet there appears to be demand for this from alumni. Partly because of its close relationship with fundraising, this is a complex and sensitive area of activity and one which institutions tend to prefer to handle individually. Nonetheless the Working Group agreed that there might be merit in attempting to de-couple from the fundraising aspect by exploring some of the generic ways to actually support alumni (such as using technology) on a sector-wide basis. **The Working Group will take forward more work in this area.**

N Staff training and development

To underpin this work, the Working Group was keen to identify examples of ways in which institutions had approached staff support and development in relation to changes they might be making to the ways they support student success. The scoping work identified several institutions where fundamental changes had been, or were being, made to services, and where deliberate steps had been taken to ensure that staff were fully supported and equipped to provide those services. Undertaking and communicating research and evidence, along with regular consultation, are particularly useful features of an approach to major change which are appreciated by staff.

Student Services at the **University of Sheffield (England)** reviewed the support that they offered to staff based in academic departments who have a student support or student administration role. This deliberately research and evidence-based, highly collaborative project called 'Supporting the Supporters' drew in the views of around 400 staff in academic departments across the University. An improved range of support resources has resulted and are currently being rolled out, including publications, a dedicated website and other web resources and development activities. Resulting practical outcomes include a guide for staff, a new training programme and redesigned staff web pages.

Edge Hill University (England) has adopted a solution-focused approach, initially in counselling but now being rolled out across the University, including as part of staff development offered to all staff - academic, administrative and support. The approach starts with the principle that everyone in the University has a duty of care for students and that this extends beyond the student in crisis to the 'creation of an environment within which students and staff are able to realise their potential and their aspirations'. The approach depends upon acknowledging problems but at the same time focusing on alternative possibilities and the University has applied this to individuals and groups, helping clients identify strengths and resources, goal-setting and next steps.

Establishing communities of practice across staff with responsibilities for 'supporting student success', in varying combinations and degrees of formality, is another route to involving staff and obtaining their input, as well as ensuring they appreciate key university concepts and policies.

The **University of Leeds (England)** has established a University Learning and Teaching Support Network Forum for all staff who have a role in supporting, coordinating, administering or managing any aspect of learning and teaching at the University. The network fosters communication, dialogue and sharing of good practice among administrative and support staff in faculties, schools and departments/centres. An important aspect of the Network is to explore how to minimise duplication of effort across schools when it comes to developing administrative policies and procedures. The Network also acts as a communication link between central management/steering groups and the wider community of staff who support learning and teaching. The Network is primarily for those who support learning and teaching, rather than for those who deliver it, and the focus is on the systems, processes and structures that support the four main areas of learning and teaching administrative activities: admissions and recruitment; exams and assessment; programmes and modules (including approval, review, timetabling, quality); and students and records (including registration, references). In addition, the University has a forum for all staff with responsibility for supporting students to hear about and discuss developments in all aspects of student support. The Student Support Network provides a forum for all such staff to hear about and discuss recent developments in all aspects of student support - from recruitment, admission and induction through to academic success and employability. The Forum consists of a series of lunchtime meetings held throughout the academic year, a small programme of training workshops and culminates in an annual conference.

Scottish examples: are being sought in this theme area.

Conclusion

The Working Group is in no doubt that staff support is crucial to any changes that institutions, or the sector as a whole, might wish to make in supporting student success. There is clearly a need both to obtain staff buy-in and also to ensure that staff are fully supported and equipped to implement and deliver services. The other themes chosen by the Working Group for further work are necessarily, and justly, student-focused and the Working Group believes that a staff-focused theme - considering the needs and challenges associated with the identified activities - would complement this work and ensure optimum success. **The Working Group will take forward more work in this area.**

4 Conclusions

Listed below are a number of conclusions the Working Group has drawn from its consideration of Scottish, other UK and international practice in supporting student success and from an analysis of participants' evaluations of the November conference.

- Approaching this theme by using the broad definition of 'supporting student success', agreed by the Working Group, has been fruitful and is in tune with 'other UK' and international developments.
- Globally, there is a significant trend away from focusing on the activities of individual 'service silos' towards a more holistic definition and approach to student support services.
- Support staff in different professions do not necessarily routinely network outwith their professional areas and they welcome the opportunity to discuss and address generic student support issues collectively.
- The theme is timely - internationally and at home - and many of the institutions surveyed have given recent attention or are currently giving attention to the concept of supporting student success.
- There is already a developing role (and potentially room for growth) for student services centrally to work with academic staff in helping them to help students.
- Consequently there are a lot of new ideas and fresh thinking, and subsequent piloting and trialling going on.
- Context is key and what works for one country, area or institution may not work for another - fortunately there are very often many different models and approaches to essentially the same issues to consider as examples of practice.
- Many initiatives have started small and grown bigger, and many initiatives evolve or roll out to other areas, once their potential is established.
- Scottish institutions have already been giving attention to a holistic approach to supporting student success through various Enhancement Theme routes, among others. This could be built upon.
- Students are a huge resource in offering services to their peers. Students like helping other students and students like being helped by students, and sometimes respond better to this means of assistance and support than to institutional services. Academic peer helping could be considered and developed further in Scotland.
- Following on from this, student-run organisations are often the most appropriate and credible means of delivering certain services to students and further consideration could be given to this.
- Students like volunteering and structured volunteering schemes benefit all parties. Some of the more challenging issues regarding recognition and credit have been tackled and there is a range of examples of schemes and approaches that could be considered by the Scottish sector. This theme dovetails with current policy and practice priorities - including employability and the work of the Burgess Implementation Group.

- While acknowledging the delicacy of matters relating to alumni, further work could be undertaken in considering generic ways to support and engage with alumni in a manner unrelated to fundraising.
- Staff buy-in is crucial to any changes that institutions, or the sector as a whole, might wish to make in supporting student success. A consideration of the needs and challenges associated with the other identified themes could be undertaken to underpin and complement this work.

5 Next steps

It is clear from this report that the Working Group has embarked upon an ambitious and challenging agenda. It has stimulated the formation of networks, encouraged cross-service debate in the sector and provided opportunities for discussion using the internet and in person, delivered a range of resources and contacts for use by the sector as well as working definitions and a typology for considering a wider-ranging and complex set of issues. As such, it has met its overall aim of helping support the Scottish higher education sector in comparing with, and learning from, practice outwith Scotland.

In January 2009, SHEEC approved the Working Group's proposal that it use the time remaining to it to fulfil its other aim of **providing an assessment of where Scotland is now, how it compares, and where it might want to do more work**. To do this in a meaningful way, it proposed to prioritise activity on six theme areas identified earlier in this report. These are:

- A Strategies and policies for student support
- G Academic peer support and mentoring
- H Students' associations/unions
- L Service learning - volunteering and the co-curriculum
- M Support for alumni
- N Staff training and development

In taking forward this work, the Working Group will engage existing networks and also contact wider networks including, for example, human resources directors. It also intends to liaise closely with relevant Enhancement Themes - particularly Graduates for the 21st Century - and other initiatives such as the Scottish Higher Education Employability Network. In each of these six theme areas, the Group will identify in more depth the particular needs and issues that practice examples seek to address and achieve; the challenges and problems faced in implementation and delivery, and the lessons learned.

Annexes

Annex A: Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee Working Group on International Benchmarking - membership and terms of reference

Membership

Chair		
Caroline MacDonald	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning & Teaching	Glasgow Caledonian University
Members		
Guy Bromley	Vice-President, Academic Affairs, EUSA	University of Edinburgh
Yvette Brough	Campaigns and Representations Officer	Napier Students' Association
David Carse	Democratic Services Manager	Glasgow Caledonian University
Catherine Coales	Vice-President (Welfare & Education)	University of Stirling, SUSA
Iain Delworth	Academic Affairs Officer, USSA	University of Strathclyde
Ellie Douglas	Head, Student Support Services	University of Dundee
Jill Hammond	Head, Student Counselling	Glasgow School of Art
Nik Heerens	Head	sparqs
Eve Lewis	Education & Welfare Manager, Students' Association	Heriot-Watt University
Denise McCaig	Vice-President, Support & Advice	Glasgow Caledonian University
Gillian Mackintosh	Academic Registrar, Registry	University of Aberdeen
Ross Murchison	President, RGU Union	The Robert Gordon University
Ginny Saich	Institutional Educational Development Coordinator	University of Stirling
Linda Savage	Student Services Support Coordinator	UHI Millennium Institute
James Shield	Director of Representation, Student Association	University of St Andrews

Judith Vincent	Vice Principal (Teaching & Learning)	University of the West of Scotland
Jane Weir	Director, Career Services	University of Glasgow
Landé Wolsey	Head, Student Services	Queen Margaret University
Secretariat		
David Bottomley		QAA Scotland
Heather Gibson		QAA Scotland
Heather Norton		QAA Scotland
Bill Thomson		QAA Scotland
Jane Denholm	Director	Critical Thinking

Terms of reference

The piloting of a methodology for international benchmarking is one of the 2007-08 'Interim Year' activities, but will extend into 2008-09.

The task is to pilot some methodology for international benchmarking, using 'student support' as the topic for the work and with an emphasis on sharing and learning from practice internationally.

The overall aims of the work should be to: help support the higher education sector in comparing with and learning from practice internationally; establish a range of useful resources for HEIs, student associations and practitioners; and establish links with and sharing with centres of practice internationally.

The Group will have the responsibility of planning and coordinating the programme of work. Linked to the Group there will be a wider network of student support service staff and student association officers.

The work will focus on 'student support' services, but in particular it will narrow down a little to concentrate on the more 'academic aspects' of student support. The plan is to use the 'student journey' as a framework - starting with recruitment and admissions, induction, and so on, through to learning support services and to exit, careers and employment. We would also hope to learn from examples of 'integrated support services'.

Similarly, at this stage, and as agreed by SHEEC, it is envisaged that the work will involve: a range of commissioned research papers on developments internationally; workshops and seminars, including with invited international contributors; and perhaps visiting a small number of centres where leading practice has been identified.

As its first task, the Steering Group should develop a broad programme of work.

- The programme should include: an initial identification of key aspects of the topic where learning from international practice is likely to be of most value; identification of the international centres and countries with which comparison and learning from is most likely to be of value; and a series of activities.

- The activities might include: commissioning desk-based research and support work; building links with key international centres of practice; inviting international contributors to Scotland; and perhaps visiting a small number of centres where leading practice has been identified.

Updates on the work will also be reported to SHEEC meetings for comment.

Annex B: Programme of work

Between April 2008 and March 2009 the Working Group:

- held eight meetings to scope out the area of work, agree definitions, develop and monitor the approach, and conduct, and then report on, the benchmarking
- held a working conference on 20 June 2008 to further clarify the scope of the benchmarking and the issues to be addressed
- commissioned an international scoping exercise (including the rest of the UK) detailing around 70 examples of practice drawn from around 35 institutions in 12 countries and homing in on key developments internationally
- invited the Scottish higher education sector to self-select up to three examples of practice each institution considered useful to share with the rest of the sector, and collected these on a website
- held a major conference on 14 November 2008, with around 100 attendees, which was very positively evaluated
- facilitated networking and established a network of practitioners deliberately drawn from across the different services and professions related to supporting student success
- created dedicated web pages on the Enhancement Themes website³⁴
- evaluated and analysed all of the different information resources it had collected and determined a way ahead, considering in depth six theme areas
- reported to SHEEC on 23 January 2009, and, again, with this document in April 2009
- through contacts established as part of the project, provided a range of workshop presenters from Scotland, the rest of the UK, and Ireland, for the annual QAA Enhancement Themes Conference, March 2009.

³⁴ www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/themes/SHEECIB

Annex C: References to other resources

Individual institutional documents and web pages are provided in the Scoping Report. Further reading and references to documents used in preparing this report are provided below:

Black, F and MacKenzie, J (2008) *Quality Enhancement Themes: The First Year Experience: Peer support in the first year*, Glasgow: QAA Scotland, available at: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/publications

Centre for Recording Achievement (2007) *A survey of e-pdp and e-portfolio practice in UK Higher Education*, York: HEA, available at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/id631_survey_of_epdp_and_eportfolio_practice

European University Association (2004) *Developing an internal Quality Culture in European Universities*, Brussels: EUA

Gordon et al (2005) *Responding to Student Needs: Student Evaluation and Feedback Toolkit*, Glasgow: QAA Scotland, available at: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/publications

Gordon, G (2008) *Quality Enhancement Themes: The First Year Experience: Sector-wide discussion: the nature and purposes of the first year*, Glasgow: QAA Scotland, available at: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/publications

Irish Universities Quality Board (2006) *National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of Student Support Services*, IUQB, available at: www.iuqb.ie/info/good_practice_guides.aspx

Jackson, NJ and Lund, H (2000) Introduction to Benchmarking, in Jackson, NJ and Lund, H (eds) (2000) *Benchmarking for Higher Education*, Buckingham: OU Press

Knox, H and Wyper, J (2008) *Quality Enhancement Themes: The First Year Experience: Personalisation of the first year*, Glasgow: QAA Scotland, available at: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/publications

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and the American College Personnel Association (January 2004) *Learning Reconsidered: a campus-wide focus on the student experience*, available at: www.myacpa.org/pub/documents/learningreconsidered.pdf

New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit Academic Audit Reports, distillation prepared for QAA by John M Jennings, Director NZUAAU (July 2008) available at: www.nzuaau.ac.nz/nzuaau_site/publications/reports/audit_reports_index.htm

Society of College, National and University Libraries (Spring 2006) *SCONUL Focus 37*, available at: www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/newsletter/37/17.pdf

Scottish Funding Council (August 2008) *Space collaboration*, Edinburgh: SFC, available at: www.sfc.ac.uk/information/information_learning/presentations_publications/space_collaboration.pdf

Whittaker, R (2008) *Quality Enhancement Themes: The First Year Experience: Transition to and during the first year*, Glasgow: QAA Scotland, available at: www.enhancementThemes.ac.uk/publications

Universities UK (2006) *'Studentification': a guide to opportunities, challenges and practice*, London: UUK



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