



## Collaborative Clusters 2020-21

### First Call for Expressions of Interest

*Would you like to lead a project with colleagues from another institution as part of the 2020-23 Enhancement Theme - Resilient Learning Communities?*

#### What are collaborative clusters?

1 Aimed at promoting collaboration between institutions, the Enhancement Theme includes projects to be run as collaborative clusters. These are projects where groups of institutions agree to work collectively on matters of mutual interest within the broad scope of the Theme, which have the potential to add value to the whole sector once complete. Clusters will be asked to report on progress to the Theme Leaders' Group to share learning from their activity. Collaborative clusters will be supported by QAA Scotland through funding and, by negotiation, some staff resource.

2 In response to sector demand to begin work on high priority topics, we are opening a first call for expressions of interest for collaborative clusters. A second call will be made later in Session 2020-21.

3 You are invited to express interest in leading one or more collaborative clusters.

4 As an indication of the kinds of work we have supported previously, the following eight collaborative clusters were delivered as part of the Evidence for Enhancement Theme:

- distance and sense of belonging - online tutor toolkit development (led by Queen Margaret University)
- creative disciplines (led by Glasgow School of Art)
- graduate support in Scotland (led by University of Dundee)
- enhancing programme leader support (led by Edinburgh Napier University)
- learning analytics (led by University of Strathclyde)
- widening participation with lecture recording (led by University of Edinburgh)
- student mental wellbeing (led by Glasgow Caledonian University)
- beyond the metrics: the intangibles (led by Abertay University).

Every Scottish institution was involved in at least one collaborative cluster.

A range of outcomes and outputs from the clusters are available on the [Enhancement Themes website](#).

## How are the topics identified and chosen?

5 Supporting collaborative clusters has been a good way of ensuring the Enhancement Theme activity helps staff and students with their priority topics. From our discussions around the sector to date, the following have been identified as potential cluster topics - if you are interested in leading activity in these areas, we are particularly keen to hear from you in this current call:

- micro-credentials, skills and work-based learning
- postgraduate taught provision and student experience
- decolonising the curriculum.

In addition, we want to encourage expressions of interest for discipline-specific projects.

6 If we receive more suggestions for topics than we can support at the current time, we have a set of selection criteria, which the expressions of interest will be considered against (see paragraph 8).

7 We are particularly keen to receive proposals for work that can be completed or will have specific deliverables available for sharing by the end of the current academic year.

## What is the selection process and criteria?

8 The expressions of interest will be reviewed by QAA Scotland and the Theme Leadership Team<sup>1</sup> against the following criteria:

- the number of institutions (and/or student associations) actively engaged in the cluster (this must be at least two)
- the potential for the sector as a whole to benefit from the work once completed
- fit with the Theme (see our [Theme information flyer](#))
- the likelihood that funding could be found from another source (could the work go ahead without the funding and/or other support provided by the Enhancement Themes?)
- impact on/benefit to the cluster institutions and their students
- the extent of student engagement in the cluster activity
- the plans for disseminating outcomes across the sector
- value for money.

## What are the key dates?

9 Key dates relating to this call for expressions of interest are as follows:

- expressions of interest must be submitted to QAA Scotland to [ARCAdmin@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:ARCAdmin@qaa.ac.uk) by **noon on 2 October 2020**

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<sup>1</sup> Theme Leadership Team:

- Professor Clare Peddie (University of St Andrews), Theme Leader
- Professor Ruth Taylor (University of Aberdeen), Deputy Theme Leader
- Mr Alexander Hedlund (Heriot-Watt University), Student Theme Leader (2020-21)

- decisions on all expressions of interest will be reported to institutions as soon as possible after the submission date
- we are particularly interested in activity that can be completed by the end of the current academic year. For any work that extends into 2021-22, a detailed progress report will be required by **30 June 2021**.

## What is the level of funding support?

10 The money allocated to successful expressions of interest will depend on the nature of the activity and anticipated outcomes, so it is not anticipated that all clusters will be equally funded. Expressions of interest should include details of how much funding and other resource you are seeking and an indication of how the money will be used.

## What are we asking institutions to do?

11 If you are interested in leading a collaborative cluster, please submit your expression of interest using the form provided in Appendix 1.

12 Please indicate the kind of support you are seeking from QAA Scotland to facilitate your proposed cluster work. As an indicative list, examples of support might include:

- providing a repository of materials through the Enhancement Themes website
- funding production of written material or multimedia resource for use by students and staff
- support for the evaluation of an initiative
- assistance with developing a good practice or quick reference guide for students and staff
- providing a small amount of funding to enable an institutional activity to be extended for the benefit of the whole sector
- providing logistical support to allow a meeting to take place online or in person.

## Interested and want to be involved?

13 Before submitting your proposal, you might find it helpful to engage in our [Mural](#) activity. We are using Mural to help gather ideas from across the sector about potential collaborative clusters and whole sector projects relating to Resilient Learning Communities. Mural is a simple collaborative whiteboard where you can leave sticky notes and comments. You may have used this app before. If not, it offers tips to help you get started. If you need more support, we recommend watching this very short [tutorial video](#). The app works best in Chrome or Firefox.

14 If you would like to discuss a proposal or early thoughts for a collaborative cluster, we would love to hear from you! You can contact us at [ARCadmin@gaa.ac.uk](mailto:ARCadmin@gaa.ac.uk)

**Many thanks for your support and enthusiasm for the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme.**