



TLG Bulletin, February 2022 – Spring is in the air!

Welcome to the TLG Bulletin - your quick guide to the activity of the Theme Leaders' Group (TLG). Please feel free to share this with any colleagues who might find it valuable.

Photo credit: John Parks



We are now around halfway through year two and halfway through our current Theme, [Resilient Learning Communities](#)! Professor Ruth Taylor, Deputy Theme Leader, welcomed everyone to the first Theme Leader's Group of 2022. Three new staff and student institutional representatives had joined the TLG from the University of the Highlands and Islands, Robert Gordon University and the University of Stirling. Members were encouraged to share their learning using Theme resources with QAA Scotland (QAAS), through their Quality Enhancement Specialist partners. Institutions were also encouraged to contact QAAS staff to help promote forthcoming institutional events and activities that are open to sector colleagues.

The regular QAA Scotland paper gave colleagues a progress update across all aspects of Theme activity and brief highlights follow.

The Anti-Racist Curriculum project activity this year focuses on piloting and evaluating [year 1 resources](#) and Fraser Payne from Edinburgh Napier University is leading on that work. We are also delighted to have Dr Peggy Brunache from the University of Glasgow leading on the development of a workshop featuring the arts/humanities/social sciences that will inspire colleagues to use the resources in the Anti-Racist Curriculum [Guide](#). This workshop will take place on Monday 25 April 2022. You can sign up [here](#). We are commissioning similar workshops for science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM subjects) and medicine, dentistry, nursing, midwifery, and allied healthcare disciplines.

This year, the **Student-Led Project** focuses on **Promoting the Equity of the Student Learning Experience** and will consider how students and staff can support equity for diverse student communities to allow students to get maximum benefit from their learning opportunities in a more blended teaching

environment. The project Steering Group is working towards production of the first set of outputs, which will take the form of a piece of desk-based research to collate a set of key existing theory, practice and resources related to equity in learning and teaching, including offering a shared set of definitions for equity that reflect and support the diversity of the student population, and a 'Top Tips' document on how to break down barriers related to equitable learning and teaching.

Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning (RPL) and Experience – the Expert Review Group has met twice and considered results from a sector survey and agreed a plan to co-ordinate revision of the RPL framework for Scottish higher education. Re-writing the Framework is well underway and will incorporate guidance around the consideration of non-traditional qualifications (such as micro-credentials). The Professional Standards and Regulatory Body section will be renamed to reflect its increased scope and will include Employers and Apprenticeships. A first draft is anticipated at the end of March 2022.

Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland – a Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials has been established with participants from the Micro-credentials collaborative cluster, the Characteristics Statement advisory group, the RPL project Expert Review Group, and colleagues from HE and FE and sector bodies. Professor Jonathan Powles (University of the West of Scotland) is Chair of the Network and Dr Anne Tierney (Heriot-Watt University) is the Deputy Chair. At its first meeting, the Network discussed: the results of the work of the collaborative cluster project on micro-credentials from 2020-21; the results of a digital scan of micro-credentials information on HEIs' websites; the outcomes of an HEI and college practitioner survey on micro-credentials; and progress on the development of a micro-credentials characteristic statement. One of the key tasks of the Network is – is to develop a micro-credentials glossary to bring about a shared language to aid understanding amongst key stakeholders (including students, employers and PSRBs) and help develop the portability of these qualifications across the tertiary sector.

Our **Theme evaluation** consultants, Professor Stella Jones-Devitt and Dr Liz Austen ran an appreciative enquiry session, which allowed TLG members' views and insights to inform a theory of change model being developed for the Enhancement Themes. The TLG explored the different aspects of Themes activity that support a successful Theme and discussions were directed by four questions:

- What currently works well in the design and implementation of the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme?
- What would the perfect Theme look like?
- What would be the impact of the perfect Theme?
- What changes could be made to 'design' this into reality?

Members recognised the opportunity presented by the SFC major review to work collectively reflecting on what aspects of enhancement work well and embedding these in the proposed tertiary quality framework.

In other evaluation updates, TLG noted the Expert Reference Group had met again in January 2022. The Group provided a 'critical friend' perspective on the Theme evaluation activity. Stella and Liz continue to support capacity building in the sector and, following on from a November 2020 workshop, they will be running **Sensational Surveys: basic elements for success**. This will be a two-hour online workshop on

the 22 March at 14:00hrs and we will publish more details very soon. Information on Theme activities and events is available through the Theme activity calendar on the [Resilient Learning Communities](#) home page.

Our Student Theme Leader, Ondrej Kucerak, welcomed colleagues from Wales, who presented on the development of Welsh collaborative enhancement projects and progress on one of the first of these, the *Welsh Language Employability Initiative*. Holly Thomas, QAA, gave us an overview of the steps the sector in Wales have taken over the past two years to develop new enhancement initiatives. We then heard from Mr Huw Swayne, Ms Sian Harris and Mrs Megan Jones from the University of South Wales (USW) about the Employability Initiative. The project is focussed on supporting students who have attended Welsh medium schools, or have learned Welsh, to continue to use their Welsh whilst at university and promoting this as a competitive employability skill. Collaboration is with Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and four of USW's HE in FE partners. It was really interesting to hear how the Scottish enhancement approach has influenced the sector in Wales and about the project team's evaluation plans and future ambitions.

Our regular 'Air and Share' session provided an opportunity for colleagues to share their views and insights on progress and the tangible results beginning to emerge from Theme activities.

In our first informal TLG networking session in January, Dr Luke Millard from Abertay University led a really interesting discussion on the 'relentless student welcome', which relates to the work of the [Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community](#) (PARC) project. This project is aimed at better preparing the individual student to be successful; through a direct approach to targeting and supporting student need and utilising diagnostic testing of students on pre-arrival/arrival. We have recently [published the resources](#) from the [Re-imagining Resilience for Postgraduate Students](#) collaborative cluster. These include a Sway presentation and two live Padlets, so please do have a look and contribute to the Padlets.

We are continuing planning for our [8 and 9 June 2022](#) Enhancement Themes Conference. Registration for **Resilient Learning Communities - Inclusive, Flexible and Accessible** will be opening very soon!

TLG is a group central to delivering the Resilient Learning Communities Theme. The group leads, supports and evaluates the work undertaken for the Theme. Please get in touch with your TLG [institutional staff and student representatives](#), [Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee](#) representative or [QAA Scotland](#) if you want to know more and get involved in Enhancement Theme activity.