



TLG Bulletin, October 2022 – Reflecting, consolidating and sharing learning

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: Clare Parks



Our current Theme, Resilient Learning Communities, has started its third and final year of activity. At the October 2022 TLG meeting our Theme Leader, Professor Clare Peddie, welcomed new staff and student members including our new Student Theme Leader and Deputy, Heather Innes from the University of the Highlands Islands and Hitanshi Badani from the University of St Andrews, respectively. In her opening remarks at the start of the meeting Professor Peddie highlighted the significance of the 2022-23 session, which marks 20 years of the quality enhancement approach in Scotland, incorporating the Enhancement Theme activity. QAA Scotland are celebrating this milestone with our 20 Years of Enhancement campaign, a year-long [programme of activity](#) that provides opportunities for reflection and consideration of the future shape and direction of quality in a tertiary quality landscape. The campaign will culminate at QAA Scotland's 5th international Enhancement Conference on the 14 and 15 June 2023 at Glasgow Caledonian University. Professor Peddie also emphasised that in its final year, the Theme would continue to be used to help the sector move forward in a positive and proactive way in response to continuing global challenges: around the pandemic; economic turmoil and financial hardship; and conflict. Never before has resilience been so important.

Prior to the October TLG meeting, we held a briefing session for TLG student representatives to help familiarise them with Themes activity. We followed that meeting by sending out a ‘welcome pack’ with key information about how the Themes work, ‘who is who’ and some jargon-busting guidance. All our new student and staff members were helped to settle in to the TLG meeting through an ice-breaker session. We encouraged our members to talk about: what they hope to achieve in Year 3; their aspirations for the legacy they want the Theme to leave for their HEI and the sector; and alignment of student representatives’ ambitions with Theme activities. Our colleagues shared with us:

- the importance of consolidating learning, continuing with evaluation work to understand impact and starting to consider what activity might be sustained beyond the end of the Theme funding and could translate into policy and practice
- the importance of resilience as the cost-of-living crisis and financial hardship impacts on students and institutions’ and students’ associations’ responses to this
- the implications and consequences of an increase in in-person learning and teaching activity.

Following the settling-in icebreaker, Professor Peddie made a short presentation introducing the third year of the Theme and QAA’s aspirations. Her presentation covered:

- the highlights of Year 2 of the Theme
- ‘ways of working’ - the role of TLG members, HEI Grant Agreement and finance
- QAA’s role in supporting TLG members – Quality Enhancement Specialist institutional partner liaison, the [2022-23 Themes Calendar of Activity](#)
- the priority topics and focus for Year 3 – along with the new Theme diagram (see below).

Resilient Learning Communities: Year 3



Reflecting on all of the Year 2 projects, the Year 3 diagram recognises that many of the sector-level projects cut-across the two key drivers of the Theme: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Flexible, Accessible Learning. Promoting Impact is also a significant driver of Year 3 work.

QAA Scotland's regular update paper provided a commentary on the progress of new, ongoing and completing projects. We are very excited to launch two new projects in the final year of Resilient Learning Communities: 'Mind the Gap', being led by City of Glasgow College and the new Student-Led Project, 'Exploring community partnerships for the future of Further and Higher Education'. You can find out more detail in a look ahead at Year 3 activity below:

Anti-Racist Curriculum project – resources from Year 2 have been [published](#) and include 21 podcasts (all with closed captions or transcripts), four illustrations, two blog posts and a reading list. This work will continue, and (as in Year 2) will incorporate the work on Decolonising the Curriculum that started as a collaborative cluster in Year 1. The aim for session 2022-23 is to establish a practitioner-led Professional Learning Community that will sustain itself beyond the end of the project, and to publish examples of practice throughout the year.

[Student Mental Wellbeing](#) – TLG members will be aware that student mental wellbeing has been a high priority during the Theme, as have the needs of [refugees and asylum seekers](#). While we are not launching any new work in these areas during 2022-23, we are exploring the possibility of hosting a training session from the Mental Health Foundation about engaging with refugees and asylum seekers. This promises to be a valuable opportunity to hear from those with lived experience. More details will follow. We will also continue to attend meetings of the Scottish Government's Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Working Group and to work with sector agencies and projects such as the NUS ThinkPositive Initiative in order to ensure that links can be made between Themes projects and work being conducted elsewhere.

[Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning \(RPL\) and Experience](#) – following consultation with key tertiary sector committees, we anticipate that the revised Framework will be published in November 2022. The aim for session 2022-23 will be to establish a practitioner-led Professional Learning Community that will sustain itself beyond the end of the project, and to publish examples of practice throughout the year.

[Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland](#) – in 2022-23 the focus of the Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland project will be consideration of principles for micro-credentials to build into a good practice guide for micro-credentials for the tertiary sector in Scotland. The Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials will lead on the development of the good practice guide following on from the production of the [Scottish Tertiary Education Micro-Credentials Glossary](#) published in the summer. To support this work, institutions will be encouraged to offer case studies of micro-credentials practice to share experiences across Scotland.

[Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community \(PARC\)](#) – the third year of PARC will see the collaborative cluster reflecting on the implementation of diagnostic activity in different institutions. PARC will be developing a legacy resource to support other institutions' exploration of the benefits of a diagnostic testing approach to supporting student transitions, resilience and community. The collaborative cluster will be welcoming five new institutional partners from Scotland, England and elsewhere in Europe.

Mind the Gap: College Students' Experience of University – this is a new collaborative cluster, led by City of Glasgow College with Edinburgh Napier University and Glasgow Caledonian University as partners. The project will consider the perceptions and experiences of learning, teaching and assessment of college lecturers, university lecturers, student support staff, current college students and students who have transitioned from college to university to identify areas of crossover and disconnect between the two sectors and how transitioning students might negotiate and manage these. Student interns, who have college to university transition experience will be working on the project. The deliverables will be a research report and a suite of staff and student development resources for colleges and universities (outputs are to be decided but might include toolkits, podcasts or video).

[Student-Led Project - Year 2: Promoting the equity of the student learning experience](#) - the final outputs of the 2021-22 Student-Led project have been [published](#). These are a Student Rep Guide to Equity in Learning and Teaching, which was published in September, and a set of case studies. Members of the steering group also delivered [two well-received sessions](#) at the Enhancement Themes conference on 8-9 June 2022.

Student-Led Project - Year 3: Exploring community partnerships for the future of Further and Higher Education – The project steering group is continuing to discuss the outcomes and associated outputs they would like to develop for the project. outcomes and outputs are being developed at present and are due to be finalised through a steering group meeting on Friday 11 November. Further information will then be made available on the project pages within the Enhancement Theme website.



[Enhancement Themes Evaluation](#)

The Themes evaluation odyssey is continuing. We have [published](#) a summary of the work that Professor Stella Jones-Devitt and Dr Liz Austen have completed in Year 2 of the Theme. Stella and Liz walked TLG members through their activity from Year 2 of the Theme, including:

- the co-creation of a Themes theory of change model
- understanding the impact of 20 years of Enhancement Themes
- the contribution and work of the Evaluation Expert Reference Group
- the development of a digital Universal Evaluation Framework (UEF)
- sector capacity building support.

As we enter the final year of the current Theme, our evaluation consultants are continuing with further support for the sector in capacity building by providing feedback on Year 2 institutions' reports, delivering an associated informal drop-in session and a further two workshops. [Fantastically Active Focus Groups](#), was delivered at the end of September. Another workshop on [Confident Claims? Understanding your contribution to the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme](#) will be delivered online on 22 November 2022. At the 1 December joint Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee/TLG event we will be hearing about some preliminary findings from the 20 years review of Themes impact and the development and piloting of the digital Universal Evaluation Framework. We will share this with you through the December TLG Bulletin.

Themes web pages re-development

The [Enhancement Themes website](#) has been refreshed for the launch of the 20 Years of Enhancement campaign. Each Theme now includes a reflective summary, looking back at the Theme and its outputs from a contemporary perspective. The website also boasts a dedicated blog area for all blogs relating to the Enhancement Themes activities. Phase 2 of the website development will focus on improving the site search function to help users more easily access

our library of resources from the current and previous Themes.

[5th International Enhancement Conference: June 2023](#)

We are excited to welcome delegates to our 5th International Enhancement Conference, 'Shaping the Student Experience Together: 20 Years of Enhancement' on 14-15 June 2023 at Glasgow Caledonian University. The conference will offer delegates an opportunity to critically reflect on the impact of Scotland's enhancement-led approach to quality nationally and internationally, to engage with innovative practice developed through *Resilient Learning Communities* and the Enhancement Themes more broadly, and to explore the role of an enhancement-led approach to quality in a tertiary education landscape. We are currently exploring the ways in which a hybrid approach may be used to complement in-person sessions.

Our call for session proposals is now [live!](#) QAA Scotland will be operating a peer review process to consider and evaluate submissions.

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.