



Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience

Overview of Year 2 Institutional Reports

Executive summary

- 1 This report provides a summary of year 2 Enhancement Theme institutional activity.
- 2 End of year 2 reports have been submitted by 19 Scottish higher education institutions.
- 3 The main highlights from year 2 of Theme activity are:
 - The balance of work from the preparatory and scoping phase of year 1 has shifted to implementation, delivery and the start of evaluation work in year 2.
 - The work in institutions is wide-ranging, often complex, with projects and activity often being interrelated and co-dependent. Institutions' priorities and activities have had to change and be refocused sometimes, over the course of the year. This has been a response to resource challenges (often staff changes) and in response to the outcomes of the work itself.
 - Institutions have reported on a number of interesting points on Theme organisation, supporting structures and approaches covering what works well and areas for improvement. Ensuring the Theme aligns with strategic priorities and work is important and also considering the longevity and sustainability of projects and initiatives. Institutions actively look at ways to streamline organisation and try out new ideas. Delivering the Theme successfully means constantly monitoring activities to ensure efforts and resource deliver the maximum benefits.
 - The Theme continues to engage a variety of stakeholders across different functional areas (academic and professional support services). Student representation and engagement is effective with several students benefitting from appointment as interns (through institution and collaborative cluster project).
 - The collaborative cluster activity has been well received. Although there are challenges in committing staff to this work, institutions involved in cluster projects have reported on the benefits of participating in these formal collaborative activities, networking with colleagues to share mutual interests, and taking learning and insights from the projects back into their institutions. The clusters allow institutions to play to their areas of strength and pursue areas for development and provide another mechanism for student engagement in Theme activity.

- There are some examples of inter-institutional collaboration outwith the formal cluster activity. Institutions have also supported the different sector project strands (contributions to commissioned work, providing case study material, involvement and participation in the upskilling webinars, attendance at sector events) and actively participated in the Theme Leader Group meetings. A sub-group of the Scottish HE Planners Forum has been working closely with us in developing the HE Data Landscape resource and undertaking an in-depth analysis of Scottish sector National Student Survey performance. Institutions have benefitted from planning colleagues' involvement in this activity.
- The evaluation work is fully underway. 19 institutions have returned 30 small evaluation case studies. Institutions' efforts have been focused on the short to medium term and there are examples of institutions reporting on positive impact on the student experience (**Edinburgh Napier University** - Big Read; **University of St Andrews** - Student-led Teaching Awards; **Heriot-Watt University** - Student Success Advisors; **Scotland's Rural College** - mid-module evaluation; **University of the Highlands and Islands** - increased survey participation rates). Institutional reporting on the in-depth evaluations is at an early stage but there are examples of early outputs and benefits (paragraph 27). Learning points are emerging around the evaluation approach.
- QAA Scotland's efforts in year 3 of the Theme need to focus on the following activities:
 - promoting, curating and helping institutions to use the sector-level resources, making the most of the interrelated aspects of the Theme
 - sharing our learning from the evaluation approach so we build a collective view on how the Theme has impacted on the student experience on strategy, policy and practice.

Investigating the organisational and structural aspects of the Theme to better understand how the Theme is delivered in different institutional contexts, and to explore what works well and common challenges, may be a valuable area of enquiry as the current Theme draws to a close.

A second aspect that may be worthy of further consideration is exploring tools and methodologies for the analysis of qualitative data. This could link with the work of the 'Intangibles' collaborative cluster and activity led by the University of Edinburgh on the use of qualitative data for making decisions at scale.

- Looking beyond the current Theme, institutions have provided valuable observations on transition to, and topics for, the next Enhancement Theme.

Year 2 institutional reports

- 4 Highlights from the reports are detailed in the following sections.

Institutional teams

5 Five new institutional Theme Leaders were appointed during the year (Edinburgh Napier University, Queen Margaret University, University of Glasgow, University of St Andrews, Scotland's Rural College). There have been a number of other changes in institutional teams among both staff and student members. Some staff changes have related to balancing priorities, for example, supporting Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) activity. Other changes have related to broadening staff engagement, for example, Heriot-

Watt University had a member of its Dubai campus staff join the team. The University of the West of Scotland widened membership to ensure all of its five schools were represented. Staff members continue to be drawn from a wide pool of functional areas including: senior managers; academic areas; academic development; quality; planning; data/statistical analysis; careers; human resources; and other support services (for example, wellbeing, widening access). Professor Alyson Tobin took over the Theme leadership from Professor Karl Leydecker midway during the year.

6 In year 2, the number of students/Students' Association representatives has decreased. There were 28 student representatives of the 192 institutional team members. In year 1, there were 36 students as team members from a total of 179 team members. Students do continue to be actively engaged within institutions with several employing students as interns (**University of Strathclyde, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Edinburgh, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling**) with some of these students working on the collaborative cluster activity. Students' work is appreciated for its unique insight. **Queen Margaret University** reported that both of its student members had to stand down due to pressures of workload. The **University of Abertay** added the CEO of its Students' Association to its institutional team to assist with continuity of student representation. Institutions continue to aim for a planned and managed handover between incoming and outgoing students to ensure a smooth transition.

Institutional outcomes and activity

7 In some institutions, priorities and activities have been changed and refocused over the course of year 2. This has been a response to resource challenges (often staff changes) and in response to the outcomes of the work itself. The aim of institutions has been to focus on activities anticipated to yield the maximum benefits. Some institutions have identified work that is still in progress, which will be completed by 31 July 2019.

8 Appendix 1 identifies the key activities that have been undertaken by institutions in year 2. The work within institutions is wide-ranging with activities often having interrelated sub-elements. It is a challenge to capture the wide-ranging and extensive work being undertaken across the sector. Activity is categorised into one of the three sector strands, although the nature of the work often straddles the strands. A high-level summary of the kinds of activity being undertaken under each of the sector strands follows.

Optimising existing evidence

9 Institutions have been working on the following:

- developing a stronger culture of sharing effective practice in using evidence
- gaining a better understanding of evidence around the student experience and exploring alternatives to metrics-based evidence
- gaining a better understanding of key stakeholders' data needs and making data more accessible to users
- upskilling staff in using a variety of evidence, with a particular emphasis on programme leaders
- reviewing and enhancing key quality processes (annual monitoring and review)
- learning analytics
- linking evidence to learning.

Student engagement

10 There has been widespread engagement of students in year 2 of the Theme in a variety of ways. Student-focused projects have covered a range of topics:

- student sense of belonging and community
- student support arrangements
- student surveys/student feedback on their experience
- closing the feedback loop effectively
- student representation
- virtual learning environment developments and digital technologies and curriculum delivery including lecture recording
- analysis and use of Student-led Teaching Award data.

Student demographics, retention and attainment

11 Higher education institutions' (HEIs) work covers different student demographics and related topics:

- understanding and responding to non-continuation challenges
- predictive modelling of students at risk in STEM subjects
- supporting specific types of students - postgraduate, overseas and students with specific characteristics (students with disabilities, trans students, widening access students, pregnant students, mature students, MD40 students, students who are property owners)
- evaluating new delivery methods (graduate apprenticeships)
- supporting students' learning outwith the traditional classroom (work-based learning, interns, students on placement, study abroad exchanges)
- enhancing employability data and stakeholder access to data
- personal development planning to support achievement
- use of digital badges
- linking feedback to progression.

12 Three institutions reported on unintended outcomes/unexpected findings:

- The **University of Aberdeen** was surprised to see the extent of use of social media during its Annual Academic Symposium. The University will investigate using this further to raise awareness of the Theme-related activities in year 3.
- **Edinburgh Napier University** used crowdsourcing to develop a programme leader checklist and associated materials. This was very successful with the checklist and associated web-based materials informed by a wide group of staff across the institution. A positive, unintended outcome is that requests have been made for a similar checklist to support module leaders.
- The **University of the West of Scotland** reported that its institutional team facilitated some novel high-level strategic work, for example, in developing a new Assessment Breakdown dashboard that allows programme leaders and others to analyse the range and number of assessments by module across an entire programme.

13 Several institutions chose to highlight work that they felt proud to promote and these are reported below (extracts from end of year reports):

- The Big Read has been an outstanding example of generating a sense of belonging and community, which is now reaching the local community. Students have been working with the charity Streetreads to support homeless readers and collected and donated 1,000 books to the charity (**Edinburgh Napier University**).
- The **University of Aberdeen** has seen a gradual change in attitude, and an increase in activity, relating to the enhancement of teaching and the consideration given to gathering evidence and measuring impact (helped by the introduction of initiatives such as the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme and the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award).
- At the **University of St Andrews**, an additional improvement to this year's Student-led Teaching Awards process has been the introduction of a live dashboard to track data whilst the nomination period was active - including a breakdown of schools, award categories, unique nominations versus total numbers, and nominations by year of study. This was particularly helpful in creating excitement around the awards among School Presidents, and they were motivated to advertise the awards to improve their school's 'ranking'. This resulted in a substantial increase in nominations from last year.
- The initial impact of the Student Success Advisors at **Heriot-Watt University** is notable. These posts were only being conceived of at this time last year and are now having real and demonstrable impact on the experience of many students. While the full value of these posts will take some time to evaluate, they are already a [success story](#).
- The impact of the student survey process work at **Heriot-Watt University** will only become clear within a longer timeframe, but the initial responses internally are positive and the external interest in this project is reassuring that the institution is heading in the right direction.

Collaborative clusters

14 Institutions involved in cluster projects have reported on the benefits of being involved in these formal collaborative activities, networking with colleagues to share mutual interests and challenges, and taking learning and insights from the projects back into their institutions. The clusters allow institutions to play to their areas of strength and pursue areas for development, and provide another mechanism for student engagement in Theme activity. For example, student interns have been progressing work on the Learning Analytics cluster. The clusters also provide a mechanism for Theme engagement for staff who may not otherwise be involved with the Theme. The extent of involvement of each institution has varied and changed over the year as different institutional activities have taken priority.

15 One of the main challenges of cluster work is the commitment of staff time. Other challenges that have been raised include:

- being geographically distant from other cluster partners
- being from a small institution with relatively fewer staff but, conversely, in large devolved institutions, it can be challenging for the Theme Lead to remain abreast of all aspects of Theme work as outcomes from different elements emerge at different timescales

- being able to fully convey and harness the learning from cluster work within an institution
- having a very different context to other cluster partners
- timing of cluster and Theme Leaders' Group (TLG) activities.

16 Six cluster projects ran in 2018-19. Two were projects continuing from year 1 of the Theme (Creative Disciplines and Learning Analytics) and the following four were new starts in year 2:

- Beyond the metrics: Charting the intangible aspects of enhancement in the age of accountability (led by **Abertay University**)
- Developing graduate support in Scotland (led by the **University of Dundee**)
- Enhancing programme leadership (jointly led by **Glasgow Caledonian and Edinburgh Napier Universities**)
- Developing a toolkit for tutors to promote a Sense of Belonging for online, distance and rural learners at the module and programme levels (led by **Queen Margaret University**).

17 The clusters have worked in a range of ways according to the type of work being undertaken and cluster outcomes and outputs are varied. These are all available on the [Enhancement Theme](#) web pages.

18 We publicised a call for expressions of interest for collaborative clusters for year 3 of the Theme at the start of May 2019. The aim of this is to manage the bulk of the administrative work over the summer so that successful cluster groups can start their work early in year 3, thus maximising the time for delivery of year 3 cluster outcomes. The timelines also mean that institutions know which clusters they are leading/contributing to, at the time they are formulating their year 3 institutional plans.

Sector work engagement and other collaboration

19 Institutions have contributed to, and participated in, a range of QAA Scotland sector events and other activity, such as commissioned work (retention and progression), developing resources (student engagement) and upskilling webinar series (optimising existing evidence). The benefits are seen as sharing practice, which results in useful resources. The contributions of institutions have helped developed sector resources including:

- Responding to Student Voice resources
- practical resources around the upskilling webinars
- *Using evidence to explore retention and progression: Key discussion topics* booklet
- examples of innovative and effective practice on students using evidence, retention and progression and annual monitoring activities.

20 Professor Keith Smyth from the **University of the Highlands and Islands** has been involved in early discussions on the publication of a special edition of the Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice (JPAAP) which will be tied into the Enhancement Theme and published at the final Enhancement Theme conference.

21 A sub-group of Scottish Planners (representation from six institutions) has been working closely with us to develop the HE Data Landscape resource and to undertake an in-depth analysis of the Scottish sector NSS performance. While not categorised as a cluster, our work with the Scottish Planners has also provided a mechanism for participating institutions to benefit from working with others. One institution reports that one of the benefits of the Planners' involvement includes greater understanding of the relationship between professional services and academics. The Planners have also contributed their time to other

aspects of the Theme, such as the Enhancing programme leadership cluster and other sector strand work - Students Using Evidence.

22 Institutional engagement in terms of using Theme resources has been most evident through the upskilling webinar series. Institutions are also reporting use of:

- Student Voice Cards (**Edinburgh Napier University**)
- HE Data Landscape resource (**Abertay University, University of Stirling**).

23 Some institutions have also hosted Theme-related events, for example, the **University of Edinburgh** has hosted two events on the use of qualitative data for making decisions at scale.

24 The collaborative clusters have provided the primary mechanism for collaboration between institutions. Beyond the cluster activity, collaboration between institutions is mainly through networking opportunities at Theme Leaders' Group meetings and other sector events. A challenge in developing sustainable collaborative activity is the availability of staff and student time. The following additional collaborative working has been reported by institutions:

- The **Universities of St Andrews, Glasgow and West of Scotland** have shown interest in using **Edinburgh Napier University's** model of The Big Read.
- The **University of Aberdeen** and the **University of the Highlands and Islands** have collaborated to provide development and support for the first cohorts of staff from both HEIs to engage with the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme.
- The **Universities of Stirling and Strathclyde** are collaborating to review institutional approaches to retention modelling.
- **Abertay University** has found discussions with the **University of the West of Scotland** on its annual monitoring data to be particularly useful.

Dissemination

25 Table 1 identifies Theme-related activity reported by institutions, which is available through their websites.

Institution	Topic/project/activity
Abertay University	Teaching and Learning Enhancement Conference
University of Dundee	Importance of attendance and the role of the advisor
University of Edinburgh	Closing the student feedback loop resources
Glasgow School of Art	Importance of collaborative activity in the asset mapping process
Heriot-Watt University	Student Success Advisors Theme projects Theme website
The Open University in Scotland	Blog post on the Exploring Student Surveys event
University of St Andrews	First Chances Fife Programme

Table 1: Theme-related activity available through institutional web pages

26 Other mechanisms for sharing information on Theme activity and outcomes externally include:

- institutions hosting events and inviting speakers from outwith their institution (**Abertay University, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Stirling, University of Aberdeen**)
- national and international conferences (**Glasgow Caledonian University**)
- annual visit by sparqs and QAA Scotland officers (**Glasgow Caledonian University**)
- attendance at sector groups and events (Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee, Theme Leaders Group, collaborative cluster activity) (**University of Edinburgh, University of St Andrews, University of the Highlands and Islands**)
- QAA Scotland events (Focus On) (**University of Strathclyde**)
- attendance at groups run by other sector bodies (sparqs Academic Representatives Co-ordinators Network) (**Heriot-Watt University**)
- online magazine (**Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Stirling**)
- QAA Newsletter (**Robert Gordon University**)
- website (**University of Dundee**).

The **Open University in Scotland** has highlighted the importance of its work in constructing a dissemination plan.

The same mechanisms are often used for both internal and external communication, for example, the **University of the Highlands and Islands'** use of social media.

27 Mechanisms for sharing outcomes of Theme work internally include:

- institutional conferences/events (**Abertay University, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, University of St Andrews, Heriot-Watt University, University of Dundee, University of the West of Scotland**)
- formal and informal ('fika') workshops, seminars (**Abertay University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Open University in Scotland, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of the West of Scotland**)
- crowdsourcing (**Edinburgh Napier University**)
- newsletter/eZine (**Glasgow Caledonian University, Open University in Scotland, University of Stirling, University of Dundee**)
- practice exchange (**Open University in Scotland**)
- key institutional standing committees (**Robert Gordon University, University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, Heriot-Watt University, Scotland's Rural College, Glasgow School of Art, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland**) and programme committee system (**Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of the West of Scotland**)
- institutional outputs from the Communications team (**Robert Gordon University**)
- Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (**University of Aberdeen**)
- staff and student contacts, institutional team members (**University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt University, Scotland's Rural College**)
- good practice case study award (**University of Aberdeen**)

- email (**University of Edinburgh, University of Dundee, University of the West of Scotland**)
- student communication channels (**University of Strathclyde**)
- Teaching Excellence Programme - academic staff development pathway (**University of Strathclyde**)
- wiki (**University of Edinburgh**)
- intranet (**Abertay University, University of Dundee**)
- poster presentations (**University of Dundee**)
- induction events for new staff (**University of Dundee**).

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is exploring more innovative and diverse ways in which to disseminate its Theme work, using data visualisation techniques (PowerBI).

Evaluation

28 The formal Theme evaluation work is fully underway. The logic model approach is being applied across all levels of Theme activity (institutions, collaborative cluster and sector). All institutions have submitted evaluation plans identifying activity that will be evaluated in-depth or through a smaller case study approach or will not be evaluated. Some institutional plans have been adjusted during the year. For example, the **University of St Andrews** has adjusted plans to give its strands of work the necessary time to develop. The University is rolling forward two of its evaluation activities into 2019-20 to gather stronger evidence on short and medium-term impacts and is changing one small case study to in-depth evaluation. Where work is not yet complete, evaluation has not yet been undertaken.

29 The in-depth work is progressing with some short-term indicators being met. At this stage, institutional commentary tends to focus on what has been done, rather than impact on the student experience. However, **Scotland's Rural College** has reported that mid-module surveys have improved the student experience for pilot modules. The **University of the Highlands and Islands** reports a reduction in survey fatigue (evidence by increased response rates) through its piloting the use of region-wide surveys project.

30 Examples of outputs from, and activities around, the in-depth work include:

- development of guidance for staff that clearly shows the flexibility of the student course evaluation process (**University of Aberdeen**)
- a clearer understanding of programme leaders' data usage (**University of Strathclyde**)
- inclusion of three-year trends to further education (FE) and higher education (HE) annual monitoring data sets (**Scotland's Rural College**)
- completion of a consultation with students and staff on their knowledge and desires for learning analytics (**University of Stirling**).

31 30 smaller case studies have been submitted by 19 institutions (details are in Appendix 2). They cover the following broad topics:

- technology and learning
- developing and supporting good practice
- student surveys and responding to students
- student sense of belonging/student engagement
- staff support/upskilling
- student demographics and different student groups
- student support
- assessment
- subject-specific activities
- shaping curriculum design and delivery.

Not all institutions have submitted all their smaller case study evaluations as some work is ongoing and not yet complete.

32 Institutions have highlighted the following learning points from the evaluation work:

- the focus of the evaluation work on impact - thinking more strategically about how impact is evidenced and active steps to build this into project work from the outset (collecting a baseline of evidence)
- staff are encouraged to think about different timescales of impact and identifying benefits to relevant stakeholders
- more detailed consideration of project plans and greater articulation of plans in terms of the links between aims, goals, outcomes and impact
- not easy to identify reliable measures
- at times there appears to be conflict between what [we] consider to be the use of evidence to change practice, and how we evaluate the impact of that changed practice against the original evidence
- the value of student inclusion, encouraging student participation, and being mindful of the isolation that students can experience
- articulating impact for the purposes of evaluation has the added benefit of producing a story that can help us to engage more colleagues across the institution with the Theme.

33 In addition, **Heriot-Watt University** commented on the lag time between taking action and undertaking appropriate assessment of impact in relation to student surveys. At the **University of Stirling**, stakeholder discussions on learning analytics have surfaced several important reasons for the University to be cautious about how to interpret certain kinds of data, as well as laying the foundations of a set of student-led ethical principles to govern data collection and use.

Theme organisation and delivery

34 Ensuring the Theme aligns with strategic priorities and work is important as well as considering the longevity and sustainability of projects and initiatives. Institutions actively look at ways to streamline organisation and try out new ideas. Delivering the Theme successfully means constantly monitoring activities to ensure efforts and resources deliver the maximum benefits. Institutions have reported on a number of interesting points on Theme organisation, supporting structures and approaches covering what works well and areas for improvement.

- Ensuring the Theme work links directly to the Student Experience Action Plan and GCU Strategy 2020 helps the University to be discerning in its activity and focus on those areas that have meaning to it (**Glasgow Caledonian University**).
- We have also reinforced the approach that the enhancement approach underpins our work to meet our Outcome Agreement targets in key strategic areas (**Open University in Scotland**).
- Placing more focus on the sustainability of mini projects - how they can be maintained and built upon after Theme completion has prompted discussion on how collective lessons can be learned and shared across the institution (**Edinburgh Napier University**).
- Crowdsourcing information for the programme leader checklist was particularly successful both in terms of the breadth of knowledge that was harnessed and the range of contributors - the approach brought a vibrancy to the project (**Edinburgh Napier University**).
- Staffing changes have necessitated a more focused approach to the development and delivery of Theme work leading the team to targeting specific expertise and sharing structural resources and opportunities for embedding practice (**Queen Margaret University**).
- Although using existing committee structures to raise awareness and collect examples of practice has been useful, this could be extended, particularly at discipline level. This is just one example of where sharing responsibility across the Steering Group could be improved to widen the reach of Theme activity (**University of Aberdeen**).
- What is becoming apparent is that many of the projects/activities are interrelated and, as we enter the final year of the Theme, they will need careful coordination and communication of outcomes (**University of Edinburgh**).
- The Theme has been led as a top-down rather than bottom up approach (Student Transitions) but we felt that this Theme was more appropriately managed this way (**University of Strathclyde**).
- A streamlined approach to managing Theme work was introduced in 2018-19. The large institutional team, which met three times per semester was replaced with a small steering group, consisting of strand-leads, which meets once per month. The strand-leads are supported by students and staff from the wider institute as work necessitates. This change brought about several benefits (**University of St Andrews**).

- A funding call for small projects was not offered in 2018-19 to support a focus on core activities at a critical point (midway) through the Enhancement Theme cycle (**University of St Andrews**).
- It is clear that the projects of the theme must be flexible in responding to the changing priorities of the university. An example being the in-year introduction of a Pedagogy Working Group with specific intent to engender collective participation from Schools in its output. There was recognition that this took prominence over the Course Leaders project, but that, in its conclusion, would provide a natural stepping stone back into specific consideration of the role of Course Leaders (**Robert Gordon University**).
- We have tried to widen the pool of staff and students involved in Theme-related work as well as spread work around the institutional team, for example, partnering more experienced pedagogic researchers with those newer to this field of enquiry (**Abertay University**).
- We have tried to be more focused in our work, particularly compared to previous years and to work on a smaller number of projects but with more depth and with an eye to ensuring capacity to evaluate Theme-related work (**Abertay University**).
- It might be useful to include milestones and risk assessment to take account of potential conflicting demands and priorities (**University of Glasgow**).
- Appointing undergraduate interns on short-term contracts was reported as challenging by the **University of the West of Scotland** and this may be a disincentive to hiring students to undertake Enhancement Theme projects.

It might be useful to investigate this aspect of the Theme in year 3 to better understand how the Theme is delivered in different institutional contexts and to explore what works well and common challenges.

How are you using the institutional end of year report?

35 Institutions are distributing the report:

- to key committees (for example, Quality Assurance, Learning and Teaching, Student Experience) and higher level (Academic Council/Executive Board/Senate)
- for use at planning away days
- to key stakeholders (institutional team members, programme leaders, directors of learning and teaching)
- to key functional areas (academic, professional support, students' association)
- for publication on the web.

Scotland's Rural College is aiming to use the report to help engage staff and students in ongoing work on its two key projects. Similarly, the University of the Highlands and Islands is using the report to establish the progress being made and the support needed to ensure a successful year 3.

Supporting staff and student engagement

Examples of staff and student support

36 Institutions have reported on the approaches they are currently using, or intend to use, to support staff and student engagement with the Theme:

- funding of smaller scale staff/student projects (**Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Open University in Scotland, University of Edinburgh, Scotland's Rural College, University of Dundee**)
- encouragement to disseminate at events/attend events (internally and externally) (**Edinburgh Napier University, Robert Gordon University, University of Aberdeen, Scotland's Rural College**)
- encouraging staff and students to identify their own projects and solutions (**Edinburgh Napier University**)
- blurring the boundaries between academic and social activities (**Edinburgh Napier University**)
- showcase events to help promote Theme work (**Robert Gordon University**)
- student magazine publication (**Edinburgh Napier University**)
- subject-specific activities aimed at particular student groups (ethnic minorities in law and men in nursing) (**Edinburgh Napier University**)
- support to engage by specific university groups/teams (**Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Edinburgh, University of Strathclyde**)
- funding Students' Association staff to attend events (**Open University in Scotland**)
- delivering workshops and other smaller scale events (**Open University in Scotland**)
- supporting attendance at Theme-related meetings and events (**Open University in Scotland, University of St Andrews**)
- creating dialogue opportunities with key stakeholders (**Robert Gordon University**)
- employing students as interns (**Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews**)
- ensuring involvement and briefing of key student leaders (**Robert Gordon University**)
- formally recognising students' Theme contribution (Enhanced Degree Transcript) (**University of Aberdeen**)
- involving key staff and students in a reflective event to consider the strengths and weaknesses of approaches to the Theme work (**Robert Gordon University**)
- use of existing networks/fora to encourage reflection on practice (**University of Aberdeen**)

- using a variety of stakeholder engagement activities (focus groups, individual interviews, local presentations) to better understand how to engage with the knowledge and desires of students and staff (**University of Stirling**)
- meeting with new postholders to raise awareness of key Theme activities (**Scotland's Rural College**)
- targeting staff and students with specific interests (**Abertay University**).
- pilot projects involving module and programme teams, with each project strand drawing upon these and other activities in producing new guidelines, case studies, exemplars and workshop designs, and materials for staff and students that can sustain engagement beyond the conclusion of the theme (**University of the Highlands and Islands**).

Staff and student upskilling

37 Year 2 of the Theme has built on the scoping and preparatory year 1 work. Staff and student upskilling activities are detailed below:

- drop-in sessions for rolling out data dashboards (**Robert Gordon University**)
- training courses, programme of training, webinars and workshops (**Abertay University, Robert Gordon University, Scotland's Rural College**)
- RGU:Insight User Group (**Robert Gordon University**)
- National Teaching Fellow Scheme engagement is encouraging staff to consider the Scheme as a path for their own development (**University of Aberdeen**)
- monthly meetings of an institutional Pedagogical Research Network (**University of Aberdeen**)
- launch of a new process to identify and recognise good practice focusing on evaluation and impact (**University of Aberdeen**)
- using the expertise of a PhD student to upskill planning team members on statistical analysis of survey data (**University of St Andrews**)
- delivery of webinars on pedagogical skills aimed at upskilling staff in gathering and using evidence to inform and enhance their teaching practice (**University of St Andrews**)
- analysis of Student-led Teaching Award data to identify examples of good practice and dissemination of these through good practice workshops (**University of St Andrews**). **Abertay University** is using its Student-led Teaching Awards (SLTA) data analysis to inform content and delivery of its PgCert Academic Practice
- drawing on the Enhancing Programme Leaders collaborative cluster and HE Data Landscape resources to support Programme Leaders (**University of Stirling**)
- specific support of student interns including an induction programme (**University of Strathclyde**)

- use of the sector strand Student Voice Cards to inform work with the Students' Association and Student Representatives (**Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Stirling**)
- training and support for student representatives offered by the Students' Association (**University of Dundee**)
- encouragement to attend sector webinar series through regular staff round-up announcements (**University of Stirling**)
- delivery of five Open Professional Development workshops (data protection and security, dashboards, league tables, student voice data) (**University of Dundee**)
- a range of engagement and professional development activities (**University of the Highlands and Islands**).

Looking ahead

Final year of the current Theme

38 Institutional commentary has tended to focus on how institutions will shape their own activity in the final year of the Theme. The emphasis on institutional work is on concluding current projects, realising evaluation plans (to gauge impact) and also a focus on activities to help disseminate and share outcomes to as wide an audience as possible both internally and externally. For example, institutions have highlighted preparations for the 2020 Enhancement Conference and emphasised that the Conference should seek to promote the Themes work as widely as possible.

39 In terms of sector-wide work, the **University of St Andrews** has commented that there seems to be considerable interest across the sector in developing appropriate tools and methodologies for the analysis of qualitative data from student surveys; activities in this area may be well received.

40 The **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland** has noted from the work across the sector, it seems clear that we need to become highly-skilled at synthesising complex data sources into accessible and meaningful resources that can be shared and used in practical ways. The Transitions Map was an excellent visual reference to demonstrate the range of activity from the previous Theme. The Conservatoire would be interested to see something similar emerge from the work of this Theme.

41 **Glasgow Caledonian University** has reported that it wants to explore opportunities and possibilities to integrate processes, addressing some of the organisational issues that have emerged during year 2 of the Theme.

Next theme

42 In considering the next Theme, a number of comments have been made by institutions about the current Theme and Theme activity generally. These are about: transitioning from one Theme to the next, particularly bridging from the current to the next Theme; revisiting previous Themes; and ensuring Themes align with sector priorities and respond to external contexts:

- The amount of institutional resource for Theme work is low so needs to align with institutional priorities.

- There is a danger of learning from previous Themes becoming lost as staff and systems change. There is consequent scope for focus on consolidating learning from previous Themes with the aim of iterative enhancement. This aligns to the current Theme, where evidence is seen in the more holistic sense of evidence from the Theme process itself.
- We should seek to create greater linkages between each Theme by explicitly bridging the current Theme and the next.
- One institution commented that it had been a challenge for it to identify clearly focused activities for this very broad topic.
- The [current] Theme has questioned fundamentally what data we collect and how we use it. Due to its far-reaching implications it has, and is, taking time to implement the enhancements.
- The current and previous Themes have returned questions around the longevity and standardisation of practice developed and outcomes produced. It is clear that, across the sector, the embedding and resourcing of evidenced good practice in institutional policy/procedure, alongside the true engagement and 'buy-in' of the wider community and senior management in reflecting lessons learnt from Themes in long-term strategy, requires stronger support.
- The challenges around using data and evidence will continue to exercise institutions and there is much in the present Theme that could be carried over into a new Theme. A new Theme could focus on how evidence is used.
- The range and scope of work being undertaken within the Theme at present suggests that an extension might be useful.
- The experience and expectations of our students entering university has changed significantly in this time, as has their final employment destination. There is an opportunity to build on the previous work in this area and explore the new challenges and opportunities impacting our students. This might include work on health and wellbeing.
- There is an increasing possibility that metrics will be disaggregated to the level of subject area and so there should be an aspect of the next Enhancement Themes that addresses the disciplinary approaches to measuring the success of their programmes.

Suggested topics

43 In addition to the comments above, the following **topics** were suggested:

- student voice
- student and staff welfare/wellbeing including mental health and student support
- students as independent learners, building resilience
- personalised learning
- explore how we use data and evidence to test whether and how the interventions we design for enhancing the student experience actually work
- widening access
- a Theme around inclusive practice could build on some of the achievements of this current Theme
- increased sectoral activity/attention to the learning experience of differentiated students - a focus on the attainment gap
- a Theme that explicitly looks at equality and diversity issues within higher education, which could include concepts around inclusive curriculum and assessment, supporting students with seen and unseen disabilities and students from disadvantaged communities as well as students from other protected characteristic groups
- postgraduate student experience
- distance/online learning
- digital literacy, digital skills to support the student learning experience
- enterprise education
- assessment - understanding the range and purpose of assessment methods
- preparing for the future HE landscape (including work-based learning, graduate apprenticeships and digital skills)
- the 4th industrial revolution and higher education, for example, HE in a robotic age/Me and My Robot/The Virtual Academic
- co-production, challenging paradigms, changing dynamic of HE
- global-local learning links (especially considering Brexit)
- sustainability/education for sustainable development.

Appendix 1: Institutional activity year 2

Sector/institution work	Optimising data	Student demographics, retention and attainment	Student engagement
<p>Abertay University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops for staff and students exploring their evidence needs. • Joint project between Teaching and Learning Enhancement, registry and Planning Heads of Division in how to support Heads' use of evidence in annual monitoring. • Collection of data about evidence sources used by academics to help deliver workshops and written resources for module leaders and develop a resource bank for sharing practice. • Use of Jisc Digital Tracker data to support new VLE procurement and support staff and student digital literacy development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on supporting different student characteristics (pregnant students) and embedding race equality in the curriculum (Abertay is the only Scottish HEI to be awarded the Race Equality Chartermark). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-led strand of work is holding workshops around the use of student feedback through module surveys and closing the feedback loop and also on how the Students' Association can better communicate changes made as a result of feedback from the student body. • Analysis of Student-led Teaching Award data to inform PgCert Academic Practice content and delivery.
<p>University of Aberdeen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award to encourage and support staff to enhance their teaching through sharing examples of effective use and innovative practice. • Funding of nine projects through the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme. One of the projects was on exploring the effect of pre-submission feedback on student engagement and performance. • Co-creation, with University of the Highlands and Islands, of a pathway for the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project to investigate the sources of evidence that could be used to identify areas for development to enhance the PGT experience (selected data sources: the PGT student survey, degree attainment and retention rates and leavers' destination data). • Preparation for two digital badge pilot initiatives, one in the curriculum and one in the co-curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project to support Schools to plan how they will make better use of MyAberdeen, the institutional virtual learning environment (VLE) - in preparation for a more significant change to Blackboard Learn Ultra Course View. • New guidance produced on how the Student Course Evaluation Form can best be used, what its purpose is and how student engagement in the process could be enhanced.

<p>University of Dundee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of Senior Advisers to help share best practice. • Establishment of a Data Champions' Group, working with registry to create and disseminate useful and user friendly data sets. • Designed and implemented a single Module Evaluation Questionnaire for use across all Schools and programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four projects funded on distance learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - distance and belonging - global student experience - embedding resilience (part-time research postgraduates) - facilitating an online community area for the Med. • The Data Champions' initiative is also designed to improve retention and progression. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee University Students' Association has introduced the Student Voice Support Officer (SVSO) initiative.
<p>University of Edinburgh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting staff to make evidence-informed decisions to enhance the student experience through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sharing good practice at relevant internal network meetings - reviewing sources of data that support key quality assurance and enhancement processes with the aim of providing staff with clarity on how to access, interpret and effectively use data - developing existing and new training opportunities for staff. • Two sector-wide events on the use of qualitative data for driving decision-making at scale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further work to investigate specific non-continuation challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Services and Student Systems evaluating the pilot to provide a standard high-level analysis of student feedback to School student representatives. • Academic Services monitoring engagement with the staff-facing web resource on closing the student feedback loop and seeking more examples to add (including those gathered as part of sector-level work in year one of the Theme). • Sharing the graphically designed visual representation of the new student representation system. • The Students' Association implementing a handover document for all programme representatives to fill in at the end of their tenure. • Evaluation of lecture recording implementation: transformation phase.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Services evaluating the approach being taken for teaching/postgraduate programme reviews taking place in 2018-19 of providing areas being reviewed with key data to ensure that remit items explored during reviews are evidence-based and address key strategic issues. • Two small projects funded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The College of Science and Engineering would like to understand the attitudes and appetite towards the use of learning analytics to support student learning journeys. - Impact of Institute for Academic Development's Doctoral Programme. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigations around the Learn Foundations (new standard VLE template).
Edinburgh Napier University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crowdsourcing information for a programme leader checklist and accompanying website materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing work is the impact case study using the previous Enhancement Theme of Student Transitions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight mini-projects to enhance student sense of belonging and community.
Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explored sectoral approaches to supporting students with disabilities as well as surveying students locally to understand provision of services to students with disabilities, particularly with regard to their experience of employability development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Student Communication and Engagement Assistants to engage students and staff on key school challenges. • Development of a more automated and standardised process to close the feedback loop to students, particularly to strengthen student engagement with survey processes.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring the implications of the findings of the SFC-funded TransEdu project for GCU students and staff. • Ongoing work to develop a GCU Evaluation Toolkit to support impact evaluation of activities across the University. • Review of survey tools to provide baseline data for graduate apprentices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of revised personal tutoring arrangements. • Collection and publication of case studies on staff and student partnership working.
University of Glasgow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of annual monitoring reporting - review of local practice (school and units of learning) to identify good practice and areas for improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of new data visualisation tools (BIOline and Qlikview) to monitor trends in students' progress and identify areas where intervention may be required (mature students, MD40 students, and property owners are deemed at risk). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Representative Council development of a student rep toolkit for integration into the MyClassRep system. • Creation of a survey portal allowing students access to the results of all student experience surveys.
Glasgow School of Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trialling a participatory art process for gathering student feedback that could enrich the increasing dependence on metrics to assess the student experience. • Supporting and evidencing the student experience in an unexpected estates situation. 		

<p>Heriot-Watt University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the recommendations from the work on student surveys. • Six projects have been funded, which align with the Theme. Projects are on the following topics: assessment and assessment feedback; formative and peer-based feedback; students with disabilities; transitions of language students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Student Success Advisor role. The Advisors are undertaking a range of actions to help support students. Other activity is underway to support differentiated students (overseas students, widening participation students). 	
<p>University of the Highlands and Islands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking evidence to learning (initiating a range of pilot projects to implement and evaluate various evidence-based and data-led approaches). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking feedback to progression (a highly successful staff and student 'Student Reps Summit'). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking student representation to enhancement and belonging (a range of professional development events and pilot project).
<p>The Open University in Scotland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness and engagement of OU students around the ethics of learning analytics. • Work with colleagues in OUIS to showcase how the work they are doing uses data, what data they use and how that impacts on the student experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating the accuracy of the predictive model used to identify students at risk in STEM subjects and ascertain the effectiveness interventions carried out. • Investigating the reasons for, and possible solutions to, the attainment gap for students from deprived communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating distance paired programming techniques as an innovative pedagogical technique and method to increase student skills and develop sense of community.
<p>Queen Margaret University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of information pack to help raise awareness of the Theme across the University. • Renewed portal with data dashboard. • Ongoing work around 'metric of the month'. • Updating a collection of existing leaflets on external evidence. • Four small project bids funded. 		

<p>Robert Gordon University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A series of activities supporting course leaders, including their use of evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project to explore the experiences of students and staff to understand areas of positive practice, as well as areas for development, in the delivery of graduate apprenticeships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of several activities for a project to support the analysis and discussion of data sources pertaining to online learning aimed to develop an understanding of 'what works' for our current students in order to inform ambitions for growth. Aim is to deliver a series of modifications leading to a step change in the user experience.
<p>Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good teacher/good learner project - collection of 370 staff and student postcard and video responses. • Improving and developing new ways to support RCS' students with performance anxiety (involves development and analysis of online survey responses). 		
<p>Scotland's Rural College</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the annual monitoring process through improved use of learning/learner analytics, which incorporates a number of integrated work streams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of success - exploring UG and PG students' perceptions of success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital technologies in curriculum delivery - the aim is to improve the use of technology in learning and teaching to enhance the student experience and there are a number of different initiatives contributing to this work.
<p>University of Stirling</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project to improve student retention by improved targeting of intervention and resource to improve the student experience. • Review of the capabilities of current systems to offer learning analytics. • Exploring options to introduce/pilot Personal Development Planning. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an induction module for UGs on academic and digital skills. • Working towards a comprehensive employability dataset. • Developed a widget to be hosted on the VLE for students to search graduate destination data. • Developed a dashboard to show student engagement with the Careers and Employability Service. • Further developed Careers registration and Exit Survey data. 	
<p>University of St Andrews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on the nature and use of evidence to enhance the student experience. This work has several elements and includes an Institution-wide investigation into correlations between attainment and progression for different demographic cohorts. • Gathering and analysing evidence to inform the development of learning and teaching spaces. • Developing the link between evidence and pedagogy through a number of interrelated activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance attainment and build diversity across the student demographic - extend and enhance the University's First Chances Programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of nomination data from teaching awards to identify and share good practice.

<p>University of Strathclyde</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two student interns are creating a resource providing a baseline of knowledge to students on their digital footprint and GDPR. • For the using data effectively strand, the insight gained from our Survey of Programme Directors to better understand their awareness of data sources and their access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed two student interns to research and design an online course for students undertaking any form of international experience, industrial/professional placement or internship. 	
<p>University of the West of Scotland (UWS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff development plans are under development and the aim is to launch these on the new UWS Academy website in 2019-20. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloting of a structured mid-module survey to enhance student engagement. • Investigating and mapping student representation structures and reviewing associated policy. • Investigating the potential student experience with an e-democracy platform.

Appendix 2: Smaller case study evaluations

Technology and learning

- University of Aberdeen - Open Badge Employer Awareness Survey
- Scotland's Rural College - Digitally and collaboratively enhance student experience within a classroom
- Scotland's Rural College - Development of a range of electronic resources, which aid student learning and understanding of the college farm environment
- University of Dundee - Impact of lecture capture

Developing and supporting good practice

- University of St Andrew's – Using nomination data from Student-led Teaching Awards to identify and share good practice
- University of Aberdeen – Creating a good practice culture
- University of Dundee – Enhancing learning and teaching through Student-led Teaching Awards' data

Student surveys and responding to students

- Robert Gordon University - Student Engagement: Extension of the reach and impact of the suite of internal student evaluation questionnaires
- Queen Margaret University - Improving use of Module Evaluation information
- University of Edinburgh - Monitoring engagement with staff-facing resource on closing the student feedback loop and seeking more examples to add
- University of Aberdeen - Evaluation of the Postgraduate (Taught) Student Experience
- University of Dundee - Making a drama out of it! Improving the student experience through Forum Theatre
- University of the Highlands and Islands - Increasing student engagement with surveys

Student sense of belonging/student engagement

- Edinburgh Napier University - Graphic Design Reading Room
- Edinburgh Napier University - Worldwide Napier (student magazine)
- Edinburgh Napier University - Exploring Language and Culture through Film

Support/upskilling (staff and students)

- Edinburgh Napier University - Programme leader operational checklist
- University of Edinburgh - Supporting staff to make evidence-informed decisions to enhance the student experience: Sharing good practice
- University of Edinburgh - Supporting staff to make evidence-informed decisions to enhance the student experience: Holding a sector-wide event on the use of qualitative data
- University of the Highlands and Islands - Student rep summit

Student demographics and different student groups

- Edinburgh Napier University - Building an inclusive programme: Scottish ethnic minority law students and understanding barriers to engagement

- Edinburgh Napier University - Recruit, retain and prosper: A strategy for men in nursing and midwifery at Edinburgh Napier University

Student support

- Glasgow Caledonian University - Contemporary Academic Advising and Mentoring (CAAM)
- Glasgow Caledonian University - HEEAPs (Higher Education English for Academic Purposes)

Assessment

- Glasgow Caledonian University - Assessing the use of rubrics
- University of the Highlands and Islands - Assessment and feedback symposium

Subject-specific activity

- University of Stirling - The experience of psychology students on the student led elective, compared to staff-led electives
- University of Stirling - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Learning and Teaching Content in the Division of History and Politics
- University of Dundee - Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship - a phenomenological exploration of the experience of medical students

Shaping curriculum design and delivery

- The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland - Good teacher/good learner

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