



Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience

Overview of Year 3 Institutional Plans

1 This paper provides an overview of the information presented in updated institutional plans for year 3 of the Theme (session 2019-20).

Background

2 This overview is based on all plans from all 19 Scottish institutions. The plans provide a rich source of information on institutional priorities, delivery of activities and Theme organisation. Areas of mutual interest and collaboration are also reported in the plans.

3 Updated context statements highlight the following points about the Theme:

- the continued relevance of the Theme to institutions' strategy and priorities
- that activity is moving from implementation and delivery to consolidation, embedding learning, dissemination and evaluation, and continuing to involve and support as many staff and students as possible in Theme activity
- that institutions are looking beyond the end of the Theme at legacy resources and activity - what can be sustained in the future.

Some information is also reported on emerging benefits and impact.

Institutional teams

4 In year 3, team members continue to be drawn from a range of functional areas. In some cases, team memberships are being reviewed and refreshed to reflect a shift in emphasis on Theme activity, from implementation and delivery to evaluation. In some cases, institutional structures and processes supporting the Theme have changed following organisational or priority/strategic changes. Other changes have reflected movement of staff. Examples include:

- closer alignment of the team to widening participation activity (**Open University in Scotland**)
- establishing a smaller steering group to allow for more regular meetings and discussion (**University of St Andrews**).

5 Over the duration of the Theme, student representation on institutional teams has been relatively steady with 17% to 19% of team members being students/student representatives (see Table 1). Students have continued to contribute to activity across sector, collaborative cluster and institutional levels. Students have gained valuable experience on substantial projects (for example, at **Scotland's Rural College** and the

University of Strathclyde). For year 3, we welcome a new Student Theme lead - Alex Hedlund from Heriot-Watt University - and 14 new The Leaders' Group (TLG) student representatives. Ensuring continuity of student contribution is an ongoing challenge given such a high annual rate of student representation turnover. Through the Student Engagement sector strand work, QAA Scotland is working to provide students and staff with an opportunity to reflect on how the sector supports students transitioning into roles associated with the Theme. In particular, the student-led steering group will aim to produce resources which help institutions and students' associations support students as they take up roles on institutional teams and the TLG.

Table 1: Institutional team staff and student composition

Institution	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	Number of students/student reps and total number of team members					
	Student	Total	Student	Total	Student	Total
University of Aberdeen	5	22	5	21	5	21
Abertay University	3	13	3	14	4	15
University of Dundee	2	11	2	15	2	14
Edinburgh Napier University	1	11	2	13	2	11
University of Edinburgh	2	13	2	13	2	13
University of Glasgow	2	7	2	7	2	7
Glasgow Caledonian University	2	14	1	13	1	13
Glasgow School of Art	1	6	1	6	1	6
Heriot-Watt University	2	10	2	10	2	12
University of the Highlands and Islands	1	4	2	9	2	10
Open University in Scotland	3	13	2	14	2	16
Queen Margaret University	2	17	2	17	2	16
Robert Gordon University	1	3	1	3	1	11
The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	4	11	4	11	3	3
Scotland's Rural College	2	10	2	11	2	10
University of St Andrews	1	10	1	8	1	8
University of Stirling	1	6	1	6	1	7
University of Strathclyde	1	4	1	4	1	4
University of the West of Scotland	1	8	1	10	1	10
	37	193	36	200	37	207

Proposed activity

6 In year 3, generally activity is aimed at completing the work of projects established in years 1 and 2 and evaluating impact, rather than starting on new work. An overview of activity, broadly categorised under the sector strands, is provided below with detail in the Appendix.

Optimising existing evidence

- Building a comprehensive dataset on the location and ownership of evidence that could be used to enhance the student experience.
- Reviewing the use of data and evidence in key quality processes - such as, course approval, annual monitoring, institution-led subject review and Enhancement-led

Institutional Review (ELIR) - ensuring a greater focus on enhancement and recognition of good practice.

- Using evidence at macro and micro levels, for example, to support review of institutional strategy or in subject-specific pedagogical/curriculum developments.
- Staff and student upskilling in using evidence - activity aimed at stakeholder training and embedding resources with a focus on key roles such as programme leaders and student representatives.
- Establishing specific roles (for example, data champions, student voice support officers, student employability representatives) to support staff and student upskilling and dissemination of Theme activity.
- Data dashboard development, implementation (including staff upskilling), evaluation and refinement.
- Activity around technology - setting minimum standards for the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and using the VLE more effectively; evidenced-based approach to enhancing the online learning experience; evaluation of lecture recording implementation; piloting digital badge initiatives.
- Using evidence to inform the development of learning and teaching spaces.

Student engagement

- Activity around survey work includes: developing an intranet site devoted to module evaluation; developing guidance to enhance the use of the student course evaluation questionnaire; evaluating and rolling-out a mid-module survey pilot; implementing recommendations from a holistic survey process review.
- More effective closure of student feedback loops.
- Projects on developing a greater sense of belonging and community.
- Enhancing student representative structures, for example, in providing student representatives with a handover document when they take up the role.

Student demographics, retention and attainment

- Learning analytics developments include: supporting staff and students; involvement in Jisc pilot trial; developing underpinning policy practice such as developing student-led ethical principles.
- Projects focusing on specific student characteristics or delivery modes to improve retention and attainment: access students, students articulating from further education, black, minority ethnic (BME) students; students from deprived backgrounds (SIMD20); students with mental health challenges; graduate apprentices; impact of gender on achievement.
- Introduction of a new support role (Student Success Advisors) to support student retention.
- Building an understanding of student perceptions of success.

- Improving reporting and communication mechanisms for providing continuation and progression data to academic units.
- Linking feedback to progression.
- Projects using evidence to enhance student employability; specific module and course developments.

7 Links formed, and areas of synergy between different levels of the Theme activity (institutional, cluster, sector level and the work of Scottish Planners) have continued to grow. For example, there is considerable activity around staff upskilling through sector strand activity (QAA Scotland webinar series), the Enhancing Programme Leadership collaborative cluster led by **Edinburgh Napier University** and **Glasgow Caledonian University**, and the Scottish Planners' development of the HE Data Landscape resource. Many institutions are also focused on this topic. The students using the evidence project of the Student Engagement sector strand have now also delivered a set of highly practical-focused resources.

8 Activity in institutions is a mix of large-scale institutional-level initiatives and smaller scale projects in specific academic or professional support departments. There is considerable activity involving, or being led by, students within both institutional and collaborative cluster projects.

9 Some institutions are augmenting QAA Theme funding with internal funding, which is often focused at supporting smaller-scale project work bid for by staff and/or students.

Dissemination of work

10 A variety of actions and approaches are being used by institutions to communicate and disseminate work internally and externally in a coordinated way. These approaches build on the first two years of the Theme and are aimed at sharing outcomes and learning both internally and externally. These are summarised, as follows:

- face-to-face activities and events (such as fika sessions, workshops, knowledge exchanges, summits, conferences, focus groups, symposia, launch events, showcase events, staff development events, staff away days, professional networks)
- electronic approaches (intra and internet, virtual learning environment, email, newsletters, webinars, social media groups, blogs, wikis, e-bulletin)
- publication in peer-reviewed journals
- using committee structures.

11 Institutions are also turning attention to how sector-wide resources can effectively be promoted to relevant stakeholders. Institutions have highlighted the important role of team members and other key staff championing Theme activity and also involving students/student representatives in dissemination activity.

12 Other interesting practice reported by institutions including those listed below.

- The **University of Dundee** is using some of its year 3 funding to create lasting artefacts (stories, images, animation or other media) that emphasise the human factor at the heart of its engagement with data.

- The **University of Strathclyde** is embedding its data strand work into its Teaching Excellence Programme, an academic staff development pathway.
- **Abertay University** is working with its Students' Association on a new Student Partnership Agreement, which will include consideration of evidence-based approaches to enhancing the University/Association partnership.
- **Robert Gordon University** is seeking to create a 'capstone' output; the intention being to succinctly capture the breadth of activity undertaken by the University over the duration of the theme, providing examples of effective approaches and demonstrable impact. The output will also reference external resources and best practice.
- **The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland** is considering developing a toolkit of a similar nature to the Responding to Student Voice resources. It is anticipated that the toolkit could be used within the Conservatoire to engage students and staff in the topics of learning and teaching as a way to enhance communication at a metacognitive level, beyond the subject discipline.

13 Colleagues across the sector are preparing for the 2020 Enhancement Conference and for submission to other Theme-related events (three of the collaborative clusters will be offering sector-wide events). Institutions have been supporting various sector projects including submitting case studies ('Students using evidence') and examples of practice (annual monitoring and retention). External promotional activity is increasing through web page developments. Table 2 provides hyperlinks to institutions' Theme-related activity.

Table 2: Hyperlinks to institutional Theme activity

Institution	Topic/project/activity
Abertay University	Teaching and Learning Enhancement Conference
University of Aberdeen	Institutional Theme web pages Principal's Teaching Excellence Award (2018-19)
University of Dundee	Importance of attendance and the role of the advisor
University of Edinburgh	Teaching matters blog Closing the student feedback loop resources
Glasgow Caledonian University	Institutional Theme web site 2020 Scholarships Scheme (2018-19 projects linked to the Theme)
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
University of the West of Scotland	Evidence-based practice resources

Collaborative clusters and wider inter-institutional collaboration

14 The collaborative cluster activity continues into the final year of the Theme. The established learning analytics and graduate support clusters will continue and complete their work in 2019-20. Two new clusters are being funded and cluster partners are being finalised:

- best practice guidelines for supporting widening participation students with lecture capture (led by the **University of Edinburgh**)
- building inclusivity and promoting student wellbeing (led by **Glasgow Caledonian University**).

15 Table 3 shows the spread of cluster activity and contributions across the 19 institutions over the three years of the Theme. The cluster activity has involved every institution and one of the new clusters will involve *sparqs* as a partner. The **University of the West of England** contributed to the 'Intangibles' cluster. In year 3, **Glasgow School of Art** will be using the Creative Disciplines *Toolkit for Reflecting on Impact* in its activity.

16 Beyond the clusters, inter-institutional collaboration is modest and primarily through invitation to institutions' learning and teaching conferences and other Theme-related events. In this final year, the **University of Dundee** and **University of Edinburgh** are intending to collaborate on a data comics project. The project is aimed at making student-related data more accessible through the comic medium and drawing on informatics expertise. The Theme Leaders' Group provides an important forum for sector colleagues to network and share learning. Some institutions have reported sharing their Theme work in other sector fora such as the Scottish Higher Education Developers' Network (SHED), Advance HE, UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE), UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA). The Teaching Quality Forum (TQF) has also been a valuable forum for sharing the Theme work.

Supporting staff and student engagement

17 Following on from years 1 and 2, institutional plans show a range of ways for supporting staff and student engagement:

- project funding for staff and students
- practical support and guidance for staff and students undertaking smaller projects through, for example, using planning and evaluation templates; and identifying local champions
- funding staff and students to attend external events
- working closely with students' associations
- providing student internship opportunities
- providing upskilling activities (face-to-face, webinars).

Institutions are now considering the sustainability of Theme work, integrating approaches and activities into existing processes and structures. For example, the **University of Dundee** is reviewing its Student Partnership Agreement to ensure engagement with the Theme is explicit and sustained.

Evaluation

18 In year 3, the focus of activity is turning to evaluation and impact. 30 institutional light-touch case studies were submitted at the end of year 2. A further submission of light-touch case studies is expected in year 3 along with reporting on the in-depth evaluations. Submission of light-touch case studies, as soon as they are completed, will help to build the narrative about Theme impact on an iterative basis.

19 **Heriot-Watt University** will be undertaking a meta-evaluation project to evaluate its surveys work, the work on student retention, the wider projects and its involvement in collaborative clusters and other cross-sector Theme-related work. This meta-evaluation will be separate from the logic model work but will include the findings of that evaluation. The purpose of the meta-evaluation is to draw together the learning from all the Heriot-Watt activities connected with the Enhancement Theme. This should allow the institution to capture and share all the successful initiatives and outcomes as well as identifying the elements that were less successful and identifying why they worked less successfully. Heriot-Watt anticipates the learning from this will inform future enhancement theme activities as well as inform other enhancement work across the University.

20 Some of the anticipated benefits of the Theme activity reported by institutions are:

- better reporting and more timely mechanisms for providing data to stakeholders in a format that is useful, which will allow for more effective monitoring of trends and identify where intervention may be required
- enhanced understanding of data and evidence and how it can be used to inform practice, leading to more effective intervention and student support
- more effective decision-making.

Table 3: Institutions' collaborative cluster activity

Cluster project	Creative disciplines	Belonging/ distance	Graduate support	Intangibles	Learning analytics	Enhancing programme leadership	Lecture capture	Student wellbeing ¹
Theme sector strand link	Optimising evidence	Student engagement Student demographics, retention and attainment	Student demographics, retention and attainment	Optimising evidence	Student demographics, retention and attainment	Optimising evidence	Student demographics, retention and attainment	All three sector strands
Abertay University				lead	partner	partner		
University of Aberdeen					partner		partner	
University of Dundee	partner	partner	lead		partner			
University of Edinburgh	lead		partner		partner		lead	
Edinburgh Napier University	partner			partner	partner	lead		
Glasgow School of Art	lead							
University of Glasgow							partner	
Glasgow Caledonian University			partner		partner	lead		lead
Heriot-Watt University					partner	partner		partner
University of the Highlands and Islands		partner				partner		
Open University in Scotland		partner			partner			
Queen Margaret University	partner	lead	partner		partner	partner		
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	lead							
Robert Gordon University					partner	partner		
Scotland's Rural College					partner	partner		
University of Stirling			partner		partner	partner		partner
University of St Andrews					partner			
University of Strathclyde					lead	partner		
University of the West of Scotland	partner							

¹sparqs is a cluster partner

Year 3 proposed institutional activity

Sector/institution work	Optimising data	Student demographics, retention and attainment	Student engagement
<p>Abertay University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding workshops and focus groups on staff and student needs re evidence (in particular for Heads of Division, programme leaders and module leaders). • Supporting students to understand and use relevant evidence effectively. • Reviewing the institution's strategy and teaching and learning strategy, informed by evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build an evidence base around our access students and their student journey. 	
<p>University of Aberdeen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued work on the four elements of the Institutional Evidence project year 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Principal's Teaching Excellence Award 2019-20 - Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP) - National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) - Pedagogical Inquiry Network (PIN). • Recognising and developing students' transferable skills in the curriculum using behavioural markers. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using technology to improve the student experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supporting Schools to plan how they will make better use of the institutional virtual learning environment - piloting two digital badge initiatives. • Measuring impact : closing the feedback loop - developing guidance to enhance the use of the student course evaluation questionnaire.

<p>University of Dundee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data champions will work with school presidents to design and deliver smaller-scale projects locally that showcase the ways in which use of data can enhance the student experience. • Data champions will work with strategic planning to identify what type of data would best support annual monitoring processes. • Data comics project 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review our Student Partnership Agreement to ensure engagement with the Theme is explicit and sustained. • Work with the Student Representative Council and the Student Voice Support Officers to train and encourage students to be evidence-minded. • Develop a set of resources that will enable better engagement with data by students.
<p>University of Edinburgh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the annual monitoring PowerBI student data dashboards. • Use the annual monitoring student data dashboards for internal periodic review to ensure that remit items explored during reviews are evidence-based and address key strategic issues. • Explore support and training opportunities for staff using the PowerBI student data dashboards. • Strategic performance measurement dashboards. • Learn Foundations - minimum standards for Virtual Learning Environment. • Evaluation of lecture recording implementation. • Analysing student survey data. • Data comics project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further research into specific non-continuation challenges. • Beyond analytics: Exploring the impact of Teaching Matters on learning and teaching practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the provision of standard high-level analysis of student feedback to School student representatives. • Gather more examples of closing the student feedback loop to add to the staff-facing web resources (aligns with mid-course feedback evaluation and course enhancement questionnaire review outcomes). Continue to monitor engagement. • Share and evaluate the student voice mechanisms graphically designed visual representation. • Evaluate the handover document implemented for all programme representatives to fill in at the end of their tenure.

<p>Edinburgh Napier University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the Programme Leaders' checklist and Moodle site. • Development of impact narrative of Supporting Programme Leaders. • Development of impact narrative of Transitions theme work. • Development of Impact Narrative Quick Guide. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of activities around the belonging mini projects (evaluation developing an impact narrative, sustainability) and encouraging collaboration between existing and new projects.
<p>Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating the Student Experience Scholarships scheme identifying the factors that contribute to successful projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring the BME Attainment Gap in the School for Computing, Engineering and Built Environment. • Exploring the impact of late registration on the student experience at GCU London. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating the peer-supported community activity in the School of Health and Life Sciences. • Current and future online learning provisions in Glasgow School for Business and Society.
<p>University of Glasgow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve and maximise engagement with the annual monitoring process with a greater focus on enhancement and recognition of good practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better reporting and more timely mechanisms for providing continuation and progression data to Schools and Colleges in a format that is useful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRC Student Representation Toolkit.
<p>Glasgow School of Art (GSA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness among Heads of Schools and Programme Leaders of the forms of evidence increasingly being used by the Scottish and Westminster Governments, which require a shift in how GSA analyses the impact of its teaching, learning and assessment at all levels with regard to students' post-graduation experiences of making a living. • The work will involve using the <i>Creative Disciplines' Toolkit for Understanding Impact</i> and each GSA School will engage in connecting the toolkit to the range of enhancement of learning and teaching activities that are occurring in the current year. 		

<p>Heriot-Watt University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to implement its 2018 review of survey work and completion of associated smaller projects. • A meta-evaluation, which draws together the learning across all Theme projects and activities. • Hosting an end of Theme celebratory symposium. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the Student Success Advisor role. 	
<p>University of the Highlands and Islands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking evidence to curriculum enhancement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking feedback to progression. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking student representation to enhancement.
<p>Queen Margaret University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module evaluation (develop an intranet site devoted to module evaluation). • Five things project – this project is aimed at helping staff to engage with the data about their programmes that are already available and using this data to gain insights into their course delivery, issues and success. • Metric of the Month. 		
<p>Robert Gordon University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminating outcomes and impact of its Themes work strands. • Reflection on its longitudinal, strategic, approach to evidencing quality enhancement in preparation for its ELIR activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued enhancement of the online learning experience, using an evidenced-based approach. 	

<p>Royal Conservatoire of Scotland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a shared language of learning and teaching (staff and students). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build understanding of student perceptions of success. • Connecting entrepreneurship and evidence through the Make it Happen initiative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a better understanding of the mental health issues often faced by performers learning in a higher education context.
<p>Scotland's Rural College</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally evaluating the use of new data sets within annual monitoring activities to understand the effectiveness of work undertaken so far and to plan for further development. • Developing and delivering staff and SRUCSA development on use of data and learning analytics to further improve evidence-based approaches to enhancement. • Evaluating the mid-module surveys pilot from year two and rolling the activity out across SRUC. 		
<p>University of Stirling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Annual Programme Review Process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of linked activities involving staff and students to achieve maximum evidence-based impact on retention. • Learning analytics development including running a Jisc pilot trial and developing student-led ethical principles for the use of learning analytics at Stirling and related policy. • Employability - review the impact of the new student induction module - 'Stirling Essentials' - launched in September 2019. 	

<p>University of St Andrews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of evidence to inform the development of learning and teaching spaces. • Develop the link between evidence and pedagogy. Running an annual learning and teaching conference (open to the sector), with the theme of assessment. An advanced webinar training programme will support staff interested in beginning pedagogically focused research, or action research projects. • Production of a comprehensive report, which identifies evidence that could be used to enhance the student experience, its location and format - a first step to developing a coherent institutional approach to the use of data to enhance the student experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract useful insights from existing data. Topics of interest include correlations between gender/ethnicity/social background/schooling and module performance/degree outcome. • Enhance Attainment and Build Diversity across the Student Demographic - developing a taster course in lab skills for College (HNC) students. • Introduction of Student Employability Representatives. 	
<p>University of Strathclyde</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implementation of a series of faculty groups with the purpose of identifying key roles and responsibilities of programme leaders within the faculties. This work will help determine if an institutional programme leader role can be defined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the online course for students undertaking any form of international experience, industrial/professional placement, or internship. • Design and implementation of a campaign to encourage student participation in a course giving a baseline level of knowledge and GDPR (to support implementation of learning analytics). 	

<p>Open University in Scotland (OUiS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data users for enhancement - to raise staff awareness of how data is used in various ways to inform practice across OUiS. • Knowledge exchange workshops: Wellbeing in the Curriculum, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (OU four nations). • Fika sessions - monthly drop-in sessions provide an opportunity for staff to showcase outcomes of projects and interventions and demonstrate how evidence has been used to inform them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting students from deprived backgrounds: closing the attainment gap (SIMD20) - final phase (2019), writing up and dissemination of findings (2020). • Effectiveness of Psychology Hubs on student engagement and performance - further roll-out (2019) and evaluation of impact (2020). • Alternative, inclusive assessment practices for graduate apprenticeship provision - currently being evaluated. • Change of study intentions pilot - data insights guiding the Student Support team to plan interventions to improve retention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-led event - to take place in November 2019 with the proposed theme Learning Analytics.
<p>University of the West of Scotland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop staff to be able to use the full range of data sources to enhance programmes and modules. • Develop resources to support the development of new and enhance existing programmes in response to evidence. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop institutional practice and policy for enhanced student feedback systems.

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2020
18 Bothwell Street, Glasgow G2 6NU
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 0141 572 3420
Web: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk