

Higher Education: More than a Degree

Online Student Communities ► Extra-Curricular Communities

Case Study 3: Open University in Scotland: Big Blether 2021 Series

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What was the issue?

The Open University in Scotland has gathered feedback from students identifying the need for community forums, and how they feel they would benefit from a series of conversations with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. Piloting these themed 'Big Blethers' would continue to build the sense of community and wellbeing, working to promote good mental health in line with our Student Mental Health Agreement. This includes raising student and staff awareness of support available, ensuring signposting to services and resources, and maintaining strong, visible leadership in promoting good mental health. This project will also need to provide tailored information for groups of students with particular support needs to help address specific challenges and promote inclusion.

How was it solved?

Following the development and publication of our Student Mental Health Agreement, and collaborating with our student association, we are piloting a series of 'Big Blethers' which have a specific focus on mental health and wellbeing. Developing the Big Blether series will bring students together to create community, a sense of belonging and to combat loneliness. The events also address challenges associated with mental health; breaking down barriers and removing stigmas. The Big Blether will offer a series of online events, allowing students to meet and chat with peers, association representatives and staff, with the input of an expert speaker on a specific topic.



What comes next?

This project will engage students meaningfully in the development of healthy cultures and communities, promoting good mental health and wellbeing through the sharing of knowledge and expertise. One of the long-term aims of the project is to empower students to take these conversations forward and, as informed by measurement metrics, could become a continuing series of events post 2021. We will measure their success by gauging uptake and gathering feedback from students following each session. This will keep an open forum for students to engage with one another, while giving us information on how to tailor the future sessions to ensure needs are being met.



Find out more

This case study is one of 13 published as part of the Student-led Project from the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme.

The project in year 1 explored issues and themes relevant to how higher education institutions and students' associations/unions have recreated student communities in an online environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, what enablers and barriers this has created, and provides the opportunity to showcase and share examples of practice.

You can find further case studies and resources on the [Enhancement Themes website](#).

