End of Year 2 Report for: University of Edinburgh

The key purposes of this report are to:-

- provide a framework for HEIs to report on their Theme activity that has taken place over the year
- help share information across the sector on the benefits and challenges around Theme engagement.

Please report under the headings below. The report should be about 6 to 8 sides of A4 in length.

Institutional team

Identify any changes in Theme leadership, TLG and institutional team membership since details were reported in the institutional plan developed at the start of the academic year.

Two PhD Interns joined the Institutional Team from March to July 2022.

Evaluation of activities/outcomes

To make evaluation processes more accessible and user friendly, we have attempted to simplify (not minimise) the evaluation reporting process into 7 key questions (see below). Prior to completing these, it would be useful to refer to the QAAS website resource: A Guide to Basic Evaluation in HE (specifically, Section 8, Summary overview on page 23, and the Evaluation Checklist – Appendix A, on pages 28-29).

Please report each activity/intervention against the following questions in the Evaluation part of the template.

N. B. You may have already realised some of your objectives and/or these might be ongoing, so please delineate each question according to whether activities or interventions have been completed already in this reporting year or are in process.

(Easiest way is to delete either/or options highlighted in red in questions below):

Evaluation

Title of project/activity
(1) Appoint two PhD Interns to support Theme work and new activity
1. What change has been made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The PhD Interns have led, supported, contributed to and engaged with various activities both internally and externally with the aim of gathering evidence to understand what works for student and staff in community building: • Provided support to the project supporting students with disabilities (Health in Social Science) • Engaged with community building activities, including Community Champions (Moray House School of Education and Sport) • Supported the sharing of examples of practice and communicating the University's Theme work through the Teaching Matters blog and conferences • Contributed to the development of postgraduate researcher networking events • Contributed to the sparqs postgraduate researcher representation project • Developed a Theory of Change model (see below under 'Processes') • Implemented a postgraduate researcher representative roundtable+ • Updated the student feedback guide+ +see below (project/activity 3) Supporting new activity aimed to focus on those activities that make the most impact, that reduce attainment gaps and align with institutional strategic priorities as appropriate.
2. Why have we made it? (Rationale for the change)
We appointed the PhD Interns in order to be able to build on year one Theme work through more targeted activities (listed above) and to continue to engage students in our Theme work. The PhD Interns have brought a different range of skills and perspectives to the University's Enhancement Themes work. The PhD Intern posts also enabled co-creation of activities with students, for example the student feedback guide, the postgraduate researcher representative roundtable and the Theory of Change model. The Theory of Change model has been and will continue to be used to guide activities.
3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
Through the activities listed above we aim to identify what works for students and staff in community building. Outcomes are envisaged in the Theory of Change model.
4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
The outputs from the PhD Internships will be considered by the Institutional Team. Possible measurements of impact are detailed in the Theory of Change model.
5. Who has been involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
The PhD Interns have been supported by the staff Theme Leader and the Institutional Team in terms of identifying and prioritising the activities listed above.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Not at this stage.
7. Any things you have stopped doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

The opportunity to work with Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program students to explore community building and sense of belonging arose in year 2, however, it was not possible to progress this work during the PhD Interns appointments. We will consider how to continue this work in year 3.

Title of project/activity
(2) Share examples
1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
A continuing exercise to gather and reflect on good practice examples of community building activities from across the University and Students' Association. See 'Dissemination of work' below for examples.
2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
• To enable sharing of good practice examples of community building activities. • To learn what activities make a positive impact in order to inform policy and/or practice
3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
• An increase in good practice examples being shared and action taken as a result. • For activities which make a positive impact on community building to have informed policy and/or practice and be embedded within institutional strategic priorities as appropriate. • Ultimately, an increase in the effectiveness of community building activities.
4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
• An increase in good practice examples being shared e.g. in network meetings and through Teaching Matters and examples of where action has been taken as a result of this. • Changes to policy and/or practice have been implemented and embedded within institutional strategic priorities as appropriate. • Ultimately, through student feedback and attainment data.
5. Who has been involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
Good practice examples were identified through: School annual quality reports, Learning and Teaching conference submissions, the Principal's Teaching Award Scheme projects, and Student Partnership Agreement projects.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Not at this stage. Sharing good practice examples will continue in year 3 of our Themes work.
7. Any things you need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
Not at this stage.

Title of project/activity
(3) Progress specific recommendations from the 2020/21 PhD Internships
1. What change has been made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The year 2 PhD Interns were tasked to: 1) Implement a postgraduate researcher representative roundtable

2) Update Giving Feedback: A Student Guide

2. Why have we made it? (Rationale for the change)

In response to recommendations from PhD Interns appointed in year one of the Theme.

3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)

1) Postgraduate researcher student representatives will have had the opportunity to find out about different community building practices and to share successes and failures.
2) Students will be clearer on the student voice mechanisms.

4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)

Student feedback.

5. Who has been involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)

The PhD Interns led these developments in consultation with students and staff from the University and the Students' Association.

6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)

Despite concerted efforts, the inaugural postgraduate researcher representative roundtable had no attendees. This is being reflected on by one of the PhD Interns and recommendations for how to progress with this initiative will be provided to the Institutional Team for consideration.

Through the updating of the student feedback guide, we realised that another version for postgraduate research students was needed and this was subsequently developed.

7. Any things you have stopped doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

See 6 above 'lessons learned'.

Dissemination of work

Which mechanisms have been most effective in disseminating outcomes and resources internally, and to the sector? Please provide examples.

If there are materials and resources you can share with the sector, please provide details below.

The Institutional Team have continued to use existing committees, groups and networks to communicate about the Theme, to engage staff and students in Theme work, and to disseminate University and sector Theme outputs.

The May-June Learning and Teaching Enhancement Theme on the University's Teaching Matters blog was building community. The PhD Interns worked with the Editor to curate a series of blog posts:

- Introductory post
- PhD Intern post (another post will be published)
- Building community theme tag

Community and academic community are established tags on the Teaching Matters blog.

A blog post was also written for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Teaching Matters theme: Prioritising equality, diversity and inclusion activities through the Enhancement Themes – Teaching Matters blog (ed.ac.uk)

Information on the methodology and outcomes of the Health in Social Science project to improve the experience of students with disabilities has been shared across the University, including at the Directors of Teaching Network.

Building community was a theme of the University's Learning and Teaching Conference and there were many sessions delivered throughout and an exhibit stand on day 1 which was run by the staff Theme Leader and the Building Community PhD Interns. The Institutional Team were involved in developing the programme for the conference.

The staff Theme Leader and the two Building Community PhD Interns presented at the Enhancement Themes conference in June 2022.

Abstract and reports of Principal's Teaching Award Scheme projects on the theme of learning communities: Learning communities | The University of Edinburgh

A member of staff from the Institute for Academic Development, contributed to the Scotland-wide Decolonising the Curriculum in the time of Pandemic collaborative cluster in 2021/22. As a result, they created the Decolonising the Curriculum Hub to support work being carried out across the University to support thinking and action on decolonising the curriculum. The Hub outlines how to make a start at decolonising the curriculum alongside supporting resources and case studies.

Collaboration outwith your institution

How have you collaborated with other institutions? This could be informally by growing networks or contacts, or more formally for example, through collaborative clusters or sector work. If you have been collaborating with others, briefly explain what this has involved and what have been the benefits and challenges.

Due to the size of the University, it is not possible for the staff Theme Lead to know when staff and students are involved in Themes activity.

The University was one of the leads for the year 1 collaborative cluster Re-imagining Resilience for Postgraduate Taught Students. Additionally, as outlined above, a member of staff was involved in the Decolonising the Curriculum in time of Pandemic collaborative cluster in year 1.

University and Students' Association staff and students presented at and attended the Enhancement Themes conference.

University and Students' Association staff and students also attended the creative evaluation methods and sensational surveys sessions.

One of the PhD Interns made use of the Focus On materials Building a research community for PGRs (qaa.ac.uk)

Although, outwith the Enhancement Themes, the University is a partner in the QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project: Defining, measuring and supporting success for PGRs from Diverse Backgrounds

We have also regularly attended Theme Leaders' Group and Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee meetings.

Supporting staff and student engagement

How have staff and students been supported to engage in Theme activities? Please provide examples.

As outlined above, the Institutional Team have continued to use existing committees, groups and networks to communicate about the Theme, to engage staff and students in Theme work, and to disseminate University and sector Theme outputs.

Student and staff involvement with the Theme itself has primarily been through the Institutional Team. However, we have supported staff and student engagement with Theme activities (not necessarily badged as such) through mechanisms such as the Learning and Teaching Conference and the Directors of Teaching Network.

Processes

What are you learning from the processes, approaches and structures you are using to support this Theme?

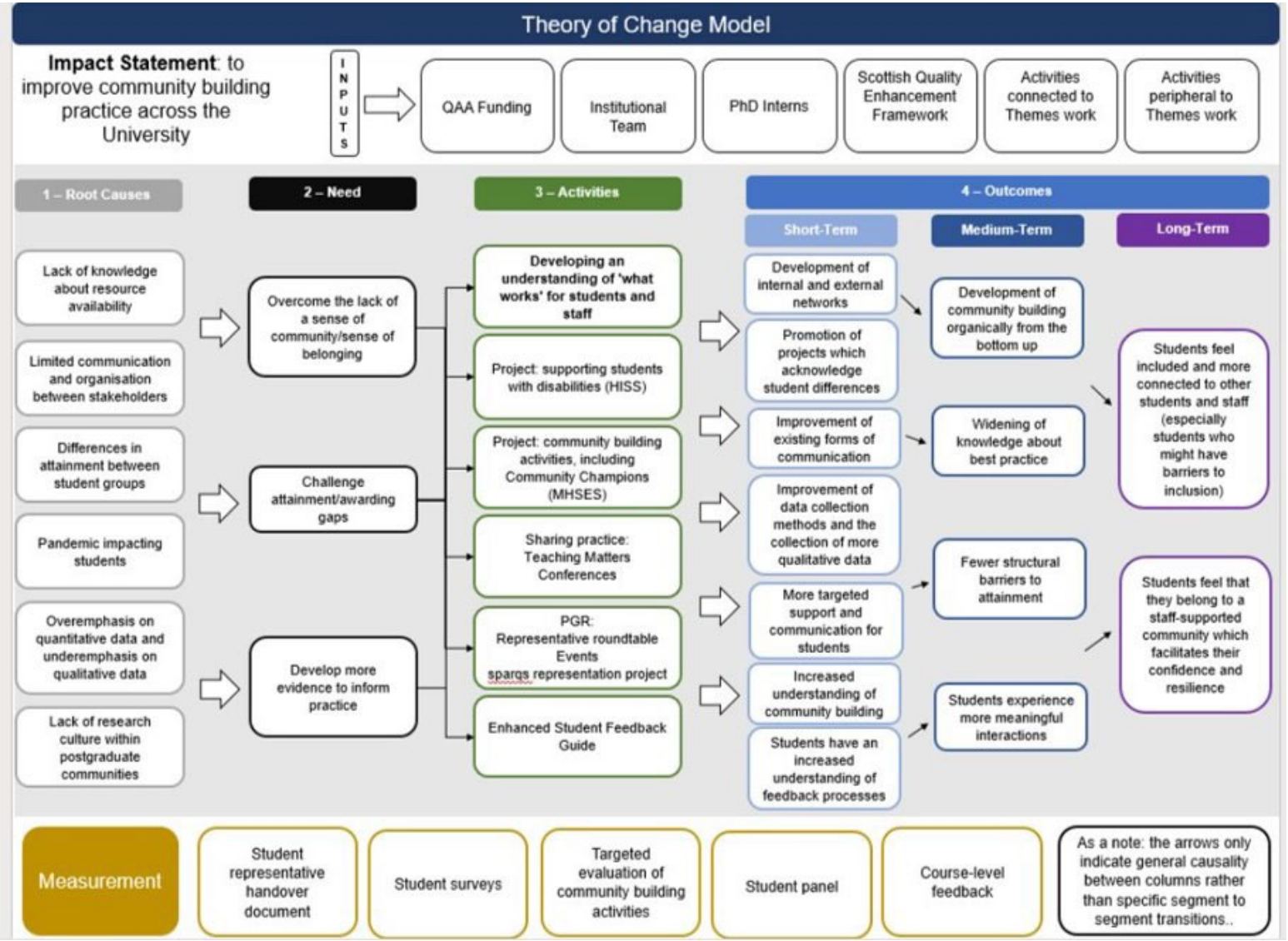
How will this report be used/distributed within your institution?

A theory of change model (below) has been developed to support our work on and develop our understanding of the opportunities and challenges within community building at the University. The model identifies root causes (as identified by the year 1 PhD Interns), needs, activities (with an overall activity of developing an understanding of 'what works' for students and staff), and short-, medium- and long-term outcomes. An overarching impact statement – to improve community building practice across the University – is accompanied by inputs and possible measurements of impact. This model will inform our approach in year 3 of the Theme where we will seek to take our learning on 'what works' in community building and identify opportunities to embed this in the University's strategic projects and activities. Primarily, these will be: the Curriculum Transformation programme; the Student Support and Personal Tutor project; and the Digital Education strand of the Digital Strategy. We will continue to use the Theory of Change model to monitor our progress.

This report will be submitted to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee and used to guide year 3 work on the Theme.

Enhancement Themes

Resilient Learning Communities



Looking ahead

In session 2022-23 we will be starting to consider what the next Enhancement Theme might focus on. We are interested to know about the discussions, hot topics and issues that are emerging in your practice and gaining increasing attention. Please share your thoughts and views below.

- Reflection on the impact of the pandemic on teaching practices. What changes made as a result have been kept and why? What changes haven't and why? Have positive and long-lasting changes been made as a result of what we have learnt during the pandemic?

- Understanding what works in learning and teaching. This could include: a focus on scholarship in learning and teaching; how individuals can evaluate and understand their teaching and student learning; potential actions at various levels throughout an institution; and perhaps a focus on sharing what hasn't worked and understanding why.

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