



End of Year 2 Report for: Robert Gordon University

Institutional team	
Following submission of the Year 2 institutional plan, the changes to the RGU institutional Team are highlighted in bold below:	
Institutional lead	Prof Lynn Kilbride, Vice Principal Academic Development and Student Experience
TLG staff representative	Dr Rachel McGregor, Academic Support Lead Susan Lawrie, Academic Support Lead (Maternity Cover)
TLG student representative	Damilola Adesanya, President (Education and Welfare) 2021-22
Additional members	Filippo Antoniazzi, Director of Student Life
	Laura Binnie, Dean, School of Health Sciences
	Prof Elizabeth Gammie, Dean, Aberdeen Business School
	Dr Duncan Cockburn, Director of Planning and Policy Development
	Prof David McLean, Dean, Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment
	Julie Strachan, Head of DELTA
	Fiona Roberts, Teaching Excellence Fellow

The project evaluations included in this report for Year 2 build on work undertaken via the University's engagement with the Theme in Year 1, drawing on the outcomes of completed partnership, engagement and consultation activity to define and deliver enhancements to the student and staff experience at RGU. The following table outlines the new activity undertaken in Year 2, along with the strands continuing from the first year:

New activity
RGU Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Continuing activity
Evolving RGU's Approach to Digital Learning
Supporting Whole-Person Education Throughout the Learner Journey
Promoting Retention and Success Through Inclusive Practice
Supporting RGU's Course Leader Community
Emerging Stronger Enhancement Award Projects

Evaluations

Title of project/activity
RGU Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment
1. What change has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>This strand was introduced to our Enhancement Plan during year 2 of the Theme and has evolved to become the key focus of enhancement activity at RGU which will take at least three years to be implemented. The multi-dimensional strand will support the university in defining RGU's future model of teaching, learning and assessment to provide an optimal and equitable learning experience for our diverse student body.</p> <p>The project has been structured into 3 parts:</p> <p>Part A - Portfolio Review: a comprehensive and criteria-based review of the academic portfolio has been completed by each of the University's academic schools to confirm which courses within their portfolio should continue to be offered and to identify any courses which could be disinvested in to release resource to support implementation of the other aspects of the strand.</p> <p>Part B - Curriculum Content: this aspect of the project aims to develop and articulate a clear vision about what the curriculum at the University should contain and how it should be delivered to ensure a stimulating, rewarding and future-focused student experience which incorporates valuable co-curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities. In combination this will support the University's commitment to produce RGU graduates equipped to excel in their careers as global citizens.</p> <p>This part of the project has been overseen by the Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment steering group and informed by student focus groups and 10 initial staff working groups. From this work a range of priorities were agreed and three short-life working groups were formed including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment & Feedback Working Group - reviewing the staff and student experience of assessment and developing a set of Standards which sets a consistent approach to assessment and feedback and enhances the assessment experience for all.• Modes of Delivery Working Group - focusing on confirming the University's future modes of course delivery and developing a set of Standards which will sets a consistent approach to course delivery and makes best use of digital learning.• RGU + group - focusing on the distinctive skills, knowledge and capabilities that a student will achieve by studying at RGU through curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities such as volunteering, fundraising, overseas student exchange, sports, exercise and work-based learning. <p>Part C – Portfolio Focus, Size, Depth and Breadth: this aspect of the project aims carry out a comprehensive review to identify the University's key areas for future portfolio development across UG and PG provision to ensure sustainability of course provision; to support regional and national economic development; and to support lifelong learning opportunities which equip graduates to excel in their careers as global citizens.</p> <p>The next stage of the FTLA project will include the creation of a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy in support of the refreshed RGU Strategy.</p>

2. Why **have we made/are we making** it? (Rationale for the change)

As COVID restrictions within Scotland lifted and a return to more campus-based teaching became possible, RGU turned its attention to the vital question of what the University's future model of teaching and learning will be.

Over the last couple of years necessity has demanded that course provision has been creatively and rapidly adapted and members of RGU's learning community have experienced a variety of different modes, including fully online, blended and hybrid. The University has actively gathered feedback to understand the impact on students and staff, and this has highlighted both positive aspects that the University may wish to retain, as well as areas of potential challenge. Accordingly, this work is necessary to futureproof the University's educational model, ensure it keeps pace with the evolving needs and expectations of students, and is sustainable into the future.

This aligns to the initial objectives around the Enhancement theme, Resilient Learning Communities, as we aim to ensure the resilience of our course provision and ensure our learners are supported to excel throughout every stage of their student journey and professional lives.

Focusing on Part B outlined above, and following on from an in-depth consultation with students and colleagues via focus groups and working groups, a series of RGU Standards to guide and enhance the teaching, learning and assessment activities have been produced:

- RGU Assessment and Feedback Standard – to guide assessment and feedback practices within the University.
- RGU Blended Learning Standard – to articulate RGU's distinctive approach to the delivery of teaching and learning.
- RGU Digital Learning Standard – to articulate RGU's distinctive approach to the use of digital learning and ensure a high-quality, consistent and cohesive experience for all students in the online aspects of their studies.
- RGU Academic Calendar Guidance – to provide planning guidance and ensure opportunities for supported transition within and between stages of study.

These Standards will take effect via a staged implementation from the next academic year 2022-23 with further enhancements planned for 2023-24, giving time to upskill colleagues through a staff development programme, and make appropriate course changes.

RGU+ - principles are being devised to support the objective of providing every RGU student with an "RGU additionality" credit bearing opportunity. This could include volunteering, community engagement experience/placement, study abroad/student mobility, public service such as charity trustee, children's panel, civic partnership and many other opportunities. Incremental developments will be launched over the next 2 academic years thus further enhancing student employability skills and supporting our students to become global citizens.

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

The changes envisaged associated with this strand are wide ranging and impact every aspect of the student journey from admissions to graduation.

The immediate changes expected are:

- Development of a clear vision for RGU's future model of teaching, learning and assessment.
- A shared vocabulary across the University to describe features of the RGU student experience.

- Consistency of the RGU student experience which draws on the best of existing practice from across each of our academic schools.
- The transformation of the assessment workload should enable students to balance study, work and personal commitments more effectively; engage more readily with formative learning activities throughout their studies; and be better prepared for summative assessments.
- The transformation of the assessment workload should enable staff to commit more time to support students with formative activities throughout course delivery; and balance marking, teaching, research and professional development commitments more effectively.
- Increased in-person time with staff and peers will be highly beneficial following extended periods of disruption in secondary, further and higher education and enables enhanced support for students.
- Clear messaging to students about the importance of attending and engaging with their course and support to re-engage in the event of attendance or engagement challenges.
- Further enhancement to the accessibility of our courses and equity of experience for students.

Anticipated longer-term changes include:

- Further adaptations to course design, delivery, and assessment;
- Widened access to RGU's courses and more inclusive modes of engagement;
- Enhancement of RGU's physical and digital learning environments;
- Enhancement to the provision of student-facing support.

The implementation of the standards should not only provide a more consistent and equitable experience for students at RGU but will upskill staff in their academic practice and assist workload scheduling, thus enhancing the staff and student experience as follows:

- RGU Assessment and Feedback – all students have opportunities to engage with assessment and feedback which extends and enhances their knowledge and skills; offers a balanced and manageable assessment load and provides good quality, effective feedback in a consistent manner. Staff now have specific principles and guidance to follow which should enable development of their academic practice in a positive and consistent manner whilst reducing their assessment workload.
- RGU Blended Learning Standard –all students are offered an engaging and inclusive learning experience which makes effective use of in-person and online delivery. Staff have the necessary guidance and principles to ensure that they can deliver effectively incorporating digitally enhanced activities where appropriate.
- RGU Digital Learning Standard –all students are supported to learn in a consistent, cohesive and inclusive digital learning environment, reflecting RGU's aims to provide a vibrant, equitable and future-focused learning experience. Staff benefit by having a baseline, guidance and training to assist with their delivery planning and execution.
- RGU Academic Calendar Guidance – to ensure a positive impact for students and staff in terms of activity planning. Inclusion of reflection points will consolidate learning, reflect on progress and development goals, have a concentrated focus on learning and development priorities etc. Importantly, they provide the opportunity for students and staff to engage with and between each other to determine progress and map out a successful path forward.

The staff development resources, as well as training sessions, should ensure staff are well positioned to adhere to the standards as well as encouraging meaningful course team development work around key pedagogic topics such as embedding of formative activities, scaffolding of learning and assessment feedback design.

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

The impact of the project will be measured via a range of key student satisfaction metrics that RGU use for data gathering such as internal Student Evaluation Questionnaires (SEQs) and National Student Survey (NSS) as well as student performance data on achievement, progression and retention.

Additional impact insights will also be drawn from Course and School Appraisal Reports, Institutional Appraisal reports, External Examiner feedback and staff feedback including via engagement of academic staff in CPD sessions.

As this is a multi-year project, feedback will be considered on an ongoing basis to help shape future priorities and continually refine approaches.

Reflecting on the impact of this work in relation to the objectives of the Resilient Learning Communities' enhancement theme, we are confident that these will be fully achieved. The wide-reaching strategic approach will shape and enhance every element of the learning experience and environment for our diverse communities. The RGU Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment project has absorbed several of our earlier enhancement strands to ensure a cohesive approach to our enhancement work. This continuous development will extend beyond the theme period and provide a sustainable, future-focused course portfolio and learning infrastructure to ensure our graduates are equipped to excel in their careers as global citizens. Following implementation of this vast project we expect to be in a position to influence external practice and share our insights in the future.

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

The project has been led by the Vice Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience who has involved many staff and students across the University in an effective model of inclusion and consultation. Initially 10 working groups were formed addressing key questions within the areas of Co-curricular activities, Assessment, Digital & Digital Literacy, ED & I, Employability, Modes of Delivery, Work Based Learning, Collaborative & Community Engagement, Internationalisation and Research. Their initial findings were presented to the Vice Principal via the Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Steering Group. Subsequently, 3 areas were prioritised for initial action to address Modes of Learning, Assessment and Feedback, and RGU+.

The draft standards that evolved from these working groups were then issued for consultation around RGU at a variety of levels including Deans, Academic Strategic Leads (ASLs), School Office Managers (SOMs), Lecturers, Professional Services staff and students. Feedback from staff and students was used to shape the final set of Standards issued in April 2022. Accompanying templates and guidance documentation were also developed using this consultative model to ensure both the Standards and supporting information are authentic to RGU, reflective of existing good practice; and to engender buy-in across the community.

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

Drawing on knowledge and experience across the University in the early formation of the working groups allowed sharing and discussion of key issues from the outset of the project. Tight deadlines and short life working groups ensured the impetus to facilitate tangible progress in a timely manner and appropriate decisions taken to allow change to be implemented in advance of the next academic year. The inclusion of the student body in the consultation process was also of great value with the sharing of their experiences and views helping to underpin key aspects of decision

making. The initial student focus groups who met with the VP drove the over-arching priority areas and assisted in the shaping of the project themes.

Having a steering group to oversee the wider project strands ensured consistency of each aspect of the project alignment particularly in relation to outputs. Consultation across the schools gave staff a “voice “in the change process and ensured representation from our diverse community.

7. Any things you **have stopped/need to stop** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

N/A

Title of project/activity

Digital Learning – Evolving RGU's Approach to Online Learning

1. What change **has been/is being** made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

The second phase of this multi-year initiative to develop our institutional approaches to online learning focused on enhancing our staff guidance and learning technologies. This is based on the reflection, practice sharing and end user consultation with the University community during Year 1 of the Enhancement Theme.

In Year 2 the project was divided into four areas of work:

- a) Digital learning practice – RGU has launched its new Digital Learning Standard, which sets an updated minimum expectation for online teaching and learning. Over 50 contributors informed its development including academic staff and students. A range of online and in-person support will be available to support its implementation. (This was highlighted as part of the RGU Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment project)
- b) Digital learning environment – A set of recommendations has been produced to enhance our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), based on the external review of the VLE during Year 1 of the Enhancement Theme, and are currently being actioned. This work will also support the changing environment identified within the FTLA project.
- c) Digital Assessment – Recommendations for the adoption of online proctoring for remote examinations have been approved and the infrastructure required to support online proctoring has been implemented. This includes guidance to staff about the limited range of occasions on which online proctoring should be utilised.
- d) Learning Analytics for evidence-based decision making – We have explored a set of options for leveraging the data generated within our VLE to gain better insight into the student online learning experience. This understanding will be used to inform the creation of reports on online student engagement during Year 3. This links to further work around the Attendance & Engagement of our students to support their development and well-being.

2. Why **have we made/are we making** it? (Rationale for the change)

The rapid innovation necessitated by COVID led to many positive enhancements and accelerated progress in respect of the University's aspirations with regards to online learning. To fully capitalise

on this, it was essential for the University to take stock of these developments and consider the future direction for online learning at RGU. The specific rationale for each individual area of work is as follows:

- a) Digital Learning Practice – RGU's previous baseline standard for online learning no longer fully reflected the anticipated change in learning and teaching that will be required as we emerge from the pandemic, nor the expansion in course provision, such as Graduate Apprenticeships and Digital Short Courses. The new standard for digital learning will be used to encourage an engaging, equitable and cohesive online learning experience for all learners, taking advantage of the new technologies rolled out during the pandemic. The Digital Learning Standard will also support the implementation of the University's new Blended Learning Standard for digitally enhanced in-person and online learning. (Part of the Future of Teaching Learning and Assessment project).
- b) Digital Learning Environment - RGU's VLE and learning technologies now play an increasingly central role within learning, teaching, assessment, and student support. Ongoing development of the digital learning environment is therefore vital to meet the increasing expectations of it from our students and staff, and to retain our reputation as a leading provider of innovative and professionally focused education. Historically, review and enhancement of the University's VLE was based on a periodic model with lengthy periods between reviews and limited increased investment resulting in an irregular development and enhancement cycle. This project was therefore used to rigorously evaluate our digital infrastructure and review the investment required for sustained development and improvement. This review highlighted the transformation and investment required in the University's VLE and associated technologies to support institutional commitment to excellence in online teaching and learning.
- c) Digital Assessment – while RGU has delivered a high volume of online alternative assessments during the past two years, we have not been able to fully replicate traditional invigilation. This project was required to explore options and made recommendations for the adoption of online proctoring in courses where there is a continuing need for timed examinations.
- d) Learning Analytics - the current capability of learning analytics within our VLE is limited and meaningful analysis of user generated data to enhance the online learning experience is not possible at scale. This aspect of work has explored a range of options for gaining a better insight into the student experience through evaluation of Analytics plugins. The intent is to assist staff to more readily see how students are engaging with their learning and to empower students with access to their own data in order to help inform their engagement with course content, learning opportunities and support provision.

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

A significant outcome of this project has been to enable the staff and student voice to influence the future direction of the digital learning experience at an institutional level. This is of relevance in the development the new Digital Learning Standard (refer to Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment) and in shaping the consultation on the future development of our VLE.

In Year 2 each specific area of work has realised specific changes as follows:

- a) Digital Learning Practice – a new Digital Learning Standard based on student and staff consultation had been launched, which will guide and enhance the digital teaching, learning, and assessment activity of RGU into the future. A series of support materials and examples of effective practice have been developed to support staff to adopt the new

standard within their online teaching. The next phase of work will provide a tailored programme of workshops and training for each Academic School to implement the new standard and evaluate its application within their own courses. The anticipated impact of the RGU Digital Learning Standard is to provide a roadmap to ensure all students learn in a consistent, cohesive, and inclusive digital learning environment, reflecting RGU's aims to provide a vibrant, equitable, and future-focused learning experience

- b) Digital Learning Environment – during Year 2 an extensive review of our VLE based on stakeholder feedback was completed by external consultants and set out a list of recommended actions for improvement of our VLE. The consultation report was used to secure a much-needed increase in funding and sustained investment for our online learning infrastructure.
- c) Digital Assessment – appropriate procedures were proposed and approved for maintaining the integrity of online examinations using online proctoring. Suitable infrastructure was installed in our VLE, appropriate types of assessments where proctoring can be used were identified, and a workflow for implementation of proctoring with suitable assessment types was developed.
- d) Learning Analytics – a student intern was employed to produce an options analysis for the implementation of learning analytics within our VLE. As a result of this work we have a set of student-informed recommendations for the improved analysis of data within our VLE, to help us better understand students' digital learning experience and the interventions that can be made to further enhance quality. The next phase of work will implement trial analytics reports in collaboration with selected Academic Schools and the anticipated impact will be a better understanding of student online engagement and further enhancement of the digital learning experience.

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

- a) Digital Learning Practice – Implementation of the RGU Digital Learning Standard will be assessed using a combination of quantitative measures in the uptake and usage of technology, and qualitative feedback through a variety of mechanisms such as student questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, with data gathered in Years 1 and 2 providing a baseline measure.
- b) Digital Learning Environment – Future impact will be assessed by measuring implementation against the consultation report finalised in Year 2.
- c) Digital Assessment – Change will be measured through the capability to implement online proctoring for appropriate assessments and through interviews with students post-exam, as well as with the academic staff involved, to inform and refine future procedures.
- d) Learning Analytics – Evaluation will be conducted by the collation of feedback from Academic Schools involved in the initial trials.

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

Oversight of the Digital Learning Project has been amended following the establishment of the University's Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment institutional working group (FTLA).

While the project still reports to our Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-committee (TLASC), portions of the work have also been informed and shaped by the FLTA and evaluation reports of impact will also be assessed by this group. FTLA members include senior members of the Executive Group and University Management Group.

Lastly a small project board has been established to oversee the technical aspects of the project involving senior representatives from IT Services and DELTA.

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

NA

7. Any things you **have stopped/need to stop** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

NA

Title of project/activity

Supporting whole-person education throughout the learner journey

1. What change **is being** made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

The aim of this project was to further embed integrated support for whole person learning throughout the student journey at RGU, with an emphasis on enhancing support at key moments of transition, promoting student wellbeing and resilience, and strengthening communication and awareness of available support.

In Year 1, this project focused on bringing together and adding impetus to a range of related enhancement activities being undertaken across the university focusing on themes such as:

- Understanding and supporting students' physical, mental and social health.
- This work continued in Year 2 via action to develop a series of signposting and support mechanisms.
- Reviewing and enhancing the university's support platform, Ask RGU – enhancing communication channels for students to receive appropriate support and guidance.
- Supporting the development of independent learning skills.
- Promoting Student Resilience.
- Building on the university's approach to Welcome to provide timely, integrated transition support at other stages of the learner journey.
- This work continued in Year 2 via the Welcome Leadership Group who introduced a series of further enhancements including a Welcome Questionnaire to measure student satisfaction with the Welcome experience; a track of transitions communications designed to drip-feed key points of guidance and highlight support at key points in the Welcome journey.

In Year 2, where project work has continued, teams have endeavoured to define and implement a suite of complementary deliverables informed by:

- Insights generated by the series of student voice opportunities enabled by the Theme in Year 1;
- Analysis of academic schools' Enhancement and Action Plans following the 2020/21 annual appraisal process.

2. Why **are we making** it? (Rationale for the change)

The original drivers for change were significant to RGU both pre-pandemic and under the leadership of the previous Executive Team. As such, the Year 1 projects which remain relevant have been incorporated within the RGU Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment work.

Areas which have been reprioritised include:

- The introduction of the RGU Learning Teaching Framework (LTF), which puts whole-person learning at the centre of the university's educational ethos;
 - This work was a valuable step in articulating RGU's distinctive approach at both institutional and academic school level. Given the learning from engagement with staff and students via focus and working groups, this work is now encompassed within the RGU Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment.
- The additional focus that the pandemic has driven on the need for holistic student support which acknowledges the academic, personal and social aspects of learning;
 - This work was an important step in the University's evolving approach to equipping learners to thrive in their careers as global citizens and is now encompassed within the RGU + strand of the RGU Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment.
- Student feedback highlighting scope to further support learners' academic preparedness, confidence, wellbeing and sense of learning community.
 - This work has informed the evolving approach to Welcome, the RGU Blended Learning Standard and the RGU Academic Calendar guidance.

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

The immediate impacts of this work include:

- New interventions supporting student success and wellbeing;
- Enhanced cross-institutional collaboration and efficiencies;
- Enhanced partnership-working across staff and students.

It is envisaged that the longer-term impacts will include:

- Enhanced student-facing support information and communication platforms;
- Strengthened support for student transitions into and through university;
- Increased preparedness, confidence, wellbeing and resilience among students;

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

The impact of deliverables defined and delivered in Year 2 will be measured via a variety of mechanisms relevant to the project in question, including:

- Student and staff engagement with deliverables;
- Student and staff feedback on deliverables;
- Student satisfaction, retention and success.

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

Oversight of activity is via the recently created Student Experience Leads Group which is convened by the Vice Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience and includes heads of service responsible for aspects of the student experience together with colleagues from Governance and Academic Quality.

A variety of project governance structures are in place for the various projects connected with this strand, involving a range of academics, professional support colleagues and students. While decision-making for each project rests with the project team, decisions regarding areas of mutual interest have been made collaboratively by project leads.

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

It is often the case that the initial stages of enhancement activity must focus on generating buy-in and traction. However, one of the impacts of the pandemic has been that certain key issues, such as digital learning & assessment, student wellbeing, resilience & support come to the collective fore. The requirement for colleagues and students to continue to deal with the challenges presented by COVID provided effective liaison and collaboration opportunities to ensure emergent activities are aligned to maximize impact and streamline work strands.

7. Any things you **have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)**

N/A

Title of project/activity

Promoting retention and success through inclusive practice

1. What change **has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)**

The aim of this strand of activity is to further promote inclusive curriculum design and delivery at the University to enhance student retention and success by:

- Developing staff awareness of, and skills in inclusive curriculum design and delivery, including the accessibility of digital learning in accordance with Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations.
- Interrogating institutional data and working in partnership with students and staff to identify further opportunities for impactful enhancement;
- Planning and implementing targeted enhancements to promote parity of participation in priority areas.

Over the course of Year 2, the following activities have been undertaken:

- Continuation of an institutional project to enhance the inclusivity of online learning at RGU by implementing further guidance and technology to better support the creation of more accessible learning experiences.
- Male Students: Closing the Gap – continuation of this project with the creation of a working group and, completion of focus groups to gather relevant data upon which a series of recommendations have been made for senior management consideration.

2. Why **have we made/are we making** it? (Rationale for the change)

The rationale for the projects within this strand is as follows:

- Accessibility of online learning – accessibility is a vital component of online education and recent changes in legislation also make explicit the expectation for digital accessibility within Higher Education. The Enhancement Theme also provided the opportunity to evaluate new technologies for the provision of more accessible and personalised learning. This work is carefully aligned to the Digital Learning Project highlighted earlier.
- Male students: Closing the Gap – institutional equalities data highlight that male students perform less well than their female counterparts against a range of measures, including satisfaction, retention and achievement. Positively and proactively addressing these differences has been identified as a priority equality outcome for the University

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

In Year 1 the **Accessibility of online learning project** articulated RGU's approach to digital accessibility, raised staff awareness of accessibility legislation requirements, and developed capability through provision of a range of technology improvements and support materials. Work in Year 2 focussed on developing staff skills by engaging more than 300 academic staff in School-based CPD sessions, using the guidance and accessibility checklists developed in Year 1.

Furthermore, by providing a focus on accessibility in the Enhancement Theme, funding was secured for Blackboard Ally, a toolset for enhancing the inclusivity of online learning through:

- Reporting on the accessibility of online learning at an institutional, School and module level.
- Tools for enhancing the accessibility of materials.
- Providing student choice of format for their online learning materials.

A limited rollout of Blackboard Ally began in Semester 2 of the 2021/2022 academic year, from which feedback was used to refine the approach to the institutional rollout for the 2022/2023 session. All online learning will now have Blackboard Ally enabled and a series of staff development workshops in its use are ongoing.

Some of the impacts from these changes include:

- A baseline measure of the accessibility of RGU's online learning delivery, against which future delivery will be measured.
- More accessible and inclusive learning experiences for students was quantified during Year 1 of the project using the reporting features of Blackboard Ally retrospectively.
- An overall increase in the accessibility score of our online learning delivery was quantified in Blackboard Ally initial rollout modules.

The University recently participated in Blackboard Ally's Annual Fix Your Content Day Competition as part of Global Accessibility Awareness Day on the 19 May 2022. The University's overall accessibility score increased by 0.6% over the course of 24-hours, and was placed 19th out of 173 global institutions and third in Europe. Having completed 3,061 fixes during the allocated time RGU achieved 0.31476 fixes per student.

Institutionally the University has been working to increase the accessibility of online materials since the release of Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018c, and since the enforcement of legislation in September 2020.

At the end of the 2019-20 Academic session the university's Ally score sat at 45.1% and rose to 57.5% in 2020-21 following the implementation of legislatively required standards. The increased emphasis on content creation in 2021-22 has seen a further increase to 79.2% mid-session, and is a direct reflection of the efforts made by staff to integrate accessible content creation and adaption into their material preparations.

Some of the wider expected impacts from this project include:

- More accessible and inclusive learning experiences for students;
- Enhanced student satisfaction, retention and success;
- Improved outcomes for students with disclosed disabilities;
- Staff development in the understanding and requirements of providing accessible materials.

Male students: Closing the Gap moved from the discovery phase in Year 1 to providing a set of recommendations in Year 2. These arise from the activities and findings of the working group and male student focus groups, and have the specific objective of enhancing the male student experience at RGU.

Several of the key themes identified in a summary literature review, namely the impact of previous educational experiences, familial involvement and expectations, peer pressure, anxiety around employment prospects, the issue of 'immediacy', and male student engagement with HEI support services, are echoed in responses from the male students in the focus groups.

These issues are complex and multidimensional because they are simultaneously educational, cultural, and socio-economic. As such, they represent challenges for any HEI which intends to address the problems of male student dissatisfaction, attrition, non-engagement, and lower degree designation.

RGU, through its recruitment processes (including Open Days), support services (Student Life, Study Skills, Employability, RGU:Union) and its Widening Access activity (including engagement with secondary schools) already invests considerable resources in supporting students. However, some male student-specific initiatives may be incorporated to improve overall male student satisfaction especially around help-seeking rates and good honours degree outcomes, while simultaneously lowering non-continuation rates.

Anticipated impacts from this project include:

- Improved satisfaction, retention and success for male students;
- Greater understanding and awareness of the male student experience among staff.

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

The change effected by these projects will be measured via:

- Student and staff feedback;
- Institutional equalities data;
- Online learning materials reporting tools;
- Male student attrition rates;
- Male student final degree designation data.

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

The Accessibility of Online Learning Project feeds into the Digital Learning Project which is managed by the University's Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching, and Assessment (DELTA). Regular project updates are provided to the University's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee and Equality & Diversity Sub-Committee to ensure project progress, effectiveness and actions are collectively considered. Where appropriate and relevant reports and discussions are elevated to the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.

The Males Student Experience: Closing the Gap project is managed by the University's Student Life department. Regular project updates are provided to the University's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee and Equality & Diversity Sub-Committee to ensure project progress, effectiveness and actions are collectively considered. Where appropriate and relevant, reports and discussions are elevated to the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.

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

Within the Accessibility of Online Learning Project, initial training necessarily focussed on the technical implementation and legislative compliance of accessibility. Opportunities for incorporating the student voice into our staff development programme for accessibility was limited due to the pandemic. However, we are now updating our support materials to include student stories focusing on the impact of accessibility on their learning experience.

7. Any things you **have stopped/need to stop** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

N/A

Title of project/activity

Supporting RGU's Course Leader Community

1. What change **is being** made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

Commencing in April 2021, the project's overriding aim is to facilitate opportunities for Course/Programme Leaders to come together as a community to enrich colleagues' work in this important role, support their professional development and enhance the overall student experience.

An institutional working group was formed comprising Course/Programme Leaders from across RGU's academic Schools, as well as representation from HR and the Department of Enhancement, Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA). Early activity was reported in the Year 1 report including work to:

- Determine the key skills and attributes of Course/Programme Leaders aligned to the role responsibilities.
- Identify and prioritise support and development needs for Course/Programme Leaders.

During Year 2 the project team obtained further insights into the key aspects of Course/Programme Leadership at RGU from role holders alongside data collected via a series of interdisciplinary focus groups. A report of initial findings was produced and presented to the Enhancement Leadership Group (ELG), TLASC and RGU Executive.

The findings led to 4 key recommendations focusing on:

- Course/Programme Leader Role and Recognition
- Course/Programme Leader Performance Review Process
- Initial and Continuing Professional Development
- Providing Pastoral Support

Arising from the first two recommendations the VP Academic Development and Student Experience formed a working group of Deans and the Project Lead tasked with a Course Leader Review. Following this review subsequent proposals are currently with the University Executive and HR for consideration. These encompass:

- Eligibility for the Course Leader Application process
- Term of Course Leader appointment
- Annual review of performance

If implemented these proposals will widen the scope of eligibility for academic staff to undertake the role, remove the fixed-term appointment concerns, clarify the responsibility allowance payments as well as simplify the annual performance review procedure to better align with the mainstream performance review.

Specific support and development opportunities have been identified as necessary role specific CPD which will be developed and implemented during the next phase of the project. It should be noted the need to support the Course/Programme Leaders to provide pastoral care was agreed as a high priority requirement and development opportunities were offered to all Course/Programme Leaders, regardless of length of time in role, during Year 1 & 2 of the Enhancement Theme.

Based on feedback from the focus groups and the initial pastoral care events, it was further recommended that a comprehensive Information Resource be developed and maintained to detail key university contacts and guidance for the range of support-related issues which Course Teams may encounter and is now in development.

During Year 3 of the Enhancement Theme the project will include further development of role specific development opportunities for Course/Programme Leaders.

2. Why **are we making** it? (Rationale for the change)

RGU recognises the crucial contribution of our Course/Programme Leaders to the student experience. This acknowledgement led to the re-specification and incentivisation of the role in 2018; building on this change, and the University's engagement with the Collaborative Cluster on Programme Leadership as part of the previous Enhancement Theme, this project seeks to enhance the support and development available to assist Course/Programme Leaders and to further support their confidence and resilience.

Consultation activity in Year 1 of the Enhancement Theme confirmed the need for further support, development and professional networking opportunities for Course/Programme Leaders, as well as generating valuable data concerning lived experiences of the role to inform future support mechanisms.

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

Based on the findings of the project to date the proposed changes should positively impact the Course/Programme leaders to overcome key challenges as well as support their resilience and well-being.

Initial feedback from Course/Programme Leaders suggests that engagement with the project has already begun to positively impact the Course/Programme Leader experience, with colleagues appreciating the:

- opportunity for dialogue with Course/Programme Leaders in other disciplines;
- chance to give voice to Course/Programme Leaders' experiences and needs;
- confirmation that professional counterparts share similar issues, challenges and concerns.

The following longer-term impacts are envisaged:

- Course/Programme Leaders' professional confidence and effectiveness are increased;
- Course/Programme Leaders' wellbeing, resilience and job satisfaction are promoted;
- Further practice sharing and professional dialogue among Course/Programme Leaders are facilitated;
- Students' course experiences are enhanced leading to increased retention, satisfaction and success.

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

The change effected by this project will be measured via the following means:

Short-term impact:

- Feedback from Course/Programme Leaders;
- Engagement with new support/development opportunities.

Longer-term impact

- Evidence from Course/Programme Leader application and review processes;
- Student and course outcomes.

5. Who **is** involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)

This project was initially overseen by a cross-institutional working group, reporting to the RGU:ELG. Following the completion of Phase 1 and the publication of the report, the VP Academic Development and Student Experience has assumed responsibility for the implementation of the Course/Programme leader review recommendations and the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA) has assumed responsibility for the implementation of the support and development recommendations.

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

The positive feedback arising from early project activities has confirmed the appropriacy of the project focus, the value of the collaborative approach involving Course/Programme Leaders as key

stakeholders as well as the immediate urgency to support Course Leaders provide pastoral support to their students.

7. Any things you **have stopped/need to stop** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

N/A

Title of project/activity

Emerging Stronger Enhancement Award Projects

1. What change **is being** made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

In Year 1, staff and students were invited to bid for £500 funding through the Emerging Stronger Enhancement Award Scheme to take forward a project of their choosing. Six award winners were selected and as a result, the following projects were progressed in Year 2:

- Collaborative Online International Learning - COIL (School of Creative and Cultural Business)
- Digital Community (Law School)
- Education for Sustainability (Employability and Professional Enrichment/Gray's School of Art)
- Student Digital Competence (School of Creative and Cultural Business)
- Supporting Mature Undergraduate Students (Law School)
- Virtual Labs (School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences)

2. Why **are we making** it? (Rationale for the change)

In our Year 1 plan, we stated our intention to identify short-term project initiatives within discipline and service areas that could be enabled by Theme funding in addition to planned institutional activities. This was achieved through the Award Scheme, which also provided a mechanism to engage staff and students in enhancing the future learning experience at RGU by leading local developments of wider institutional interest and relevance. As part of the proposal process, applicants were required to justify potential projects on the following grounds:

- Benefits to the RGU learning experience
- Links to RGU's Learning and Teaching Framework
- Relevance in supporting staff, students and the university in emerging stronger from the pandemic

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

Planned outputs from funded projects include:

- New mechanisms to facilitate COIL partnerships and staff training resources;
- A good practice guide on supporting digital community for students;
- Resources to support embedding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals within course provision;
- A diagnostic tool and student peer network to aid the development of digital competencies;

- An enhanced support system for mature undergraduate students in the Law School;
- Introduction of new technology enabling the recording of biophysiological measurements within virtual labs.

It is also anticipated that engagement with the Award Scheme will result in the following impacts for award holders:

- Increased awareness of the Theme and Emerging Stronger Campaign;
- Developed skills in project management, enhancement and evaluation;
- Professional recognition, fulfilment and satisfaction.

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

Collaborative Online International Learning - COIL (School of Creative and Cultural Business) -

- The level of engagement with COIL@RGU is being closely monitored by the RGU Employability & Community Engagement team with all new connections and projects being recorded on a central database.
- The dedicated COIL@RGU email address provides a central point of communication that can also be monitored and analysed.
- A 'COIL@RGU Conversations Miro Board' was launched in semester 1, 2022 in the dedicated COIL@RGU MS Teams area to facilitate ongoing feedback, discussion, and best practice sharing. Visits to the Moodle and web pages will also be monitored.
- All COIL@RGU projects are evaluated to obtain staff and student perceptions of transversal skill development. Examples of recent COIL project evaluations have been included on the COIL@RGU Moodle page.
- The student-facing COIL@RGU Moodle page that is currently under development will provide a further opportunity to promote the benefits of COIL to students and monitor their level of engagement with it.

Digital community (Law School)

- Feedback from students via emails, SEQ, focus groups

Education for sustainability (Employability and Professional Enrichment/Gray's School of Art)

- Feedback from staff and QAA (Liaison day)

Student digital competence (School of Creative and Cultural Business)

- Digital competences self-assessment tool and recommendations toolkit.
- Collaborations with School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice to produce a peer reviewed nursing journal.

Supporting mature undergraduate students (Law School)

- Feedback from staff and students

Virtual labs (School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences)

- Feedback from volunteers and students

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

Each of the winners has presented to RGU:ELG, TLASC and to a QAA representation at the inaugural Enhancement Theme Liaison Day in March 2022.

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

Several of the award projects have enhanced collaboration practice across the University bringing academic, professional services staff and students together to work on projects with shared interest. This will be encouraged in any future award programmes as the benefits of including varying perspectives has enriched the project outcomes. Developing networks to share information and gather data has been a consistent message from the award holders and so ensuring that they were given the correct communication platforms to engage with colleagues has been recognised as another important aspect to consider.

7. Any things you **have stopped/need to stop** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

N/A

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 following mechanisms have helped to support effective dissemination within RGU during Year 2, as envisaged in our institutional plan:

- RGU:ETLG members and project leads acting as champions for the Theme;
- Raising awareness via the University's Committee structure;
- Staff development and networking opportunities.

Staff have been updated on the main project, Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment via many communication channels from executive level, committee structures to school department meetings. Having colleagues involved in the data gathering and presentation of outcomes has also supported this work. A dedicated area on the VLE has been created with for all key messages and documentation that staff will require to embed in their academic practice.

Collaboration out with 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.

Engagement with Collaborative Clusters has continued to be a key mechanism for collaboration with other institutions this year.

The University remained actively involved in the 'Programme leadership: Strengthening Resilience, Supporting Learning Communities' cluster following on from the earlier engagement prior to the internal project launch. RGU Course Leaders have benefitted from being engaged in cross-institutional action learning sets facilitated by this cluster and external communications have continued.

In addition to the Collaborative Clusters, participation in the Theme Leadership Group has provided useful opportunities to share practice and insights with other institutions, which have then influenced the operation of the Theme at RGU.

The Male Student Experience: Closing the Gap project has also been presented at the QAA Scotland Enhancement Theme conference in Glasgow, June 2022, where the attendees made valuable comments and observations about the project.

Supporting staff and student engagement

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

Staff and students have been supported to engage in Theme activities in many ways:

- The RGU:ELG has been constituted comprising cross-institutional representation from academic schools, support services and RGU:Union;
- Project teams and working groups have recruited staff and students from across the university giving a wider perspective to all strands;
- Three student internships have been created to support institutional activities enabled by Theme funding.
- As reported above, staff and student consultation has been a core feature of many Year 2 activities, including a range of focus groups connected to project strands;
- Theme funds have been utilised to sponsor the Emerging Stronger Enhancement Award scheme, enabling staff and students to bid for funding to take forward a project of their choosing, with six awards made in June 2021 to support their work through 2022;
- Further engagement has been generated via staff development events taking place as part of RGU Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

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?

Key points of learning stemming from the processes, approaches and structures we are using to support this Theme include the value of:

- involving multiple 'voices' and perspectives in project management and delivery;
- planning time for 'discovery' at the outset of projects and stakeholder engagement;
- maintaining flexibility to accommodate the dynamic nature of enhancement and fluidity created by the pandemic;
- sharing learning and resources across projects and institutional areas;
- having the confidence to commit to longer-term initiatives as well as short-term projects.

This report will be shared with the RGU:ETLG and project leads to inform planning for Year 2. It will also be shared with the wider university via the RGU committee structure.

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.

Given the seismic changes brought by the pandemic which continue to impact education, a continuation of the current theme would be welcome to allow us to continue to explore institutional, staff and student resilience post-COVID.

Alternatively, a theme which allowed exploration of any of the following would be welcome:

- Role of the University in Society
- Student Transitions Post Covid
- Sustainable Development

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