



End of Year 2 Report for: University of St Andrews

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.

N/A

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

Please complete the following 7 questions for each activity or intervention (N.B. Just cut and paste the table below as many times as necessary)

Title of project/activity
Investigating the impact of online learning on students during the pandemic: Longitudinal Survey Project
1. What change has been made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>In order to better understand the impact of online learning during the pandemic on our student cohort, we implemented a longitudinal survey with three data collection points. Students were first asked to reflect on Semester 2 2020-21 which was a solely online semester (n=1146). Students then reflected on their experiences during Semester 1 2021-22 which adopted a hybrid approach with both online and in-person elements (n=546). Our final data collection point (scheduled for after this summer) will ask students to reflect on Semester 2 2021-22 which included both online and in-person elements, but with more in-person teaching than had previously been offered during the pandemic. The survey covers aspects of the student experience in terms of academic, social, and wellbeing factors.</p> <p>The survey was run by student interns; they developed the overarching focus points of the survey, the survey questions themselves, and data analysis directions. This 1) gave student interns key research experience 2) expanded student-staff communication within the Enhancement Theme Team, and 3) allowed a major student-focused project to be designed by students, who better understand the current struggles and needs of students.</p>
2. Why have we made it? (Rationale for the change)
We wished to identify aspects of learning during the pandemic that we want to take forward in future teaching and learning (i.e., which online learning approaches have been effective and should be maintained). We also wanted to ensure that the student voice was considered when making future plans and felt that a formalised approach to data collection would be valuable in this respect.
3. What difference has occurred as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
<p>Findings from Survey 1 were shared with the Proctor's Office and this information helped shape how teaching was delivered in the 2021-22 academic year. For example, students expressed a strong preference for tutorials, seminars and practicals to be delivered in-person, rather than online. The same was not seen for the delivery of lectures, where results showed an even spread of student preference across in-person, online and hybrid delivery options. This was invaluable information for the University as they were able to rank order which teaching activities would be given priority for in-person scheduling of classes.</p> <p>Results from the first two surveys showed that students felt they benefited greatly from lectures being recorded (for a variety of reasons including disability support and flexibility) and that they would like lecture recording to continue in the future (Note: until the pandemic it had not been compulsory for lectures to be recorded at St Andrews). A new lecture capture policy has now been approved requiring all lectures to be recorded from 2022-23 onwards.</p> <p>Additional results from our surveys showed that students have felt a lack of belonging to their academic Departments and the University more generally during the pandemic. We have been able to share this finding with relevant units in the University including Student Services, Learning and Teaching Committee and the Mental Health Task Force. Student belonging is now a factor being considered by groups across the University as we plan for the next academic year and consider how to help our students create a connection with our community when they come back in person after the summer.</p>

When students were invited to complete the second survey, we attached a summary report of the main findings from Survey 1, highlighting the changes that the University has made based on their data. We thought it was critical to show students that their participation is valued, and their voice does help to shape practice at St Andrews. We intend to also release summary reports for Survey 2 and 3, when appropriate.
4. How do we know? (How is the change measured)
We have seen these changes occur through: 1) teaching and learning decisions made by the Proctor's Office that have shaped our practices; 2) the Proctor presenting a highlight report to relevant groups in the University (e.g. Director of Teaching Meeting, Learning & Teaching Committee; 3) changes to University Policy regarding lecture capture; 4) student belonging being a factor considered by multiple groups across the University as they plan for the next academic year and consider how best to support our students as they return to in-person teaching. We are now in the process of preparing a manuscript based on this project.
5. Who has been involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
The Enhancement Theme Team, The Proctor and Proctor's Office.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Student involvement is key. We have had two undergraduate student interns work with us on this project and they really have been the driving force of this work. Their engagement with his project has been inspirational. They are passionate and thoughtful and have ensured that we keep the student experience at the heart of this work. Our collaboration has been so successful that our interns were invited to present at the recent Enhancement Theme conference.
7. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
N/A

Title of project/activity
Investigating the impact of online learning on students during the pandemic: Digital Storytelling Project
1. What change has been made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
In response to a low turnout of participants (n=4) in our previous focus group project, we decided to trial new, creative types of qualitative studies to investigate the student experience and student wellbeing during the time of Covid. Our digital storytelling project was the most successful of these new approaches. We created sheets of paper with "Draw your semester!" written at the top of the page followed by 6 empty squares; each square represented a time period during the semester (e.g., "Independent Learning Week", "Week 5-7", "Exam Period"). We placed sheets and submission boxes, around the campus in areas with a lot of student foot-travel, such as libraries and student hubs. Despite minimal advertising and no compensation, we gathered 114 submissions in a 2-week period. We coded the art from the submissions based on prominent themes (e.g., sadness, friendship, outdoors, alcohol), and then quantified these themes.
2. Why have we made it? (Rationale for the change)
Previous qualitative studies (the focus group) were poorly received. They required payment for participants and a sizeable amount of scheduling and effort for the researchers conducting them. Anonymization and transcription following the focus groups added to the workload. We aimed to find a qualitative study that would gather student feedback in a genuine way, where students felt

that they could be honest and authentic, while also keeping the workload of the researchers in mind.

3. What difference has occurred as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)

Student responses to the creative digital storytelling study were exceptionally truthful: they featured profanity, details about mental health conditions, romantic confessions, and a range of other topics that a researcher would not typically see in a formal setting like a focus group or via a questionnaire. The authenticity of the creative digital storytelling study was unparalleled because of this, and gave insight into what students really thought of their semester.

Unexpectedly, many students did not draw about hybrid learning aspects, and instead showed aspects of their social and personal life. This is an important finding, as it shows that hybrid learning was not their main memory of the previous semester. Quantitative studies and focus groups that ask questions regarding hybrid learning may be polarizing, and give the false impression that students were entirely focused on this aspect in their lives.

This being said, some students did choose to create drawings of aspects of hybrid learning, such as images of themselves sitting in front of a desk in their accommodation, drawings of Microsoft Teams meetings, and technology (laptops and devices) as a key feature in learning environments.

During the theme analysis, two key findings stood out:

- 1) Themes of sadness increased as the semester went on.
- 2) Themes of happiness decreased as the semester went on.

These findings show that student wellbeing does decrease as the semester period progresses, and it is important to check in with students and promote good wellbeing advice (and when/where to seek help) especially in the later parts of the academic semester.

The methodology and findings were presented at the 2022 Enhancement Theme conference, with the goal of encouraging other researchers to adopt creative methodologies in future studies. These findings will also be shared with the Proctor, and other key stakeholders at the University, so that our results can be included in future decision-making regarding the student experience and student wellbeing.

A series of 'We Heard You' posters will be displayed around the University when we return after the summer to thank students for their participation and to show students that their involvement in our study is valued.

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

The participant size was larger than expected (n = 114) and participants stated on social media and to researchers that they appreciated the novelty and "fun" aspects of the study – this suggests that creative digital storytelling was well received by participants as a research methodology.

Audience engagement at the Enhancement Theme conference showed that researchers were interested and engaged in the idea. (Note: The St Andrews Enhancement Theme Lead received several emails (internal and external) post conference stating how valuable colleagues found the session and congratulating the student interns on conducting such a worthwhile, creative project).

We are now in the process of preparing a methods-based manuscript based on this project.

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

The Enhancement Theme Team. Going forward this will also include the Proctor and the Proctor's Office.

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

Future creative digital storytelling studies are being planned for the next semester as a replacement for focus groups. This approach is more cost efficient (especially since the supplies like submission boxes and coloured markers are reusable), reduces researcher workload, provides insight into student experiences that may be missed by more traditional methodologies and, importantly, is well received by participants and provides a larger sample of data.

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

Originally, we were going to analyse colour choices based on their emotional ties (as per previous research that has used digital storytelling to investigate student wellbeing). Many students chose to draw in a single colour (likely the one they picked up first, or whichever was closest to them), and so this aspect of the study was discarded.

Title of project/activity

Enhancement Theme Open Forum

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

This year we hosted a new event - our Enhancement Theme Open Forum. At this half day event we introduced what the Enhancement Themes are, outlined the work we have done to date on the current theme of resilience and presented the projects that we are currently working on. The Proctor and the Rector's representative spoke at the event. There was an opportunity for attendees to network and brainstorm new ideas and initiatives that they might want to engage with going forward. Our funding call was also announced at the forum, with Team members on hand to answer any questions about our funding call/application form. We invited all students and staff (professional services and academic) to attend, and we ran the forum as a hybrid event with both in-person and online attendance.

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

We wanted to increase the visibility of the Enhancement Theme within the University. We hoped that by holding the forum we would be able to reach a wide audience and increase the number of people who know about the Enhancement Themes (an example of a possible outcome would be staff and students opening a future email that contains 'Enhancement Theme' in the subject line, rather than deleting it because they don't know what it is or how it might relate to them).

We hoped that the forum would encourage the development of new ideas and initiatives relating to resilience in teaching and learning. We felt that this was particularly important for our students, as their engagement would help them to initiate and contribute to real change at the University level, showing them that they are valued members of our community.

We know that increasing awareness about the Enhancement Themes will be a long-term project; we felt that holding the Open Forum was the right way to kick start this process.

3. What difference has occurred as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)

We believe that the Open Forum was a success. As a result of the forum, we hope to increase awareness of the important work that is currently being done and raise the profile of the Enhancement Theme. We hope to foster new positive collaborations between students and staff which will lead to the development of exciting novel projects. We also see this as a key opportunity to remind our students that their voices are heard, respected, and valued within the University community.

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

We measured change and impact by collecting data on the following:

1) *Attendance rates at the Open Forum and data on student/staff ratio:* We were extremely pleased with the attendance rates (especially given that there were some challenges with the date of our forum – the covid situation at that time, school holidays, it fell on a strike day, and the weather was particularly bad on the day preventing some people from being able to make it to St Andrews). We had ~30 in-person attendees, as well as ~10 online attendees. There was an even split of students (including UG and PG) and staff (including professional services and academic).

2) *Number of people who engage with us after the event/number of new projects and initiatives that are acted upon after the forum:* Post forum, we received four applications for funding from attendees, including groups who were established during the forum. We have also established new connections with members of our community, including the Rector, the Wellbeing Officer network and the University’s Diversity Lead for Arts and Divinity.

3) *Feedback on the Open Forum:* We were delighted with the results of our formal evaluation post forum. Feedback showed that the event was extremely well received. The following areas were rated on a 5 point scale where 0 = poor and 5 = excellent: How well the event met its stated objectives (4.8/5); Quality of materials (4.6/5); Ability of presenters (4.8/5); Structure of event (4.8/5); Delivery method (4.8/5); How relevant was the event for professional/personal development (4.8/5); How likely you are to make a change as a result of attending this event (4.4/5); How well did the event meet personal objectives (4.5/5).

Free text comments for the question ‘What did you find most useful about this event?’ included: “Demonstrations of previous research”; “I loved having a chance to talk to other people about my idea and getting some feedback on it”; “Very valuable opportunity to find out about the work of the Enhancement Theme team, plus how to get involved”; and, “Opportunity to engage with students and seek their thoughts”.

For the question ‘What would you say to others to encourage them to attend this event in the future?’, free text responses included: “I will let people know to attend if they have a project or things within the University they would like to help change”; “Not to be put off by the educational jargon!”; and, “The Enhancement Theme is a wonderful approach and the more people who engage in it the stronger it will get”.

Finally, in the ‘Additional comments’ section of the feedback form we were really pleased to see this response: “It was well run, very organised, and the members of the Enhancement Theme team were positive and extremely enthusiastic. I felt, as a student, that they really did want my contribution.”

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

The Enhancement Theme Team and our Open Forum attendees.

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

Given the success of this event, we have decided that the Open Forum will become an annual event. Our forum helped to establish connections between students and staff, boosted our funding call applications and raised awareness of who we are and what we do. In future events will allow a little more time for the individual presentations and a little more time for networking (based on feedback we received).

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

N/A

Title of project/activity

Toolkits for supporting disabled students to transition to and thrive at University

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

We are developing two bespoke resources for students:

1. Development of a Self-Help toolkit aimed at students who have ADHD, reflecting the increasing recognition of persistence of ADHD in adults
2. Completion of an online autism transition toolkit aimed at providing information to support autistic students' transition to University

Development of both resources is progressing in consultation with student groups.

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

The creation of these resources recognises the increased number of students declaring a disability and how we can better support this student demographic.

In 2020/21, 35% of all disabled students at the University of St Andrews disclosed a specific learning difficulty (SpLD), which includes Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). There is an increasing recognition of persistence of ADHD in adults (3-5% of adult population). Online support tends to focus on childhood ADHD with few resources available that are specific to university students. Most online resources available are commercial products, which is a financial barrier. During the pandemic, the Disability Team noted a significant increase in the number of students wishing to pursue ADHD screening and diagnosis. The shift to online learning was a large factor in that increase, recognising the challenges that students found in adapting to learning from online material. There are long waiting lists within the NHS for diagnosis and costs can be high for private assessments. As a result, students are often left with little in the way of support. With dual delivery and increased online content (i.e. lecture capture) likely to continue post-pandemic due to its inclusive benefits, there is a need to provide additional resources to students who have ADHD or are exploring a diagnosis. By creating a specific, yet self-guided coaching tool for students, we hope that this module will build resilience in the student community to learn and develop strategies to cope with the demands of university. This module would not only benefit students, but also staff who can direct students to this, for example study skills support in our Centre for Educational Enhancement and Development (CEED).

In 2020/21, 4.3% of students declared a social/communication disability. The provision of a bespoke and St Andrews-specific transition toolkit for autistic students will help to develop resilience in the student community providing them with relevant information to support their transition to university. Autism is not an indicator of academic ability, but many autistic individuals can have difficulties starting university and experience challenges relating to the social and physical environment, lack of appropriate support and unrealistic expectations. Success for autistic students in university can be achieved through promoting self-awareness, problem solving and coping skills, accessing support, and having opportunities to develop and maintain peer relationships and friendships. Personalisation of the transition toolkit with input from existing students would produce a vital resource that would reduce barriers for autistic entrants, sharing information that is relevant and useful for university life. The toolkit will promote ways to access support and highlight resources in St Andrews such as the peer mentor scheme for orientation, key contacts within academic Schools, the weekly autism group facilitated by Student Services and peer support.

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

These toolkits have resilience at their core. They relate to ensuring that students are informed about what to expect from St Andrews and starting university life (autism transition toolkit), and helping students develop the tools and strategies to cope with the stresses of university learning (ADHD module). We are not aware of any bespoke modules related to supporting the increased needs for students with ADHD. All initiatives have student collaboration at the core, ensuring that

the resources that are created are relevant and appropriate for the needs of students they are designed to help.
4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
There have been delays in completion of these two resources due to service demands and staffing. The Autism & Uni toolkit will be live shortly and usage will be monitored by engagement statistics. The ADHD module will be monitored through staff referrals to the resource, engagement stats, and student feedback.
5. Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
N/A at present. Once these resources are live, the Disability Team and key stakeholders (i.e., students, CEED, admissions) will help to determine effectiveness.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Student engagement is high in this area. For the Autism&Uni toolkit, students were very keen to contribute and provide feedback, demonstrating the willingness of the student population to help improve the student experience for others.
7. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
The only unsuccessful element has been the ability to complete the projects within the intended timescales. The learning is that we need to provide more development time to staff, but this is a challenge due to high service demand.

Title of project/activity
How can extension policies be applied to best support student success? Assessing extension procedures across departments and institutions.
1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
This project was an information-gathering activity, so no direct interventions or changes were made as part of the project. Outcomes from the activity were shared with the Extensions Working Group in the School of Psychology and Neuroscience. These outcomes informed their review of current extension practice within the school, with a view to changing it to better support pedagogical and wellbeing aims. The Extensions Working Group review was also passed onto representatives from the Proctor's Office to inform their University-level review of extension policies.
2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
The extensions procedure in the School of Psychology & Neuroscience is under review as current procedures have not coped well with the large increase in extension requests made since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Current practice results in unreasonable pressure on support staff at peak times, makes it difficult for staff to plan their marking time, and does not adequately support students.
3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
We are hoping that changes made to the extension system will change the culture of the School with regards to deadlines, such that extensions are granted under appropriate circumstances. Creating a better extension system will relieve pressure on staff time, allowing that time to be spent on other duties that support pedagogy.

4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
Effectiveness could be measured by canvassing staff and student opinion on proposed changes to extension procedures in advance of implementation. After any new procedure has been piloted or implemented, monitoring factors such as the number of extension requests submitted per module, the length of deadline requests, the number of requests made per student would also be informative, in addition to collecting staff and student feedback.
5. Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
The Director of Teaching and the Head of School will ultimately decide on the effectiveness of any changes, in consultation with interested parties in the staff and student cohort.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Including three elements in the initiative (literature review, policy review, survey) was perhaps a little over-ambitious and did not allow any one element to be covered comprehensively.
7. Any things you have stopped doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
N/A

Title of project/activity
Defining resilience: a student-centred perspective
1. What change has been made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
We gathered student perceptions of resilience when studying at university. These data were then used to create resources that support the teaching activity across the University: a multi-media output (a 2-3 minute video) and infographic e-resources (6 posters). These resources communicate a shared, student centered understanding of resilience. While it was possible to create one definition, the data indicated that it could be more helpful to develop resources that would encourage students to reflect on what resilience means for them. We used the data and quotes from the data to develop two themes. Firstly 'being resilient' which might include the skills, attitudes or behaviours that make an individual resilient; and secondly 'becoming resilient', which sees resilience as a learning process, where individuals might seek help or engage in self-care.
2. Why have we made it? (Rationale for the change)
Our student-centered understanding of resilience can be shared among teaching staff across the University in order to help staff to develop learning interventions that support resilience building by embedding discussions on resilience into the curriculum. The video and e-resources can be easily reviewed and updated in consultation with relevant learning communities.
3. What difference has occurred as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
An improved understanding of student perspectives and experiences of resilience in academic settings, which will further the University's strategic goal of embedding wellbeing in the curriculum. Highlighting resilience as a key part of personal and professional development for students, by giving voice to the student experience of resilience in the context of studying at St Andrews.
4. How do we and how will we know? (How is the change measured)
The team intend to embed the resources over the summer period so that they are available for Schools and Units to use from Semester one 2022/23. We will continue to monitor the impact of the

resources through e.g., video views and document downloads as well as staff and student feedback.
5. Who has been involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
We presented our project at the HIER conference as well as the Enhancement Theme Open Forum, where we received positive feedback and a willingness among colleagues to take up these resources within their Schools.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
We believe that the defining resilience project has the potential to seed further research that could ultimately inform policy development.
7. Any things you have stopped doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
From this project we understood that we should not use top-down approaches for sensitive matters like wellbeing or resilience. We should first understand and give voice to student perspectives before devising strategies or initiatives for improving their wellbeing or resilience. We also understand that resilience is not always about an individual but highly dependent on the context.

Title of project/activity
Making St Andrews a place to belong: A day with Dr Greg Walton, Stanford University
1. What change has been made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>We organised an in-person seminar and workshop event to explore student belonging. Our invited speaker was Greg Walton. Greg is known internationally for his large body of work on belonging, and threats to belonging, as important contributing factors in student success and experience on campus. Greg's research is based on simple and effective interventions at the campus and classroom level that can change educational outcomes in systemic ways. The day-long event was divided into two sessions. In the morning session, Greg set the scene with a short presentation. We then had invited presentations from staff and students across campus already working on innovations and interventions around the theme of belonging, to stimulate conversation. This session allowed for network-building across campus, and for Greg to provide feedback and suggestions for further development of these initiatives. The morning was largely focused on initiatives at the campus-wide level.</p> <p>In the afternoon we focussed on what individual teaching staff can do in their interactions with students to support and reinforce belonging in the classroom and in the Departments more generally. The afternoon session was of interest to anyone involved in teaching with an aspiration to improve the student experience of belonging.</p>
2. Why have we made it? (Rationale for the change)
<p>We have always valued the importance of a student's sense of belonging and the impact that this can have on the student experience. We have taken several opportunities to draw upon Greg Walton's work to stimulate further work in this area, through a Psychology invited speaker slot, and a keynote slot at the HEIR conference held virtually by St Andrews in 2021. The number of belonging and identity-related initiatives grew dramatically over that period.</p> <p>Covid has highlighted that this area of work is now more important than ever. We will be welcoming students back to campus in the next academic year, after a very difficult and unusual period, and it will be essential that we provide our students with the opportunity to develop a sense of belonging right from their point of arrival. We know from our longitudinal study on the impact of online learning on the student experience, that students report a lack of feeling of belonging, both to their Academic Schools and to the wider University community, so we have work to do in this area.</p>

We were aware that a number of people from across the University were interested in the concept of belonging and that student belonging was being mentioned at multiple University-level meetings. Holding an event specifically dedicated to student belonging seemed to be an important further step in raising awareness of this topic and creating and solidifying connections/networks to ensure that work in this area progresses and remains visible at St Andrews. The showcase and discussion component of the event was particularly helpful.
3. What difference has occurred and will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
Forty people attended the event, most for the whole day. Attendees included academics, support staff, UG and PG students, and occupants of key roles in inclusion and student experience. Such a good turnout has helped us achieve a number of our goals, including raising awareness of belonging and allowing members of our institution to network. A planned follow up post event will provide further opportunities for networking and collaboration, through informal networks and through the Enhancement Theme team, the Centre for Higher Educational Research (CHER), and the Community for Evidence-Led Practice in Education (CELPiE).
4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
Given the nature of the intervention, success will be judged by continued networking and activity in the area of identity and reducing threats to belonging across campus, and changes at the individual module level. Event participants will be surveyed at the end of the following academic semester to see what changes in behaviour or organisation have been implemented.
5. Who will be involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
The workshop hosts (Enhancement Theme team and CHER) will evaluate the increased activity in this area.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Arising immediately from the workshop discussion were suggestions about how to improve widening engagement with local schools and evaluating possible changes to student communications.
7. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
N/A

Title of project/activity
Online learning community in the COVID-19 era: Examining community in a large first year psychology cohort
1. What change has been made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
Due to increased online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic we felt there was a need for a means of evaluating and supporting a sense of community in our first-year module. a) We have developed a feedback mechanism that we now use to evaluate our first-year students' sense of community at the end of their first year at St. Andrews. b) We have identified elements of our teaching that help develop student community. This has led to temporary and long-term changes to the module.
2. Why have we made it? (Rationale for the change)

Online tools for learning have become more important over the last few years due to the social distancing measures introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. On our module we have learned to embrace online learning tools as we feel they can benefit students in terms of facilitating flexible and equitable learning. However, in our own experience, and elsewhere in HE (e.g., Mooney & Becker, 2021), it has been clear that students feel less connected to others on their module when learning online.

Our goal is to learn what is **effective** in creating community for students in both in-person and online contexts. We have already identified certain aspects of our teaching that may help develop community (see below), but we are already adapting our feedback tool to explore another aspect of our module that may facilitate community.

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

Through our learning community feedback tool, we have identified elements of our module that best correlate with a sense of community in our students (i.e. interactive Q&A and workshop sessions), and which do-not (online synchronous lectures). This information has allowed us to adapt our teaching to allocate more time towards interactive online sessions. For a brief summary of preliminary findings please see our presentation from the 2021 Higher Education Institutional Research Conference: https://osf.io/6ug2d/?view_only=23357fd8e7ab43bd877332d2f09d364a.

Importantly, through our feedback tool we will continue to evaluate student community in our first-year module, and we will adapt this tool to assess future interventions. This long-term focus on community will allow us to examine changes across cohorts and the impact of various novel activities.

For example, in the 2022/23 semester we will introduce additional support for group work, and we will evaluate how students respond to this in terms of both their learning and sense of community.

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

In our original study, we used both interview and questionnaire methods to explore community but going forward we will focus on using a survey approach only to explore and evaluate community in our students.

Student feedback will be discussed annually with the School of Psychology & Neuroscience Director of Teaching to develop actionable points that will be addressed in subsequent semesters.

For example, in the 2022/23 term, while we anticipate a return to in-person teaching, based upon our evaluation we will continue to host weekly online Q&A sessions. This choice is based directly on evidence gathered through our work; for example, where one student wrote: *“Keep the q&a as lively and interesting as they were, they were the highlight of my week”*.

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

Students (through various feedback routes – e.g. staff-student committee meetings, Module Evaluation Questionnaires, etc.), the module coordinator (through planning and execution of changes), and Director of Teaching (through oversight) all play a role in assessing the effectiveness of any ongoing and novel activities.

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

We have discovered the importance of informal educational activities where students can ask questions of lecturers. Going forward we will focus our efforts on how to make these activities more attractive to students (i.e. increase engagement with these activities). We will also formalise a guide on how these sessions might be run across the School to develop community throughout our students' university journey.

7. Any things you need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

During this study we identified certain components of our feedback tool that were not relevant to our primary research question and so we have adapted our tool to more efficiently assess community. Through this tool we have learned about certain aspects of our teaching that are ineffective in supporting either learning or community (i.e. synchronous online lectures) and so we have adapted our teaching methods accordingly. We will continue to refine both our teaching and evaluation methods to promote learning and community across our students.

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.

Internally:

This year we conducted our first Open Forum, and this proved to be a very effective way of disseminating the work of our Team to the wider university community. As a result of this event, we have established links with the EDI and Wellbeing networks in the University and with the Rector. The Proctor attended the full event which gave us an opportunity to showcase the work we have done, and having the Proctor's contributions to the discussions we had was invaluable. We also had four groups of attendees who established connections during the forum. These groups all went on to apply for our Enhancement Theme funding. Our Open Forum will now become an annual event at St Andrews.

Presentations from the Enhancement Theme Team are a standing item for several groups within St Andrews. These include the Learning and Teaching Committee, Postgraduate Research Committee, Flexible Learning Pathways Group, and the Education Strategy Management Group. The Theme Lead is also in contact with the Vice Principal of Education, the Head of Education Policy and Quality, the Director of Student Experience, and the Associate Dean for Education. The Director of Education from the Students' Association shares Enhancement Theme information and news with students via email, social media and various student contacts (e.g., School Presidents and Class Representatives). The Director of Education has also invited three members of our core team (Lead and two student interns) to sit on the newly established Online Learning Reps Committee. Information relating to the Enhancement Theme (e.g., funding calls) is also disseminated via University newsletters (e.g. Wednesday Memos and In the Loop) and emails (e.g., emails sent to the Directors of Teaching and Unit Heads to forward to relevant staff).

Externally:

The highlight of our external dissemination in 2021-22 was attending the Enhancement Theme Conference. Our two student interns were invited to present at the conference to talk about their experiences being part of our core team and to present findings from work that they have been carrying out (e.g., investigating the impact of online learning via a longitudinal survey-based study and a digital storytelling study). Their presentation/workshop was very well received (e.g., received emails post conference from colleagues reporting on how much they enjoyed and benefited from the interns' session). Since the conference, our two interns have been asked to contribute to a podcast on decolonising the curriculum at Edinburgh Napier University. At the conference we were also included in presentations relating to work we have done with collaborative clusters.

We have been really pleased to continue to contribute to the Decolonising the Curriculum collaborative cluster this year. And, once again, we have found the Theme Leaders Group meetings to be incredibly helpful and effective as an opportunity to share work outside of our own institution.

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.

We have continued our involvement with the 'Decolonising the Curriculum' Collaborative Cluster. Two members of our institution are a part of this cluster, and we value the opportunity to continue to work with this group. Our meetings and discussions have helped maintain our focus on this important area. Whilst the other two collaborative clusters we were involved with have officially finished, our colleagues remain in contact with their cluster teams.

Following the Enhancement Theme conference, our two student interns were invited to contribute to a podcast organised by Edinburgh Napier University.

Supporting staff and student engagement

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

Funding Calls: We have been able to support the engagement of students and staff from across the University via our funding call (advertised via University newsletters, emails, and social media). Applicants were able to meet with the Theme Lead before submitting their applications to ask any questions they may have about the application form or the process. Eight projects were funded in July 2021 and four projects were funded in March 2022. Some of these projects have been completed and some will continue into the next academic year.

Titles of funded projects:

- Cost of Living and the Postgraduate Experience: Insights from across University of St Andrews.
- Defining resilience: A student-centred perspective.
- Imposter phenomenon and wellbeing: Collating evidence-based resources for students.
- Can auditory feedback enhance the student learning experience? Assessing the benefits for students, barriers for staff and implications for inclusivity.
- How can extension policies be applied to best support student success? Assessing extension procedures across Academic Schools and institutions.
- Online learning community in the COVID-19 era: A study with a large first year psychology cohort.
- Prolific study: What is higher education anyway? Students and teachers' beliefs about the purposes of higher education.
- Improving content, navigability, and resiliency for the university's student and staff mental health resources.
- How resilient are our staff? An exploration of staff wellbeing across one calendar year.
- Gaining insights into the experiences of graduating students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Resilient spaces for individual and collaborative study in the University of St Andrews learning community? Associations with coping, resilience, and stress.
- What Do Students Consider Excellent Teaching?

STEP Team: The University of St Andrews runs a six-week Summer Teams Enterprise Program (STEP) to promote undergraduate student engagement with graduate attributes and to support interdisciplinary teamwork among students. This summer we have a team of seven STEP students working with us to develop resources to support students as they return to in-person teaching. The Enhancement Theme Lead and Deputy Lead are staff sponsors of this project and the postgraduate student representative from our core team is the team coach.

Interns: Last summer we recruited student interns to add a student voice to the Working Groups and to join a new group investigating the impact of online learning during the time of Covid. We provided support for these interns by assigning them with a mentor from the core team. Our partnership was so successful that we extended their contracts to the full academic year. We are currently looking to fund them further this summer and into next year as they are still very keen to be involved and we very much want them to remain a part of our team.

In addition to the points listed above, we have continued to benefit from the monthly meetings of the core team, we held our Open Forum which provided an additional opportunity for collaboration and helped to create connections between students and staff, and our Students' Association has become more involved in our work and we have benefited from sitting on their Online Learning Reps committee.

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?

Involving students more was the highlight of this past year for us (e.g., two student interns, a PhD student joining our core team, many funded projects involving or being led by students and our STEP team). We will seek to continue this level of student involvement (or more) in the final year of the theme.

We will continue to fund local projects, events and initiatives via our funding call. We are delighted with the wide range of projects that we have been able to fund to date and see this as a vital part of our work.

Our core team has decided to focus on two major projects that we have started this summer and that we will follow through into the final year of this theme: 1) preparing and supporting students for their return to in-person teaching; and, 2) group work and conflict resolution. We feel that in the past (particularly year 1) we have been very ambitious, and upon reflection, we have over-committed ourselves. With these two main projects, plus the Open Forum and a number of smaller projects continuing from last year, we will be able to focus our efforts more fully and give these projects the level of attention necessary.

This report will be distributed to the various committees across the University where the Enhancement Theme is included as a standing item (as listed in 'Dissemination of Work' section above). This report will be used as a guide for discussions with the Enhancement Theme Team as we plan for Year 3. We will also include key aspects of this report on our webpage and showcase some of this work at our next Open Forum.

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.

The following topics are of current interest to our team:

- Supporting students returning to in-person teaching
- Conflict resolution and group work
- Assessment Feedback Literacy
- The changing face of HE and understanding the purpose of HE
- Student belonging

Report Author:	Paula Miles
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