



End of Year 2 Report for: University of Strathclyde

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.

Institutional lead, TLG staff representative and TLG staff representative alternate have all remained the same as disclosed in the First Year Plan. For the upcoming year 3, the TLG student representative has changed, this is now Arran Lamont, our newly elected Vice President Education.

Work has also begun on the creation of an Enhancement Theme steering group, made up of staff and students from across the institution. The aim of the group is to foster greater engagement, development of resources and to assist in the long term embedding of ET project outcomes/outputs.

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
Race Equality Internship
1. What change has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The aim of this project is to support Strathclyde's ongoing commitment to race equality, specifically within diversifying its learning and teaching practices and spaces. In a collaborative approach, the Equality & Diversity team and Strath Union will employ a student intern in a supportive role to raise awareness, build community and support practice amongst our students and staff in decolonising, anti-racist, and inclusive curriculum approaches.
2. Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
This Race Equality Intern role will foster a bridge between staff and students to encourage race equality dialogue and co-creation across our diverse learning communities. They will highlight and connect with the most recent sector-wide conversations and developments in anti-racist curriculum from NUS, Advance HE and QAA Scotland. The intern will support curriculum-specific recommendations from the Race Equality Action Plan (2021 – 2023), and will support the implementation of assets from sector-leading race equality projects including Tackling Racism on Campus (TRoC) , the Anti-Racist Curriculum (ARC) and NUSDecoloniseEducation .
3. What difference has occurred/will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
A number of planned outcomes and outputs have been identified. The planned outcomes include: greater awareness and engagement amongst student & staff in the development of decolonising, anti-racist, and inclusive curriculum approaches; the centring of student voice and co-creation within the decolonising agenda; the introduction of safe and inclusive spaces for staff and students to have constructive and supported discourse around race equality in the curriculum at a university and subsequently local subject area level; and the promotion of existing in-house best practice to inspire and build confidence for further developments. Planned outputs include: the creation of a community of practice working towards a decolonised, anti-racist and inclusive curriculum, a communication plan including events, social media campaign, engagement, and case studies; the curation of resources in a centralised space for easy access; and a written report on the scoping, research and good practice identified during the course of this project.
4. How do we/will we know? (How is the change measured)
In the short and medium term, formal and informal feedback channels will be utilised to determine the effectiveness of this project. Long-term markers are currently a point for further consideration.
5. Who has been/is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
Colleagues from the Equality & Diversity team, the Strathclyde Students' Union, in collaboration with students.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Too early in the project to say at this stage.
7. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
No unsuccessful elements have been reported so far.

Title of project/activity
Looking at Retention project
8. What change has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The exploratory project will utilise available relevant data to: identify relevant literature on student retention, identify factors that may relate to increased retention, identify appropriate methodological approaches, and to implement/share any findings across the faculty, wider university and the sector (where relevant).
9. Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
The pandemic has impacted every aspect of our education provision and exacerbated existing inequalities in the student population (e.g., digital divide). However, there are signs of encouragement in analyses of progression, award (Advance HE, 2021) and retention data in parts of the sector. Discussions are focusing on the potential positive impact of mitigations put in place to support students through the pandemic. At Strathclyde, retention has increased by 2.9% in the pandemic years and in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS) alone, this increases to 5%. The aim here is to develop an understanding of the drivers behind these increases.
10. What difference has occurred/will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
Our largest faculty by student numbers, HaSS also has a greater proportion of students in the lowest two SIMD quintiles as well as a higher proportion of: mature students, students recording a disability, and students entering the University on lower entry tariffs. The outputs this two year project focussed in HaSS will subsequently be applied across the institution on matters relating to retention. Outputs from the project will include: a literature review of student retention in higher education; the identification of factors that may be influencing the increase in student retention seen during the pandemic years; an evaluation of the impact of institutional interventions on student retention using a robust multi variate Strathclyde University Retention framework (Dreiblathena, 2022); and an enhanced understanding of how student characteristics in terms of protected characteristics may impact retention in HaSS. Further outcomes may be identified at the project progresses.
11. How do we/will we know? (How is the change measured)
Evaluation of this scoping project will take place on a short, medium and long term basis. This includes an initial examination of skills within the project team, regular meet-ups with staff and students to monitor progress and to discuss any barriers/issues. In the medium term, the project's progress will be monitored the production of a report on the drivers behind increased retention in HaSS during the pandemic years. This enhanced understanding will be used to guide the work in the second year of the project, as well as future institution-wide efforts on retention. In the long-term, the success of the project will be measured in terms of its impact in informing the development of policy and practice that fits the needs of all students. This can be measured through the responses of academic staff, students and professional services staff to the findings in terms of: 1) implementation plans to support retention that are co-created with students; 2) the ongoing monitoring of retention data that includes consideration of equalities data; and 3) a sharper focus on retention through an equalities lens. This will be evidenced by data being reported to faculties and relevant university committees for annual monitoring and action; and 4) better understanding of how to review, analyse and evaluate external impacts, such as COVID-19, on internal policy and the strategic priorities of the University.
12. Who has been/is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
Colleagues from the Strategy and Policy Team, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, in collaboration with student interns.
13. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)

Too early in the project to say at this stage.
14. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
No unsuccessful elements have been reported so far.

Title of project/activity
A mismatch in Mathematics and Statistics
15. What change has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The overall goal of the project is to ease the transition of students coming into the university, as a result of changing curricula at school level. This project is a scoping project to assess what is needed to help equip our students with the skills needed to succeed in our degree programmes which will lead to the development of a module that will support students in gaining these skills. While this project will focus on Mathematics and Statistics initially, we anticipate that the skills identified in this scoping study will be transferrable.
16. Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
Over the past few years, expectations of student knowledge and skills has not matched with the skills of enrolled students. This mismatch was primarily seen in areas that would be considered soft skills - report writing, presentation, and teamwork – and in their basic computer skills. This project aims to identify specifically where this misalignment occurs by conducting surveys of schoolteachers, academics, and current students. We hope to eventually address these issues by providing a short course that will help students to develop these skills in order to ease their transition into university.
17. What difference has occurred/will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
The output from this scoping study will be the surveys themselves which will be sent out to individuals across Scotland. Once analysis has been completed, we aim to write up the results as a report for dissemination to teachers, as well as a paper summarising the results and the next steps of the project for academic colleagues.
18. How do we/will we know? (How is the change measured)
Once the course has been developed and is running, data on student confidence with the skills will be collected, via a survey at the start and end of the course. This will allow for greater continuous assessment of the students' skillset, and provides opportunities for further interventions in the future. As the course is voluntary, a general survey will also be circulated at the same intervals to gather an understanding of the skills within the cohort compared to those who elected to participate.
19. Who has been/is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
Colleagues from Mathematics and Statistics in collaboration with students.
20. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Too early in the project to say at this stage.
21. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
No unsuccessful elements have been reported so far.

Title of project/activity
Learning, Teaching and Technical Staff

22. What change has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
We will work with a cohort of 10 – 15 technical staff in a 'peer network' to support them in reflecting on their role in learning and teaching and to submit applications for Associate Fellowship of the HEA, an international professional recognition of learning and teaching in HE. We will work with them to assess their confidence and competence as part of a teaching team before and after working in the network and achieving AFHEA.
23. Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
Learning communities are increasingly diverse and with that so must our teaching teams develop and diversify. Supporting learning and teaching can no longer be the domain of a single academic. This project focuses on exploring the role of technical staff in learning and teaching teams.
24. What difference has occurred/will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
The purpose and outcomes of this project are to: encourage the development and diversification of learning and teaching teams in the university; promote recognition of the role played by technical staff in supporting learning and teaching; develop the confidence and competence of technical staff in being part of a diverse learning and teaching team and learning community; evaluate the impact of supporting technical staff with a peer network and with professional recognition on their confidence and competence in supporting learning and teaching; identify best practices in supporting technical staff to obtain AFHEA; and to create a toolkit for supporting technical staff to obtain AFHEA and share this with the HE Academic Development sector.
25. How do we/will we know? (How is the change measured)
The survey will capture a combination of quantitative and qualitative data regarding participants' involvement in the network and any potential changes to relationships with peers, conceptions of professional role, capabilities related to learning and teaching and confidence. To provide opportunities to question participants and delve further into their survey responses, the intern will carry out focus groups with a sample of survey respondents. The data will be analysed through thematic analysis, with the focus groups being coded according to principles of grounded theory. Participants will also receive a follow up survey 3 months after their initial achievement of AFHEA to allow the research team to interrogate the mid-term impact of the project.
26. Who has been/is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
Colleagues from the Academic Development Team in collaboration with students.
27. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Too early in the project to say at this stage.
28. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
No unsuccessful elements have been reported so far.

Title of project/activity
PGR Resilience and Wellbeing
29. What change has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The project will evaluate the efficacies and challenges in developing a self-sustaining PGR community of peer-support to promote mental wellbeing and resilience. The project aims are to: create a programme of activities that deliver meaningful and effective group interventions around success in the PhD journey; determine the effectiveness of the programme to seed the development of self-sustaining trans/multidisciplinary peer-support groups; and to consider how this model might operate permanently with buy-in locally in faculties and departments.

30. Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
<p>It is widely known that the incidence of poor mental health is higher within the PhD student population than in the general population and that poor mental health is often normalised as part of the PhD experience. The promotion of equality, diversity, resilience, integration, and work-life balance is highlighted as one route to addressing the deepening issue of poor mental health.</p> <p>The mental health crisis and isolation the PGRs can experience go hand in hand with poor completion rates. This impacts progression and attainment, with 16% of students sector-wide leaving early, and 3% failing at the viva stage.</p>
31. What difference has occurred/will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
<p>This project will support the introduction of a programme of 6-8 themed events/workshops over a period of 10-12 weeks. The PGR intern and supporting team will work together to develop themes to focus on topics known to impact the PGR journey and route to completion. This will allow development of skills to increase resilience with workshops being delivered by expert leads recruited from within and outside the university. The same 25-30 PGRs will attend all workshops to form a cohort of support with priority given to under-represented groups, this additional benefit of increased connectedness gives the opportunity to capitalise on peer-support through cohort development.</p>
32. How do we/will we know? (How is the change measured)
<p>Evaluation will be performed during the programme to allow for clear understanding of the continued needs of the PGR cohort and to gauge appropriateness of approach and themes. Multi-level evaluation following the programme will gauge efficacy of approach in terms of aims around development of self-sustaining peer groups and current infrastructure.</p>
33. Who has been/is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
<p>Colleagues from the Strathclyde Doctoral School and Researcher Development Team, in collaboration with students.</p>
34. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
<p>Too early in the project to say at this stage.</p>
35. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
<p>No unsuccessful elements have been reported so far.</p>

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.

Due to the ongoing influence of COVID-19 on the Enhancement Theme process and our institutional work, this year's projects are still taking place and therefore their outcomes have not yet been disseminated to colleagues and the wider sector. It is expected that dissemination will primarily be communicated through internal workshops and conferences.

Projects from the first year of this Enhancement Theme have now concluded and are in the process of disseminating their work across the sector. Several projects were presented at external conferences (including the QAA Enhancement Themes Conference in June 2022). The 'Collecting Stories' project produced an e-booklet outcome and a micro-CPD course which were disseminated to all staff across the institution as a way of fostering collaborative conversations and initiating discussions on successful (and less successful) adaptations as a result of the new learning and

teaching environment. It is hoped that these future conversations will remove the stigma attached to discussing 'failed' projects in the hope of achieving a greater collaborative/innovative workplace.

Internal committee structures have also been used to disseminate findings. The 'Student Resilience in HE: A Strathclyde Toolkit' project, for example, has been widely disseminated within faculty (and relevant support service) reporting structures to ensure the outputs and outcomes are widely accessible. Project leads have also engaged with interested colleagues to assist in the creation/implementation of the toolkit (which faculty-specific additions) within their own teaching and learning environments.

All projects are currently participating in an internal micro-CPD programme aimed at removing the barriers associated with engagement in the Enhancement Themes, by sharing outcomes and outputs, lessons from the application process and any tips/tricks for colleagues unfamiliar with enhancement activity, but with the interest/passion for staff-student collaboration. For future dissemination, discussions have taken place regarding the formation of a seminar series associated with Learning Enhancement, which would enable colleagues from across the institution to freely discuss ideas and seek support/ or collaborative partners.

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.

This year, Strathclyde has continued its involvement in collaborative cluster work. Colleagues from the institution have also been part of the leadership team for the Anti-Racist Curriculum project. Informal networks have been established, with the hope of greater collaboration in the third year of the theme.

Supporting staff and student engagement

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

An internal collaboration space and resource library is in development that will act as easily accessible space for colleagues to find resources/outputs/advice and collaboration partners for future enhancement activity. Included in the archive will be the outputs of this theme's activity, as well as activity from previous themes.

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?

Continuing on from the processes begun under the previous theme, the Enhancement Theme work is being led by a group rather than an individual. Work is ongoing to standardise an enhancement infrastructure that will allow for greater/faster dissemination of work, resources and opportunities for engagement. This report will be shared with the institution's Learning Enhancement Committee and reported up to the Education Strategy Committee, our highest strategic learning and teaching committee.

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.

From discussions with colleagues within the institution and outwith, two particular focus areas are worthy of mention. The first of these is perhaps only worthy of a year-long theme, but a focus on embedding, reflecting and evaluating the work of the past 20 years of enhancement activity. A dedicated space to looking at the journey institutions have been on, may identify successes that aren't immediately apparent, but also identify areas for future growth.

The second topic is PGR experience. The PGR experience, including wellbeing and mental health, progression and attainment, is a widely discussed topic that would benefit from a sector-wide approach. This is especially the case in the aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic. Substantial focus across the sector was given to adapting taught programmes to a hybrid model, and it would be beneficial to give research programmes the same priority.

At the end of 2018-19 we have one year of the current Theme remaining. Looking beyond this Theme, please share any observations and views to help shape the final year of the current Theme and to identify a topic for the next Theme.

Report Author:	Helyn Gould and Chris Bovis
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