



# **End of Year 3 Report for: Scotland's Rural College**

Table 1: Evidencing effectiveness and reporting impact						
Cumulative descriptor of institutional Project activity over RLC Theme period	Which overarching RLC Theme questions (1-5) were prioritised?	Evidence of effectiveness in addressing chosen RLC theme priorities	Suggested outcomes and impact measures used to assess effectiveness	Challenges	Made most difference?	Hindsight
<b>Project: Understanding Resilient Learning Communities</b>						
A student-led research project: undertaking a review of the literature, and working with both students and staff to understand current states of play with regard to learning communities, and to target activity for Year 2 and 3.	1, 2, 4	<p><i>Understanding:</i> raised awareness and understanding of what learning communities look like and how to develop them.</p> <p><i>Difference:</i> project identified areas not just for Theme work, but also for wider SRUC activity that have been, or are in the process of being, addressed.</p> <p><i>Engagement:</i> 294 responses to survey (221 students, 73 staff). 15 semi-structured interviews.</p> <p><i>Experience:</i> project developed skills and sense of belonging of student interns.</p>	<p>Understanding encapsulated in project report.</p> <p>Projects undertaken within and outwith Enhancement Theme remit and use of outputs for further activity (e.g., in the development of our new Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy).</p> <p>Number of students and staff taking part in research.</p> <p>Testimony of interns following project end. Request to set up Theme Student Intern Alumni network.</p>	Keeping the research in scope and on track.	The student-led cooperative approach, meaning the project was designed and implemented by those with immediate experience of student learning communities. This also gave greater weight to the recommendations.	Hiring of interns earlier in the year and pre-planned interventions to support staying in scope.
<b>Project: Developing Student Societies</b>						
A student-led research project: undertaking a review of non-SRUC approaches and of the literature, and working with students to explore how to get	1, 2, 4	<p><i>Understanding:</i> raised awareness and understanding of barriers and enablers to developing student societies.</p> <p><i>Difference:</i> project identified changes to be made to improve the student experience of – and likelihood of – developing societies / communities of</p>	<p>Understanding encapsulated in jointly authored project report.</p> <p>Changes identified to overcome barriers. Two students completed the changed process to</p>	Supporting student interns to balance work and study.	The student-led cooperative approach, meaning the project was designed and implemented with those with	Hiring of interns earlier in the year, and pre-planned interventions to support staying on track.

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more students involved in setting up societies / communities of practice.		<p>practice. Project also facilitated development of business case to trial a “Students’ Association Community Coordinator” position.</p> <p><i>Partnership:</i> between SRUC and SRUCSA in the joint student-led research.</p> <p><i>Engagement:</i> Interviews with four non-SRUC Students’ Association staff; interviews with three SRUC club / society leads.</p> <p><i>Experience:</i> project developed skills, sense of belonging and appetite to engage further of student interns.</p>	<p>develop societies. SRUCSA Community Coordinator post developed / filled.</p> <p>Number of students and staff taking part in research.</p> <p>Testimony of interns following project end. Election of both student interns to SRUCSA Co-Presidency in following year.</p>		immediate experience of student learning communities.	
Pilot implementation of changed processes in the (supported) establishment of student societies / clubs.	3, 4	<p><i>Understanding:</i> certain society members (e.g., for the Foraging society) have reported gaining increased skills / knowledge through society activities.</p> <p><i>Difference:</i> establishment of 4 new societies in AY22/23, each with their own ‘student-leadership team’, with student members reporting positively on engagement in activities, including how this has impacted on their wellbeing and persistence.</p> <p><i>Engagement:</i> variable per society, with a mix of 5-16 regular / consistent engagement by members in society activities.</p> <p><i>Partnership:</i> between SRUCSA Co-</p>	<p>Student member feedback, student society leadership team feedback, SRUCSA feedback and staff feedback.</p> <p>Numbers of societies developed, of activities undertaken, of students engaging in those activities, and of increases in student numbers as each society becomes more established (e.g., OWLs increased by 50% in 6 weeks).</p>	<p>Support required by SRUCSA to support leaders to develop concept into a society, to maintain interest among / communicate with students, and to maintain leadership of the society when members graduate – particularly as many students</p>	<p>Having a banner under which to organise.</p> <p>Start-up funding to support society development through initial activities.</p> <p>Dedicated support to scaffold student leadership team learning and support initial lack of confidence.</p>	<p>Develop a communications procedure for societies’ development to go alongside the general development process.</p> <p>Support societies to begin earlier in the year to facilitate momentum.</p> <p>Develop more robust and</p>

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		<p>Presidents and students, building further SRUCSA community. Partnership also between certain societies and other organisations (e.g., the Foraging Society and NatureScot, OWLs and a local high school).</p> <p><i>Experience:</i> project developed skills of SRUCSA Co-Presidents, particularly those who led as student interns in the previous year – enabling them to test the new approach they had recommended based on their experience. Project developed skills of student leadership team (per society), from establishing to building societies based on feedback and engagement.</p> <p><i>Accessibility:</i> 1 society – OWLs (Organisation for the Wellbeing of Learners) was specifically set up to support learner wellbeing. The OWLs group comprises 40% students with physical and cognitive disabilities. Students have reported that they felt comfortable joining the group, that they belong.</p>		are only studying for one or two years.		habitual data gathering mechanisms to be better able to analyse success / areas for development, and so share learning with others.
Development of Fundraising Events	3, 4	<p><i>Understanding:</i> piloting fundraising activity to support others – i.e., by being able to offer guidance and support to student societies in their own fundraising activities, based on own experience. Guidance (verbal) has been offered to societies following the activity.</p>	<p>Attendee and organiser feedback.</p> <p>Numbers of attendees.</p> <p>Feedback form was disseminated, but not yet analysed.</p>	Communication to encourage engagement.	Recruitment of student volunteers to help design and run the event.	More time to develop and communicate as fully as possible, and to scope more fully and so bid for a larger

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		<p><i>Engagement:</i> with 6 staff and 30 students in attendance.</p> <p><i>Partnership:</i> between SRUCSA, SRUC and the South of Scotland Wildlife Hospital (for whom the fundraising was undertaken).</p> <p><i>Accessibility:</i> event was specifically designed to be accessible, with attendees asked in advance via Microsoft Forms regarding any dietary, physical and wellbeing adjustments required.</p>				budget.
<b>Project: Developing Peer Support Communities</b>						
Establishing a Peer Support Process: conducting research to establish what Peer Support should look like at SRUC to meet the needs of current and future students, establishing administrative, operational and evaluative processes, and piloting with two peer support groups.	1, 2, 4	<p><i>Difference:</i> evidenced by positive feedback from students and staff, feedback from volunteers, and numbers of students who had access to peer support.</p> <p><i>Attribution:</i> no projects existed before, so we can see a clear link between their introduction and student and staff feedback, and the number of activities run.</p> <p><i>Quality:</i> one of the projects, Mucker's Nation (Equine), won the sparqs student engagement award for a student-led initiative in a college. We were also asked to share our work internally via blogs, forums etc. We presented at the external Scottish Peer Support Network.</p> <p><i>Partnerships:</i> the groups are jointly run</p>	<p>Volunteer, staff and participant feedback.</p> <p>Number of volunteers, groups, activities run, participants, staff contacts, and students with access to peer support.</p> <p>Emails to peer support inbox with notes of interest.</p> <p>Discussions in Boards of Studies, Annual Monitoring, Institution-led Review, Student Liaison Groups and Annual Quality Dialogues.</p>	<p>Staff engagement with the groups. This was due to a lack of staff awareness of the role of peer support and how it would work at SRUC.</p> <p>COVID meant that all delivery needed to be online.</p> <p>Getting the resources / structure in</p>	<p>Student engagement. The volunteers produced some high-quality materials and sessions, providing their expertise on what support learners needed.</p>	<p>More detailed planning of the infrastructure that would be needed from the outset. This would have allowed us to get set up before starting the groups, rather than designing support systems while piloting. However, it could be argued that we were</p>

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		<p>by students, subject staff and CELT staff in partnership. Everyone works together to identify what the focus of the group should be, and to support its operation and enhancement. For the first 2 groups, these partnerships were established in year 1.</p> <p><i>Engagement:</i> we had engagement from staff and students involved in the groups, with 7 volunteers and 2 staff contacts in year 1. Although the project was initially led by Student Journey, we also had support from other staff within CELT (the Academic Enhancement Team), and from our marketing department.</p> <p><i>Experience:</i> volunteers reported that they developed skills and confidence over year 1, particularly in online delivery (nb., this was a Covid year), working with others, study skills and communication. Student attendees also reported increased confidence. Staff reported better understanding of peer support and their role within it.</p> <p><i>Accessibility:</i> CELT staff worked with each subject area to ensure that the group was tailored to the needs of learners within each. Likewise, we organised the training and coordination in a way that was preferable to volunteers and staff.</p> <p><i>Recognition:</i> we were asked to set up a</p>		<p>place in time for the groups to get started.</p> <p>How to best get the message out to students and staff about the groups, what they were and what activities they ran.</p> <p>Some challenges around finance and how students should be reimbursed.</p>		<p>able to ensure that any resources / support were well-tailored to actual need by creating them concurrently.</p> <p>Spending more time with staff before starting the groups, in order to ensure that they knew what peer support was, how they could support it, and the responsibilities associated with being a staff contact.</p>

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		project for Vet Nursing due to the success of the Equine group. Following on from this, our year 2 activity and expansion was mostly based on recognition.				
Expanding Peer Support: setting up more groups, reviewing and enhancing processes based on Year 1 evaluation (e.g., developing a communications strategy, improving digital resources, introducing in-person events, and developing a suite of training, promotional and informational resources for staff and students.	2, 3, 4	<p><i>Difference:</i> evidenced by positive feedback from students and staff, feedback from volunteers, numbers of students who had access to peer support. Volunteers particularly praised the new training package and guidance on promoting their groups.</p> <p><i>Scale:</i> year 2 saw growth in the number of projects, number of volunteers, and number of students with access to peer support. A key part of this expansion was working out how the model could be implemented in different subject areas, and which groups would benefit learners most.</p> <p><i>Partnership:</i> the partnerships that were established in year 1 deepened, with volunteers and staff gaining confidence. This allowed us to promote autonomy, and to hand some tasks over to staff and volunteers. New partnerships were also established for the next round of projects.</p> <p><i>Engagement:</i> for the continuing projects, we saw deeper engagement from staff and students, wherein they would take on more responsibility for their group and</p>	<p>Volunteer, staff and participant feedback, including feedback on the training.</p> <p>Regular engagement with groups and review of weekly-updated group status tracker.</p> <p>Number of volunteers, groups, activities run, participants, staff contacts, students with access to peer support, and volunteers completing the training.</p> <p>Emails to peer support inbox with notes of interest.</p> <p>Discussions in Boards of Studies, Annual Monitoring, Institution-led Review, Student Liaison Groups and Annual Quality Dialogues.</p> <p>Behaviour changes (e.g., increased confidence) in volunteers and staff. For</p>	<p>Recruitment: we initially tried approaching all students first, without necessarily knowing which staff were able to support a project. This meant that it took a long time for groups to get set up, losing some student enthusiasm.</p> <p>Keeping volunteers engaged throughout the year. This was due to student workload, having volunteer teams that were too big</p>	<p>The involvement and support of the wider Academic Enhancement Team was vital for the streamlining, operation and enhancement of the project. The introduction of the new training package, Moodle page and promotional resources was also advantageous, allowing us to standardise elements of the groups whilst showcasing their individual differences.</p>	<p>Making staff expectations clearer from the outset so as to be clear what responsibilities were expected of them, ensuring the right people were doing the right activities.</p>

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		<p>introduce new ideas. We had positive engagement from many of the new groups, although there were some areas where initial engagement faded away or did not translate into an operational group. We saw wider engagement from CELT staff in the project, with the whole Academic Enhancement Team becoming involved in coordination. Staff from marketing and comms also joined the groups and assisted students with promotion.</p> <p><i>Experience:</i> students continued to develop skills and confidence throughout their roles. We saw all 7 of our year 1 volunteers returning. We also received positive feedback from volunteers about the skills they had gained (particularly following the new training package), with many saying that it had helped with their confidence running the groups, and whilst studying. We also saw many previous attendees become volunteers, building on their experiences with the groups.</p> <p><i>Corroborative:</i> this happened internally, wherein subject areas tried the model, saw that it worked, and recommended it to their colleagues. Staff contacts created resources such as a video on 'what to expect when getting involved in peer support', as well as presenting at internal forums.</p>	<p>instance, taking the lead on the project, having cameras on and chairing meetings.</p>	<p>and students having other commitments.</p> <p>Taking on too much responsibility for the management and operation of each group. This meant that staff were less likely to engage as the vast majority of the work associated with the groups was being done for them.</p> <p>Establishing the need and scope for each group. Whilst we identified this for some groups and saw good attendance, this was not the case for all. In these instances, we</p>		



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		<p><i>Accessibility:</i> following on from Year 1, we reviewed our materials to ensure that the online training and process for setting up a project was accessible, and that students had lots of different ways to take part. We also created a supplementary training piece for volunteers on making their sessions accessible.</p> <p><i>Recognition and Quality:</i> we were asked to share our practice for a CDN event and the SRUC Celebration of Learning &amp; Teaching.</p>		saw low student engagement or attendance.		
Embedding Peer Support: reviewing the project and working with student interns to undertake research with staff and students to develop a model of peer support that can be sustained outwith the Theme funding / infrastructure.	1, 2, 3, 4	<p><i>Difference:</i> evidenced by positive feedback from students and staff, feedback from volunteers, numbers of students who had access to peer support. We also heard evidence of difference directly from students taking up the CELT Intern role, who said that peer support had increased their confidence and skills. We have seen peer support become more embedded at SRUC, with more staff aware of what it is and the value it adds. This has been reflected in the decision to continue funding peer support beyond the end of the current Enhancement Theme.</p> <p><i>Scale:</i> one more project was added in year 3 (taking the total up to 5). We had 15 volunteers, and 5 staff contacts. The projects now span across all of our</p>	As above, plus CELT Student Intern reports, papers written for Student Support & Engagement Committee, project plan for 2023/24, and receiving of additional funding from the David Doig Foundation to continue the project with paid support leaders, match funded by SRUC.	<p>Staff engagement in the projects.</p> <p>After high initial recruitment, we saw some volunteer drop out owing to student commitments, challenges getting involved in volunteering and high numbers of students running the groups.</p> <p>Some</p>	Securing funding to trial a paid model of peer support. We anticipate that this will have numerous benefits in terms of engagement, sustainability and enhancement. It has also provided 5 new paid opportunities for students and has made the expectations of subject staff in supporting the projects much clearer.	In hindsight, we could have investigated moving to a paid model earlier. However, the trial has been informed by 3 years of practice.

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		<p>campuses, over a range of subjects.</p> <p><i>Quality:</i> we have been asked to share lessons from our work within the Enhancement Theme Institutional Group, and with SRUC committees such as Student Support &amp; Engagement Committee (who approved the expansion of the project).</p> <p><i>Partnerships:</i> the partnerships developed throughout the project continue to deepen and grow, with subject staff agreeing to take on additional responsibilities for supporting the new paid Peer Support Leader role. Our volunteers and Student Interns were involved in the design of the new role, and the support structures that sit around it.</p> <p><i>Engagement:</i> we have seen engagement with the projects continue, with many staff and students becoming more confident with running their groups. However, engagement in some areas has been lower than others, both from staff, volunteers and attendees. We have seen wider engagement with peer support within SRUC, particularly from marketing and comms.</p> <p><i>Experience:</i> students have continued to develop skills and confidence through involvement with the project. Several past volunteers have taken on roles as</p>		<p>challenges remain in terms of working out exactly what support learners need as we move out of COVID. However, this is unlikely to remain static, and will continue to evolve as we develop peer support at SRUC.</p>		

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		<p>CELT Student Interns, SRUCSA Officers, Student Ambassadors and Reps.</p> <p><i>Corroborative:</i> the lessons that we have learned from 3 years of peer support informed our approach to taking the project forward, and the trial of a paid model, for which we have gained internal and external funding.</p> <p><i>Accessibility:</i> our CELT Student Interns reviewed our central support and training package for accessibility, suggesting improvements that we could make to ensure that it can be effectively used by a wide range of different audiences.</p> <p><i>Recognition:</i> peer support has featured at Student Support &amp; Engagement Committee this year, where a paper was agreed to trial a paid model and a project plan created for the evaluation of the trial. This has led to further work, and the development of 5 new paid student posts.</p>				
<b>Project: Supporting Year Tutors</b>						
A student-led research project: undertaking a review of non-SRUC approaches and of the literature, and working with Year Tutors to explore how to better support them and	1, 2, 4	<p><i>Understanding:</i> raised awareness and understanding of barriers and enablers to year tutor activities, and what works best to support them to best support students.</p> <p><i>Difference:</i> project identified changes to be made to improve the YT experience, and to develop a YT community of</p>	<p>Understanding encapsulated in jointly authored project report.</p> <p>Changes and activities identified to better support YTs and to develop a community of practice.</p>	Supporting student interns to balance work and study.	The student-led cooperative approach, meaning the project was designed and implemented with those with immediate	Hiring of interns earlier in the year, and pre-planned interventions to support staying on track.

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develop a community of practice, so as to better support students.		<p>practice, which were implemented in Year 3 of the Theme.</p> <p><i>Quality:</i> we have been asked to share lessons from our work within the Enhancement Theme Institutional Group, and with SRUC teams such as the Academic Leadership Team.</p> <p><i>Partnership:</i> between the student interns and SRUC staff in the development and implementation of the research project.</p> <p><i>Engagement:</i> over 75% of YTs engaged in some way, 47 via informal interviews and a Padlet, 43 via focus groups, and 96 via a questionnaire.</p> <p><i>Experience:</i> project developed skills, sense of belonging and appetite to engage further of student interns.</p>	<p>Number of staff taking part in research.</p> <p>Testimony of interns following project end.</p> <p>Election of one of the student interns to SRUCSA Co-Presidency in following year.</p>		<p>experience of the student journey.</p> <p>Developing a multi-modal approach to research supporting participants to take part in the way best suited for them.</p>	
A review of the roles and responsibilities of the Year Tutor as articulated within the policy and throughout the Education Manual	4	<p><i>Difference:</i> changes have been recommended to the YT role that aims to ensure greater clarity, equity and consistency for those undertaking the duties.</p> <p><i>Accessibility:</i> translation of role in toolkit (see below) from the policy speak of the education manual to more accessible language to ensure common understanding of what the role requires.</p>	Cannot yet measure effectiveness, beyond the suggested changes being made. It is anticipated that future outcomes will include an increased awareness of the YT role and what it comprises and improved staff wellbeing, to be measured by engagement and feedback.	Timing: recruitment of seconded staff was delayed, meaning the project could not begin until halfway through the year, meaning changes were too late to see outcomes.	Secondment of YT to undertake review – ensuring activity came from a place of experience.	Earlier recruitment of secondees with early consultation with the QA team so as to ensure changes to policy were anticipated and planned for.
Creation of a Year	4	<i>Difference:</i> there is now a core	Cannot yet measure	As above.	As above.	As above.

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Tutor Toolkit		framework for staff to get the basic information required, without needing to refer to multiple policies and processes. This is organised according to the academic year, ensuring staff are able to access the information at the right time. It is anticipated that this can be used both for new Year Tutors, and as a refresher for existing YTs. This toolkit will be launched in August 2023.	effectiveness, beyond the existence of the toolkit. It is anticipated that future outcomes will include co-development and ownership of the toolkit (it has been developed in a wiki-style so staff can add and amend as needed), measured by changes to the site; engagement in the toolkit, measured by Moodle statistics; and use of the toolkit as a platform for the development of a YT forum.			

**One most positive aspect to report:** The development of a variety of rich opportunities for students to build and engage in learning communities. This was particularly important following reports of loneliness and isolation exacerbated by the pandemic. Participation in these communities – both in the establishment and running of them – have led not just to the development of belonging and skills, but also to further engagement in non-ET activities in SRUC (i.e., it has nurtured a sense of partnership).

**Most challenging issue:** Treating the projects as isolated year-long activities (even if they build on each other), has sometimes meant starting from scratch, with difficulties caused by waiting for the start of the ET Year to begin work. With the slowness of some internal processes, this has sometimes meant that work cannot begin again until interns / secondees are in place, which is usually January / February. The fact that this has not been the case for the Peer Support project, which was seen from the outset as a three-year ongoing project, is borne out in the depth of development and evaluation.

**Thing that has made the most difference:** Employing those most impacted by the project to lead on or get involved in project activities (i.e., student interns for student societies, year tutors for the year tutor project etc.), ensuring changes are led and informed by those with direct experience, in partnership with and with support from Theme staff. For the Peer Support project – having a consistent team for all three-years of the work.

**Would not do again and why:** Wait until the new academic year / start of the ET to hire interns / secondees (see above). We would also not ignore the

importance of a communication plan, instead ensuring it is an integral part of projects from the beginning.

<b>Table 2: Ways of working/engaging in the Resilient Learning Communities Themes work</b>					
<b>Theme process</b>	<b>Activities' description</b>	<b>Positive aspects/difference made</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Changes made during process</b>	<b>Hindsight - could be improved by:</b>
<b>Supporting staff and students to engage with Theme activity</b>	<p><i>Staff:</i> use of funding for staff secondments, building in staff contact requirements in projects (and creating staff role descriptions making expectations clear), using multiple means of engagement to encourage taking part in the research elements of the projects, regular blog posts, presentations at forums / networks / bespoke sessions, sharing best practice, staff development packages, videos / resources for staff.</p> <p><i>Students:</i> use of funding for student interns and sourcing of further funding for student leaders (and creating role descriptions making expectations clear), recruitment drives, using multiple means of engagement to encourage taking part in the research elements of project, use of Moodle (e.g., Peer Support Moodle page), weekly emails, social media, training packages, offering support.</p>	<p>Staff contacts and secondees have been very useful for spreading the word and encouraging other staff to get involved. Similarly, student interns have been very useful for spreading the word and encouraging students to get involved.</p> <p>Use of funding for secondees / interns has indicated the value and importance of activity.</p> <p>Introduction of materials (e.g., training packages, information packs, expectations notes etc.) has made it easier for staff and students to get involved and to understand what is expected of them</p>	<p>Staff engagement can still be varied, with some areas / projects seeing less involvement outwith the project leads / secondees / Institutional Group.</p> <p>Student engagement has also been variable, with volunteers and interns needing to balance study with work meaning sometimes pausing the projects during busy times, which can mean losing momentum.</p>	<p>The main change has been increasing the amount of communication and support materials provided to facilitate staff engagement. This is a significant amount of work and requires staff dedicated to it.</p> <p>In terms of student engagement, we have looked to making this easier by identifying and removing barriers, and creating resources to support engagement.</p>	<p>Building communication strategies into the expectations of engagement – so that this becomes part of the projects (and budgeted for) rather than an add on.</p>
<b>Effectiveness of</b>	Alignment of project work to	Use of committees has	It has been difficult to	Increased staffing to	Build communications in

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<b>Theme process</b>	<b>Activities' description</b>	<b>Positive aspects/difference made</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Changes made during process</b>	<b>Hindsight - could be improved by:</b>
<b>organisational and management structures</b>	<p>strategic priorities (e.g., identifying projects through wider activities, including previous ET work and other quality enhancement activities).</p> <p>Use of Enhancement Theme Institutional Group and existing committees and leadership teams to oversee work and ratify changes made to systems and processes owing to the projects.</p> <p>Creation of new structures and processes as part of the ET work.</p>	<p>helped embed the project work within wider SRUC activity.</p> <p>The creation of new structures and processes has promoted greater understanding, autonomy and quality.</p>	<p>maintain engagement in the ETIG, outwith the project teams. This has especially been the case with a communications representative, owing to staffing changes. This has meant communication has been a particular challenge for all projects.</p> <p>Creation of new structures and processes have been quite resource intensive.</p>	<p>support the projects.</p> <p>Increased use of existing committees and leadership teams (so as to ensure ETIG did not become an echo-chamber).</p> <p>Changes also to communications, finance and coordination processes to aim to streamline work, create efficiency, build understanding and promote autonomy.</p>	<p>from the start. We now have a Student Communications Officer. This post has been invaluable in a range of projects, and it would have been good to have had this post sooner to support ET work.</p> <p>Integrate further within existing committees, into which the ETIG reports more regularly, to highlight importance of ETIG activities (and hold the Group accountable).</p>
<b>Evaluating activity and projects</b>	<p>Evaluation has been conducted at the end of each project year, overseen by the ETIG.</p> <p>For two and three-year projects, with consistent project leads (i.e., the Student Societies and Peer Support projects), this has enabled consistency, with evaluation outcomes and metrics shifting each year in line with the growth of the project and refinement of activities and aims.</p> <p>For projects with different leads each year (i.e., the Year Tutor project), this has been less simple, with</p>	<p>The evaluation methods and metrics that we have chosen have allowed us to understand how well the projects are running, how effective any activities or adjustments have been, and to gain insight into how these could be enhanced.</p> <p>We have found student and staff feedback, as well as observed behaviour changes, to be the most beneficial. We have also benefitted from evaluative pieces being carried out by our student interns, and by attending wider QAA workshops on evaluation. In</p>	<p>There were some challenges at first in terms of ascertaining what the correct (or most useful) evaluation methods / metrics were. At the outset, we had a mostly quantitative outlook. However, over time – and with support from QAA – we recognised that these did not capture everything that we wanted to know, and that they needed to evolve and mature.</p> <p>There were also some challenges with getting</p>	<p>The main changes were around the sophistication and depth of analysis. This was informed by feedback from QAA, as well as attending workshops and doing some research into theories of change. This meant we introduced a range of new metrics, looking for example at behaviour changes rather than just numerical data.</p>	<p>We should have spent more time at the beginning of the Theme planning out our theories of change, and the evaluation metrics that we would use.</p> <p>We should have also spent more time thinking about the practicalities of how some of the data was to be collected.</p> <p>We have learnt from this – e.g., the next stage of the Peer Support project, which is being trialled next AY, already has an evaluation</p>

<b>Table 2: Ways of working/engaging in the Resilient Learning Communities Themes work</b>					
<b>Theme process</b>	<b>Activities' description</b>	<b>Positive aspects/difference made</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Changes made during process</b>	<b>Hindsight - could be improved by:</b>
	evaluation almost starting from scratch each time.	particular, the latter provided us with some ideas about how to move beyond many of the numerical or quantitative metrics we employed in year 1 to looking at different qualitative measures.	the information and data to evaluate – once we set up a framework for this, this became easier.		process in place.
<b>Disseminating outcomes and findings internally and externally</b>	<p>The vast majority of dissemination has been internal: blog posts, social media updates, updates at key forums and networks, sharing case studies, disseminating through CELT activities (e.g., the CELT Celebration of Learning and Teaching) etc.</p> <p>External dissemination has focused on the Peer Support project: one of the groups was entered into (and won) a sparqs award for a student-led initiative in a college, we have shared a case study for CDN, and have presented about the work at the Scottish Peer Support Network.</p>	Making use of our internal communication channels and key forums has allowed us to get the word out about the projects, encouraging engagement.	<p>There have been some challenges around how best to disseminate information; in some cases, we are better at communicating with those (students and staff) who are already involved / interested in the work, but are not reaching as well those not.</p> <p>Externally, we have not sought out as many opportunities to promote our work as we could – external dissemination has been owing to being asked to participate in such activities rather than proactively seeking them.</p>	Over the years we have aimed to disseminate examples of case studies and best practices to encourage engagement. We have also relied more often in the later years on the secondees / interns / volunteers to communicate as they are closer to the ground.	Develop a communications strategy from the outset, both for the Theme as a whole and for each individual project.
<b>Collaborating with other institutions/other organisations</b>	Collaboration with other institutions mainly occurred in the research stages of each project (i.e., looking at how Year/Personal Tutor support, Peer Support,	It was useful to see what models other institutions use for similar work, and the variety of processes and systems used to support activities. This allowed us to	The transferability of approaches is not always obvious, especially in light of our student and study profile (i.e., we tend to have	None	It would have been beneficial to do more external collaboration, particularly with others in the college sector, and those used to



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Theme process	Activities' description	Positive aspects/difference made	Challenges	Changes made during process	Hindsight - could be improved by:
	Student Societies work best in other institutions and referring to best practice). However, there have been some ongoing discussions with external colleagues through various networks and forums.	understand some of the key decisions / changes we needed to make.	students studying with us for less time than the traditional 4-year degree, which can cause legacy issues).		tertiary and/or more transient student profiles (e.g., UHI and OU).

**One most positive aspect to report and why:** The evaluation of the three-year project (Peer Support), informed by guidance from QAA. This has enabled us to not only refine and develop over the three-years, but also to be able to provide the evidence that has enabled us to gain further funding (external foundation funding matched by internal SRUC funding) to continue the project, albeit in a slightly modified form with changes based on the evaluation.

**Most challenging issue:** Communication.

**Reason for Changes:** Changes were made based on lessons learned in previous years.

**Would not do again and why:** Rather than build evaluation as the projects develop, we would set up a theory of change evaluation framework from the beginning of each project, which would include a communications plan. We would also aim to make those projects multi-year from the start. This would allow for consistency and momentum.

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