



Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: Heriot-Watt University

Heriot-Watt University will use Resilient Learning Communities Theme activity as a vehicle for amplifying the impact of key strategic work in train across the institution. The Theme also offers opportunities to extend engagement with enhancement efforts across the university community and to innovate in learning, teaching and student support practice.

Given our unique global reach and multi-campus, multi-context profile, Heriot-Watt will focus activity around the topic 'Strengthening our Global Learning Community: Resilience in Action'. This will enable a collective effort to consider what our global learning community may look like by 2025 and how collaborative action can help support staff and students connect across contexts and shape institutional processes & practice to meet future challenges.

To work towards this broad objective, activity is split between **institutionally-commissioned work** and activities initiated through workstream '**special interest clusters**'. In doing so, the intent is to engage stakeholders from across the university in mini-projects, linked to shared areas of practice, development & scholarship. This will benefit the institution and the wider community by sharing the outcomes of the diverse range of work being undertaken across the institution, highlighting the ways in which we identify, develop and support the variety of learning communities which exist in a range of contexts.

Institutional team

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Institutional lead	Prof Martha Caddell		
TLG staff representative	Dr Anne Tierney		

TLG student representative	Alex Hedlund		
	Dr Maggie King		
	Campbell Powrie		
	Dr Anna Sedda		
	Prof Dennis Wong		
	Dr Mehdi Nazarinia		
	Soehl Abraham		
	Carlos Augustine		

Note: The Theme will be led by a core Institutional Team as a steering group and a wider Enhancement Themes Forum will bring together the broader community of workstream leads who will all contribute to building a community of practice around the Theme activity. Additional members will be co-opted on to Steering Group as required, to facilitate conversation, engagement and action.

Planned activity: Year 1

Overall outcomes/activity

Our overall outcome is for our colleagues and students to have an enhanced sense of being part of a global community, and the practical means to facilitate such a community. We will use the Theme to enable a deeper engagement with specific aspects relevant to the institution. Core to our activities is the Special Interest Clusters, which will encourage collaboration across our campuses.

Specifically, over the three year period, our priorities will be to:

- Provide a focal point for institutional conversations around community, belonging and wellbeing.
- Create special interest clusters to advance projects related to resilience, community and wellbeing across our Schools and campuses.
- Develop a longitudinal evaluation to map how our global learning community is evolving over time. This will also provide insight into our progress towards *Strategy 2025* and our *Inspiring Learning* Learning and Teaching Strategy.
- Engage with sector activities and explore external collaboration and practice sharing opportunities.

Year 1 outcomes/activity

Year 1 of the Theme will be approached pragmatically, recognising the particular challenges staff and students are facing as we continue to deal with the Covid pandemic and the impact on teaching and learning. Work will aim to bridge the gap between emergency pandemic response and longer-term enhancement activity. Central to this will be efforts to develop practical examples and exemplars of what embedding community, belonging and wellbeing in learning, teaching and the student experience.

Specific activity in Year 1 will include:

- Preparing an initial Institutional reflection and framing of 'Strengthening our Global Learning Community: Resilience in Action', reflecting on key aspects of institutional practice and dimensions of resilience.
- Establishing special interest clusters to support collaboration across Theme activity.
 - Leaders for each workstream cluster will be identified and supported via the Enhancement Theme Forum.
 - Special Interest Clusters (SICs) will each explore (a) existing practice, (b) areas for enhancement and development and (c) change and evidence of impact over the course of the Theme.
 - Proposed themes for SICs include
 - Resilient Pedagogies
 - Resilient Teaching Teams
 - Student Action for Resilience
 - Local Resilience, Global Change

▪ Enabling Resilience, Creating Connection

- Initiating a longitudinal evaluation exploring efforts to Strengthening our Global Learning community. This will integrate student and staff survey insights, a tailored qualitative study focused on community and belonging at Heriot-Watt, and embedded evaluation of the cluster activity.
- The Strengthening our Global Learning Community Theme will be at the heart of University-wide keynote teaching events, notably the *Inspiring Learning* New Year Lecture (January 2021) and Learning and Teaching Week (June 2021)
- Continue the sector-wide work on Programme Teams and Programme Leadership.
- Launch a new sector Collaborative Cluster focused on work-based learning and the opportunities (and challenges) of micro-credentials.

Dissemination of work

The Enhancement Themes work is a whole University collaborative effort, with broad engagement, discussion and dissemination integral to core activity. Our approach focuses on using the Themes as an umbrella for a series of institution-wide conversations and connected local-level action and innovation.

- Special Interest Clusters will bring together staff and students interested in specific aspects of the Theme to explore opportunities for enhancement and innovation in practice. These groups will be empowered to run micro-projects and run collaborative events. Clusters will also be able to share insight via the LTA Blog.
- The Learning and Teaching Academy will facilitate institution-wide seminars and workshops focused on Enhancement Theme projects and practice sharing.
- Our Global Learning and Teaching Week, which takes place each summer, will have a stream dedicated to Enhancement Themes work.
- Formal platforms for institutional oversight and sharing of practice such as University and School Committees, Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fora and Student Representative Group assemblies will also be invited to consider updates on Theme initiatives.
- There will be a dedicated Theme Teams site to share practice, ideas and emerging work.
- Colleagues from across the University will be encouraged to share findings at internal events and external conferences. Projects will also be encouraged and supported to disseminate findings through publication and other practical outputs to support practice across the institution and wider sector.

Collaborative cluster work

Heriot-Watt will contribute to, and lead where appropriate, sector activities related to Theme work. HWU will be leading on two Collaborative Clusters:

- Exploring the potential of micro-credentials: new routes to resilience and flexibility in curriculum design (Led by Robin Westacott & Anne Tierney)
- Programme Leadership: Strengthening resilience, supporting learning communities. (Led by Martha Caddell)

We also intend to actively participate in the Decolonisation of the Curriculum and Student Wellbeing collaborative clusters.

Supporting staff and student engagement

Making connections between the Theme and institutional strategic projects and priorities is critical to the reach and impact of our work over the next three years. This will support staff engagement by ensuring the Theme is directly relevant to institutional work, embedded in the suite of enhancement activities at all levels.

As noted above we will be embedding Theme discussions in existing institutional discussion and engagement fora. In addition, we will establish two new platforms for collaboration and sharing:

- Our Enhancement Themes Forum will meet three times each academic year to share insights and shape the next steps for the Theme. This group will include Special Interest Group Cluster leads, student representatives, and other colleagues with particular interests and expertise in Theme activity.
- Special Interest Clusters are open to individuals interested in taking forward work in a range of identified areas relevant to institutional strategy priorities. Engagement in these clusters will be supported by seed funding to establish micro-projects to take forward Theme ideas in specific courses and contexts. These will help contribute to our understanding of Resilient Learning Communities and create opportunities for staff to take their first steps into leading enhancement-related initiatives. Where possible, Clusters will be *co-led* by students and staff members, embedding partnership and collaboration in all our enhancement efforts.

Evaluation

Heriot-Watt will build on the key learning from our *Evidence for Enhancement* Theme activity, notably the insights from our student survey review, to put in place an institutional evaluation plan from the outset of the new Theme. This also provides an opportunity to extend institutional discussion around appropriate indicators and measures of enhancement activity.

Specific evaluation activity will focus on (a) exploring existing institutional and local data and how it can help inform a narrative of change and enhancement; (b) identify how student voices will inform the development of practice across the three years of the Theme, incorporating institutional surveys and School and course-based activity; (c) initiate a longitudinal qualitative study to offer a rich picture of change across the HWU community over the Theme period.

Our institutional approach to enhancing resilience recognises the term 'resilience' must be opened to conceptual and practical scrutiny. As we embark on Theme-related work, we will maintain a *critical perspective* on the concept and practices related to resilience and associated action around community, belonging and wellbeing. One of our first institutional activities is to develop a 'think piece' on individual, team and organisational resilience to

help frame conversations across the other workstreams and the development of specific activity. This will help underpin evaluation work and the establishment of our institutional change narrative.

Special Interest Clusters will each be responsible for the development of related mini-projects and for the overall development of the SIC theme.

Across the three years of the Theme we will make use of the evaluation approaches trialled and developed by the Evidence for Enhancement Theme, with SIC asked to engage in the 'light' evaluation process developed for sector evaluation.

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Financial Annex Year 1

In order to carry out the planned activities, we request the following funding from QAA Scotland

Institutional evaluation:

Appointment of interns to support baseline data collection and analysis
£2000

Facilitating Student and Staff Engagement:

Funding for Mini-projects linked to Special Interest Clusters and keynote events
£4000

Total

£6000

Additional Note: The University offers matched funding to the ET Theme work to ensure the successful development of initiatives and sharing across the institution.

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