



Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: Queen Margaret University

Context

This Plan aligns with our [revised Institutional Strategy for the period 2020-25](#) (published July 2020): Within that Strategy we set out our commitment to maintaining and developing our distinct people-centred environment to ensure that students feel safe and supported in their studies by staff who are confident, motivated and inspired. The Strategy seeks to respond to the circumstances arising from the coronavirus pandemic. It expresses our commitment to promoting a culture of respect and resilience. We anticipate that the activities progressed under the auspices of the Enhancement Themes Team will make a direct contribution to that objective.

Our [Student Experience Strategy and Student Partnership Agreement](#) are both under review at present. We will consider carefully how the work of the Institutional Team informs and aligns with these important reference points. Reports from the Institutional Team will be considered by the Student Experience Committee, which has oversight of the academic and co-curricular experience for all of our students.

Institutional team

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Institutional lead	Professor Richard Butt, Deputy Principal		
TLG staff representative	Professor Richard Butt, Deputy Principal		
TLG student representative	Linnea Wallen, Doctoral Candidate		
Year 1 team members listed alphabetically			
Dr Theresa Cronin	Transnational Partnership Manager and International Lead - School of Arts,		

	Social Sciences and Management		
Heather Hartley	Student Experience Data Officer		
Karl Johnson	Lecturer, Division of Psychology, Sociology and Education		
Dr Jessica Lindohf	Head of Student Services		
Dr Joan Ma	Lecturer, Speech and Hearing Sciences		
Dawn Martin	Assistant Secretary Governance and Quality Enhancement		
Chiara Menozzi	Student President		
Ailsa McMillan	Senior Lecturer, Nursing		
Kristina Mountain	Senior Lecturer, Nursing		
Dr Olivia Sagan	Head of Psychology, Sociology and Education		
Shawn Soh	PhD Candidate		
Dr Stefanie van de Peer	Lecturer, Media, Communication and Performing Arts		

Planned activity: Year 1

Overall outcomes/activity

We will have a main focus on tackling loneliness and isolation during year one of the Theme. We will concentrate on improving wellbeing and resilience, being careful to frame our activities positively, avoiding a deficit model of loneliness and isolation.

We want to achieve the following outcomes:

- Provision of immediate intervention(s), where possible and necessary, to support students who are feeling, or are at risk of feeling, lonely and/or isolated (especially in light of Covid/increased remote learning).
- A better institutional understanding of loneliness and isolation, of the distinctions between the two conditions, and of their impact on health and wellbeing.
- A better understanding of the current impact of loneliness and isolation on the health and wellbeing of Queen Margaret University students.
- Improved understanding of the impact of loneliness and isolation on different groups of students, and how to meet the needs of these different groups.
- A better understanding and improved awareness of the resources already available at QMU and externally, (such as the recommendations from The Jo Cox Loneliness Commission and work by the Wellcome Trust) to support students experiencing loneliness and isolation, where this is detrimental to their wellbeing.
- A more nuanced understanding of how existing QMU resources support students in their loneliness or isolation.
- Provision of additional resources for staff and students, as appropriate and informed by the activities we deliver.

We will deliver the following activities:

- Staff expert briefing note on loneliness and isolation and contributing factors, drawing on academic and professional services specialists within the institution.
- Staff questionnaire to gather information on the following:
 - Resources/interventions already in place – locally or on an institutional level.
 - Suggestions for additional support/resources/interventions.
- Selection and inclusion of a bank of loneliness survey questions in our annual student questionnaire (the QSS).
- Student focus group(s) to further develop our understanding of qualitative responses to the QSS.
- Development of additional support/resources/information informed by staff and student questionnaire responses.

We anticipate the following benefits for QMU staff and students:

- Raised awareness of the experience of loneliness and isolation.
- Enhanced understanding of the means by which these can be managed by both individuals and the institution.
- Improved and faster access to the support/resources/interventions available to any member of the QMU community experiencing loneliness and isolation.
- Development of evidence based curricula and extra-curricular strategies for mitigating against loneliness and isolation, where such feelings are detrimental to the individual's wellbeing.

We anticipate the following benefits for the sector:

- We will share our outputs with the sector at TLG meetings and through other Enhancement Themes opportunities.

Dissemination of work

- The Institutional Team will report regularly to the Student Experience Committee. SEC members represent the full range of academic divisions and professional services, and we expect SEC members to communicate key points from meetings to their immediate peers.
- Institutional Team members' will report to their peers through their participation in Divisional and School Academic Board Meetings.
- The SU will play an important role in promoting our work to students. We will also issue updates to all staff and students through our established communication channels.
- We will use our Graduate School Hub site and newsletter to engage with our doctoral community.
- Externally we will report to TLG and through other opportunities arising from the Enhancement Themes.
- We are also considering a dissemination event, but that is a longer term aspiration, perhaps for year two of the Theme, by which time we will hopefully be in a position to hold the event on campus.

Collaborative cluster work

We are in discussion with Dr Fiona Smart from Edinburgh Napier around possible mutual involvement in some of the collaborative clusters, including decolonising the curriculum.

Supporting staff and student engagement

- Through our Performance Enhancement Review process, staff have the opportunity to discuss their engagement in this activity, and the necessary time commitment, with their line manager.
- We recognise that it is a significant undertaking for a student member to join the Team. As such, we are looking at ways to support student participants more effectively in this role.
- We will support wider engagement through the communication channels identified above. We recognise that not all staff and students will be familiar with the Enhancement Themes. We will make sure that our target audience can relate to communications and that the benefits for our staff and students are at the forefront of such communications.
- Members of the Institutional Team will make themselves available for discussions around the Theme and QMU's priorities.

Evaluation

- This will be a longitudinal exercise.
- Activity will be formally evaluated by the Institutional Team and Student Experience Committee.
- We expect to incorporate evaluation of Themes activity in our Student Experience Strategy, which is due for review in semester two of 2020-21.

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Financial Annex Year 1

Please provide information on how the funding given through the Enhancement Theme institutional contract will be used to support work within the HEI in relation to the Theme. This should be high level, not detailed.

At the time of the end-of-year report, you will be asked to comment on expenditure against financial plan information.

Please note that this information remains confidential and will not be made available on the web.

We plan to allocate some of the budget to support survey development and analysis. The remainder will be allocated to support the development and roll out of resources.

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