



Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: Heriot-Watt University

This document will form your year 3 plan and should be around three to four sides of A4. You can find your year 1 and plans through this [web page](#).

Context

Provide any statements that might be helpful in explaining your institution's context and approach and how this plan supports the achievement of institutional priorities. Any context statement could draw on salient points from the previous year's learning/outcomes from Theme work and reflect any changes in the strategic direction of your institution.

Heriot-Watt University is using the Resilient Learning Communities Theme activity as a vehicle for amplifying the impact of key strategic work in train across the institution linked to the implementation of our Learning and Teaching strategy and the strengthening of our commitment to Globally Connected Learning and Purpose-Led Education. The Theme offers opportunities to extend engagement with enhancement efforts across the university community, enabling a collaborative approach to developing practice in learning, teaching and student support.

Given our unique global reach and multi-campus, multi-context profile, Heriot-Watt is focusing activity on the topic 'Strengthening our Global Learning Community: Resilience in Action.' This is enabling a collective effort to consider what our global learning community may look like by 2025 and how collaborative action can help 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,
- Developing special interest clusters' to support collaboration and connection, an
- Enhancement Mini-projects to support broad-based engagement with the Theme.

This multi-layered approach is designed to amplify the impact of enhancement activities through reinforcing the connection between local action and institutional strategic change.

Institutional team

Please specify for each member whether staff or student and for staff, their role title. Where the Theme Leaders' Group (TLG) staff or student nominee is unable to attend meetings, an alternate can attend on their behalf.

Institutional lead	Prof. Martha Caddell
TLG staff representative	Dr Anne Tierney
TLG student representative	Molly Knight
Steering Group	Dr Rob Daley
Steering Group	Dr Anna Sedda
Steering Group	Dr Mehdi Nazarinia
Steering Group	Prof Dennis Wong
Steering Group	Dr Maggie King
Steering Group	Campbell Powrie
Steering Group	Prof Deborah Hall
Student Association President, Dubai	Syed Uzair
Student Association President, Malaysia	Ilya Sulaiman Dali

Overall outcomes/activity

Are there any changes to your key priorities, outcomes and delivery activities that you identified at the start of the Theme?

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 have used the Theme to (a) explore what community and connections staff and students value in our university context and (b) identify practical ways of strengthening those connections.

Core to our activities is the introduction of Special Interest Clusters and mini-project activity, which offer practical routes to build collaboration across our campuses.

Specifically, our priorities over the three-year period are 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.

As we begin year 3 of the work, we turn our focus to the completion, consolidation and broad communication of the practical resources and key learning that has emerged from the RLC activity.

This year we focus on a series of practical outputs intended to guide and enhance the development and support of global learning communities, pulling together resources from the various strands of work.

- Each project across the suite of work has outputs and resource development that will directly enhance the work of that specific community and / or the wider university.
 - For example, the Programme Directors Forum have produced a practical Toolbox for use by that community.
 - The Assessment for Learning special interest cluster have produced a set of key principles and case studies to inform institution-wide enhancement of practice.
 - The Student Reps community project is directly changing practice within that community.
- A capstone output for this year is the production of a practical guide to ***Strengthening Global Learning Communities***. This will be a headline output from our three years of work, encapsulating key learning from across the Theme projects, practical tips and activities for colleagues and students to embed in their practice in coming years, and case studies across the areas of work we have initiated over the life of the Theme.

Year 3 outcomes/activity

In answering the following, identify what is continuing from year 2 and what is new:

What are your key priorities?

What outcomes do you want to achieve?

What activities will you deliver to achieve your key priorities?

In **Year 3** we build on the work initiated in Year 1 and 2, consolidating our baseline development and expanding our enhancement and engagement activities. This year practical evaluation and sharing of

key learning will form a large part of work, consolidating the thematic work and strengthening our institutional narrative of change. Again, we focus on three areas of work: Institutional narrative | Thematic Workstreams | Enhancement Mini-projects

a. Institutional level work

Our institutional priority is 'Strengthen Our Global Learning Community,' exploring what is distinctive about Heriot-Watt's approach to supporting learning and creating a global-connected learning experience. The institutional work strand in Year 3 builds upon earlier conceptual work around understanding resilience and our initial baseline 'snapshot' of Heriot-Watt as a global learning community.

This year we will continue to build this institutional picture of the university as a resilient learning community through:

- Follow-up reflection on the 'snapshot' study of HWU as a global learning community as a way of tracking progress made. This will include exploration of existing data and 'snapshot' insights from teaching teams, student groups and other key stakeholders
- The development of a capstone RLC Theme output: ***A Practical Guide to Strengthening Learning Communities: Insights from Heriot-Watt University***

b. Thematic work areas

We will continue to develop and expand our thematic work across five key areas:

1. Resilient Pedagogies

Our enhancement focus is on how to effectively build communities of practice / communities of enhancement to support pedagogic development. We have established a number of key groups and are evaluating their specific and collective impact.

- The work of our Global Digital Pedagogies Hub supports staff to enhance their understanding of, and capability with digital teaching, and highlight areas of good practice across the university.
- Our Assessment and Feedback Special Interest Group (SIG) continues to develop guidance for staff on issues pertaining to feedback and assessment. They will also work with staff to implement our recently published Principles of Assessment.
- We will be launching a new Centre for Scholarship and Educational Leadership in December 2022. This will provide a supportive community for staff wishing to enhance their understanding of SoTL, as well as providing support for staff-led scholarship initiatives

2. Resilient Teaching Teams

Our enhancement focus is on practical support to strengthen collaboration within teaching teams, particularly in the context of global teaching team practice.

- Our Programme Directors' Forum will continue to provide peer-support for programme leads across the university. It will also deliver a programme of activity to provide focused professional development on different aspects of this challenging role. It will continue to evaluate and enhance the new Programme Directors toolkit and facilitate a number of action learning sets to provide programme directors with support in meeting the specific challenges they face.
- Building on the development of our Programme Director's Toolkit, we will develop a specific resource to support Course Leaders and will develop a toolkit to support Global teaching teams across HWU.

- Our WELCOME project on the practice of global teaching teams will continue to explore the challenges and experiences of new teaching staff at HWU and will develop guidance for teams on how best to support new colleagues as they transition into teaching at HWU.

3. Student Action for Resilience

The work to further enhance our student representative structures, communities and approaches will continue. This focuses very practically on the training and support provided to our student representatives across campus locations.

4. Local Resilience, Global Change

This year we will be focusing on sharing case studies of practice from across the institution on action to support local action to tackle global challenges, to amplify the work of student and staff groups making a positive impact on the university and the communities we live and study within. This will help amplify and celebrate work aligned with our sustainability commitments and our learning and teaching interest in championing challenge-based learning.

5. Enabling Resilience, Creating Connection

This year's work focuses on consolidating and amplifying learning from our work exploring the evolving use of learning spaces at our new Dubai campus. Further local dissemination and discussions will lead into the sharing of insights into the use of campus learning spaces with colleagues across the university through associated workshops and top tips guides.

Enhancement Themes Mini-projects

We continue to build on the success of the mini-projects approach as a vehicle for engaging diverse groups of staff and students in Theme activity. This approach empowers colleagues to interpret the Enhancement Theme and institutional strategy in ways to relevant to their own within their teaching and learning context and progress projects that are meaningful and impactful for a specific group.

We will:

- Open a focused call for projects in Year 3.
- Provide support for carrying out, evaluating and disseminating mini-project outcomes.
- Carry out a specific evaluation of the mini-projects approach to explore their usefulness as a vehicle for generating institutional change via local enhancement.

Using Theme resources from sector projects

In the year 3 report we will ask you what resources you have used and which you have found to be most valuable. It would be helpful for us to know now, how, and which resources, you may be planning to use in year 3 of the Theme and beyond (from the Anti-Racist Curriculum project, Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning and Experience, Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland, the Student-Led Project, Student Mental Wellbeing).

Year 3 sector wide work

We will continue to lead and contribute to work going on throughout the sector as they are redefined for Year 3 of the Enhancement Theme.

- Contribute to TLG
- Contribute to, and lead on

- Micro-credentials Tertiary Education Network
- Recognition of Prior Learning Network

We continue to embed findings from last year’s Programme Leaders’ and Micro-credentials collaborative clusters within our institutional work. The Programme Leadership work has also continued beyond the timeframe of ET funding, with spin-off research and development work underway to produce a Programme Leadership Manifesto.

Our approach to evaluation will draw from Enhancement Theme resources and workshops led by Stella Devitt-Jones and Liz Austen.

We continue our institutional collaboration with Edinburgh Napier University and Queen Margaret University, inviting colleagues to contribute to this year’s Learning and Teaching Symposium in October which is focused on feedback and capturing the Student Voice.

Evaluation

How do you intend to evaluate your year 3 projects and activities?

Prior to completing this section, 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 complete briefly the following 5 questions for each activity or intervention (N.B. Just cut and paste the table below as many times as necessary). This will help you complete your end of year 3 report.

Title of project/activity
1. Consolidation of Enhancement Theme Work: Global Resilience
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The commitment of HWU in this Enhancement Theme is to deepen understanding of how staff and students experience our ‘global learning community’ and strengthen and enhance this in practical and pragmatic ways: development of communities of practice, supporting resource development, implementing changes in process and practice. We seek to enhance the student learning experience and build resilience by sharing and amplifying the wealth of expertise and strength of community within and across our five global campuses.
Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
HWU is in a unique position of having five global campuses, each of which has a unique character. We initiated this theme work through an interest in exploring how to strengthen connections between campuses, between teaching teams, and between student cohorts can enhance or change a ‘sense of belonging’ to a global institution. We are interested in knowing what is valued (and what is not) in creating stronger connections between campuses, communities and contexts.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
The tangible change we envisage is strengthened sense of community and tangible changes in the opportunities for learning and more effective working between campuses. The work will also offer

guidance on good practice that draws on a clear evidence-based evaluation of practice and experience.

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

We have gathered data from existing sources to act as a baseline of where staff and students' perceptions of belonging were prior to the start of the theme. We have ongoing reporting documents from each of the areas of activity and individual projects which show the development of innovative practices, and better support of our global community. Our work this year will triangulate this evidence with stories gathered from those involved in the ongoing theme work, developing our narrative of change, and evidencing how specific activity has impacted on individual and institutional learning and lived experience.

Title of project/activity

2. Evaluating Impact of the Heriot-Work Thematic Work (Scaling up learning)

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

This year we are building on learning from Theme activity and amplifying its impact through the development, dissemination, and use of practical resources to shape practice across the university. We will undertake an in-depth evaluation under each of the five thematic areas. We will explore a range of data sources gathered through the specific activities and then use a dialogic approach to explore the impact activities have had within immediate spheres of impact and then across the wider university community. This approach will enable the scaling of impact evaluation from individual projects through to the wider thematic area and then the work HWU has undertaken on the Theme as a whole.

Thematic areas each have their own intended outcomes, as outlined in the plan above:

- **Resilient Pedagogies**
- **Resilient Teaching Teams**
- **Student Action for Resilience**
- **Global Resilience, Local Change**
- **Enabling Resilience, Creating Connection**

Evaluation in this area will involve exploring the theory of change narrative of each theme with key participants and project leads.

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

The specific changes in each area offer opportunities to enhance the work and learning experience of the immediate community of practice (e.g. Programme Directors will have resources to ensure they can work more effectively; student reps will have enhanced training and support).

In addition, the institution will have a stronger understanding of how effective collaboration works in the context of our multi-campus university. This will ensure that the work of the Theme has longer term benefit and impact, extending beyond each individual work package.

What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)

As outlined above each of the five thematic area has specific tangible outputs and will lead to community-specific enhancement. Across the five themes we hope to be able to scale up impact and demonstrate:

- Staff and students feel a stronger sense of belonging to a supportive global learning community.
- Staff and students are able to access the practical support they need to build communities and enhance practice in context-relevant ways.
- There is a strengthened sense across the institution of what being 'truly global' means in practice for the HWU community.

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

Building on analysis of individual project outputs and impact, we will develop this into a rich, qualitative understanding of lived experience of learning and working at Heriot-Watt through interviews, focus group discussion and analysis of existing staff and student-facing data sources.

Title of project/activity

3. Evaluating the impact of the Enhancement Theme Mini-projects

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

This year we will fund the final round of mini-projects which gives individuals or groups of staff and students autonomy in making a change or intervention which supports innovative changes in teaching and learning.

We will be carrying out a reflective analysis of the mini-projects as a vehicle for change and how the process has impacted at school/campus/institutional level.

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

This is an opportunity to give individuals or small groups of staff and students control over an area which is important to them, to support them in interpreting strategic priorities within their disciplinary context. Staff and students submit proposals under the five thematic areas identified for HWU work. The projects represent interventions in teaching and learning which benefit teachers and students, reach out to the wider community, or make connections between campuses.

What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)

The immediate change is confidence-raising for the teams who are successful in gaining funding. The projects themselves facilitate local changes, the learning from which can then be shared between campuses and disseminated more widely. As the mini-projects are sought under the banner of the Enhancement Themes HWU thematic areas, the findings from the projects will be included in the change narrative under each theme, whereas the process will be reported on as a project.

We will have a good understanding of the strengths of our resilient communities and be able to identify approaches that support such reliance across or global community. This will also identify areas which would benefit from further strengthening. These will ensure that our future approaches are evidence based and are more likely to result in positive outcomes.

We believe that the mini-projects are a powerful way to transform understanding by offering colleagues and students the opportunity to explore what interests them and develop interventions which transform student experience. We want to share that process with the wider sector.

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

The data collected will provide evidence of enhanced resilience among the different groups and communities that we have focused on.

- Each project team submits an interim and final report on activities.
- In addition, this year our evaluation of the mini-projects will include a survey through which we will track the transferable learning from each project, identifying which opportunities the project teams have had to share their learning with others, and from which we will identify the academic capital accrued to the team members.
- We will also look at project submission numbers over time, campuses and schools which contribute, and how we can continue to enhance this activity.

Dissemination of work

How will you promote and communicate your work internally and externally?

Year 3 dissemination

In Year 3, we will build on the dissemination practices put in place in Year 2. These include internal and external dissemination opportunities.

- Support Enhancement Themes activities throughout the year
 - Teaching and Learning Symposium in October 2022
 - Teaching and Learning Week in June 2023
- Encouraged colleagues to present at QAA Scotland conference and events
- Encouraged colleagues to present at external conferences and other appropriate forums.

In 2021 we negotiated an institutional registration subscription with Improving University Teaching international conference (www.iutconference.com) The theme of the 2021 conference was “The Human Side of Teaching” which offered a useful platform for developing understanding of pedagogy and practice relevant to the current Enhancement Theme. We developed our relationship with the conference in 2022, contributing eight posters and one digital showcase to the conference. Individually, colleagues also presented at a range of UK and Asian events, showcasing their work within the Enhancement Themes.

Year 3

Building on the work we have done in engaging colleagues in scholarship, we will be hosting the 49th International Improving University Teaching conference at our Heriot Watt Malaysia campus in 2023. This will be a flagship event for our work on the Theme, highlighting not only the strengthened commitment to evidence for enhancement and scholarship of teaching and learning in the institution but also how our university community has expanded its external connections and collaborations.

Supporting staff and student engagement

How will you support your community to engage with planned activities?

- We continue to meet as a steering group regularly, to discuss progress on the strands of activity.
- Mini-projects are offered practical support with development and evaluation throughout the year.
- All involved with Enhancement Theme activities is encouraged to disseminate their work.

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