



Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: University of St Andrews

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.

We have identified 3 key areas of the Resilience Theme that our work is based on (diverse learning communities, student attributes and learning communities of the future). These areas tie to the University's Education Strategy of: World-leading | Entrepreneurial | Diverse | Global.

For the current Enhancement Theme, the Theme Lead position was appointed to a member of staff outside of the Proctor's Office. A large Core Enhancement Theme Team was then created by inviting participation from members of staff across all sections of the University to join our Students' Association Director of Education and the Team Leader. Our Core Team is larger compared to previous Enhancement Theme teams, both in terms of size and representation. In Year 2 we actively recruited for more student (undergraduate and postgraduate) representation in the core team and are delighted that student members will be continuing with us in our final year.

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	<i>Paula Miles</i> (Staff - Psychology & Neuroscience, Director of Teaching, Senior Lecturer)
TLG staff representative	<i>Paula Miles</i> (Staff - Psychology & Neuroscience, Director of Teaching, Senior Lecturer)
TLG student representative	<i>AK Schott</i> (Student - Students' Association Director of Education)
Additional Members	<i>Hitanshi Badani</i> (Student)
	<i>Nicola Balloch</i> (Student)
	<i>Nicole Cizauskas</i> (Student)
	<i>Kenneth Mavor</i> (Staff – Psychology & Neuroscience, Senior Lecturer)
	<i>Heather McKiggan-Fee</i> (Staff – Head of Educational Development)
	<i>Lara Meischke</i> (Staff – Student Services, Director)
	<i>Sharon Nangle</i> (Staff – Library, Academic Liaison Librarian)
	<i>Julie Oswald</i> (Staff – Deputy Enhancement Theme Lead, Biology, Senior Lecturer)
	<i>Laura Palmer</i> (Staff – Lead Administrator)
	<i>Eric Stoddart</i> (Staff – Divinity, Lecturer)
	<i>Penny Turnbull</i> (Staff – Student Services, Assistant Director - Projects & Residential)
	<i>Fiona Whelan</i> (Staff – Student Services, Assistant Director - Accessibility & Inclusion)

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 key priorities, outcomes, and delivery activities remain largely the same, with our work revolving around diverse learning communities, student attributes and learning communities of the future. One addition is our Open Forum event that was introduced in our second year. We plan to hold another Open Forum in Year 3.

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?

1. We will continue our longitudinal study exploring the **impact of online learning during the pandemic** on our student cohort. To date we have utilised multiple methods to collect this information from students: focus groups, questionnaires, digital storytelling, and analyses of anonymous social media posts. In Year 3 we will distribute another questionnaire and carry out another digital storytelling study. Based on the findings, we will present a set of recommendations to the University, and we are currently preparing a manuscript based on this work. *(Continued from Year 2)*
2. One attribute that varies widely among students is how they react to and use feedback. We plan to host an invited lecture and workshop on **Assessment Feedback Literacy**. Via this event, we aim to better support the use of feedback by students by promoting discussion amongst teaching staff about the best ways to deliver feedback so that students can successfully engage with and benefit from it. *(This priority was identified in Year 1; due to staff absence we have postponed this event to Year 3)*
3. We have sought to encourage our student body to engage with the University community, and the Enhancement Theme specifically. We have also aimed to increase staff awareness of the Enhancement Themes. In Year 2 we held our first **Open Forum**, and it allowed us to achieve both aims. We intend to run a second Open Forum this year to help encourage further involvement from students and staff. The forum will allow us to create additional positive collaborations between students and staff, show students that their voices are valued, and raise the profile of the Enhancement Theme work within the University. *(Continued from Year 2)*
4. We want to better understand student and staff views on the **purpose of Higher Education** and what impact these views have on the choices that our students and staff make. This project is continuing from Year 1 when we collected data via an online questionnaire. In Year 3 we plan to analyse the data and consider what steps are necessary, if at all, to help align the expectations of students and staff in the higher education setting. *(Continued from Year 1; on hold in Year 2 due to staff absence – plan to resume in Year 3)*
5. Having managed a pandemic for the past two and a half years, we are now set to return to in-person teaching. We appreciate that this will be an adjustment for all involved. We plan to focus specifically on **students returning to the classroom** and in-person teaching and wish to develop a set of resources and raise awareness of

existing resources to help students with this transition. We have a team of eight students who will be working on this project. Student involvement is key to the success of this work because students will better understand the likely challenges they are going to face going forward. Resources will be advertised to students before the end of semester 1. *(New in Year 3)*

6. There is an expectation for university students to engage in group work in order to equip them with some of the transferrable skills necessary for the workplace. As such, we do regularly include group work in our lesson plans. However, we are also very aware that group work can be challenging for some students. One of the issues that arises with group work is intra-group conflict, as not all students know how to deal with this difficult situation if it arises. We plan to embed **conflict resolution training** within a module and then assess the impact this training has on students' experiences of group work. If this pilot is successful, we will aim to embed such training as standard into other modules involving group work. If we can teach our students how to successfully resolve conflict, then we are helping our students become more resilient in the classroom (and beyond).

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).

At this point, we plan to use resources from the Anti-Racist Curriculum project, Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland project and the Student Mental Wellbeing project. Resources from these projects will help to support existing work at St Andrews through our EDI network, our Flexible Pathways Committee, the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice and our Mental Health Task Force.

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

Understanding the impact of online learning during the pandemic

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

In collaboration with students (who lead this work), we have designed a longitudinal research project to help us better understand student experiences with online learning during the pandemic. We have been collecting data in several ways:

- 1) questionnaire disseminated to all students asking them to reflect on their teaching and learning experiences in: Semester 2 2020-21 (fully online learning - completed); Semester 1 2021-22 (hybrid - completed); and Semester 2 2021-22 (hybrid but with more in-person than previously delivered – due to complete this in the upcoming months).
- 2) analysis of anonymous student Facebook posts relating to their experiences during the pandemic (ongoing).
- 3) targeted focus group sessions with students to create a more detailed account of learning experiences in Semester 2 2020-21 (completed).
- 4) digital storytelling to help students express, through a different medium, what learning during the pandemic has been like for them in Semester 1 2021-22 (hybrid – completed) and Semester 2 2021-22 (hybrid but with more in-person than previously delivered – due to complete this in the upcoming months).

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

We are conducting this project to help us better understand our students' learning experiences during the pandemic. This will allow us to identify positive aspects of online learning that we may then want to take forward and utilise in future teaching and learning.

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

We presented our initial findings and a set of recommendations to the University so that they could make fully informed decisions about the shape of our future learning and teaching practices. We intend to do the same once we have our most recent set of data analysed.

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

- 1) Our research project will have been successful if we have been able to reach a wide range of students, thereby allowing for a diverse student voice to be heard. Analysis of demographic information collected during the project will help us determine if we have achieved this.
- 2) We will have been successful in terms of making recommendations to the University if our findings and recommendations are included in agenda items at University meetings (e.g.,

Learning and Teaching Committee) and changes are considered or made to teaching practice or policy by members of our University community based on our findings.

Title of project/activity
Assessment Feedback Literacy
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
Traditional approaches to feedback (that is, a one-way delivery of information from the marker to the student) are being replaced by various approaches that see using feedback as a focus in itself. This area is known as Assessment Feedback Literacy. We plan to hold a lecture and workshop delivered by Prof. Naomi Winstone, an internationally recognised scholar in this area. The initial lecture will help to raise awareness of feedback literacy and the subsequent workshop will help those who wish to implement these changes in feedback practice in their teaching. Following these events, we wish to establish a feedback literacy community of research and practice at our institution to allow this important work to continue and grow post the event. (Please note: this project has been on hold since Year 1 due to staff availability.)
Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
This is an area in which we believe that change can be made in both academic and student practices, as well as being a burgeoning area of higher education research. We seek to raise awareness about these new approaches and how they can benefit the learning community in St Andrews, as well as to establish a foothold in research on this theme.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That some academics will broaden their assessment practices to take on board new techniques and approaches to feedback.2. That a feedback literacy practice and research network will be established at St Andrews.
How will we know? (How the change is measured)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. We will stay in contact with staff who attend the lecture and workshop to understand the impact that this event has had on their practice. This will include seeking feedback immediately after the session, and then at a follow-up later in the academic year.2. We plan to establish a network of colleagues who will continue to focus on assessment feedback literacy in practice and/or in research. Tracking this network will give us an indication of how successfully colleagues have embedded this approach in their work.

Title of project/activity
Identifying the purpose of Higher Education
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
We have collected data using Prolific to test the reliability and construct validity of our survey instrument that seeks to better understand the purpose of higher education through the lens of students and staff (Part A completed). This year we plan to analyse these data. Following this, we will make any necessary changes to the survey and apply for ethical approval for Part B of the study using the survey with secondary school students, university students, and university lecturers. (Please note: this project has been on hold since Year 1 due to staff availability).

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

One's understanding of the purpose of higher education will impact what one personally hopes to achieve from their experiences at university and what goals they will set for themselves while at university. If students and staff view the purpose of higher education differently, then expectations will not align, and this could result in disappointment for either or both groups. We need to know if a mismatch does exist.

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

Through this exploratory piece of work, we will be able to determine if expectations between students and staff align regarding the purposes of higher education. If they don't, we will then be able to focus our attentions on developing an intervention that helps to align the goals between students and lecturers (e.g. developing student-staff partnerships).

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

The Enhancement Theme Team will be involved in analysing the results of this exploratory research, which will then inform how the project evolves. In the long term, if an intervention is developed, we would hope to assess the effectiveness of the intervention by comparing before and after data.

Title of project/activity

Developing resources to support students as they transition back to in-person teaching

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

Resources will be developed to help students return to in-person teaching and learning. This may include items such as videos, podcasts, social media communications, and other multi-media materials. This project will be led by students.

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

Over the past two years, most teaching has occurred online and as such many students have never had the experience of in-person lectures and tutorials. Because of this, there is a lot of anxiety around attending live classes and many students don't realize all the benefits that come with interacting with staff and students in these settings.

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

We want to support students as they transition back to in-person teaching so that they can make the most of the learning opportunities provided to them. We hope that these resources will help students to be confident as they embrace their new surroundings.

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

We plan to monitor student engagement with newly developed and existing resources (e.g. number of views) relative to a baseline (for previously existing resources).

Title of project/activity
Conflict resolution in the classroom
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
We will be embedding conflict resolution training into an existing first year module, before group work begins. We will then survey students at the completion of the module, asking them to reflect on their experiences working in a group.
Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
Given how important and prevalent group work is, both at university and in employment, we want to equip our students with the skills necessary to navigate and manage conflict that may arise in group settings. Gaining these skills will help our students to become more resilient learners and future employees.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
Post conflict resolution training, we hope to see that students have had a positive experience working with their group.
How will we know? (How the change is measured)
We have collected control data from an equivalent module where students have completed a group project but have not received any conflict resolution training. We will compare control and experimental data to see if satisfaction with group work is higher for the experimental group who have received training.

Dissemination of work
How will you promote and communicate your work internally and externally?
<p>1) We aim to continue to raise the profile of the Enhancement Theme within our University by holding our second Open Forum and hosting an End-of-Theme Sharing Event at our institution. These events will be an opportunity for those already involved in the theme (e.g., Core Team, recipients of Year 1 and 2 funding) to share their work with colleagues and students from across the University. These events will help us to promote the Enhancement Themes internally.</p> <p>2) We plan to revamp our website and create brief promotional/informational videos about our work to share with the University community via our website (and other social media channels such as Instagram and Facebook). This will help us raise awareness of the Enhancement Theme work and promote the Open Forum and Sharing Event internally (and potentially externally).</p> <p>3) We will continue to present our work at important University meetings (e.g., Learning and Teaching Committee, Postgraduate Research Committee, Flexible Learning Pathways Group, Student Experience Strategic Management Group and the Education Strategic Management Group) and networks such as the Community for Evidence-Led Practice in Education (CELPiE).</p> <p>4) We will encourage students and staff to present their work at external events (e.g., Enhancement Theme related meetings and conferences, Enhancing Student Learning Through Innovative Scholarship Conference).</p>

5) We will also encourage our community to continue to collaborate outside of our institution (e.g., work continuing from the Decolonising Curriculum Collaborative Cluster).

Supporting staff and student engagement

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

1) Our Open Forum and Sharing Event will allow students and staff from all areas of our community to engage with the theme in a supportive environment and learn more about what we do and how to get involved in our theme work.

2) We will continue to support independent projects, events and initiatives across the University that focus on the resilience theme via a funding call.

3) Through our questionnaires, focus groups, digital storytelling and Facebook posts, we will be reaching a wide range of students and giving them an opportunity to shape the future of teaching and learning in our university.

4) We will continue to have student interns form part of our Core Team in Year 3 to ensure that the student voice is heard.

5) Our Sabbatical Director of Education will continue to be actively involved in promoting the Enhancement Theme to students, and this year we will solidify our relationship with the University's Academic Representation Co-Ordinator from the Students' Association to ensure even more connectedness with the student body.

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