



Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: University of Stirling

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.

At the start of the Theme, we were in the immediate aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on Higher Education set this plan, indeed the whole sector, in an unprecedented context. As we move to “life with Covid-19”, there continue to be significant challenges for all the communities of the University. One challenge that has been brought to the fore is that of belonging. This aspect of student life has widely been identified as a key factor in student success. During the pandemic, belonging was very challenging due to isolation. We are now seeking to rebuild belonging as we move back to more campus-based teaching and our projects this year seek to re-evaluate what is important to students and staff in doing so. Since the beginning of the theme, we have undertaken and completed significant projects, for example developing and embedding our BeConnected student life programme into the University culture. The projects this year build on these developments. The projects described in this plan are strategically aligned to the [University Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy](#) and are approved through our governance structures as appropriate. These projects form just a part of the enhancement work being undertaken at the University.

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	Professor Alison Green Dean for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience
TLG staff representative	Simon Horrocks, Head of Learning Innovation and Development

TLG student representative	Tash Miller, Students' Union President
Add additional rows for additional members	Natalie Hay, Democracy & Representation Coordinator Students' Union
Activity 1 lead	Dr Peter Baker
Activity 2 lead	Professor Wendy Maltinsky
Activity 3 lead	Tash Miller

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 themes identified in year 1 of the Theme were: support for students; students as partners in learning and technology enhanced education. These remain priorities and our activities this year focus on support for students and students as partners in learning.

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?

We have two new projects for 2022-23 and are continuing one of the projects from last year. The other projects developed last year are now embedded as "business as usual".

Activity 1

Our continuing project is decolonising the curriculum which we commenced last year. We want to further develop practice and understanding of an inclusive curriculum at Stirling, this year.

Activity 2

Our first new project has been developed to examine ways to enhance the resilient learning community. The project will develop a methodology for collecting the views of the learning community that can evolve over successive years but will also produce a set of tangible and pragmatic actions that can be taken to build a tighter resilient learning community. The project has a cross-institutional steering group consisting of staff/student/senior management members across the university.

Priorities: We want to ensure that we are building a resilient learning community that all parts of our community can feel a part of – through contributions as well as drawing on the strengths of that community. To do so we need to understand what the community perceive as an effective resilient learning community, the value it holds and the barriers and facilitators to achieving that vision.

Outcomes:

We wish to raise the voice of all members of our community and have a visible vehicle that can demonstrate that voice.

We will use the voice of students and lecturing staff primarily to draw out a series of actionable and tangible steps informed by behavioural change theory towards enhancing the resilient learning community

We will create a steering group consisting of representatives from all parts of the learning community to guide and direct activities of the project and the outcomes.

Activities:

- A graffiti wall both online and face to face that collects stories of a resilient learning community, the value that community holds for participants and the barriers and facilitators to achieving that vision
- Photo-journaling by representative members of the community that demonstrates the key characteristics of a resilient learning community

- A Q – sort methodology which has extracted the key ideas from the earlier activities that sets out a set of tangible and actionable steps

Activity 3

Our second new project is a student led review of personal tutoring at Stirling. The current system has been in place since 2014 and, in the context of the changing needs of students, a review of the perception of students and staff upon what these needs are and what is valued in a pastoral system is timely.

The outcomes will be a rich source of student and staff views along with some recommendations.

The activities will include student led surveys, focus groups and reviews of evidence from recent student led awards.

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).

Resources from the QAA Anti-racist project have offered useful resources for the group considering the inclusive curriculum and some have been added to our learning and teaching resources, to share with our academic staff.

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.

Project/activity 1

Inclusive Curriculum at Stirling

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

Resources and events are being made available to staff to enable them to consider this area of inclusive practice and reflect on their own practice and content of the curriculum.

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

This project continues to inform our pedagogy and fostering an inclusive culture at Stirling. The development of inclusive curricula is an identified priority in several institutional strategies for EDI, including the mental health strategy and the Anti Racism and Race Equality Strategy. The latter specifically recognises the importance of exploring and developing support and guidance around decolonising the curriculum.

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

In this first year (AY22-23), we envisage the creation of a network whereby good practice and guidance can be shared, aligned with a series of events to stimulate thinking and prompt action to develop inclusive curricula and pedagogy. This will be supported by a SharePoint site where resources will be shared.

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

This is a behaviour change and will be an area of continued vigilance and improvement. We will seek to measure impact by assessing the extent to which our community feels that our culture and environment – including our curriculum – is inclusive, which we evaluate in part through student surveys. More thought is to be given on the further tools we will use.

Where possible, we will integrate evaluation of change into well utilised tools, such as NSS/Student Experience Survey, staff culture pulse surveys and programme/module evaluation feedback.

Project/activity 2

Resilient Communities

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

The project will set out to establish perspectives of lecturers, students and other university stakeholders around what a resilient learning community looks like and the value it holds for each of the incumbent groups. We will use this idea of a resilient learning community to also explore the barriers and facilitators to achieving that vision– what does each person/group need to do, or not do, to help build this community, what are the barriers and facilitators to achieving this and what can be done to erode the barriers or build on the facilitators. Using the Capability, Opportunity and Motivation Behaviour Change wheel, we will move to looking at what are the steps that can be taken to implement easy change that increase the motivation, capability and opportunities for building a resilient learning community which take into account the environmental, institutional and individual needs for change.

We will be using several innovative methods to reach out to as broad a participant group as possible. Questions will be distributed via graffiti boards which are placed in strategic places in both the online resources and in parts of the university. Questions will be asked over an 8-week period and will attempt to tap into the evolving views of participants. Participants will also be invited to contribute to photo-journals – building a visual portrayal of the resilient learning community. Themes from these activities will be analysed and the key 'actions' to achieve a learning community will be extracted. A Q Sort methodology will be distributed, again through accessible methods, to identify the priority actions that can be taken towards building a resilient learning community and which consider what needs to change (environmental, institutional, individual) and in what way and how this can most easily be achieved.

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

Teaching staff, students and senior managers note NSS responses and modular feedback which depict a picture in which some students feel disconnected to the learning community. Teaching staff detect this lack of connection in classes which may manifest itself through limited engagement in class, or lack of attendance and there can be a feeling of despondency that teaching efforts are not being valued by students. Some students who approach personal

tutors note that they feel isolated and disconnected and this is having an impact on mental health and wellbeing.

We recognise the importance that being connected to the learning community brings to all parts of that community. Students gain vital and employer-appealing graduate attributes of working in groups and delivering presentations. Assumptions are challenged and new learning can be synthesised. Being connected is also a critical component of mental wellbeing – for all members of that community.

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

We will use visible and accessible means of collecting the views of the community. This will produce an activity (and data collection tool) which we hope will attract the community to contribute to the 'wall of views', which by its very nature is a community-built resource to which that the community will feel connected.

We hope that it can be used in the future to stimulate conversations but that those conversations can be visual, written or auditory. It is a tangible means not only of providing information but helping to shape of the community.

We will identify a set of actionable pragmatic steps that can be made to change the environment, institutional practice and/or individuals in ways that are simple, and easily achievable.

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

We will reiterate this approach in successive academic years and will engage with students at the end of the first year of the programme to help guide the activities and question formation of the subsequent years.

We will do a sense-checking of perceptions from students and lecturers at the end of the project

We will undertake a series of steps guided from the Q-Sort methodology and will have successfully implemented some of the steps.

Project/activity 3

Personal Tutoring

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

The University's current personal tutor scheme has been in place since 2014. A review will be undertaken of the views of students and staff on the best approach to pastoral support in the current context. The review will include a staff and student survey, focus groups, and an investigation into similar programs at other higher and further education institutions. A final report will be produced before the end of the 2022/23 academic year, presenting the evidence along with some recommendations on the key elements of providing pastoral care to students.

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

The pressures on staff and students have changed since the system was introduced and a review is timely.

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

We anticipate that evidence gathered through this project and its recommendations will help inform the design of student pastoral care at Stirling in the future.

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

Based on the evidence gathered by this project and its recommendations changes will be made to the pastoral care system at Stirling.

Supporting staff and student engagement

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

We will support engagement in the activities through communication to both staff and student and we will use Enhancement Theme funding to facilitate events and activities.

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