



Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: University of the West of Scotland

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.

In February 2020, we launched Strategy 2025. Our strategy focuses on the key areas in which UWS will seek to flourish in the next five years, giving a picture of what the University will look like by 2025 and beyond. UWS will work in partnership with our students to deliver world-ready graduates who will design, shape and build a new future as pioneers in developing effective interactions with global business, industry and the public and voluntary sectors.

The following activities were planned for session 2021/22 and 2022/23 as part of the implementation of the Curriculum Framework and the overarching Student Experience Project and in line with the core principles of the UWS Strategy 2025:

- Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Portfolio Review
- Launch and embedding of the UWS Curriculum Incubator Project to support programme level curriculum enhancement
- Move to Aula Learning Management System (Making the transition to social learning within a hybrid environment, ensuring students can access their learning on an individualised basis)
- Developing a new model of personal tutor support within an integrated and holistic student engagement and advisory model (Student Success Hub)
- Implementation of the UWS Curriculum Framework.
- Review of the Student Journey and associated touchpoints and systems

These aligned particularly well with aspects of the current Enhancement Theme, Resilient Learning Communities and in Year 1, we committed to the following through our Enhancement Theme Plan:

- Development of the UWS Curriculum Framework – this was launched in Autumn 2021 and we are currently at the stage of embedding the core principles across our portfolio
- Review of Student Representation data – this highlighted that the current system of student representation could be more effective for postgraduate research students and further work is needed to enhance PGR representation
- Refresh and Relaunch of the Student Experience Committee – the Student Partnership Forum launched in 2021/22. Whilst there were some issues around representation and

balance of staff and students on this committee, these have been addressed in-year and the Forum subsequently successfully oversaw the publication of our Student Partnership Agreement for 2022/23.

In Year 2, we continued to align our ET plans closely to the work of the Student Experience Programme with the following projects:

- Curriculum Incubator project for the development of the Masters in Professional Development – a curriculum development afternoon surfaced various complexities in the plans for MPD and an adjustment to the timeline was made to enable multi-stakeholder engagement in the design, processes and systems development required to support the plans for this programme. Work is ongoing with the programme launch anticipated in 2023.
- Creation of clear policy on the recognition of RPL, CPD and Micro-credentials - while we have expertise in all areas of RPL, we recognise that micro-credentialling remains in its infancy across the UK sector despite significant interest. There is a need for further reflection and continuation of sector-collaborative projects that we will use, along with international trends in micro-credentialling, to inform the development of our approaches at UWS.
- Reconceptualising our approach to student support through the new Student Success Hub and our academic, professional and personal development modules, ASPIRE. Initial steps taken to move to a tripartite approach whereby students receive joined-up support from professional services (Student Success Hub), academic ASPIRE Advisers (replacing the previous personal tutoring model); and their peers.
- Healthy Body Healthy Mind Bronze Award & Increased membership of Team UWS and enhanced BUCS ranking with a medium-term goal of top 50 – we have learned a lot about what can be achieved remotely. It is envisaged that with the immediate impact of the pandemic now reducing, we can harness that learning to serve our students better.

As we move into year 3, and following the 2022 Planning and Budgeting process, a consultative process with schools and services agreed the requirement for an aligned strategic programme with the focus on three key areas: Student Experience; Digital Transformation; and Organisational Effectiveness. This will frame the broad institutional context for our Enhancement Theme Plans.

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 Jonathan Powles, Vice Principal, Learning, Teaching and Students
TLG staff representative	Dr Eilidh Kane, Lecturer, Learning Futures
TLG student representative	Subuola Elufioye, Vice President (Education), UWS Students’ Union
Add additional rows for additional members	Helen McLean, Head of QuEST (Interim) Nina Anderson-Knox, Head of Student Success Hub (Interim) Ruth Whitney Senior Lecturer Academic, Professional & Personal Development Dr Alison Gilmour, Head of Learning Transformation Dr Daniel Turner, Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement (Interim)

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 remain fully aligned to the UWS Strategy 2025 – fostering an engaging, inspiring student experience and reflects our commitment to producing work ready graduates. The strategy is underpinned by enabling documents including the Learning and Teaching Thematic Plan and our Curriculum Framework.

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?

Key Priorities

Our key priorities build from the university's three focus areas: Student Experience, Digital Transformation and Organisational Effectiveness. The three areas interconnect, and all have synergies with the Enhancement Theme work.

The focus on Student Experience aligns most fully to the Enhancement Theme. The work in this area includes the full realisation of the Student Success Hub and revised personal tutoring system; the launch and expansion of the new ASPIRE curriculum; and the creation of flexible professional Postgraduate provision. These projects are all underpinned by UWS's Curriculum Framework and its emphasis on flexible, student-centred approaches and the value of real-world learning.

The work on Student Experience will connect to, and be supported by, activities undertaken in the Digital Transformation focus area which include projects on enabling student environments to facilitate flexible engagement.

The remit of the Organisational Effectiveness focus area includes the implementation of an academic development framework. As UWS works to realise its Curriculum Framework in full, there is an opportunity for staff development in related areas, including personal tutoring.

The **activities** undertaken to support our key priorities will fall under three key themes:

1. Personal Tutoring (ASPIRE Advisers)

Build on the launch of our ASPIRE modules, through which support for student success and personal tutoring has been embedded in the curriculum. Integral to these modules are our ASPIRE Advisers, academic colleagues who support students with their academic, professional and personal development. Our next step in this work is to create a comprehensive development pathway for ASPIRE Advisers. We will undertake a review of personal tutoring support and development across the HE sector, including engaging with sector organisations such as the UK Advising and Tutoring network. Given that our approach to student success also includes student peer support, a particular focus will be the ways in which the sector has managed to incorporate the student voice into the professional development of personal tutors. Opportunities for the professional recognition of ASPIRE Advisers will also be explored.

The outputs of this work will include the development pathway itself along with recommendations and online development resources that could be shared across the sector.

The ultimate outcome of the revised personal tutoring system will be to support student success and flexible learning journeys across UWS.

2. Experiential Learning

Draw on expertise from across the sector to explore opportunities for recognition of experiential learning including digital badging and academic credit, in relation to ASPIRE and professional postgraduate provision.

Outputs to include updated RPL guidance to allow more flexibility in accrediting prior experiential learning and a framework for the recognition of experiential learning that is *concurrent* with degree study.

Outcomes of this work will include support of the expansion of ASPIRE modules, with their focus on student success and employability, and the provision of professional postgraduate programmes built on CPD and microcredentialed learning to provide maximal flexibility for lifelong learners.

3. Hidden Costs of Study

Given the diversity of the student body at UWS, and as we consider how we support student journeys in light of the 'cost-of-living crisis', this student-led project will investigate the hidden costs of study (e.g. unexpected charges, travel costs). It will consider opportunities to mitigate costs in recognition of the increasing pressures on students' finances, such as flexible approaches to learning.

The project outputs will comprise recommendations for mitigating the impact of these costs where possible.

These recommendations will enable UWS to enhance its learning and teaching cognisant of the cost-of-living crisis and the challenges that students face.

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).

It is likely that we will make use of Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning and Experience and Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland in the development of the Professional Postgraduate portfolio. We will likely use resources from Student Mental Wellbeing in our development of the Student Success Hub.

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
Personal Tutoring (ASPIRE Advisers)
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
A comprehensive development pathway for ASPIRE Advisers including a review of personal tutoring support and staff development across the HE sector.
Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
To enable UWS's new approach to personal tutoring (ASPIRE Advisers) to be as effective as possible, and to support staff to feel confident in these new roles.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
The aim of the Student Success model as a whole, including the embedded ASPIRE modules and ASPIRE Advisers should encourage student retention, progression and success. The difference the development pathway for staff should make is increased confidence and understanding of the value of these roles.
How will we know? (How the change is measured)
Successful production of the pathway itself and related resources. A short questionnaire on confidence levels prior to and after staff engage with the development materials.

Title of project/activity
Experiential Learning
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
Introduction of new routes for experiential learning to be recognised within the curriculum
Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
UWS is committed to flexible, real-world focused learning through its Curriculum Framework. We have a strong history of supporting the Recognition of Prior Learning, building on this will enable us to better recognise the concurrent experiential learning of our students.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
Routes for the recognition of experiential learning designed in to ASPIRE and professional postgraduate provision.

How will we know? (How the change is measured)
Routes reflected in validation documentation for relevant modules and programme(s). Clear guidance for staff and learners.

Title of project/activity
Hidden Costs of Study (student-led project)
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
Increased recognition of the financial challenges students face, especially in light of the cost-of-living crisis. Further consideration of how the university could mitigate some of these challenges.
Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
UWS is proud of its work on widening participation but it is important to recognise and challenge not only barriers to joining the University but also potential barriers to engagement.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
Recommendations arising from the findings of the project will offer guidance to the University on where our efforts are best focused to support students.
How will we know? (How the change is measured)
The recommendations themselves will represent a change in terms of an even more student-centric approach to planning and curriculum design; specific changes arising from the recommendations will also be captured.

Dissemination of work
How will you promote and communicate your work internally and externally?
Plans and progress will be shared through the usual committee structures (EAC/Senate) and promoted through our internal Staff e-Bulletin, Staff Intranet, All School Meetings and updates provided via the Principal's All Staff Update Meetings. The University's annual learning and teaching conference will be an excellent opportunity to share details of the projects including any changes made and any evaluation data available at that point.
Externally, those undertaking project work will be encouraged to submit a proposal for the Enhancement Theme Conference. Further, as Chair of the Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials, UWS's Vice Principal for Learning, Teaching and Students, Prof. Jonathan Powles is extremely well placed to represent the theme work around recognising experiential learning to the sector.

Supporting staff and student engagement
How will you support your community to engage with planned activities?
Enhancement Theme work has been and will continue to be, enthusiastically supported by the Student Union. The Enhancement Theme group will include a strong student presence as well as staff representatives from a wide range of areas.
Updates on the theme work will be shared through the channels outlined above.

Plan author:	Eilidh Kane, Lecturer Learning Futures Helen McLean, Head of QuEST (Interim)
Date:	6 th October 2022

Return to: ARCAAdmin@qaa.ac.uk

Author:	Eilidh Kane, Lecturer Learning Futures
Date:	10 th October 2022

Return to: ARCAAdmin@qaa.ac.uk