



## Resilient Learning Communities

### Institutional Plan for SRUC (Year 2)

Context	
<p>We continue to implement the 2020-25 Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy outlined in the Year 1 plan of work. Through this, we continue to support the enhancement of learning communities and the development of active blended learning. The development of resilient learning communities is key to this – as is the first and foremost principle of the Strategy – working with our learners as partners. It is within this context that the Enhancement Theme work sits.</p>	
<p>Our plan for 2021-22 is to continue to build and create a range of communities at campus, faculty and Pan-SRUC levels based on research undertaken by the Student Interns in Year 1. We aim for the enhancement theme work to support the student experience in particular as we move from emergency blended learning, implemented owing to the pandemic, to more considered active blended learning in line with the Strategy.</p>	

Institutional team	
Institutional lead	Dr Pauline Hanesworth, Head of Learning and Teaching
TLG staff representative	Alison Boyle, Student Journey Lead
TLG staff alternate representative	Dr Lisa Nowak, Student Journey Officer
TLG student representative	Amy McLuckie, Co-President SRUCSA
TLG student representative	Roz Asli, Co-President SRUCSA
Additional Team Member	Dr Jill Offer, Programme Leader, Applied Animal Science
Additional Team Member	Sarah Young, Careers Adviser
Additional Team Member	2 x Class Reps (TBD)

## Overall outcomes/activity

Our key priorities for 2021-22, given the ongoing challenges with Covid-19 and the move from remote learning to an active blended learning model, are focused on building on our Year 1 activities. The Student Intern Team clearly evidenced the importance of developing a range of communities such as social, health related, subject, and academic at a campus, faculty and cross-SRUC level. It was also clear from this – and other quality enhancement mechanisms – that the Year Tutor (SRUC's personal tutors) has an integral role to play.

It was evident through the research that both staff and students recognised the value of and willingness to engage in learning communities for connection, participation, engagement, and outcomes, but are not always clear on how to do so, and what mechanisms are already available.

As such, our plan for Year 2 is to raise awareness, build and enhance our existing activities, and learn from established and successful communities whilst creating new opportunities based on staff and student feedback. In so doing, we aim to build greater resilience, create a sense of belonging, and promote good mental health and wellbeing in our learners and staff in an online blended learning environment.

## Year 2 outcomes/activity

Year 2 activities will comprise three separate projects:

### **Project 1 – Raise Awareness and Develop Student Communities**

Employment of a student intern to work with our Students' Association to raise awareness of existing communities – encouraging engagement – and to further develop opportunities as identified in last year's research and recommendations, particularly in the online space. Last year's research indicated that there are strong community groups within SRUCSA, such as the class reps community, but that more was required to support the engagement and interaction of all students across SRUC. It also indicated that while students felt a sense of belonging to their programme and campus, they were less likely to feel a cross-campus connection. A focus on online cross-campus community building via social interaction aims to address this.

### **Project 2 – Develop a Year Tutor Learning Community**

Building on the successful communities identified in last year's research, work in consultation and collaboration with all Year Tutors to determine (and then implement) what kind of learning community would suit their needs, would enhance their role, and would enable them to provide peer support for each other. This focus on Year Tutors is owing to two reasons: i) this group does not currently have a community space where they can access peer support and ii) it is clear that the Year Tutor role itself is fundamental to supporting student learning communities. Enhancing the Year Tutor community aims to enhance the student experience overall.

### **Project 3 – Digitalisation of Peer Support**

Continue to develop and enhance an online accessible digital peer mentoring resource bank within Moodle to support the roll out of peer support at SRUC and to promote independence. The Moodle course is intended to act as a one-stop-shop for all those interested in either finding out more about peer support or getting involved. In creating this module, we hope to build independence and facilitate the up-skilling of our staff and students, whilst retaining the support structure that has been introduced in Year 1. The Moodle page will host volunteer

training, additional resources and will cross-reference to our Careers site to build on existing skills opportunities for students and to highlight and promote new ways for them to engage, build a sense of belonging, enhance student wellbeing, and reduce student isolation.

The overall outcome that we wish to achieve through these projects is to continue to foster an ethos that demonstrates the importance of peer support and community development for both staff and students in the enhancement of the whole student learning experience.

## Evaluation

Title of project/activity 1

Raise Awareness and Develop Student Communities

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

Employment of a student intern to work with our Students' Association to raise awareness of and encourage engagement in existing communities and to develop further opportunities for engagement.

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

Student intern research from Year 1 indicated more work was needed on cross-campus engagement of all students in SRUCSA activities, particularly areas not related to Student Voice (an area identified already as a strength of the association).

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

Increased engagement with SRUCSA-led cross-campus activities leading to increased feelings of student community and increased satisfaction with SRUCSA.

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

Evidenced by number of activities, engagement with activities, and feedback from students on both learning community and SRUCSA.

Title of project/activity 2

Develop a Year Tutor Learning Community

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

Work in consultation with Year Tutors to determine (and then implement) what kind of learning community would suit their needs, would enhance their role, and would enable them to provide peer support for each other.

Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
Year 1 research – and other internal activities – indicate that this is a group currently without a community space where they can access peer support. It also indicated that this role is pivotal in supporting students to feel like they belong at SRUC.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
Development of effective Year Tutor community where they feel supported in their role to enhance student belonging and engagement.
How will we know? (How the change is measured)
Evidenced by creation and implementation of a Year Tutor Community plan, engagement with activities by Year Tutors, and feedback on staff communities and sense of belonging.

Title of project/activity 3
Digitalisation of Peer Support
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
Complement the roll out of the Peer Support Scheme through the creation of an accessible digital peer mentoring resource bank.
Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
To support the successful scaling up of the Peer Support Scheme, enabling more independence for Peer Support groups and staff members in developing and running their projects.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
Increased number of successful peer support projects, through which students feel a sense of belonging and engagement, supported by the resource bank.
How will we know? (How the change is measured)
Evidenced by creation and further development of Moodle course, interactions with the resources, number of successful peer support projects, and peer support group feedback.

Title of project/activity 4
Student Intern Engagement

What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
As with previous years, employment of Student Interns to support the Enhancement Theme work.
Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
To underpin quality enhancement activities with a students as partners ethos and to directly enhance the student experience through the way the Enhancement Theme is managed.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
Projects developed are student-led, and students involved feel benefits such as increased confidence in project work and increased sense of belonging to SRUC.
How will we know? (How the change is measured)
Evidence via exit interviews with the interns post-project completion.

Title of project/activity 5
Overall Enhancement Theme Work
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
Through all projects, increasing the awareness of learning communities among staff and students.
Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
To encourage development of learning communities beyond the enhancement theme work.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
Increased awareness of learning communities among staff and students.
How will we know? (How the change is measured)
Evidenced through informal discussions and formal minutes from team meetings, and engagement with Theme updates/outputs (e.g., blog reads, resource views etc.).

<b>Dissemination of work</b>
Internally, we will engage with staff and students via existing forums including the Heads of Department Forum, Programme Leaders Forum, and Guidance, Academic and Pastoral Support Forum. We will publish updates and reports and seek engagement via our institutional

blog and institutional Theme webpage and incorporate learning/outputs in our annual staff development programme. We will also rely on the range of staff and students within the Institutional Theme Group to engage with their stakeholders on Theme work. This has been effective to date with buy in from both staff and students.

Externally, we will encourage sharing of project updates and outputs via sector forums (both those Theme related and more wider learning and teaching/student engagement forums) and networks and will encourage/support dissemination of outputs via relevant sector-wide conferences and events.

### **Supporting staff and student engagement**

Staff and student engagement will be encouraged and supported through various routes such as Forums, Departmental meetings, Boards of Studies, and Student Panels. The allocated funds for Theme work will be used to support all three projects, including the employment of a student research intern for project 1, the development of training materials and resources, and staff time. Finally, the fact that Learning Communities is one of our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy principles means that we will be able to embed Enhancement Theme work within wider Strategy activity.

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