



End of Year 1 Report for University of Edinburgh

The key purposes of this report are to:-

- provide a framework for HEIs to report on their Theme activity that has taken place over the year
- help share information across the sector on the benefits and challenges around Theme engagement.

Please report under the headings below. The report should be about 6 to 8 sides of A4 in length.

Institutional team

Identify any changes in Theme leadership, TLG and institutional team membership since details were reported in the institutional plan developed at the start of the academic year.

Two PhD Interns joined the Institutional Team from May to July 2021.

Evaluation of activities/outcomes

To make evaluation processes more accessible and user friendly, we have attempted to simplify (not minimise) the evaluation reporting process into 7 key questions (see below). Prior to completing these, 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 report each activity/intervention against the following questions in the Evaluation part of the template.

N. B. You may have already realised some of your objectives and/or these might be ongoing, so please delineate each question according to whether activities or interventions have been completed already in this reporting year or are in process.

(Easiest way is to delete **either/or** options highlighted in **red** in questions below):

Evaluation

Please complete the following 7 questions for each activity or intervention (N.B. Just cut and paste the table below as many times as necessary)

Title of project/activity
Gather examples of community building in the hybrid context and share examples
1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>An exercise to gather and reflect on good practice examples of community building activities from across the University and Students' Association. This activity links to the appointment of PhD Interns to support Theme work (see below).</p> <p>We are aware that there are a vast number of activities taking place across the University and the Students' Association to support community building. The report of the Sub Group of Senate Quality Assurance Committee that reviews School annual quality reports (December 2020) noted: "The sense of community evoked by the pandemic and support that academic and professional service staff provided for their students and each other within Schools was a strong positive theme throughout the reports." Additionally, community is one of the University's six Induction Guiding Principles which aim to improve and underpin induction activities and programmes that welcome new and returning students at any point after a break in studies.</p> <p>The University's Teaching Matters blog contains many examples of community building activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic community • Community
2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable sharing of good practice examples of community building activities. • To learn what activities make a positive impact in order to inform policy and/or practice.
3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in good practice examples being shared and action taken as a result. • For activities which make a positive impact on community building to have informed policy and/or practice. • Ultimately, an increase in the effectiveness of community building activities.
4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in good practice examples being shared e.g. in network meetings and through Teaching Matters and examples of where action has been taken as a result of this. • Changes to policy and/or practice have been implemented. • Ultimately, through student feedback.
5. Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
The Institutional Team have oversight of Enhancement Themes activities.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Not at this stage.
7. Any things you need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
Not at this stage.

Title of project/activity
Support new activity
1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The School of Health in Social Sciences is appointing a student in June and July 2021 to work on a project to improve the experience for students with disabilities. The project will focus on improving website information and engaging with current students to identify what can be done to improve their experience.
2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
The School identified this as an area of development. It also aligns with the Senate Quality Assurance priority to: Examine data and methodological options for the systematic monitoring of retention, progression, and attainment data.
3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
Outputs of the project will be implemented that improve the experience for students with disabilities in the School.
4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
The completion of the project will be one outcome. How the impact of outputs implemented as a result of the project will be measured is still to be established.
5. Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
The project is being managed in the School, however, the outcomes of the project will be considered by the Institutional Team to establish how they can be shared and if there are outcomes that can inform policy and/or practice.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Not at this early stage as the project is set to complete by the end of July.
7. Any things you need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
Not at this early stage as the project is set to complete by the end of July.

Title of project/activity
Appoint a PhD Intern to support Theme work
1. What change has been made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
Two PhD Interns are in post from May to July 2021. One PhD Intern is focussing on building communities and the other PhD Intern is focussing on building postgraduate research communities. Themes emerging at this stage of the internships are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication/dissemination • Using existing structures and ensuring a level of synergy • Sense of belonging/resilience • Different communities • Student-led and staff-supported activities
2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)

The PhD Interns were appointed to provide resource to support gathering examples of good practice in community building and a reflection on these. They were also appointed to support student engagement with our Theme work.

3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)

In the first instance, the outputs of the internships are expected to be reports with immediate and longer-term recommendations. Additionally, it is anticipated that there will be outputs in the form of Teaching Matters blog content. The Institutional Team will consider these reports and how we can action the recommendations and subsequently the differences that will hopefully occur.

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

This will depend on the recommendations in the PhD Interns' reports and also how the Institutional Team determine how to action these. The PhD Interns are aware of the evaluation guidance and have been involved in the drafting of this report.

5. Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)

The internships have been managed by colleagues in Academic Services and the Institute for Academic Development. The Institutional Team will be involved in actioning recommendations from the reports.

6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)

We will reflect at the end of the internships, with input from those in the roles, on how this approach has supported our work on the Theme and if we should apply the same approach in future years.

7. Any things you need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

This will be determined by the reflection outlined above.

Dissemination of work

Which mechanisms have been most effective in disseminating outcomes and resources internally, and to the sector? Please provide examples.

If there are materials and resources you can share with the sector, please provide details below.

Building community was a sub-theme of the Learning and Teaching Conference in June 2021 where 13 sessions and four posters were presented. The Institutional Team reviewed proposals and shaped the conference programme [Learning and Teaching Conference 2021 – Curriculum as a site for transformation | 15 – 17 June \(ed.ac.uk\)](#)

The PhD Interns have been focussing on communication and dissemination as part of their work and we anticipate recommendations in these areas.

The March 2021 Directors of Teaching Network discussed sense of belonging in terms of planning for 2021/22 and our work on the Enhancement Theme was outlined.

Plans and reports are submitted to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee.

The University's Teaching Matters blog contains many examples of community building activities:

- [Academic community](#)
- [Community](#)

Collaboration with your institution

How have you collaborated with other institutions? This could be informally by growing networks or contacts, or more formally for example, through collaborative clusters or sector work. If you have been collaborating with others, briefly explain what this has involved and what have been the benefits and challenges.

Re-imagining Resilience for Taught Postgraduate Students

Dr Donna Murray is leading this Enhancement Theme cluster which is a collaboration between the University, the University of St Andrews, Heriot-Watt University, and the University of the West of Scotland. The cluster has met four times with each meeting format decided by one of the partners. To date the group have explored many different ways of interacting including: exploring polemic pieces; hearing from student panels; group discussions; and thinking about the 'ghosts' of academic life.

The work has also been presented at a Theme Leaders' Group meeting, and a blog has been written for the THE Campus website.

Some of the obvious challenges have involved working at home, and differing levels of confidence with using online tools such as Teams. Exploring 'messy problems' like resilience can also be intimidating online as you lack the feedback you would have in a physical meeting. By giving each partner university complete freedom to host the meeting as they wish we have gone some way towards creating a very free and active discussion space. It has also had the benefit of introducing us all to new ideas, and to different ways of working.

Decolonising the Curriculum in the time of Pandemic

A member of staff from the Institute for Academic Development has been involved in the collaborative cluster and is connecting this with the University's Race Equality and Anti-Racist Sub-Committee [Decolonising the Curriculum – Sharing Ideas: The Podcast Series – Teaching Matters blog \(ed.ac.uk\)](#). Additionally, a student from the University is an Intern on this cluster.

Benefits and Challenges

The Theme Leaders' Group staff member has distributed information on collaborative clusters and sector-wide projects. There are real benefits in terms of synergies to working at sector level on such activities, however, given the challenges experienced by students and staff due to the pandemic, time to engage and digital fatigue will have contributed to engagement levels. In a large institution, it is also a challenge to find out who has been involved in these activities.

Supporting staff and student engagement

How have staff and students been supported to engage in Theme activities? Please provide examples.

Student and staff involvement with the Theme itself has primarily been through the Institutional Team. However, we have supported staff and student engagement with Theme activities (not necessarily badged as such) through mechanisms such as the Learning and Teaching Conference and the Directors of Teaching Network.

Student engagement in the Enhancement Themes is being considered by the PhD Interns, including how we communicate about the Themes to different stakeholders and work with different teams to raise awareness about the Themes.

A number of other students have been or will be employed across the University to support work related to the Theme. We will endeavour to ensure that the outputs from these posts are informing our work on the Theme in future years.

Processes

What are you learning from the processes, approaches and structures you are using to support this Theme?

How will this report be used/distributed within your institution?

This first year of Theme work has focussed on scoping as planned. The outputs of the PhD internships will shape our work in future years. We will consider if our approach of a small Institutional Team remains appropriate going forward, including how we continue to engage with other University activities, networks and groups accordingly, including the Curriculum Transformation Programme. We will also reflect on the use of PhD internships to support Theme work as outlined above.

Plans and reports are submitted to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee. We will also explore other mechanisms for sharing the headlines of our year 1 work in order to engage students and staff with our work on the Theme.

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