



End of Year 1 Report for: Edinburgh Napier University

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.

N/A

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
Digital Support Partnership Research Project
1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>The Digital Support Partnership (DSP) project aimed to bring together expertise from across Edinburgh Napier University to enable effective online learning and teaching practice through three workstreams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workstream 1: Curriculum development and delivery planning.• Workstream 2: Staff development.• Workstream 3: Student participation, engagement, and support. <p>Further information about the DSP can be found on the DLTE webpages.</p> <p>The DSP <i>Research</i> project will evaluate the outcomes of the DSP in supporting both the staff and students in effective online learning and teaching practices.</p>
2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
<p>The Digital Support Partnership was created in response to the rapid move to online learning in early 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which prevented most face-to-face teaching and learning. Expertise in digital pedagogies was relatively strong, as Edinburgh Napier has been running a programme in Blended and Online Education for some time, but expertise was distributed across the University, so a partnership was created amongst academic staff, professional services staff, and students to disseminate best practice in online learning and teaching and to build capacity and expertise.</p> <p>Seeking regular feedback from students and staff about their experiences of online teaching and learning during the academic year was necessary to evaluate current university support. To build resilient learning communities online, it was necessary to understand students' and staff's experiences to ensure that our approaches to learning, skills development, and support were as engaging, inclusive, effective and accessible as possible throughout the pandemic.</p>
3. What difference has occurred and will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
<p>The DSP project has supported students and staff during the shift to primarily online delivery throughout the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that the online curriculum was engaging and student-centred. Staff development facilitated by the project has contributed to building staff capacity and confidence to deliver online teaching primarily through sharing good practice for digital learning from across the university and from external networks. This also facilitated student participation, engagement, and support in their online learning experiences.</p> <p>Documentation and evaluation of the project will enable the DSP research project to make recommendations for both internal and external audiences that help to shape the emerging framework for blended and online learning across the FE and HE sectors in Scotland and the UK. Its outcomes will guide further work on Universal Design and Inclusive Practices to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to thrive. This is important to building resilient learning communities as we consider what learning and teaching might look like in future and how our reflections on digital learning during the pandemic can help to build more flexible, accessible learning that is inclusive for all learners.</p>

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

We have gathered a range of qualitative and quantitative data that will enable us to evaluate the DSP project. Student and staff surveys about their engagement and experiences were carried out as well as an equality impact assessment. We have carried out staff interviews, student focus groups and have further plans for a BAME focus group to fill a gap in data about these student's experiences. Further data is also available for evaluating the changes outlined above from module evaluations, student attainment and retention data, online forums and community spaces, view counts for engagement with learning and teaching resources, and documentation and resources developed throughout the project.

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

The Digital Support Partnership emphasises a partnership, acknowledging that different stakeholders across the University have a wealth of knowledge and expertise to contribute to providing an effective and engaging online curriculum. The project is overseen by a cross-university DSP project advisory board, chaired by the Vice Principal for Learning and Teaching and reporting to the university's Learning, Teaching, Assessment & Student Experience Committee and through to Academic Board (the most senior academic committee in the university). Throughout the project, we have endeavoured to include all voices in making judgments about the effectiveness of the approach to digital teaching and learning. The DSP project advisory board includes representation from academics, professional services staff and students. It has done so throughout the duration of the project as creating a working partnership between these different stakeholders was essential to achieving the aims of the project. Subject group representatives from each school within the University have contributed to the project and have acted as a bridge between the project and the schools, ensuring inclusion of the perspectives and priorities of all schools. Additionally, the tools used to evaluate the project such as the equality impact assessment have stressed the inclusion of all voices, providing a platform to ensure that all findings of the DSP will benefit all members of the University.

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

As with all practice-based research, the learning and expertise generated through this project has continuously informed our approach to digital practice throughout the 2020/2021 academic year. We have developed extensive resources and community spaces that have been used by staff throughout the year including (but not limited to) an intranet site with advice for supporting online learning (12 Principles for Online Learning and Teaching), ongoing webinars and drop-in sessions for staff, online spaces for staff to share resources and best practice and learning technology pages to support students. These have been developed and delivered throughout the 2020/2021 academic year, ensuring that we are constantly improving our approach to digital learning in real time. Feedback from students on what has worked well/less well has been fed back to Programme Leaders for incorporation into module plans in advance of each new trimester.

7. Any things you **have stopped** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

The DSP project's structure allowed for the project to be responsive to the dynamic situation as the year progressed. A number of central hubs, such as the project team (comprised of wide representation from across the University) and which reported to the project board, were pivotal in continuous monitoring of requirements and quickly implementing changes as the need arose. Workstream 1 (Curriculum development and delivery planning) is an example of something which had an important role at the start of the project, instrumental in setting up the 12 Principles framework and sharing practice examples, however once these were in place, the workstream was integrated into the work of Subject Group Representatives as these became more central to communications to the schools. Similarly, WS2 provided initially very intensive staff training from Information Services (eg. In the use of digital tools) and the Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement (in curriculum and online pedagogy) in the run up to trimester 1, but as once the academic year was underway, the need for training gradually reduced, with much less being

required in trimester 2. Instead, this was replaced by more bespoke help and greater sharing of practice sessions to build a strong support network for all staff.

Title of project/activity
Student buddying scheme (student-led project)
1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) is working together with the Edinburgh Napier School of Computing (SoC) to develop a buddy system that will match current students with new students based on preferences and interests. ENSA has recruited a student intern from SoC to create a form which will match students via an algorithm based on certain criteria (eg : campus of study, hobbies and interests, languages spoken) to create an online 'matching' system. One of the lecturers from SoC is mentoring the student intern and overseeing the progress of the technical part of the project. The form is currently being developed and will be ready for the September 2021 intake of students. When the term starts, new students and current students will be emailed and asked if they wish to participate in the scheme. If yes, they will be sent the digital form and asked to complete their preferences.</p> <p>ENSA is also working alongside the University Safeguarding and Equality manager to create a 'student buddy handbook' in order to outline practical guidelines for the student buddies on how to fulfil their roles as well as essential safeguarding information to retain.</p> <p>The form, algorithm and handbook will be shared with the sector in order to facilitate the implementation of a buddy system in other HE and FE institutions.</p>
2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
<p>The student buddy system aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance integration and confidence for new students - Strengthen the Edinburgh Napier community spirit - Prepare new students to the next years of their University life - Foster a sense of belonging amongst students - Improve peer to peer connection post-pandemic - Develop a sense of purpose and care in current students
3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased meaningful friendships between students - Improved sense of belonging to the Edinburgh Napier community - Improved mental health in the student population (reduction of loneliness and anxiety)
4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of students signing up to the scheme - Increasing number of students using the scheme year on year - Direct positive feedback from students (through surveys and word of mouth) - Higher score in the NSS 'feeling part of Napier community' question.
5. Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
<p>Effectiveness judgements will likely be made at a range of levels, including the students involved and by ENSA and the University working together in evaluating and reporting on the scheme. The</p>

University Learning, Teaching, Assessment & Student Experience Committee which includes ENSA membership will receive a report on the scheme during 2021/22 academic session.

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

We encountered some challenges relating to GDPR and this scheme and in hindsight should have involved the Information Services team earlier in the developments of the project. Likewise, we have recognised the importance of safeguarding and protected characteristics, and are now working with Diversity and Inclusion teams to ensure that the scheme is sound from this perspective. It also would have been beneficial to have involved them from the outset.

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

n/a

Title of project/activity

Resilient Learning Communities – Student-Staff Collaborative Mini-Projects

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

Building on our approach in previous themes, we sought to reach out across the University to identify how staff and students were exploring themes around resilient learning communities in the broadest terms. We allocated £2,500 of the funds for this work and put a call out for proposals for small scale projects (requiring in the region of £200 – £500 each). We funded seven projects in total for 2020/21 academic session (though one project returned the funding on realising that it would not be practicable to undertake this additional work on top of an already full workload; and one did not progress this year due to staff illness). Funding was reallocated to support the DSP project.

The five remaining projects were exploring:

1) Building resilient learning communities through student engagement in ILR

The change was to bring students together with the shared purpose of improving their lecturers' understanding of how to effectively involve students productively and meaningfully in preparation for ILR – piloting in one School preparing for ILRs in 2021/22

2) Enhancing practice for resilient future mathematics education for engineering and technical degrees

Covid had forced the change as to how mathematics education had been provided at Edinburgh Napier. This project proposed to explore what could be learnt from this changed approach to inform resilience in future approaches, through focus groups with students.

3) Developing dialogue to improve the student experience for care experienced students at Edinburgh Napier

This project brings together care-experienced student ambassadors and staff from the University and Hub for Success with the intention to support care-experienced students to lead dialogue to develop a new collective understanding of care experience students' experiences and support needs at University.

4) Creativity in a Virtual Environment

This project is a collaboration between third year photography students and final year music students where the music students act as clients for the photography students who produce outputs intended to market the music students pieces (album covers, t-shirts etc). This project sought to foster creativity when students could not work in person together and was about adapting to a new environment.

5) Step-away from the Screen: Physical Packages to Support Online Learning

<p>This project sought to reconnect students who are studying and working almost exclusively online, to the material world – by providing sketchbooks and pens and a series of supporting materials to encourage them to engage offline in their learning reflections.</p> <p>These projects are diverse and wide-ranging but allow us to see different forms that resilience, and resilience support can take.</p>
<p>2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)</p>
<p>Each mini-project has a different rationale for its change.</p> <p>Some such as projects 2 and 4 were seeking to learn from the transitions made as a result of the Covid disruption and the resultant changes to pedagogy with a view to how this might help shape future approaches. Project 5 also was in response to being online through necessity but with wellbeing very much at its centre – but also helping students to develop tools to help them to reflect on the skills developed and to better see the distance travelled in their learning.</p> <p>Project 1 seeks to build on good practice developed by SPARQS to better involve students as active participants within ILR preparation as part of our commitment to working in partnership with students.</p> <p>Project 3 recognises the University’s commitment to inclusion and to be a destination for care-experienced students to thrive. The project recognises a gap in understanding students’ own needs and support needs.</p>
<p>3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)</p>
<p>The projects did not receive funding until February and some projects took a while to get started due to administrative challenges so the majority of the projects remain in progress.</p> <p>Project 1 aims to redevelop the existing guidance into a co-created resource, produce an adaptive ILR student engagement toolkit and a good practice guide as practical resources to inform future ILRs.</p> <p>The outcome of Project 2 will inform future module and programme design to incorporate effective approaches in delivering resilient mathematics education – informing the balance between face-to-face synchronous delivery, recordings and online approaches.</p> <p>The intention is that the project outputs for Project 3 will inform resources offered to support the University’s Personal Development Tutors (PDTs). We anticipate that the project will impact the University’s Corporate Parenting Plan and Widening Participation Ambassadors Scheme and strengthen the relationship between the University and the Hub for Success. It is also anticipated that the project will lead to student-led enhancements to pre-entry, transition and on-course student wellbeing services.</p> <p>While Project 4 was in response to covid and what can be learnt about learning and teaching approaches. It is intended that the project approach will also support and increase graduate employability.</p> <p>Project 5 aimed to change participant behaviour in spending more time away from screens. It has developed a model which could be reutilised and resources which are available under Creative Commons licenses and has been showcased in the University’s Learning & Teaching Exhibition https://artspaces.kunstmatrix.com/en/exhibition/5535234/edinburgh-napier-learning-teaching</p>
<p>4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)</p>
<p>The impact of Project 1 will be measured as part of the ILRs taking place in the School of Applied Sciences in 2021/22 academic session, and into the future– this will reported through annual</p>

reporting to the Scottish Funding Council and will continue to be evaluated as part of ELIR preparations around student engagement.

Project 2 involved a series of interviews and focus groups with students and a report is in the process of being finalised and will include a number of recommendations regarding how online and blended approaches to mathematics education may be more effective. The longer term impact will be evaluated through standard module evaluations as per standard Quality processes.

The impact of the changes being made through Project 3 will take longer to be felt, and the intention is that this project may continue to be supported into next year. The project intends to continue into a second phase which will incorporate the development of a questionnaire and interviews which will be analysed to improve understanding of care-experienced student needs.

Project 4 has resulted in a physical exhibition of the collaborative work and accompanying virtual exhibition and students have provided feedback on the process and its outcomes. Initial findings have been that students have greatly developed their confidence in working collaboratively, at a distance and in using the virtual technology to produce creative outputs. The longer-term impact on employability outcomes will take longer to measure and evaluate as the students have another year prior to graduating.

The final project gathered participant feedback through a survey. It is anticipated that some of the resources created through this project will be shared by others and have a wider impact. The project was showcased internally and externally in our Learning & Teaching Exhibition.

5. Who **has been/is** involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)

Shortened evaluation templates used in the Evidence for Enhancement Theme (utilising logic chain evaluation model shared by Liz Thomson Associates) have been reutilised for this year's mini projects to help determine judgments on effectiveness. The individual project team members have submitted paperwork to the University Institutional team. The projects and findings will be disseminated at an event early next academic session to allow for further discussion and dialogue around effectiveness and impact.

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

Most mini-project evaluations indicated it was too early to report definitively on this. A dissemination event is planned for Autumn 2021.

7. Any things you **have stopped** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

Two of the funded mini-projects did not make progress this session as anticipated in part as the additional workload required for the projects could not be incorporated alongside general workload, nor covered during staff absence. Given the theme relates to resilience this is important to consider, as enhancement activity is most likely to succeed when it is incorporated within, rather than additional to, business as usual.

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.

This year Edinburgh Napier utilised a new approach to showcase practice in learning and teaching through a virtual exhibition: <https://artspace.kunstmatrix.com/en/exhibition/5535234/edinburgh-napier-learning-teaching>. This was promoted widely within the University and externally. The exhibits included a number of outputs from this, and previous themes. For example, the online movie streamings 2021 showcase was a continued project from the 2018/19 mini-project round demonstrating its ongoing legacy and traction. The Step Away Project; and outputs from some of the Collaborative Clusters also featured in the exhibition.

The Digital Support Partnership project has its own website: https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/dlte/DSP/Pages/DSP_about.aspx where resources available to share under creative commons licences can be downloaded.

We anticipate that further dissemination will take place as part of ongoing work during the Theme.

Collaboration outwith 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.

Edinburgh Napier staff and students have been actively involved in a range of sector-wide activities, primarily within the Cluster Work.

Christine Haddow & Errol Rivera (SAS) were members of the organising group for the Programme Leadership Cluster led by Heriot Watt and a number of colleagues contributed in delivering keynote sessions (Bryden Stillie (SACI); Christine Haddow; Susan Meldrum; Eva Malone (SAS) and Steve Yorkstone (Information Services)) to share Edinburgh Napier's ongoing work related to the importance of the programme leader for resilient learning communities. Katrina Swanton (DLTE) was commissioned to create visual summaries of the sessions for this cluster for wider dissemination and sharing on the Enhancement Themes website.

Fiona Smart co-led the Resilient Academic Leadership Cluster which has produced a series of blogs on the QAA Enhancement Themes website.

Sally Smith (DLTE/SoC) and Katrina Swanton (DLTE) are members of the Microcredentials Cluster led by Heriot Watt University and the staff-focussed workshop was well attended by Edinburgh Napier staff.

One challenge we have encountered is around transparency of knowing about engagement in collaborative activity. While we seek to encourage colleagues to participate in and attend many Enhancement Theme events, it can be challenging to have an institutional oversight of engagement and whether our promotion approaches have been successful.

Supporting staff and student engagement

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

The University and ENSA have used appropriate networks and communication channels to raise awareness of sector-wide Enhancement Theme events, though as indicated in the section above, it is challenging to ascertain what take up has been, and the effectiveness of encouraging wider participation in Enhancement Theme events and activities. We have recently established a new Learning & Teaching Network within the University with an active MSTeams site and activities. We envision that this will be an effective forum by which we can engage more staff in Year 2 activities and opportunities.

The call for mini projects was across the whole University to raise awareness of the Enhancement Theme and to encourage University-wide participation. The mini-projects sought to involve students as partners to encourage student participation and all funded projects involved students within the projects, though primarily as participants.

The ENSA-led project is seeking to build a foundation for greater work into the second year of the Theme as the buddy scheme becomes established and involves many more students.

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?

By collaborating with ENSA we have strong ties with the student community, and through the DSP project we reach the community of lecturers and professional support staff. We share and announce our activities through the L&T Network as well as via the staff intranet and the Learning and Teaching Matters newsletter. In doing so we aim to reach as wide an audience as possible. We will also create an Enhancement Theme staff web page where we can share this report and further resources as they become available.

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