



## End of Year 1 Report for: Heriot-Watt University

Given its unique global reach and multi-campus, multi-context profile, Heriot-Watt is focusing this Theme activity around the topic 'Strengthening our Global Learning Community: Resilience in Action'. This is enabling the development of a collective effort to consider what our global learning community should look like by 2025 and how collaborative action can help support staff and students connect across contexts and shape institutional processes & practice to meet future challenges.

To work towards this broad objective, activity is split between **institutionally-commissioned work** and activities initiated through workstream '**special interest clusters**'. Thus allows engagement of stakeholders from across the university in mini-projects, linked to shared areas of practice, development & scholarship. This benefits the institution and the wider community by sharing the outcomes of the diverse range of work being undertaken across the institution, highlighting the ways in which we identify, develop and support the variety of learning communities which exist in a range of contexts.

Taking this approach allows Heriot-Watt to amplify the impact of key strategic work in train across the institution and to extend engagement with enhancement efforts across the university community and to innovate in learning, teaching and student support practice.

In Year One of the Theme the focus has been on setting the foundations for the institution-wide work and building a community of practice around key themes, through the introduction of the first tranche of mini-projects. This report provides an overview of key areas of activity during this period.

### 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.

We have had changes in the Student Officers who are involved in the institutional steering group, as sabbatical posts have rolled over since the beginning of June 2021:

**Edinburgh VP Education:** Hannah Copeland

**Edinburgh VP Wellbeing:** Frankie Hulme

**Malaysia Student President:** Sai Vishnu

**Dubai Student President:** Syed Uzair

In addition, **Dr Rob Daley, Learning and Teaching Academy**, has been added to the institutional steering group.

## Evaluation

Our overall outcome is for our colleagues and students to have an enhanced sense of being part of a global community, and the practical means to facilitate such a community. Over the three year period, our priorities will be to:

- Provide a focal point for institutional conversations around community, belonging and wellbeing.
- Create special interest clusters to advance projects related to resilience, community and wellbeing across our Schools and campuses.
- Develop a longitudinal evaluation to map how our global learning community is evolving over time. This will also provide insight into our progress towards *Strategy 2025* and our *Inspiring Learning Learning and Teaching Strategy*.
- Engage with sector activities and explore external collaboration and practice sharing opportunities.

This report presents an update on current progress in these four areas and an overall reflection on the impact of the Theme activity to date.

Title of project/activity
Inspire institutional conversations around community, belonging and wellbeing.
1. What change <b>is being</b> made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>Through the course of this year Theme works has focused on creating opportunities for staff from across the institution to engage in conversations around enhancing the HWU learning community and what that means across and within our diverse campus locations. This work has been particularly vital in the pandemic context, offering opportunities for connection, support and reflection in the midst of exceptionally challenging working and learning conditions.</p> <p>The Theme offers an opportunity to amplify discussion around global working and learning and to hear diverse perspectives on what being part of a 'resilient global learning community' means – and the support needed to embed connection, community and belonging in meaningful, practical ways.</p>
2. Why <b>have we made/are we making</b> it? (Rationale for the change)
<p>To develop this institutional perspective and create change in practical ways we have focused activity this year on:</p> <p>Amplifying institutional efforts to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating spaces for sharing practice in learning, teaching and assessment in the pandemic context.</li> <li>• Refreshed our approach to course team working, focusing on creating strong global teaching teams.</li> <li>• Introduction of extended induction for new, returning and postgraduate taught students across our global community, to support students to cope with the disruption to their learning and the challenges of returning to studying and living in campus locations.</li> </ul> <p>Creating spaces for reflection and action to support specific groups of staff and learners:</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiated a collection of 'Thinkpieces' to share perspectives on resilience around the university, including a multi-disciplinary Roundtable session exploring what we can learn from different subject perspectives on resilience.</li> <li>• Extension of the Happiness Forum in Malaysia campus.</li> <li>• Directed support and research into Postgraduate-taught community, in conjunction with the Students' Union.</li> <li>• New to Teaching Network to support those who are new to a teaching role, for example, new academic staff, tutors, approved teachers and demonstrators.</li> <li>• Technicians Network to support technicians with teaching and supporting learning roles</li> </ul>
<p>3. What difference <b>will hopefully occur</b> as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional activity to support community, belonging and wellbeing will be founded on a comprehensive understanding of what support and connection makes a difference to staff and students</li> <li>• Practical support will be in place to create more resilient teaching teams and empower students and staff to engage with new approaches to course delivery and assessment.</li> <li>• Practical activities – and the process and conversations involved in developing these will enhance and deepen connections across our global community.</li> </ul>
<p>4. How <b>will we</b> know? (How is the change measured)</p>
<p>Community, belonging and resilience are, in many respects, intangibles that need to be explored and measured through a suite of indicators and proxies.</p> <p>Part of the work we are undertaking is to develop that portfolio of appropriate measurement for this work.</p> <p>In developing this we are drawing on insights from staff and student surveys, evaluation of change of the specific interventions and mini-projects and initiating additional quantitative and qualitative analysis as part of the institutional evaluation work strand.</p>
<p>5. Who <b>is</b> involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)</p>
<p>The steering group connects the enhancement themes work directly in to University governance structures, reporting to the University Committee on Learning and Teaching.</p> <p>Our approach seeks to incorporate diverse staff and student voices into the decision-making process at all levels – from mini-project development through to the institution-wide work. Connecting and amplifying diverse voices is core to the work and to making decisions on effectiveness and impact.</p>
<p>6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)</p>
<p>We have learned a great deal from our induction activities last year, which were done in response to the lockdowns in our various campuses. This year we have taken a more strategic approach,</p>

widened the scope of induction, have been better prepared, and communicated developments out in a more timely manner.

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

Progressing broadly as planned, with some rephrasing of work in response to ongoing pandemic challenges. This rephrasing is primarily around the institution-wide evaluation work.

Title of project/activity

**Create special interest clusters to advance projects related to resilience, community and wellbeing across our Schools and campuses.**

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

Special interest clusters have been established to support collaboration and enagment with the Theme activity and, in themselves, to build community and connection across our global community. These groups are each explore (a) existing practice, (b) areas for enhancement and development and (c) change and evidence of impact over the course of the Theme.

We have initiated special interest groups in these areas:

- Assessment for Learning
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.
- Digital Pedagogy and Practice

We have also funded the first round of mini-projects focused on Strengthening Our Global Learning Community. These fourteen projects covered a diverse area of initiatives including:

- Makerz Lab – providing Arduino programming kits to students
- Use of Virtual Reality to bring site visits to Surveying students
- Connecting students with Alumni
- Community outreach
  - Tote bag printing workshop for school students
  - Knitted Tomographies in Galashiels
- Minecraft Server to facilitate community

A full list of mini-projects and their descriptions can be found at:  
<https://lta.hw.ac.uk/strategic-projects/current-projects/>

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

We are raising the profile of evidence-based scholarly practices in the institution, building community through collaborative work, and amplifying the voices and inspiring teaching of colleagues around the university.

We are supporting staff develop their online and blended support for students, to cover current teaching arrangements and the anticipation of returning to campus whilst still offering a blended approach to learning.

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

Staff will increase their expertise in areas of teaching and learning that are of importance to them. We will also amplify areas of good practice which can be highlighted and promoted within the institution, and externally, raising the profile of the institution.

Special interest groups and collaborative mini-projects will, in themselves, open new connectins across our community.

We are committed to developing our blended support for students, and support for staff in adapting at pace to new opportunities in learning and teaching.

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

This falls under our ongoing evaluation of institutional activities.

Participation in Special Interest Clusters will be reviewed and their development tracked.

All mini-projects are building evaluation in to their work. In addition, the institutional evaluation will explore the impact of this mini-project approach on institution-wide community building and enhancement.

In the particular case of the mini-projects, all fourteen supported projects have presented to an HWU audience, either at the HWU Learning and Teaching Symposium, or at one of our Sharing Scholarship sessions. We also have two mini-projects which have been accepted to external, international conferences.

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

The steering group is involved in developing the evaluation workstreams which will work across the Theme period.

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

Special interest groups and the mini-projects appear to be opening enhancement activity to a diverse group of colleagues, parking connections that did not previously exist. Colleagues are busy, and have competing priorities, therefore it is important not to overload colleagues with more work to do. It's also important not to rely on the "old faces" by encouraging more colleagues to take part in these activities.

14. Any things you **have stopped/need to stop** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

n/a

Title of project/activity
<b>Strengthening our Global Learning Community: A Longitudinal Evaluation of Change</b>
15. What change <b>is being</b> made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
HWU are develop a longitudinal evaluation of enhancement efforts to map how our global learning community is evolving over time and deepen understanding about what practical steps support and strengthen this community. This will integrate student and staff survey insights, a tailored qualitative study focused on community and belonging at Heriot-Watt, and embedded evaluation of the cluster activity.
16. Why <b>are we making</b> it? (Rationale for the change)
Exploring change in relation to 'intangibles' such as community, belonging and resilience require engagement cross a broad range of data sources to build an understanding of change over time. This initiative will allow us to bring together insights from a range of sources to deepen our institutional understanding of these areas and to contribute to wider discussions about evidencing enhancement.
17. What difference <b>will hopefully occur</b> as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
Through this evaluation work we will develop an integrated approach to evaluating institutional enhancement activity and create the foundations and language for understanding what community and belonging and resilience means in our university context.
18. How <b>will we</b> know? (How is the change measured)
Our evaluation plan will be implemented over the next two years, using a range of evaluation methods.
19. Who <b>is</b> involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
<p>The Steering Group are involved in making the initial judgments but this group will expand as work within the institution matures.</p> <p>Themes work is reported to UCLT and onwards to Senate, as it contributes substantially to the strategic goals of the institution,</p> <p>The work also contributes to the Student Partnership Agreement, and the direction of work is co-developed with the student representative bodies in Scotland, Dubai and Malaysia, who are represented on the institutional Steering Group.</p>
20. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
As we move to the second year of the theme, we have identified members of the steering group who will be responsible to direct the workstreams identified in this document.
21. Any things you <b>have stopped/need to stop</b> doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

n/a

## 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.

The Enhancement Themes work is a whole-University collaborative effort, with broad engagement, discussion and dissemination integral to core activity. Our approach focuses on using the Themes as an umbrella for a series of institution-wide conversations and connected local-level action and innovation.

We have used a variety of dissemination events internally, which have also been used as a method to engage colleagues and students with the Enhancement Theme. These include:

- Heriot-Watt's Global Learning and Teaching Symposium. This showcased the ET work going on within the institution: The Micro-credentials and Postgraduate Taught Experience collaborative clusters both had panel sessions, while 11 out of 14 of the ET-supported mini-projects presented their work. In addition, two other mini-projects presented at institutional "sharing scholarship" events in June.
- A University-wide Teams site to engage colleagues in learning and teaching enhancement conversations.
- A dedicated website to showcase and highlight the work of the mini-projects which will be used to spearhead the recruitment campaign for the 2021/22 round of mini-project funding.
- Externally there has been opportunity to disseminate work. The Micro-credentials collaborative cluster features in the April 2021 issue of Quality Compass [https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/news/quality-compass-which-way-for-micro-credentials.pdf?sfvrsn=25c6d481\\_8](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/news/quality-compass-which-way-for-micro-credentials.pdf?sfvrsn=25c6d481_8) and Anne Tierney has been asked to present the cluster work at Quality Beyond Boundaries Group meeting on Thursday 8 July, a global Quality event which will feature a panel on micro-credentials.
- Work from this year's mini-projects will feature at two international conferences: The 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial Threshold Concepts conference 7-9<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and the 46<sup>th</sup> International Improving University Teaching Conference 21-23<sup>rd</sup> July 2021.
- Opportunities to write for the LTA blog, primarily for an internal audience, but accessible externally.
- Special interest clusters bringing together people with particular interests in teaching and learning.
- Formal platforms for institutional oversight and sharing of practice such as University and School Committees, Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fora

and Student Representative Group assemblies will also be invited to consider updates on Theme initiatives.

### **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.

HWU has extensive collaboration within the sector via Collaborative Clusters:

Martha Caddell leads on the Programme Leaders' Collaborative Cluster, which has held events throughout the year, building on the work of the cluster in the previous Enhancement Theme. HWU staff from across the University have engaged in the webinars and Action Learning Set activity.

Anne Tierney and Robin Westacott lead the Micro-credentials and Digital Badges Collaborative Cluster, which was set up this year as part of the current theme. In collaboration with colleagues at 11 Scottish Universities, and JISC, we have held three stakeholder events for Staff, Customers and Employers, and are carrying out focus groups with Current Students. We have also commissioned an international landscape of practice and four think-pieces from speakers at our stakeholder events.

Rob Daley and Maggie King have both contributed to the Wellbeing Collaborative Cluster, hosting the second meeting of the "Re-imagining Resilience for Taught Postgraduate Students" Collaborative Cluster on March 22nd 2021 (12.00-15.00).

Rosemarie McIlwhan has contributed to the Decolonising the Curriculum Collaborative Cluster.

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

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

We have endeavoured to give our staff and students as many opportunities as possible to take part in theme activities, for example:

We have advertised ET Events via the Staff Newsletter and Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA) Newsletter. The July 2021 LTA Newsletter showcased current ET mini-projects under the banner of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The timing also coincides with the 2021/22 call for project proposals. This year we will be offering information workshops on mini-projects to attract ideas from a wider range of people.

We also dedicated ET sessions in our institutional Learning and Teaching Symposium, which attracted a lot of attention, with eleven out of fourteen mini-projects presented at the symposium, as well as panel sessions on the PGT experience and Micro-credentials.

Mini-project PIs who were not able to present at the LT Symposium have presented at our regular "sharing scholarship" sessions.



We are raising the profile of the Enhancement Themes by developing a dedicated website of outputs from current projects.

We encourage our mini-projects PIs to disseminate externally. Two of our mini-projects are featured in external conferences: Threshold Concepts, held online July 7-9<sup>th</sup> 2021 and Improving University Teaching, held online July 21-23<sup>rd</sup> 2021.

We are also in the process of submitting an abstract about the mini-projects at HWU to ISSOTL 2021, which is being held online in October 2021.

## 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?

**The most heartening thing about this Enhancement Theme is how people have pulled together to make things happen, despite the extra challenges we face. There has been a tremendous amount of activity, and while we are capturing work which is supported directly by Enhancement Themes, there is still a great deal of work which goes on un-recognised, and this is a priority for Year 2. The steering group has worked well in supporting the local work that goes on. In Year 2, there should be a shift in focus to strategic institutional goals of our Strategy 2025 and Learning & Teaching Strategy, at the intersection where it meets the goals of the Enhancement Theme.**

**Formal reporting and discussion of Theme activity is through UCLT and onwards to University Senate.**

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