



End of Year 1 Report for: University of Strathclyde

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.

Institutional lead, TLG staff representative and TLG staff representative alternate have all remained the same as disclosed in the First Year Plan. For the upcoming year 2, the TLG student representative has changed this is now Savvina Kritharidou, our newly elected Vice President Education.

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
Thesis Mentoring Scheme
1. What change has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>This project will examine the impact of mentoring on Postgraduate Research Student (PGR) resilience and thesis completion, whilst providing tailored, targeted support for PGRs who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Thesis Mentoring Scheme is a pilot initiative which aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Enhance resilience, writing and time management skills of individual PGR students; 2) Develop a pool of experienced Postdoctoral Research Assistant/Associate (PDRA) mentors, enhancing Strathclyde's own resilience in supporting the PGR community effectively; and 3) Consider the wide implementation of PGR mentoring at Strathclyde.
2. Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
<p>It has been increasingly documented that PGRs are at higher risk of poor mental health than the general population. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a further negative impact on PGR mental health and reduced access to the support networks, known to be critical to successful doctorate completion. The completion period is known to be particularly challenging for PGRs. Optimal completion rates are a significant issue in some areas and an area of focus for the Strathclyde Doctoral School (SDS) in terms of enhancing the PGR experience and supporting timely doctoral completions.</p>
3. What difference has occurred/will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
<p>The planned outcomes for the project are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) enhanced personal resilience through targeted support and constructive feedback for PGRs, as well as the creation and maintenance of a formal support network to address isolation caused by the pandemic; 2) development of strong supervisory and leadership skills for PDRA mentors, alongside an enhanced support network to combat isolation; 3) more timely completion rates and greater support for under-represented groups, a better understanding of our research students and how they learn, as well as how we can continue to support our learning communities in the future.
4. How do we/will we know? (How is the change measured)
<p>In the short and medium term, formal and informal feedback channels will be utilised to determine the effectiveness of this project. Long-term markers are currently a point for further consideration.</p>
5. Who has been/is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
<p>Dr Emma Compton-Daw (OSDU) and Dr Stephanie Colvan (SDS/RDP) are both highly experienced in designing and managing effective learning activities for researchers (PGRs and PDRAs). Additionally, Dr Compton-Daw has extensive experience delivering mentoring schemes. Maisie Keogh (Chair, (DRG)) is a key member of the team, representing the PGR voice, drawing on DRG's experience of delivering the peer-support scheme. This team is ideally placed to co-</p>

create a scheme that cultivates resilient PGRs through an outstanding learning community experience.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Too early in the project to say at this stage.
7. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
No unsuccessful elements have been reported so far.

Title of project/activity
Undergraduate to PGT – WA Student Transitions
8. What change has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>This project aims to create a series of online resources for widening access students transitioning from undergraduate to postgraduate studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS). The repository pages will be divided into two main sections: one with links to support services available at Strathclyde and one with information on academic requirements and expectations, which will include an area designed for development of PGT study skills.</p> <p>The core objective of project is to remove barriers and support students from a non-traditional background move into postgraduate studies, build their confidence and understanding of the expectations and academic requirements involved in pursuing further studies, and ultimately enrich their experience and resilience so that they can enhance their qualifications and strengthen their position in a volatile job market.</p>
9. Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
<p>The HaSS Faculty attract and recruit large numbers of students from a widening participation background. In 2019, HaSS funded a six-month research project that examined the experience and expectations of WA students transitioning from UG to PG studies. The final report outlined a number of conclusions and recommendations, some of which this project seeks to implement.</p> <p>The data resulting from the 2019 survey, interviews and focus groups reveal that full-time WA postgraduate students felt that there was a clear need for further information on support services – e.g. mental health, careers, and student finance; and better information on academic expectations and requirements for PG courses. These were two important elements highlighted by students as ways of better preparing undergraduate students for postgraduate study.</p>
10. What difference has occurred/will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
The project aims to, among other things, support and enhance the recruitment, retention and transition of SIMD0-40 and more broadly first generation students, mature students, carers and students from non-traditional backgrounds; enhance our PGT internal and external recruitment by helping students familiarise with and prepare for the recruitments of further studies, whilst reassuring them that all the necessary support services are in place and easily reachable.
11. How do we/will we know? (How is the change measured)
In the short and medium term, formal and informal feedback channels will be utilised to determine the effectiveness of this project. Long-term markers are currently a point for further consideration.
12. Who has been/is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
Colleagues from the Widening Access, Careers and HaSS are involved in the development and implementation of the project, alongside a paid student internship.

13. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
The project will implement the findings of the research on widening access students transition into postgraduate studies conducted in 2019.
14. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
No unsuccessful elements have thus far been reported.

Title of project/activity
Collecting Stories
15. What change has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
This project will collect and celebrate stories from each faculty, of innovative and effective practice that has taken place during the pandemic. The project will recognise and reward the achievements of staff during the Covid period – demonstrating and developing the resilience of the institutional Strathclyde learning and teaching community as a whole, while supporting faculty learning communities. Recognition will be achieved through publication and dissemination of the stories. Funding from this project will be used to provide the crucial element of reward which will support staff in feeling valued and encourage them to continue development of their practice through scholarship.
16. Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
<p>Colleagues across the University of Strathclyde and the HE sector have shown remarkable resilience across the past year in response to COVID-19 working to bring their modules and programmes to a virtual audience – often utilising new and innovating practices to do this. This project seeks to recognise the hard work by colleagues over the past year, many of whom have gone above and beyond to help support their students.</p> <p>The stories and good practice will be brought together as a resource for colleagues interested in adapting their own modules, programmes and work. More than that, the resource will include stories which include learning from elements that may not have gone so well – to help inform innovators of the challenges involved, but also to help remove associations of failure with efforts that may not have worked immediately.</p>
17. What difference has occurred/will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
<p>Envisaged successes of the project include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To encourage the recognition and development of a resilient learning community of learning and teaching staff at both institutional and faculty levels; 2) To encourage and support sharing of innovative practice between staff and across the university; 3) To provide ‘examples in practice’ as a way of encouraging staff to try new things; 4) To celebrate the wonderful work that people have been doing across the university to support L&T in this new environment; 5) To support wellbeing and support staff feeling valued for their contributions to the Covid response; and 6) To support staff in considering how to develop scholarship projects, including the evaluation of new learning and teaching practices, and the subsequent dissemination of these projects.
18. How do we/will we know? (How is the change measured)

19. Who has been/is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
<p>Colleagues from Strathclyde's Organisational Staff Development Unit (OSDU) and Education Enhancement have come together as a cross-directorate group who work together and support one another to deliver Education Development programmes and activities across the University.</p> <p>Each colleague will be assigned to support a faculty in the development and curation of stories, while lending support and expertise to one another through our regular meetings. When the monetary rewards are allocated the team member assigned to a faculty will act as the primary mentor for the scholarship project being taken forward by the reward recipient of that faculty. Our team will however work together sharing expertise to discuss the development and progress of all of the projects at our regular group meetings.</p>
20. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Too early in the project to say at this stage.
21. Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
No unsuccessful elements have thus far been reported.

Title of project/activity
Student Resilience in HE: A Strathclyde Toolkit
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
This project aims to develop a plan for a Strathclyde centric toolkit which will support student resilience across all four Faculties. This is inspired by the Student Services Organisation Resilience Toolkit, launched in 2018. The resources cover a range of research, case studies and tools to help develop student resilience to stress, anxiety and similar barriers to achievement and success.
22. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
<p>Resilience has been shown to contribute to a variety of positive aspects of student development including mental health (Dunn et al. 2008, Watson and Field 2011, Hartley 2013), academic achievement (Martin et al. 2015) and smoother transitions from study into the workplace (Candy and Crebert, 1991). There are a number of skills which have been shown to support students in developing resilience. For example, McGee (2006) and Hodges (2005) show that students sharing experience and participating in reflection improves resilience.</p> <p>COVID-19 has shown us how important it is to develop skills of resilience. Unite's report on student resilience highlights the need to develop resilience skills due to the increase in student mental health difficulties. As we move forward with a revised approach to higher education, it follows that we should ensure students are well prepared for their future lives and careers, where resilience skills will continue to be required. Currently the University of Strathclyde provides mental health support but does not currently offer many resources created by students to help students reflect on their own resilience and develop their skills. This toolkit aims to address this.</p>
23. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
Students and staff will be aware of artifacts designed by students to help students understand resilience, and techniques they can use to develop their resilience and apply these techniques. Artefacts can include, but are not limited to posters, infographics, reflective practice diaries, promotional videos such as students discussing reflection, music to support students.

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

We will survey students to measure whether they have engaged with resources and whether they feel more resilient having done so.

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

Colleagues and students from the Strathclyde Faculty of Science at the primary stage, and then Professional Service Colleagues and wider staff and students on whether the lessons/approach can be more widely disseminated.

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

Student interns have only been engaged for a few weeks so too early to say at this stage.

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

No unsuccessful elements have thus far been reported.

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.

Due to the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on the Enhancement Theme process and our institutional work, this year's projects are still taking place and therefore their outcomes have not yet been disseminated to colleagues and the wider sector. Discussions are currently planned on how best to do this, once it is appropriate to do so. It is expected that dissemination will primarily be communicated through internal workshops and conferences.

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.

This year, Strathclyde has been involved in a number of Collaborative Clusters including:

- 1) Exploring the Potential of Micro-credentials and Digital Badging
- 2) Programme Leadership
- 3) Student Mental Wellbeing within our BAME and LGBTQ+ Learner Communities
- 4) Decolonising the Curriculum in the Time of the Pandemic

So far this year, the clusters have organised numerous events held with employers, university staff, students and alumni to explore what micro-credentials means to them in their individual context; and webinars focused on creating inclusive learning communities. Additionally, in terms of micro-credentials, a researcher has been employed to write up a final report and to create a list of recommendations to hopefully take forward in further applications to support this work.

Supporting staff and student engagement

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

Staff have been supported by the institutional Enhancement Theme team to advance work in the allocated project areas. As this year of the theme has been primarily focused on understanding the landscape, we anticipate greater staff and student engagement in year 2 and 3. Student interns will undertake full inductions and are linked to staff leading each of the funded projects (outlined above) to ensure they are fully supported in their intern role.

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?

Continuing on from the processes begun under the previous theme, the Enhancement Theme work is being led by a group rather than an individual. This has been particularly helpful due to the nature of the Theme, multiple stakeholders, and the collaboration required across faculties and Professional Services departments.

This report will be shared with the institution's Learning Enhancement Committee and reported up to the Education Strategy Committee, our highest strategic learning and teaching committee.

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