End of Year 1 Report for: University of the Highlands and Islands

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.

One change in updated membership below (Elaine Dalloway now part of team).

TLG Staff representative and institutional lead
Dr Heather Fotheringham, Evidence-Based Enhancement Lead

TLG Student representative
Jack Shehata, VPHE Highlands and Islands' Student Association (HISA)

Institutional team (internal Enhancement Themes Consultation Group)

Professor Keith Smyth, Professor of Pedagogy and Head of Learning and Teaching Academy (Chair, Enhancement Themes Consultation Group)

Andrew Bowie, Student Voice Assistant, HISA
Elaine Dalloway, Educational Design and Development Leader
Iain Eisner, Careers Manager
Dr Heather Fotheringham, Evidence-Based Enhancement Lead
Dr Iain MacInnes, Subject Network Leader (Humanities and Gaelic)
Dr Iain Morrison, Dean of Students
Rhiannon Tinsley, Academic Registrar
Jack Shehata, VPHE Highlands and Islands' Student Association (HISA)
Kevin Sinclair, Student Engagement Manager

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

Title of activity
Facilitating resilient students: This comprises one of the three strands of the university's approach to this Enhancement Theme and has the overall aim **to develop a student body of resilient learners and resilient graduates, able to adapt to a changing world of education and employment.**
1. What change has been made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The following activities occurred within Year 1: • Running a Student Support Initiative Award to identify and celebrate excellent practice • Holding a Learning and Teaching Symposium to share innovative practice • Creating a 'pathway' resource to help students develop career resilience
2. Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
• To champion good practice in teaching, learning and student support that can help to develop resilient learners. • To help staff to develop the knowledge and skills to encourage resilience in their students through teaching, learning and support activities. • To broaden students' skillset and increase their confidence.
3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
• Awareness raised amongst staff about effective practice in learning, teaching and student support which is then adopted by others • Students access resources and skillset and confidence increases as a result
4. How do we/will we know? (How is the change measured)
We have the following metrics demonstrating outcomes from these initiatives: that staff have engaged with events and resources, and that awareness has been raised within and outside the University of this work: • 20 entries for Student Support Initiative Awards with the winning entry also shortlisted for the 2021 Herald Awards • 100 attendees at the Learning and Teaching Symposium from 11 of the University's 13 Academic Partners • Developing Resilience online pathway resource created with a framework of activities and tasks. Representing 20 hours of student learning. (This will be promoted further in academic year 2021-22 where analytics on the resource and further impact data will be gathered from student users).
5. Who has been/is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
All Enhancement Themes work is overseen by the Enhancement Themes Consultation Group which reports to the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). Whilst Year 1 of this Enhancement Theme has been mainly concerned with benchmarking and identifying relevant activities, we are developing an evaluation strategy that will measure the impacts of projects within year 2 and 3 of the Theme.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)

- Student uptake of the Resilience Pathway resource has been lower than anticipated at this stage. Comparing the use of this resource to other Pathway resources, it is clear that embedding the resources within existing curricula is key to student buy-in. Promotion of the resource to Programme Leaders will take place in Year 2 of the Theme to maximise the benefit to students.

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

Title of project/activity
Facilitating resilient staff: This comprises the second of the three strands of the university's approach to this Enhancement Theme and has the overall aim **to develop a staff body of resilient educators able to adapt to a changing world of education and employment.**

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

The following activities occurred within Year 1:

- A research project to investigate the use of Reflective Practice amongst University staff, both for their professional development, and in their teaching practice.
- Gathering data on staff awareness and use of values underpinning the University's Learning Teaching and Enhancement Strategy (LTES) in their teaching practices,
- Examining the extent to which the VLE and other learning approaches and technologies are being used and embedded specifically in relation to the Benchmarks for the Use of Technology in Learning and Teaching, and particularly their emphasis on active and creative use of technology, connected learning experiences, integrated and sustainable teaching practices, and reflective practice and continuous improvement

2. Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)

To benchmark current practice and current levels of staff confidence, ability and awareness in: LTES values, Reflective Practice and use of technology in learning and teaching in order to inform Enhancement Theme work in Year 2 and 3

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

Projects undertaken in Years 2 and 3 of the Theme will address the training and development needs of University staff, informed by the outputs of benchmarking in year 1. These will include:

- Workshops in reflective writing and reflective practice
- Developing communities of practice concerning the use of the VLE to embed LTES values
- Creating a toolkit concerning the use of flexible assessment

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

Uptake of, involvement with and impact of Year 2 and 3 projects as ascertained by evaluation.

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

All Enhancement Themes work is overseen by the Enhancement Themes Consultation Group which reports to the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). Whilst Year 1 of this Enhancement Theme has been mainly concerned with benchmarking and identifying

relevant activities, we are developing an evaluation strategy that will measure the impacts of projects within year 2 and 3 of the Theme.

6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Findings from the research have indicated a clear direction for embedding Reflective Practice within induction for new lecturers, and for creating dedicated time and space for this activity.

7. Any things you need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
It has been difficult to engage staff in surveys during this particularly busy year so alternative approaches to gathering data will be used next year e.g. interviews to generate case studies and other narrative approaches.

Title of project/activity
Creating a resilient institution: This comprises the third of the three strands of the university's approach to this Enhancement Theme and has the overall aim **to examine the policies, processes and structures within the University to ensure that they are fit to serve the changing needs of the staff and student body.**

1. What change has been/is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The following activities occurred within Year 1: • Aligning the work of the new Enhancement Theme with the recently implemented Curriculum Review Group, to mutually support and inform institutional-wide curriculum review activities in relation to the flexibility, robustness and future proofing of curriculum design and delivery post-pandemic • Reviewing the extent to which our formal programmes for educators are engaging our lecturers in issues relating to resilience and resilient practices in learning and teaching. • Reviewing, forward planning foregrounding issues of resilience in the delivery of continuing professional development opportunities through the activities of the Learning and Teaching Academy

2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
• To foreground issues of resilience within any new curriculum framework • To benchmark the extent to which our programmes for educators and CPD offerings prepare academic staff to teach within a changing environment

3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
• To create a curriculum structure that is able to stand up to future challenges (e.g. potential lockdowns, demand from student body for flexible delivery and courses, meeting local employer needs) • To create a body of resilient educators who will have the necessary skills to adapt their teaching and learning practices to changing circumstances and to deliver an excellent student experience.

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

Proposed metrics to measure the 'future-proofing' of the curriculum include: reduction in the overall number of modules/units offered and corresponding increase in student numbers for each module, uptake and evaluation of micro-credentials offered to students.

Confidence and preparedness of academic staff will be ascertained by evaluation activities in Years 2 and 3 of the Theme measured by assessment of micro-training modules specifically designed for teaching staff around these themes and their reflections on completing them.

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

All Enhancement Themes work is overseen by the Enhancement Themes Consultation Group which reports to the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). Whilst Year 1 of this Enhancement Theme has been mainly concerned with benchmarking and identifying relevant activities, we are developing an evaluation strategy that will measure the impacts of projects within year 2 and 3 of the Theme.

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

Our initial exploration of the extent to which our professional development provision both informal (e.g. workshops, webinars, events) and formal (e.g. our taught education programmes for lecturers) are engaging staff in thinking about and experiencing learning and teaching practices, revealed an existing focus on dimensions of creative practice, 'resilience' and adaptability in learning and teaching. However, it is also clear that effective practices and new possibilities, and new student needs and expectations, emerged during the pandemic that need to be recognised in how we support the development and enhancement of learning and teaching going forward, and which are relevant to sustainable and resilient educational practices and communities.

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

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.

We have established an Enhancement Themes Consultation Group comprising representatives from academic staff and our students' association HISA, as well as from learning and teaching enhancement and academic quality. We report on progress to our Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee which is a key channel for communicating to senior staff from across the University partnership.

Our Learning and Teaching Symposium, held on June 17 2021, was a key channel to disseminate the work of the Theme to date. Over 100 staff attended from across the University and presentations were themed around issues key to this Enhancement Theme: Digitally enabled innovation, Community, Rethinking learning and teaching.

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.

We have been involved in the following Collaborative Clusters this year:

- Micro-credentials
- Student mental health
- Decolonising the curriculum
- Personal Approaches to Resilience and Community (PARC)

Work with the PARC cluster has been particularly prominent with our Staff Lead joining the Cluster working group, attending meetings, and helping to organise and present at the Cluster event in June 2021. It is intended that work with this cluster will continue into Years 2 and 3 of the Theme, with institutional projects aligned to the cluster occurring in both years.

Supporting staff and student engagement

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

An open call went out to staff and students to become involved with the Theme, either by aligning their activities to the work of the Theme, becoming a member of the Consultation Group, attending relevant events, or proposing a project for Years 2 and 3 of the Theme. Whilst no funding has been attached to involvement in Theme activities, colleagues have been supported by the additional expertise of the Learning and Teaching Academy to plan and evaluate their work, and the LTA has also provided a channel to share outputs via its calendar of events.

Student engagement has been managed by our students' association HISA, who have aligned many of their activities this last year to the different strands of the Theme.

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?

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