



Student Transitions Enhancement Theme: End of Year 3/End of Theme Synopsis

The key purposes of this report are to:-

- provide a framework for HEIs to report on their Year 3 activity
- help share information across the sector on the benefits and challenges around Theme engagement.

Institution
<i>University of Dundee</i>
Theme Leaders' Group institutional representative(s)
<i>Lorraine Anderson</i>
Institutional team membership
<p><i>Michael Allardice, Academic Skills Tutor, CASTLE</i></p> <p><i>Kevin Burns, Deputy President, Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA)</i></p> <p><i>Jo Corlett, Associate Dean (Learning & Teaching), School of Nursing & Health Sciences</i></p> <p><i>Tom Cunningham, Transitions Officer, CASTLE</i></p> <p><i>Stella Howden, Associate Dean (Quality & Academic Standards), School of Medicine</i></p> <p><i>Keith Mackle, Assistant Director Student Services (International & Student Well-being)</i></p> <p><i>Lissa Monk, Senior Lecturer, School of Business, Social Sciences</i></p> <p><i>Teresa Moran, Associate Dean (Learning & Teaching), School of Education & Social Work</i></p> <p><i>Andy Munns, Associate Dean (Quality & Academic Standards), School of Science & Engineering</i></p> <p><i>Lynsay Pickering, Senior Careers Advisor, Careers Service</i></p> <p><i>Amanda Whitehead, Student Transitions Project Officer, CASTLE</i></p> <p><i>Jenny Woof, Associate Dean (Quality & Academic Standards), School of Life Sciences</i></p> <p><i>Neil Taylor, Associate Dean (Quality & Academic Standards), School of Education & Social Work</i></p> <p><i>Debbie Smith, Academic & Corporate Governance, Admin support</i></p>

Outline what was achieved in relation to your Year 3 plan of work, at the time of submitting this report.

Identify what future outcomes are anticipated to be delivered by the end of the Theme.

Have there been any unintended outcomes/unexpected findings?

The student transitions topic unit has been developed, implemented and evaluated as part of our PG Certificate in Academic Practice in Higher Education (PGCAPHE). Feedback has been very good and in several instances has encouraged PGCAPHE participants to develop small teaching & learning projects in relation to student transitions. Papers on work from the projects, and reflections on the concept more generally, have also been accepted for publication in the student transitions special issue of the Journal of Perspectives on Applied Academic Practice (JPAAP).

The STEP UP student transitions module has been developed, piloted and evaluated with a group of articulation students. Feedback has been very good and the module will be offered next academic year for first year students entering the School of Social Sciences, the School of Business and again for another group of articulation students.

The 'Live Smart, Learn Smart' online guide has been developed and made available to students to support them in taking a pro-active approach to both their personal well-being and to study, throughout their academic careers. The guide is available now and will also be promoted actively during Welcome Weeks at the beginning of each semester.

The Dundee TLG member has been actively involved in the production of the student transitions special issue of the Journal of Perspectives on Applied Academic Practice (JPAAP) which will be launched to coincide with the international conference in June.

Dundee's Student Transitions symposium will be held on 9th June.

- Sally Brown, independent consultant and Professor Emerita at Leeds Beckett University, will provide a keynote and workshop on helping students transition into the approach to assessment in HE.*
- Abby Shovlin from the University of Edinburgh will also be running a workshop on the 5 Element Induction Model - a new transitions resource for building academic competencies and supporting wellbeing.*
- Students from the STEP UP module will be showcasing their posters.*
- Colleagues from across the University will be showcasing their work in support of student transitions, including our 'living' institutional transitions map.*

Our commissioned collaborative project, looking at the ways in which Open Badges can support effective student transitions, is a partnership between the universities of Dundee, Aberdeen and Abertay. We are developing a decision-making guide for the sector on whether open badges might be a useful way to support student transitions through a micro-credentialing approach. Colleagues, student associations and employers will all be involved in the project and the development of the guide. Our sharing practice event will be held on the 19th June and the project is due to report by the end of July.

Although perhaps not 'unexpected', the extent of engagement in the Theme from colleagues based in Professional Services, and the opportunities this had created for closer collaboration and shared working, has been a very welcome development. The 'Live Smart, Learn Smart' toolkit that we submitted as our multi-media artefact provides an example of an outcome of this closer working.

The extent to which supporting effective 'student transitions' has also been recognised as an integral part of 'what we do' as a university in support of our core aim of transforming lives, has also been very important for us. The challenge now will be to embed that recognition within our practice across the institution in order that working with the concept of student transitions into, through and out of study becomes normalised.

In what ways have institutional team members (including students) engaged in Theme activities during this session?

It would be helpful to reflect on the following aspects: developing the institution's plan of work, contributions to institutional team meetings, participation in the Theme Student Network and TLG meetings, participation in the International Enhancement Conference, participation in the institutional team event held in November 2016, institutional work undertaken as part of the year 3 plan etc.

Our institutional team has reflected a broad cross-section of the University community, involving academic colleagues in leadership roles for learning & teaching and quality & academic standards and professional services staff in academic skills, transition and careers roles. We have also benefited from the involvement of our DUSA Deputy President as a team member. The DUSA VP Representation has been our student rep on TLG. Students in the pilot of our STEP UP module have been actively involved in the concept of transitions and will continue to work with us throughout their academic career to evaluate the longer term impact of the module. Staff as students on the PGCAPHE programme, have been actively involved in engaging with the student transitions topic unit and their feedback will support the ongoing development and enhancement of the resource.

Development of the institutional plan of work was a collaborative endeavour, building on previous work and approaches; responding to institutional and sectoral priorities; and informed by individual's areas of expertise and contacts. The institutional plan and updates were submitted to the University Learning & Teaching Committee which is chaired by our VP(LT) and attended by all Associate Deans for Learning & Teaching and our DUSA President and Deputy President.

We had an excellent team presence at the institutional team event in November and a large number of colleagues are due to attend the international conference as both participants and also presenting.

The Dundee TLG member, working with colleagues from UHI and Edinburgh Napier in their capacities as part of the editorial team for JPAAP, have put together a special issue on student transitions to act as a dissemination vehicle for work around this Theme. The special issue will be guest-edited by the Chair of TLG and will be produced to coincide with the international conference in June.

Our commissioned collaborative project on the use of open badges to support effective student transitions, in partnership with the University of Aberdeen and Abertay University, includes students from Dundee and Aberdeen as project researchers and Student Association colleagues from across the sector who are interested in using the open badge approach for micro-credentialing. The project will produce guidance for the sector on the What, Why and How of Open Badges and will also involve a sharing practice event with keynote speakers, Grainne Hamilton from Digitalme and Doug Belshaw, 'open educational

thinker'. Participants at the event will also be able to contribute to the development of the guide. This project is due to report at the end of July.

As indicated above, year 3 has also seen the completion of the cycle through to feedback and evaluation of several areas of activity such as the student transitions topic unit within our PGCAPHE programme for staff and in our STEP UP transitions module for students. Both received very good feedback which will support us in further enhancing these approaches as an embedded part of our practice. Several of the members of staff who engaged with the topic unit as part of the PGCAPHE have gone on to submit and have articles accepted for the Student Transitions special issue of JPAAP. Students from the STEP UP module will be presenting their posters at our Student Transitions symposium on 9 June.

Identify good practice in supporting the TLG representative/alternate both in their TLG role and in their institution.

A large and varied institutional team provides good support for the TLG rep.

Inclusion and active involvement of a student rep on the institutional team is very important.

A good working relationship with the Students' Association and the SHEEC member is also very important.

Inclusion of the work of the Theme as a standing agenda item for the institutional and School learning & teaching committees is a very helpful way to maintain focus on the work of the Theme throughout the year.

A small amount of dedicated admin support for the institutional team also helps to effectively oil the wheels!

Which mechanisms has your institution employed to disseminate outcomes and resources internally, and to the sector?

Which approaches have been most effective?

Illustrative examples would be valuable.

Our internal Highlighter Newsletter (part funded by the Enhancement Themes) includes a regular update on the current Theme and reaches staff and student representatives. Availability in both hard copy and online provides best reach and coverage.

Committees, such as our institutional and School-level learning & teaching committees, provide a regular opportunity for updating and circulating information. Recommended that the work of the Theme is included as a standing item on the agenda.

Events, such as our Student Transitions symposium on 9th June, engage both staff and students and provide a showcase opportunity for Theme-related work. The sharing practice event for our Open Badges collaborative project on 19th June is open to the sector and the guide that we are developing as an output from the project will be informed by colleagues, employers and student representatives. Recommended to get dates for these kinds of events in the diary as early as possible and always include student participation.

The development of materials for staff and students as part of credit-bearing learning, utilising the Theme resources, has been very successful.

The development of an institutional map of student transitions activity will highlight areas of good practice and also any gaps where colleagues might start to look more actively at this area of work. The map will be shared at the Student Transitions symposium as a 'living' document, in order to encourage further contributions of practice and to surface any examples that have not hitherto come to light. The idea of the map as a 'living' document will also provide a tool to embed and normalise the concept of student transitions as a central part of 'what we do' as an institution.

Outline your approach to collaborative working with other Higher Education institutions and what you perceive as the benefits and challenges.

Examples of activities and outcomes through inter-institutional collaboration would be helpful.

The Scottish sector always works collaboratively; an approach that is facilitated by its size and the underpinning vehicle of a strong educational developers' network across the country. Supporting the development of specific and additional collaborative working on top of the planned work of this Theme has proved somewhat challenging, however, although two examples of effective partnership working are provided below. On reflection, perhaps greater recognition should be given to the collaborative work that institutions have undertaken cross the Theme in relation to their participation in TLG, the numerous sharing practice events that have been open to the sector and have involved visiting speakers from other HEIs, and engagement with the Theme webinars, etc. While these collaborations are more implicit than explicit, their value should not be under-estimated in the contribution they have provided to better understanding and potentially greater longevity of the work of the Theme.

Dundee is leading the commissioned project on the use of open badges to support effective student transitions, working collaboratively with the universities of Aberdeen and Abertay. The project includes students from Dundee and Aberdeen as project researchers and Student Association colleagues from across the sector who are interested in using the open badge approach for micro-credentialing. The views of colleagues and employers will also inform the development of a decision-making guide which will be the primary output of the project.

The development of the special issue of JPAAP provides another example of effective collaborative working.

To help facilitate the sharing of practice please provide:

- **a list of the case studies further developed during Year 3 to include student reflective commentary on successful transitions practice (5 examples)**
- **details of your student-facing multimedia resource.**

You might also wish to report on any aspect of work that you are particularly proud of and want to promote.

Our submitted case studies of student reflective commentary on successful transitions practice are:

1. *Lost in transition? Student experiences of articulation*

2. *Welcome Week at the University of Dundee*
3. *Gateway to Learning*
4. *Principles of Postgraduateness*
5. *Supporting an inclusive approach to 'Becoming' and 'Belonging' at the University of Dundee*

Our multimedia artefact is the 'Live Smart, Learn Smart' online guide - libguides.dundee.ac.uk/livesmart

The guide provides orientation and support tools for students to ensure that they can find out what they need to know and where to find it, facilitating a pro-active approach to well-being and the development of skills and attributes to support academic study and future employability.

I'm proud of the ways in which my colleagues in academic schools, professional services and the Dundee University Students' Association have embraced the concept of student transitions so positively and worked together so well to realise our institutional aspirations around this Theme, including the development of our credit-rated materials; online guide; working with staff and students to develop our case studies and institutional map; leading our collaborative project; and planning our symposium.

Identify the ways in which your institution has contributed to Theme evaluation and other commissioned work.

Our VP(LT) and TLG member have both engaged with the evaluation team through telephone interviews. The evaluation team will also be holding a focus group at our Student Transitions symposium on 9th June.

We have used the transition skills and strategies materials in the development of our Student Transitions topic unit within our PG Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education programme for staff and in our STEP UP transitions module for students.

Members of the institutional team have engaged with the Theme webinars.

We are leading on the commissioned collaborative project on the use of open badges to support effective student transitions, in partnership with the University of Aberdeen and Abertay University.

As a result of engaging with the current Enhancement Theme, what has changed/is done differently within your institution and across the sector?

It may be helpful to reflect on changes in strategy, policy, practice and how these changes have affected the student learning experience.

Please see above for the details on institutional impact re.:

- *surfacing approaches to identifying student transitions within every day practice*
- *enhanced working practices for staff across the University*
- *development and embedding of well-received and effective resources to support staff understanding of student transitions*
- *development and embedding of well-received and effective resources to support student understanding of their transitional experiences*

Reflecting on the totality of Theme activity what are your perceptions of both the short and longer term impact of the Theme?

It may be useful to refer to the Theme's Logic Model here.

My personal view is that the Student Transitions Theme has been perhaps the most effective Theme to date in engaging a variety of staff across HEIs and in developing user-friendly but also pedagogically sound, resources and approaches. From anecdotal observations I believe this view to be shared quite widely amongst colleagues. As a result, I believe that this Theme has the potential for significant long-term as well as short-term impact.

Recognising that this is the end of the current Theme, what one piece of advice would you give to colleagues supporting the next Theme?

At a very early stage, create a comprehensive institutional plan to cover the lifetime of the Theme that covers not just the plan of work but how the institutional team will work together; how staff and students will be engaged with the work of the Theme; an awareness raising and dissemination approach; ensuring that the work of the Theme is included as a standing item on all appropriate committees; and an evaluation and embedding approach. Plan early and re-visit the plan regularly as time goes by very quickly! The Logic Model approach can provide a very useful vehicle for understanding what those plans will look like and how they might be effectively realised.