



# TLG Bulletin, May 2023

## 12 Themes, 20 years. Thank you!

**Welcome to the TLG Bulletin - your quick guide to the activity of the Theme Leaders' Group (TLG). Please feel free to share this with any colleagues who might find it valuable.**

Photo credit: Clare Parks



This is the final Theme Leaders' Group Bulletin for the Resilient Learning Communities Theme. The Bulletin also marks a milestone in the Scottish higher education sector's enhancement activity, delivering 12 Enhancement Themes since 2003. Professor Clare Peddie welcomed colleagues to the May 2023 TLG meeting and delivered a summary presentation reflecting on the activity

of the most recent Theme, Resilient Learning Communities. Professor Peddie spoke about: the five original questions posed by the Theme; the aspirations of the Theme Leadership Team; and the personal, intangible and real benefits of Resilient Learning Communities. As part of the reflection, TLG members had an engaging discussion about:

- The new colleagues they had met and collaborations they had formed - from increased inter- and intra-institutional connections, to collaborative clusters and the Student-Led Project, there were many examples of colleagues forming enjoyable, meaningful and lasting connections, which had supported enhancements to policy and practice.

- What they had gained from this Theme, including intangible benefits - colleagues reported on aspects both within institutions and at sector level. For example, the camaraderie and mutual support within the Enhancement Themes community and specific projects within HEIs. The Anti-Racist Curriculum project has been really helpful in supporting institutional work.
- The outcome/output of which they were most proud - among others, sector colleagues were proud of: the diverse and inspiring Theme resources; TLG becoming a resilient learning community itself; and student engagement.

With so many positive comments from TLG, the 'human-centredness' of the Theme appeared to be a strength at a time of huge social challenge when belonging and community in higher education have become increasingly significant.

Professor Peddie extended sincere thanks to everyone who had engaged with the Theme and paid tribute to the Student Theme Leaders over the three years of the Theme: Alex Hedlund (Heriot-Watt University Student Union); Ondrej Kucerak (Aberdeen University's Students' Union); Heather Innes (Highlands and Islands Students' Association at the University of the Highlands and Islands); and Hitanshi Badani (University of St Andrews).

Progress on each project was outlined in QAA Scotland's regular update paper for TLG:

**[Anti-Racist Curriculum Project](#)** – the key aim of the project is the establishment of a Professional Learning Network to support practitioners across the tertiary sector, with the idea that this Network will be self-sustaining beyond the end of the project. The Network, which has now met twice, is known as AREN (The Anti-Racist Education Network). Work commissioned to Edinburgh Napier University (the creation of a digital artefact focused on stories grounded in individual experiences) is progressing. We are also exploring how the project resources can support the development of anti-racist curricula in a specific context (undergraduate study of music) at four institutions. All research workshops have taken place and findings are being written up. We will run a workshop related to this project at [CDN's Expo23](#) event.

**[Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning \(RPL\) and Experience](#)** – as with the Anti-Racist Curriculum project, the aim for session 2022-23 is to establish a Professional Learning Network (PLN). Following three successful online workshops in January and February, the first meeting of the RPL PLN was online on 31 March. We were delighted to have with us Andrina Wafer (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) and Deirdre Goggin (Munster Technological University), who shared insights about their experience of supporting the establishment of the RPL Practitioner Network Ireland.



**[Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland](#)** – the focus of the project is on the creation of a good practice guide for micro-credentials for the tertiary sector in Scotland. The Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials is leading on the development of the guide following on from the production of the [Scottish Tertiary Education Micro-Credentials Glossary](#) published in the summer. To support this work, institutions are being encouraged to offer case studies of micro-credentials practice to share experiences across Scotland. Additionally, a survey of the sector has been undertaken to gain an up-to-date snapshot of the micro-credentials and small qualifications in Scotland – the results of the survey will be published in June.

**[Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community \(PARC\)](#)** – the PARC project is continuing to make steady progress addressing the four outcomes developed in their face-to-face meeting in January 2023. Dr Luke Millard will be providing an online 45-minute ‘Conversation Around Diagnostics and Personalised Approaches to Building Student Success (QAA HE Collaborative Cluster Project)’ at [CDN’s Expo23](#) event in June 2023 as well as presenting at the QAA Enhancement Conference and the European First Year Experience Conference (EFYE).

**[Mind the Gap? College Students' Experience of University](#)** – considers the perceptions and experiences of learning, teaching and assessment of college lecturers, university lecturers, student support staff, current college students and students who have transitioned from college to university to identify areas of crossover and disconnect between the two sectors and how transitioning students might negotiate and manage these. The first output from the project a [qualitative research synthesis](#) has been published, providing a timely summary and analysis of what is known about the lived experiences of those involved in making effective transitions from college to university in Scotland. In addition, student interns, who have college to university transition experience have run a series of focus groups exploring staff experiences.

### **[Year 3 Student-Led Project: Exploring community partnerships for the future of Further and Higher Education](#)**

The first output of the student-led project, [Developing Community Partnerships: Guidelines for Student Groups and Institutions in Scotland's Colleges and Universities](#) has been published. A photographic display, *Learner Communities*, will be part of the June 2023 Enhancement Themes conference. A workshop is also being delivered at the conference. A set of case studies, representing the different education regions of Scotland and illustrating examples of successful provider: community partnerships and supported by a short, written piece will be published over the summer.

### **[Themes Evaluation](#)**

The three-year evaluation journey is coming to an end and we are looking forward to our evaluation consultants' conference keynote at our 5<sup>th</sup> International Enhancement Conference - [Shaping the Student Experience Together: 20 Years of Enhancement, which will be held on 14 and 15 June at Glasgow Caledonian University](#). Professor Stella Jones-Devitt and Dr Liz Austen are completing their analysis of an extensive and varied evidence base. The final evidence set will be the reporting on Year 3 of the current Theme, which is not due to be submitted until the end of June. We are grateful to our sector colleagues for their commitment in supporting this innovative and bold activity. A suite of resources will be published from late summer.

We will issue a further Bulletin later this year with a round-up of the final publications from the [Resilient Learning Communities](#) Enhancement Theme.

## 20 Years of Enhancement

QAA Scotland's [20 Years of Enhancement campaign](#) will draw to a close in June 2023 with our 5<sup>th</sup> International Enhancement Conference, '[Shaping the Student Experience Together: 20 Years of Enhancement](#)'. This will mark the end of our successful ten-month campaign to enable the sector to reflect on the lessons learned from our experience of an enhancement-led approach to quality and look to an exciting future of enhancement across a tertiary education sector. The final published resources from the campaign are:

- A [blog post](#) by Roni Bamber, Professor Emerita of Higher Education at Queen Margaret University and Theme Lead for the [Student Transitions](#) Enhancement Theme.
- An updated version of our popular '[Responding to student voice: Principles of practice](#)' cards.
- An online 'in-conversation' session with Peter Felten, Executive Director of the Center for Engaged Learning, Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning, and Professor of History at Elon University, Leo M. Lambert, President Emeritus and Professor of Education at Elon University and students. Drawing lessons from Professor Felten and Professor Lambert's most recent book, [Relationship-Rich Education: How human connections drive success in college](#), the conversation explored themes of resilience, the value of community, and the role of enhancement in supporting student success. This was a really popular and lively session and great way to end the campaign. If you want to watch the recording, you will find it on the campaign [web page](#).

## Tertiary Enhancement Activity

In the second part of the meeting, Caroline Turnbull, Quality Enhancement Manager, led a discussion on QAA Scotland's development of a new national programme of tertiary enhancement activity. As part of [their new tertiary approach to quality](#), SFC has commissioned QAA Scotland to lead this work and QAAS will be working closely with the College Development Network (CDN), staff and students in colleges and universities and colleagues in sector bodies to co-create then co-deliver this new enhancement approach from session 2024-25.

## A word of thanks from QAA Scotland

QAA Scotland want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme for their contributions, wisdom and insights. We are particularly grateful for the commitment and enthusiasm from staff and students in delivering a Theme that coincided with a period of enormous challenge.

We look forward to working with universities and colleges in a new collective enhancement endeavour in the years ahead but hope to see many of you either in-person or online at [Shaping the Student Experience Together: 20 Years of Enhancement](#) on 14 and 15 June 2023.

**THANK YOU!**

Please get in touch with [QAA Scotland](#) if you want to know more about [Enhancement Themes](#) activity.