



TLG Bulletin, March 2023 – Evaluating impact and Theme legacy

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.

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With just over four months to go, we are fast approaching the culmination of three years of activity on our current Theme, [Resilient Learning Communities](#), and 20 years of the Enhancement Themes initiative. After welcoming new members at the start of the March 2023 TLG, our Theme Leader, Professor Clare Peddie, highlighted the importance of continuing to engage in the Themes evaluation work, which was focused on capturing further evidence of the Themes' impact on student experience and outcomes. There were a number of supporting papers for the meeting, which included an [overview](#) of Year 3 institutional plans.

Theme Leaders' Group (TLG) members heard from Heather Innes, Student Theme Leader on progress with the Year 3 Student-Led Project. [Exploring Community Partnerships for the Future of Further and Higher Education](#) is the focus of 2022-23 project with four strands of activity. For more information on the 2022-23 SLP, visit the project web page and a recent [news item](#):

- **Capturing current good practice of working with the community** – a call has been launched seeking five examples across different Scottish regions to reflect the diversity of student experience and ways of community working. The five case studies are planned to be presented as short videos, complemented by a written piece. The project is seeking submissions by 24 March, please do get in touch with Megan Brown at sparqs to submit or discuss ideas (Megan.Brown@sparqs.ac.uk).
- **Demonstrating to educators the experience of diverse student groups and how students currently enrolled at a Scottish university or college interact with and learn in their communities** – this strand will take the form of a photo gallery that will be showcased at QAA Scotland's 5th International Enhancement Conference, 'Shaping the Student Experience Together: 20 Years of Enhancement' on 14-15 June 2023. The call for submissions is currently open and will close on 31 March 2023. Please spread the word and encourage your students to submit a photo to Hitanshi Badani at University of St Andrews (hb207@st-andrews.ac.uk). More information, including some suggestions for photos, is available [here](#).
- **Enabling students to build relationships with their local communities** – this strand will develop guidelines for student organisations who are seeking to forge positive engagement and activities with their local communities and groups that can enhance the student learning experience and benefit the area and people within it as well. The guidelines will be developed from 'top tips' submitted by sector colleagues. Please get in touch with Megan Brown and Oluwafunmilola Akinoso with your ideas by 28 March (Megan.Brown@sparqs.ac.uk or o.akinoso1@rgu.ac.uk
- **Exploring/recommending how community partnerships can be incorporated into academic assessment** – the output of this strand will be a workshop activity as part of QAA Scotland's 5th International Enhancement Conference in June.

Year 3 reporting

Dr Liz Austen, one of our Theme evaluation consultants, walked colleagues through the reporting requirements for Year 3 of the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme. The draft reporting template focused on capturing evidence for demonstrating impact on the student experience and outcomes, and identifying the processes or 'ways of working' that supported achievement of outcomes. The template covered all aspects of activity:

institutional activity, collaborative clusters and sector-level projects. The Theme evaluation consultants' online [Confident Claims?](#) workshop (28 March 2023 10:00 to 12:00) will provide an opportunity to work through the reporting template in a more dynamic way and TLG members, and colleagues working on Theme activity, were encouraged to attend. If you are interested in attending this workshop, please e-mail ARCAAdmin@qaa.ac.uk to register.

Resilient Learning Communities Theme Legacy

In a plenary discussion activity, colleagues considered three key topics:

- what we have learnt from the RLC Theme and how this becomes 'business as usual',
- a reflection on the changing nature of student engagement, and
- how to maintain institutional connectivity entering a period of change.

Discussion among TLG members was thought-provoking, showing how the Theme is continuing to flex as the challenges of the pandemic and other global crises have evolved into wide-reaching economic challenges which have a considerable impact upon students and staff. These conversations are important in informing planning for future tertiary sector enhancement activity.

In addition to the interaction at the meeting, TLG members also received updates across all the Enhancement Themes projects, which are summarised in the following pages.

[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. At present, around 60 staff and students from across the sector have agreed to join the Network. An initial meeting took place online on Friday 10 March 2023. Alongside this activity, Edinburgh Napier University has been commissioned to create a digital artefact focused on stories grounded in individual experiences. 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.

[Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning \(RPL\) and Experience](#) – as with the Anti-Racist Curriculum project, the aim for the 2022-23 academic session is to establish a Professional Learning Network. At present, around 17 staff and students from across the sector have agreed to join the Network, and an initial meeting takes place online on Friday 31 March 2023. Two CPD workshops, hosted by the SCQF Partnership and SQA, took place in January and short video presentations are available on the project website. A third workshop, hosted by Irene Sheridan from Munster Technological University, took place on 28 February 2023.

[Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland](#) – in the 2022-23 academic session, the focus of the project will be 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 good practice guide following on from the production of the **[Scottish Tertiary Education Micro-Credentials Glossary](#)** published in Summer 2022. To support this work, institutions are 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 the spring.

[Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community \(PARC\)](#) – the third year of PARC sees the collaborative cluster reflecting on the implementation of diagnostic activity in different institutions. Reflections on the successes and challenges of the diagnostic testing approach will be published in academic journals and book chapters, as well as feature in conference presentations. PARC will also be developing a legacy resource to support other institutions' exploration of the benefits of a diagnostic testing approach to supporting student transitions, resilience and community. It is hoped that the diagnostic testing can be adapted to work on an app and link to an institution's VLE or equivalent.

[Mind the Gap: College Students' Experience of University](#) – this is a new collaborative cluster, led by City of Glasgow College with Edinburgh Napier University and Glasgow Caledonian University as partners. The project is considering 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. Student interns, who have college to university transition experience have started work and are running a series of focus groups. The deliverables will be a research report and a suite of staff and student development resources for colleges and universities.

[Student Mental Wellbeing](#) – student mental wellbeing has been a high priority during the Theme, as have the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. While we are not launching any new work in these areas during 2022-23, we hosted a training session from the Mental Health Foundation on 21 February about engaging with refugees and asylum seekers. This was attended by around 50 people from across the UK and was very well-received. You can watch the full recording **[here](#)**. The Mental Health Foundation are looking to make connections with HEIs, and we will be circulating more information about how colleagues can get involved with them in the near future.

20 Years of Enhancement

This year marks the 20th year of Scotland's enhancement-led approach to quality in higher education, articulated in the Quality Enhancement Framework. QAA Scotland's [20 Years of Enhancement](#) campaign continues to offer colleagues a variety of opportunities for critical reflection and looking toward the future of enhancement in a tertiary education sector. Over the course of the campaign, we have held several successful online events, re-launched some key Theme resources, and published a series of blogs on Wonkhe. As we draw the campaign to a close, we will re-launch our Student Voice cards and supporting resources in March, publish a blog authored by Professor Emerita Veronica Bamber on student transitions on Wonkhe, and host an exciting online in conversation session with Professors Leo M. Lambert and Peter Felten from Elon University and students from Abertay and Elon Universities. More information on upcoming campaign activity can be found [here](#). Alongside the campaign, The [Enhancement Themes website](#) has been refreshed. Each Theme now includes a reflective summary, looking back at the Theme and its outputs from a contemporary perspective. The website now also boasts a dedicated blog area for any blogs relating to the Enhancement Themes activities. Phase 2 of the website development will focus on improving the site search function to help users more easily access our library of resources from the Themes.

Shaping the Student Experience: 20 Years of Enhancement, 14-15 June 2023

QAA Scotland is excited to welcome delegates to our 5th International Enhancement Conference, 'Shaping the Student Experience Together: 20 Years of Enhancement' on 14-15 June 2023 at Glasgow Caledonian University. The conference offers the sector an opportunity to come together to debate a range of current issues that impact the student experience, to engage in challenging conversations about moving forward our collective thinking on these issues, to share innovative practice and learn from each other's experiences, and to look to the future of enhancement in a tertiary education sector. General delegate registration will launch on Monday, 20 March 2023. We anticipate that there will be quite a lot of demand for the limited delegate spaces that are available – make sure to register as early as possible to secure your spot!

TLG is a group central to delivering the Resilient Learning Communities Theme. The group leads, supports and evaluates the work undertaken for the Theme. Please get in touch with your TLG [institutional staff and student representatives](#), [Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee](#) representative or [QAA Scotland](#) if you want to know more and get involved in Enhancement Theme activity.