Programme Leadership: An Agenda for the Year Ahead

The *Enhancing Programme Leadership* collaborative cluster brings together thinking and learning from across the sector to explore evidence for enhancement from the vantage point of programme leadership. The cluster will encourage sharing of practice and resources that focus on linking evidence with support for practical pedagogic action for enhancement. Crucially, the span of involvement will be deliberately wide, encompassing programme leaders, educational developers, planners, those with responsibility for learning analytics, and all other relevant roles.

Working together and sharing expertise will enable us to better understand the diversity of approaches taken to programme leadership across our institutions, to share experience and practical resources, and to identify areas for further learning and development. Delegates from across the sector met for the first time at Edinburgh Napier on 30 October to map the landscape and hone a workplan for the cluster. Two central questions emerged:

- What data and evidence do programme leaders routinely navigate, analyse and act on?
- How can programme leaders be better supported, for example, to use evidence to enhance the student experience?

Delegates appreciated the opportunity to have informal conversations about current institutional practice in these areas. Further opportunities will be provided through a series of roundtable events during the current academic year. Each roundtable will generate additional think pieces.

Meanwhile, a Programme Leader Forum will ensure that the programme leader voice informs the work of the cluster and is heard at each roundtable. The Forum will be a focal point for the sharing of practice, the development of case studies and the promotion of cross-institutional collaboration. It will comprise programme leaders from several institutions and a range of disciplines.

Resources developed from the cluster's work are intended to be practical. An online resource bank, hosted by QAA Scotland, will continue to grow under the banner of *Evidence for Enhancement: The Landscape from the Programme Leader Perspective*. This will draw together the think pieces, case studies and any practical resources shared at the roundtables. A thematic summary of three forthcoming roundtables is provided below.

Understanding the evidence landscape

The next roundtable will be held in January, at which the evidence landscape will be mapped further. This will clarify some of the approaches used by programme leaders and others in reading and interpreting data. Some practical methods for enhancement will be shared,

including the outline structure of a workshop designed to engage students more directly in incremental change.

Colleagues will report on some recent work around optimising the use of existing evidence. Members of the Programme Leader Forum will discuss the types of data they are required to collect and produce, when, and how they use it for enhancement. We anticipate that two think pieces will originate from this roundtable, provisionally covering the data landscape and staff-student liaison.

Creating cultures of enhancement

A subsequent roundtable will be held in the spring, and will address cultures of enhancement at both the programme level and the institutional level. Those attending will explore how 'programme-generated evidence' is currently used by programme teams. Experiences will be shared in developing programme teams that work. We will look at how being the figurehead for a programme can be elevated from the management domain to the leadership domain.

The relationship between planners and programme leaders will also be considered, as well as how to normalise regular dialogue between these roles. What time and space can be created for such dialogue? To what extent do institutional processes support agile enhancement? In many institutions, an annual report from a programme leader is considered by a committee, with little scope for feeding into broader initiatives. We will explore opportunities for programme leaders to engage in genuinely transactional dialogue with those responsible for enhancement initiatives.

Finally, we will discuss some welcome work by AdvanceHE on the role that programme leaders may have in supporting and implementing strategic change, including some models for effective leadership and management. Indicative think pieces for this roundtable will cover cultures of enhancement within programme teams, and the efficacy of action learning sets for programme leaders.

Wider issues of support and development

The final thematic roundtable will look ahead to some of the wider issues identified during the first meeting on 30 October, with a particular focus on support across the sector for programme leaders. We will revisit the work by AdvanceHE outlined above, and consider how the role maps to UKPSF Descriptor 3: at least one English HEI has mapped credit-bearing CPD for new and aspiring programme leaders.

These wider issues go beyond evidence for enhancement. We anticipate that an informal virtual network will be established for colleagues who are working to support programme leadership development, to enable the sharing of practice and resources. A related think piece will report on agreed next steps.