End of Year 2 Report for: The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

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.
In year 2, the institutional team reduced slightly to a core group of staff who were exploring a single project. The team was: Jamie Mackay – Head of PG Learning and Teaching and Academic Development and Theme Lead Jesse Paul – Fair Access Manager and Theme Leader Annie McCourt – Lecturer in Learning and Teaching Lio Moscardini - Lecturer in Learning and Teaching Jan Waterfield – Lecturer in Music Ken Davidson – Lecturer in Music Education

Evaluation

Title of project/activity
Coaching Resilience: The effectiveness of the small-group Developing Coaching Practice sessions involving teaching staff at RCS and the identification of potential development of coaching systems and the rollout of practice across the institution.
1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
Under the facilitation of The College Development Network, 8 teaching colleagues from RCS met online on 8 occasions to investigate, practice and discuss types of one-to-one and small group coaching models with the view of suggesting

approaches appropriate to a rollout of coaching programmes across the institution. Through individual interview, the group participants have been invited to identify the strengths and shortcomings in their experience of the various models and make connections to the QAA Enhancement Theme of Resilient Learning Communities. The connections, if any, will inform recommendations to the institution and the QAA for year 3 of the theme.

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

In year one of the theme, we invited our staff and student community to facilitate and join a series of Creative Conversations around the theme of Resilience. These conversations covered the following areas:

1. Resilience, Care Experience and Estrangement
2. Resilience in a Research Community
3. Resilience and the International Artist
4. Resilience and Anti-Racism
5. Resilience and Consent
6. Resilience and Online Learning
7. Resilience and Artist Development
8. Resilience and Neurodiversity
9. Resilience Coaching

The conversations were transcribed and analysed, and a report was produced summarising the key emergent themes. In each conversation, definitions of resilience were explored and the report concluded that it was beneficial to consider two distinct interpretations of resilience:

- Resilience as a quality possessed by an individual
- Resilience as a characteristic of an organisation

Each conversation had something to offer, however it was felt that, conversations 1 to 8 dealt with resilience in relation to a line of enquiry already being explored within the institution. Rather than spread our efforts across the themes, we made the decision to focus the work of the theme on coaching and resilience as this particular theme was one that was not being addressed strategically across the institution, and was also one that we felt could produce tangible and usable outcomes within the scope of the theme.

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

In the RCS we currently have four different contexts where non-directive coaching is being applied to support the development of individuals:

1. Colleague Coaching – overseen by the Conservatoire Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Officer, under the HR department. This is an offer for staff who wish to be coached in an aspect of their professional role at RCS. We have trained a small group of coaches to offer this provision.

2. Transitions Coaching – overseen by the Fair Access Manager. This coaching is part of the Transitions offer where pre-HE students from SIMD 20 and/or are Care Experienced/Estranged are provided with coaching to support their development as part of the overall provision. This coaching has now been extended to support Transitions students who have moved into study on an undergraduate programme at the RCS. The coaching is provided by a team of coaches employed through the Fair Access department and trained for the role by the RCS.
3. Coaching for Innovation – overseen by the Knowledge Exchange Manager & Innovation Hub Project Lead from the Knowledge Exchange department, this provision is being developed in partnership with professional coach and consultant Lindsey Dunbar, and is designed to support arts professionals to develop innovative projects within the arts sector.
4. Coaching in Learning and Teaching – overseen by the Head of Postgraduate Learning and Teaching Programmes and Academic Development, this work extends back to the launch of the largely self-determined learning model of the MEd in Learning and Teaching in the Arts. Whilst this is not technically a one-to-one coaching provision, coaching principles of goal-setting, action planning and self-evaluation sit at the heart of each module and the coaching model informs the staff-student relationship.

What we have found in developing staff to deliver these provisions is that despite offering sessions on the underpinning philosophy of non-directive coaching, some coaches find it difficult to remain non-directive and move into a more guidance-based mentoring role. In each provision, a central aim of the coaching is not simply to help someone solve a specific challenge, but to help them develop the critical judgement, decision-making and autonomy that will help them build resilience. Whilst directive models such as mentoring can at times provide a faster solution to an immediate issue, at a meta-level research shows this approach does little to positively impact resilience, and can actually increase dependency.

Through studying the following coaching models with Valerie Jackman from the College Development Network, we were able to explore the degree to which each one might provide an insight into how we might ensure the fundamental principles of non-directive coaching can be embodied in the practice:

- The GROW Model
- The Case Study Model
- The SCARF Model
- The Solutions-Focused Model
- The STAR Model
- The Sailboat Model

Through a practical examination of these models, we were able to see the impact of each one in practice. We are currently in the process of obtaining institutional ethical approval to interview each participant and produce a report synthesising

our findings and informing the development of an RCS model for coach development.

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

The research report on the impact of the year 2 work will provide a significant amount of analysis on the efficacy of the individual coaching models and on their potential to inform our own model. In year 3 we will begin by surveying staff and students about their experiences of coaching-based provisions and will seek to gain an insight into how we might best meet the needs of stakeholders. Following this survey, we will develop and pilot the coaching approach across the institution. This will include opportunities for participants to provide feedback on their experiences, further informing the development of the model.

As part of the move to a more holistic model for coaching provision across the institution we intend on developing a set of core principles to guide coaches and coachees. Our initial thoughts around this are that it could take a similar form to the existing UK Professional Standards Framework, however this is likely to evolve over the year as we gain more insight into how the approach is being received. We are conscious that we would like to have a flexible model that people can adapt to meet their needs, and envisage the framework as acting like the hub of a wheel, with new provisions extending out like spokes of that wheel. In that way we can be sure the fundamental principles of non-directive coaching will sit at the heart of any new provision.

This change will take some time, and we will seek to gain feedback from anyone who has a meaningful engagement with the coaching provision and the model.

6. Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)

The core team highlighted in the first section of this document will act as the primary evaluators of the year 2 work. This team are inherently self-selecting with a vested interest in non-directive coaching. By gaining feedback from a range of stakeholders as we move into year 3, we will extend the number of evaluative judgements we have to draw on. It is important that the provision be accessible and valuable to our full RCS community, so we will seek to target as diverse a range of stakeholders as possible.

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

The principles and practices we have engaged in as part of the year 2 work have already begun to influence the practice of those involved directly in the work, and is currently informing the existing provision outlined in section 3. Further insights will come from the analysis of participant experiences currently in process.

8. Any things you need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

Further analysis will come from the research currently in process; however, we have had the opportunity within the sessions to critically reflect on the models we were being introduced to. Whilst we have not discounted any particular coaching models, it is likely that the analysis will favour the use of some more than others

e.g., the SCARF model considers power imbalances and ways in which individuals might feel their voice is not currently being heard. As such, this model would need to be applied with some care and considerable coaching experience. Our early conversations suggest we may not use this model within the next stage of development.

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.

Activity in year 2 has been deliberately targeted and focused on a small group of staff members who work across the institution. We have continued to provide updates on progress through having a standing item of the agenda of all Programme Committees, and thought the introduction of an agenda item within our Quality and Standards Committee.

Our wider dissemination strategy will happen within year 3 of the theme when we seek to engage our RCS community with the coaching model, and prior to that in the survey on experiences of coaching. At a sectoral level, as we move towards the completion of the theme, we hope to be able to share our experiences of launching the resilience coaching model at RCS and also to share the core principles of coaching resource that we will develop as part of the resource. Whilst we are developing this for use at a creative arts institution, we expect that the resource will be applicable across other subject domains.

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.

This project has allowed us to collaborate with the College Development Network and informally with other education professionals who have been working with coaching and non-directive heutagogy models. Collaboration across the HEI sector has been minimal during this academic year, primarily as we wanted to target our resources towards a specific line of enquiry that has the potential to address some institutional priorities.

Supporting staff and student engagement

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

At the launch of this theme, we made a decision to invite any staff and students with an interest in resilient learning communities to become involved in the work we were doing. This approach was a departure from the model for previous themes where particular staff were identified as a representative for their department or school. Approaching the current theme in this way allowed us to build a core team with a vested interest in exploring the strategies that were most likely to make an active difference, and also allowed them to engage as individuals rather than as a representative of a particular group. This year we were able to engage on a more personal level with the coaching work, and as such we were able to identify the genuine benefit of this approach to supporting development. We recognise that this approach has reduced the overall reach of the theme a little within the institution, but we feel this was necessary prior to re-engaging the wider community in year three of the study. In particular, we would like to engage with students as we pilot the coaching approach and will seek to work more closely with the student union to aid us with this.

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?

The aim of this project is to develop a model for the development of coaching provision within our institution and to provide a set of standards to guide coaches and coachees in understanding the processes and principles of the practice. As outlined previously, in year 3 we will be actively developing and launching these processes with the wider community and using feedback to refine and develop this resource.

Looking ahead

In session 2022-23 we will be starting to consider what the next Enhancement Theme might focus on. We are interested to know about the discussions, hot topics and issues that are emerging in your practice and gaining increasing attention. Please share your thoughts and views below.

Considering the work still left to do in this theme, it is difficult to speculate on what the next Theme should focus on. However, from our work so far on coaching as a model to support the development of resilience in groups and individuals, I would personally welcome a further exploration of the relationship between learners and educators. Non-directive coaching aligns very closely with heutagogy (self-determined) learning and our early work in this area suggests a central concern

might be how we articulate to students the relationship we want to have with them as educators. In the shifting landscape of digital, blended, hybrid and face-to-face learning, and taking into account the concerns around mental health and wellbeing, representation and inclusion, the relationship between learner and educator appears of increasing importance to get right.

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