End of Year 2 Report for: University of the West 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.

Both the Interim Head of Learning Transformation – Dr Chris O'Donnell and Dr Meg Dunn have moved to different positions within the University. Nina Anderson-Knox has moved to Interim Head of the Student Success Hub (see associated project), Helen McLean has moved to Interim Head of QuEST. The recently recruited (Interim) Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement, Dr Daniel Turner and the Head of Learning Transformation, Dr Alison Gilmour join the group to lead us into year 3.

Evaluation of activities/outcomes

To make evaluation processes more accessible and user friendly, we have attempted to simplify (not minimise) the evaluation reporting process into 7 key questions (see below). Prior to completing these, it would be useful to refer to the QAAS website resource: A Guide to Basic Evaluation in HE (specifically, Section 8, Summary overview on page 23, and the Evaluation Checklist – Appendix A, on pages 28-29).

Please report each activity/intervention against the following questions in the Evaluation part of the template.

N. B. You may have already realised some of your objectives and/or these might be ongoing, so please delineate each question according to whether activities or interventions have been completed already in this reporting year or are in process.

(Easiest way is to delete either/or options highlighted in red in questions below):

Evaluation

Please complete the following 7 questions for each activity or intervention (N.B. Just cut and paste the table below as many times as necessary)

Title of project/activity
A Curriculum Incubator project for the development of the Masters in Professional Development

1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD) is a key feature of the UWS Curriculum Framework. A Curriculum Incubator initiative provided the opportunity for the accelerated and intensive development of a new programme known as the Masters in Professional Development. The portfolio of Postgraduate Professional Development awards will introduce a fully flexible master's award which underpins all master's provision, where students can opt-in at any stage of their studies or enrol directly. This reimagining of our approach to CPD will be truly student led, have significant employer input. The programme offers employers opportunities to address skill shortages by tailoring the programme to the needs of their workforce, and individuals the opportunity to create a bespoke qualification specific to their career and learning needs.

This curriculum will be substantially different from our traditional master's provision

- A catalogue of modules will be available for students to choose from with input from all Schools.
- Previous CPD and micro-credentialling credits can be recognised, as can prior learning, to facilitate advanced entry.
- The programme will feature a long term element focussed on detailed personal reflection and planning in which students work with an academic advisor/ personal tutor to identify a career plan, complete RPL, and make appropriate module choices to meet programme level learning outcomes.

The programme approval documentation is at the stage of consultation with a broad range of stakeholders to support anticipated programme validation by autumn 2022.

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

In February 2020, we launched Strategy 2025. Our strategy focuses on the key areas in which UWS will seek to flourish in the next five years, giving a picture of what the University will look like by 2025 and beyond. UWS will work in partnership with our students to deliver world-ready graduates who will design, shape and build a new future as pioneers in developing effective interactions with global business, industry and the public and voluntary sectors.

A key mechanism to deliver our strategic aspirations, in terms of supporting our students, and in developing our teaching and learning approaches, has been the launch of the Student Experience Programme on 19 April 2021.

The high level objectives of the SEP are:

- Delivering transformational change to the UWS student experience
- Ensuring our portfolio and curriculum is designed for the diversity of the UWS student population
- Making the transition to social learning within a hybrid environment, ensuring students can access their learning on an individualised basis
- Developing a new model of personal tutor support – the student engagement and advisory model (Student Success Hub)

- Streamlining of the University's internal processes and communications with students to reduce duplication and avoid confusion
- Driving a change in approach from professional services and academics to utilise data analytics and enable all students to benefit from high engagement practices

The development of the Masters in Professional Development directly supports the first 3 objectives, providing a flexible and student-centred approach, allowing students to manage the mode, intensity and duration of study.

The programme was identified as a Curriculum Incubator initiative – receiving support for intensive development drawing on internal and external expertise. The Learning Transformation team engaged the services of an external learning design consultant, Neil Mosley to assist in the development of the programme and approaches to curriculum development in ways that support the wider aims of building a flexible, inclusive and sustainable curriculum aligned with the principles of the UWS Curriculum Framework.

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

The difference we expect to see will be improved outcomes for our Masters students as they engage in a programme that is truly student-centred and directly addresses their learning aspirations and those of employers. In addition, the programme should grow the number of staff with expertise in Recognition of Prior Learning and micro-credentialling. The approach will ensure closer alignment between employability, our CPD provision, and learning and teaching. It will result in transformation of the student as an individual and transformation of the way in which we support our students.

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

We will know by healthy recruitment, progression, retention and award data, positive feedback from stakeholders (particularly students and employers), key changes on assessment approaches, external examiner feedback and associated mechanisms involved during annual monitoring. We would expect to see improved outcomes for our postgraduate students and indeed, change in the traditional type of postgraduate student. We expect to see greater operational effectiveness with the removal of barriers, including the way in which we apply fees to PPD students and in flexibility around delivery.

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

Students through feedback, staff involved in the delivery, external delivery experts, employers and external examiners. In addition, we have engaged with key colleagues around business innovation finance models.

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

Operationally, it has been challenging to articulate how the programme will work in practice. The importance of having the right people in the room at the right time and understanding the importance of development time and user testing have been reflected on. With regards to both funding and delivery models it has been challenging to negotiate legacy operational practices.

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

We are currently considering whether one core module is the correct approach. There is a balance to be struck between offering maximum flexibility and aligning with the programme learning outcomes. Discussions with external design consultant Neil Mosley have offered opportunities to explore more innovative curriculum design opportunities.

Title of project/activity

Creation of clear policy on the recognition of RPL, CPD and Micro-credentials.

1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

As noted on the Enhancement Themes website:

"there is increased interest at policy and practitioner levels in flexible and accessible pathways into and through HE. In 2021/22 the Flexible and Accessible Learning strand of the Enhancement Theme 'Resilient Learning Communities' seeks to explore two project areas that imbue the concept of flexibility and accessibility in HE those being focused on Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience (RPL/RPEL) and the use of Micro credentials as a means to access Higher Education and potentially "stack" credit to achieve an HE award."

UWS has a leadership role in both these projects with colleagues Gillian Hodge and Suzanne Gallagher–Graham leading on the student chapter of the RPL National Toolkit for Scotland, and Professor Jonathan Powles, Vice-Principal, Learning and Students chairing a Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials to support the QAA Scotland sector-wide project entitled Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland.

With regards to RPL and more specifically APEL, UWS is sector-leading in this area having built up years of good practice and robust processes and procedures to support APEL. Our colleagues are now sharing this positive practice with the sector, most recently leading a session at the Enhancement Themes conference.

With regards to micro-credentials, we are harnessing the Professor Jonathan Powles' involvement in the cross-sector project to shape institutional thinking on a UWS micro-credentials framework and related implications for Curriculum Framework developments such as the Masters in Professional Development. We have established an internal micro-credentials group and ran a workshop on the potential for micro-credentials at UWS drawing on sector perspectives. It is the intention that this group will deliver a micro-credentials framework for UWS.

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

We are cognisant that the demands of the sector have developed to one where upskilling through individualised learning, and particularly microcredentials, is vital to address individual needs, workforce requirements and government aspirations. We are building our own policy as an institution which builds on existing expertise, and is both shaping and being shaped by our leadership of cross-sector projects of this high-profile agenda. We are showcasing this expertise through the facilitation of a new approach to masters, sharing our knowledge of RPL practice and contributing to sector-wide micro-credential discussions.

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

Through our partnership working with other HE providers we share goals to create a joined up approach to RPL and micro-credentialling, facilitating a holistic and consistent framework supporting flexible student learning journeys, and migration and portability of learning across different contexts and providers. The development of our policy in RPL, CPD and Micro-credentials provides the foundations for new programmes such as the Masters in Professional Development which will positively enable the recognition of micro-credentialling and CPD as entry routes and contribute to the upskilling of our communities.

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

We expect to see an increase in micro-credentialling offerings and increased student mobility within the sector. We will capture these student journeys and pathways into higher education within our student record systems.

5. Who has been involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)

There has been sector-wide engagement, and discussions with a variety of stakeholders including students, employers, academic staff and staff involved in RPL activities. The Student Experience Programme Workstream 2 has led on developments.

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

Whilst we have expertise in credit rating and in particular experiential credit rating, it was clear from sector-wide discussions that definitions of micro-credentials vary across the UK sector and further afield. There are further conversations to be had around the merits of credit vs non-credit bearing as well as further consideration of external credit rating, training and development, admissions and recruitment and how we best capture this within our systems.

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

While we have expertise in all areas of RPL, we recognise that micro-credentialling remains in its infancy across the sector, therefore there is a need for further reflection and continuation of sector-collaborative projects.
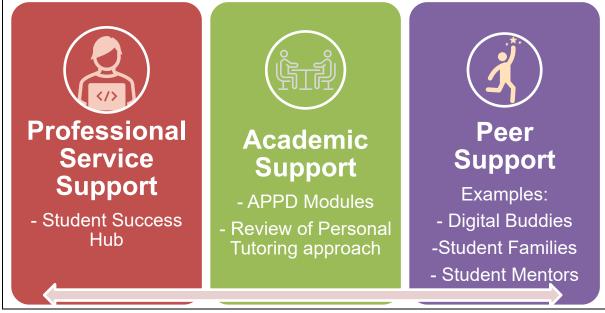
Title of project/activity

Introducing Student Success Advisors to UWS

1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

A significant focus of our work during this year of the enhancement theme of Resilient Learning Communities has been to reconceptualise our approach to student support across UWS. A new student support model will be introduced from September 2022 called "Supporting Student Success".

The ethos of the UWS Supporting Student Success model is to streamline the student journey through dedicated teams that understand the individual needs of their students. It provides a fundamental shift from directing resources to a deficit model of targeting failing students, to proactively creating an environment in which all students can succeed.

There are three core pillars of the new UWS Supporting Student Success Model:

Professional Service Support

- Student Success Hub

Academic Support

- APPD Modules
- Review of Personal Tutoring approach

Peer Support

Examples:
- Digital Buddies
- Student Families
- Student Mentors

The enhancement theme funding was used to develop the new institutional model of student support in the following ways:

a) A review of personal tutoring was undertaken in autumn 2021. Varied stakeholder engagement informed the production of qualitative and quantitative outputs delivered to the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group and has informed Student Experience Project workstreams.

b) A student-led project on scoping, understanding and redesigning a collaborative personal success advisor. The project captured the lived experiences of our student community that is representative of their journey, culture, ethnicity, gender and diversity through the medium of film.

c) The institution is drawing on the work of Dr Emily McIntosh (Director of Learning and Teaching Experience) at Middlesex University. Enhancement Theme funding was used to support a Personal Tutoring workshop in November 2021 attended by c.70 staff at which Emily McIntosh provided a keynote followed by workshop activities with cross-functional teams including academics, student support staff and learning and teaching-focused staff.

d) This workshop has directly informed the development of the new Student Success Hub, which was approved at Senate in June 2022, and will be implemented by the start of the academic year 2022.

e) An articulated ambition of the UWS Curriculum Framework 2021, was the introduction of a shared/ common curriculum at Levels 7, 8, and 9 to support personalised learner journeys and development of meta-skills known as the Academic, Professional and Personal Development (APPD). An outcome of the review of the personal tutoring system was the decision to embed personal tutoring directly within the curriculum, and the decision was taken to incorporate all personal tutoring at UWS within APPD.

f) To develop the APPD curriculum, Enhancement Theme funding was used to support two Curriculum Incubator design days in March and April 2022, attended by cross-functional staff and students.

g) The APPD curriculum is being developed for implementation in September 2022 at Level 7. This will be delivered by a cross-functional team and organised around three strands of Core; Supported Reflection and Self-Directed Activity. The Supported Reflection strand will be delivered by a new personal tutoring role of Personal Academic Advisor connecting this APPD curriculum with the Student Success Hub. During Term 3 of 2021/22, a training and development programme for the new Personal Academic Advisor role is being developed. The design of this support is being led by Learning Transformation (specifically, a new Senior Lecturer in APPD), the Head of Student Success Hub and Student Support staff for delivery in August and September 2022, with ongoing development and support anticipated after this date.

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

Recognising that the UWS student community is diverse and students are unique in the experiences they bring to university, the new centralised model of Supporting Student Success will provide a personalised approach to support academic, professional and personal development, promoting student engagement and supporting successful outcomes. Whilst there are examples of good practice across the Institution - for example the creation of the Student Success team using a data informed approach to positively impact engagement, retention, progression, and increase student satisfaction - there is a clearly identified need to enhance our approach to student support to ensure a consistent, transparent and effective model is implemented across all sites of delivery, for all students. This was reflected in our ELIR 2019 recommendations.

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

It is anticipated that the project will deliver several benefits:-

- A commitment to delivering key aspects of the Learning & Teaching Thematic Plan with a strong focus on increasing student engagement through improved progression and retention outcomes.

- Organisational structure that delivers: a personalised approach to supporting academic, professional and personal development with a focus on the right people giving the right advice, at the right time.
- Building a flexible, community of support for our diverse student body to engage with.
- Leading on clear, student-facing communication strategy, reducing duplication and confusion – providing a single source of truth.
- Centralised services driving efficient delivery of professional support leading on process improvement and enhancement to streamline internal processes and create a seamless student journey.
- Provision of a consistent, transparent and practical student support and guidance system that meets the needs of our students regardless of when, where or how they study with UWS,
- Sharing of effective practice and learning from across the sector to support organisational effectiveness and ensure we can benefit from digital innovations.

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

Student success indicators such as improved progression and retention rates, and positive student feedback pointing to an improved sense of belonging through a variety of existing vehicles e.g. ILR, Module evaluations, end of year data, Student Representatives.

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

Strategic planning, student success team, cross institutional conversations, student union sabbatical officers and other forms of representation, student feedback.

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

It has taken time to understand the Work Allocation model, curriculum design and development, use of and learning from data and analytics, messaging and thematic reporting, merging of academic and professional service model, tripartite approach to student support. So much of what we do is interconnected and takes time to review. Social connection will be of utmost important as we move to more hybrid delivery models.

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

Enhancement takes time – particularly on this scale.

Title of project/activity

Healthy Body Healthy Mind Bronze Award https://www.scottishstudentsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HBHM-criteria-2020-new.pdf

Increased membership of Team UWS and enhanced BUCS ranking with a medium-term goal of top 50.

1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

Recreational Sports opportunities delivered by Team UWS, UWS Sport and community sport partners which are developed in partnership with the Students Union and jointly promoted, to ensure that these are successful in engaging new participants in physical activity from across the diverse student population. Examples include the award winning UWS Active Community https://www.scottishstudentsport.com/sssawards2020-21/#1627558354279-190cf736-8ff0

Healthy Body, Health Mind (HBHM)
- Initial benchmarking against HBHM criteria carried out as basis for targeted action;
- Workplan progressed through regular meeting (VP Welfare and Wellbeing and Team UWS Sport President, with wider staff support as required);

- Poster campaign to increase visibility of Ash Scotland materials on campus delivered;
- Sport Development Coordinator completed Ash Scotland training to support delivery of the smoking cessation aspects of HBHM;
- Ongoing membership of Scottish Student Sport, and associated promotion and delivery of a wide range of sport and physical activity opportunities;
- Commitment made to completion of the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) Physical Activity Charter as a next step in terms of ensuring best practice in supporting wellbeing through physical activity;
- Retention of free gym access for students as a core UWS commitment to supporting physical and mental wellbeing within our communities;
- The nature of activities delivered had to flex through the year to reflect some challenges relating to facility access, and through campus footfall being restricted through the year. Positive examples include:
  - Successful delivery of the inclusive #TrySomethingNew campaign to bring new participants to recreational sport through removing barriers for participation;
  - Programme of nine social walks engaging over 100 students delivered through partnership working between the Union and Team UWS to encourage activity and create community;
  - A wide range of physical activity challenges delivered to promote physical activity and active health for all levels of ability covering for example running, walking and general minutes of activity. Challenges were operated and promoted through a bespoke online portal; and
  - Successfully carried out a 'Couch to 5K' challenge where participants were supported with a training programme, with some members going on to complete a 5K in aid of Purple Wednesday (LGBT Youth Scotland charity).

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

Promoting physical activity will improve student health and wellbeing.

It will improve the consistency of our commitments for our diverse student body and what of mode of study they select.

It reflects sector priorities and projects such focused on student wellbeing.

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

Healthier students with an improved standard of life, fewer referrals to health services, better NSS, outcomes, more engaged students, clearer messaging of what support we have available to students.

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

NSS / students surveys feedback / feedback through our wellbeing services / stronger ecosystem of wellbeing.

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

Student union, sabbatical officers, student wellbeing working groups, Student Partnership Forum, Team UWS.

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

The aspiration this year was to return to a full programme of sports clubs, and to deliver increased membership and performance. Term 1 plans were however hampered by ongoing restrictions and in particular challenges with facility access. Nine teams completed a full season of competition, with many further participants representing UWS in individual competition. A small number of our teams

remain in a recovery phase however and will prioritise their development in the coming months. Overall, both membership numbers and overall performance (BUCS points) were marginally reduced based on pre-covid position. The achievements to date are a positive reflection of the significant efforts made, within a period of ongoing disruption.

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

We have learned a lot about what can still be achieved remotely. It is envisaged that with the immediate impact of the pandemic now reducing, we can harness that learning to serve our students better.

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.

We have found Focus Groups, Workshops, all staff meetings, conferences (and in particular the ET conference) particularly helpful.

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.

Throughout our Enhancement Theme work we have sought opportunity to collaborate with colleagues across the Scottish and UK higher education sector. As noted above, we have been active in contributing to the sector wide project on "Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland", and in contributing to the RPL National Toolkit for Scotland. Our UWS colleague Khadija Mohammed has been very active in leading the sector on creating resources to support an Anti-Racist Curriculum and in helping start some challenging conversations. On June 15th 2022, we held a symposium "Focusing on building a decolonised, anti-racist curriculum" with a keynote from Dr Catriona Cunningham of Edinburgh Napier University which was attended by a range of students and staff.   Additionally, we have engaged with Emily McIntosh from Middlesex University as we have shaped our thinking on our forthcoming student success hub and plans for incorporating personal tutoring within the curriculum.

Supporting staff and student engagement

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

Most of the activities within the plan are closely aligned with the Student Experience Programme which has both student and staff representation across the workstreams. The work of SEP is discussed at every Student Partnership Forum and Education Advisory Committee.

Our partnership working with the Student Union has ensured that the forthcoming student success model and the new Academic, Professional and Personal Development modules are strongly backed by the student union and students contributed to the student success model through the project to create a film and through the use of surveys.

As mentioned above, we held a symposium "Focusing on building a decolonised, anti-racist curriculum" which was attended by a range of students and staff and facilitated space for discussion. This will in turn lead to a series of focused workshops to continue the conversation into tangible actions.

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 key lesson has been about including the right people at the right time in terms of ensuring engagement and achievement of goals. The effect of staff absences and the lack of availability of resources and input from key areas due to vacancies has impacted on progress. The importance of winning hearts and minds has been invaluable particularly when we consider the large institutional cultural change resulting and it indubitably takes time to bring everyone on this journey. We began this journey pre-pandemic, but now having to look through a different lens, there is a real excitement with the changes going on across sector.

How will this report be used/distributed within your institution?

The report will be shared through the committee and governance structures – namely Student Partnership Forum, Academic Quality Committee, Education Advisory Committee and Senate. The content will be explored at the Vice Principal (Learning Teaching Students) Direct Report meeting and will form the basis for the 2022 Enhancement Theme Newsletter will be shared across the University by the all staff e-bulletin. This report and underpinning evidence and reporting will inform the development of the refreshed "Student Partnership Forum" with student perspectives at the heart of the forum, this will be key vehicle for facilitating student input.

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.

Key questions for us as we move into the final year of the current enhancement theme include:
- How do we foster student belonging in hybrid learning communities?
- How do we most effectively design learning that supports diverse routes and pathways into higher education?
- How may online learning environments positively support wellbeing and resilience?

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