Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: University of Strathclyde

This document is intended to be a cumulative plan for your institution, which you will add to year on year as the Theme progresses. At the end of the Theme, this document will show how plans may have developed and changed over time. The plan for each year should be around three to four sides of A4.

Italicised text in this document can be removed as it is advisory.

Context

In recent years, the University of Strathclyde has invested in our learning communities through a number of collaborative, student-led and student-focused projects that focus on the various types of student journey and learning experience. These include:

- The expansion of the Learner Experience Framework, to include indicators around resilience, innovation, and atypical learning experiences (such as industry placements);
- The development of our online learning capacity and capability, with the development of institutional standards, governance and oversight, amidst the expansion of our Graduate Apprenticeship and Degree Apprenticeship programmes and the expansion of our online learning degree portfolio;
- The implementation of a Learning Analytics system that allows us to identify where students may need further support to assist in improved experience and retention;
- The continued development and use of Strathclyde's system for academic management information, through the work of the Institution's Strategy and Policy Directorate and the SUnBIRD system (Strathclyde University Business Intelligence Reports and Dashboards) to provide data-informed student insights to programme leaders;
- Substantial expansion of mental health and wellbeing services;
- The establishment of a Race Equality Working Group;
- The foundation of the Strathclyde Doctoral School and an institution-wide project aimed at producing a sector-leading PGR student lifecycle that supports positive outcomes, innovation, and world-leading research; and
- The promotion of a positive, healthy, and people-orientated working environment to enhance staff and student work/life balance.

All of these can be clearly mapped against our Strategic Plan 2020-2025 to provide an outstanding experience for students and staff. These activities have proven to be of significant benefit in our ability to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and provide the foundation on which we will explore the impact of the pandemic and evaluate our response to the changed learning and teaching environment and the consequent impacts to our learning community.

Provide any statements that might be helpful in explaining your institution's context and approach and how this plan supports the achievement of institutional priorities. In subsequent years, any context statement could draw on salient points from the previous year's learning/outcomes and reflect any changes in the strategic direction of your institution.

Institutional team

Please specify for each member whether staff or student and for staff, their role title. Where the Theme Leaders' Group (TLG) staff or student nominee is unable to attend meetings, an alternate can attend on their behalf. This need not be named individuals, which may help support Theme involvement across a range of staff and students.

	Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**
Institutional Lead	Helyn Gould, Deputy Associate Principal, Learning and Teaching	Helyn Gould	Helyn Gould
TLG staff representative	Chris Bovis, Learning Enhancement Officer	Learning Enhancement Officer	Learning Enhancement Officer
TLG staff representative alternate	Brian Green, Deputy Associate Principal, Learning and Teaching	Brian Green	Brian Green
TLG student representative	Chelbi Hillan, Vice-President Education	(elected post)	(elected post)

Planned activity: Year 1

Overall outcomes/activity
What are your key priorities?
What outcomes do you want to achieve?
What activities will you deliver?
What do you anticipate will be the benefits at sector and institutional levels?
Through discussion with colleagues across the institution, Strathclyde has decided to adopt a community-led approach with departments/schools/faculties and other teams identifying areas within their own remits for prioritisation. Colleagues will then be encouraged to put forward proposals on areas that would benefit from student-staff partnership and intern involvement. This model of engagement for the Enhancement Theme was previously exceptionally effective for us during the Student Transition theme, and staff and students felt that the current theme focus combined with the present situation would be able to benefit from a similar approach.

Given that the theme has the potential to reach out to a broad range of colleagues, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic response, it was felt that this enhancement theme would offer the opportunity to empower colleagues to identify, collaborate and enhance their learning communities.

The key priorities for the overall theme are therefore:

1. Identifying the crucial aspects of a learning community, and individual groups within the learning community, that underpin its resilience (in the context of online and blended learning precipitated by the pandemic response) and developing a better understanding what resilience means in practice for students and staff;
2. Exploring the ways in which these learning communities have proven resilient, identifying best practice, and sharing amongst colleagues. This includes investigating what has and has not worked, and why that was within those contexts; and
3. Instituting the findings of the above key priorities to ensure that the 'new normal' at Strathclyde includes all students (undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research) and staff, regardless of their learning experiences.

This would mean that Year One would be spent exploring, reflecting and debating the above key priorities, supporting colleagues to be able to take the points above and focus down on individual case studies that will provide a foundation to the following years. Year Two would be focused on transition to the 'new normal', and exploring potential activities and structures that facilitate, support and enhance our learning community. Year Three would be focused on developing future pathways for enhancement and identifying what the future of Higher Education at Strathclyde would look like (beyond the Enhancement Theme activity), and how new structures and systems can be resilient, ensuring the theme legacy.

By the end of the three-year Enhancement Theme, the expected outcome would be a range of case studies exploring resilience within our learning community, and potential activities, structures and best practice that will support our learning community beyond these exceptional circumstances.

Benefits at sector and institutional level will include a greater understanding of what a resilient learning community looks like and how it can be used for enhancement, learning and teaching.

Year 1 outcomes/activity

What are your key priorities?

What outcomes do you want to achieve?

What activities will you deliver?

What do you anticipate will be the benefits at sector and institutional levels?

In line with the overall outcomes and activity, Year 1 will be focused on exploration, reflection and debate around resilience, the established learning communities at

Strathclyde, and the areas that may have been highlighted as potential priorities from the pandemic response.

The key priorities for Year One are:

1. To empower colleagues to explore and reflect on their own activity over the past year (and the previous academic year) and to identify areas for further development, review or dissemination;
2. To establish a community-led project bid process;
3. To focus on, and learn from, the pandemic response work.

We at Strathclyde are keen to ensure that all our learning communities have the opportunity to feed in and shape this Enhancement Theme. This means engagement with all types of student learning experience (such as the experiences of BAME students, overseas students, students with disabilities, mature students, students with families and caring responsibilities and LGBTQ+ students), especially those communities who often face difficulties in Higher Education in 'normal' times.

For this we will undertake student and staff engagement activities, such as surveys and focus groups, through the use of student interns, to gain an understanding of the pandemic response landscape (and a greater move towards blended learning – on and off campus).

Dissemination of work

How will you promote and communicate your work internally and externally?

Dissemination of this work will primarily be communicated through internal workshops, however papers may be presented at external conferences if appropriate.

Collaborative cluster work

What is your intended involvement in formal collaborative cluster work? Do you intend leading a cluster? Who might be involved in cluster activity?

(Formal bids for collaborative cluster work will be managed separately.)

Strathclyde would like to be part of the collaborative clusters in:

- Programme Leadership: strengthening resilience, supporting learning communities
- Micro-credentials
- Student Mental Wellbeing (with a focus on BAME & LGBTQ+ student communities)
- Decolonising the Curriculum

Supporting staff and student engagement

How will you support your community to deliver on planned activities?

The broader institutional activity will be overseen by the institution's Learning Enhancement Committee. Through this the intern-supported projects will report to the Learning Enhancement Committee and also through targeted showcase events to the wider Strathclyde community.

A panel of senior staff and student executive members, supported by the Education Enhancement Directorate, will manage the project bids and funding for interns, following the same model successfully utilised during the Student Transitions theme.

Support for the ET Student Interns will be delivered through the existing infrastructure developed for this purpose, as Strathclyde continues to work with student interns across a number of enhancement activities beyond the Enhancement Theme.

Evaluation

How will you monitor progress and impact of the enhancement activities?

Specific outcomes and deadlines will be put in place for each activity and funded project. Evaluation will be a required feature of all activities and projects.

Both aspects will be overseen by the Learning Enhancement Committee, who will then ensure dissemination through the Faculty Vice Deans Academic, and Faculty committee and communication structures.

Plan author:	Helyn Gould and Dr Chris Bovis
Date:	10/12/20

Return to: mailto:ARCadmin@qaa.ac.uk

Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: University of Strathclyde

Financial Annex Year 1

Please provide information on how the funding given through the Enhancement Theme institutional contract will be used to support work within the HEI in relation to the Theme. This should be high level, not detailed.

At the time of the end-of-year report, you will be asked to comment on expenditure against financial plan information.

Please note that this information remains confidential and will not be made available on the web.

Indicative Allocation of Funds	£
Student Interns activity: payment for presentations and productions of outputs, external engagement, travel expenses, etc.	4,000
Focus group(s): payment for attendance and refreshments	450
Internal Consultation/Dissemination Events	500
External Dissemination	500
Staff & Student Travel to QAA ET events	250
Miscellaneous: survey prizes, etc.	300
TOTAL	6,000

Author:	Helyn Gould and Dr Chris Bovis
Date:	10/12/20

Return to: mailto:ARCadmin@qaa.ac.uk