Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: University of Edinburgh

Context
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. Any context statement could draw on salient points from the previous year's learning/outcomes from Theme work and reflect any changes in the strategic direction of your institution.
The theory of change model that was developed in year 2 (see below) will guide and support our work on community building at the University.

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.	
Institutional lead	Professor Tina Harrison (Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance)
TLG staff representative	Nichola Kett (Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement)
TLG student representative	Sam MacCallum (Vice President Education)
Edinburgh University Students' Association staff member	Robin Gay (Student Voice Manager)
Institute for Academic Development	Jon Turner (Director)
Doctoral education/researcher development representative	Dr Fiona Philippi (Head of Doctoral Education/Deputy Head of Researcher Development, Institute for Academic Development)

Academic Services	Sinead Docherty (Academic Policy Officer)
PhD Intern	To be appointed

The Institutional Team will remain small and focused, engaging with existing groups, committees and networks as appropriate. Additionally, students and staff who are working on community building activities will be invited to attend all or parts of relevant meetings.

The team will look for opportunities to align activities and use insights (institutional and from sector resources) to support curriculum transformation: https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/strategy-2030/strategy-in-action/curriculum-transformation

Overall outcomes/activity
Are there any changes to your key priorities, outcomes and delivery activities that you identified at the start of the Theme?

A theory of change model (see below) has been developed to support our work on and develop our understanding of the opportunities and challenges within community building at the University. The model identifies root causes (as identified by the year 1 PhD Interns), needs, activities (with an **overall activity of developing an understanding of 'what works' for students and staff**), and short-, medium- and long-term outcomes. **An overarching impact statement – to improve community building practice across the University** – is accompanied by inputs and possible measurements of impact.

We will continue to use the theory of change model to monitor our progress.

Year 3 outcomes/activity
In answering the following, identify what is continuing from year 2 and what is new:
What are your key priorities?
What outcomes do you want to achieve?
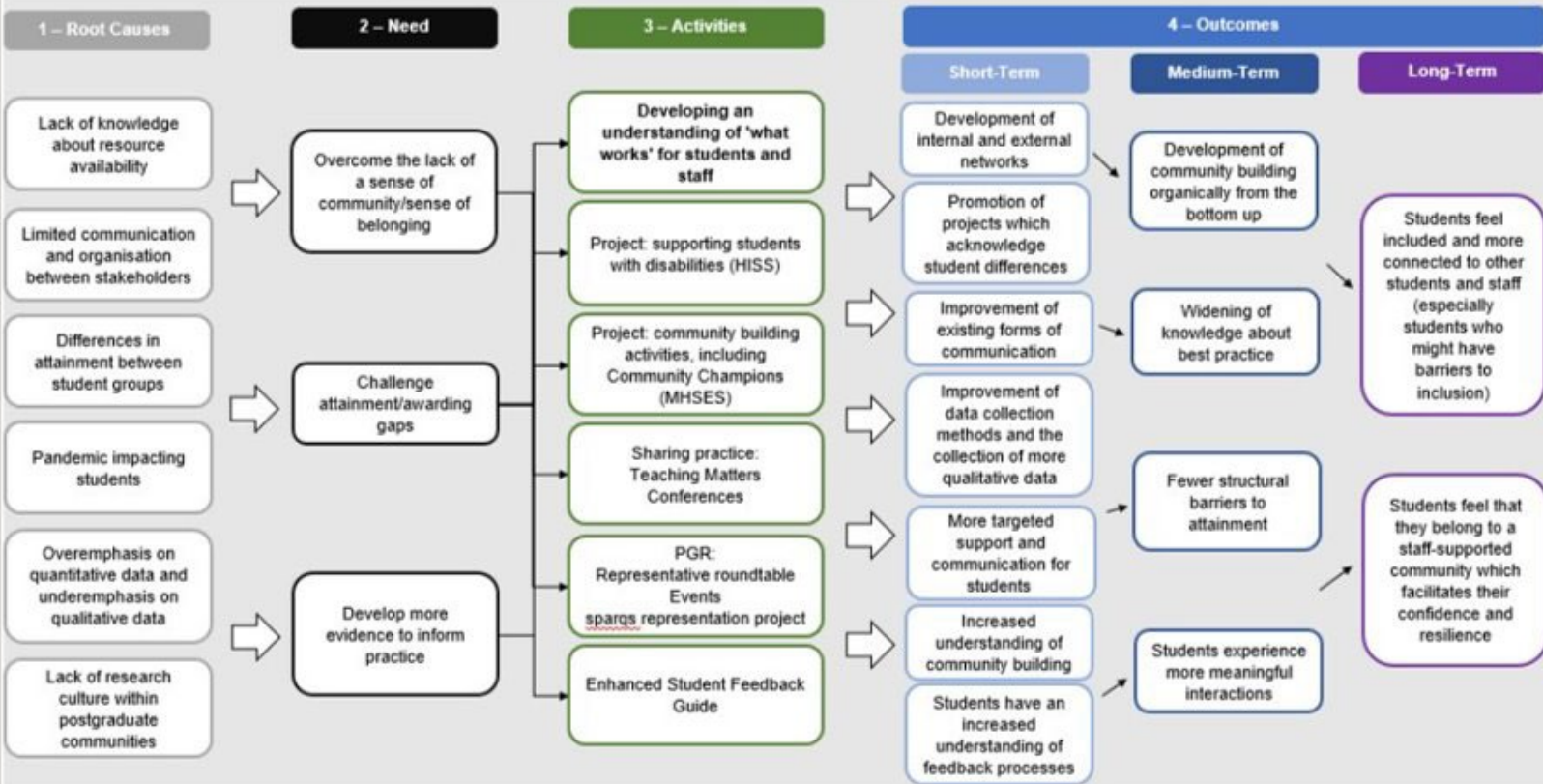What activities will you deliver to achieve your key priorities?

The theory of change model will inform our approach in year 3 of the Theme where we will seek **to take our learning on 'what works' in community building and identify opportunities to embed this in the University's strategic projects and activities**.

Our projects/activities are outlined below (see Evaluation).

Theory of Change Model

Impact Statement: to improve community building practice across the University

INPUTS →

| QAA Funding | Institutional Team | PhD Interns | Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework | Activities connected to Themes work | Activities peripheral to Themes work |

1 – Root Causes

- Lack of knowledge about resource availability
- Limited communication and organisation between stakeholders
- Differences in attainment between student groups
- Pandemic impacting students
- Overemphasis on quantitative data and underemphasis on qualitative data
- Lack of research culture within postgraduate communities

2 – Need

- Overcome the lack of a sense of community/sense of belonging
- Challenge attainment/awarding gaps
- Develop more evidence to inform practice

3 – Activities

- Developing an understanding of 'what works' for students and staff
- Project: supporting students with disabilities (HISS)
- Project: community building activities, including Community Champions (MHSES)
- Sharing practice: Teaching Matters Conferences
- PGR: Representative roundtable Events sparqs representation project
- Enhanced Student Feedback Guide

4 – Outcomes

Short-Term

- Development of internal and external networks
- Promotion of projects which acknowledge student differences
- Improvement of existing forms of communication
- Improvement of data collection methods and the collection of more qualitative data
- More targeted support and communication for students
- Increased understanding of community building
- Students have an increased understanding of feedback processes

Medium-Term

- Development of community building organically from the bottom up
- Widening of knowledge about best practice
- Fewer structural barriers to attainment
- Students experience more meaningful interactions

Long-Term

- Students feel included and more connected to other students and staff (especially students who might have barriers to inclusion)
- Students feel that they belong to a staff-supported community which facilitates their confidence and resilience

Measurement

| Student representative handover document | Student surveys | Targeted evaluation of community building activities | Student panel | Course-level feedback |

As a note: the arrows only indicate general causality between columns rather than specific segment to segment transitions..

Using Theme resources from sector projects
In the year 3 report we will ask you what resources you have used and which you have found to be most valuable. It would be helpful for us to know now, how, and which resources, you may be planning to use in year 3 of the Theme and beyond (from the Anti-Racist Curriculum project, Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning and Experience, Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland, the Student-Led Project, Student Mental Wellbeing).

We have drawn on resources to inform our work. Resources produced from sector projects have been especially helpful during the induction of our PhD Interns. Additionally, resources are routinely shared, including through Teaching Matters Prioritising equality, diversity and inclusion activities through the Enhancement Themes – Teaching Matters blog (ed.ac.uk)

As outlined in our year 2 report, a member of staff from the Institute for Academic Development contributed to the Scotland-wide Decolonising the Curriculum in the time of Pandemic collaborative cluster in 2021/22. As a result, they created the Decolonising the Curriculum Hub to support work being carried out across the University to support thinking and action on decolonising the curriculum. The Hub outlines how to make a start at decolonising the curriculum alongside supporting resources and case studies.

Evaluation

How do you intend to evaluate your year 3 projects and activities?

Prior to completing this section, 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 complete briefly the following 5 questions for each activity or intervention (N.B. Just cut and paste the table below as many times as necessary). This will help you complete your end of year 3 report.

Title of project/activity
1) Evaluation of specific projects/activities We expect these to be: • Community Champions (Moray House School of Education and Sport) • Project to improve the experience of students with disabilities (Health in Social Sciences) • Postgraduate researcher community building activities • Giving Feedback Student Guides
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The evaluation will aim to demonstrate the impact of specific projects/activities and provide us with learning on 'what works' and case studies to include in a community building guide (see project/activity 2 below).
Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
To understand the impact of and identify what can be shared more widely across the University in support of community building.
What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
Improvement of community building practice across the University.

How will we know? (How the change is measured)
See possible measures of impact in the theory of change model.

Title of project/activity
2) Community building guide A review of good practice examples to identify what works in community building for sharing in a guide with the aim of embedding it within the University's strategic projects and activities

What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
To take our learning on 'what works' in community building and identify opportunities to embed this in the University's strategic projects and activities.

Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
To improve community building practice across the University. To provide a useful resource which will help develop community building and widen knowledge about good practice.

What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
Improvement of community building practice across the University.

How will we know? (How the change is measured)
See possible measures of impact in the theory of change model.

Title of project/activity
3) Explore community building and sense of belonging with Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program students

What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
To inform our learning on 'what works' in community building.

Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
To improve community building practice across the University.

What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
Improvement of community building practice across the University.

How will we know? (How the change is measured)
See possible measures of impact in the theory of change model.

Dissemination of work How will you promote and communicate your work internally and externally?
Communication methods: • Internally: email; Institutional Team; Senate Quality Assurance Committee; Doctoral College Forum; Directors of Teaching Network; Teaching Matters blog; Learning and Teaching Conference; Students' Association groups/networks. • Externally: Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC); Theme Leaders' Group (TLG); Enhancement Themes conference; and the University's and Students' Association's websites.

The Institutional Team will continue to use existing committees, groups and networks to communicate about the Theme, to engage staff and students in Theme work, and to disseminate University and sector Theme outputs.

Community and academic community are established tags on the [Teaching Matters blog](#).

Supporting staff and student engagement How will you support your community to engage with planned activities?
As outlined above the Institutional Team will continue to use existing committees, groups and networks to communicate about the Theme, to engage staff and students in Theme work, and to disseminate University and sector Theme outputs. Student and staff involvement with the Theme itself has primarily been through the Institutional Team. However, we have supported staff and student engagement with Theme activities (not necessarily badged as such) through mechanisms such as the Learning and Teaching Conference and the Directors of Teaching Network. Staff and students will be kept informed of the work of the Theme through the communication methods outlined above. Support and guidance can be provided by the Institutional Lead and Theme Leaders Group staff member. Students will be supported through the Students' Association.

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