Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: Queen Margaret University

This document will form your year 3 plan and should be around three to four sides of A4.
You can find your year 1 and plans through this [web page](#).

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.

This Plan aligns with our [Institutional Strategy for the period 2020-25](#) (published July 2020): Within that Strategy we set out our commitment to maintaining and developing our distinct people-centred environment to ensure that students feel safe and supported in their studies by staff who are confident, motivated and inspired. The Strategy seeks to respond to the circumstances arising from the coronavirus pandemic. It expresses our commitment to promoting a culture of respect and resilience. We anticipate that the activities progressed under the auspices of the Enhancement Themes Team will make a direct contribution to that objective.

Our [Student Partnership Agreement](#) is in the process of being updated. The most recent iteration included, as one of four priority projects for the period 2020-21, an action for the University and Students' Union to work together to promote students' resilience and ability to thrive in their student life.

Our [Student Experience Strategy (2021-26)](#) was developed during 2021 and then approved by Senate in Dec 2021. This includes five core strands and three overarching themes which are summarised in the infographic on the next page. These include Healthy Universities; The Learner Journey; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; and Students as Partners. All of these align with our institutional focus on Loneliness and Isolation as part of the Resilient Learning Communities (RLC) Theme.
Helpfully, there is also crossover in the membership of the Student Experience Strategy Steering Group and our RLC Team, and this supports a consistent and complementary approach to our review and project activity.
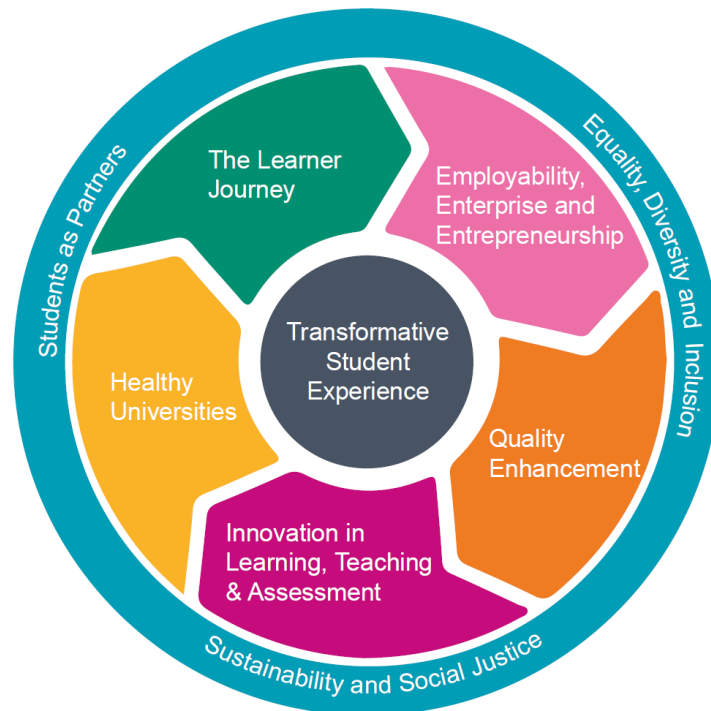
The QMU Student Experience Strategy 2021-26.

Reports from our Institutional Team are considered by the Student Experience Committee, which has oversight of the academic and co-curricular experience for all of our students. Regular updates on the work of the SEC are shared with the wider University community to promote engagement with strategic and policy initiatives. SEC members also have an important representative role to play in disseminating outcomes from the Committee.

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 Catriona Bell, Director of Learning Enhancement and Academic Development
TLG staff representative	Professor Catriona Bell, Director of Learning Enhancement and Academic Development
TLG student representative	TBC - Aasiyah Patankar, Student President – Academic Life, QMU Students Union
Dr Gemma Blackledge-Foughali, Senior Lecturer, Division of Business, Enterprise and Management	
Prof Richard Butt, Deputy Principal	
Dr Rachael Davis, Lecturer, Division of Psychology, Sociology and Education	
Heather Hartley, Student Retention Data Insights Manager	
Dr Jessica Lindohf, Head of Student Services	
Gia Longo, Academic Development Administrative Officer (Secretary to the Institutional Team)	
Dr Kat Lord, Senior Lecturer, Division of Psychology, Sociology and Education	
Dr Joan Ma, Senior Lecturer, Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences	

Dawn Martin, Assistant Secretary, Governance and Quality Enhancement
Ailsa McMillan, Senior Lecturer, Division of Nursing
Dr Glyn Morris, Lecturer, WISeR Coordinator, Division of Dietetics, Nutrition and Biological Sciences, Physiotherapy, Podiatry and Radiography
Kristina Mountain, Senior Lecturer, Division of Nursing
Aasiyah Patankar, Student President – Academic Life
Mhairi Robertson, Assistant Lecturer, Division of Psychology, Sociology and Enterprise
Prof Olivia Sagan, Head of Division of Psychology, Sociology and Education
Bill Stronach, Student Funding Advisor, Student Services
Ann Turner, Senior Lecturer, Division of Media, Communication and Performing Arts
Dr Stefanie van de Peer, Reader, Division of Media, Communication and Performing Arts
Linnea Wallen, PhD Candidate, Lecturer in Division of Psychology, Sociology and Education

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

Our key priorities, outcomes and delivery activities remain largely as stated at the start of the Theme. In addition, several of our Year 3 activities will build on our existing focus on loneliness and isolation to link it with the current Cost of Living Crisis for students.

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 key **outcomes** remain as stated in previous years, namely:
- A better institutional understanding of loneliness and isolation, of the distinctions between the two conditions, and of their impact on health and wellbeing.
- A better understanding of the current impact of loneliness and isolation and associated links with the Cost of Living Crisis on the health and wellbeing of QMU students.
- Improved understanding of the impact of loneliness and isolation and associated links with the Cost of Living Crisis on different groups of students, and how to meet the needs of these different groups.
- A better understanding and improved awareness (signposting) of the resources already available at QMU and externally to support students experiencing loneliness and isolation and affected by the Cost of Living Crisis, where this is detrimental to their wellbeing.
- A more nuanced understanding of how existing QMU resources support students in their loneliness or isolation and associated links with the Cost of Living Crisis.
- Provision of additional resources and interventions for staff and students, as appropriate and informed by the activities we deliver.

We plan to deliver the following **activities**:
- Further preparation of research papers and outputs informed by the Year 2 research project for dissemination within and beyond the University (follow-up activity to research project in Year 2 of the Theme).
- Development of new and existing strategies, interventions and resources for the University community as a whole, and particular student demographics, co-created with newly recruited Student Champions (new activity for Year 3).
- Co-creating Learner Journey maps with Student Champions to identify the following for students joining QMU from different routes (e.g. international, mature and direct-entry students) (new activity for Year 3).:

- Identifying challenges and other pinchpoints, plus sources of support that were used
- Signposting additional sources of support and resources for the future
- Support for Programme Leaders, Personal Academic Tutors and the wider staff community to raise awareness of the outputs from the Theme and help them signpost accordingly (follow-up activity to initiatives launched during Year 2).
- Partnership working with Student Champions, Class Reps, Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PALS) Leaders and Student Ambassadors to raise their awareness of the outputs from the Theme and support them to signpost their student peers accordingly (new activity for Year 3).

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).

- Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland
- Student-Led project (Promoting the equity of the Student Learning Experience)
- Student Mental Wellbeing
- Anti-Racist Curriculum project

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
Lonely Learning and learning to be lonely: a study of student resilience and challenge during and after COVID-19 lockdown
What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
The overall purpose of our project to date has been to explore student experiences of loneliness and isolation and identify strategies that may have been used to manage these experiences. Our key objectives have been to raise awareness of the student experience, to enhance staff and student understanding, to promote and signpost to existing resources and approaches, and to develop new resources and interventions to mitigate loneliness and isolation where these are detrimental to the individual. In addition, as we enter Year 3 of the project the current Cost of Living Crisis is likely to have direct links with our loneliness and isolation focus. As a result, throughout Year 3 we will be focussing on co-creating interventions with our new Student Champions and other QMU students that target both the Cost of Living Crisis and Loneliness and Isolation.

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

Supporting our students through the Cost of Living Crisis is an urgent and critically important priority for QMU during the 2022-23 academic year.

The co-created interventions and signposting to support around Loneliness and Isolation that we'd already been planning for Year 3 of our project can also be linked and extended to the Cost of Living crisis, hence our decision to include this change in the Year 3 project plan.

What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)

The most important difference that we hope will occur is a reduced detrimental impact of loneliness and isolation and the Cost of Living Crisis on the student experience.

We expect that the following outcomes will underpin this overall objective:
1) The design and delivery of co-created interventions and resources developed in partnership with our Student Champions and other QMU students.
2) Increased student awareness of and engagement with support services, resources, interventions and strategies to address feelings of loneliness and isolation and associated links to the Cost of Living Crisis
3) Increased staff awareness and signposting to support service, resources, interventions and strategies to address feelings of loneliness and isolation and associated links to the Cost of Living Crisis

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

In partnership with our Student Champions we will undertake mixed methods approaches to evaluate the impact of our co-created interventions. These may include quantitative data around engagement levels with interventions, as well as focus group or other qualitative approaches to develop a nuanced understanding of their impact, and how these may have been translated into coping strategies by students.

We will also compare NSS and QSS free text results to determine whether levels of loneliness and isolation have decreased from previous years of the study.

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

- Internally, we will continue to report to the Student Experience Committee and to other senior committees, including the School Academic Boards and the Senate.
- We will promote the use of our dedicated staff Intranet Enhancement Themes pages to communicate updates and publish key papers.
- Committee members, acting in their representative role have a responsibility to feedback locally within their academic Divisions and professional services, and it is at this local level that more nuanced discussion can take place.
- We will arrange an on campus event linked to the Theme towards the end of year 3.
- Externally, we will participate in the International Enhancement Themes Conference and related events. We hope to be able to share the project outputs widely within the sector, and ideally to have the opportunity to present the findings through the Conference and/or related events.

Supporting staff and student engagement
How will you support your community to engage with planned activities?

Please see the comments above on committee remits. RLC Team members additionally play an important role in dissemination and engagement in their capacity as Theme Champions.

All QMU staff and students have been invited to engage with this particular Theme through the questionnaires on loneliness and isolation undertaken in Year 2. We will also disseminate the outputs widely through a variety of routes, culminating in a RLC themed QMU internal event towards the end of Year 3.

Staff are guided to the Themes, in some cases, as an outcome from the Performance Enhancement Review (PER) process. Staff are also encouraged to engage with the Themes through our Annual Monitoring and review processes.

We will be considering, at an early meeting of the RLC Team in year 3 of the Theme, approaches to promote student engagement through our newly recruited Student Champions. We will also be launching a small projects initiative in which both students and staff can apply for a small pot of funding (from the Themes budget) to lead projects and develop interventions and resources for our students (and staff as appropriate).

Plan author:	Prof Catriona Bell, Director of Learning Enhancement and Academic Development
Date:	16th September 2022

Return to: ARCadmin@qaa.ac.uk

Author:	Prof Catriona Bell, Director of Learning Enhancement and Academic Development
Date:	16th September 2022

Return to: ARCadmin@qaa.ac.uk