

Overview of year 2 institutional plans

Institutional Plan for: Heriot-Watt University

Executive summary

- 1. This report provides a summary of year 2 Enhancement Theme institutional activity based on higher education institutions' (HEI) plans. This summary report and plans will be made available through the <u>institutional</u> Theme web pages.
- 2. The key points from year 2 plans of activity are:
 - continuing use of the Theme to support institutions' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic
 - progressing work from scoping, exploration and discovery to implementation and with a focus on evaluation
 - the continued importance of student and staff wellbeing as in-person and hybrid delivery is implemented
 - the spread of work between whole-institution and smaller, local projects and balance of work between supporting continuing activity and starting new projects
 - engaging students in Theme work, particularly as interns
 - the range of HEI work, broadly covering the following topics: student groups/characteristics; student peer-to-peer support; discipline-specific projects; employability, curriculum developments; digital learning and teaching; assessment integrity and assessment feedback; the use of data and evidence; supporting specific staff roles; using physical space.

Year 2 institutional plans

3. This report focuses on institutions' reporting of work that is planned for year 2 of the Theme.

Year 2 Priorities and activities

4. Year 2 HEI activity builds on the momentum established through the discovery, scoping, research and development activities of year 1. Overall aims and key priorities reported by HEIs in year 1 remain largely the same. Some institutions have commented on shifting towards a more outward focus in year 2 while also increasing internal

engagement with Theme activities. The majority of year 2 activity is follow-on work from projects started in year 1 with some new projects being started. Around 80 projects are detailed in plans although some of these are competitive bids for internal project funds and outcomes of the bidding process are not currently known. The appendix provides summary information on the planned projects reported by institutions.

- 5. Several institutions have highlighted institutional strategy, plans and priorities in the context of Themes work (University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University in Scotland, Queen Margaret University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Scotland's Rural College, University of St Andrews, University of the West of Scotland).
- 6. It is evident that Theme activities are anticipated to be delivered, and have a duration and legacy, beyond the three-year funding of the Theme, for example the University of Glasgow is investing in a four-year plan for peer learning facilitation.
- 7. The key features of activity and projects are:
 - There is a mix of large-scale whole-institution projects and smaller local level activity. Most institutions are working on two or more projects with fewer working on single projects although in such cases the work is multifaceted, for example Queen Margaret University's project on Lonely Learning and Learning to be Lonely. Encouraging engagement through competitive bidding of funding for small local projects features in the plans for: Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, University of Strathclyde. In these cases, and other institutions (University of Dundee, Glasgow School of Art), the projects for year 2 funding will be selected very soon.
 - Wellbeing and mental health is a common theme picked up in 11 HEI plans. Institutions are keen to help students be independent, resilient, successful and not just survive but thrive. The Universities of Stirling, Aberdeen and the Highlands and Islands have specific projects on student mental health/wellbeing. An awardwinning project from the University of the West of Scotland supports students and staff in maintaining a habit of physical activity which emphasises the associated mental health benefits. The Open University in Scotland's Big Blether Series gets students together in an informal environment to discuss issues of interest and concern with particular focus on mental health.
 - A focus on specific **student groups/characteristics** is reported by the following institutions:
 - Arab students University of Aberdeen is trying to better understand and lessen stigma surrounding disclosure of mental health issues amongst Arab students
 - Articulating students University of Aberdeen is identifying the specific challenges articulating students face as they transition into university
 - Black and minority ethnic students Glasgow Caledonian University
 - Forced migrants Open University in Scotland
 - Postgraduate students University of Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt University
 - Secure environment students Open University in Scotland
 - Socio-economically disadvantaged students Open University in Scotland.
 - Student peer-to-peer support projects are being undertaken by:
 - Edinburgh Napier University student buddying scheme implementation supported by a Student Buddying Handbook
 - University of Stirling student per-to-peer support (for example, Pandemic Pals)

- Scotland's Rural College digital peer mentoring resource bank to support its Peer Support Scheme
- University of Glasgow peer-assisted learning/study support
- Abertay University is hoping to develop mentoring as an integrated retention approach. Student Success Officer posts have already been developed and they will use existing data to target interventions and provide a personalised approach to student support and development.
- Projects with a specific **subject focus** are reported by:
 - University of Aberdeen creation of guidance / best practice around rendering mathematical text accessible for screen readers
 - The Open University in Scotland establishing an online student community and computing club
 - University of Glasgow numeracy/mathematical skills.
- Resilience and **employability** projects are being taken forward by the University of Aberdeen (addressing lack of graduate resilience reported by employers), University of the Highlands and Islands, and the Open University in Scotland.
- **Curriculum development** projects including the following:
 - Creation of a zero credit course to develop student resilience University of Aberdeen
 - Curriculum re-design through block delivery of learning Abertay University
 - A suite of microcredentials linked to diagnostic testing on transition into university designed to help students identify, and fulfil, their learning and support needs – Abertay University
 - Understanding students studying two concurrent modules Open University in Scotland
 - Decolonising the curriculum/anti-racist curriculum Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Stirling
 - Sustainable Development Goals and employability in the curriculum Glasgow Caledonian University
 - Developing a microcredential relating to the curriculum area of social sciences and foregrounding the notion of resilience in the University's approach to curriculum content and design – University of the Highlands and Islands
 - Making the curriculum more flexible and more resilient drawing on learning from the University's response to the pandemic Edinburgh Napier University
 - A curriculum incubator project for the development of the Masters in Professional Development University of the West of Scotland.
- Institutions are continuing to develop and refine digital learning and teaching approaches in light of the pandemic. The University of Stirling highlights work on hybrid learning and the Open University in Scotland is developing the sense of belonging toolkit that was a key project from the Evidence for Enhancement Theme. The University of the Highlands and Islands is supporting a network of practitioner groups/communities of practice relating to innovative use of its VLE, Brightspace. As students return to on campus study, the Glasgow School of Art is using this as an opportunity to explore belonging and how students can feel a greater sense of connectedness to their academic community. The University of Strathclyde will be undertaking student and staff engagement activities to gain an understanding of the pandemic response landscape informing the move towards more blended learning on and off campus. Robert Gordon University's four-strand project evolving digital learning covers: practice; environment assessment and learning analytics.

- The University of Stirling and University of St Andrews are undertaking work on **academic integrity** and **assessment feedback** respectively. Glasgow Caledonian University is anticipating activity on both those topics. The University of the Highlands and Islands is holding a two-day symposium on sustainable assessment.
- The impact of the previous Theme is highlighted by institutions emphasising **the use of data and evidence** in supporting Theme work (Abertay University, Heriot-Watt University, Open University in Scotland, University of St Andrews). Heriot-Watt University is also drawing on the work of the 'intangibles' collaborative cluster as it develops a baseline from which to track change and enhancement related to community and belonging in the University's global context.
- Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), Heriot-Watt University (HWU) and Robert Gordon University (RGU) have projects aimed at **supporting specific staff roles**; Year Tutors (SRUC), Programme Directors (HWU) and Course Leaders (RGU). The University of the Highlands and Islands is creating resources to support resilient practices in graduates of taught programmes for educators. The University of the West of Scotland is reviewing the role, purpose and support for Personal Tutors to ensure a consistent and valued approach is taken across all programmes and campuses.
- As Heriot-Watt University opens its new Dubai campus it is using this opportunity to explore how a learning community uses a new **campus space**.

Institutional teams

- 8. Institutional team details are still to be finalised in some institutions particularly student members, where there is student representation being sought outwith student union and student association sabbatical officer roles. Currently, there are 33 students across the 19 HEI institutional teams ranging from undergraduate students to PhD candidates. Team sizes vary from between three to 17 members. Eleven institutions have teams with two or more students members
- 9. Outwith the core institutional team members, student involvement in Themes work is being achieved in an increasing number of ways. Several institutions are appointing student interns to undertake Themes work. In year 2 of its work, the University of Glasgow is offering a Masters student on its MSc Statistics with Placement course a placement in its Planning Insights and Analytics team and their work will include contribution to a Theme project.

Dissemination

- 10. As year 1 of the Theme moves into year 2 and output is being generated and outcomes published, disseminating Theme activity, both within institutions and externally, is gathering pace. All institutions make use of formal committee structures to disseminate and promote work along with a range of other mechanisms but with an emphasis on digital.
- 11. Institutions have been engaging students in various ways and key to this is close working with students' associations/unions.
- 12. The role of the institutional team members as Theme 'champions' is really important with several institutions highlighting this in their plans. Exploring new ways of disseminating and supporting staff and student engagement has led the University of St Andrews to introduce an Enhancement Theme Open Forum. All students and staff (professional services and academic) are invited to attend and the forum provides a way to describe what the Enhancement Theme is, the work that has been achieved and what projects

are currently being progressed.

13. Institutions are reaching out into professional sector networks to promote Themes work, for example, Abertay University's diagnostic testing is being disseminated through the Quality Strategy Network and the UK Advising and Tutoring group. Institutions are also collaborating to run joint dissemination events, for example Edinburgh Napier and Heriot-Watt Universities are planning a festival of mini-projects.

Supporting staff and students

- 14. Institutions have highlighted a number of approaches to, and factors that are important in, support for staff and students with Themes work:
 - Working closely with students, engaging with Students' Associations/Unions and using existing mechanisms, such as Student Partnership Agreements
 - Institutional team composition securing membership from across the institution
 - Student interns institutions are increasingly engaging students as interns, from undergraduates to postgraduate research students and in both contributory and leading roles and in promotional work
 - Communities of practice developing Theme-specific networks/fora open to staff and students for sharing practice and ideas and also linking with existing established networks and groups
 - Bespoke ad hoc Theme events a wide range of bespoke events dedicated to Themes work conferences, seminars, workshops
 - Competitive local project bids selection involving staff and students in decisions about funding of local projects
 - Senior staff involvement having visible support from senior managers and keeping them regularly updated on activity
 - Shared digital working space having a shared digital working space for those involved in Theme work
 - Using existing process such as staff performance/career review processes and course annual monitoring and review processes.
 - Sharing learning of both outputs and outcomes so that learning about what works well and what doesn't can be applied to future activity
 - Staff time allowing staff who are undertaking substantive work under the theme to negotiated with their line managers time to do this
 - Briefing student representatives student sabbatical officers specifically, about Themes work and encouraging engagement
 - Effective communication of events and activity using established communication and promotion mechanisms that might be different for staff and students
 - Leadership and responsibility devolving work and having clearly defined staff and student leads responsible for project implementation and evaluation.

Appendix

Summary of institutional activity year 2

Sector/Institution Work	Activities and projects
Abertay University	 Diagnostic testing of students through engaging microcredentials to develop successful student attributes ('MySuccess') Student Success Officers – three new appointments to monitor student engagement in the microcredentials and their programme specific modules Curriculum redesign through block delivery of learning – continuing to develop the approach New approaches to orientation and the 'relentless welcome' – continuing this development Enhancement Theme learning and teaching projects (a suite of local projects)
<u>University of Aberdeen</u>	 Continued growth of its Enhancement Theme community of practice Continue to explore aspects of learning to learn/learning to teach during a pandemic considering how these changes will transform learning communities post-COVID-19 Awareness-raising around decolonising the curriculum Continuing to engage in microcredentials and student mental wellbeing work The bridge between: Arab voices and stories of coping Exploring the experiences of articulation students' transition to university Understanding, developing and demonstrating resilience in the context of employability Building student resilience through course development – moving from surviving to thriving Investigating solutions to make mathematical teaching content more accessible
University of Dundee	 Continuation of existing projects - year 1 projects were School-based and part of the year 2 plan is to expand and extend these so that they have reach beyond the 'home' School Programme of workshops and seminars with staff and students, including showcase/dissemination activities - to raise awareness of the Enhancement Theme and to spark discussion and exploration of resilience and what it means for the University's learning communities Engagement with a range of university stakeholders - to raise awareness of the Enhancement Theme and to spark discussion and exploration of resilience and to spark discussion and exploration of resilience and to spark discussion and exploration of resilience and what it means for the University's learning communities Development of new projects - these new projects will align with current institutional issues and concern and will expand the groups involved in the Enhancement Theme
University of Edinburgh	A continuing exercise to gather and reflect on good practice <u>examples</u> of <u>community</u> building activities from across the University and Students' Association

Edinburgh Napier University	 Appointing PhD Interns to support Theme work (including projects on analysing student feedback, working with the Students' Association to align actions with student representative structures, support pilot projects to test interventions to reduce attainment gaps – links to ELIR) Progressing specific recommendations from the 2020-21 student intern activity Student buddying scheme (student-led project) Student-staff collaborative mini-projects (new round of internal competitive project funding bids) Building resilience through the <u>Gold Standard Curriculum</u> Framework - building on themes emerging during the Digital Support Partnership Project evaluation conducted in year one, the University plans to draw on its evaluation of the learning gained during the response to the pandemic to inform and influence current and future curricula to make them more flexible and more resilient
Glasgow Caledonian University	 Understanding what resilience means to our students - exploring students; understanding of the concept of 'resilience' Common good attributes and employability - a study exploring how the University's revised Common Good Attributes (for new Strategy for Learning 2030), including resilience, can best be articulated for its students as employability skill Embedding the Sustainable Development Goals in the Curriculum - an audit/mapping exercise that will document the ways in which UN Sustainable Development Goals (part of the new Strategy for Learning) are embedded in the University's course curricula, in ways that meet the needs of its diverse student communities Student-led work on the BAME student experience Small grant award/development work - funding a small number of activities (three to four) focused on areas of strategic importance which fit with the Theme topic of 'Resilient Learning Communities' Student-led work - an awareness campaign on either plagiarism or mental health in the curriculum
University of Glasgow	 Institutional programme of Peer Assisted Learning/Study Support – increasing the capacity of the Student Learning Development team to provide peer-enabled activity – new roles, resources, information and (multimedia) guides for staff to promote adoption, expansion and implementation of peer enabled activity Gap Analysis for Mathematical/Numeracy Skills – aim is to statistically prove the value of mathematical skills as key contributors to student success
Glasgow School of Art	• The 'Belonging' institution-wide activity will invite students and staff to work in partnership on up to four projects that aim to foster in students a greater sense of belonging and connectedness to their academic community
Heriot-Watt University	 Exploring our global learning community: resilience in action - developing a baseline from which to track change and enhancement related to community and belonging in the HWU global context Resilient pedagogies: the impact of special interest clusters to support enhancement - collaborative communities that offer a focal point for connecting staff across campuses and Schools

	 Resilient teaching teams: enhanced support for Programme Directors – establishment of a Programme Directors Forum to support colleagues in this key educational role to connect across the University and to share practice and develop guidance resources
	 Student action on resilience: supporting student representation in a global context - strengthening collaboration and support across the Heriot-Watt student representative groups
	• Enhancing the PGT experience: sharing practice - deepen the institutional conversation around the PGT student experience, opening space to better understand the PGT learner journey and what really makes this student group feel connected to and supported by the Heriot-Watt University community
	Building community: a case study of HWU's new Dubai campus - explore how a learning community uses a new campus space
	 Local action for resilience: evaluating the mini-projects model - funding for mini-projects which enable small scale projects which improve student experience and enhance the University community
	 Facilitating resilient students strand - aims to develop a student body of resilient learners and resilient graduates, able to adapt to a changing world of education and employment. Six projects including work on employability, mental wellbeing, student diagnostic testing
University of the Highlands and Islands	 Facilitating resilient staff strand - aims to develop a staff body of resilient educators able to adapt to a changing world of education and employment. Four projects including a symposium, webinar series, supporting a network of practitioner groups/communities of practice relating to innovative use of the University's VLE, Brightspace Creating a resilient institution - aims to examine the policies, processes and structures within the University to
	• Creating a resilient institution - aims to examine the policies, processes and structures within the Oriversity to ensure that they are fit to serve the changing needs of the staff and student body. Three projects including developing a microcredential, foreground the notion of resilience in the University's approach to curriculum content and design, creating resources to support resilient practices in graduates of taught programmes for educators
Queen Margaret University	 Lonely learning and learning to be lonely: exploring student experiences of loneliness and isolation and identifying strategies that may have been used to manage these experiences. Key objectives are to raise awareness of the student experience, to enhance staff and student understanding, to promote existing resources and approaches, and to develop new resources to mitigate loneliness and isolation, where these are detrimental to the individual
Robert Gordon University	 RGU teaching and learning futures - will support the University in defining RGU's future model of teaching and learning, including how off- and on-campus learning will feature within this to provide an optimal and equitable learning experience for its diverse students
	 Supporting whole-person education throughout the learner journey – the year 2 work will produce a suite of complementary deliverables informed by: insights generated by the series of student voice opportunities enabled by the Theme in year 1; and analysis of academic Schools' Enhancement and Action Plans following the 2020/21 annual appraisal process

	 Promoting retention and success through inclusive practice - continues year 1 work through two strands. Accessibility of online learning will provide further support to Schools to increase the accessibility of online learning and work with support services to enhance staff awareness and skills. Male students: closing the gap, will move from the 'discover' to 'define' and 'deliver' stage in seeking to recommend evidence-informed enhancements to address disparities in male student outcomes Supporting RGU's Course Leader community – year 2 work will analyse data generated by focus group activity in year 1 to understand Course Leaders' lived experiences of the role, preferences and needs. Findings will be shared with key stakeholders across the institution. Work will also aim to define and implement new support mechanisms and CPD opportunities for the University's Course Leader community Evolving RGU's approach to digital learning – progresses year 1 work over four work strands: digital learning practice; digital learning environment; digital assessment; learning analytics
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	 Action learning sets for development – follows on from the year 1 'Creative Conversations' work designed to explore different facets of the concept of 'resilience' and 'resilient learning communities'. The intention for this project is to use findings from year one of the Theme to inform a pilot project that will explore models for staff development. The aim is to design, run and evaluate a model based on facilitated Action Learning Sets
Scotland's Rural College	 Raise awareness and develop student communities - to raise awareness of, and encourage engagement in, existing communities and to develop further opportunities for engagement Develop a Year Tutor learning community - identify (and then implement) what kind of learning community would suit their needs, would enhance their role, and would enable them to provide peer support for each other Digitalisation of peer support - complement the roll out of the peer support scheme through the creation of an accessible digital peer mentoring resource bank Student intern engagement - employment of student interns to support the Enhancement Theme work Overall Enhancement Theme work - through all projects, increasing the awareness of learning communities among staff and students
University of Stirling	 Academic integrity – aimed at ensuring students fully understand good academic practice and are supported to act in an appropriate ethical manner towards their studies Transitions - enhanced support for the transition into university with a focus on Honours and Masters students. Student Life - extending the 'BeConnected' programme into a full student life programme on campus and online for the whole university community to engage with Hybrid learning - to introduce the technology and support pedagogy to deliver hybrid teaching as many of the University's students will be unable to attend campus due to COVID-19 restrictions Peer support - build on the success of the peer mentoring scheme (STEER) and befriending scheme (Pandemic Pals), by transitioning that support out of the pandemic context into mainstream activity and expanding its reach Decolonising the curriculum – a student audit of identified degree programmes

University of St Andrews	 What is Higher Education anyway? Stakeholders' beliefs about the purposes of Higher Education in the 21st Century - a project that investigates what secondary school students, university students, and university lecturers consider the purposes of higher education to be Understanding the Impact of Online Learning during the Pandemic – aims to gain a better understand student experiences with online learning Assessment feedback literacy – challenges traditional approaches to feedback and includes a workshop and establishing a feedback literacy community Identifying the needs of our diverse student communities - evaluating the data gathered from across the University on what is currently known within Schools and Units about the needs of diverse student groups Enhancement Theme Open Forum – for students and staff to work collaboratively brainstorming new ideas and initiatives
University of Strathclyde	 In addition to funding new projects through a competitive bidding scheme, the University will be reflecting on ongoing activity and existing projects: Thesis mentoring scheme - examines the impact of mentoring on postgraduate research student (PGR) resilience and thesis completion, whilst providing tailored, targeted support for PGRs who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic Undergraduate to PGT – widening access student transitions - aims to create a series of online resources for widening access students transitioning from undergraduate to postgraduate studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS). The repository pages will be divided into two main sections: one with links to support services available at Strathclyde and one with information on academic requirements and expectations, which will include an area designed for development of PGT study skills Collecting stories - project will collect and celebrate stories from each faculty, of innovative and effective practice that has taken place during the pandemic Student resilience in HE: a Strathclyde toolkit - aims to develop a plan for a Strathclyde-centric toolkit which will support student resilience across all four Faculties. This is inspired by the Student Services Organisation Resilience Toolkit, launched in 2018. The resources cover a range of research, case studies and tools to help develop student resilience to stress, anxiety and similar barriers to achievement and success
Open University in Scotland	 Forced Migration project development – comprising three pilot projects on skills for employability, skills for study and community-based ESOL resources Sense of belonging toolkit – updating the OpenLearn resource created as a result of Evidence for Enhancement Theme collaborative activity Students in Secure Environments – Open Learn Materials - a collaboration with Fife College to make the University's free Open Learn resources available in an offline context on computers in prison Learning Centres

	 SIMD20 project – continues with phase 3 of a project (disseminating the report outcomes and designing interventions based on the collated data and analysis) aimed to reduce isolation and facilitate a sense of belonging among SIMD20 students EmployAbility programme – a collaboration between a not-for-profit organisation and 10 Scottish HEIs offering activities to support disabled students Student community and computing club – re-establishing a previous initiative for students with an interest in this subject area Big Blether Series - getting students together in an informal environment to discuss issues of interest and concern; particular focus on mental health Who are the Education Studies (Primary) Concurrent students? Responding to an increase in the number of students studying 2 concurrent modules (120 credits) at all levels, this work aims to better understand our concurrent students, how they demonstrate resilience in managing their study, the issues of studying concurrently within our systems and the opportunities that concurrent study brings
University of the West of Scotland	 A variety of consultation and feedback opportunities to secure staff and student engagement in the review of the personal tutor system Review of sector practice around personal tutoring for identification of effective practice and learning A curriculum incubator project for the development of the Masters in Professional Development – pulling together expertise from within and outwith the University to inform the development of an innovative, flexible and valuable programme A student led project on scoping, understanding and redesigning a collaborative personal success advisor. The aim is to capture the lived experiences of our student community that is representative of their journey, culture, ethnicity, gender and diversity. The output of this project will reflect the creativity and lived experiences of the UWS student journey, e.g. a film, podcast, song etc. 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 <u>UWS Active Community</u>