Resilient Learning Communities

Institutional Plan for: University of St Andrews

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.
We have identified 3 key areas of the Resilience Theme that our work is based on (diverse learning communities, student attributes and learning communities of the future). These areas tie to the University's Education Strategy of: World-leading | Entrepreneurial | Diverse | Global. For the current Enhancement Theme, the Theme Lead position was appointed to a member of staff outside of the Proctor's Office. A large Core Enhancement Theme Team was then created by inviting participation from members of staff across all sections of the University to join our Students' Association Director of Education and the Team Leader. Our Core Team is larger compared to previous Enhancement Theme teams, both in terms of size and representation. Having now developed a solid Core Team in Year 1, we will be actively recruiting for more student (undergraduate and postgraduate) representation and engagement in Year 2.

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	*Paula Miles* (Staff - Psychology & Neuroscience, Director of Teaching, Senior Lecturer)
TLG staff representative	*Paula Miles* (Staff - Psychology & Neuroscience, Director of Teaching, Senior Lecturer)
TLG student representative	*Leonie Malin Höher* (Student - Students' Association Director of Education)
Add additional rows for additional members	*Hitanshi Badani* (Student – Intern, 2nd Year International Relations and Psychology Undergraduate)
	Nicole Cizauskas (Student – Intern, 4th Year Neuroscience Undergraduate)

	Pamela Forbes (Staff – Medical Admissions Officer)
	Gordon Henry (Staff – Recruitment Marketing Officer)
	Kenneth Mavor (Staff – Psychology & Neuroscience, Senior Lecturer)
	Heather McKiggan-Fee (Staff – Head of Educational Development)
	Lara Meischke (Staff – Student Services, Director)
	Sharon Nangle (Staff – Library, Academic Liaison Librarian)
	Julie Oswald (Staff – Deputy Enhancement Theme Lead, Biology, Lecturer)
	Laura Palmer (Staff – Lead Administrator)
	Eric Stoddart (Staff – Divinity, Lecturer)
	Jennifer Taylorson (Staff – International Education Institute, Associate Lecturer)
	Penny Turnbull (Staff – Student Services, Assistant Director - Projects & Residential)
	Fiona Whelan (Staff – Student Services, Assistant Director - Accessibility & Inclusion)

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 the same. Our work revolves around these three key questions:
1) What will our learning communities look like by 2023? How can we prepare for the learning communities of the future?
2) How can we capitalise as a sector on the attributes students bring into their learning?
3) How do we ensure we are able to support our diverse learning communities? What might this mean for our staff and our infrastructure?

Year 2 outcomes/activity

In answering the following, identify what is continuing from year 1 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?

1) Learning communities of the future

   a) We will be identifying student and staff views on the **purpose of Higher Education** and what impact these views have on the choices that our students and staff make. We are collecting data via an online questionnaire to gain a better understanding of what stakeholders think about the purposes of Higher Education. Based on the outcomes of the questionnaire, we will be able to develop an intervention aimed at aligning the expectations of students and staff in the higher education setting. *(Continued from Year 1)*
   b) We aim to better understand the **impact of online learning during the pandemic** on our student cohort and to identify aspects of this new form of learning that we want to take

forward in future teaching and learning. We are utilising multiple methods to collect this information from students: focus groups, questionnaires, and analyses of anonymous social media posts. Based on the findings, we intend to present a set of recommendations to the University. *(New)*

2) Student Attributes

    a) One attribute that varies widely among students is how they react to and use feedback. We aim to better support the use of feedback by students by promoting discussion amongst teaching staff about the best ways to deliver feedback so that students can successfully engage with and benefit from it. We plan to achieve this by hosting an invited lecture and workshop on **Assessment Feedback Literacy**. *(Continued from Year 1)*

    b) An important attribute to encourage in our student body is their desire to initiate change. We aim to foster this attribute via the introduction of an **Open Forum**. This will function to promote wider engagement from students (and staff), encourage the development of new ideas and initiatives relating to resilience in teaching and learning, and raise the profile of the Enhancement Theme. Our desired outcomes are positive collaborations between students and staff, students feeling that their voices are heard, the development of new tangible projects and greater awareness of the Enhancement Theme work. *(New)*

3) Supporting Diverse Communities

    a) We are gathering data from units across the University to help us **identify the needs of our diverse student body**. This work will help us to recognise areas of best practice for supporting our diverse student body and identify any common issues or gaps that may exist in the support we offer (e.g., specific cohorts that may currently be overlooked/would benefit from additional support). Based on this exploratory work, we will disseminate our findings to the appropriate units within the University and facilitate implementation of mitigation strategies. *(Continued from Year 1)*

Evaluation

How do you intend to evaluate your year 2 projects and activities?

Title of project/activity

What is Higher Education Anyway? Stakeholders' Beliefs about the Purposes of Higher Education in the 21st Century

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

We are currently planning a project that investigates what secondary school students, university students, and university lecturers consider the purposes of higher education to be. In Part A of our study, we will collect data using Prolific to test the reliability and construct validity of our survey instrument. We have gained ethical approval and have also been granted funding to conduct this part of the study. We anticipate that data from the Prolific study will be collected and analysed by the end of September 2021. Following this, we will make any necessary changes to the survey and apply for ethical approval for Part B of the study using the survey with secondary school students, university students, and university lecturers. This will happen during the first semester of 2021.

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

One's understanding of the purpose of higher education will impact what one personally hopes to achieve from their experiences at university and what goals they will set for themselves while at university. If students and staff view the purpose of higher education differently, then expectations will not align, and this could result in disappointment for either or both groups. We need to know if a mismatch does exist.

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

Through this exploratory piece of work will be able to determine if expectations between students and staff align regarding the purposes of higher education. If they don't, we will then be able to

focus our attentions on developing an intervention that helps to align the goals between students and lecturers (e.g. developing student-staff partnerships).

How will we know? (How the change is measured)
The Enhancement Theme Team will be involved in analysing the results of this exploratory research, which will then inform how the project evolves. In the long term, if an intervention is developed, we would hope to assess the effectiveness of the intervention by comparing before and after data.

Title of project/activity
Understanding the Impact of Online Learning during the Pandemic

What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
In collaboration with students (who lead this work), we have designed a research project to help us better understand student experiences with online learning. We are collecting data in several ways: 1) questionnaire disseminated to all students asking them to reflect on their teaching and learning experiences in Semester 2 last year (i.e., fully online learning); 2) analysis of anonymous student Facebook posts relating to their experiences last semester; 3) targeted focus group sessions with students to create a more detailed account of learning experiences last semester.

Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
We are conducting this project to help us better understand our students' experiences during a fully online semester. This will allow us to identify positive aspects of online learning that we may then want to take forward and utilise in future teaching and learning.

What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
We plan to present our findings and a set of recommendations to the University so that they can make fully informed decisions about the shape of our future learning and teaching practices.

How will we know? (How the change is measured)
1) Our research project will have been successful if we have been able to reach a wide range of students, thereby allowing for a diverse student voice to be heard. Analysis of demographic information collected during the project will help us determine if we have achieved this. 2) We will have been successful in terms of making recommendations to the University if our findings and recommendations are included in agenda items at University meetings (e.g., Learning and Teaching Committee) and changes are considered or made to teaching practice or policy by members of our University community based on our findings.

Title of project/activity
Assessment Feedback Literacy

What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
Traditional approaches to feedback (that is, a one-way delivery of information from the marker to the student) are being replaced by various approaches that see using feedback as a focus in itself. This area is known as Assessment Feedback Literacy. We plan to hold a lecture and workshop delivered by Prof. Naomi Winstone, an internationally recognised scholar in this area. The initial lecture will help to raise awareness of feedback literacy and the subsequent workshop will help those who wish to implement these changes in feedback practice in their teaching. Following these

events, we wish to establish a feedback literacy community of research and practice at our institution to allow this important work to continue and grow post the event.

Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
This is an area in which we believe that change can be made in both academic and student practices, as well as being a burgeoning area of higher education research. We seek to raise awareness about these new approaches and how they can benefit the learning community in St Andrews, as well as to establish a foothold in research on this theme.

What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
1) That some academics will broaden their assessment practices to take on board new techniques and approaches to feedback. 2) That some academics will build feedback literacy explicitly into their curriculum plans; ideally at multiple levels in the curriculum so that it scales up from simple techniques in the first year, to more sophisticated professional approaches to feedback in honours years and PGT. 3) That student organisers can initiate or support campaigns to shift the culture of expectations around feedback, the various purposes it serves, and how to use it in constructive ways. We see this as a joint effort between student representatives, the Enhancement Theme Team, our Centre for Educational Enhancement and Development, and our Centre for Higher Education Research.

How will we know? (How the change is measured)
1) We expect to be able to measure changes in assessment engagement by surveying students using common measures over a 2-3 year period. We will collect some pre-intervention data this year prior to the planned workshop, and then over the subsequent 2 years, comparing Schools where change has been implemented early versus control Schools. 2) We would also seek mixed mode feedback from participants in the workshop immediately after, and then again at a 1 year follow-up.

Title of project/activity
Enhancement Theme Open Forum

What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
This year we will be introducing an Enhancement Theme Open Forum. We will invite all students and staff (professional services and academic) to attend. At the forum we will describe what the Enhancement Theme is, the work we have done to date on the current theme of resilience and what projects we are currently working on. We will then split into breakout rooms to brainstorm new ideas and initiatives. Each breakout room will be facilitated by a member of the Core Team.

Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
We want to increase the visibility of the Enhancement Theme within the University. By holding a forum, that will be advertised widely, we will potentially reach a wider group and hear a wider range of thoughts and suggestions than we normally would. This is particularly important for our students, as their engagement will help them to initiate and contribute to real change at the University level, showing them that they are valued members of our community. We hope that the forum will encourage the development of new ideas and initiatives relating to resilience in teaching and learning.

What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
As a result of the forum, we hope to increase awareness of the important work that is currently being done and raise the profile of the Enhancement Theme. We hope to foster new positive collaborations between students and staff which will lead to the development of exciting novel

projects. We also see this as a key opportunity to remind our students that their voice is heard, respected, and valued within the University community.

How will we know? (How the change is measured)
We will measure change/impact by collecting data on the following: 1) attendance rates at the Open Forum and data on student/staff ratio 2) number of people who engage with us after the event 3) number of new projects and initiatives that are acted upon after the forum

Title of project/activity
Identifying the Needs of our Diverse Student Communities

What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
We plan to evaluate the data gathered from across the University on what is currently known within Schools and Units about the needs of diverse student groups. Where this data is incomplete, we will work with students, Schools and Units to seek more data.

Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
We need to better understand who our diverse communities are so that we can ensure we are providing them with the best support possible. If we identify gaps in our support systems, we will then be able to develop targeted interventions to fill those gaps.

What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change envisaged)
At the end of this project, we hope that all our diverse student cohorts will be able to access the support they need and thereby thrive in their learning environments. Engagement with students from diverse learning communities, and staff in Schools and Units who are currently involved in supporting these students, is key to the success of this project. It is hoped that we will see an increase in collaboration across the University to make the most of work being undertaken, and to ensure students are aware of support resources and services available to them.

How will we know? (How the change is measured)
1) Once we have identified existing good practice, we will share those practices across the University. We will then track whether others in the University have successfully adopted or developed these practices in their own settings. 2) Following the development of new interventions, we will seek feedback from students and staff on how well those interventions have met their goals. This feedback will be provided in the form of survey answers.

Dissemination of work How will you promote and communicate your work internally and externally?
1) We aim to raise the profile of the Enhancement Theme within our University via our Open Forum. We consider this to be an excellent first step towards achieving this goal – especially with respect to student involvement. 2) We will be hosting an Enhancement Theme Sharing Event at our institution. This will be an opportunity for those involved in the theme (e.g., Core Team, recipients of Year 1 funding) to share their work with colleagues and students from across the University. 3) We plan to create brief promotional/informational videos about our work to share with the University community via social media and other channels. This will help us raise awareness of the Enhancement Theme work and promote the Open Forum and Sharing Event.

3) We will continue to present our work at important University meetings (e.g., Learning and Teaching Committee, Postgraduate Research Committee, Flexible Learning Pathways Group, and the Education Strategy Management Group).
4) We will encourage students and staff to present their work at external events (e.g., Enhancement Theme related meetings and conferences, HEIR Conference, Enhancing Student Learning Through Innovative Scholarship Conference).
5) We will also encourage our community to continue to collaborate outside of our institution (e.g., Decolonising Curriculum Collaborative Cluster).

Supporting staff and student engagement

How will you support your community to engage with planned activities?

1) Our Open Forum will allow students and staff from all areas of our community to engage with the theme in a supportive environment.
2) We will continue to support independent projects, events and initiatives that focus on the resilience theme via a funding call.
3) Through our questionnaires, focus groups and Facebook posts, we will be reaching a wide range of students and giving them an opportunity to shape the future of teaching and learning in our university.
4) We would like to appoint interns to join our Core Team in Year 2 to ensure that the student voice continues to be heard.
5) Our Sabbatical Director of Education will be actively involved in promoting the Enhancement Theme to students.
6) Our Sharing Event will be advertised widely to the University Community so that those who are interested in the Enhancement Theme can come along and learn more about what we do.

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