



End of Year 3 Report for: University of Aberdeen

The details in Table 1 showcase a range of projects funded through our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP) over the course of the Theme (of which there were 21 in total). The most positive aspect does not relate to a single project, but rather the collective impact and atmosphere created by the sum of all the projects. These have made a significant impact across the University of Aberdeen and the wider sector reflected by broad dissemination through publications (5, including a Wonkhe blog on resilience and a book chapter on widening participation), conference presentations (17), posters (9) and Theme Leaders Group webinars (2). The most challenging issues have centred around timing of the projects and the recruitment of participants for surveys and focus groups. However, lessons learned through these projects will inform and fine tune future endeavours to ensure maximum success and impact. The most important factor across all the projects was the involvement of students as interns in driving the research and co-creating content and resources. Indeed, the value of student contributions has never been as evident than across this portfolio of work. The momentum created has meant that in the Resilient Learning Communities Theme, over 75% of these LTEP projects have been led by staff with no prior experience of Enhancement Theme work, a value which was below 30% previously.

As well as the LTEP projects, the Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group is nearing the end of its phase 1 work when the Group will launch a set of resources to support colleagues across the University to take forward the Senate-approved roadmap for its decolonising work. The national Antiracist Curriculum Project resources are embedded within the University's resources enabling access to important resources which will support our work.

Table 1: Evidencing effectiveness and reporting impact

Cumulative descriptor of institutional /cluster/Student-Led Project activity over RLC Theme period	Which overarching RLC Theme questions (1-5) were prioritised?	Evidence of effectiveness in addressing chosen RLC theme priorities	Suggested outcomes and impact measures used to assess effectiveness (refer to Theory of Change model)	Challenges	Made most difference?	Hindsight
<p>LTEP project 1: Staying and getting on.</p> <p>Developing strategies to support widening access students in their medical studies through discursive workshops with staff and students.</p>	2, 5	<p>Significant engagement from both staff and students – owing to staff interest, an additional workshop was organised.</p> <p>The workshop style of data collection (where issues relating to widening access students</p>	<p>Impact Activities/Outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focused activity and data collection on how to support widening access students in Medicine. 2. Staff and student workshops to develop and discuss intervention/support approaches. 3. Creation of an evidence-based and theory-informed 	<p>Time has been the most challenging issue – the project team had to run the workshops to coincide with five-year groups and assessments. This has meant both data collection and</p>	<p>The student interns have been valuable to the process in terms of design, and development of an evidence-based and theory-informed intervention strategy, which will be integrated</p>	<p>Being too flexible with student interns might lead to delays in project delivery and we have since developed clear tasks with prescribed end dates to ensure delivery on time.</p>

		<p>were discussed with staff and students) appeared to be appealing to both groups – conversations were fruitful, and all participants were engaged.</p> <p>The method would be transferable to other student populations within the university.</p>	<p>intervention strategy to support widening access students in MBChB.</p>	<p>analysis has been compressed to a period of four months. In addition, training student interns and monitoring progress is a time-consuming process despite their enthusiasm.</p>	<p>into our approaches to supporting widening access students. This project was a participatory activity, and this has been enhanced by their input – it has been more relevant to the target population as a result.</p>	
<p>LTEP project 2: Building Resilience Through Timely and Effective Feedback.</p> <p>Creation of a report to inform development of a collection of resources for students to help them use feedback and make the pedagogy in our practice more transparent.</p>	1, 2, 4	<p>Engagement with staff around their desire to support and be supported in assessment and feedback practices. This has also highlighted some differences in practice across the school, therefore, the project has presented an opportunity to align practices to make them more consistent, which should enhance the student experience.</p> <p>Whilst the project suggested that assessment and</p>	<p>Impact Activities/Outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of resources explaining to students where to find their feedback in Turnitin and advice on what to do with feedback. 2. Development of a school statement explaining the pedagogical approach to assessment and feedback. 3. Provision of assessment information at course level to explain why an assessment has been chosen, and how it links with intended learning outcomes/skills/attributes. 4. Development of short guides for staff to support marking and providing 	<p>There were some issues with student interns due to health issues. However, by adapting the approach we were able to continue to produce resources and outputs.</p>	<p>Funding for student interns allowed collection of data that otherwise would not have been possible, and enabled development of resources. Together this has prompted consideration of school approaches to assessment and feedback.</p>	<p>Did not set clear timescales for project milestones and this would have been useful for monitoring purposes during the academic year.</p>

		<p>feedback practices are largely effective in the School, the project also highlighted that students needed support in developing their resilience by understanding why they were doing specific types of assessment and how to use/interpret feedback. This will help students develop resilience and be more independent in their learning and use of feedback. Clearly articulating what we do and why, will further help support staff to support their students with their learning.</p>	<p>constructive feedback.</p>			
<p>LTEP Project 3: Developing the resilience of advanced entry students through evaluation of support for staff and students. Project aiming to enhance the academic</p>	<p>1, 2, 4, 5</p>	<p>The project team has constructed a toolkit of resources and guidance on developing and evaluating resilience of advanced entry students. The work is still ongoing with evaluation of the</p>	<p>Impact Activities/Outputs: 1. A workshop for staff (academic and professional services) and other individuals involved in supporting advanced entry students across the sector and developing an institutional Community of</p>	<p>Further data will be gathered from the new cohort of students in 2023/24 to enable a comprehensive evaluation of the toolkit.</p>	<p>Funding for a student intern to allow the majority of the evaluation to be completed and to enable more student insights into the project.</p>	<p>On hindsight the textbook chapter authoring was a substantial (but worthwhile) commitment.</p>

<p>resilience of advanced entry students.</p>		<p>toolkit currently being completed and a workshop planned for early summer. However, one of the most positive aspects to date has been the opportunity to engage another student intern and get their insights into the project to date. The level of engagement in the wider sector has been very positive.</p> <p>The researchers have also authored a textbook chapter and have presented the research at the University's Annual Academic Development Symposium, QAA TLG group, SCAPP Conference and presented a poster at the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning (HETL) conference whilst also taking part in two panel discussions related to the book chapter</p>	<p>Practice.</p> <p>2. Evaluation of the toolkit of resources for advanced entry students created using a previous award.</p> <p>3. Interview sessions with staff working with advanced entry students to gain their insights and share practice around advanced entry student support.</p>	<p>Evaluation will be an ongoing task to maintain the relevance of the toolkit content. Further it was decided that running a staff workshop during teaching time was going to prove difficult, so this aspect has been deliberately delayed until the summer.</p>		
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		at the QAA and European First Year Experience (EYFE) conferences.				
<p>LTEP Project 4: Understanding and enhancing the employability of care-experienced/estranged students.</p> <p>Project aiming to develop a greater level of understanding of the needs of care-experienced and estranged students relating to employability and skills development, and the University changes to target and address these needs.</p>	1,2,4,5	<p>The project has achieved impact by developing a much deeper understanding of the needs of care-experienced and estranged students regarding employability and skills development.</p> <p>Furthermore, impact will be evident through closer consideration of the needs of groups such as these when planning mentoring and work experience initiatives.</p>	<p>Impact Activities/Outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased knowledge about the needs of advanced entry students. 2. Use of the knowledge gained to put initiatives in place to support development of student resilience. 3. A programme of targeted contacts from the Careers and Employability Service directed to identified care-experienced and estranged students. 4. Currently developing a group to look (nationally) at how university careers services can more effectively meet the needs of care-experienced/estranged students. 	Ensuring that as many students as possible are reached within this context to make sure the best possible understanding of the issues and concerns of this group.	The funding to recruit an intern to undertake the research work, which otherwise would not have been possible.	Would rethink the project activity in May - June as this added unnecessary time pressures to reach students before they left for the summer vacation period.
<p>LTEP Project 5: Investigating ways of improving accessibility of mathematical texts in education.</p> <p>The project investigated various ways of</p>	2, 5	<p>Impact of the project is evident through the development of guidelines around making mathematical texts more accessible. These have been</p>	<p>Impact Activities/Outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development and dissemination of guidelines relating to accessibility of mathematical texts created using LaTeX. 2. Expansion of guidelines 	Limitations uncovered in terms of various suggested solutions to accessibility investigated in the project.	Employment of a student intern to drive many aspects of the research work. This accomplished substantial	n/a

<p>increasing accessibility of texts using mathematical symbols and language created using LaTeX.</p>		<p>disseminated widely through presentations across the Scottish HE sector, and have resulted in further funding being secured to support future phases of the project.</p>	<p>across disciplines that utilise Mathematics at the University of Aberdeen, to increase accessibility in line with legal requirements.</p> <p>3. Dissemination of findings and guidelines across the UK sector.</p>		<p>development in our understanding and identified limitations in some of the suggested solutions available.</p>	
<p>LTEP project 6: Supporting international PGT students to overcome language barriers.</p> <p>Project aimed to investigate language challenges facing international PGT students and develop initiatives to support them.</p>	<p>1, 2, 4, 5</p>	<p>Impact evident through presentation of preliminary results at the Higher Education Teaching and Learning International Conference in June 2023.</p>	<p>Impact Activities/Outputs:</p> <p>1. Establishing and developing a link between the School of Psychology and language Centre to develop understanding around language barriers to PGT students.</p> <p>2. Translation of the above integrated approach into a language support package to support international PGT students</p> <p>3. Publication of the findings in a peer-reviewed article.</p>	<p>Participant recruitment has been challenging perhaps because of timing of the project and call for participation.</p>	<p>The funding to recruit two interns has been invaluable to the project and its progress.</p>	<p>Adapt intern hours to maximise the efficiency of input to the project.</p>
<p>LTEP Project 7: Understanding taught postgraduate students' learning experience and the development of</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</p>	<p>A mixed methods approach was used to explore how postgraduate taught students' academic resilience is related</p>	<p>Impact Activities/Outputs:</p> <p>1. Focus group and survey used to investigate PGT student learning experiences of the current MSc Psychology</p>	<p>For the focus group study, international students are less likely to share their opinions (perhaps due to</p>	<p>Intern students are great. Both worked efficiently and independently.</p>	<p>Would not invite both native and non-native students to attend the same focus group. The native students were</p>

<p>resilient learning skills.</p> <p>Project aiming to investigate how PGT students develop essential resilience skills to efficiently overcome academic and personal challenges, anxiety, and pressure by evaluating their learning experience and expectations.</p>		<p>to their educational background, academic and personal challenges and their learning expectations. The impact will be created by using the learning generated to guide academic approaches to teaching and supporting postgraduate taught students.</p> <p>Attending the national theme meetings is very helpful. The feedback received and questions discussed with other staff helped with the design of the project, and to reflect on other teaching activities.</p> <p>Presented a poster at the University's Annual Academic Development Symposium and presented a poster at the international Higher Education</p>	<p>programme. This focused on negative and positive aspects, and areas where support might be provided.</p> <p>2. All of these findings are being used to review, evaluate and develop the current programme.</p>	<p>cultural differences).</p> <p>Difficult to recruit sufficient students to complete the questionnaire.</p>		<p>more likely to lead the discussion and discourage the non-native students from sharing their opinions.</p>
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		Teaching & Learning Conference 2023.				
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Our approach to the Resilient Learning Communities Theme employed a collaborative, communicative and co-creative model, involving individuals across our Institution and engagement widely across the broader sector. Here, our organisational approaches facilitated engagement of staff and students in innovative and varied types of work associated with the Theme. The output from these initiatives was broadly disseminated internally and externally, creating impact within and outside the University of Aberdeen. As a result, it is clear that ALL aspects described in Table 2 worked in concert to deliver our engagement and outputs related to the Theme, where their integration was vital to creating maximum impact across the sector. We have also learned through this experience that careful consultation with staff around timing and workloads is central to the success of such initiatives. One of the biggest challenges was engaging new faces with the theme, as year on year we often have had the same individuals contributing. However, throughout this Theme we have used varied approaches to communication, dissemination and support to promote the Theme and work surrounding it, to engage the breadth of the University community (staff and students), which has successfully led to a substantial increase in the numbers of individuals involved (e.g., >75% of applicants for LTEP funding for this Theme had not previously been associated with an LTEP award).

Table 2: Ways of working/engaging in the Resilient Learning Communities Themes work

Theme process	Activities' description	Positive aspects/difference made	Challenges	Changes made during process	Hindsight - could be improved by:
Supporting staff and students to engage with Theme activity	Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP). A scheme developed to provide funding for initiatives related to the Enhancement Theme. An LTEP network was established for this Theme to facilitate discussion, practice sharing and collaboration across project teams.	Each project had its own defined output in terms of a resource, toolkit, set of guidelines. The full range of projects can be found here . Collectively, the projects have impacted aspects of the University of Aberdeen strategic vision for 2040 (Aberdeen 2040). Establishing the LTEP network created a thriving Community-based	Evaluation of project outputs and impact (individual and collective), but this was very well supported by QAAS Evaluation Consultants and their workshops/drop-in sessions.	At the end of every LTEP cycle the application process is reviewed and refined by the judging panel, taking in to account any feedback received from applicants. Establishing the LTEP network was an invaluable change, as it created a proactive forum for the LTEP project teams to	Coordinating development of an LTEP mentorship programme where experienced LTEP projects teams support new projects.

		approach that helped share practice, stimulate discussion and seed collaborative partnerships.		discuss and advance their projects.	
Effectiveness of organisational and management structures	<p>In terms of organisation and management of the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme work, we established:</p> <p>1. The Resilient Learning Communities Steering Group with oversight of the University of Aberdeen approaches to the Theme.</p> <p>2. The Resilient Learning Communities Community of Practice, an informal forum to air and share around various emerging areas and topics relating to the Theme.</p> <p>3. The LTEP network, a network for LTEP project groups to discuss challenges, solutions, and progress around their projects.</p> <p>Materials discussed in all of the above channels feed into the established University of Aberdeen</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Steering Group successfully established and oversaw the direction of University of Aberdeen work related to the Theme and ensured it aligned with University and sector-wide goals and objectives. 2. The Community of Practice engaged large numbers of staff (academic and professional services) and students in relevant and proactive discussions around key challenges and areas for practice sharing and potential collaboration. 3. The LTEP network provided an excellent forum to maximise collaboration and outputs relating to the LTEP projects. 	<p>Ensuring the cascade of information is established early in the Theme and maintained over the 3-year period.</p> <p>It is always a challenge to get new faces involved, but this was successfully achieved through communication, dissemination and promotion of activities/opportunities.</p>	<p>The combination of these changes in organisational and management structure have created a formal framework around the University of Aberdeen Enhancement Theme work. The overarching Steering Group provided the strategic oversight within which the Community of Practice, and the LTEP network, was introduced to provide an informal group which facilitated discussion and dissemination of specific projects and their progress. Not only did this serve as a useful vehicle for sharing practice within the University of Aberdeen, it also served to promote channels for collaboration and</p>	<p>Have these in place from the outset (or even prior to the beginning of the Theme).</p> <p>Link these structures to the mentorship programme outlined above.</p>

	governance structure, specifically the University Education Committee (UEC) and the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).			dissemination outside the University.	
Evaluating activity and projects	<p>QAA evaluation resources and interactive workshops & the evaluation of the LTEP-funded project interventions. Staff from across the University participated in several interactive workshops delivered by the appointed QAA (Scotland) RLC evaluation consultants. These sessions focused on the use of focus groups in data collection, designing effective surveys, and using creative evaluation methods. Drawing upon these sessions, which have been offered over the past three years has been extremely valuable to deepen our understanding of robust evaluation methods.</p>	<p>Specifically, the sessions have helped to define the methods and approaches to evaluate the funded RLC LTEP projects, which are a distinctive feature of the University's enhancement-led approach.</p> <p>We have also gone beyond the specific Enhancement Theme activities and used the evaluation methodology to inform the evaluation of other education-related activities. For example, the session, 'Fantastically Active Focus Groups' provided practical guidance for the University's new strategic assessment and feedback programmatic level review project, where focus groups are a key part of the methodology.</p>	<p>Staff from the Institutional RLC Steering Group attended these sessions, along with academic staff and several student interns. There was certainly an appetite from staff and students to attend these interactive workshops, that said the timing was not always conducive for more individuals to participate.</p>	<p>As a result of participating in the evaluation sessions, the RLC executive team has expanded our knowledge and confidence in evaluation approaches and refined our LTEP evaluation approach this year by devising a revised end of LTEP project evaluation form. This form asks clear questions linked to the Theory of Change model and aligns with the QAAS evaluation report tables herein.</p>	<p>It would have been helpful to deliver a short practical exercise based on the 'Sensational Surveys' session at one of our LTEP Projects Group Meetings to help cascade the positive aspects of this session more widely across the University.</p>

		The 'Sensational Survey' session exercise, 'The Biscuit Challenge' was also adapted and used in an action research session for our PGCert in Higher Education Teaching & Learning programme, which is undertaken by our academic staff.			
Disseminating outcomes and findings internally and externally	<p>1. The main internal vehicle for dissemination of LTEP projects was the University's hybrid Annual Academic Development Symposium (27/04/23), an internal hybrid event with external speakers and guests with the Theme 'From Surviving to Thriving: Building Resilient Learners Through Assessment and Feedback'.</p> <p>2. The main external channel for LTEP projects was this year's international Higher Education Teaching & Learning (HETL) conference hosted by the</p>	1.The Symposium provided an opportunity for 180+ staff to share practice in person, online and a mixture of both. Participants exchanged practices and ideas through a range of parallel sessions and learnt about other initiatives from the 30+ poster submissions available to view throughout the day. The event concluded with an Expert Panel discussion on all aspects of resilient learning, feedback and assessment, a short presentation from this year's Principal's Teaching Excellence Award winner. All sessions included	<p>1. Whilst the Symposium attracted record numbers, it still has limited reach to the wider staff audience. The challenge, as ever, is to encourage more staff to engage with sharing practice in this way.</p> <p>2. As an international conference, it was not possible for all staff who wanted to attend, to be funded to do so.</p>	<p>1. Inclusion of students from all levels, who had intern or institutional roles, in all aspects of the Symposium.</p> <p>2. It was decided that central institutional funding, ear-marked for enhancement activities, would be offered to enable LTEP project awardees to attend and contribute to HETL.</p>	<p>1. To review and discuss the timing of the Symposium, as some staff were still teaching and therefore unable to attend.</p> <p>2. Student interns who had worked on LTEP projects were offered funded places to attend HETL. In future, this offer would have been made earlier so that more students could attend.</p>

	<p>University of Aberdeen after winning a competitive bidding process.</p>	<p>contributions from University of Aberdeen students representing all levels of study. The Symposium created a collegiate, engaging environment for staff and students at and beyond the University to network and collaborate.</p> <p>2. The HETL conference welcomed participants from around 20 countries to three days of extensive sharing, debate, and discussion. The conference themes and overall approach embedded enhancement at its heart and actively sought contributions that aimed to enhance practice. One of the keynotes, delivered by the Vice-Principal Education (and Deputy Theme Leader) and the Student Theme Leader shared the ET history, evaluation approaches, and future for enhancement in Scotland which created interest and ongoing conversation. The HETL conference provided an</p>			
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		excellent opportunity for UoA staff to share their LTEP projects with an international audience, at the same time learning about innovative practice from across the world.			
Collaborating with other institutions/other organisations	<p>Micro-credentials Collaborations & the Exchange of Enhancement-led Practice, Tools, and Learning:</p> <p>During the past three years we have collaborated with individuals and institutions, to build capacity and assure micro-credentials standards through partnership working as an active member of the Scottish Micro-credentials Tertiary Network.</p> <p>Over the duration of the RLC theme our staff and students have also presented at the annual enhancement conferences, and this year's international HETL conference.</p>	<p>The findings and outcomes from the Year 1 micro-credential collaborative cluster alongside our activities from the Year 2 & 3 Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials has enabled the University to build expertise in this area for our own 'On-demand' short courses. In addition, we have been able to share our experiences in this area with other institutions through our contributions to the resource, QAA Micro-credentials Characteristics Statement and the soon to be published Micro-credential Good Practice Guide with its three UoA case studies. These cover a student-facing resilience short course, a staff upskilling teaching</p>	<p>Having collaborators separated geographically can make sharing ideas and managing priorities in a collaborative project a challenge.</p>	<p>The University has been keen to showcase LTEP projects and activities relating to the RLC Enhancement Theme, this has offered the opportunity to discuss key issues and challenges in developing staff and student communities of learning. Given we are celebrating 20 years of enhancement, the Centre for Academic Development decided to prepare a podcast to share our enhancement-led learning and development during this entire period, a change to our plans and a welcomed addition. A further resource incorporated student interns sharing their</p>	<p>With hindsight it would have been helpful to measure website traffic to the 3 UoA micro-credential case studies on the QAAS Enhancement Themes website. This would have permitted a better analysis of impact.</p>

		<p>course and a CPD micro-credential for external businesses.</p> <p>At the Enhancement Themes Conference events, several of the LTEP project leads disseminated their key project findings and resources to diverse audiences. This has resulted in new innovative approaches to accessibility and decolonising the curriculum practices being discussed and adopted in other institutions.</p>		<p>experiences of working on LTEP projects in a similar style of podcast. Both podcasts can be found on our institutional Enhancement Themes webpages.</p>	
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