End of Year 3 Report for:

University of Dundee

Introduction

The following report provides a response to the key questions posed in identifying the outcomes and impact of the enhancement theme's (ET) resilient learning communities' activities (RLC) over the last three years. It draws information from project activity, management of ET RLC outcomes and output as well as institutional structures. For the purpose of this report, the University of Dundee will be herein referred to as the university.

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**
Drawing on previous Themes RLC activity can be summarised broadly as: defining, understanding and building resilience. In doing so, we invited staff student collaborative engagement at a local and cross institutional level to develop impactful and sustainable outputs for our learning communities. For	Question 1, 2 & 3	Successful development of a postgraduate academic culture course introduced for all successful international PG students as interactive pre-sessional engagement tasks and the establishment of in sessional support specific	Learning experience of students have been enhanced through these pre-sessional support structures. Staff awareness has been improved in relation to cultural needs of PG students.

Prototype has informed staff of | Dissemination of work across the University to ensure all PG students are supported in an equitable manner.

Prototype took longer than anticipated due to changes in student membership and timing of activity | Increased understanding of international PG student needs to improve learning experience, develop resilience and university welcome.

Student involvement to enhance resilience building and | Initiate project as a three-year plan to ensure impact of pandemic is better understood from an international perspective.

Further planning to better anticipate the time needed to develop a prototype suitable for all |

example, the development and introduction of an online game for students aiming to develop resilience.		to students cultural and academic needs.

The development of a game-based digital learning tool to enhance student resilience. Prototype has been successfully tested and planned rollout for all students for AY 23-24.

The development of student-led action learning project to support resilience for student nurses.

Establishment of a student peer supported resilient resource | digital approaches to learning for understanding resilience building with students. Equally, staff digital literacy for resilience has been developed and enhanced.

Student nurses action research led to greater understanding of resilience during and post-pandemic. Increased peer interaction informed construction and piloting of resilience building (RB) tool.

Construction and distribution of postcards (physical and digital) providing advice and | that impacted upon commitment. Final version will be ready for 23-24 academic year. Has already shown potential to enhance the learning experiences of students.

Individual student contribution to the theme was limited to 4 people. This impacted on the time to showcase and share within institution.

Ensuring that the timing of dissemination is congruent with student induction without overloading with information, advice, and guidance. | ensure digital input is current, relevant and contextualised.

Ongoing development, with students as project leaders to enhance collaborative practice, student confidence in design and knowledge of resilience. Completion of RB tool.

Student Association fully involved in the theme's work and becoming aware of student and staff working collectively to enhance student learning experience.

Greater understanding of student's well-being and being | students across the University.

Recruitment of student nurses from a greater range of programmes in order to support action learning on a wider base.

Ensure Student Association works with programme directors and marketing to establish timely dissemination.

Greater consideration of dissemination to all life science students through school learning and teaching committee. |

			direction for support, managed by the Student Association - resulting in focused activity and shared university wide. Research of student traumatic experiences through forensic exposure provided clearer understanding of student needs and informed mental well-being elements integrated into module content for all forensic students	Challenging the tacit culture of students keeping 'stiff upper lip' when exposed to forensic material that would be traumatic to everyday experiences.	able to translate this into curriculum material promotes positive mental well-being when dealing with potentially traumatic learning environments or experiences.	
		Development of resources and educational content for forensic practitioners to deal with exposure to trauma.				
In addition to the activity described above, an important element of our activity included the integration of our institutional enabling strategies which include 'education	Question 1, 4 & 5	The establishment of a Digital mentorship platform. The development of a blended delivery	Successful production of a digital mentorship platform shared with learning and teaching committee's and student advisers.	Ensuring that digital proficiency is not a barrier for accessing mentoring tool. Ensuring sufficient student participation in	Providing an on-demand structure ensures response and support is proactive and able to implement a cross university.	Ensure communication of platform includes a demonstration at different teaching, learning committees in

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and student experience, engagement and enterprise, and digital support' with specific focus upon developing digital transliteracy.		approach to support a more diverse and digitally broad student group. The establishment of a 'Positive steps with artificial intelligence (AI)' series of recorded workshops and resources for staff, established University wide steering group, contribution to a nationwide University working group, and collaboration with local FE college.	Through project outcomes and agreement to focus further on digital mentoring. A more inclusive and fluid pedagogical approach to digitised learning has been established taking into account, location, mobility, caring roles and employability and revenue pressures. School Townhall presentation of key findings including identified staff training needs and collaboration with centre for technology and innovation in learning (CTIL), & conference presentation.	order to develop models and receive appropriate feedback. Ensuring that university wide communication and perceptions of AI as a negative element of learning technology impacts upon reception of workshops and online resources. Ensuring project focuses upon the learning experience and outcomes for students, rather than digital proficiency of staff. Ensuring that all outcomes are reported and shared within important University	Enhanced curriculum structure. Increased student staff collaboration alongside confidence to develop hybrid learning opportunities for more diverse student community. Shared responsibility throughout the Scottish university sector and increased collaboration with FE college. Institution adapting strategy and practices to enhance student teaching and learning experience.	order to provide appropriate initial training and support. Consider more effective dissemination throughout the University alongside school-based reporting and conference presentation. Approaching FE sector at an earlier stage in order to share resources and developments to enhance learning all tertiary students.

			An emerging internal and external network has increased collaborative activity with staff becoming more confident and supported in developing enhanced teaching, learning and assessment activities. Sharing of good practice on AI, including HEI's guidelines and support structures. Activity informed development of University strategy now includes 'education and student experience, engagement and enterprise, and digital support'	infrastructures alongside external networks.		

| Overarching all RLC activity and with a particular resonance with the universities EDI position, we sought to ensure institutional engagement had a specific focus in relation to student and staff well-being building upon important equality, diversity and inclusive principles. | Question 2, 3 & 4 | Successful project focusing upon decolonisation within undergraduate programmes in one school, communicated through the teaching and learning committees has led to other schools establishing collaborative decolonisation processes for their curriculum.

Increased awareness and inclusivity of gender-based violence (GBV) support services at the University through research output, leading to internal communication and published abstract | Increased understanding of colonisation on curriculum and strategic involvement in the decolonisation process includes student and staff representation. This has led to systematic undergraduate programmes review and updating materials, approaches and opportunities for meaningful engagement. Also informed University antiracist policy and open seminar series.

Enhanced GBV student services with more knowledgeable staff, student signposting | Initial understanding in order to ensure sustainable approaches that are participatory, collaborative and transformative.

Ensuring support services and relevant Student Association members are suitably trained. Dissemination of material is proactive whilst sensitive to the needs of students and staff.

Given the scale of the undertaking, the materials and staff training are being rolled out fully in AY 23-24 | University has engaged in a strategic level to focus upon decolonisation as part of a collaborative EDI approach. At programmatic level, academic staff have recognised the importance and are ensuring that curriculum developments are meaningful and representative.

The inclusion of practices and information to educate students and staff on GBV.

Having comic-based material to allow door opening communication relating to racist behaviour. | Attended to decolonisation as an EDI element alongside other important wider societal issues that influence learner experiences.

Consider further collaborative planning with external organisations and charities to benefit from local expertise and support networks.

Engage with other clinical staff from other medical based areas. |
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		The successful development of materials and training to challenge racial micro-aggression for students and staff within clinical dentistry training settings	material and more inclusive approach to supporting students, preventing harassment and the establishment of a strong and protective support network for survivors. The development of comic-based material that is accessible to students, staff and patients alongside training in non-violent communication to challenge unacceptable behaviour and attitudes.		

When considering information provided in Table 1:

What is the ONE most positive aspect to report over the 3-year period? (Evidence of effectiveness column and Suggested outcomes and impact column)

Breadth of initiatives that have enhanced resilience among our learning communities. Some of which have focused on specific approaches that translate across the University, and others have addressed contextualised learning settings and specific learner groups. Finally, some initiatives have had immediate and specific impact, whilst others have an incremental and cascading impact – see for example, positive focus on AI, which is expanded to a cross university working group.

What is the most challenging issue? (Challenges column)

Identifying effective modes of communication for both promoting ET at all levels of learning communities as well as impact of RLC project outcomes.

What has made the most difference and why? (Made most difference column)

Having students experiences central to the development of RLC projects. This has enabled both an important collaborative approach and an empathic perspective on resilience.

What would you NOT do again, in hindsight and why? (Hindsight column)

Have a clearer understanding of offering information on a range of dissemination approaches to ensure communication of ET is better embedded in the University's learning communities.

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	Having an annual small-scale funded RLC-focused project initiative that promoted staff student collaboration, communication and output.	Having cross university and student representation on the ET steering group, ensured communication about RLC occurred at strategic, departmental and local level. Thematic activity became embedded and established within the University culture.	Ensuring that communication reached all aspects of the University, especially during the transition due to the pandemic. Staffing and student changes impacted upon consistency and momentum of activity. A small number of projects started, then had to be suspended due to staffing changes.	Movement from online meetings and communication to a hybrid offering due to the pandemic. This resulted less effective communication for a short period. IT system changes resulted in some loss in communication during information migration.	Consider the re-establishment of the highlighter newsletter using a different format to ensure all aspects of the Enhancement themes is circulated. For example, as an interactive item for school learning and teaching committees, student Association and Academic Support Directorates.
Effectiveness of organisational and management structures	Established ET cross university steering group enabled effective communication, promotion and support for the theme's activity, including marrying the enhancement theme within the university's	Regular meetings of the steering group (4-6 weeks), ensured that theme activity was maintained	Having campuses in more than one location meant that hybrid meetings was an essential method for communication, however, was not necessarily the most effective when	As mentioned in the challenges section moving from online meetings and communication to a hybrid process was partially effective in	Include QAA ET presentation to incoming student Association management at the start of each academic year. Developing and approach of co-opting new

	strategies.		welcoming and supporting new staff		members as they become involved in Theme work.
Evaluating activity and projects	Individual projects submit a summative report at the end of each academic year alongside steering group review activity, engagement and successes	Project review allows clear and informative account of activity and University wide engagement.	Some projects failed to reach satisfactory completion, or outcomes are different from initial plans.	In year three, ET steering group lead provided ongoing support and communication during project to ensure project momentum and outcomes remained on track.	Make project leaders aware of ongoing support available.
Disseminating outcomes and findings internally and externally	Steering group report on ET theme activity to learning in teaching committees and executive group. Project leaders are encouraged to present project findings internally and at external conferences, networks and through publication.	Staff and students are able to ensure that project activity is shared and can impact more widely. Evidence of internal and conference presentation as well as use of electronic bulletins, VLE and formal committee structures. Representation and integration of newly formed Education Academy to support University ET team members actively championing Themes work.	Not all project leaders are confident in disseminating outcomes or utilising project activity beyond individual or group experience and expertise.	ET steering group lead provided ongoing support to disseminate findings and increase project communication remit during project lifespan.	Ensure that future projects have section indicate expectation of wider communication output. Ensure that all annual learning and teaching/academic development institution-wide events include ET involvement.

Collaborating with other institutions/other organisations	ET steering group had forged links with neighbouring HEIs in relation to project formulation and sharing of findings.	Project seminars are shared externally with other HEIs and staff use project activity to establish external networks with other HEIs.	Timescale for project activity do not always dovetail with other institutional calendar event such as assessment.	Devolving responsibility of collaboration from the steering group to project leaders to minimise communication.	Establishing networks at the start of each academic year, in relation to project and enhancement theme direction.

Which ONE process from each of those listed within the Theme processes column in Table 2 worked best? (Activities description and Positive aspects columns). Why was it the best? (Positive aspects/difference made column)

Having an annual small-scale funded RLC focused project initiative that promoted staff-student collaboration, communication and output. It enabled a number of different initiatives to be supported, as well as open communication with other project leaders about potential avenues for development and support. Further, it allowed projects to be collaborative within the academic year span, thus enabling students to have a meaningful and equitable involvement.

Which was most difficult and why? (Challenges column)

Ensuring communication about project opportunities and overall ET RLC purpose reached all aspects of the wider University learning communities. Previous use of a newsletter was effective in reaching staff and university structures, however, new digital opportunities, including comic-style approaches offer new possibilities.

Why did you make any changes? (Could be reported as Positive or via Challenges column)

As stated previously, having combined staff and student project activity ensures representation and integration of ET activity.

What would you NOT do again, in hindsight and why? (Hindsight column)

Promote project activity without further review of communication and dissemination strategy.

Summary

The University of Dundee (UoD) has a long-standing commitment to align strategy, policy and practice of improving a quality learning environment for our student and staff community in parallel within the QAA enhancement themes. Over the last three years we have introduced ideas, innovations and change to address the evolving learning and organisational context to embed sustained and effective improvements. The impact echoes our [strategic ambitions](#) and our commitment to the enhancement of student experience. The 3-year contribution to RLC from university staff and students far exceeds the boundaries of this summative report, however, the following extends beyond the focus of the above framework. Several prominent features are represented within the following section[1], which demonstrate our involvement, representation and contribution in the current and previous themes.

ET communication

To sustain such involvement with QAA ET, the University ensured that a Leadership group, an institutional lead appointment and a steering group existed and was cross-sector in its representation throughout the last 3 years. In addition, a member of the Senior Executive Group (SEG) member liaised with the working group and ongoing activity was reported regularly to the executive teaching and learning committee as well as throughout the university schools and through Dundee University Student Association (DUSA). This also cascaded to the university's Distance Learning Forum and Quality Assurance department. Student representation through DUSA, included vice president sitting on the ET leadership group – ensuring decisions and student involvement was central. This was instigated in 2009 when school student presidents signed an agreement with UoD (*Highlighter*, Winter 2009) and the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) as an ongoing agreement to ensure institutional commitment, widescale representation and a range of inclusive student practices and innovations are introduced, maintained and developed.

Consequential Outcomes

- Thematic legacy is often described in three-year cycles, noting enhanced student involvement, improved communication and dissemination with thematic recommendations. At University of Dundee, sustainability of ET transcends into new structures and across themes. For example, the previous theme on student transitions has been embedded into a transitions research centre (https://www.dundee.ac.uk/tcelt) with resources, events and research activity. Current ET RLC project on AI has been incorporated in our new Education Academy (see below). Similarly, the development of digital literacy will be embedded within the new Education Academy and a nationwide HEI working group to share good practice.

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[1] University of Dundee has recently provided 20-year feedback to QAA Scotland's (January 2023) evaluative questions and as part of our quality institutional review.

- Ensuring student voice remains central and is evident from the continued and enhanced Student Partnership Agreement with Dundee University Student Association (DUSA), project interface leading to improved inclusive practices. For example, of the current ET RLC project year 3 applications, 6 of the 12 were either led or are joint staff-student membership. DUSA played a key role (*Highlighter*, Winter, 2018) ensuring all new resources and practices are included and manged by the student body.

- During the last three years, the leadership and governance of the themes has maintained a diverse and inclusive approach to share ET events and activities throughout the institution, communicate outcomes and developments, and encourage participation and celebrate successes. For example. the introduction of student-based teaching awards, acknowledges teaching excellence and creates internal structures to enhance capacity.

- Communication of ET activity is both static and dynamic. Static in that teaching and learning committees have ET activity reported at both senior and school level. There is a standing ET working group which meets quarterly and attends/contributes to QAA events on a shared basis reporting back and sharing new and emerging practices. Having the vice-president of DUSA on the working group ensures a direct channel back to the student body and the partnership agreement. The dynamic aspects are the activities, projects and initiatives undertaken to ensure ET focus permeates throughout the university communities and beyond. For example, a current project examining the positive benefits of AI and GPT type mediums is being opened to our reginal FE partner, Dundee and Angus College for shared seminars.

- During the last six years, seed funded projects supported collaborations between students and staff to attend to the ET. Over 50 ET funded projects have focused on building resilience in our student population, introducing and evaluating mentoring for wider participation programmes, co-developing shared understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion practices, and developing enhancement-focused teaching and learning practices.

- The development of a new cross-university Education Academy has been informed and includes membership from ET steering group. Partly aimed at embedding enhancement work into scholarship in a way that supports institutional enhancement of education in line with university strategy and partly as a way of improving teaching, learning and assessment processes for all within our learning community.

Hidden outcomes

A challenge to long-term impact assessment is collating informal and hidden learning that accompany QAA ET involvement. For example, the University of Dundee supports small-scale projects congruent to the enhancement themes using ET funding. The project application process requires communication and dissemination across the University to ensure inclusivity of opportunity. In the last three years 33 applications were submitted, and 24 were financially supported. Unsuccessful applications obtained feedback, and some continued without funding. In addition, a further number of enquiries led to clarification of the enhancement themes, their role and types of involvement. What is unseen, therefore, is the non-financially supported projects which developed with partial of informal support by the QAA RLC ET team. Further, the informal discussions and ideas not reported provided inspiration, acceleration or refinement in concept by the saliency of the themes. The internal ET working group provided the mentoring and feedback to support such initiatives, even if they did not receive funding or achieve their full ambition. In summary,

then, key visible activity and outcomes, does not capture the full activity of the university's engagement with the Enhancement Themes or the unforeseen or unaccounted-for activity. Equally, the enhancement themes success is reflected in both the intended outcomes of enhancing student experience and the unintended journeys, discussions and ideas raised. Such impact reflects an ethos, new avenues of collaboration, informal achievement and meaningful experience.

Longevity

As the three-year cycle of enhancement themes concludes, the university has produced a reflective report on 20 years of enhancement themes. The three-year report is embedded within this journey, sharing the initiation and integration of quality enhancement and educational development within the University of Dundee in a number of ways. First, ensuring more effective collaboration between our Student Association, student experience and teaching and learning directives. For example: all teaching and learning forums have student representation and input; the development of adviser of studies congruent to student needs and the ever-changing contexts within our wider communities. The ongoing development of mentoring; including enhancing procedures and policies that further utilise the understanding of transitions, experience, data and attainment. The importance of connectedness and identity, effectiveness of support, and the understanding of student experience to include cultural diversity, post-pandemic support, shared experiences of our wider learning community and support from QAA enhancement theme staff.

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