End of Year 3 Report for:

Glasgow Caledonian 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
We undertook or supported a range of activities aimed at understanding and addressing the challenges faced by our students (and other staff groups). These included: - The 'Snack size self-Care' scholarship project which embedded health and wellbeing activities in the curriculum. - The development of a Learner Transition tool - Leading the Mental Health Collaborative Cluster and follow on activities to raise awareness of how health and wellbeing is impacted by curricular activities.	Q1 What will our communities look like. How can we prepare them?	The impact of COVID has been profound, with staff becoming acutely aware of how our student body is changing, both in its increasing diversity, and the changing expectations of students. The activities undertaken here have helped us understand the scope of the challenge we face and have begun to provide potential solutions. With the Scottish Principal Fellows Network, the Resilient Staff community Cluster engaged in a	• Snack-size self-care: we have evidence of these activities efficacy at pilot and now hope to reappraise and refine for potential wider scale deployment. • Persistence of staff community after cessation of funding. • The Principal Fellow Network design principles have been shared with Advance HE.	Staff changes (and Covid) after the original year of the Mental Health and Wellbeing cluster meant we didn't immediately capitalise on this work. After gaining our Student Minds Mental Health Charter status we have re-started this work with a focus on how health and wellbeing is addressed through/impacted by curriculum design/content.	The Snack-size self-care scholarship project is a good example of a simple idea, with a clear rationale that was implemented as a pilot (3 courses) and evaluated (positively). We now have a strong evidence base that is being used to inform decisions about how the approach could be deployed in other courses.	The challenge of using collaborative working in pilot initiatives was greater as a result of staff having been working online during the COVID period The resilience of staff and their mental health and well being was not considered as fully in comparison with the student experience. Community can be transformational in increasing staff resilience.

- Leading the Resilient Staff communities Collaborative Cluster.		shared focus and task that was fundamental to developing the identity of the network as a community of practice. This Cluster was being established during COVID, and the Scottish Principal Fellows Network provided a concrete mechanism and focus around which to grow a community which was particularly vulnerable at that point.				
We undertook or were involved in a range of activities focused on understanding our students, and specifically how they are changing. - The PARC Collaborative Cluster - Scholarship project exploring Post-lockdown student attitudes. - Work across the	Q2 Who are our students, How will they want to learn, How can we understand their needs, what information do we need to best support their learning.	The persistence of the PARC project through two rounds of repeat funding, as well as it continuing as an ongoing special interest group is evidence of its utility to GCU and other partners. Two scholarship projects (due to report end of June 23) and related	• Staff awareness of our student demographic.	Fitting in with strategic priorities and rhythms. For instance, our involvement in the PARC collaborative cluster was primarily in shaping thinking, but we were not able to trial any diagnostic testing ourselves during this time. Current institutional work on review of	The cross-university study of perfectionism and learner agency is set to provide (it reports in June 23) a valuable research-led picture of our students' behaviours and expectations on what is a core component of our Strategy for	For PARC GCU should have looked further for small scale test-beds rather than exploring options for more widespread deployment. This (looking for small scale pilots) was particularly impacted by COVID.

University focused on the impact of the Cost of Living crisis on our students. - Scholarship activity exploring the importance of perfectionism and learner agency.		work have explored changing student skills, attitudes and expectations and these will provide key data that can be used to consider reform to timetabling, curriculum delivery etc.		the induction experience at GCU may provide opportunities to put PARC ideas into action in the next period.	Learning.	
We undertook activities which explored new delivery formats and learner routes. - Participation in the *Exploring the Potential of Micro-Credentials and Digital Badging* collaborative cluster and follow on Network - Contribution to the review of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) National Framework. - Further work to understand what resilience means to work-based learners.	Q3 How do we capitalise, as a sector, on the attributes students bring?	The Microcredentials work allowed us to work with colleagues across the sector to understand and shape emerging practice and priorities. In IU2B (University to Business Education), recently developed programmes and our Flexible Framework are designed to accommodate Recognition of Prior Learning and micro credentialing and	• New policy and practice around RPL in place in the university, • Increased awareness of flexible delivery among staff designing such programmes.	Activities such as the sector work on microcredentials take more time to achieve tangible internal impact.	IU2B staff were involved in the review of the national RPL framework and were well placed to implement good practice in RPL.	Better engagement with our student body on theme activities.

		permit bespoke academic awards at various levels in line with our intention "*to attract, improve access and meet the needs of a wider range of learners; to redress historical inequalities; to encourage life-long learning*".				
We undertook activities designed to further our understanding of how to support an increasingly diverse population. - A scholarship project funded to explore how we can best support international PGT students. - An event organised with the Association for Black Engineers. - Surveying our BAME Student Experience - Mapping of wellbeing activity. understanding student needs. - Continued work on RPL	Q4 How do we ensure we support diverse learning communities	The BAME student experience survey laid the groundwork for our current efforts to gain the Advance HE Anti-Racist Charter. The project officer for this activity was our student partner in year 1 of the Theme. The GCU London International Student experience project worked with students who had faced the challenge of being a newly arrived	• New policy and practice in place for EDI. • Pursuit of sector Chartermark. • Awareness of activity beyond the institution • New EDI School networks and an institutional network. New EDI toolkit to support an inclusive curriculum and embed dept evaluation of EDI in dept practice embedded in quality monitoring	The sensitive nature of some content prevented wider dissemination.	The scholarship focusing on International Student experience was based on the challenges recognised at our GCU London Campus. This work is applicable back in GCU Glasgow, but has also been shared with our peer Universities who have London campuses.	We recognise a need to be continually sensitive to the changing demographics of our student cohort.

- New focus on EDI to enhance modules programmes and department		student, facing a host of non-academic challenges (visa, accommodation etc.) and having to prioritise these (over induction and the initial weeks of their PGT study).	• New Digital Accessibility Champions Network			
Making use of evidence and embedding enhancement in our processes. - Development and use of Evidencing Impact Tools - Increased emphasis on evidence and evaluation within the SfL Innovation Fund Projects and other enhancement activity. - Embedding ideas of enhancement throughout scholarly activity.	Q5 How should we anticipate, influence and respond to the changing external environment?	Several of the activities funded by theme funding and/or through the Strategy for learning Innovation Fund were concerned with collecting data about how our student body/attitudes are changing and the increased use of evidence has been vital in developing our understanding of our student cohort. The tools, specifically our impact matrix, have been used extensively by funded scholarship	• Development and deployment of tools for evidence-based decision making and evaluation, Use of tools in new contexts. • Use of new tools by a wider cohort of staff. • Emphasis on impact, in revised staff awards (Teaching impact Awards) and in wider academic development activities.	As the evaluation approach has developed through the Theme, we have tried to develop and extend the evaluation tools available locally and this has sometimes made deploying them more challenging.	The development of evaluation tools helped us think about enhancement across a broad range of our scholarship support.	While there was existing awareness of the value of evidence informed decision making, across the University the integration of evaluation into project working required a more significant culture shift. Some of the tools and practices have proved easier to integrate than others. Similarly, some activities prove more amenable to evaluation using the initial tools developed.

			projects to support their evaluation and impact planning.				

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).

The Resilient Learning Communities Theme was the right theme for the right time as we emerged from COVID. The hitherto 'challenging to explain' Theme title suddenly came to life as a term that could accommodate the many facets of post-pandemic practice: the way our staff pulled together; the critical requirement to understand the wider student experience; and the need to focus on the health and wellbeing of our students as they found their feet in the wake of the pandemic.

What is the most challenging issue? (Challenges column)

With COVID, and the subsequent challenges (return to campus, rise in plagiarism, cost of living crisis, changing student expectations and more recently the impact of industrial action), staff have spent so much of the last three years firefighting that the opportunities to engage the staff community has been more difficult. Similarly, our students' approach to learning appears to have shifted considerably over the last two years, as they emerged from covid with new expectations of their learning mode, and the balance of work and study.

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

The development and deployment of evaluation and impact tools within the Scholarship projects, and elsewhere has provided a framework to think about enhancement (and wider development) activity in terms of the impact on the individual, local context, institution and sector.

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

We'd always like to engage more staff/students and have more impact but also have to acknowledge the importance of fitting in alongside other priorities and tasks.

Notes

The Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme intends to answer the following questions:

- What will our learning communities look like by 2023? And what can we do now to prepare for them?
- Who are our current and future students and how will they want to learn? How can we gain a clear understanding of their needs? What information do we need to enable us to best support their learning?
- How can we capitalise as a sector on the attributes students bring?
- How do we ensure we are able to support our diverse learning communities? What might this mean for our staff and our infrastructure?
- How should we anticipate, influence and respond to the changing external environment? How can we engage with our stakeholders and ensure we are influencing strategy and policy both in Scotland and beyond?

In answering these key questions, the Theme will focus on four priority areas: equality and diversity; community and belonging; supporting staff and student success; and flexible, accessible learning.

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	Ultimately, primarily through tried and tested approaches. We ended up relying heavily on the Scholarship approach adopted in previous themes.	Aligning some of the work to activity around our Strategy for Learning allowed the development of a critical mass of projects that supported each other and drove each other forward to completion.	As above, with COVID, and ensuing challenges (return to campus, rise in plagiarism, cost of living crisis, changing student expectations), staff have spent much of the last three years firefighting and therefore opportunities to engage the staff community have been limited. Engaging students has also been more difficult than in previous themes perhaps reflecting their changing perception of how Higher Education fits into their life – where their primary identity may not be as a student. The changing student demographic (particularly the increase in international students at PGT has also been a factor: these students are not initially embedded in the Scottish HE approach to quality and so engaging them demands a more nuanced approach.	Changing to focus on a scholarship model.	Do the tried and tested things to begin with.
Effectiveness of organisational and management structures	Institutional Team Group. Building key relationships internally.	Reporting through institutional committees was refined in this period and our Enhancement Theme activity update is considered twice each year (as well	Meetings held online so group identity wasn't as strong as previous theme. Even after return to campus, online meetings were still used as they provide more flexible options for access.	None	Face to face or more interactive formats for meetings could be organised.

			as plans/reports being tabled).		
Evaluating activity and projects	We engaged strongly with the evaluation elements of the Theme, adapting and extending the tools made available to create an internal suite of tools focused specifically to our institutional needs: the Evidencing Impact Toolkit	Contributed to better understanding of the role of evaluation across enhancement activities and beyond.	Base knowledge/culture was low. For staff whose main role Is not enhancement/development/scholarship, finding time/prioritising evaluation is difficult alongside core role. Central support for evaluation is not scalable – which is why the tools have been developed/deployed.	Continual re-alignment of internal Tools with QAA Evaluation/Evaluators Tools/ thinking.	It would have been helpful for us to have considered Theory of Change from the start as it would have been a good model to deploy with many of our interventions/activities.!
Disseminating outcomes and findings internally and externally	All projects were encouraged to disseminate locally and beyond where appropriate. The L&T day in April 2023 presented a dissemination opportunity for enhancement theme activities to a large (>200) audience.	Projects have used the Impact Matrix to 'plan for impact' by thinking (in advance) about who they need to work with, where they need to get their projects discussed. As they finalise their outputs, project staff are again asked to consider where to disseminate and how to refine their message for maximum impact.	Sensitive nature of some content prevented wider dissemination.	None	None

Collaborating with other institutions/other organisations	External collaboration was primarily through Collaborative Clusters (led 2 Clusters and were involved in 3 further clusters). These in turn fostered new links across the community.	We really enjoyed the opportunity to work with other colleagues across the sector, especially having the luxury to do deep thinking in a collegiate atmosphere without the constraints of a strategic imperative or timeline.	Aligning external work to internal priorities and rhythms was sometimes a challenge.	Rather than trying to see an immediate impact of work, we instead focused on the wider benefits of collaboration.	None

Which ONE process from each of those listed within the Theme processes column in Table 2 worked best? (Activities description and Positive aspects columns)

Evaluation – but largely because it sits alone. An enhancement theme requires the careful alignment of many activities.

Why was it the best? (Positive aspects/difference made column)

Evaluation has the potential to change the culture at the University.

Which was most difficult and why? (Challenges column)

Supporting staff and students to engage when there had been so much disruption/so many challenges to their work and study for so much of the period.

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

We continually monitor activities to ensure they are having the impact we want. During this theme, we recognised that critical mass would be important so we aligned the RLC activities with complementary activities of the Strategy for Learning Scholarship projects.

What would you NOT do again, in hindsight and why? (Hindsight column)
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While we could have done many things better, it is important to try new ways, even if you go back to your tried and tested approaches.

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