End of Year 3 Report for:
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Table 1: Evidencing effectiveness and reporting impact

Cumulative descriptor of institutional activity/Cluster/SLP 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
Group Coaching and Action Learning Sets Year one of the theme, we invited students and staff across the institution to propose and lead conversations around the topic of Resilience and Resilient Learning Communities. This helped us raise the topic as a point of discussion and presented us with a number of possible lines of exploration. Following an evaluation of the conversations, and an analysis of the themes that emerged through these, we highlighted one particular area that we felt might allow us to discover new approaches to supporting the development of resilience within our community, namely coaching. This was an area of practice that was familiar to some of the members of the core institutional QAA team, and one that was not being strategically explored through another institutional priority. Whilst some of the team had experience of one-to-one non-directive coaching, and had gained professional accreditation to support	This project was designed to help us explore responses to the following theme questions: • 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?	The non-directive coaching approach takes the philosophical position that an individual has within them the resources they need to become successful. Whilst non-directive coaching is associated with business coaching, its roots lie in the work of Carl Rogers and his client-centred therapy model. Since the development of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and Self-Determined Learning (Hase and Kenyon, 2000), there has been a considerable body of research evidence to support the belief that individuals who are intrinsically motivated within an autonomy-supportive context are significantly better placed to meet SDT's three basic psychological needs of:	For a number of reasons, the work of this project is still in the process of being evaluated. Issues with scheduling sessions that worked for the part-time students and staff members delayed the start time for the set of coaching sessions that formed the core of this work. The last sessions were delivered in mid-June and, as we wanted to produce a robust analysis from participant interviews, we are still taking the evaluation element through our ethical approval process, a timeline that is further affected by staff annual leave. This evaluation will now not be available until the end the summer break, however, in the meantime, we are able to make a less formal evaluation of the outcomes of this work.	The main challenge in undertaking this project was simply the scheduling of times for the ALS sessions to happen. Some of the staff involved were full-time and some were on part-time contracts. Some of the students taught during the day and some in the evening. We settled on a compromise of a mix of lunchtime and evening sessions, but some interested parties were not able to make any of these sessions. This remains an issue for any group coaching model. Secondly, despite the confidentiality of the sessions, and reassurances that all participants were engaging on an equal level, students did express an awareness of an inherent and unavoidable power imbalance. The facilitator

their practice in this, as a group we had very little experience of group coaching mechanisms. Having seen the positive impact on individuals through one-to-one coaching, both as an approach to student tutorials, but also as a mechanism to support non-curricular development in staff and students, we were conscious that limitations on resources meant that the reach of this work was limited by teaching workloads and coach availability. In year 2 of the theme, we felt that a thorough exploration of group coaching processes and models would help us discover whether there was scope to expand the scope for staff and students to benefit from the highly autonomy-supportive coaching process, but within a group context. The core team went through group coaching programme with the College Development Network and gained insight into a number of group coaching processes such as the Sailboat model, the Case Clinic model, Solutions-Focused Coaching and the SCARF model. At the end of the process, we conducted interviews with all participants and produced an evaluative report highlighting the themes and identifying our priorities for moving into year three of the theme. The report sparked conversation around the best model to pilot for year three of the theme work. Whilst we saw the benefit of the models, we could		Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness. Evidence from the first two years of the theme led us to be confident that the Action Learning Set approach to non-directive coaching would lead to increased psychological wellbeing, and following our year one definition of the term, we took this as a proxy for resilience.	In practice, one larger pilot group was formed from the core QAA ET team and the PG Learning and Teaching community. In total, 8 coaching sessions were held online through MS Teams, and whilst the number of available individuals varied between sessions, each session had between 5 and 9 participants. The part of this project that focused on the Transitions coaches will be reported on in the section below this. **Short-term – Awareness and Understanding** In the ALS sessions, we typically had a mix of staff who had already developed an awareness of the ALS process and an understanding of the philosophy that underpins it. The students who joined these sessions were professional arts educators studying on the MEd in Learning and Teaching in the Arts programme, and, as such had a vested interest in models for development. Some had an experience of coaching on a one-to-one basis, but	of the sessions was the head of the MEd programme and two of the four other staff members regularly present were also lecturers on that programme. As we move forward with this provision, we need to be conscious of any potential power imbalances and how we might limit these to allow maximum freedom to engage in the process. At this point, it is not clear in what way the coaching model and facilitated Action Learning Sets might be considered as options for staff at RCS. Development sessions introducing the work will help, however there is little resource for staff development and this work does take an investment of time to gain an understanding of its potential. In the first instance, a robust analysis document and the Coaching Core Principles model will provide a way in.

see that there were challenges with some of them either for being too closely aligned to a therapeutic model (SCARF) or were potentially culturally exclusive (Sailboat model). The Head of the Transitions coaches programme engaged in a series of facilitated Action Learning Sets across the year that included participants from
 	
   ○   RCS
   ○   Glasgow City Council
   ○   University of Glasgow
   ○   Willima Grant Foundation (charity)
   ○   Semble (charity)
 	
These sessions, facilitated by Jessica Watson from the University of Glasgow, helped us refine our aspirations for our approach and following a session where we explored this model, we made the decision that we should pilot a version of this approach within year 3. It was our intention to create three Action Learning Set pilots over the year, with at least one of these including a strong contingent of students. We identified one group within the Postgraduate Learning and Teaching community, one within the Transitions coaching community and were seeking a third within another student community. The model was to set a series of 6-8 Action Learning Set (ALS) sessions with an evaluation at the end. In
			none had experience of facilitated ALS or group coaching. It is worth mentioning here that the MEd students did have experience of unfacilitated Action Learning Sets as part of their programme, however with that model, students were entirely self-directed and there was no suggested structure. These sessions allowed the students to gain an understanding of what this process was and provided them with the knowledge and skills to act as facilitators in future.
			
			Medium-term – Behaviour Change
			
			As mentioned, the *facilitated* ALS model was new to the students. We have found that the existing non-facilitated model works for some, but not all ALS groups, so part of the rationale for inviting these students was to explore the potential for a more structured approach to ALS, underpinned by a coaching philosophy. Through discussion with participants, it was clear that the students would	

each ALS session, someone would act as facilitator, someone would bring an issue and the process would proceed as follows:

1. The facilitator would welcome everyone and go over the ground rules including the need for confidentiality
2. The facilitator would invite the person bringing the topic (the coachee) to take five minutes to describe the issue/topic
3. The facilitator would then invite the other members to take a further 5-10 minutes to ask any questions they had that would help them clarify the issue at hand. These were generally closed questions aimed only at increasing understanding, and the coachee would answer these as well as they could.
4. The facilitator would then invite the other members to take 15 minutes to ask more open questions designed to provoke reflection and possibly lead to new ways of considering the issue. The coachee did not respond to these questions, but noted down those that resonated somehow.
5. The facilitator would then ask the coachee to reflect on the questions that resonated most, on any new thinking that emerged and on any actions they might take to address the issue.

welcome a more structured model and sessions to support students in learning the basics of this approach. Rather than being seen as an approach they *must* take (which would contravene the non-directive philosophy), it was felt that taking them through the process through practical sessions, and providing a model would give students the option of managing this themselves. As such, the MEd team have committed to developing sessions for all students at the September weekend sessions and the Coaching Core Principles (CCP) model (see section 4 below) will inform this.

Long-term – Realising Aims

At this point in time, the impact from the work of the theme is quite local. It takes time to build meaningful evidence to support an evaluation of a project like this, and then to package it in such a way that it translates to people new to the topic. Through the full evaluation and the

| | | | development of the Coaching Core Principles, we expect to be able to share this work more broadly with colleagues across the RCS. It is our aim that we could offer a programme of development built on this work that might standardise coaching at RCS and provide staff who have demonstrated particular commitment to the process with some for of accreditation. This is something we intend to explore more fully following the final evaluation report. | |
| This simple model would be used for each session, with the intention that each member have to opportunity to bring an issue forward and act as the coachee. Following the pilots with the core QAA team, the PG Learning and Teaching Community and the Transitions coaches, we planned a substantial evaluation of the experience, drawing on interviews with participants. | | | We believe that this work translates beyond any subject discipline and, indeed the ALS and coaching practices come from outside the arts education context, so continue to have value across the sector and in any context. Having said this, the non-directive coaching model does appear to be particularly suited to supporting students to explore and discover their own creative voice, as this is challenging to do using more traditional | |

		directive methods. As such, we expect to share this work in future at arts education conferences, especially where there is an emphasis on creativity and artist development.	
Transitions Coaching

The theme leader for RLC is the Head of Fair Access at RCS and over the last few years, has introduced an enhanced provision for non-directive coaching, and this has become part of the work of the theme. The Transitions programme provides learners from SIMD 20 areas and/or with care experience to access free pre-HE learning in all areas of the performing and production arts, with the view that this will increase their chances of going on to study at degree level with RCS or another HEI. Over the last few years, the more traditional mentoring support these individuals received has been replaced by a non-directive coaching model. Within year three of the theme, the development has included:

• **Coaching Training sessions for Transitions coaches**
We delivered three sessions (two face-to-face and one online) for the 10 Transitions coaches. These sessions were focused on helping the coaches engage at a deeper level with coaching | This project was also designed to help us explore responses to the following theme questions:

• 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? | The development of resilience is of particular interest within the Fair Access department and in particular with the Transitions students. The investment of time and resource to provide coaching for the Transitions students and development for the Transitions coaches was felt to be a major part of the strategy. Whilst it was recognised that many of the Transitions students will have developed very high levels of resilience through having to deal with a number of barriers to accessing learning in the performing and production arts, there is a recognition that this can vary considerably between any two students, and resilience should not be taken for granted by any means. Traditional mentoring models can be | A fuller analysis of this project is underway, however, for now we can report the following:

• **Coaching Training sessions for Transitions coaches**
Some of the sessions had to be offered twice as not all coaches were able to commit to the same times. However, these sessions were highly productive and positively received. As there was something inherently contradictory in delivering these sessions in a directive way, the sessions were facilitated using open-ended coaching questions designed to engage participants in critical and creative discourse. This approach appeared to work well. | Whilst there are practical issues associated with the organisation of the coaching process itself, the biggest challenge we still face is on ensuring that we have a clear and distinct message about what coaching is, and what it isn't, and that everyone involved in the process adheres to this principle. In practice, we have been conscious that some of the coaches fully embrace the non-directive nature of the relationship and are eager to access more development opportunities in this respect, and there are some that resist the non-directive nature, acting at times more as mentors or in the direction of students towards particular actions. Whilst we recognise the underlying drive to help learners is positive, we have tried to be clear that solving the |

principles and practices, and through critical conversation to arrive at a shared understanding of the intentions of coaching, how it differs from other development models such as mentoring, and on collaborating on the first iteration of the Coaching Core Principles model. • **Coaching for the Coaches** We offered coaching sessions to the Transitions coaches to help them gain an experience of what it felt like in practice to be coaches, and to aid them in their development as coaches. This offer also included the option for supervision within the coaching sessions, and encouragement for the coaches to engage in Coaching Triangles where one acts as coach, one as coachee and one as observer. • **Action Learning Sets** A programme of facilitated Action Learning Sets was planned for the Transitions coaches. • **Coaching Booking System** A new model was designed to help individuals book coaching sessions with their Transitions coaches, and to monitor the number of sessions that were taking place.		less effective where the student does not have the same lived experiences, cultural reference points or access to opportunities that the mentor has. Coaching builds resilience through supporting the individual to begin to take ownership of their own learning journey and to have agency over what and how they learn.	• **Coaching for the Coaches** Only 5 of the 10 coaches took this up in practice, raising questions about the reasons behind this. Participants didn't engage in the Coaching Triangles. In future development we will consider making some aspects of this mandatory, and this may be an area we would consider. One coach has gone on to further study, gaining an accredited qualification in coaching from Relational Dynamics 1st. • **Action Learning Sets** In practice, only two Action Learning Set sessions took place. Despite a high level of engagement from the coaches in attendance, there was not sufficient buy-in for further sessions. This requires some reflection and a deeper analysis of the reasons behind this.	student's issue is not the point of coaching, and that doing so limits the degree to which the student can develop the autonomy, self-determinism and self-efficacy that are a natural and designed outcome from a coaching experience. Partly this will involve better communication about the role, however the Coaching Core Principles document should help in this respect. Should we decide to go down the route of aligning this with some form of accreditation, we might need to develop a way in which to evaluate coaches and help them guide their practice as professionals.

• **Transitions Coaching** Coaching was offered to 40 Transitions students in their year of application (to FE/HE programmes), and for 15 RCS UG/PG students who had come through the Transitions programme. The offer was for a series of 5 coaching sessions each. Historically, this offer was mandatory and this year students were invited to opt-in. • **Coaching Resources** A new online portal page was launched to begin to start acting as a repository for a self-coaching process, with resources and signposts **https://portal.rcs.ac.uk/fairaccess/self-coaching/**			• **Coaching Booking System** This appears to have been moderately successful, however a number of students and coaches are bypassing the system, so further work is required to ensure the system is used in practice. • **Transitions Coaching** 30 students engaged in coaching across Transitions and UG, and on average each student undertook 3.6 sessions, with a total of 98 coaching sessions over the year. The onus was on the students to dictate the frequency of coaching sessions, however there was a notable drop off for those opting for monthly coaching sessions rather than fortnightly sessions. Nonetheless, reflections from coaches and students suggest that the levels of engagement in the coaching itself were significantly higher and the sessions were	

			more productive now that these were no longer mandatory for all Transitions students.	
			The Transitions team developing a series of professionally made short videos to promote the coaching offer in an engaging and informative way.	
			Short-term – Awareness and Understanding The new provision for this year has increased awareness and understanding in Transitions coaches about the practice at a deeper level.	
			Medium-term – Behaviour Change We are seeing the change in behaviour through the actual coaching sessions and from the content of the development sessions.	
			Long-term – Realising Aims By continuing to develop this provision and through the parallel development of	

			a Coaching Core Principles model, and potential accreditation, we can affect more radical change within the Transition area and act as an inspiration for other areas within RCS.	
Coaching Core Principles Model As a tangible outcome for the work of this theme, it was our intention to develop a model for coaching that could be applied across the institution wherever coaching was being used. The intention was for this to be communicated in the form of a diagram and to highlight the dimensions of coaching practice. The inspiration for this comes from the recent redevelopment of the Advance HE Professional Standards Framework, with a coaching-based focus.	Again, this is part of our overall response to the questions: • 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?	Whilst this model will predominantly be used by staff coaching students, our intention is to use it as the basis of communication to students about what to expect from a coaching experience. As such, we will frame the coaching around the ways in which it is designed to support them to become increasingly autonomous and resilient.	At the time of writing this model exists in a draft form, but the forthcoming evaluation will help inform the next stage of the development. Initial input from the Transitions coaches has informed some of the content, however it is too early to see any impact from this work, however we hope to see it impact on **Short-term – Awareness and Understanding** The model will help to communicate the principles, values and practices of a coaching approach to help individuals make a decision on whether to engage in coaching **Medium-term – Behaviour Change** The model will then support the development of	The current challenges are simply time-based, as more time is required for the development of this model.

			individuals who wish to become coaches or to apply a coaching approach to their teaching practice. The model can be used to track the development of each dimension. **Long-term – Realising Aims** The model will serve as the basis for accrediting new coaches in the RCS model. This will allow us to ensure a parity of coaching experience across an expanding provision, and to clearly articulate what to expect from an RCS coach.	
Arts Educator Podcasts Over year 3 of the theme, the institutional lead for the Enhancement Theme has been recording and sharing a series of podcasts with arts educators. Whilst one driver for this work is to disseminate practice from graduates of the MEd in Learning and Teaching in the Arts, it also includes podcast interviews from arts educators across the globe, some of whom have significant international profiles e.g., Eric Booth. These podcasts are based around a set of coaching questions designed to explore the	Again, this is part of our overall response to the questions: • 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	This resource is designed to show the multivarious ways in which arts educators support learners. It is targeted at arts educators and helps them to both develop their practice and see alternative ways to resolve challenges.	**Short-term – Awareness and Understanding** On a basic level, this resource gives listeners an insight into how others think and act, and will help them see opportunities for the development of their own practice **Medium-term – Behaviour Change** The intention is that some the content might change how people behave in their	Whilst there is a challenge to finding the time to undertake, process and release the arts educator interviews, the bigger challenge is in disseminating this resource more widely. This is happening, but a move to a hosting site that provides access to Spotify and Apple is required in the middle-term.

guest's goals, barriers, values and strategies. This resource provides prospective applicants with an idea of what students might do on the programme, it provides arts educators with an insight into how other art educators think and act, and it provides current students with a rich resource to reference and reflect on, but on a more subtle level, it also provides an insight into how non-directive coaching-based questions can elicit deep and though-provoking responses. https://portal.rcs.ac.uk/arts-educator-interviews/	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?		arts education practice, but on a deeper level, the hope is that the way in which the questions are asked in a structured non-directive way, where the interviewer has no influence over the response, will demonstrate the richness of a non-directive approach. **Long-term – Realising Aims** Ultimately the podcast resource has more direct aim to act as a repository of arts educator values, goals and strategies that will continue to grow and demonstrate a diversity of approaches to learner support in the arts. The more subtle aim of influencing how individuals think about how non-directive questioning can be useful, it harder to measure and can only be considered as a side aim in practice.	

When considering information provided in Table 1:

What is the ONE most positive aspect to report over the 3-year period?

The efficacy of the facilitated Action Learning Set model as an autonomy-supportive process to aid individual development and group cohesion

What is the most challenging issue?

Engaging the wider RCS community in the work of the theme

What has made the most difference?

Working with a group of self-motivated, engaged individuals in the exploration and critical reflection of the work

What would you NOT do again, in hindsight?

Whilst it certainly wasn't perfectly executed, we learned from each aspect of this, so there is nothing we wouldn't do again

We want to know about the process of engaging in the Resilient Learning Communities Themes work. Please address the following areas within the template provided:

Table 2: Ways of working				
Theme process	**Positive aspects/difference made**	**Challenges**	**Changes made during process**	**Could be improved by:**
Supporting staff and students to engage with Theme activity	From the outset, we made the decision to invite staff and students to engage with the work of the theme, on the basis that they had some existing interest in the topic. These individuals acted as advocates for the work of the theme and some were involved in the realisation of the work.	Engagement with the work of the theme has historically been challenging for a small institution. Staff involved in the theme have worked hard to find ways to integrate into their existing roles and to find ways to set aside meaningful amounts of time to more deeply engage in the work. Students on production and performance programmes typically have very full timetables and the ongoing impact of Covid made it difficult to engage additional individuals to the work of the theme.	During the theme, we added an agenda point to the Programme Committee meeting structure specifically to update on the work of the theme and to invite people to get involved. The theme leader attended a number of student meetings for the musical theatre students, to share more details on this and the hope was that this might lead to more involvement. We recorded a short presentation on the work of the theme for the last programme committee cycle but again, did not receive any responses.	This is a challenging area. The people who self-selected to be involved in the work of the theme were highly engaged throughout and benefitted from that involved greatly. As mentioned above, the production of the full evaluation and the Coaching Core Principles document should help us disseminate this work more fully, especially if we can align it to the Learning and Teaching Strategy that is currently in development.
Effectiveness of organisational and management structures	Beyond the sharing of this work at our Quality and Standards Committee, and our student Programme Committees, the management of the theme was undertaken by the Theme Leader and the Institutional Lead.	Organising time within a very busy institution with individuals on different timetables of activity can be very challenging, however, through perseverance we were able to ensure that the bulk of what we planned was able to take place.	We decided to accept that the constituency of the Action Learning Set would change from one session to the next, and to see the process as more of an experiment than a test.	We could have used some of the funding to pay for a part-time administrator, so we would consider this in future projects.

Evaluating activity and projects	Whilst we are engaged in a process of more formal evaluation, we have found that evaluating the individual sessions in the sessions has been a very rich process. Typically, within the Action Learning Set sessions, we run through the model for approximately 45 minutes and then have 15 minutes for reflection on how we felt the session went. This would normally start with the person bringing the issue but would open into a wider analysis of the model and the questions it raises about our practice. In the Transition coaches' session, integrating reflecting evaluation within the delivery of the development sessions, provide again to be very rich and informative.	Capturing the key points from reflective evaluation can difficult and can leave one individual feeling they can't fully contribute	During this year, we asked one of the key members of the team who were involved in the Action Learning Sets and was also a Transition coach, to conduct the overall evaluation. As such, he took on the role of capturing key points throughout the process, and it will ensure that these smaller points can be included in the fuller evaluation.	Including a reflective evaluation segment for all sessions as a standard.
Disseminating outcomes and findings internally and externally	We feel we are quite early on in the dissemination stages and have no particular achievements to point to as yet.	The Action Learning Set process is quite subtle and it needs to be experienced to gain an insight into the nature of the practice.	Over this year we have developed our practice and a clearer understanding of the ALS process and coaching provision more broadly. With this learning we are now in a position to develop the Coaching Core Principles model and associated material. We could not have done this at the same point last year.	Our intention is to build an advocacy base within the RCS that will centre around the Coaching Core Principles and potential accreditation. The clarity that we intend for this piece of work will make it easier to communicate the essence of what coaching is and what the ALS process can bring to learning. Once we have this, we intend on

| Collaborating with other institutions/other organisations | Through the Action Learning Sets we have linked with individuals from other institutions and organisations. This was a minor part of the process, but instrumental in helping us find an approach that would work for our ALS provision.

We have also had conversations with individuals in other institutions who have some form of coaching provision.

The initial work with the College Development Network has continued to inform our practice. | We felt that this work required quite an insular focus to allow a deeper focus on the subtleties of this work and how we might best use it in practice. We wanted to keep this located within our own institution to maximise the likelihood that it would have an impact on our learners and staff. | We increasingly added elements of evaluative reflection to ensure that we were able to maximise on the input of those involved. It is worth mentioning that the MEd students also brought insight from their own institutions, including Glasgow School of Art and Perth College. | Moving into the next stage and sharing practice with other institutions once we have our completed evaluation and Coaching Core Principles document |
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Which ONE process from those listed in Table 2 worked best?

Group evaluation in practice after Action Learning Set sessions

Why was it the best?

It allowed us to challenge assumptions and find new insights in the moment

Which was most difficult?

Disseminating progress

What would you NOT do again, in hindsight?

Have the two leads take on all of the practical organisation and scheduling

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