



End of Year 3 Report for: University of Stirling

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>Practical steps were taken in the first and second years of the theme to welcome students into the learning community of the University. These included pre-arrival and transition workshops, while the Students' Union supported students with mentoring through its STEER scheme and buddying through its Pandemic Pals initiative to address concerns about isolation in the context of Covid.</p>	<p>What will our learning communities look like by 2023? And what can we do now to prepare for them?</p>	<p>The actions taken in years one and two were effective in their own right, reaching a wide number of students (as detailed in earlier reports).</p> <p>The project in year three provides a more holistic overview of the elements which the University needs to prioritise to sustain/enhance the institutional sense of learning</p>	<p>S5 and S6: by surveying and engaging with a wide range of staff and students, a key impact of the final year project was raising awareness of the enhancement theme across the University.</p> <p>L1: as the final year project has reported in early June 2023, its findings and recommendations can now be reflected in the</p>	<p>Like all universities, Stirling has experienced considerable disruption during the theme period, not least due to the impact of the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>Other factors that have had significant impact on student engagement and perspectives on learning include the cost of living crisis, with the</p>	<p>The Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme has provided a vehicle for engagement across the University of Stirling, bringing together a wide range of staff (senior management, academic and professional services) and students (Students' Union sabbatical officers, module and faculty</p>	<p>As noted in the first column, the University is committed to tracking student and staff perceptions of learning community over the coming years.</p> <p>An external appreciative enquiry report in December 2020 provided a starting point but the University has not yet had the opportunity to deploy consistent methodology over</p>

<p>In the final year of the theme, the University sought to better understand what the concept of resilient learning communities meant to students and staff (academic and professional services). An appreciative enquiry project engaged with nearly 250 individuals over several phases to articulate the characteristics and values of a learning community and then identify actions that could enhance/sustain that community.</p> <p>Focus groups refined the recommendations with specific actions identified under three interrelated thematic areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships (within peer groups and across groups) 		<p>community. Although actions from this project will be implemented from 23/24 onwards, the broad recommendations can now be incorporated into the University's new Learning and Teaching Strategy which is due to be published in late 2023. As such, the project will influence the University's approach to learning community throughout the forthcoming strategy period.</p>	<p>University's new Learning and Teaching Strategy.</p>	<p>majority of students needing to work alongside their studies.</p>	<p>representatives). As such it provides a model for successful enhancement work beyond the life of ET.</p>	<p>subsequent years to provide longitudinal data to evaluate.</p> <p>The environmental context as meant that each year had unique dynamics, especially the focus on remote learning and teaching in AY 20/21.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and Teaching Activities • Learning and Teaching Environment <p>The University now has a baseline from which it can assess the effectiveness of actions to enhance the sense of learning community over the coming years.</p>						
<p>The direct contribution of students to the University's enhancement initiatives over the three-year period of theme has provided invaluable evidence and insight to inform developments both in the short and longer term.</p> <p>The role of the students appointed to support the rapid development of</p>	<p>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?</p>	<p>The University's move to online provision during the pandemic was commended in its ELIR Outcome Report in April 2021.</p> <p>It also resulted in strong satisfaction scores despite the challenging context. As such, the University improved its position in the</p>	<p>M3: students were empowered to innovate and explore alternatives to the University's current practice to address the new context of the pandemic.</p> <p>M4: the contribution of students directly influenced the way in which learning and teaching was</p>	<p>In 2022/23, the University of Stirling Students' Union was not able to elect a Vice President Education.</p> <p>This meant that the Union President effectively took on the duties and responsibilities of VP Education in addition to those of her</p>	<p>The student involvement in shaping the University's approach to online learning during the pandemic and subsequently hybrid learning.</p>	<p>The Students' Union project on personal tutoring in AY 22/23 provided valuable insight into the effectiveness of the current University approach.</p> <p>Translating this into recommendations for development of personal tutoring at Stirling may have been</p>

<p>online provision in the first year of the pandemic was critical to ensuring the student experience would be of a high quality and giving staff confidence that the new modality of learning and teaching would be effective.</p> <p>Likewise, the project conducted by The Students' Union in the final year of the theme, researching student and staff perspectives on personal tutoring at Stirling has provided the University with valuable data to inform the ongoing development of its approach in this area.</p>		<p>overall NSS rankings, moving up two positions in the institutional table to 26th in 2021, a position sustained in 2022.</p> <p>The findings and recommendations of the Students' Union report on personal tutoring, will help shape planning in this area including the University's new Learning and Teaching Strategy which is due to be launched in late 2023.</p>	<p>rapidly developed, embedded and scaled during the pandemic.</p> <p>L1: the University's ongoing commitment to supporting high quality digital education as part of blended, hybrid or fully online provision has been directly influenced by the contribution of students over this ET period. This can be evidenced in significant investment in the technology used in classrooms as part of the University's Learning Spaces project, the first phase of which is being implemented for the beginning of</p>	<p>appointed role, including coordinating the ET project on personal tutoring.</p>		<p>more targeted if this stage had been co-created with senior managers who had greater understanding of resource implications and other related developments regarding institutional plans for student support.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that there were resource constraints experienced by the SU with no VP Education in AY 22/23 and this limited the time available for evaluation of the project findings before the sabbatical officers reached the end of their term.</p>
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			<p>AY 23/24.</p> <p>Likewise, the impact of more explicit learning design during the pandemic, co-created with students, will help shape the University's more systematic approach to modular and programmatic curriculum design from AY 23/24 onwards.</p>			
<p>One of the University's three ET projects in 22/23 directly addressed the question of supporting diverse learning communities. This builds on the Decolonising the Curriculum work of the previous year.</p> <p>The Inclusive Curriculum Working Group oversaw</p>	<p>How do we ensure we are able to support our diverse learning communities? What might this mean for our staff and our infrastructure?</p>	<p>Over a three-year period, the University has progressively raised awareness and understanding of the importance of inclusive curriculum.</p> <p>While it is recognised that there is much</p>	<p>S6: Inclusion and intercultural awareness have been foregrounded in a range of contexts for academic and professional services staff. The University is developing a course on intercultural awareness for all staff that will cover generic</p>	<p>During the final year of the theme period, the University experienced a significant demographic shift in the make-up of its international student body.</p> <p>Prior to the pandemic, international student</p>	<p>Practical measures for academic staff to make changes to their programmes, for instance support from subject librarians to help decolonise reading lists.</p>	<p>An earlier introduction of a more systematic approach to curriculum design may have facilitated inclusive practice in a wider range of courses.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that responding to the pandemic was the catalyst for</p>

<p>several activities that raised the profile of this theme with staff and students. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - workshops that featured expert academics from other universities and first-person accounts from international students in the form of video interviews, ensuring issues were communicated as directly and as authentically possible - providing a wide range of resources on the University's Learning and Teaching SharePoint site to support inclusive practice - the publication of an Inclusive Curriculum Manifesto - Library staff providing guidance to academic staff on how to decolonise their reading lists 		<p>more work to do and that the University will avoid complacency, the wide sense of ownership of work in inclusive curriculum provides a strong basis for the next strategy period where fostering and maintaining an inclusive community will be an institutional priority.</p>	<p>aspects for all roles as well as specific considerations for different staff groups, depending on the nature of their engagement with students.</p> <p>M9: there is strong evidence of academic staff taking action to revise their practice, for instance in decolonising reading lists.</p> <p>L1: the publication of the Inclusive Curriculum Manifesto is a key institutional step in setting the expectations for new and revised programmes.</p> <p>Supporting this, inclusive practice</p>	<p>recruitment had been largely dominated by the Chinese market but the University's current cohort is drawn principally from South Asia (India and Pakistan) and West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria).</p> <p>This change has required the University to consider how best to support this changing demographic, recognising students' specific cultural and educational backgrounds.</p> <p>In addition, the University is focused on supporting staff (both academic and professional</p>		<p>adopting more inclusive design approaches as mainstream practice.</p>
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			features strongly as a core element of the University's curriculum design project that will be rolled out from AY 23/24 onwards.	services) to have a greater understanding of what they can contribute to intercultural awareness in their respective roles.		
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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)

Timing of the theme means outcomes can inform the University's new Learning and Teaching Strategy which is due to be published in late 2023.

What is the most challenging issue? (Challenges column)

Adapting to the significant environmental shifts (pandemic, cost of living crisis, changing profile of international students)

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

The collaborative approach of staff and students during the pandemic and subsequently during enhancement projects. This has provided evidence for enhancement, credibility for actions taken and furthered a sense of institutional community.

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

Some projects would have benefitted from greater alignment with institutional priorities, other concurrent learning and teaching activities and a greater understanding of resource implications for project recommendations. In hindsight, more explicit co-design and co-delivery of projects with senior University representatives and the Learning and Teaching Enhancement team may have addressed these issues.

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:
<p>Supporting staff and students to engage with Theme activity</p>	<p>A wide range of methodologies were used. Working groups, such as that on inclusive curriculum, included a broad spectrum of staff and student representatives. Focus groups allowed for more detailed engagement while surveys reached a wider constituency of staff and students.</p>	<p>Quality and quantity of data for most projects helped to provide confidence in project recommendations/outcomes.</p>	<p>Reaching students beyond those who have already volunteered as module or faculty representatives.</p> <p>Student survey fatigue</p> <p>Lack of capacity in Students' Union during AY 22/23 without a VP Education.</p> <p>Lack of capacity in academic community during the pandemic for "non-essential" activity</p>	<p>Some changes were made to final year project looking at perspectives on learning community. Initial plans for engagement would have allowed students to more freely respond to theme questions but it was decided to manage student participation to ensure responses were sufficiently informed by project aims.</p>	<p>Capturing some student responses to focus groups as audiovisual material to enrich/illustrate dissemination.</p>
<p>Effectiveness of organisational and management structures</p>	<p>The establishment of the new Learning and Teaching Enhancement team, integrating academic development and learning technology, provided a vehicle to ensure enhancement</p>	<p>Good internal communication within Learning and Teaching Enhancement and across faculties. For instance leading to linkage of international experience in one faculty to wider inclusive curriculum project.</p>	<p>Lack of capacity to support all projects and lack of experience in supporting institutional enhancement initiatives.</p>	<p>Dr Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka, an Academic Development Partner within Learning and Teaching Enhancement, took over as chair</p>	<p>Assigning individual members of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement team to all projects to support project delivery and</p>

	projects were aligned to other institutional learning and teaching developments.			of the Inclusive Curriculum Working Group mid-way through the project.	evaluation.
Evaluating activity and projects	Activities and projects were evaluated largely by participants themselves.	Greater sense of ownership by project teams and ability to determine own timescales for evaluation.	With unprecedented environmental challenges due to the pandemic, and personnel changes, it was not always possible to deploy a consistent methodology for evaluation.	Changes in personnel during theme period meant that a variety of evaluation approaches were used.	Consistent support from Learning and Teaching Enhancement for all projects will help more systematic evaluation going forward. However, the challenging environmental context and changes in key personnel meant this would have been difficult to achieve over theme period.
Disseminating outcomes and findings internally and externally	Annual reports on outcomes of ET activity have been provided to formal university committees. Outcomes of some projects, such as	Awareness of Enhancement Themes among key internal stakeholders.	Changes to academic development personnel mid-theme have restricted opportunities for dissemination of more recent	N/A	More digital storytelling, making the outcomes of projects engaging for both internal and external audiences.

	<p>Inclusive Curriculum, were communicated via the main student and staff bulletins, supported by linked resources on the University's Learning and Teaching SharePoint site. Poster campaigns highlighted the outcomes of some projects such as the work on academic integrity.</p> <p>Some work was presented at sector events including the QAA Enhancement Themes conference.</p>		projects.		
Collaborating with other institutions/other organisations	<p>Leadership of the Decolonising the Curriculum cluster helped to inform internal action planning and culture.</p>	<p>Access to a wider community of practice at the inception of a new project.</p> <p>Specific outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - development of Enhancement Theme resources on inclusive curriculum supporting sector practice. - reshaping the University's PG Cert HE curriculum, for 	Changes in personnel leading to lack of continuity.	The University experienced a full changeover in its academic development staff during the theme period. This brought with it fresh insight into key theme areas and practical application of some of the	Potential for some other projects over the three year period to benefit from more explicit collaboration.

		instance foregrounding Ngozi Adichie's "danger of the single story". In turn this has influenced the practice and research of Stirling staff.		conceptual frameworks that had been developed earlier in the theme, for instance around decolonising the curriculum.	
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Which ONE process from each of those listed within the Theme processes column in Table 2 worked best? (Activities description and Positive aspects columns)

Using a wide range of methodologies to deliver projects.

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

Range of methodologies led to engagement from a broad cross-section of the University community and a strong evidence base to support project recommendations.

Which was most difficult and why? (Challenges column)

Evaluating impact of projects and activity. No consistent evaluation framework agreed at beginning of projects, making it harder to identify whether aims had been achieved.

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

When the chair of the Inclusive Curriculum Working Group stood down half-way through the life of the working group, it was agreed that they would be succeeded by Dr Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka from Learning and Teaching Enhancement. Tanya's university-wide remit as an Academic Development Partner meant that she already had a solid grasp of how different parts of the institution had embraced the inclusivity agenda. Combined with her expertise in inclusive pedagogy, this ensured the group maintained its momentum and was able to deliver a range of outcomes that will shape the University's ongoing approach in this area.

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

Not only record text-based contributions from students and staff to focus groups. Audiovisual resources would have provided more opportunity for dissemination, foregrounding the authentic voice of contributors.

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