



TLG Bulletin, December 2021 – Goodbye 2021!

Welcome to the TLG Bulletin - your quick guide to the activity of the Theme Leaders' Group (TLG). Please feel free to share this with any colleagues who might find it valuable.



We are nearing the end of 2021. Despite another year of change and challenge we are immensely proud of everything our colleagues are achieving through their Theme work. As the Themes are owned and driven by the sector, we rely on the energy and commitment of our staff and students working together. This has been such a strong feature of Theme work in 2021. Our Theme Leader, Professor Clare Peddie, welcomed colleagues to the second Theme Leaders' Group

of session 2021-22 in December, particularly members attending for the first time. We had a lively TLG session with three small group discussions.

Professor Peddie gave a short presentation giving colleagues a summary update on progress across all Theme activities: institutional work; equality, diversity and inclusion projects; flexible, accessible learning projects; the Student-Led Project; Themes evaluation; and the 2022 Enhancement Conference.

Institutions have submitted their year 2 work plans and these are available, along with an overview, on the institutional [web pages](#). With around 80 projects in progress, institutions have continued to use the Theme to support their responses to the pandemic. Work is progressing from scoping, exploration and discovery to implementation and with a focus on evaluation. Institutions are looking carefully at the spread of work between whole-institution and smaller, local projects, and the balance of work between supporting continuing activity and starting new projects. As the pandemic continues, so does the importance of student and staff wellbeing, which is highlighted as ongoing work by several institutions.

The Anti-Racist Curriculum project is running again in year 2. If you haven't reviewed [year 1 resources](#), please do so! Phase 2 work is well underway and as part of that we will be piloting and evaluating the year 1 resources. To support the year 2 work we will be commissioning workshops and evaluative activity; further details are in the [expressions of interest](#).

For the **Supporting New Scots** project, we have completed a scan of practice on information publicly available online from Scottish higher education institutions' web sites. The **Student Mental Wellbeing** work has been delayed and we look forward to that starting in early 2022.

Abertay University continues to lead the **Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community** (PARC) project, which is aimed at better preparing the individual student to be successful; through a direct approach to targeting and supporting student need and utilising diagnostic testing of students on pre-arrival/arrival. In year 2, the work focuses on:

- running diagnostic tests in each institution and sharing of models of practice
- evaluation and research into outcomes (quantitative and qualitative)
- disseminating findings at events (conversation and conference).

The **Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning and Experience** (RPL) project is moving forward at pace. Professor Ruth Whittaker, Pro Vice Chancellor (Education and Students), University of Brighton has agreed to chair the Expert Review Group. Ruth led the development of the previous version of the RPL framework whilst at Glasgow Caledonian University (prior to moving to Brighton) and continues to undertake work on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council in this area. We really welcome Ruth's expertise on this project. The Group will be reviewing the existing Framework and identifying the extent to which it needs reworking.

We are delighted to have Professor Jonathan Powles (University of the West of Scotland) chairing the Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials and Dr Anne Tierney (Heriot-Watt University) will act as Deputy Chair. The Network will support the **Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland** project and has participants from: the 2020-21 Micro-credentials collaborative cluster; the Characteristics Statement advisory group; the RPL project expert group; and colleagues from HE and FE and sector bodies. A key task of the Network will be to develop a micro-credentials glossary to bring about a shared language to aid understanding amongst key stakeholders (including students, employers and PSRBs) and help develop the portability of these qualifications across the tertiary sector.

We really appreciate the time and effort colleagues invested in completing surveys relating to the RPL and micro-credentials projects and analysis of the responses will be a key discussion item when the Expert Review Group and Network meet.

Following a short presentation from our sparqs colleague, Megan Brown, TLG members participated in a small group discussion activity aimed at supporting the **Student-Led Project**. Building on the work of Year 1 of the Student-Led Project, which focused on Digital Student Communities, this year's project will consider how students and staff can support equity for diverse student communities to allow students to get maximum benefit from their learning opportunities in a more blended teaching environment. **Promoting the Equity of the Student Learning Experience** is particularly important as there is recognition that learning and teaching delivery will not return to pre-pandemic experiences.

Over the past few months the work of our **Theme evaluation** consultants has focused on supporting sector colleagues in evaluating the current Theme. Stella Jones-Devitt and Liz Austen held an informal drop-in session in November 2021 to answer queries on evaluation methods and practice. Colleagues benefitted from the session with discussion topics including: evaluating mini-projects; short- medium- and

long-term outcomes and building confidence in approach; and baselines. Our consultants also delivered a two-hour online workshop on the 23 November on [Using Creative Methods in Evaluation](#). There will be a second online drop-in session in January 2022. Alongside the work to build staff capacity, the Expert Reference Group (ERG) met again to discuss lines of enquiry in evaluating 20 years of Enhancement Theme activity. Stella and Liz previewed their prototype Universal Evaluation Framework at the most recent ERG; it's a really exciting development and we will be sharing this more widely in early 2022!

A final small group discussion session at TLG allowed members to explore successes and challenges in extending the impact and influence of the Enhancement Theme. The [Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee](#) was very interested in this aspect of the Theme and we will be reporting back to SHEEC when it meets next year.

Our regular 'Air and Share' and final Q and A session provided an opportunity to share successes and challenges. Colleagues really welcome the informal 'Air and Share' approach; there is a demand for more networking and discussion. To this end, we plan to support some informal networking sessions between TLG meetings in 2022.

We are delighted to let you know that our **Enhancement Theme Conference 2022: Resilient Learning Communities - Inclusive, Flexible and Accessible** will be a hybrid event. For colleagues attending in-person we will be at The Studio in Glasgow, right beside Glasgow Central rail station. Whether you are participating in-person or online, we will be delighted to see you on the [8 and 9 June 2022](#)!

The QAA Scotland team wish you all a restful and peaceful break.

TLG is a group central to delivering the Resilient Learning Communities Theme. The group leads, supports and evaluates the work undertaken for the Theme. Please get in touch with your TLG [institutional staff and student representatives](#), [Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee](#) representative or [QAA Scotland](#) if you want to know more and get involved in Enhancement Theme activity.

