Enhancement Themes

QAA Scotland

An Introduction to the Enhancement Themes

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About QAA Scotland

QAA Scotland is part of the UK-wide Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). We develop and undertake quality assurance and enhancement activities to reflect the needs of higher education in Scotland.

We work in partnership with the Scottish Government, sector agencies and all higher education institutions in Scotland. This allows us to support and shape the continuing enhancement of learning and teaching in Scotland. At the heart of our work is the commitment to ensure all students in Scotland receive a quality education.

About the Enhancement Themes

The Enhancement Themes are a programme of activity that involves the entire higher education sector in Scotland. Staff and students at all levels can collaborate on one or more topics to improve strategy, policy and practice. The Enhancement Themes are a key component of Scotland's quality enhancement strategy.

While the work is coordinated by QAA Scotland, it is owned by the sector.

Since their introduction in 2003, the Enhancement Themes have explored areas of emerging interest and value to the higher education sector in Scotland and helped drive positive change.

By participating in Enhancement Themes projects, educators benefit from collaboration with peers outwith their own institutions, explore enhancement-driven research in diverse fields, and help shape best practice.

Similarly, students can directly contribute to Enhancement Theme projects, and also steer the theme through representation at committees. Student-led projects within each Theme allow students to select and explore areas of particular interest to them and help enhance the student learning experience in Scotland.
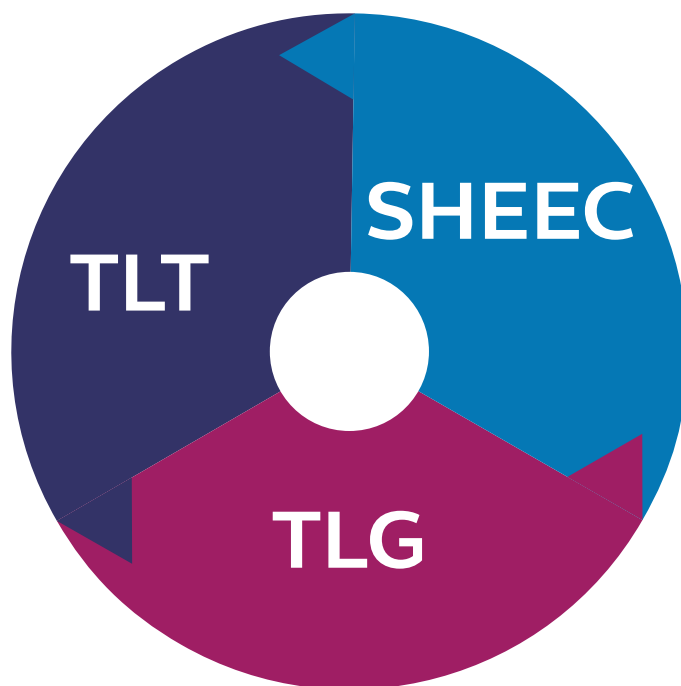
> Theme activity involves a variety of work: projects within an institution, collaborative work between a few institutions on a common area of interest, and big ideas that bring together the whole sector.

QAA Scotland formally contracts with each Scottish institution to deliver on a plan of work and funding is released at key points during the year. Institutions' plans and reports are key deliverables that help us identify common topics where the sector is investing effort and also distinctive approaches.

> More information on the current Theme, as well as outcomes from the Enhancement Themes work, are available at www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk

Structure of the Enhancement Themes

Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee

The Enhancement Themes are directed by the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC).

SHEEC ensures that higher education in Scotland continues to be at the forefront of developing and enhancing the student learning experience and student success.

Every Scottish institution has a representative on the committee, who are senior colleagues from across the sector with institutional responsibility for learning and teaching. They have a key role in supporting the embedding of effective enhancement-led approaches to managing quality in their higher education institutions. There are also four student members and observers from partner organisations such as sparqs (student partnerships in quality Scotland) and NUS Scotland. The group meets three times each academic year.

Theme Leadership Team

Each Enhancement Theme is led by the Theme Leadership Team (TLT). It is a small group comprising academic and student leaders along with officers from QAA Scotland. The Team directs the work of the Theme and leads the wider Theme Leaders Group (TLG). It meets six to eight times throughout the academic year.

Theme Leaders Group

Critical to the success of each theme is the Theme Leaders Group (TLG), which determines, supports and evaluates the work undertaken for every project within each Theme.

Every Scottish higher education institution is represented on the TLG by a member of staff and a student. The TLG staff member leads their institution's work on the Theme, working with their Institutional Team which typically comprises a mix of academic staff, professional services staff and students.

Also represented on the TLG are observers from sector bodies such as Advance HE, sparqs, the Scottish Funding Council, and Universities Scotland.

The TLG meets four times every academic session.

How QAA Scotland supports Theme activity

Support from QAA Scotland, including funding, can be provided depending on the needs of the individual project. Our dedicated team of Quality Enhancement Specialists is available as needed to work with project leads and help coordinate the activity. Project leads are also provided with Enhancement Theme branding and templates to support their work.

Evaluation of the Themes

Does the Enhancement Themes work make a difference? That's a question crucial to Theme activity. We investigate this important aspect by integrating evaluation into all Theme activity. From institutions' work to sector projects, it's important we understand what works well, what doesn't, what impact each Theme has, and the cumulative legacy of the Enhancement Themes in Scotland.

How to get involved

All Scottish higher education institutions work on the Themes in their own institution, and contributions from staff and students across the institution at all levels are vital to help the Enhancement Themes succeed.

Each institution has a staff and a student member on the Theme Leaders' Group (TLG). You can view the TLG membership list on the Enhancement Themes website to find out who to contact at your institution.

You can also attend Enhancement Themes events which showcase the ongoing work across the country within the theme and support networking and discussion.

Collectively we can make a real difference to education in Scotland. Join us and let's see what we can achieve together.

Sign up for the quarterly Quality Enhancement News e-newsletter
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Visit: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk