

QAA Enhancement Theme: Student Transitions

Edinburgh Napier University institutional plan of work 2016-2017

The University's institutional plan of work on the Theme this year continues to be driven by the four key objectives of our Strategy 2020¹. Work on the Theme at Edinburgh Napier University is co-ordinated from the Department of Learning & Teaching Enhancement and led by Julia Fotheringham (Senior Lecturer and Senior Teaching Fellow) who is the designated institutional Enhancement Theme leader. She will be working in consultation with Prof Brian Webster-Henderson (Dean of Learning and Teaching), the Institutional Enhancement Theme Team, and assisted by research assistant Sidonie Ecochard. We will continue to engage with students and the Edinburgh Napier Students' Association to work collaboratively on the Theme and to encourage active participation in the Student Network.

Institutional work: international transitions

The focus for the various strands of activity this year will remain international transition, based on the interest of the Institutional Enhancement Theme Team, the important number of international students enrolled on programmes at Edinburgh Napier University and the findings of last year's research project *International Students Transition Scoping Project*, funded by QAA (Scotland). We received a funded place to present the findings of the *Scoping Project* at the HEA conference: Ready for retention, hosted by the University of South Wales in July 2016.

Strand 1: International Students' Attitude to Support Provision

Our main focus this year will be on international student transition support. Last year's research project *International Students Transition Scoping Project*, funded by QAA (Scotland), allowed to map the existing support practices available to international students, as well as gaps and duplications in provision. Building on last year's study, we will now undertake an ambitious research project to determine the support needs of international students and how to best address them – in terms of format or time for delivery for instance – as well as their attitude towards existing provision.

QAA funding will enable the University to employ a Research Assistant to work on this project and, in doing so, generate our evidence base for enhancement of practice in this area. The recruitment process has been completed for this post and the project has been granted ethical approval. The results from this study will be disseminated through a peer-reviewed publication, as well as presented at conferences. The findings will also provide the basis for a range of interventions to be implemented in the future.

¹ To grow our academic reputation, to internationalise our work, to build innovation enterprise and citizenship, and to deliver an excellent personalised student experience.

Strand 2: Workshops in Schools – Student Stories of international transitions

A series of workshops for staff are planned for individual Schools, contextualised to explore particular disciplinary challenges and to suggest strategies and tactics for effective learning and teaching as students make their transition onto local programmes here in Edinburgh. The workshops use a dialectical format, gathering School staff and international students for round table discussions and experience sharing. Short video student stories were produced from interviews with students who have made the transition from Hong Kong to Scotland and provide the starting point for workshop discussions.

Strand 3: Collaborative activity

Edinburgh Napier University is developing existing relations with partner colleges to support articulating college students and review articulation agreements for smoother transition onto our programmes.

Furthermore, Edinburgh Napier University will be looking to build new partnerships with Scottish HEIs to work on the theme this year. Plans are in the early stages to collaborate with the University of West Scotland (UWS) in respect of international student transitions, by sharing research and examples of best-practices. First meeting took place in October 2016.

Strand 4: Friendship Family Programme

We are also launching the Friendship Family Programme this year, the purpose of which is to give international students a chance to have first-hand experience of the local culture and way of life in a staff family, in addition to life on campus. At the same time, the staff families get an opportunity to learn about the students' home countries and cultures.

Strand 5: Multimedia student-facing resource

We will develop a Moodle Page, in partnership with Edinburgh Napier Students' Association for our international students, responding to the gaps identified in last year *International Students Transition Scoping Project*. It will be available to our students before their transition onto our programme and will introduce them to their Student President, the main activities of their Student Association, as well as some other events and ways to make friends when arriving in Edinburgh. Through this page, they will also be directed to the different support available to them.

Strand 6: Staff and student engagement with the Theme

We are planning for staff and students to engage with the Theme through participation in existing and successful practices, as well as through the launch of new and original programmes.

Existing practices:

- Our Institutional Enhancement Theme Team Members, composed of staff and students, will be invited for regular meetings this year.



- Our Transition Blog is still up and running and available to both staff and students.
- Our workshops will enable a conversation between staff and students on the theme of international student transition.
- Staff and students will once more be encourage to attend the QAA's annual Enhancement Theme conference, as well as participate in the abstract reviewing process.

Original programmes:

- Staff and students were also invited to Inclusivity Week, taking place in October 2016, which included a session focused on international student transition.
- We are also launching the Friendship Family Programme this year, to facilitate an exchange between staff and student around the experience of international transitions.
- Our staff and students will also be involved through the student reflective commentaries.
- Finally, our students will be involved in the theme through the Student reflective commentaries and the Multimedia student-facing resource to be developed this year.

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