

Developing and Sustaining a Quality Enhancement Culture: The Scottish Higher Education Experience

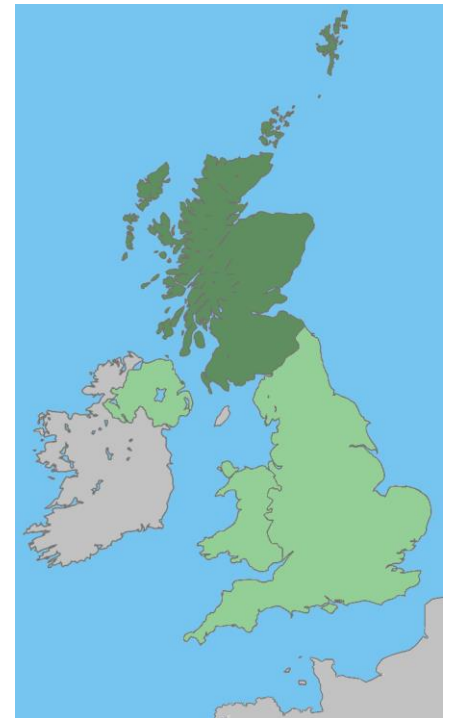
Prof. Frank Coton
Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching)





Background: Scotland

- a devolved parliament
- its own education system
- 19 higher education institutions including:
 - undergraduate curriculum based on four-year honours degree programmes
 - no undergraduate student fees



Where we have come from

- By 2003, the UK HE sector had gone through the considerable pain of struggling with an overly bureaucratic Quality Assurance framework
- Individual subjects had to undergo periodic external reviews which
 - were hugely expensive
 - stifled innovation – focus on process and compliance
- It was in this context that Scotland made the move from a quality audit culture in HE to a quality enhancement culture



- **Enhancement** -taking **deliberate** steps to bring about **improvement** in the effectiveness of the learning **experiences** of **students**.
- Aims to enhance the student learning experience and encourages student engagement and participation
- Emphasises partnership & collaboration



- **away** from top-down compliance processes to participative and critical supported self-evaluation;
- **away** from audit and towards improvement;
- **away** from ruffling the surface of HE practices and towards permeating the system;
- **away** from mechanistic models based solely on inputs and outcomes and towards more sensitive forms of evidence of cultural change, while maintaining rigour and challenge’.

Principles of the National Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland

Responsibility

- institutions in Scotland manifestly take a responsible approach to the maintenance of quality and standards;

Ownership

- Ownership of quality and standards issues rests with the **institutions** and not with SFC or the Quality Assurance Agency;

Commitment to Enhancement

- institutions are committed to the principle of continuous quality enhancement;

Student Involvement

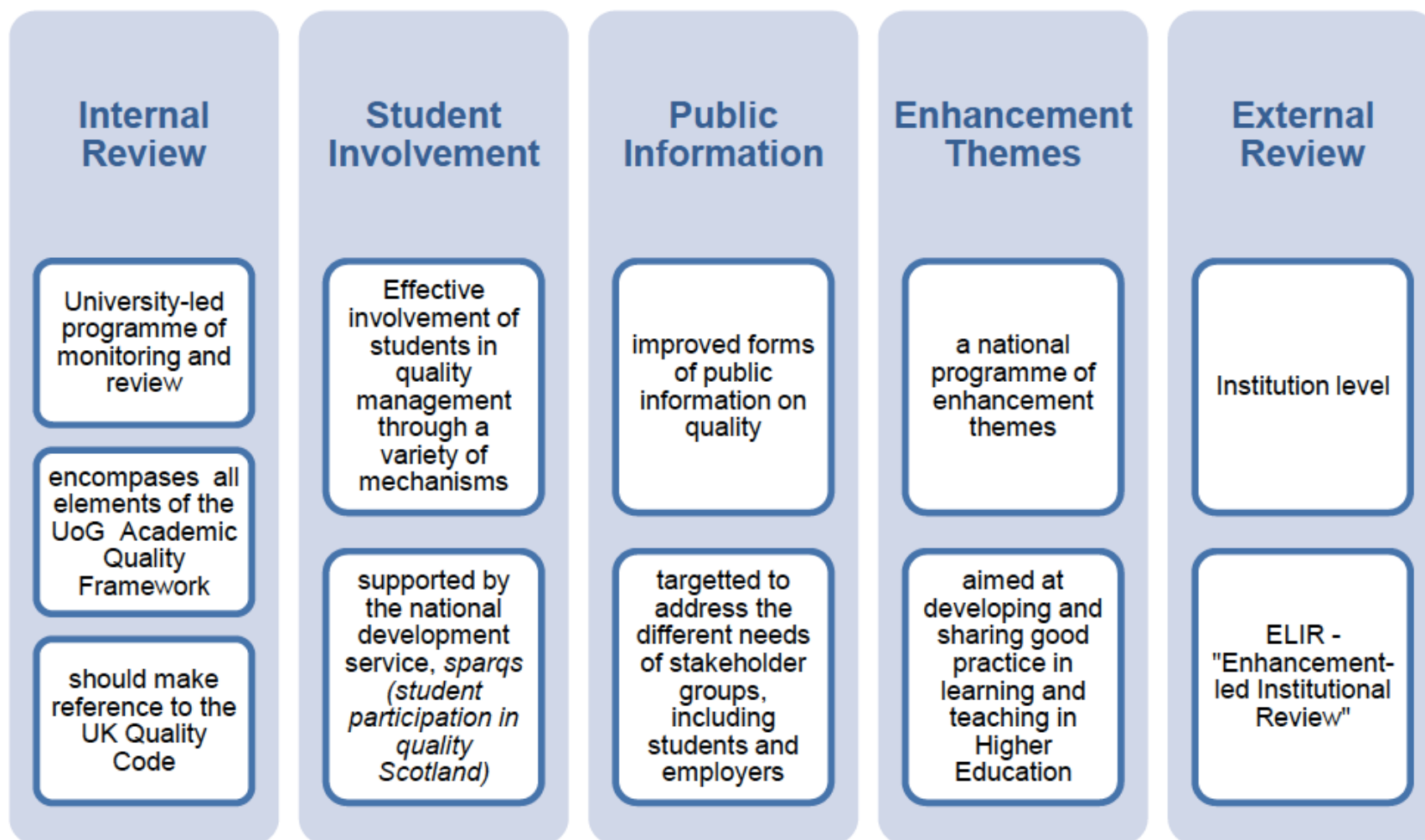
- students have a major involvement in internal and external quality processes;

Public Information

- students and other stakeholders have access to relevant public information about the nature and quality of provision.

The Framework within which we operate

Elements of the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland



The University of Glasgow Quality Framework

Regular

Course and
Programme
Design and
Approval

Student
Feedback and
Representation

Staff Student
Liaison
Committees

Annual

Annual
Monitoring

External
Examining

Periodic

Periodic Subject
Review

Graduate School
Review

Administrative
Review

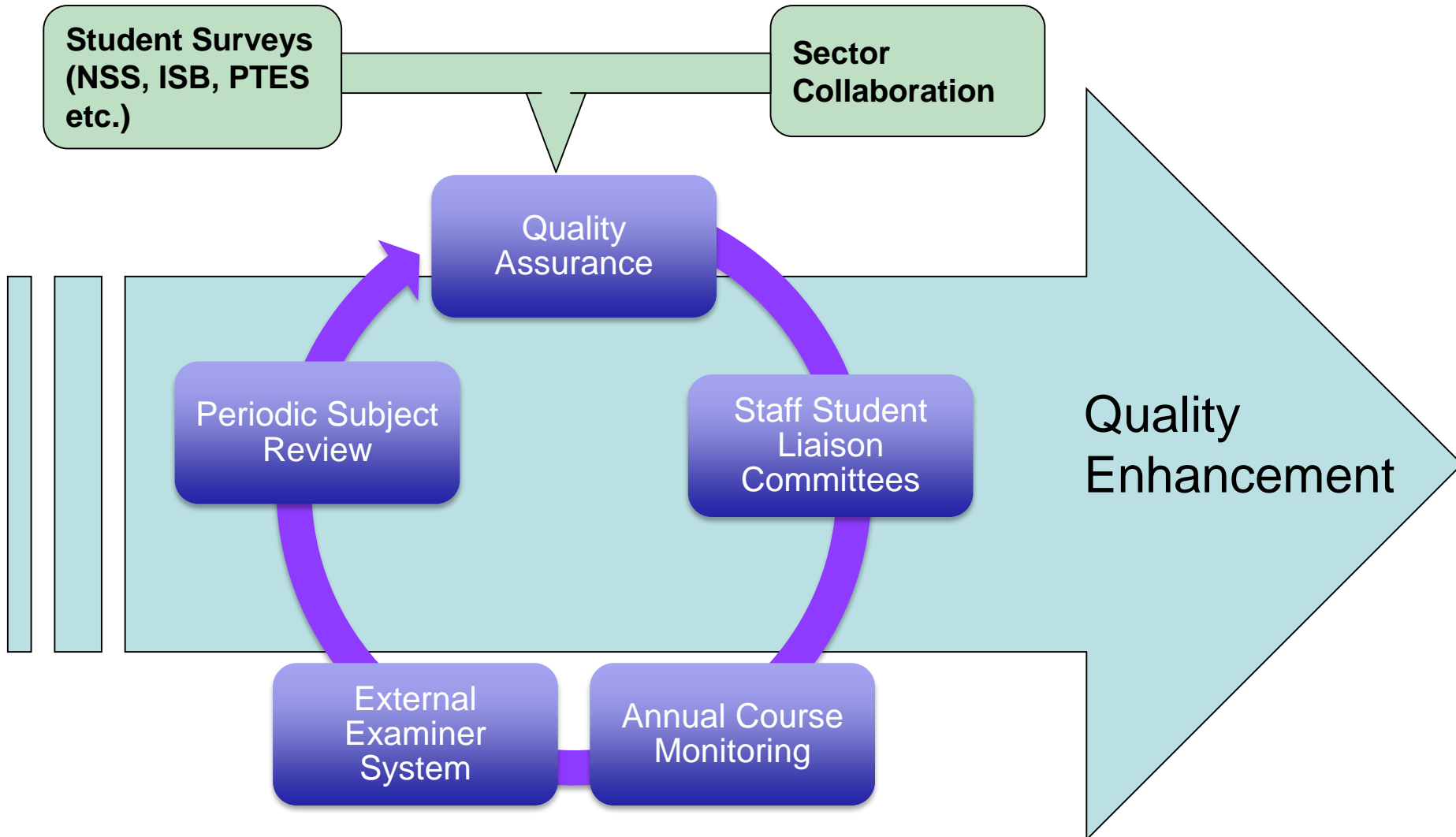
External

Accreditation by
PSRBs

Enhancement-
led Institutional
Review



The Quality Processes as Mechanisms for Enhancement





The Enhancement Focus

Focus on
Enhancement

Education Policy
and Strategy
Committee

Focus on
Assurance

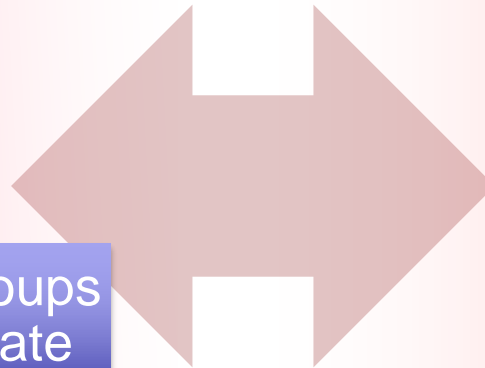
Learning and
Teaching
Committee

Academic
Standards
Committee

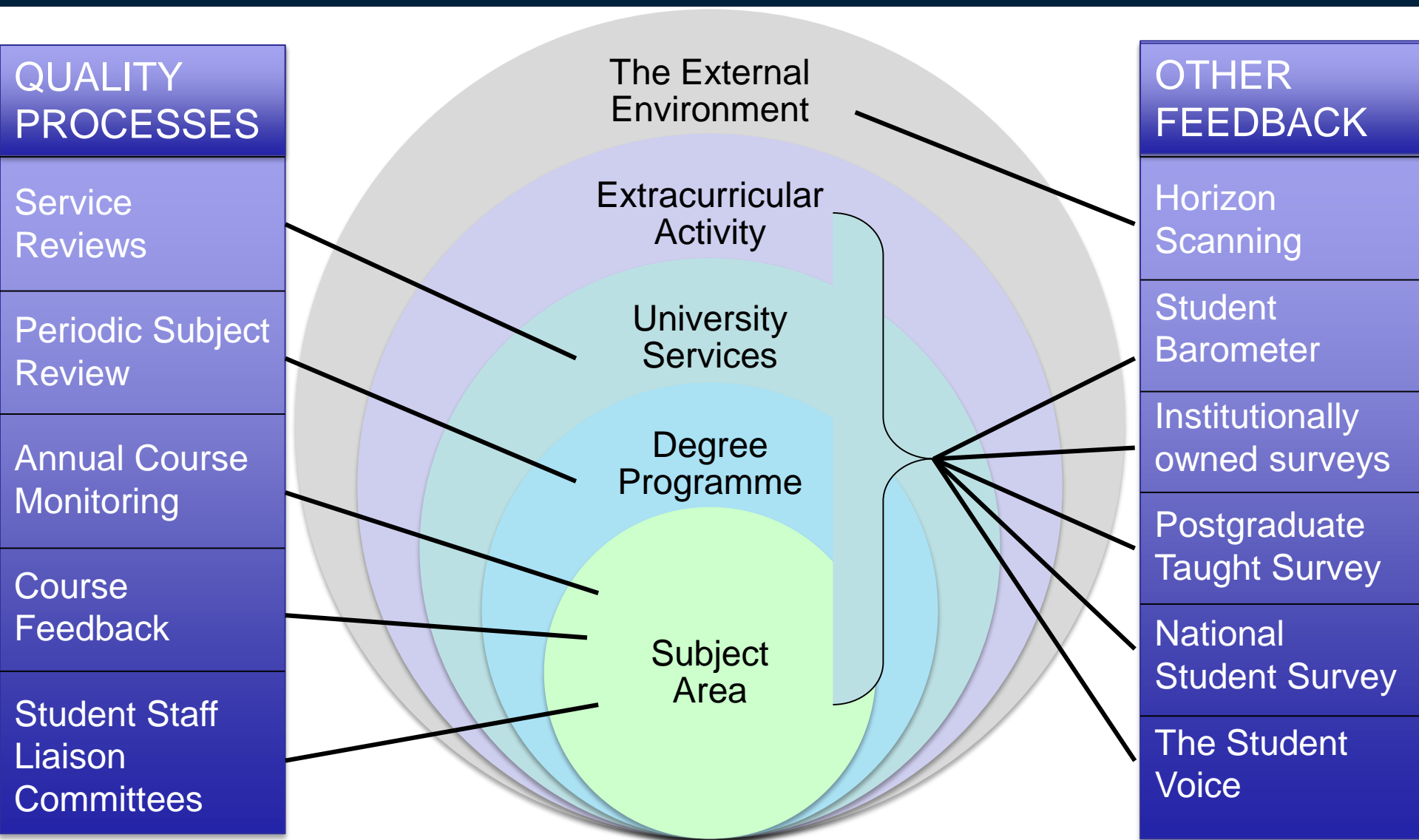
Working Groups
e.g. Graduate
Attributes

Quality Officers
Forum

ASC Sub-
committees



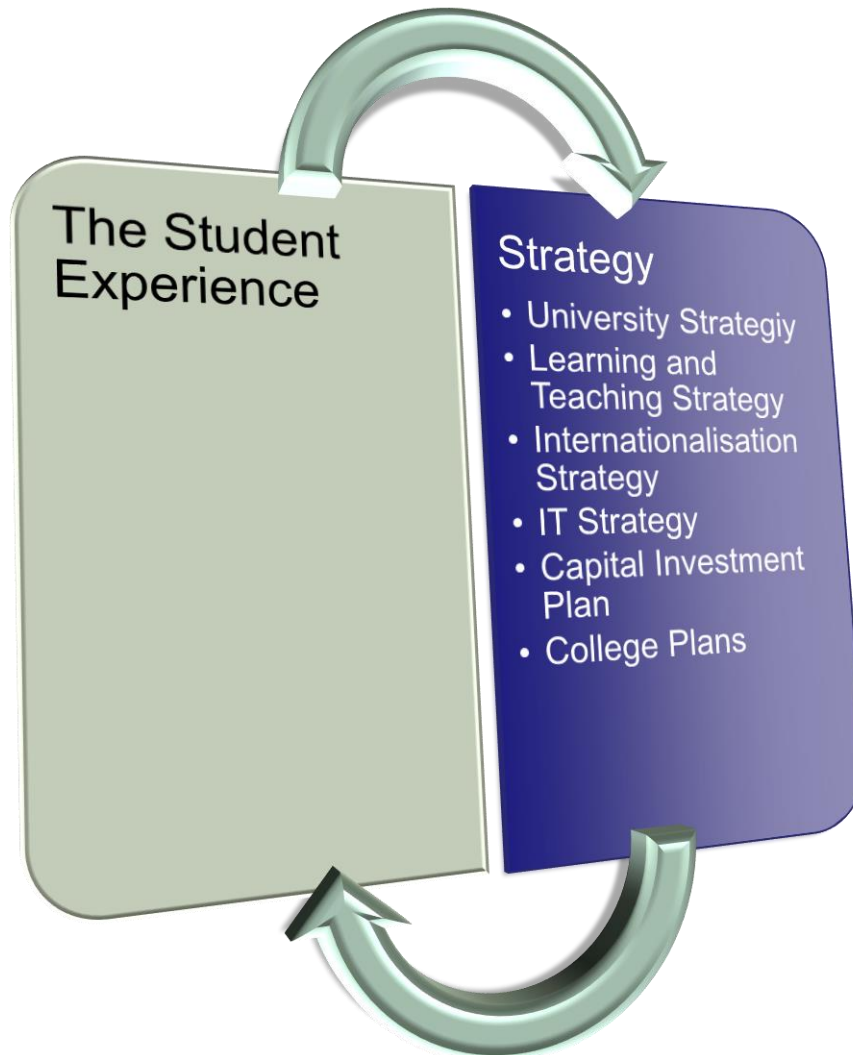
Understanding Enhancement





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Delivering the Student Experience: Embedding Enhancement in Strategy





Strategic Enablers



Dental School Teachers Win
Teaching Excellence Award

Academic
Promotion,
Reward and
Recognition

Learning and
Teaching
Development
and other
Strategic Funds

Learning and
Teaching Centre

Learning and
Teaching
Conference and
Seminars



Learning and
Teaching Centre
Southpark House

External funding
and initiatives



Student
Engagement



Teaching Awards
(Student and
Staff-led
schemes)





The National Enhancement Themes

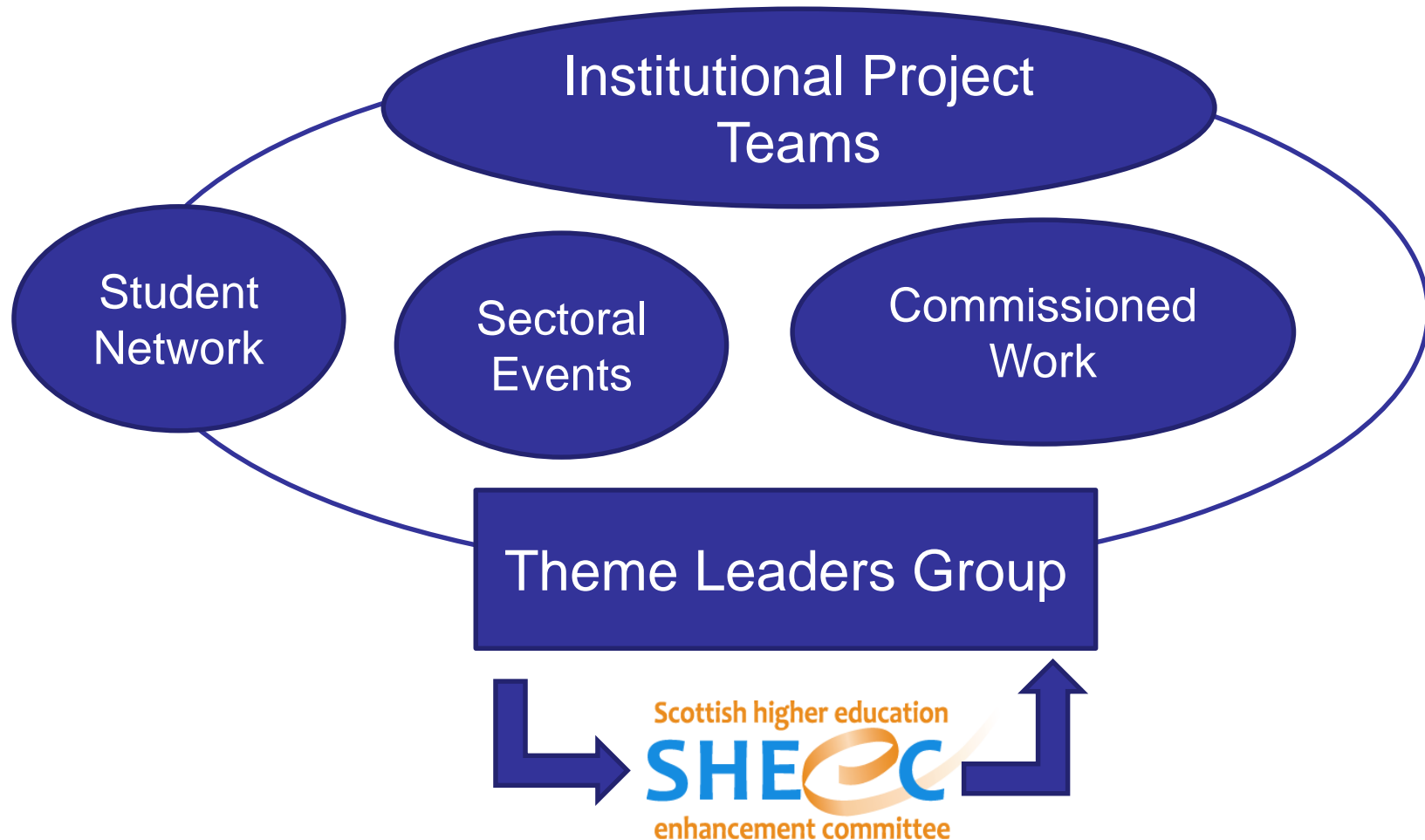
- Enhancement is embedded within our core strategy and is supported by established processes
- The Enhancement Themes do not shape our enhancement activities but rather contribute to and extend existing activity
- They provide an opportunity for our staff to work with and learn from other institutions
- They also provide opportunities to identify and take forward sector-wide approaches to issues

The Enhancement Themes

- Planned and directed by the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) on which ALL Higher Education institutions are represented
 - SHEEC decides the broad topic for each Theme including the order in which Themes take place
- Topics of interest to the Scottish higher education sector as a whole
- They are explored and developed with the aim of enhancing the student learning experience across the sector
- Funded by the Scottish Funding Council
- Managed by QAA Scotland



How the Enhancement Themes Run





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A Diverse HE Sector



UNIVERSITY
OF ABERDEEN



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



University
of Glasgow



University
of
St Andrews

UNIVERSITY OF



DUNDEE



UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING



The Open
University



Royal Conservatoire
of Scotland

THE GLASGOW
SCHOOL OF ART



RGU ROBERT GORDON
UNIVERSITY ABERDEEN



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean



Abertay
University



A Diverse HE Sector

- The significant diversity in our HE sector is actually a real advantage
- Different institutions often face similar issues in different contexts – cooperation leads to deeper understanding of the limitations of specific approaches and can inspire the evolution of new strategies



A key lesson from the Enhancement Culture

- Quality Assurance is relatively straightforward to do in near isolation (external examiners and quality audits aside). This is because the focus tends to be on the refinement of what we are doing now.
- Quality Enhancement is difficult to do in isolation. It requires an outward-looking approach where considerable value is gained by working with and learning from the experiences of others.
- The Enhancement Themes provide a focus for cooperation and collaboration

Linking to the Enhancement Themes

- Assessment and Integrative assessment (2003-04)
- Responding to student needs (03-04)
- **Employability (04-06)**
- Flexible delivery (04-06)
- First year: engagement & empowerment (05-08)
- **Research-teaching linkages: enhancing graduate attributes (06-08)**
- **Graduates for the 21st century: integrating the Enhancement Themes (08-11)**
- Developing and supporting the curriculum (2011-14)

Case Study: Graduate Attributes

- **Employability (04-06)** Linked well with institutional focus on work-based learning which kicked off an internal working group looking at employability and PDP within UoG. Carried on until 2008 with the publication of the Employability Strategy Review.
- **Research-teaching linkages: enhancing graduate attributes (06-08)** Started a genuine internal debate amongst staff on how Graduate Attributes are developed through research-teaching linkages
- **Graduates for the 21st century: integrating the Enhancement Themes (08-11)** Brought the work of the two previous themes together in the development of the University Graduate Attributes Framework.

GA Working/ Action Group

Institutional
Senior
Management

Careers
Employability
Advisers

Academic
Staff

Educational
Developers

International
Students'
Adviser

Students

Project aims

- Develop a University-wide approach to Graduate Attributes that
 - » enhances student personal development
 - » recognises attribute development is continuous and pervasive
 - » allows personal/subject specific variations in attribute competence
 - » can be embedded in and beneficial to curriculum design and review
 - » enhances student engagement with the curriculum
 - » encourages reflection by students.....and staff!
- Use data generated to inform the University Learning and Teaching Strategy and assist in decisions concerning the implementation of this strategy (2011-2015)

Attributes implicit in original Learning & Teaching Strategy (2006-10)

Academic abilities

1. Capable of Engaging in Enquiry-led learning
2. Capable of Independent and Critical Thinking
3. Breadth and Depth of Knowledge Base within Discipline

Personal qualities

4. Motivated, Confident, Adaptable, Resilient
5. Capable of Self-Evaluation and Reflection
6. Capable of Effective Professional Interaction

Social aware-ness

7. Entrepreneurial and Career Aware
8. Equipped for Global Citizenship
9. Ethically-Minded

2009-2011

- Design and populate - graduate attributes matrix (represented then current activity within the institution) – one-to-one consultations.
- Student-led, enquiry-based project - qualitative data gathering concerning staff and student perceptions of graduate attributes and their development in a research-intensive institution (30 staff & 30 students interviewed).
- Electronic questionnaire focused on senior academic staff, at the level of Dean / Associate Dean / Chair of central committees and new lecturers.
- Focus group sessions with Students' Representative Council
- An employer consultation process

2011-2012

- Graduate Attributes and international students (student-led project funded by HEA)

- A team of paid students acting as *student enquirers* over the course of a 9 week project.
- Undertaking interviews with staff and students as a form of action research:
 - Each student enquirer to interview at least 3 staff and 3 student subjects each
 - Each interview subject interviewed twice to assess attitudinal change over time
 - Student enquirers asked to participate as research subjects themselves
- Key outputs: staff and student guides to the benefits of developing graduate attributes



What did the consultations find?

Strong agreement on which attributes were most important to develop:

Top 10 Staff Attributes

Independent & critical thinking
Communication & presentation
Motivation
Confidence
Subject knowledge
Problem solving
Research skills
Self-sufficiency / independence
Self-reflection
Team workers

Top 10 Student attributes

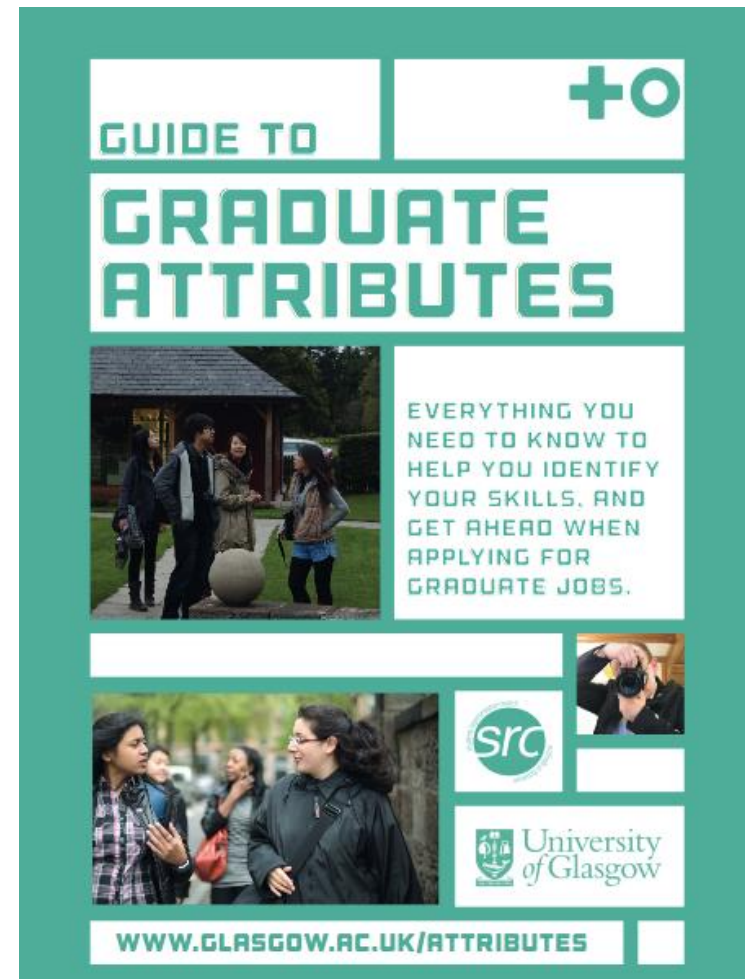
Communication
Confidence
Motivation
Teamwork
Professionalism/interpersonal skills
Research skills
Self-reflection
Independent and critical thinking
Self-sufficiency / independence
Subject knowledge



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Our Graduate Attributes

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/students/attributes/>

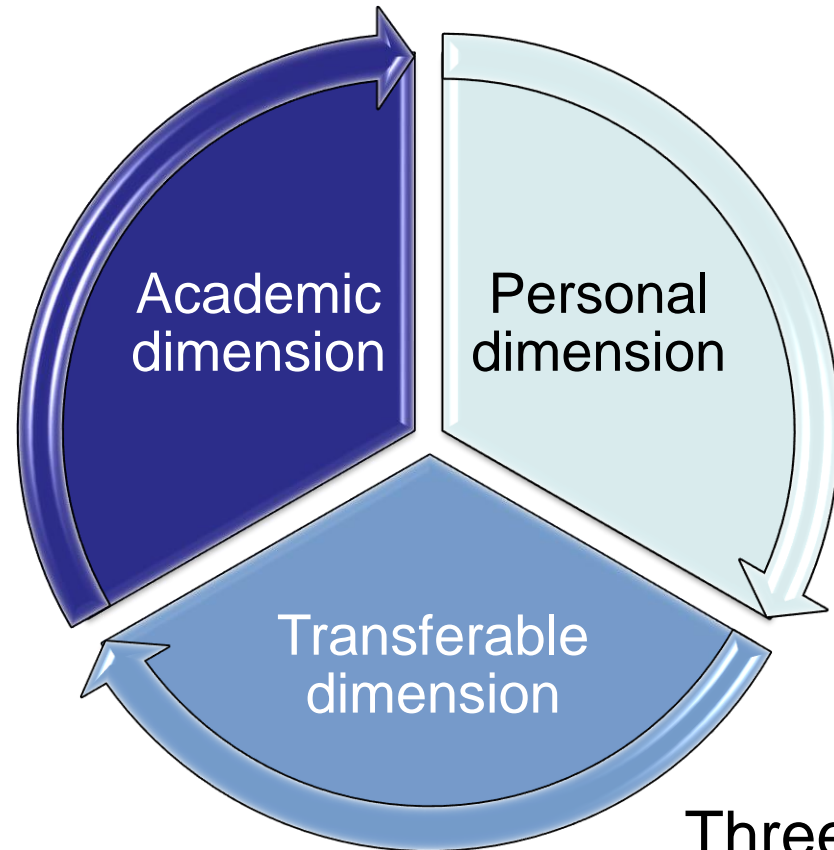




University of Glasgow's Graduate Attribute Framework

10 Graduate Attributes:

1. Subject specialists
2. Investigative
3. Independent and critical thinkers
4. Resourceful and responsible
5. Effective communicators
6. Confident
7. Adaptable
8. Experienced collaborators
9. Ethically and socially aware
10. Reflective learners



Three inter-
dependent
dimensions



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...and we did not make this journey
alone!



Enhancement
Themes

SEARCH THIS SITE:

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Graduates For The 21st Century - Synthesis of work 2010-2011



[Download this document](#)
PDF, 208.91 KB

This report is a review and summary of key aspects of the work on the Enhancement Theme, 'Graduates for the 21st Century: Integrating the Enhancement Themes', suggesting a range of options that might be pursued in taking this work forward into the academic year 2010-2011.

Following this introduction, the report analyses key attributes of the 21st century Scottish graduate, points of intersection with the linked prior Enhancement Themes, and institutions' strategies for advancing the current Theme. The report concludes with a summary of possible options for 2010-11.

Authors: Dai Hounsell, University of Edinburgh

Publication Date: June 2010



The Current Theme

- The current enhancement theme is “Student Transitions”
 - the focus at Glasgow will be on transitions between conventional, blended and online learning for students and staff – we are currently investing £2.4m in blended and online learning
- Why Transitions? – we all support a wide range of transitions such as
 - Transition from School to University
 - Transition from Further to Higher Education
 - International student transitions
 - Transitions into the workplace

The Current Theme

- All of these transitions challenge us and our students and many of the underlying issues we face are common to multiple transition strands
- This is an ideal theme for cross-sector working and has the potential to improve connectivity between the sector and other organisations



- The UK Funding Councils are currently reviewing arrangements for quality assurance.
- In England, Northern Ireland and Wales, the review is far-reaching and is likely to produce a complete re-shaping of their quality assurance regime
- Scotland is adopting a lighter touch review process and, while nothing is certain, it is likely that Scotland will retain its enhancement focus in the future - it has been good for us!



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Thank you!

