Institutional strategies support package

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The **EFFECT project** has developed the European Principles for the enhancement of learning and teaching, which are an instrument for dialogue and cooperation, in different contexts. Among others, they can:

- inspire and structure discussion and joint work among the members of the institution (teachers, all other staff concerned with the education mission, students and leadership)
- encourage exchange and cooperation with external parties (other universities, employers etc.)
- help institutional leadership to develop or evaluate strategic approaches for learning and teaching, in collaboration with students and staff.

http://bit.ly/JISCViewpoints

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Your ideas

The following presents the Principles, and in addition a collection of guiding questions, which are designed to support systematic reflection and discussion. Colleagues from different institutions have developed them and found them a helpful starting point for engagement with the Principles. As with the Principles, the guiding questions are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive and you are strongly encouraged to ask the questions most relevant to your own institution and context.

Principle 1

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The higher education learning experience nurtures and enables the development of learners as active and responsible citizens, critical thinkers, problem solvers, equipped for life-long learning.

Higher education equips people with the confidence and skills to live and learn in a changing world, able to proactively address their own and the world's grand challenges.

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Guiding questions

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- How would you describe the institution's educational aspiration and goals? How are they perceived by students and staff? What are the indications that they are embedded in the curricula, study programmes and courses?

- How does the institution address the importance of developing civic and transversal skills (critical thinking, communication skills, public speaking etc.) alongside discipline-specific and professional knowledge?

- In what ways are students exposed to multi- and interdisciplinary learning?

- How do the curriculum and education processes foster social responsibility and individual accountability? What opportunities and expectations are in place to encourage engagement with local and global challenges? How do you cooperate with external stakeholders on learning and teaching? How do you recognize student engagement in civic life?

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Learning and teaching is learner-centred.

The university should provide learning opportunities tailored to the needs and capabilities of diverse learners. It should nurture a culture and an environment in which reciprocal learning between students and teachers can take place. Students are actively engaged as co-creators in all aspects of the learning experience, and share the responsibility for their own learning, in partnership with the staff of the institution.

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- What is your vision of student-centred learning, and how does your institution demonstrate commitment to it? What are the indicators for student-centeredness, and how are they used?

- How does the institution ensure that the actual provision of a course (contents, methods, examinations) is in line with the intended learning outcomes?

- How does the institution address the use of different modes of delivery (incl. digital and blended learning) and flexible study paths (incl. individualised learning paths)?

- How are students encouraged to become actors and co-creators of their learning experience? How are they involved in decision-making on the education offer, at the level of the institution, faculties/departments?

- How is learning designed to meet the needs of different learners as they progress through their learning journey? How do you scale up and personalise learning opportunities, skills, and remedial support?

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Commitment to learning and teaching is integral to the purpose, mission and strategy of the university.

Enhancing learning and teaching requires that the mission reflects the educational purpose and values of the institution. Comprehensive, values-based institutional strategies are needed to guide the learning and teaching initiatives, and enhance their impact and sustainability.

■ Has the institution developed a specific strategy for learning and teaching? If yes, how has this been developed and how does it refer to the purposes, values and vision of the institution's educational mission? If no, how is L&T reflected in other institutional strategies?

■ How visible and accessible is the institution's L&T strategy to your university community (incl. students), and to external stakeholders (incl. national/regional authorities, local communities, enterprises, other higher education institutions)?

■ What are the tangible benefits that the strategy brought? What has it changed?

■ Who owns the strategy, and who is responsible for its implementation? How does the institution follow up through work plans? How is the strategy assessed, and is it regularly reviewed?

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Principle 4

Institutional leadership actively promotes and enables the advancement of learning and teaching.

An institution-wide strategy requires the institutional leadership team to drive, support and maintain the focus on learning and teaching.

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Guiding questions

How does institutional leadership engage in and contribute to L&T? In what ways and to what extent does the institutional leadership maintain their own professional and academic understanding of current learning and teaching theory and practice?

Does the president/rector give as much attention to the education as to the research mission? How would you measure this?

How can you create better opportunities for institutional leadership to engage with and contribute to L&T?

In what ways does the senior leadership encourage and celebrate those who actively champion learning & teaching excellence in the institution?

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Learning and teaching is a collaborative and collegial process involving collaboration across the university and with the wider community.

The entire institution, including students, administrative and technical staff are actively involved in learning and teaching. Opportunities in the private, public and voluntary sectors are essential to enable students and graduates to fulfil meaningful roles in an ever-changing society. Learning and teaching processes ultimately promote social responsibility.

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- How do the governance and management systems support learning and teaching? Does it enable the different parts of the institution (faculties, departments, institutes, offices for staff and student affairs) to actively contribute to the development and delivery of the institutional strategy for L&T?

- How would you describe the role of administrative and technical staff in supporting learning and teaching? What mechanisms are in place to ensure it is sufficiently acknowledged, valued, and addressed (e.g. through strategic papers, curricula, etc.)?

- How are reflective practice, communities of practice and peer-learning encouraged among staff with teaching responsibilities? What opportunities exist for exchange and collaboration across and beyond the institution? Are there platforms or networks for teachers to exchange and collaborate?

- How do the learning and teaching practices in the institution actively promote and support social responsibility and active citizenship? How are staff (teachers, technicians, professional services, etc) developed to incorporate these approaches in the learning experience? What opportunities are available for staff and students to work with external partners on community initiatives?

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Principle 6

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Learning, teaching and research are interconnected and mutually enriching.

Connection between research and education is essential to stimulate innovation and creativity in the learning experience and to advance knowledge. Learning and teaching in universities is informed by research and encourages students to engage in research and creation of new knowledge.

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Guiding questions

How would you describe the relationship between research and teaching at the institution?

To what extent does learning and teaching practice at your institution inform pedagogical research and scholarship? How is research influenced by teaching at the institution?

How are students enabled to develop research skills? How are they provided with opportunities to use research methods and techniques? What opportunities exist for student involvement in research projects, citizen science, etc.?

How does emerging research inform curriculum development?

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Principle 7

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Teaching is core to academic practice and is respected as scholarly and professional.

As a core function of higher education, teaching is recognised as a professional and skilled activity, which is actively promoted through recruitment, staff development (including Continuing Professional Development), and promotion schemes. Staff members with any teaching responsibilities are supported in fulfilling their role and developing their practice to meet changing circumstances. The institution promotes research on its own learning and teaching practices, and teachers are actively encouraged to engage with the scholarship of learning and teaching to inform their own practice.

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Guiding questions

- How does the institution recognise and valorise teaching?

- What teaching enhancement opportunities are offered at the institution? To what extent do they address all staff with teaching responsibilities? What evidence exists that they are attractive and well-regarded by staff?

- How does the institution encourage teachers to conduct research on their teaching?

- How is teaching considered in career development?

- What continued professional development opportunities are offered to academic developers and other support staff?

- How is staff encouraged to reflect on their pedagogic practice? How are exchange and collaboration between teachers encouraged and supported? What opportunities are there for staff to showcase achievements in teaching practice (e.g. through events, awards, etc.), and to peer-learn from colleagues?

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Principle 8

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The university community actively explores and cherishes a variety of approaches to learning and teaching that respect a diversity of learners, stakeholders, and disciplines.

Higher education provision needs to address the diversity of learners, disciplines, learning purposes and outcomes. Learning design needs to be informed by disciplinary content, any available knowledge about how students learn, and information available about learner progress.

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Guiding questions

- How would you define inclusiveness in higher education learning and teaching? How do you evaluate the inclusivity of the curricula at your institution? To what extent does the curriculum reflect the diversity of the student, staff and wider community?

- How does the student experience comprise life-like learning situations (e.g. through internships, collaboration with industry and society, student research on social/societal issues, community work, etc.)? How are these learning situations utilised across the institution?

- How is digital learning embraced throughout curricula (e.g. developing pedagogy with digital learning, technology-enhanced virtual opportunities, digital tools such as Moodle, etc.)? To what extent can you describe it as satisfactory? How do professional development schemes support digital learning (for any category of staff)?

- How are evidence, metrics, student data, etc. used to inform, review and enhance the range and effectiveness of pedagogic approaches in your institution?

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Principle 9

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Sustainable resources and structures are required to support and enable learning and teaching enhancement.

There has to be appropriate and sustainable funding for developing and carrying out teaching. Resources are allocated and used to support a long-term strategic approach for enhancing learning and teaching. Learning and teaching is structured in a sustainable way, with distributed leadership and clearly articulated responsibilities, including at discipline and programme levels.

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Guiding questions

What are the means and resources allocated to the implementation of the institution's L&T strategy, including financial means? What money and resources are earmarked for learning and teaching activities and innovation?

Are the resources sufficient? Do premises, infrastructure and equipment meet the goals and requirements for teaching? Are learning spaces fit for the different learning approaches, allow for collaborative work (between staff, between students, or between staff and students)? Are learning resources sufficient (e.g. library resources, online access to library resources, labs, etc.)?

What learning and teaching innovations have been possible or inhibited by the available resources? What does staff and student feedback tell you about satisfaction with the available resources and infrastructure?

How aware are staff of the institution of the resources, in terms of infrastructure, but also regarding funding for new and additional initiatives? How do you promote and advertise the availability of any innovation funding? Does the institution ensure equitable access, and considers the needs of diverse students and staff? Have you ever conducted an evaluation on the quality of access to the institution's facilities (incl. physical access, user-friendliness of access procedures if any, and access hours)?

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Institutional QA for learning and teaching aims at enhancement, and is a shared responsibility of staff and students.

In line with the ESG, institutional QA develops flexible, fit-for-purpose processes suited to evaluate and demonstrate the quality of the learning experience. It is geared toward continuous improvement and fostering a culture that engages everyone in the university community in assuring and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching.

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- How does the internal QA contribute to learning and teaching? What does it take into account?

- How does it relate to diverse learning and teaching approaches, in particular to innovation and creative teaching?

- How is evidence from QA processes used to inform improvement of and decision-making in learning and teaching?

- How does the institution act upon the results of monitoring and evaluation activities? How does this relate to teachers, and student support? What specific examples do you have of L&T enhancements, policy changes or practice innovations that have emerged from QA processes? How are these subsequently evaluated and fed into QA processes?

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