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LEARNING & TEACHING PAPER #1

2017 Thematic Peer Groups

Report

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Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

Increasing attention is being paid to learning and teaching (L&T) in higher education, both at the level of universities and governments. EUA's surveys among its members show that many universities are putting effort into developing strategies for L&T, establishing learning centres, and setting up staff enhancement measures. In some countries these efforts are supported by national initiatives[1]. There is also increasing focus on L&T at European level both by the European Commission and the Bologna Process.[2]

With this background in mind, EUA advocates consolidating a European dimension in L&T, driven by universities, in collaboration with national and European policy makers and other actors to enhance quality and relevance of higher education provision.

Therefore, in 2016, EUA decided to strengthen its activities on L&T with the aim to:

• identify and better engage with relevant university communities/those in charge of L&T at institutional level, and dedicated networks and organisations;

• provide EUA members with opportunities for peer-learning and exchange of good practice;

• thus strengthen the voice of EUA in ongoing policy debates addressing the quality and relevance of universities by providing direct feedback from members on changing pedagogical landscapes.

The first activities launched in this context were setting up thematic peer groups and embarking on preparations for the 1st European Learning & Teaching Forum, which was organised in Paris on 28-29 September 2017 in collaboration with the Conférence des Présidents d'Université (CPU) and hosted by the University Pierre and Marie Curie (UPMC). Thematic peer groups provided the participating universities with opportunities for peer-learning and exchange of experiences while at the same time contributing to European policies on L&T. The Forum was then used to present and debate the outcomes of the groups' work in various parallel sessions.

The four groups were established following a call for participation to all EUA member universities. The groups consisted of 31 universities from 17 countries (see further details in the Appendix). In the course of the first half of 2017, each of the following themes was addressed by one thematic peer group:

1   Sursock, A., 2015, *Trends 2015: Learning and Teaching in European Universities*. (Brussels, European University Association). Retrieved on 31 October 2017 from http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/EUA_Trends_2015_web
European University Association, 2018, *Trends 2018 (forthcoming)*. (Brussels, European University Association).
2   European Commission, 2017, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education*. Retrieved on 31 October 2017 from https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/he-com-2017-247_en.pdf
European Higher Education Area, 2015, *Work Programme of the Bologna Follow-up Group 2015-2018*. Retrieved on 31 October 2017 from http://www.ehea.info/pid35146/work-programme-2015-2018.html
European Higher Education Area, 2016, *Terms of Reference of the Working Group on New Goals – Policy Development for new EHEA Goals (WG3)*. Retrieved on 31 October 2017 from http://media.ehea.info/file/20160307-08-Amsterdam/22/5/BFUG_NL_MD_50_5e_WG3_revised_ToR_615225.pdf

- building a link between research and teaching missions of the university

- empowering students for their future professional life and civic engagement

- addressing larger and more diverse student bodies ensuring student success

- fostering engagement in developing L&T.

Each group was coordinated by one university and supported by a member of the EUA secretariat. The groups met three times so as to identify challenges related to their respective themes, to seek solutions and, finally, to formulate recommendations based on existing good practices. Each group was invited to prepare a summary of their key findings and also to prepare sessions for the 1st European Learning & Teaching Forum.

This report aims to provide the reader with an insight into the discussions and conclusions of the thematic peer groups with each chapter consisting of the summary of one thematic peer group presenting first the challenges identified, followed by recommendations on how to address them. The report by no means presents final answers to the issues discussed; rather, they aim to provide a basis for further debate. Readers are invited to reflect to what extent the groups' recommendations apply to their own institutional contexts, which is hoped to provide impetus for further development of L&T in universities.

2. Improving the link between research and teaching

The group discussed how research and teaching are intertwined, and how research can aspire and enrich L&T. Prior to discussing the topic, the group considered four different aspects of the linkage between research and L&T:

- how research contributes to L&T (new insights, theories, methods, learning experiences from research outputs or embedded in a research culture);

- how research can be influenced by teaching (through student engagement in research questions, when using enquiry-based approaches in teaching enhances the teacher's own research skills);

- students as researchers (research-based learning, engagement in research projects, citizen science and research focused on addressing societal issues);

- through research into teaching (how research on teaching approaches and student learning influences practices in higher education).

The group noted that when exploring the nexus between research and teaching the language used can be complex. For instance, there are different meanings of research-based/-led learning, and its implementation may vary depending on disciplines and perceptions among academic staff. For the purposes of its work, the group agreed on two working definitions:

- Research should be understood as a purposeful attempt to establish facts, conceive, discover, and/or advance new understanding through systematic investigation or the deployment of prototypes or innovations. Importantly, this means that in this definition research does not only refer to its published output (papers, monographs, reports etc.), but encompasses aspects of innovation (e.g. methods, practices, processes) resulting from research experiences. Also, it should not be used interchangeably for any methodology using enquiry-based learning.

- Research-based learning (RBL) is an approach by which students are actively engaged in enquiry and research. The curriculum contains activities in which students conduct research or engage in authentic processes of enquiry. This can include the development of students' research skills through engaging in research methods courses, or problem-/project-based learning methods and include real cases of analysis and solution. While there are different interpretations and models of RBL, they all share an emphasis of active acquisition of skills and knowledge through research. Consequently, academics involved in RBL play the roles of mentor and research project leader, and also serve as examples of how to integrate research and teaching in academic life.

The group discussions showed that the links between research and L&T vary between institutions, and can be weak even within research-intensive institutions. This was, at least in part, due to limited institution-driven, strategic approaches on how to integrate research and education missions, and how to make this integration visible. Differences also existed in the type of opportunities for student engagement with research (from programmes involving students in research at all levels of studies, to initiatives aimed at highly gifted graduate

students only). Also, in several cases, the frameworks for research and teaching have been set up in such a way that academic staff tend to separate their activities as researchers in labs and teachers in the classroom.

After an exchange of views on their institutional practices in linking R&T, the group identified three areas of common challenges:

1. Balance in esteem between research and teaching in academic life: presently, the higher education sector clearly emphasises the value of research over teaching. While there are many incentives for staff to engage in research (research sabbatical, research funding, impact of research on career prospects), this is not the case for teaching. Indeed, during its discussions, the group found that projects aimed at raising the quality of teaching (evaluations, awards) could inadvertently contribute to lowering the status of teaching further. While several of the institutions in the group had taken steps to address the balance in esteem, none of these efforts had a significant impact on the prevailing culture. However, while further research into the "self-concept" of the modern academic might be needed, the group believes that RBL as a concept might be one way of reducing this imbalance.

2. Shifting the understanding of research-enriched curricula, from approaches that are driven by content, towards a student-centred approach, which would ensure that research integration focuses on developing students as research-aware learners and even researchers.

3. Curriculum development: how to create spaces and opportunities in the curricula for research-based learning and research experience, and identify teaching formats for engaging with research at different levels.

These three challenges may target different audiences: challenge 1 may be more relevant for university leaders and policy makers to tackle; challenge 2 may be more interesting for researchers and teachers to explore; and challenge 3 could be for practitioners (teachers, university administrators). The group formulated recommendations to address these three challenges.

As the first, and general, recommendation, the group concluded that the institutions should be encouraged to **consider strategies so as to better link research and teaching.** Research and teaching, as two of the traditional missions of universities, are often considered as feeding into each other in a self-evident way - where there is quality research, there is excellent teaching. The realities of practice show that this relationship is not straightforward, and would benefit from further attention by higher education institutions (HEIs) and policy makers. The following three recommendations unfold from this general recommendation.

Addressing the disparity between the status of research and teaching in academia

The disparity between the status of research and teaching in academia can be addressed by:

1. Supporting and enhancing explicitly the status of teaching - which should be distinct from, yet connected with, measures for enhancing the quality of teaching, through:

    •   Career paths and criteria for promotion that recognise the breadth of academic roles, have sufficient flexibility to cater for changing emphasis through the course of an academic career, and are explicit in rewarding successful integration of research and L&T activities. This will not be easy to establish at individual institutional level, and should be addressed at national or HE system level (and even more at the global level, considering staff mobility).

2. Creating incentives and policies for a stronger, positive engagement with teaching amongst academic staff. Examples of incentives could be:

    •   Better consideration for workload required to enhance teaching (appropriate workload allocation models taking account of time needed to prepare/revise teaching material, sabbaticals to work on curriculum revision or embedding a teaching approach, etc.)

    •   Training and support offered to all academic staff categories for developing teaching (methodologies, stimulate reflection on one's own teaching).

    •   Incremental exposure to, and engagement in RBL (e.g. peer-learning, peer-counselling, exchange of practices).

    •   Awards, bonuses, funding, time allocation (e.g. scholarships in L&T, grants for L&T projects).

    •   Adapting teaching evaluations so as to take into account new, innovative approaches to L&T.

3. Ensuring that funded research projects have direct links back into the taught curriculum (through taught input and opportunities for students to take part in the projects).

4. Acknowledging the impact of student-centred learning on the role of teachers and supporting staff in moving away from the classical role of the teacher as a 'transmitter of knowledge' towards focusing on student outcomes and active learning, in a holistic approach to supporting student development.

5. Professionalising teaching practice that includes developing staff and student capacity to engage in research-based education, problem solving, or experiential learning.

In order for these measures to work and therefore identify the drivers and obstacles with regard to the status of teaching, further empirical research into how academics see themselves engaging with research and teaching is required.

Adopting and implementing research-based learning and student enquiry approaches

If sensibly implemented, both research-based learning and student enquiry have the potential to change the general teaching culture, from isolated individualism towards a culture of shared enterprise in educating students, where learning becomes a shared effort in knowledge production.

The following benefits of RBL were identified:

• RBL and student enquiry put students at the centre of knowledge creation, allowing them to acquire and develop skills and competences necessary for lifelong, self-directed learning, including interdisciplinary and practical skills.

• In handling their own research projects, students learn to draw meaningful connections between their subject knowledge, their skills, and their future professional life (as researchers or not), in a more effective manner.

• RBL provides a concrete way to make the staff and the institutional research agendas visible through curricula. In becoming actively engaged in the institution's research agenda, students are more likely to identify with both their subject and their institution.

• RBL offers the academic staff an opportunity to practise and enhance their skills in successfully leading research teams. This is beneficial for their own professional development and, generally, to building up institutional capacity in research.

• RBL and student enquiry projects enable HEIs to extend the student experience beyond university walls, for example, through co-operation with affiliated research institutes, industry, and community organisations.

• Key principles of RBL, such as shared responsibility for joint research projects, can be useful for other areas of institutional development, such as curricular innovation.

• The ability to teach in RBL and student enquiry formats (supported by appropriate training) can contribute to rebalancing and reconciling teaching duties and research interests, and enhance both teaching and collaboration in teaching in research-intensive universities.

Should institutions decide to strongly commit to better relating research and teaching, their institutional mission and vision statements need to refer to RBL and student enquiry.

Offering research opportunities within curricula

Curricula should offer practical research opportunities from the bachelor level in order to create transferrable skills for students (e.g. learning to learn, communicating research, critical enquiry).

This could be done by:

- Creating opportunities for students to learn through RBL, which would be enhanced through suitable credits. This includes existing RBL initiatives that are currently considered as extra-curricular activities.

- Giving enough flexibility to students for them to define to what extent they want to be involved in RBL or research projects in general.

- Supporting small-scale projects or projects using existing resources for more effective learning which could be promoted and cross-fertilised across the institution.

- Engaging students into initiatives such as community engaged research and learning, FabLabs, links with business/the world of work (internships, industrial PhDs, etc.), seminars, research projects, prototyping workshops, or interdisciplinary projects.

- Monitoring the potential impact on the way students are assessed, and revising student assessment procedures accordingly. Authentic assessment, in which students demonstrate that they acquired knowledge, skills, and competences through meaningful, real-world tasks, is recommended. This type of assessment would ensure that students gain experience of producing typical research outputs (e.g. conference papers, posters, publications).

- Creating a suitable learning environment for research-based learning, with tools and resources such as research facilities, inspiring spaces and labs, libraries and collaborative work areas with easy access and extended/flexible access hours for students.

Institutions and authorities in charge of regulating curricula should look into how study programmes and a general approach to curriculum design and development could better embed practices which make the most of the linkage between research and teaching. Better integrating research and teaching cannot be done through a stand-alone module or course, but should be embedded throughout the curriculum. A focus on learning outcomes (LO), rather than the content to be covered, could support this approach and aid effective programme design. In this respect, RBL could be considered as a driver for enhancing the LO-based approach.

Ultimately, the group concluded that, in an age of post-factual politics and economics, higher education needs to enable students to understand, appreciate and value the role of scientific research in the production of knowledge. To this end, it is important that students have opportunities to engage with research as part of their studies and academics have opportunities to link their research and their teaching, rather than experiencing them as conflicting interests.

3. Empowering students for their future professional life and civic engagement

The group explored how to respond to the needs of society for informed citizens, capable of critical and reflexive thinking considering the expectations towards future graduates.

Over the course of three meetings, the group discussed institutional challenges and practices in relation to empowering students for their future professional life and civic engagement and identified three main recommendations:

Integrating and explicitly identifying skill development (transversal/ professional competences) into the formal curriculum

Many institutions offer a comprehensive range of courses and activities that support students in developing transversal skills and professional competences. These might include, but are not limited to, writing, presentation and communication skills, team work, leadership, decision-making, entrepreneurship and intercultural competences. However, one of the key issues identified by the group was that these are often voluntary extra-curricular activities and are only accessed by a small percentage of students – usually those who are highly engaged and motivated and in many cases, in least need of such support. Reaching the students who would benefit most appears to be a widespread challenge. In order to engage with all students, it is necessary to integrate the development of transversal skills into the curriculum and explicitly identify these in the curriculum description and expected learning outcomes. In parallel, engaging teachers to implement changes to the curriculum was also identified as being a challenge shared across many institutions, particularly as it may involve them changing their teaching style and/or sacrificing other components of the curriculum.

Some approaches to applying this recommendation include:

- Allocating a certain number of ECTS for civic engagement or for modules focusing specifically on transversal skill development and making this a compulsory part of the curriculum (in the same way as work placements are already integrated into curricula and recognised through ECTS for programmes in many disciplines).

- Adapting L&T methods to put greater emphasis on transversal skill development combined with discipline-specific knowledge acquisition and application, for example through service learning, research-based learning, problem-based learning and work-based learning. The group identified taking a cross-disciplinary approach as a key way to add value by maximising synergies between different disciplines and exposing students to a wider range of issues.

- Reviewing existing curricula and explicitly identifying the skills that are being developed through the established modules and approaches. This point is of particular importance in systems where there is very little flexibility in curriculum design due to national regulations, making it difficult to implement the first two points.

Additional considerations for successful applications of the approaches above include:

- Taking a holistic approach to curriculum design and delivery, including cooperation between academic and support staff in order to embed transversal skill development into curricula and explore cross-disciplinary approaches. Consideration should also be given to appropriate assessment methods, including possible separation between the assessment of knowledge and skills. One alternative is that the grade given for generic skills does not formally count towards the degree mark, but is an indicative assessment for the student, as well as a way of enabling the institution to monitor whether it is supporting the development of these skills effectively.

- Ensuring support for academic staff to develop their teaching skills. This may be a question of

  - resources: ensuring sufficient support for pedagogical development is offered and that academic staff have time to dedicate to it;

  - values: promoting a balance in esteem between research and teaching activities and recognising good teaching in order to motivate and engage staff in developing their own skills.

- Developing a learning environment that supports students in taking responsibility for their own learning. This might include increased emphasis on giving feedback to students about their transversal skill development, instead of, or as well as, simply assessing it, and offering sufficient guidance for students in making study choices.

- Cooperating with external stakeholders and student organisations to develop opportunities for civic engagement that can be recognised through ECTS.

- Allowing some flexibility in curriculum design to give room for the inclusion of different approaches. This may require regulation changes at institutional or national level.

Recognising or rewarding skills that are developed through non-formal learning and civic engagement

While the first recommendation focuses on embedding skills development into the curriculum, the second recommendation reflects on further learning taking place outside the formal curriculum. This recommendation addresses the challenge of how to recognise or reward activities that cannot or should not be fitted into the formal curriculum in order to emphasise their value and encourage engagement.

Some approaches to applying this recommendation include:

- Offering ECTS for voluntary activities, for example involvement in running student organisations or community/charity work. This differs from the approach mentioned under the previous recommendation, in that it is a non-compulsory activity, but is nonetheless recognised through ECTS and included in the diploma supplement or equivalent.

- Developing and implementing digital badging schemes as a way of recognising specific activities or skills. This might range from completing a certain period of voluntary work, developing specific skills either through dedicated courses or through other activities, for example leadership skills demonstrated through positions in student/community organisations.

- Recognising students who make a significant contribution to university life or civil society through their extra-curricular activities, for example through prizes or awards.

Additional considerations for successful applications of the approaches above include:

- Introducing an institutional digital badging scheme requires a clear policy on what is being recognised and how. Institutions may also consider cooperating with other institutions to develop a broader system that could carry more value externally and enhance comparability.

- Providing opportunities for student-led initiatives for prizes or awards, for example through institutional or faculty student unions, in order to encourage ownership at student level.

- Recognising that student ownership and willingness to engage in extra-curricular activities also varies from one context to another and may depend on the extent to which there is already a tradition of student involvement, as well as their ability to fit extra activities into their schedule (due to course workload, employment or caring responsibilities). It is important to bear in mind the contextual starting point when considering how to engage students in such activities.

Embedding responsibility, ownership and opportunities for reflection across the institution

The group recognised that in order to effectively empower students for their future civic engagement and professional lives, these aspects cannot be viewed in isolation. Therefore, this final recommendation runs through many of the approaches discussed in the group's two first recommendations. Responsibility for this needs to be embedded into the institutional culture at all levels. Closely linked to this is the need to support reflective practice across the institution in order to foster ownership among staff and students for their own development and to facilitate a broader awareness of an institution's role in society. At the student level, it was noted that many students develop generic skills during their time at university, but are not explicitly aware of it and therefore do not communicate it, for example to prospective employers.

Some approaches to applying this recommendation include:

- Communicating the importance of developing civic and professional skills, alongside discipline-specific knowledge, to the institutional community in order create a common understanding of it.

- Identifying students' needs at the point of admission so they can be addressed throughout the period of enrolment. Reflection on professional skills often takes place only in the later stages of the students' time at university. By integrating into the admission or orientation process a reflection (e.g. self-assessment) on the student's generic competences, which are lacking or could be improved, the student develops an early awareness of this issue and the institution can better target them with information about the available opportunities. Trigger points should be embedded at certain stages in the student life cycle to ensure a continuous reflection process. This approach also takes into account that needs differ considerably from one student to another. This is particularly relevant in a time of an increasingly diverse student body in which, for example, mature students who already have professional experience have a very different starting point and existing skill set to those entering into higher education directly from school.

- Embedding reflective practice into development paths for both staff and students in order to increase awareness and facilitate ownership:

  - For students, this means becoming aware of the skills that they do and do not have so as to improve any skills deficiency and better communicate the skills that they do have. One approach is requiring students to maintain a portfolio documenting their skills with practical examples. The use of professional mentors can also support this, by providing an outside view of the skills that are valued in the workplace.

  - For staff at all levels, this means reflecting on their own skills and engaging in opportunities for continued professional development. Institutional leadership should lead the way in supporting and valuing life-long learning.

Additional considerations for successful applications of the approaches above include:

- Defining and communicating the institution's societal mission both internally and externally in order to reflect the importance of societal engagement alongside the research and teaching missions. The importance of societal engagement may also be reflected in the way in which institutions communicate on their degree programmes to prospective students, emphasising the transversal and citizenship skills that will be gained in addition to the discipline-specific knowledge.

- Integrating reflective practice requires proper planning in order to be effective. Space should also be given for experimentation, recognising that not all approaches will succeed. To support this, opportunities should be provided for the exchange of good practice across the institution in order to multiply successful practice and allow the institutional community to learn from each other.

- Using technology effectively to facilitate teaching and support services. In this regard it is important to focus on harnessing digital opportunities, not making the use of technology a goal in itself.

In summary, these three recommendations reflect the need for both formal and informal approaches to empowering students for their future professional lives and civic engagement. It also becomes clear that this issue cannot be an 'add-on' activity for students and staff, but should be integrated into university life in order to be successful. Therefore, in essence:

- Institutional leadership should take the lead in ensuring that the university's social mission receives sufficient attention (also through links with the teaching and research missions) and by creating the right framework conditions through institutional structures and policies for staff and students to take ownership of their personal and professional development.

- Academic and support staff should work together, and with external stakeholders such as employers, to integrate the development of transversal skills into curricula and recognise skills acquired through non-formal learning. Approaches should also take into account the differing needs of individual students.

- Students should reflect on the importance of gaining transversal skills and take responsibility for their own development by engaging with the opportunities offered by their institution.

4.   Addressing larger and more diverse student bodies ensuring success

The group explored conditions for students' success such as how to sustain student engagement, implement student-centred learning and ensure the progress of students from the very beginning of their studies.

Demographic change and the expansion of universities in many countries have led to enhanced opportunities to study at HE level for groups that were traditionally under-represented. This has in turn increased the diversity of student populations. The opportunities and issues posed by diversity in the student population involve both the pedagogical challenge of teaching in larger groups but also the need to ensure that teaching methods respond to an increased heterogeneity in the student body. In addition, while student populations have grown more diverse, it remains the case that participation is still low among many groups and so there is an additional challenge both to monitor and influence recruitment to ensure that participation in HE is fully representative. The group concluded with the following four recommendations to address these challenges:

Improving communication and liaison between universities and the wider stakeholder community to target future students

Schools and the wider community, including employers, public institutions and student organisations are responsible for the preparation that students receive for university study and the expectations that they form about that study. There is evidence[3] to suggest that failure often occurs when the students' transition from their prior institution to university is not successful. This may be because incoming students' expectations of HE study do not align with the reality or due to less adequate academic preparation. By forging closer links with institutions that prepare students for university, the mismatch of expectations and attainments can be mitigated.

In addition, liaison between HEIs and community stakeholders will allow a more accurate understanding of non-traditional attainments that might be suitable for university study through schemes such as accredited prior learning (APL) and/or recognition of prior learning (RPL). This will ensure that students who might benefit from university study, and who have the capacity to succeed, are not inadvertently excluded.

Successful examples of stakeholder engagement take several forms. Institutional or regional "open days" or "fairs" are an important aspect of good practice and provide access to prospective students to academic life at universities. However, they do not reach sectors of the community where potential learners may be unaware that they could succeed in higher education.

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3   Tinto, V., 1975, 'Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of resent research', Review of Educational Research, 45(1), pp. 89-125. Institute for Advanced Studies, 2015, 'Sozialerhebung 2015 auf einen Blick'. Retrieved on 16 October 2017 from http://www.sozialerhebung.at/index.php/de/zentrale-ergebnisse-2015

For this reason, outreach activities with schools and other institutions are considered to be an important extension of open days. The group considered a number of good practice examples involving talent scouts and student ambassadors, student tutors and targeted recruitment to advise and encourage students from non-traditional backgrounds to consider university study.

Inclusive support and skills provision

Regardless of the success of information and recruitment activities and the preparation provided to incoming students by external stakeholders, diversity in the student body poses a challenge to universities at the point of student arrival and transition, and throughout the first year of study in particular. Diverse intakes imply that students' prior attainments, though they may be suitable and appropriate for higher education, may nevertheless be very heterogeneous. Moreover, some degree of integration will be necessary both academically for the purposes of enabling a common basis for further study, and socially to ensure that cohort identity and a sense of belonging is forged. The group considered evidence which showed that non-traditional students tended to drop out of university disproportionately and that the reasons for this appear to go beyond those that are purely academic. In this regard, the role of student associations, extra-academic activities such as sports and appropriate support for welfare, are considered to be as important as ensuring suitable academic skills support.

On the academic side, diverse student bodies call for institutions to make available generic study skills support. Typically, this is in the area of mathematics, languages or academic writing but can also involve study skills such as note-taking or critical thinking. Since these skills tend to be cross-disciplinary, they would normally be provided at the institutional level to support diverse student bodies within the disciplines. Many examples of good practice in skills provision were provided using online methods blended with face-to-face learning in order to make individual study paths more flexible or even independent from time and location.

The group found that successful cases of transition support tended to be inclusive in their approach. That is to say, students with non-traditional attainments were not identified for remedial support based on their entry grades, background or attainments, but that support was provided for all students without discrimination. Various targeting mechanisms can be used to ensure that the support reaches the right students. For example, diagnostic testing of all students as a guide to suggesting who could benefit from skills support such as mathematics or language is used in some institutions. Other institutions use a mentoring-based method where students discuss their needs with academic mentors often as part of an ongoing process of personal development planning involving keeping a reflective portfolio. The benefit of these methods is that they encourage student self-reflection and self-identification of areas where support is needed. These inclusive methods of skills provision share the feature that they encourage self-diagnosis and self-reflection which are important academic skills in their own right, and therefore should form an integral part of academic acclimatisation.

As noted above, the group also found that good practice was comprehensive as well as inclusive and that it should consider pastoral (coaching, support) and social aspects of transition as well as academic aspects. In this regard, the involvement of student and academic societies and the existence of services to provide coaching and support for students is considered to be good practice.

Student-centred, practice-based and flexible teaching approaches encourage active and personalised learning suitable for diverse student bodies

As student bodies become more heterogeneous, their educational needs are also more diverse. Many students increasingly have other commitments, such as caring responsibilities or part-time employment, or they have diverse needs which impact their learning. Responding pedagogically to these changes requires an innovative and flexible approach to education (as suggested in the EU's The Changing Pedagogical Landscape study)[4] in which digitisation will be an important facilitator. Moreover, nowadays, the concordance and correspondence between learning outcomes, learning methods and assessment throughout the curriculum is of particular importance, and should be kept in mind when introducing innovative practices in L&T.

Good pedagogical practice in responding to larger and diverse groups of students entails ensuring that the teaching is student-centred so that students can personalise their learning to their own context. Personalisation of the learning experience can be attained in many ways, often helped through technological means. For example, the use of video capture tools, in-class student response systems and online learning tools are now embedded in many universities' provision and these technologies allow students to engage with material in diverse ways, revisit subjects they find challenging and work at their own pace.

With the variety of learning methods that personalisation brings, the need to ensure high quality learning is paramount. Recent literature in pedagogics[5] suggests that learning effects are highest where students are engaged in active learning. Various developments in recent years encourage this kind of learning, for example, lecture "inversion" or "flipping". In the "flipped" approach, online means are used in advance of lectures so that the learning experience in class can be more active and problem-based, encouraging students to play to their own strengths. These approaches also have the added benefit of being conducive to students learning in groups which can help cohort cohesion, an important consideration in the retention and success of non-traditional students.

Other examples of inclusive and flexible pedagogies that the group considered include peer learning groups (where students teach each other either in traditional ways or by creating short videos) and practice-based or problem-oriented learning (in which students use their own experiences and knowledge to conduct the task). The group also highlighted the necessity for there to be a match between learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment, resources and even the capability of the academic teaching staff.

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4   European Union, 2014, *The Changing Pedagogical Landscape. New Ways of Teaching and Learning and their Implications for Higher Education Policy.* Retrieved on 26 October 2017 from https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f43a8447-7948-11e5-86db-01aa75ed71a1
5   Contreras, J., Jokela, P., Norling, A., 2016, *Assessing co-creation of value using service science to promote students shift from passive to active learners.* Retrieved on 16 October 2017 from https://open.lnu.se/index.php/lld/article/view/384

The diversification of teaching methods also implies that universities' assessment regimes are developed to incorporate more flexibility in assessing learning outcomes. At the most innovative end of the spectrum, the group looked at examples of students co-creating assessments with members of faculty staff.

Continual inter-professional practice-based education for university staff

Many of the benefits discussed above cannot be realised without investment and training of faculty and support staff. Many universities have training and certification of teaching practice for new staff and this is an important mechanism to embed the principles of inclusive assessment and learning within institutional practice. However, universities should consider methods for ensuring a culture of professional development and certification for all their academic staff to ensure that the benefits of research into L&T are fully realised.

Since retention of non-traditional students is a key concern in many HEIs[6] the early adoption of new pedagogies and insights into the relationship between teaching and assessment methods and the learning of diverse students is particularly important. Thus, universities should encourage a culture of continuous engagement with regard to professional development.

It has proved difficult in many universities to encourage the participation of more established staff in training programmes intended mainly for newer recruits. The group found that a variety of approaches could be used to ensure participation of all staff in continuous professional development. The establishment of an institutional centre for L&T, especially with the involvement of senior academic staff, helps to create symbolic value and fix innovative teaching as a strategic objective. Also, the use of L&T workshops and seminars and the recognition of participation can help to embed a culture of innovation and research-led practice in teaching. In some participating universities the continuous professional development is linked with career path advancements, and therefore is an integral part of a merit framework.

6   Bologna Process, 2015, *Yerevan Communiqué*. Retrieved on 16 October 2017 from http://bologna-yerevan2015.ehea.info/files/YerevanCommuniqueFinal.pdf

5. Fostering engagement in developing learning and teaching

The group was charged with exploring institutional policies and structures, such as those related to human resources management that can be used to motivate players in the university community to invest efforts in teaching and improve the quality of learning.

At the beginning of its work, the group identified five clusters of challenges that relate to fostering engagement in developing L&T:

1. Motivational aspects of engaging the stakeholders, e.g. how to motivate teachers to invest their time in teaching (what their incentives are to develop innovations in L&T) and how teaching can be better acknowledged in the institutional (e.g. human resource) procedures.

2. Organisation and structures for L&T, i.e. how institutional policies build and maintain practices that are fit for purpose. Here the challenges span from physical characteristics of the learning spaces to sufficient funding, time and effective institutional frameworks that are needed to facilitate the development of L&T. In this context, the group emphasised especially difficulties that can arise from a weak link between the institutional quality assurance procedures and the assessment of pedagogical activities.

3. Exchange of practice in L&T, e.g. which communication channels universities use to exchange good practices and how they build their learning communities.

4. Pedagogical aspects of L&T development, e.g. teachers' capabilities to teach, how teachers involve students in their learning and how universities assess L&T.

5. Sense-making, i.e. how to change the mind-set of all stakeholders involved in order to foster the development of L&T. Two groups of challenges were emphasised: those related to the engagement of the institutional management, and those related to making teachers more aware of the programme objectives.

The group then formulated three specific recommendations to address the identified challenges based on institutional practice and experience from the group members.

Making teaching visible across the university

In order to make L&T activities visible across the university, it is important to create opportunities where teaching can be honoured. It is also necessary to reward teaching and to create tangible gains for the people involved. Institutionalising support for L&T, for example, through the implementation of overarching frameworks such as L&T strategies, is another possible way to enhance the importance and visibility of L&T. Last but not least, a valuable aspect of raising the status of L&T is to link it to research: encouraging action-research and providing funding for projects that are related to scholarship of L&T is another way of making teaching more visible across the university.

The group formulated the following suggestions on how to operationalise the recommendation:

1. Honour teaching

In many institutions the visibility of research achievements is very high, but there are no real opportunities to honour achievements in teaching. In order to make L&T activities visible across the university, it is important to create opportunities where teaching can be honoured. These can be events or initiatives that ideally involve and are accessible to all stakeholders (students, teachers and leadership).

Suggestions for implementation:

- Care taken not to devalue or belittle teaching by the format and/or the wording chosen for honouring teaching (research conference vs. teaching day)

- Establish formats such as teaching days, teaching conferences, learning festivals

- Promote teaching awards and organise related award ceremonies.

2. Value teaching

In many higher education systems, the only way to advance one's own career is to excel in research. In order to address this imbalance, it is necessary to reward teaching and to create tangible gains for the people involved.

Suggestions for implementation:

- Develop criteria to show the value of teaching that stimulate people to prioritise teaching over research

- Reward outstanding achievements in teaching through bonuses or salary rises

- Develop career progression paths for teaching staff

- Support staff to become members of institutional setups that help teachers advance in teaching (e.g. Teaching Networks)

- Recognise teaching (e.g. through teaching portfolios).

3. Institutionalise support for teaching

L&T initiatives need umbrella/larger frameworks that help to increase the visibility of such initiatives and demonstrate to the members of the university community that their efforts are part of a larger picture. Institutional frameworks also allow the establishment of links between the individual and institutional levels and to anchor existing practices into a larger vision. Greater benefit can be attained by aligning and finding synergies between single initiatives.

Suggestions for implementation:

- Identify people who are already successful teachers (i.e. flag-bearers)

- Set up institutional centres for L&T

- Develop institutional L&T strategies and involve teachers and students in this process

- Establish a mentoring system.

Forming a true partnership between teachers and students

Commitment to student-centred learning requires changes in teaching methods, but also in the way students learn. The partnership between teachers and students, which is at the heart of student-centred learning approaches, can only work if both partners understand their roles and responsibilities and do not lay all expectations on the other party. Engaging students in processes in which traditionally they are not involved, such as course design, can be an advantage for the partnership. Furthermore, offering courses on learning theories, good learning practices and academic skills can help students to assume responsibility for their own learning process. Two aspects are vital in this regard:

1. Prepare for student-centred learning

It is important to prepare teachers as well as students for student-centred learning. Students need to be empowered to take a more active role in their education and learning process.

Suggestions for implementation:

- Engage students from the very beginning of their university studies

- Make students part of course development processes

- Integrate courses on academic skills in the curricula

- Offer training programmes for tutors

- Offer courses on learning theories and good learning practices for students and teachers

- Engage students in research projects.

2. Build mechanisms to collect student feedback

Apart from the well-established format of course evaluation, there are also other mechanisms that can be used to collect student feedback. Involving students in the re-design of courses or collecting their opinions on effective teaching methodologies (i.e. elements of teaching they perceive as supportive for their learning) can be an efficient way to gain insights from a different point of view.

Suggestions for implementation:

- Organise focus groups with students to learn about their experiences with different teaching methods and course designs

- Involve students when designing learning spaces

- Implement feedback mechanisms (e.g. virtual or real feedback walls) that enable students to comment on courses, teachers etc.

Professionalising teaching

The image of outstanding teachers as people who are naturally gifted needs to be changed to teachers who are seen as professionals in teaching. Teachers should be encouraged to learn more about learning itself in order to better support student learning processes, and collaborate more in order to exploit the complementary strengths of teachers within the university community. The proposed continuous professional development in L&T should therefore be implemented with the following aspects in mind:

1. Promote scholarship of teaching & learning

In line with the need for teachers to develop as professionals in teaching, it is also important to provide opportunities for teachers to position themselves as scholars in their field. They should be encouraged to gain insights into their own teaching, improve it based on evidence and also share their findings with the relevant community. Another aim would be to better understand student learning and make it more effective. All in all, teaching initiatives should be evidence-based and linked to theory: the closer teaching is to the logic of research the more acceptable it becomes (i.e. another angle of the research-based teaching).

Suggestions for implementation:

- Acknowledge and involve experts with knowledge and experience in pedagogics and didactics

- Link initiatives to challenges that are relevant for teachers - try to speak their language

- Encourage action-research and provide funding for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) projects

- Recruit scholars of L&T.

2. Acknowledge teaching as a craft that needs hard work and practice

Apart from developing a repertoire of pedagogical methods that foster student-centred learning, teachers also need to acquire knowledge about theories of learning and good learning practices. In this regard, different disciplinary cultures need to be taken into account while establishing interdisciplinary teaching exchange groups.

Suggestions for implementation:

- Offer courses on university didactics or pedagogics

- Bring the different disciplinary application contexts into pedagogical staff development programmes

- Support continuous process of professional development.

3. *Strengthen the programme focus*

The curriculum that gives structure and purpose to the L&T processes, integrates activities that are part of the programme and leads students towards their qualification, should be at the core of L&T in universities. This stands in contrast to the perspective of many teachers who primarily focus on the courses they teach. The university should therefore provide support to further align study programmes and to increase coherence within programmes.

Suggestions for implementation:

- Implement processes that provide a better overview of the existing situation within programmes (i.e. to which extent programme activities are integrated so as to lead students towards their qualification)

- Support and facilitate the re-design of courses through formats such as Future Labs or Program Labs.[7]

- Build course development teams (faculty, didactic experts and students).

4. *Share practices and knowledge*

In contrast to communication on research, exchanges on teaching (methods) or course design is often limited within universities. In order to facilitate cooperation and exchange between faculty members, formal and informal opportunities to talk about L&T and to benefit from colleagues' experiences, should be created.

Suggestions for implementation:

- Build communities of practice (disciplinary and interdisciplinary formats)

- Create opportunities for informal exchange about L&T (such as lunch meetings)

- Establish opportunities for formal meetings to talk about and work on teaching.

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7   Programme labs are on-campus or off-campus workshops to which all teaching staff of the specific study programme are invited. The workshop includes different staff categories and is usually organised by the L&T support unit and/or human resource unit of the university. It usually includes external speakers who make a presentation on a particular topic, followed by team work that enables better integration of a programme. Future labs are workshops that invite students and/or teaching staff to work on a specific challenge and develop solutions.

General advice for L&T professionals

In addition to the three recommendations, the group also identified some more general advice to L&T professionals so as to foster development of L&T:

- Make deliberate changes to practices – keep them fresh and do not let teachers get used to them

- Be persistent and do not give up too early: many good practices need some time to unfold their potential (and senior management is not always patient enough)

- Try to find positive recognition beyond teachers' own institutional borders: an award from outside the university (included in a best practice catalogue, references etc.) will help to gain legitimacy and make individual practices more acceptable inside the teacher's own institution

- Ensure that the leadership «buys into» the practice by creating a situation of mutual benefit

- Eliminate administrative barriers: make the L&T enhancement processes as easy and time-saving as possible

- Ensure ownership: make it a project of the university/faculty and not just of an individual or small project group.

6. Concluding remarks

The thematic peer group discussions show that European universities share some challenges in learning and teaching regardless of their different national settings and institutional structures, and that there are some common strategies on how to tackle them. The reports in this publication summarise the rich discussions each group had on their respective themes, and focus on the commonalities identified based on group members' institutional practice and experience.

The feedback during the parallel sessions of the 1st European Learning & Teaching Forum, where participants were invited to reflect and comment on the findings of the groups, confirmed their relevance. By sharing these summary reports, EUA hopes to facilitate the further sustained discussions on L&T in higher education among universities and other stakeholders.

While each group worked on its own topic, it became clear that some recurring issues arose in several groups, for example:

• promoting student centred-learning or active learning by students

• revising how student assessment is carried out so that it better captures new approaches to learning and learning outcomes

• addressing the esteem given to teaching as part of the academic profession in universities

• investing in staff development and career paths that motivate to develop L&T

• having a holistic institutional approach, policies and culture for L&T in universities.

Having been encouraged by the positive feedback from the participants of the first thematic peer groups and the European Learning & Teaching Forum, EUA will continue its work aimed at developing L&T in universities. Another set of thematic peer groups will commence their work in early 2018 on new themes that have been inspired by the discussions in this report. They will take up some of the cross-cutting themes identified above, but also introduce some new aspects to the debate

The 2nd European Learning & Teaching Forum, planned to take place in February 2019, is also in preparation. Finally, EUA will continue to bring up the perspective of universities on these matters in the European policy debate, with its policy position drawing on the lessons learnt from its L&T activities, including these thematic peer groups.

Further information on the EUA Learning & Teaching Initiative, including the upcoming activities, is available at http://bit.ly/LearnTeachInitiative and on the Forum at http://bit.ly/EUALearnTeach.

Appendix: Composition of thematic peer groups

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Thematic peer group "Building a link between research and teaching missions of the university"

EUA liaison person: Thérèse Zhang, Deputy Director, Higher Education Policy Unit, EUA

Meetings:

17 March 2017 in Berlin

29 April 2017 in Barcelona

30-31 May 2017 in Paris</td></tr>
<tr><td>Humboldt University of Berlin (group coordinator), Germany</td><td>Wolfgang Deicke, Coordinator of the Bologna Lab

Max Peers, MA Student

Thies-Rasmus Propp, MA Student

Reka Gal, graduate student</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pierre and Marie Curie University, France</td><td>Marc Hélier, Director for Education and Career Guidance

Bernold Hasenknopf, Director MA Programme in Chemistry</td></tr>
<tr><td>University of Sheffield, UK</td><td>Wyn Morgan, Vice-President for Education

Louise Woodcock, Head of Academic and Learning Services</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sapienza University of Rome, Italy</td><td>Elisabetta Corsi, Responsible for L&T, Sapienza QA Board</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pompeu Fabra University, Spain</td><td>Manel Jiménez Morales, Academic Director of the Centre for Learning Innovation and Knowledge

Marta Lopera, Student

Samara Maultasch, Student</td></tr>
<tr><td>Silesian University of Technology, Poland</td><td>Wojciech Sitek, Rector's Plenipotentiary for International Education</td></tr>
<tr><td>University College Cork, Ireland</td><td>John O'Halloran, Vice President for Teaching and Learning

Catherine O'Mahony, Manager of the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning

Ian Hutchinson, UCC Research-Teaching Linkage Project</td></tr>
<tr><td>University of Borås, Sweden</td><td>Martin G. Erikson, Chair of the Research and Education Board

Nathalie Bengtsson, Vice-Chair of Student Union</td></tr>
</table>

Thematic peer group "Empowering students for their future professional life and civic engagement"	
EUA liaison person: Anna Gover, Policy and Project Officer, Institutional Development Unit, EUA	
Meetings:	
24 March 2017 in Dublin	
11 April 2017 in Milan	
8 June 2017 in Brussels	
Dublin City University (group coordinator), Ireland	William Kelly, Dean of Teaching and Learning Yvonne McLoughlin, Head of Careers Service Claire Bohan, Director of Student Support and Development
University of Zaragoza, Spain	Carmen Pérez-Llantada, Director, Secretariat for Quality and Teaching Innovation Concha Orna Ignacio Vazquez, Associate Professor
Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Belgium	Jan Danckaert, Vice-rector Education & Student Policy Arthur Skenazi, Head of Career Centre Carmen Mazijn, Student
University of Lucerne, Switzerland	Bernhard Lange, Head of the Teaching and Faculty Development Centre
University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy	Paolo Cherubini, Vice-Rector Francesco Palladino, Student
Management Center Innsbruck, Austria	Regina Obexer, Senior Lecturer
University of Tampere, Finland	Harri Melin, Vice-Rector Liisa Ahlava, Head of Education Development
University of Bucharest, Romania	Magdalena Iordache-Platis, Vice-Rector Lucian Petrescu, Vice Dean Gabriel Staicu, Student (Head of Students' Association)

Thematic peer group "Addressing larger and more diverse student bodies ensuring student success"	
EUA liaison person: Luisa Bunescu, Policy and Project Officer, Higher Education Policy Unit, EUA Meetings: 22 March 2017 in Bristol 20 April 2017 in Bochum 21 June 2017 in Oslo	
University of Bristol (group coordinator), UK	Alvin Birdi, Director of the Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching and the Undergraduate Academic Director Judith Squires, Pro Vice-Chancellor
University College Dublin, Ireland	Marie Clarke, Dean of Undergraduate Studies
University of Antwerp, Belgium	Ann De Schepper, Vice-Rector for Education
Masaryk University, Czech Republic	Michal Bulant, Vice-Rector for Studies and Information Technologies
Ruhr University Bochum, Germany	Kornelia Freitag, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and Professional Development Susanne Lippold
Leopold-Franzens University of Innsbruck, Austria	Christina Raab, Head of Unit, Bologna Process and Teaching Development, Office of the Vice-Rector for Student Affairs and Teaching
Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway	Nina Waaler, Vice-Rector for Education Sunniva Braaten, President of the Student Parliament

Thematic peer group "Fostering engagement in developing learning and teaching"

EUA liaison person: Goran Dakovic, Policy and Project Officer, Institutional Development Unit, EUA

Meetings:

24 March 2017 in Vienna

24-25 April 2017 in Aveiro

19-20 June 2017 in Bordeaux

Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) (group coordinator), Austria	Oliver Vettori, Director Program Management & Teaching and Learning Support Johanna Warm, Strategic Projects & Program Management
University of Bordeaux, France	Joanne Pagèze, Project leader Défi International
HTW Berlin - University of Applied Sciences, Germany	Angela Weisskoeppel, Special Assistant to the Vice-President for Teaching
University of Turku, Finland	Petri Sjöblom, Director of Academic and Student Affairs Minna Vuorio-Lehti, Academic Developer for Learning and Teaching
Lodz University of Technology, Poland	Dorota Piotrowska, Rector's Plenipotentiary for Internationalisation; Deputy Head of the International Faculty of Engineering
University of Aveiro, Portugal	Gillian Moreira, Pro Rector
Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia	Tatjana Koķe, Vice Rector for Education Nora Jansone Ratinika, Head of the Centre for Educational Growth
Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway	Frode Ronning, Professor

Note: Due to the strong institutional aspect of the topic, the group decided not to invite students to the meetings. Instead, each member was asked to discuss the topic with their students in between the meetings and incorporate students' viewpoints into the preparatory tasks of the meetings.

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The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The Association provides a unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, websites and publications.

This paper is one of a series of reports specifically focused on learning and teaching. It is designed to gather the knowledge and experiences of experts on the topic from across Europe. EUA's activities in learning and teaching aim at enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education provision, underline the importance of learning and teaching as a core mission and advocate for learning and teaching activities to be geared towards student learning and success.