

Resilient Learning Communities (2020-2023) at Strathclyde – Call for Internship Proposals (Final Call)

Context

The Resilient Learning Communities Steering Group invites proposals for funding of small-scale projects or initiatives to progress the [QAA Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme](#) (2020-2023) within Strathclyde. We have a total fund of £10,000 to allocate for one-year projects which involve students as interns.

A maximum of £1,000 will be awarded to one-year projects.

Applications should focus on the changing needs and values of an increasingly diverse student community, and a rapidly changing external environment. The key questions informing this Theme's work include:

- What will our learning communities look like by 2023? And how can we prepare for the learning communities of the future?
- How have the needs of our learning communities been changed by the experience of 2020?
- Who are our students and how will they want to learn? How will we gain a clear understanding of the nature and learning needs of our current and likely future student population? What granular information do we need to enable us to support their learning better?
- How can we capitalise as a sector on the attributes students bring into their learning?
- How do we ensure we are able to support our diverse learning communities? What might this mean for our staff and our infrastructure?
- How should we anticipate, influence and respond to the changing external environment? How can we engage with our stakeholders and ensure we are influencing strategy and policy both in Scotland and beyond?

Funding Criteria

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Alignment with the University's Strategic Plan and objectives of the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme;
- The overall quality of the project, including design, timeliness and originality;
- Wider applicability of the project within Strathclyde;
- Potential positive impact of the project on the wider student body, Strathclyde University as a whole and the student interns themselves, and how will/could this be measured for evaluation;
- Value for money;
- Sustainability of the project and how the outcomes of the project will be taken forward.

The majority of spend must be on intern or student co-creation activity. Other expenditures will be considered on application. However, any other sources of funding secured for the project should also be detailed here (e.g. external support; Department/ School, Faculty or Directorate contributions, etc.).

Application Process and Timescales

Please complete the Application Form overleaf.

We would anticipate that expenditure and projects would be completed by the end of summer. Alongside a breakdown of planned expenditure, we would anticipate the inclusion of information pertaining to the student interns within the application, i.e. whether the proposal requires undergraduate or postgraduate interns, and the

number of hours you foresee they will need to work. Please note that Strathclyde is a Living Wage Employer (currently £9.90 but due to change in November) and this should factor into your calculations.

Successful project teams will be required to submit a short end of project report/case study for dissemination to the wider Strathclyde community, and a summary of how the funds have been spent. Successful project teams may also be required to present their project at internal and/or external events. Successful applications may be used in future development activities as a guide for colleagues (staff only).

Please return the attached application form to: educationenhancement@strath.ac.uk, by **Friday 9th December 2022**. Please note that this will be the third and final of three calls for such proposals during the 3-year theme.

Helyn Gould on behalf of the Resilient Learning Communities Steering Group

Resilient Learning Communities Application Form

Team

Applicant	Department/School/Service		Email
Dr Stewart Beattie	CEE	Engineering	stewart.beattie@strath.ac.uk
Dr Christine Switzer	CEE	Engineering	christine.switzer@strath.ac.uk
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Project Summary – 150 words max.

Please note that this will be used on the Enhancement Theme SharePoint page.

Ensuring equality and diversity in higher education begins with assembling a diverse learning community. Graduate Apprenticeships were set up to create new pathways into engineering for people from different backgrounds. While the Graduate Apprenticeship in Civil Engineering (GA-CE) diversified the number of stakeholders involved in recruitment and our GA employers are also committed to providing learning opportunities for a wide spectrum of society, there is an apparent lack of diversity in our GA-CE programme, which reflects a wider sector issue in GA programmes. This project seeks to identify the key factors affecting recruitment to the GA and develop recommendations to increase diversity in recruitment of future GA cohorts. The student intern proposed in this project would be a key neutral party to conduct interviews and focus groups with employers to characterise the recruitment experience from all angles and inform development of initiatives to improve diversity in future GA applicant pools.

Project Description - 500 words max.

Please note that this should also include all relevant internship information, including project start and end dates.

Graduate Apprenticeships in engineering were set up to create new pathways into engineering for people from different backgrounds, reimagining the university experience as a holistic integration of classroom and workplace-based learning. This new model aimed to diversify the range of experiences entering engineering, but early analysis shows the opposite trend. In four years, our Graduate Apprenticeship in Civil Engineering (GA-CE) cohorts have less gender diversity, less ethnic diversity, and less socioeconomic diversity compared to our traditional undergraduate programmes. These trends reflect wider observations of Degree Apprenticeship not providing envisaged social mobility (Cullinane & Doherty, 2020; Casey & Wakeling, 2022; SDS, 2021; Smith et al, 2021). This project aims to identify key factors affecting recruitment to GA-CE and develop recommendations with our GA employers to improve diversity in recruitment and, ultimately, their workforces.

Our Department recently achieved Athena SWAN Gold Award in recognition of our sustained efforts and progress in equality, diversity, and inclusion. Our staff are 45% female and highly international. Among students, our postgraduate research and postgraduate taught programmes (40% and 52% female, respectively) track above sector averages; however, our undergraduate programmes lag significantly at 18% female. Within this average, GA-CE lags further at 9% female. In its first year, it had no women; it now has 14.

Unlike traditional undergraduate programmes, employers recruit GA-CE candidates. They identify candidates internally or recruit externally. Most employers put forward 1-2 candidates per year. Lack of diversity is an engineering-wide problem, but, on aggregate, granular GA-CE recruitment compounds the lack of diversity. In 2022-23, the largest contributor put forward 8 candidates, of which 1 was female. Based on our Department's experience of increasing and maintaining diversity over rapidly expanding staff numbers (1-3 new permanent staff per year), we believe we are in a strong position to work with employers to adapt recruitment processes.

Methodology

This study will use mixed methodology. A questionnaire will investigate current GA-CE (n=98) entry journeys and key influences. A subset (n=20) will be invited to focus groups to enable deeper exploration of trajectories into their jobs and through GA-CE. Interviews will be conducted with GA-CE employers to enable deeper exploration of recruitment processes. The intern will conduct the interviews and focus groups. Thematic analysis will identify patterns and commonalities across these datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2012). A latent approach will be used taking an inductive-deductive approach to coding and identifying candidate themes.

Alongside qualitative analysis, the team will collect and analyse recruitment data for gender, age, ethnicity, SIMD, and disability of GA-CE candidates relative to undergraduates on traditional degree programmes. Some of this work is already underway. We will ask GA-CE employers to collect and share their recruitment data (anonymised) so we can gain better insight into the processes leading to selection, which is currently absent.

Schedule

The project will start on 30/01/2023 and aim to recruit the intern before the end of the academic session. The internship allots 90 hours for project work (interviews and focus groups) and the work pattern (full-time, part-time, or flexible) will be agreed with the successful candidate. The project will conclude on 31/08/2023.

References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic Analysis. Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology: Vol.2.

Casey, C and Wakeling, P.(2022).University or Degree Apprenticeship? Stratification and Uncertainty in Routes to the Solicitors' Profession , *Work, Employment and Society*, 36(1) 40–58.

Cullinane, C and Doherty, K. (2020) *Degree Apprenticeships Levelling Up ?* The Sutton Trust.

Skills Development Scotland (2021) Graduate Apprenticeships At SCQF Levels 8-11 Progress report June 2021 Incorporating programme activity from 2017 to 2020
https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/48126/ga-report-2021_25821.pdf

Smith,S, Smith,E.T, Fabian,K Zarb, M, Paterson,J, Barr, M & Berg, T .(2021). A multi-institutional exploration of the social mobility potential of degree apprenticeships, *Journal of Education and Work*, 34:4, 488-503, DOI:10.1080/13639080.2021.1946494

Project Outcomes - 500 words max.

This should include how the Project will benefit the Enhancement Theme activity at Strathclyde & should mention what outcomes/outputs are planned.

Vision

The project will enhance the recruitment of apprentices in the civil engineering industry, to better represent a diverse population. The influence of the University on the civil engineering industry will increase and elevate the University's position as a bastion of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I).

Outcomes

The anticipated outcomes of the whole study, including this initial pilot are:

- Improved understanding of candidate and employer journeys to the GA-CE. This knowledge will feed into development of recommendations in partnership with GA employers to widen access to these experiences in future.
- Recommendations for improved recruitment practices that can be disseminated among GA recruiters and supported by GA staff in the Department.
- Sharing of knowledge and best practice from the GA-CE with other programmes across the University to enhance the recruiting practices of our employer partners.

- Sharing of knowledge with other providers to influence the apprenticeship community and cement our place in the HE sector as a bold, innovative, and people-oriented institution.

Ultimately, the success of the project can be measured by improved representation of minority groups in future GA-CE cohorts, which may take some time to be fully realised. The project team want to see efforts being made by employers to recruit a representative student population and it may take more than one recruitment cycle for the full benefits of new approaches to become embedded within the practice of our employer partners.

Outputs

- Project Report – A final project report will document project evidence and key findings in a formal manner. This initial presentation of our results and analysis will give the team freedom to express the findings in the most suitable format.
- Interim Report – Recruitment data will be collated into a presentation that will be shared initially in the Department and with GA-CE employers. This presentation will be updated as recruitment continues and ultimately shared wider with other GA teams in the University.
- Plan for action, delivered in partnership with GA-CE employers – using the examples from improvements in the diversity of Strathclyde CE staff, Athena SWAN work and other examples of best practice.
- Best Practice Toolkit – The team will create a best practice tool kit to be shared with a newly formed and emerging network of HE apprenticeship providers, delivering apprentice degrees in Engineering, Computing and the Built Environment.
- Conference Paper QAA - The team will share our findings with the wider community through published peer reviewed conference and/or journal papers. The intern will be part of wider publication and dissemination processes to the extent they wish to participate. As a minimum, we hope they will join us as co-presenter.

The project will improve the Department, University, and GA-CE profile, and promote our work in both ED&I and in Scholarship. Our reputation will be enhanced in both the network of providers and industry.

Project Evaluation - 500 words max.

This should include how the project progress will be monitored and how project teams plan to measure the impact at the end of the project. Short, medium, and long term evaluation opportunities should be included.

PRE-PROJECT: Analysis on gender and socioeconomic background has been completed for existing cohorts. Further analysis on ethnicity will be completed by January along with retention and progression data. The first recruitment event is 26/01/2023, before which, we will discuss preliminary findings with GA-CE employers and invite collaboration with this project. A questionnaire will be distributed among current GA-CEs to gain insight into their journeys into the programme.

DURING PROJECT: Typically, employers send prospective candidates' CVs to the Department's GA-CE team for pre-screening, but recordkeeping only begins once formal applications are made. From this year, records will be kept during pre-screening and employers will be asked to share anonymised data from their recruitment. Increasing diversity in the candidate pool is critical to increasing diversity in the programme. The project team will review data formally on a monthly basis.

The intern (Summer 2023) will conduct interviews and focus groups with current GA-CE employers and GAs about their experiences in recruitment and progression. If this application is successful, recruitment will begin immediately so that we can apply with the candidate to other internship programmes (e.g., Interns@Strathclyde, EPSRC Vacation Bursary, and Carnegie) to support a larger project.

Employers participants will be identified before the intern starts so that the intern is not spending their time recruiting participants. Interviews will be unstructured or semi-structured. Because participating employers will be aware of the overall problems and project aspirations, they may be

self-conscious or afraid of being blamed for these problems. The intern will not be involved in the Graduate Apprenticeship and therefore will not have an agenda regarding the programme. We want GA-CE employers as active, ongoing collaborators and, in this exercise, we want to capture their voices and perspectives as well as characterisation of their processes. Loose interview structure with an unbiased interviewer seems best poised to support these aims.

The internship is short (90 hours or 12 working days FTE) but we hope to extend this with other funding. The intern’s work will involve 4 employer interviews, 2 focus groups, and transcription of these sessions. Ethics approval will be applied for and secured in the period between intern recruitment and the project start date so they can start immediately with the interview work. Unfortunately, timing leaves little opportunity for the intern to influence the contents of that application.

POST-PROJECT: Project work will continue beyond the lifetime of this application. The team will undertake thematic analysis of the interview and focus group transcripts to develop a rich picture of employer and candidate experiences. We will share early results and analysis as well as recruitment progress in the current cycle with the Department’s Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee for their input. We will then share our analysis with our employer partners as well as our own experiences working on similar challenges with our own recruitment. Together, we will brainstorm further interventions based on this evidence to implement collaboratively in future recruitment cycles. Data collection will continue to enable us and our employer partners to assess progress.

About the Team – 100 words max.

Please outline the key tasks and responsibilities

Dr Stewart Beattie (Teaching Fellow) is the Director of the GA-CE at Strathclyde. Dr Beattie will lead the project and be the initial point of contact between the team, GA-CEs, and our GA-CE employer partners. He will also be the intern’s line manager. Drs Michael Murray (Senior Teaching Fellow) and Christine Switzer (Lecturer) will lead development of the questionnaire, interviews, focus groups, and conduct thematic analysis with support from the team. The intern be an important neutral party conducting interviews and focus groups. Dr Yannick Kremer (Teaching Associate) will lead data analysis with support from Drs Beattie and Switzer.

Budget

Please provide a breakdown of all costs and any justifications. Feel free to add new rows as required.

Item	Justification	Cost (£)
Intern	The intern will conduct interviews and focus groups with current GA employers and Apprentices.	£10.90 ph x 90hrs (12 days) =£981
Total Cost:		£981

(Important) Applications Notes:

- All interns **must** be guaranteed a minimum number of hours of work over the project life. Project **should** not exceed 100 hours.
- All interns **should** be paid hourly according to the duties they are undertaking. Guidance can be found in the University’s Guidance for the Engagement of Workers (found [here](#)). No intern should be paid less than the Glasgow Living Wage. Pay Scales can be found on the University of Strathclyde website or through the attached document.
- Evaluation resources can be found [here](#).
- All projects should anticipate (and factor in) an additional 30% in recruitment costs for a student intern. This covers additional pay in lieu of holiday, national insurance employer’s contribution, and any potential pension pay.
- Nominated Project Leads **are** responsible for the completion of any recruitment related paperwork, including ‘Right to Work’ checks. These should be undertaken on all recruited interns, unless they have been completed prior to the intern’s recruitment on the project for another institutional role. These should also be undertaken prior to the intern commencing their role.

- All Projects should aim to be completed by the end of August 2023.