



STEP

Scotland's Tertiary
Enhancement Programme

STEP Bulletin December 2024

Reflections on STEP One: Who are we and what are our challenges?

Welcome to your first STEP Bulletin! We plan to produce these after each of our Discovery Days and at other key points as STEP progresses. They are intended to be short, accessible and engaging updates on STEP to support dissemination of our collective work. We would encourage you to share as widely as possible within your institution. Please do also bring your colleagues' attention to our [website](https://step.ac.uk) – step.ac.uk – and encourage them to sign up to our [mailing list](#).

Our first STEP topic, which will run until 2028, is **Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys**.

During session 2024-25, staff and students from Scotland's colleges and universities will come together for a series of Discovery Days – spread geographically across Scotland – to establish collaborative partnerships and design projects that will form the core of the programme. Discovery Days will include a mix of networking, teamworking and CPD activity. Between these days, Navigation Sessions will provide momentum, alongside additional supporting activities such as workshops, networking opportunities and CPD activity related to the topic. In developing projects there will be a focus on collaboration, clarity of outcomes and anticipated impact, and the formation of a cohesive programme of work that involves every college and university in Scotland in at least one project.

On 4 December, we were delighted to welcome over 80 students and staff from Scotland's colleges, universities and sector agencies to the first of our Discovery Days.

Setting the scene

STEP One: Who are we and what are our challenges took place at Stirling Court Hotel, kicking off with a welcome from Alastair Duthie (Head of Scotland, QAA) and Vicky Underwood (Director of Operations and Strategic Planning, CDN). Heather Fotheringham (Quality Enhancement Manager, QAA) offered a short presentation about the purpose and operation of STEP before introducing our four **Topic Leads**. This core team will be key members of the STEP Topic Leadership Group, work closely with the other STEP governance groups, and champion STEP across Scotland, driving forwards the enhancement ambitions of the sector.

Leading for university students is **Adelayo Adebayo**, from the University of Stirling, while **Chloe Sandilands** from New College Lanarkshire will lead for college students. Our university staff lead is **Professor Steve Tucker** from the University of Aberdeen. **Dr Derek Robertson**, from City of Glasgow College, is our college staff lead, and shared his experience of running a previous tertiary enhancement project on college students' experience of university.

Exploring the topic

Our Discovery Days are all about active engagement, and we didn't want to keep colleagues sitting still for long – so Valerie Jackman (Delivery and Engagement Partner, CDN) introduced our first activity: a **Learning Walk**. Participants were asked to organise themselves into small groups with people they did not already know, and with a mix of people in different roles. They were then given an hour to walk around the campus, getting to know each other and surfacing some of the things they hoped to discuss. On returning to the plenary room, we asked participants to jot down their thoughts on post-it notes and arrange them according to our four priority areas:

- Supporting Transitions and Exploring Pathways
- Strengthening Engagement, Community and Belonging
- Developing Skills and Capabilities for Learning
- Delivering Tailored, Targeted and Personalised Support.

Colleagues from QAA and CDN arranged the post-it notes thematically with the aim of enabling participants to add any further ideas, as well as expressing their interest in any of the emerging

areas of work. Participants then spent time in small groups developing potential project ideas in relation to these areas of work.

Outcomes from the day

We were greatly encouraged by the level of energy and engagement throughout the day. Post-event, we've been analysing around 200 post-it notes, which we have grouped into 34 areas of work and 13 ideas for potential projects. These ideas will develop as our Discovery year progresses, but even at this early stage there are clear areas of interest including staff development, planning and pathways, community and belonging, student skills and attributes, and enhanced student support. We have created a [Mural of the findings](#), and will use them to plan activities for the subsequent events that will help shape potential projects. Please feel free to explore the Mural.

Participants have been asked to go back to their institutions and continue discussions about their preferred areas of work, thinking about what work needs to be done to secure support, what work is already underway, and who should be involved.

If you have any questions about any of the above, please drop us a line at info@step.ac.uk.

Registration is now open for our two January events. [STEP Two: How will we work together?](#) will take place on 29 January 2025 in Inverness and is open to STEP Network members. Our first [Navigation Session](#) will take place online on 20 January 2025 and is open to STEP Network members and any of their colleagues who think they may be interested in the emerging projects.