



STEP

Scotland's Tertiary
Enhancement Programme

STEP Bulletin November 2025

Welcome to the fifth STEP Bulletin, and the first of the 2025-26 academic year. We plan to produce these after each of our in-person meetings of the STEP Network 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 – step.ac.uk – and encourage them to sign up to our mailing list.

Reflections on STEP Five

At-a-glance:

- Over 80 staff and students joined us for our first in-person meeting of 2025-26
- Members received updates on project progress
- We spent most of the meeting working in project teams, and members reported that this had been a productive use of the day
- We identified potential gaps in our programme of work, as well as practical ways we can improve STEP
- Members were reminded about the call for proposals for projects relating to student support



It's nearly a year since students and colleagues from Scotland's colleges, universities and sector agencies first came together at the University of Stirling for our first STEP Discovery Day. As we move from the Discovery phase to the Implementation stage, you'll notice that we've retired the term 'Discovery Day', but these in-person meetings of the STEP Network are as important as ever.

Our first in-person meeting of the year took place on Tuesday 18 November. It was a cold and wet day with weather warnings hanging over Scotland, but we received a warm welcome at Fife College's new Dunfermline City Campus, a modern and flexible learning space that is designed to produce net zero carbon emissions. More than 80 students and colleagues from Scottish colleges, universities and sector agencies – including a strong showing of new STEP Network student members – had braved the weather, travelling from as far as the Scottish Borders and the Isle of Skye, to contribute to the day's lively and productive discussions.

Bringing the Network up to speed



The day opened with updates from each of the STEP project teams, allowing all participants to learn about the initiatives that are already underway. We heard a little from each project lead, with Jakki Jeffrey (Edinburgh College) providing a more detailed update on the project Supporting Access, Progression and Successful Outcomes in Disabled Student Communities (SAPSO). Our intention is to do something similar at future in-person meetings to help members stay up-to-date on project developments and opportunities to get involved.

Getting our projects moving

For most of the day, the project teams worked together to progress their work. When we all came back together for our closing plenary, members reported that these team working sessions had been really fruitful and that they felt much more confident in their projects

than they had at the start of the day. It was wonderful to hear participants emphasise the value of coming together in person to progress their work and to meet and share ideas with others from across the sector.

What's missing from our programme of work?

Professor Steve Tucker, one of our four Topic Leads, led us through a Menti activity to identify areas that might be missing from our overall programme of work. This generated some useful suggestions, including work around specific student demographics, students who are unengaged, international students, and AI.

As well as suggestions of potential gaps in the topic, members suggested that there was a need for clarity around aspects of project management (such as GDPR, ethics, student consent and hosting media); coordination of project surveys; better dissemination of information on projects (both for STEP Network members and the wider academic community); managing student handover; and more opportunities to get involved in multiple projects.

Members also used the Menti poll to make practical suggestions about the in-person events, including: holding events in venues with better transport links; providing a more detailed agenda in advance; and making better use of break times. We will take all this feedback into account for future events and welcome any additional feedback members would like to share – this is your time, and we want to make sure that you get as much out of the day as possible.

STEP so far and what comes next

Adelayo Adebayo, another of our Topic Leads, closed the day with some personal reflections on the day and on her involvement with STEP to date, commenting on the significant progress that had been made in the space of a year. It was a really positive note on which to end the meeting.

In terms of next steps, project teams will continue their work. CDN will run an Online Support Session on for 9 December which will offer project teams support on the topic of ethical approval, as well as a project 'pre-mortem' exercise.

A reminder that our open call for a further project on Student Support is open until 3 December. Full details are available on the STEP website and proposals are welcome from non-members of the STEP Network, so please share this call with any colleagues you think may be interested.

We're looking forward to seeing everyone at our next in-person meeting in Edinburgh in January and we wish you all a restful winter break in the meantime.