EMBEDDING THE EVIDENCE BASE AROUND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT METHODOLOGIES & PATIENT SAFETY INTO HEALTH, NURSING & MIDWIFERY PROGRAMMES

BACKGROUND
An increased focus on financial and process efficiency coupled with a local NHS and wider agency collaboration has led to the development and implementation of Quality Improvement and Patient Safety modules. Although these themes are also embedded throughout the undergraduate curricula, there has been a marked focus to implement this at Degree and Masters Level within Scotland’s largest School of Health, Nursing & Midwifery.

AIMS
The modules seek to enable healthcare professionals from different backgrounds and settings to critically appraise the evidence base around current quality improvement approaches. Whilst responding to local, national or international challenges, they will have the confidence to use this evidence and data to bring about changes in practice which will benefit patient care and ultimately the patient experience.

METHODS
As the industry surrounding improvement methods and techniques evolves, it is essential that healthcare professionals are aware of the strengths and limitations of these approaches. Hence, the most common quality improvement methodologies are explored alongside the evidence base which underpins their use within healthcare. Students, under guidance from UWS academics, will undertake a project of continuous quality improvement within their work setting. The effectiveness of their project is measured in relation to safety outcomes, performance, and productivity.

RESULTS
Over 100 healthcare professionals have already driven forward a quality improvement/patient safety project within their work setting. By adopting the current evidence around quality improvement methodologies and evaluation strategies, real improvements have been made in areas such as safety, efficiency (using Lean methodology), and increased compliance with clinical quality indicators and local/national and international guidelines.

CONCLUSION
The emerging evidence around the actual impact of quality improvement programmes within healthcare is still in its infancy. With much of the literature driven from a medical perspective and focused on large scale change, it is essential to recognise the important contribution that healthcare professionals can have, working collaboratively, on improving the quality and safety of healthcare through small scale changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Students need to be actively encouraged to publish their work following successful completion of these modules in order to increase the evidence base around this very important and topical subject area.