

Reflective Analysis

ELIR 4
2019

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Introduction by Principal and Vice-Chancellor Professor Pamela Gillies CBE, FRSE

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of our students and staff, Glasgow Caledonian University welcomes this review and we look forward to meeting with the Panel as the University enters the fourth cycle of Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR). As with previous cycles we have used this review to reflect on and evaluate our progress since the last ELIR in 2015.

Glasgow Caledonian University is a values-led, vibrant and multi-cultural community with a strong sense of purpose including a clear commitment to social justice and sustainability. We are strongly committed to delivering our mission as the University for the Common Good. Our global reputation for the social impact we have through our education and research was confirmed by our placement as 44th in the world for impact in the THE Global rankings league table. In this important table we were placed 3rd in Scotland and 10th in the UK, a significant achievement. The 2030 vision of the University builds further on this foundation seeking to ensure we are a 'world leader in social innovation through education and research'.

Collectively our students and staff make a major contribution to the communities we serve through our approach to widening access and social inclusion. We are sector leaders in the recruitment and support of care-experienced students, provide educational opportunities for Veterans and encourage individuals from the most challenging backgrounds to become our students and leave as our graduates. The University's mission to advance the Common Good has never been stronger and 5,000 of our staff and students currently engage in volunteering. Raising aspirations through working in partnership and engaging with our communities, lies at the heart of what we do here at GCU, from the work we do with early stage school pupils and their parents as part of the Caledonian Club to the avenues of opportunity created by the Advanced Higher Hub, which in AY 2018/19 celebrated a 91% pass rate, 14 points above the sector average. Our role as a champion of social change has significantly evolved since 2015. Working in partnership with the Students' Association we have raised awareness of the importance of positive mental health through a Student Mental Health Agreement and faced up to the challenge of gender based violence by training First Responders and running a powerful and impactful campaign to 'Erase the Grey'.

Teaching and learning and student support are critical to our success as a University, and we work in partnership with our students and the Students' Association to constantly enhance our student experience. Our academic and professional services staff make an outstanding contribution to the fulfilment of the 2020 Goal of 'Transforming lives through education'. The first University to have completely aligned our research strategy to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) issued by the United Nations, our new University strategy builds on the focus of the 2020 strategy to apply our research for social impact and focus on our success to deliver social benefit through our health protection and prevention work, domestic violence alleviation, cyberbullying prevention, safe energy, water, food security and climate justice and the promotion of sustainable business models to the corporate sector.

Since ELIR 3 we have extended our reach locally and internationally. We are successful at home and with overseas partners in crafting co-created, work-based programmes with industry and are proud our partnership African Leadership College (ALC) in Mauritius delivering a new cadre of ethical leaders for the continent which has recently graduated its first cohort of students. Our partnerships and TNE activity also reflect the 2020 Goal 'Innovating for social and economic impact'. Graduate Apprenticeships (GA's) are a strong area of growth for the University and we are sector leaders in offering GA's in Scotland. Home students are now more likely to take advantage of opportunities to study abroad and we are also increasing the number of our international students.

As the University moves towards 2030 our Chancellor, Dr Annie Lennox OBE is proud that her University has a common good mission and a vision that drives our commitment to access and inclusion; research that improves society and the human condition; learning and teaching underpinned by robust pedagogy and practice and digital development that adds real value and quality to our student learning experience. The centrality of the student experience, an outstanding student and staff commitment to the Common Good and a dynamic culture of partnership working set the context for our Reflective Analysis. We hope that you will find it to be a thought provoking and honest self-evaluation of our University community.

Introduction Student President, Eilidh Fulton

There is a strong ethos of partnership working at Glasgow Caledonian University. Within this Reflective Analysis there are many examples on how this is genuinely delivered between the University, the Students' Association and students.

The Students' Association exists to represent and enable GCU students to enhance all aspects of their student experience. This is our Mission. We are constantly striving towards our Vision that GCU students will have an outstanding experience that will live with them forever. We wholeheartedly support Glasgow Caledonian University in being the University for the Common Good and that the Students' Association wants GCU students to Be part of something.... Bigger. Our shared beliefs are outlined in our Student Partnership Agreement. We believe this Reflective Analysis captures the true essence to what it means to be part of the GCU Community.

GCU, in partnership with the Students' Association, encourages students to become actively involved in providing constructive feedback about all aspects of University life. The University has worked with the Students' Association to produce the Guide to Student Representation at GCU that outlines the student representation and joint academic representation structure. This was an outcome of the Internal Audit on Student Representation and the Academic Rep Review during 2018/19. The University places great value on listening and responding to the Student Voice, for instance a recent agreement to abolish graduation fees from Summer 2020, postgraduate study space created in the Saltire Centre, that all student facing policies have consultation with SAGE, personalised timetables, Student Mental Health Agreement, online submission of coursework and the re-opening of the Saltire Centre Rooftop Garden as an outdoor learning space. We have been actively involved in the recent articulation and PGR thematic reviews, Outcome Agreements and the creation of the GCU 2030 Strategy. Through the Student Experience Action Plan we work with the University to continue identifying how the student experience can be improved. Future areas of work include creating a learning capture strategy, investigating the BME attainment gap and with the growth in Graduate Apprentices we plan to explore further the Graduate Apprenticeship Student Experience. We believe our distinctive Full Time Officer model, that works closely with our academic schools, helps us achieve this improved student experience.

Working with the University to produce this Reflective Analysis has given us all the opportunity to recognise areas for development but also to reflect on our successes. As a Students' Association we look forward to engaging in this continuous improvement for the benefit of our members, GCU students.

1. Context Information about the Institution, student population and the review

1.1 Summary information about the institution, including strategic framework, organisational structure

Welcome to Glasgow Caledonian University: *The University for the Common Good*

- 1.1.1 Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) was originally formed by a merger of Glasgow Polytechnic and the Queens College Glasgow in 1993. The University was established under the 1992 Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act and its awarding powers conferred by the Academic Awards and Distinctions (GCU) (Scotland) Order of Council 1993. GCU has a well established reputation for equality of widening participation in HE and for providing a high-quality teaching, learning and research which dates back to its founding institutions in 1875. The University's commitment to social innovation is reflected in and inspired by its motto; For the Common Weal, and is shared by students and staff at all levels. Our mission is to make a positive difference to the communities we serve, through our applied research and education, and this is at the heart of all we do.
- 1.1.2 The University makes a significant economic and social impact generating nearly £1bn for the UK economy, and supporting 14,000 jobs each year and has become one of the largest universities in Scotland with 20,000 students across the globe. The university attracts individuals from a wide range of backgrounds; from local school leavers to international Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students. We offer programmes that prepare our graduates for a successful career in their chosen discipline. The Higher Education Statistics Agency ([HESA](#)) [2018 Employment Performance Indicator](#) show that 95% of GCU graduates were in employment or further study after six months. Ensuring the success of all of our students, regardless of their background or previous educational experience is a key aspect of the GCU student experience. GCU has a strong track record of attracting students from non-traditional backgrounds, particularly from areas of social and economic disadvantage. In Academic Year (AY) 2017/18 97% of young first-degree entrants are from state school or college - 10% points above the sector average ([HESA, 2019](#)). In addition, 49% of full-time undergraduates (UG) are first generation students. Forty-six percent of Scottish-domiciled first degree UG entrants at GCU were aged 21 or over in AY 2017/18. Whilst 22% of Scottish-domiciled UG entrants were from SIMD20 areas in AY 2017/18, the Scottish sector average is 15%.

This level of widening access recruitment is matched by a strong track record in terms of student retention of 91% in AY 2017/18.

- 1.1.3 The University was recognised for its commitment to the [Common Good](#), when in 2019 we were placed within the top 15 universities in the world for gender equality and reducing inequalities, according to the inaugural [Times Higher Education Impact Rankings](#). The new metric from Times Higher Education, which evaluates the social impact of universities, ranks GCU 44th in the world overall, third in Scotland and tenth in the UK. More than 500 institutions across 75 countries participated, presenting evidence of their impact against a number of the United Nations (UN) [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

Our culture: The common Good

- 1.1.4 The GCU commitment to the [Common Good](#) and [Sustainability](#) was seen in action in June 2019 when the University hosted the first world forum on Climate Justice. Personifying the spirit of the common good, in 2018 Royal Academician, singer-songwriter, social activist and philanthropist Dr Annie Lennox OBE became GCU's first woman Chancellor. Dr Lennox succeeds Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, anti-poverty campaigner and founder of the Grameen Bank and Social Business Movement and currently our emeritus Chancellor. In 2017 the Principal was appointed as a founding Trustee of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights UK.
- 1.1.5 Our commitment to the [Common Good](#) is reflected in the [GCU Values](#). Following the 2018 [Living Values Project](#), which included widespread consultation with staff, and enthusiastic endorsement by our students, a [GCU behavioural framework](#) based on our values of *Integrity, Creativity, Responsibility* and *Confidence* was developed. The GCU Values permeate all that we do; our values should be lived, and drive and define us as an institution. To achieve this we have captured the definition of each of our values within a set of [benchmark behaviours](#). These aspirational statements clarify the things we would like to be recognised for and help us in evaluating and improving our current practices. The values are embedded in areas such performance review and recruitment where individuals evidence examples of the values drawn from their own experience. Our common good philosophy is also embedded in the curriculum and provides opportunities for students to engage in aligned co- and extra- curricular activities. This work is underpinned by participation in the prestigious Ashoka U network. Ashoka U works with colleges and universities to foster a campus-wide culture

of innovation. GCU is the only Scottish institution to achieve Changemaker status and is one of only 29 in the world.

Valuing the Common Good: what we do and how we do it

Our work for the Common Good defines who we are and what we stand for. We want our values to be lived and to drive us. Therefore, we have captured the definition of each of our values within a set of benchmark behaviours. These aspirational statements clarify the things we would like to be recognised for and help us in improving our practices. The values of *integrity, creativity, responsibility and confidence* were selected by staff and students of the University as those we felt represented GCU as the University for the Common Good. They describe the behaviours we aspire to as an organisation and how we as individual members of GCU aspire to live our values. Our values are the foundations upon which we build collaborative relationships to deliver our social mission for the common good.

Since defining our values and behaviours, 93% of staff agree with the statement: *'I believe in the University motto "for the common good" and believe it is important'* (AIS, GCU Staff Pulse Survey AY 2016).

- 1.1.6 [Equality and diversity](#) are fundamental to the university's purpose and related activity such as the women only [Aurora](#) Programme is informed by external and internal policy and practice and consultation with our staff and students. We prioritise action and believe in a culture and environment that is inclusive of all sections of society; one that is equally responsive to the needs of groups and individuals. GCU has been an active member of the [Scottish Race Equality Network](#) since its inaugural meeting.
- 1.1.7 The University has made a visible and lasting commitment to addressing [gender imbalance](#). GCU was a runner-up in the [2018 Guardian University Awards](#)- Advancing Staff Equality category for our focus on female academic progression. GCU's commitment to the principle of equality and equal pay is part of our [Common Good](#) mission, and wider commitment to [equality and diversity \(3.4.22\)](#). Our [gender pay gap](#) remains below the Scottish and UK average at 12.8% as at 31 July 2018. We continue to engage in focussed work on preventing and responding to sexual and gender based violence. This is a priority area for GCU, exemplified by the [Erase the Grey Campaign \(2.3.45\)](#) and is an important aspect of our overall approach to safeguarding the wellbeing of our students.
- 1.1.8 In AY 2017/18 the University in partnership with the Students' Association implemented a new student partnership agreement; [GCU Community: Working Together in](#)

[Partnership](#). This agreement describes our agreed responsibilities as students and staff of the University. Our commitment to true partnership working has resulted in significant changes in the way we; work with our students, create university policy, respond to student feedback and work together to enhance the student experience.

- 1.1.9 A GCU Student Mental Health task group was established in 2017, with representation from across the University and the Students' Association to review current practice and make recommendations for enhancement. The [Student Mental Health Agreement](#) was signed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) Academic and the Student President. Reflecting the importance of this commitment, the Principal is the current Chair of Universities Scotland Mental Health Group part of whose purpose is to raise sector mental health priorities with the Scottish Government and share good practice across the sector.

Our context: Strategy 2020

- 1.1.10 [GCU Strategy 2020](#) was under development at the time of Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 3 and sets out the university's vision to achieve a global reputation for delivering social innovation benefit and impact through education and research. Our staff, students and partners have been central to the delivery of Strategy 2020. The strategy is underpinned by a suite of cross-cutting action plans and enabling approaches, including our [supporting strategies](#). Strategy 2020 provides a structure to support an outstanding student experience, the delivery of world-leading research, increased business development and growth in our international networks. Furthermore, it seeks to reinforce our distinct position as the University for the [Common Good](#) that works collaboratively to deliver social benefit to the communities we serve. We are now developing our [2030 strategy](#) and we will continue to build upon our work for the common good with the university [Research Strategy](#) continuing to employ the [SDGs](#) used by the UN as the framework for our research activities. *(1.1.13)*

Our vision

By 2020, GCU will have a global reputation for delivering social benefit and impact through education, research and social innovation. We will be recognised as the University for the [Common Good](#) that transforms lives, enriches cities and communities, innovates for social and economic impact, engages globally and aligns with others in partnership and collaboration to deliver our goals.

2020 Strategic goals

- Transforming lives through education
- Enriching cities and communities through research
- Innovating for social and economic impact
- Engaging globally
- Aligning for the Common Good

1.1.11 [Strategy 2020](#) drives the university's ambitions to deliver real and lasting positive impact for the communities we serve locally, nationally and internationally. A high level review undertaken in AY 2016/17, (the mid-point of the planning horizon) confirmed that the university's vision and goals remain relevant, ambitious and in line with the institutional mission; 'For the Common Good'. The review process also provided an opportunity to assess the targets set for the institutional 2020 Strategic Indicators, which can be seen below. The review was considered by University Court at its meeting in June 2017. Court approved an additional two 2020 Strategic Indicators. One on environmental sustainability, demonstrated by a reduction in our Global Carbon Footprint and achievement of EcoCampus Platinum status, and the other inclusion of a new 2020 target to achieve 90% satisfaction amongst international students, as measured by the International Student Barometer (ISB) survey, which was then achieved a year later in 2018, and continued to be achieved the following year. (AIS, ISB 2017 and 2018)

2020 Strategic Indicators:

- Maintain a leading position for widening access
- Achieve excellent student satisfaction
- Ensure positive outcomes for our students and graduates
- Diversify our student population, growing the proportion of postgraduate (PG) and international students
- Enhance the global impact of our research, focussing on its reach and significance in addressing societal challenges
- Increase income from research, knowledge exchange and commercial activities
- Enhance staff engagement and grow the proportion of our academic staff holding doctoral and PG qualifications
- Ensure financial sustainability
- Be recognised as a leading university for environmental sustainability
- Achieve 90% satisfaction amongst international students

- 1.1.12 [Strategy 2020](#) builds on our strong tradition of [widening participation](#) and sets out our commitment to delivering an excellent student experience which [supports students](#) into, through University and out of University into employment or further study. GCU makes an important contribution to Scottish Government's widening participation aims for the sector. We will continue to intensify efforts to achieve the [Commission on Widening Access](#) (CoWA) targets on widening access to higher education from underrepresented groups and sections of the population, and meeting our [SFC Outcome Agreement](#) targets for the Proportion of students from [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (SIMD) 20 and those accessing Higher Education (HE) through [articulation](#). Our ambition in this regard is to maintain a balanced SIMD profile across our Scottish domiciled UG entrants (SDUE). We have consistently achieved the 20% target for SIMD20 intake, exceeding the CoWA targets for 2021, and set to achieve at least 20% in AY 2019/20.

Strategy 2030

- 1.1.13 The University is moving from [Strategy 2020](#) to [Strategy 2030](#). The new strategy will build on a mature and impactful predecessor and take the [Common Good](#) mission and vision into the next decade. A 10-year horizon allows us to be even more ambitious for our future. It is proposed that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be set to a 2025 milestone and there will be a 2025 mid-point review. The 2020 vision of 'a global reputation for delivering social benefit and impact through education, research and social innovation', realised through the global achievements and emerging lines of sight detailed in this chapter, are leading to a 2030 vision of GCU as a '*world leader in social innovation through education and research*'. The values of; integrity, creativity, responsibility and confidence selected by staff and students are a guiding principal for 2030 and remain a steadfast influence. The development of Strategy 2030 has been informed by an extended consultation with staff, students and key external partners in 2019 led by members of the University Executive focussed on key areas such as Education, Research, Sector Partnerships, International and the University Community. The strategy will launch in Spring of 2020.

Student experience

- 1.1.14 Strategy 2020 sets out the University's strategic priorities over the planning period and provides a structure to support an excellent student experience. To support the delivery of this key objective, in 2016 a major consultation with students and staff resulted in the creation of a single overarching strategic plan aimed at enhancing the experience of all GCU students - The Enhancing the Student Experience 2020 Action Plan ([SEAP](#)).

The plan has not been developed, or delivered in isolation. It aligns with and encompasses GCU strategic priority areas and operational plans and incorporates key sector-wide priorities, including the current Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Enhancement Theme; [Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience](#). The SEAP responds to key priorities, such as the areas for improvement highlighted in the National Student Survey (NSS), and is delivered through a mix of cross-university and local School based action plans focussed on improving student outcomes and increasing student engagement and sense of belonging. In the 2018 NSS positive improvements were seen across seven out of the nine sections, most notably in Assessment and Feedback (71%), which increased 5 percentage points, representing the highest score that the University has achieved for this section in the previous five-year period and outperforming the Scottish sector average. Although Overall Satisfaction has remained at 81%, in the 2019 NSS the University has maintained these improvements with slight improvement seen for Learning Opportunities and the Student Voice. (AIS, NSS 2018 and 2019)

Staff development

- 1.1.15 The University recognises the importance of [staff wellbeing](#) by promoting positive physical and [mental health and wellbeing](#) to ensure that all staff can work in a safe and supportive environment. We also recognise that our staff are central to delivering an excellent student experience. [The Academic Development Framework \(3.4.3\)](#) implemented in 2017 sets out structured pathways for inexperienced and experienced teaching and research staff to engage in Continued Professional Development (CPD) that supports the design and delivery of our student learning experience. Professional Support Services staff are also included in CPD provision and annual update activity. Key priority areas are; supporting the digital capabilities of all staff and the enhancement of academic leadership across all our discipline communities. Both new and experienced teachers are supported to achieve fellowship through the [UK Professional Standards Framework \(UKPSF\)](#). Currently 54% of GCU teaching staff holds professional recognition against a UK sector average of 42%. The proportion of academic staff with PG qualification meets the 2020 target of 85% and 53% of academic staff possess a doctoral qualification.

Research environment

- 1.1.16 [Research](#) is at the heart of our mission to be known as the University for the [Common Good](#) and this is central to the development of both research and teaching. Our applied

research contributes to the development of intellectual and social capital, enhances our reputation as an international centre of knowledge and expertise, and provides a basis for collaboration with other organisations in the UK and internationally. Research is crucial to the design of our academic programmes and informs and underpins the content of all curricula. Research informs authentic evidence based learning and supports the development of skilled, intellectually adept and employable graduates.

1.1.17 Our [Research Strategy](#) underpins our focus and preparation for the next Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise in 2021, building on [GCU's performance in REF 2014](#). The performance in REF 2014 has GCU in the top 10 in the UK for impact in Social Work and Social Policy, with 80% of outputs rated as world-leading. We are ranked in the top 20 in the UK for allied health and related research, with 89% of research rated in the highest categories of world-leading and internationally excellent. GCU's research in the Built Environment was rated in the top 20 in the UK.

1.1.18 As the top Modern University for research power in Scotland ([REF 2014](#)) our research strengths allow us to be global in our ambitions. In 2017, the University's [Research Strategy](#) was reframed around the [SDGs](#) assumed by the UN in 2015, enhancing integration with initiatives such as Principles for Responsible Management Education ([PRME](#)) and AshokaU. We address the Goals via three societal challenge areas of Inclusive Societies, Healthy Lives and Sustainable Environments, providing an excellent fit with the [Common Good](#), our [Research Integrity](#), School structures and GCU's associated Strategy *for Learning* ([SL](#)). To promote greater cross-disciplinary and cross-School working:

- Researchers are grouped into six themes to correspond with the challenge areas: Social innovation and public policy: Social Justice, equalities and communities; Public health; Long-term conditions; Built environments; and Efficient systems.
- Research to address the [SDGs](#) is further promoted through our prestigious thematic [research centres](#) which are subject to a five-yearly Centres Renewal and Approval Process.

International environment

1.1.19 With campuses in Glasgow, London, and New York and strong educational partnerships in Oman, Bangladesh, Mauritius and now a new University in Oman the University approaches partnerships in a sustainable way, seeking to embed them within local environments. We remain focussed on [internationalising the curriculum](#);

including participation in [EQUiP](#), which supports the CPD of staff in internationalising the curriculum. We actively seek to diversify our student and staff profile, whilst enhancing our campus culture and driving income growth. We encourage students to become global citizens and graduates through participation in [international study experiences](#) with partner institutions, organisations and employers. In AY 2017/18, 13% of final year first degree leavers had undertaken a mobility experience during their time at GCU. ([SFC Outcome Agreement, 2019](#))

1.1.20 In 2017 we were the first foreign institution ever to become a degree-granting body, by the Board of Regents, in New York City following the granting of a Charter by the New York State Education Department, and in 2018 achieved Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Candidacy and was officially recognised as part of the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP) which allows GCU to recruit international students to its campus in New York. The MSCHE is federally recognized by the United States (US) Department of Education to accredit degree-granting institutions in the state of New York, that wish to participate in Federal "Title IV" student loan programs. Title IV of the Higher Education Act covers the administration of the US federal student financial aid programs and authorizes programs that provide financial assistance to students to assist them in obtaining a postsecondary education at certain institutions of higher education (IHEs). Glasgow Caledonian New York College (GCNYC) has completed the Title IV process and we are now awaiting the result.

1.1.21 The University continues to be the biggest recruiter of international students amongst the Scottish modern Universities. In AY 2018/19 we numbered **1225 students (7% of the student population)**; an increase from AY 2017/18 where the number of international students was 1205. We recognise the vital contribution that international students make to both the cultural diversity and financial sustainability of our campuses and communities. The 2018 ISB results show that satisfaction amongst international students at GCU is very high at 92%, with 96% stating they are happy with their life at GCU. Across all categories, GCU satisfaction levels are higher than Scottish and UK averages. ([AIS, ISB 2018](#))

1.1.22 The University is internationally recognised for a global contribution to the [Common Good](#) as demonstrated in the following table:

THE Impact Rankings	The Impact Rankings evaluate social impact based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. GCU is ranked 44th in the world out of 500 universities, and 10th in the UK. GCU is placed within the
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	top 15 universities in the world, and first in Scotland, for Gender Equality and Reducing Inequalities.
The Young University Rankings	THE Young University (top 200) Times Higher Education Young University Rankings 2019
QS World University Rankings	QS Rankings (801-1000) - QS World University rankings 2020
The World Rankings	THE World Rankings (601-800) - Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2019
UN Global Compact	GCU was the first Scottish university to join the UN Global Compact in 2013 and we are members of the UK Network Advisory Group. GCU is a Champion for Principles for Responsible Management Education .
Ashoka U	GCU is the only Scottish University accredited by Ashoka U as a 'Changemaker' Campus for our commitment to social innovation and change across the University, and is a key player in this prestigious global network.
Research and innovation	The 2014 REF results demonstrated GCU's world-leading research strengths in key areas. We have built on this foundation to apply our research for practical impact, for example leading the agenda on climate justice.
Erasmus+	The University's record in international collaboration under the Erasmus+ Programme is unrivalled in the UK. Our projects are not limited to Europe but support international development and capacity building in regions throughout the world, including Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

1.1.23 In addition to attracting international students to study in the UK, GCU has been at the forefront of [Transnational Education](#) (TNE) developments since the establishment of the Caledonian College of Engineering in Oman in 1996. Currently there are a significant number (78) of TNE projects at varying stages of the pipeline, across all 4 GCU academic Schools and each school has a pipeline of future activity.

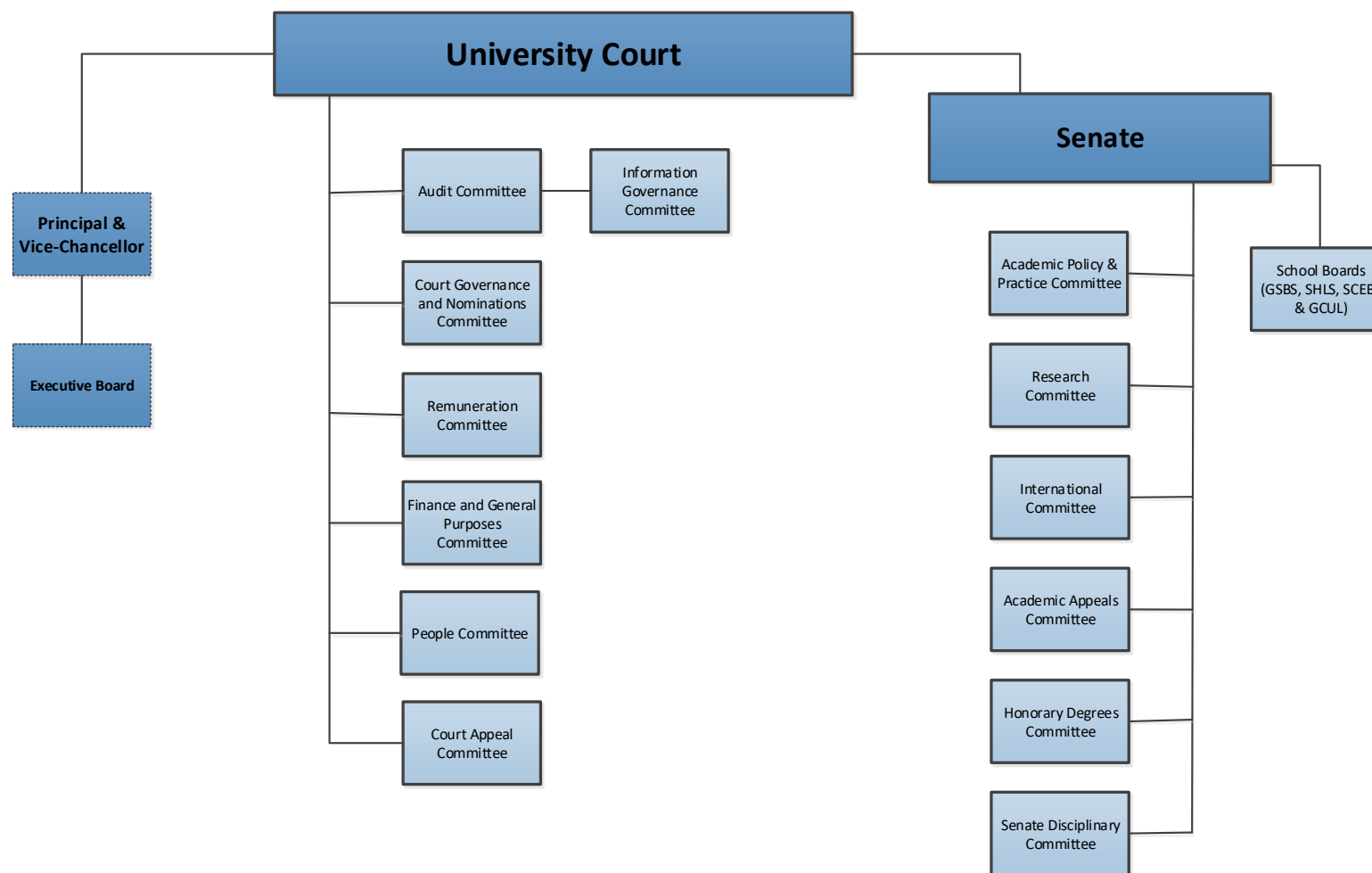
University Governance

1.1.24 The University Court of GCU is committed to best practice in all aspects of corporate governance. The Chair of Court ensures that Court fulfils its responsibilities as set out in the Statutory Instrument by means of its Statement of Primary Responsibilities, reserved powers, Standing Orders and the scheme of delegated authority. In accordance with the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance (the Code), Court has a Statement of Primary Responsibilities outlining which matters are reserved for consideration by the Court and which can be delegated by the Court to its committees. Court delegates the co-ordination, development and supervision of the academic work of the University to Senate subject to the general control and direction of Court. Senate normally meets four times per year. Senate reports to Court following

each meeting and also prepares an annual report detailing how it has fulfilled its terms of reference. All lay Court members are expected to attend at least one meeting of Senate per year. Court and Senate have agreed procedures for reviewing their effectiveness, with formal reviews for both bodies having been undertaken in 2017. Both Court and Senate include student membership, and students are members of relevant Court and Senate committees. The University Governance Framework is shown below:

Diagram 1:

Glasgow Caledonian University Governance Framework 2018/2019

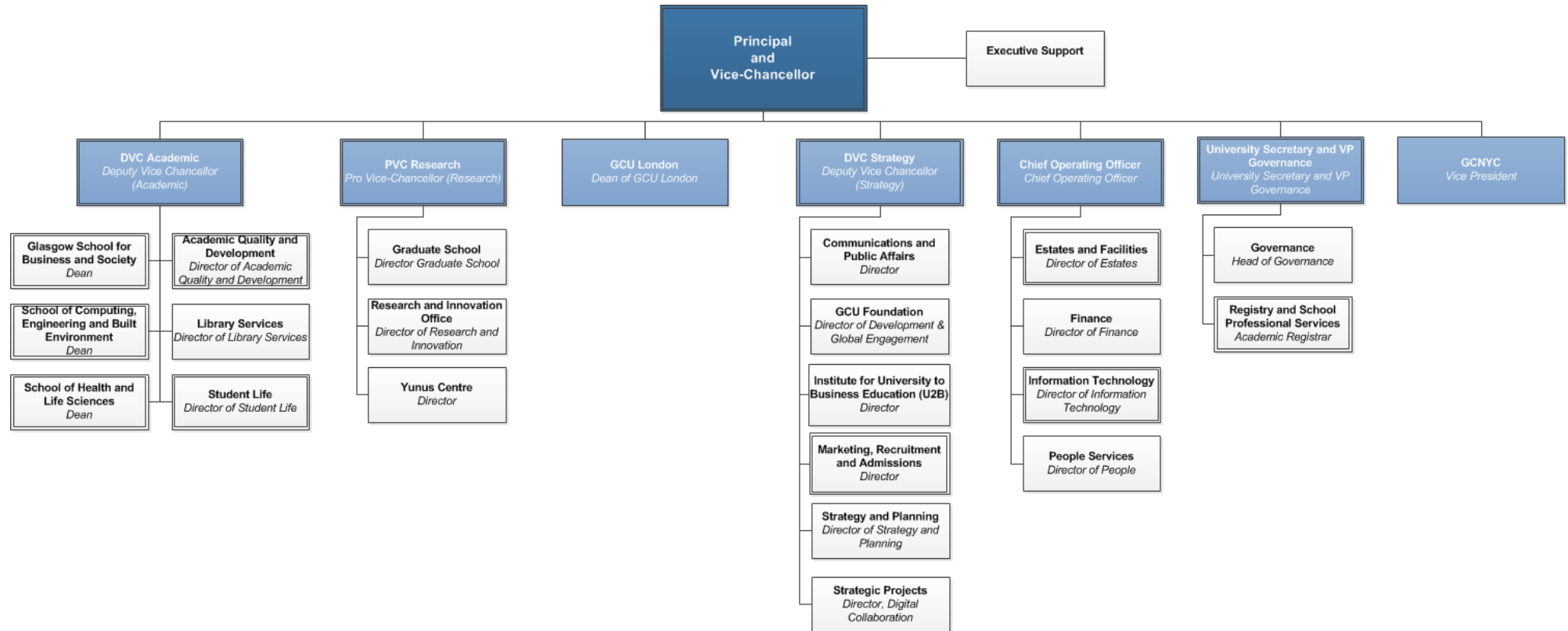


University Structure- Schools refresh

1.1.25 At the conclusion of a major review in 2017 to ensure that our overall portfolio remains current and contemporary, staff were consulted in order to explore the degree of refresh required to deliver growth, enhance the student experience, give momentum to leadership and management and release academic initiative and drive to support the continued success of the university. A set of proposals emerged from the consultation during AY 2017/18 and were endorsed by Executive Board and Court in 2018. The University continues to have three academic Schools. The School refresh has delivered the desired increased visibility of academic disciplines through a re-design of academic Departments (9 to 22 Departments). It has also resulted in a refreshed approach to School Professional Services provision and the leadership and management structure in Schools and Departments including enhancement of Professoriate strategic and discipline leadership. Overall, the refresh will drive quality enhancement and allow academic Schools and Professional Support Services to develop increasingly agile and flexible ways of working. Importantly the refresh captures the ongoing commitment of staff to effect culture change that releases potential and addresses performance. The Schools' Refresh is part of a strategic drive to place the student experience at the heart of all we do and release the energy, drive and potential of the university in order to develop staff capacity and capability, streamline processes and drive leadership, responsibility and accountability at all levels.

1.1.26 The current composition of the University is shown below:

Diagram 2: Glasgow Caledonian University Organisational Structure 2018/19



1.2 Composition, key trends and anticipated changes in the student population, including information on retention, progression and outcomes.

Contextual data on population, retention, progression and outcomes

- 1.2.1 The University continues to perform well in a challenging external environment with a number of our [2020 performance indicator](#) outcomes met or on track. The [2018 HESA Performance Indicators](#) on projected learning outcomes for students and graduate destinations compared well to our 2020 ambitions, and in a sector context, we continue to achieve excellence in [widening participation](#) ([SFC participation indicators](#)).

In 2018/19 GCU student demographics from AY 2014/15 to 2018/19 are shown in the following tables.

Table 1: Undergraduate (UG), Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student Demographics

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19*
UG Full-time	11910	11340	11090	11240	11671
UG Part-time	2185	2460	2420	2335	2113
UG Home, RUK & EU	13540	13365	13110	13190	13432
UG International	555	435	395	385	352
UG Total	14095	13800	13510	13575	13784

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19*
PGT Full-time	1380	1375	1535	1545	1693
PGT Part-time	960	945	935	880	946
PGT Home, RUK & EU	1510	1570	1760	1760	1930
PGT International	830	750	710	665	709
PGT Total	2340	2320	2475	2425	2639

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19*
PGR Full-time	265	235	235	225	209
PGR Part-time	235	225	195	225	228
PGR Home, RUK & EU	320	300	280	295	301
PGR International	180	160	150	155	136
PGR Total	500	460	435	450	437

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19*
Institution Total	16930	16580	16415	16450	16860

Table 2: Proportion of students

	2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19*	
UG Total	14095	83%	13800	83%	13510	82%	13575	83%	13784	82%
PGT Total	2340	14%	2320	14%	2475	15%	2425	15%	2639	16%
PGR Total	500	3%	460	3%	435	3%	450	3%	437	3%
Total UG/PG	16930		16580		16415		16450		16860	

* Please note 2018-19 is subject to confirmation and will be included in the final RA

- 1.2.2 The University consistently achieves a high intake of students from SIMD 20 areas in comparison to the sector, both in terms of numbers and as percentage of all entrants; and combines this with retention rates which are above the sector average demonstrating the success of our holistic approach to widening participation. The latest report by SFC on [widening access](#) shows that GCU 91% of Scottish full-time entrants from the 20% most deprived areas continued into second year, compared to a sector average of 89% (AY 2017/18). Our ambition in this regard is to maintain a balanced SIMD profile across our Scottish domiciled UG entrants; and to maintain high retention rates for all students. (Tables 3 and 4 as follows)

Table 3: Scottish-domiciled UG Entrants (SDUE) by Protected Characteristics

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
SIMD				
SIMD20	21%	23%	21%	22%
SIMD40	41%	42%	40%	40%
COWA SIMD20	21%	23%	21%	24%
Gender				
Female	57%	57%	54%	55%
Male	43%	43%	46%	45%
Age				
Under 21	59%	55%	58%	54%
21 and over	41%	45%	42%	46%
Ethnicity				
BAME	9%	9%	9%	10%
Disability				
Declared disability	7%	9%	10%	10%
Care experienced				
Care experienced	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%

Data source: SFC National Measures

Table 4: Scottish-domiciled UG Students - Retention to Year 2 by Protected Characteristics

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
SIMD				
SIMD20	91%	89%	92%	91%
SIMD40	91%	90%	92%	91%
Gender				
Female	93%	90%	92%	91%
Male	89%	92%	95%	92%
Age				
Under 21	92%	92%	94%	92%
21 and over	91%	90%	93%	91%
Ethnicity				
BAME	93%	91%	94%	95%
Disability				
Declared disability	89%	92%	91%	90%
Care experienced				
Care experienced	-	94%	75%	100%

Data source: SFC National Measures

Key trends

- 1.2.3 GCU National Measures are shown in the [2019/20 SFC Outcome Agreement](#).
- 1.2.4 The AY 2017/18 overall retention rate for females was 91% and the retention rate for female students from SIMD20 areas was also 91%, demonstrating the success of our holistic approach to widening participation. For males the overall retention rate was 92% while the retention rate for male students from SIMD20 areas was 91% therefore we have some more work to do to achieve equal retention between SIMD20 males and females, which will remain a key area of focus for the University in 2019/20. (Table 4 above)
- 1.2.5 The [University's Strategy 2020](#) builds on our strong tradition of [widening participation](#) and sets out our commitment to delivering a distinctive student experience which supports students into and through their university journey, and out into employment or further study. We take a lifecycle approach to the learner journey (in totality) using a model of partnership working and student engagement, with support at multiple points across the learner journey. The University has maintained its strategic commitment to widening participation and has improved across all metrics relating to learning and teaching and student outcomes as follows:

SIMD profile	22% of Scottish-domiciled UG entrants were from SIMD20 areas in AY 2017/18, the Scottish sector average is 15%
Articulation	Approximately 1000 students per year enter into Levels 2 and 3 with full advanced standing, representing 25% of our Scottish UG entrants in AY 2018/19
State schools or colleges	97% of young full time UG entrants to GCU students come from a state school or college, compared to the Scottish sector average of 87%. (2017/18 HESA 2019 PI)
First in family	42% of UG entrants were the first in their families to enter higher education 2017/18
Care-experienced students	Supported by focussed outreach work, the number of care-experienced students increases each year, and was 30 in AY 2018/19. We have signed the Stand Alone pledge for estranged students.
Carers	The first University to achieve the <i>Going Higher for Student Carers</i> Award from Carers Trust Scotland, we have over 270 students identified as carers in AY 2018/19
Disability	10% of Scottish-domiciled UG entrants had a declared disability in AY 2017/18
BAME	10% of Scottish-domiciled UG entrants are BAME compared to the Scottish sector average of 8% in AY 2017/18
Gender	45% of Scottish-domiciled UG entrants are male in AY 2017/18, and we continue to drive initiatives to promote gender balance in participation
Mature students	46% of Scottish-domiciled first degree UG entrants at GCU were aged 21 or over in AY 2017/18.
Veterans	With sector leading support, we have a veterans student population of c80 students in AY 2018/19
SIMD Retention	91% of Scottish full-time first degree entrants from SIMD20 areas continued into second year, compared to a Scottish sector average of 89% (AY 2017/18)
Employment	95% of GCU graduates are in employment or further study six months after graduation, and we have increased graduate level prospects by 4%

Sources: HESA (2017, 2018, 2019), SFC (2018) and internal data

1.3 Commentary on the preparation for the ELIR, including confirmation of the nature and rationale for the contextualised range of topics included in the self-evaluation.

Preparation for ELIR4

- 1.3.1 Since ELIR 3 the University has implemented an enhanced approach to learning, teaching and the student experience. These have included *a Back to Basics with Quality Assurance Project (4.3.3)* which lead to the *Quality Assurance and Enhancement Academic Pillars Programme (4.3.3)*. This comprehensive programme resulted in a streamlined approach to quality assurance ([Academic Quality Policy and Practice \(AQPP\)](#)) and [Thematic Reviews](#) of the Postgraduate Research (PGR) and Articulating Student Experience. We have also introduced the student facing SEAP and the staff facing [Academic Development Framework](#) (ADF). This work has been implemented to build on the good practice identified as part of the last review process. All are designed to enhance learning, teaching and the student experience. (AIS, Thematic Review PGR)
- 1.3.2 In early 2019 the DVC Academic convened a cross university [steering group](#) to oversee preparation for ELIR, including exploring and setting the context of the GCU Review, the Reflective Analysis (RA) and Advance Information Set (AIS). The group included representation from the GCU Students' Association, academic Schools and professional support Services staff, drawn from across the university. Regular ELIR updates were provided for discussion and information to Executive Board, Court, Schools, Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE), Senate, Academic Policy and Practice Committee (APPC) and the Learning and Teaching Sub-committee (LTSC). In addition, updates have been provided on the staff web portal.

GCU ELIR4 context: The Student Experience

- 1.3.3 The 2020 [SEAP](#) emerged from extensive staff and student consultation in 2016. The SEAP supports the implementation of [Strategy 2020](#) and incorporates major areas of enhancement identified in ELIR 3. It sits alongside the [SfL](#) and is underpinned by academic quality and standards and processes. The plan reflects the centrality of the student experience and our commitment to staff and student partnership. It also incorporates key sector priorities such as the QAA Enhancement Themes and [SFC priorities](#). The SEAP Themes provided an ideal framework for the contextualisation of our RA.

SEAP Themes

1. Student Engagement and a Sense of Belonging
2. Programme Organisation, Management and Delivery
3. Assessment and Feedback
4. Wider Student Experience

Student and staff consultation

- 1.3.4 In order to ensure the RA accurately reflected GCU, its staff and students we facilitated a wide ranging series of consultation events with students, academic Schools and professional support Services staff. Approaches included face to face meetings; pop up events and via social media. The consultation was contextualised to the SEAP Themes as staff and students are familiar with them. From the data generated we constructed a set of self-evaluative statements, which can be seen below. The statements represent the collective voice of staff and students, providing a contemporary view of the university from the perspective of those who work and study here.

GCU STUDENTS AND STAFF SELF-EVALUATIVE STATEMENTS

Who we are

Our Common Good

Our ethos and purpose is the Common Good; embedded in research and teaching, our common good values drive socially responsible innovation and practice.

Our Student Experience

We aim to deliver excellence in Learning, Teaching and Research. Our student experience builds on the GCU culture of student engagement and partnership working, and is at the heart of all that we do.

Our Community and Identity

Our community is diverse and inclusive and offers individuals from all backgrounds the opportunity to grow and develop their academic and professional identity.

What we do

Our Learning Experience

Our high quality learning experience prioritises real world learning. We work with our partner employers and professional bodies to prepare students to be global citizens, and to achieve professional success through high quality graduate opportunities; a key driver for 2030.

Our Applied Research

Our applied research addresses the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and informs and underpins the content of all curricula, helping to produce skilled, intellectually adept and employable graduates.

Our Student Support

Our academic and professional staff are friendly and approachable; they offer support and subject expertise that is both valuable and valued.

Where we do it

Our Learning Environment

Our learning environments are virtual and physical; the Campus is modern, welcoming, accessible, friendly and relaxed.

1.4 Summary of the institution's follow-up to the previous ELIR

1.4.1 The [ELIR 3 Outcome Report](#) asked the University to consider five areas for development

1. Implementation of institutional strategies and consistency of practice
2. Research Student Experience
3. Graduate Teaching Assistants and institutional oversight of the role
4. Feedback on assessment
5. Capturing the off-campus student voice

1.4.2 Strategy implementation, highlighted as an area for development in the ELIR 3 Outcome Report, is demonstrated by the maturation of GCU [Strategy 2020](#), which was under development in 2015. Although the University is in a similar position at the time of ELIR 4, the new [Strategy 2030 \(1.1.14\)](#) builds on the success and impact of Strategy 2020. The introduction in AY 2016/17 of the SEAP operationalises the student experience and student feedback on assessment. This was highlighted as an area for development in ELIR 3, and is an integral part of the plan. The SEAP is also intrinsic to the way academic Schools and professional Support Services construct and make sense of the local student experience and it supports the way that they engage and work with their students.

1.4.3 In response to the area of development in ELIR 3 around the Research Student Experience, the University has undertaken a Thematic Review of the PGR Student Experience. The findings of this review are discussed in Chapter 2 [\(2.4.4\)](#). In addition, during 2018/19 the Students' Association and University reviewed the Academic Rep Structure, including PGR reps; there are now two student reps in each Glasgow School and one in London. PGR Students are also now more closely aligned to their discipline area in the academic Schools. This has been brought about by the Schools refresh in AY 2017/18. Additionally, dedicated physical space for PGR students has also been made available in the library. The Graduate School continues to act as a hub for research student and supervisor development and oversees the PGR experience in partnership with the university's academic Schools and Professional Support Services. As part of the development of the PGR Student Experience, the introduction of a mandatory [Teaching Skills Programme](#) now ensures that PhD students are prepared for their teaching responsibilities. The results of the first internal PGR Experience Survey (PGRES 2019) undertaken since the previous external PGR Experience

Survey (PRES) in 2017 showed a significant improvement in the GCU PGRSE student experience with an **84%** satisfaction rate in 2019 compared to **72%** in 2017. (AIS, Thematic Review PGR and PGRES 2019 and PRES 2017)

- 1.4.4 The University now has an [Academic Development Framework](#) in place and within this is an 'Introduction to Teaching Skills' programme which supports the development of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). It is mandatory to complete a block of four half day [workshops](#) prior to embarking on teaching as a GTA at GCU. Training blocks are offered throughout the year to provide some flexibility in opportunities to attend.
- 1.4.5 In response to the area for development around Feedback on Assessment, in 2017 the University published a the University developed in 2017 the University published a [Digital Assessment Policy](#) to encourage consistent and efficient approaches to digital assessment practices across the University to enhance the student learning experience. We also publish collective guidance; [Assessment and Feedback at GCU](#). Our Student Performance Feedback Policy has been refreshed for AY 2019/20 to ensure greater clarity for students and staff [\(2.3.31\)](#).
- 1.4.6 Capturing the off-campus student voice, again highlighted in the last ELIR, has developed in parallel with increasing TNE activity [\(2.3.63\)](#) and [\(5.1\)](#). This has resulted in an extended network of [support for international students](#). The results of the most recent ISB in 2018 reinforces the success of this additional support, with 92% of GCU students reporting that they were *either satisfied or very satisfied* with their experience at the University. This figure is 2% higher than the Scottish average and 3% higher than the UK average. Our ability to recruit additional numbers of international students, in common with the rest of the HE sector, has been impacted by major changes to the UK Visa entry requirements, a development not foreseen at the time of ELIR 3. Linked to this, on a positive note in 2018, INTO (Scotland), the international study centre and joint venture with GCU was [successfully reviewed](#) by the QAA (Educational Oversight- Exceptional Arrangements). This is further discussed in Chapter 5 [\(5.2.70\)](#). (AIS, ISB 2018)
- 1.4.7 Developments since ELIR 3 (2015)
 - In AY2015/16 the University finalised and implemented [Strategy 2020](#)
 - In 2016 an extensive consultation with staff and students led to the creation and implementation of the 2020 SEAP. The SEAP supports [Strategy 2020](#) and incorporates key areas of enhancement identified in ELIR 3.

- In 2016 GCU established a partnership with the [African Leadership College](#) in Mauritius, to deliver GCU degree programmes accredited by the Mauritian Education Commission and focuses on building ethical leadership capability in Africa.
- In 2017 the university [Research Strategy](#) was refreshed and GCU became the first University to incorporate the UN [SDG's](#) as the unifying and overarching framework for our University Research Strategy.
- Co-founded in 2010 by GCU and the Grameen Healthcare Trust, the Grameen Caledonian College of Nursing in Bangladesh is a tangible example of aligning with partners for positive social impact. In 2017 GCU handed over the Principalship, diplomas and degrees are awarded locally by Dhaka University.
- The emergence of the [GCU Values](#) in 2017 followed a widespread consultation with staff and students resulted in a [behavioural framework](#) for the University based on values of *Integrity, Creativity, Responsibility* and *Confidence*.
- In 2017 the Principal was appointed as a Founding Trustee of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights UK. Demonstrating [our values](#) and commitment to the [Common Good](#).
- GCU worked in partnership with Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) in South Africa to co- create bespoke programmes to transform the business through enhancing capability and capacity, with almost 500 of their employees becoming students on our work-based programmes in AY 2017/18.
- In 2018 Dr Annie Lennox succeeded Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, anti-poverty campaigner and founder of the Grameen Bank and Social Business Movement. She is the first-ever female Chancellor of the University.
- In 2018 the University finalised a new [student partnership agreement](#); *GCU Community: Working Together in Partnership*, replacing the previous document and approach.
- The University appointed seven Assistant Vice-Principals (AVPs) in 2018 whose specific disciplinary strength and wider expertise will drive forward key strands of work aligned to the university portfolio.

- By 2018 54% of GCU teaching staff had attained professional The UKPSF recognition, 85% hold a PG qualification and 53% have a doctoral qualification (2018).
- The 2018 Schools Refresh resulted in a reinvigorated academic portfolio and renewed focus on disciplinary communities to offer a sustainable platform to build greater academic excellence and enhanced student experience to deliver [strategy 2030](#).
- By 2018 the University had become a sector leader in the development and delivery of Graduate Apprenticeships (GA), funded by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and currently partners 70 employers to deliver seven GA frameworks to over 265 graduate apprenticeship students (Phases 1 and 2). A further £5.4 million has been secured for Phase 3 from September 2019. GCU is also an accredited provider on the [Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers](#) in England to deliver Degree Apprenticeships through the GCU London (GCUL) campus.
- GCU is the first institution to open a branch campus in New York. GCNYC is an independent graduate college, strongly linked with GCU, and became a degree-granting body in New York City following the granting of a Charter by the New York State Education Department, and in 2019 was officially recognised as part of the SEVP.
- In 2019 GCU's long-standing partnership with the Caledonian College of Engineering in Oman allowed the College to gain University status through amalgamation with two other institutions in Oman.
- In 2019 the University was placed within the top 15 universities in the world for gender equality and reducing inequalities, according to the inaugural [Times Higher Education Impact Rankings](#). The new metric from Times Higher Education, which evaluates the social impact of universities, ranks GCU 44th in the world overall, third in Scotland and tenth in the UK.
- [Strategy 2020](#) is moving toward [Strategy 2030](#). The [2020 Common Good](#) vision of '*a global reputation for delivering social benefit and impact through education, research and social innovation*' becomes a 2030 vision of '*world leader in social innovation through education and research*'.

1.5 Impact of the institution's approach to engaging students in ELIR preparations

- 1.5.1 We have taken a 'whole of institution' approach to the preparation for ELIR 4, building on the centrality of partnership working taken forward since ELIR 3. From the outset the project team worked with the Students' Association to ensure that students were partners and that the student voice was heard and reflected at all stages of the ELIR journey, formally through University Committees and the ELIR the steering group and informally through partnership working via the University student and staff consultation exercise. The project team also utilised small groups of students and staff to support the planning of, contribute to, and to review individual RA chapters.

2. Enhancing the student learning experience

2.1 Student representation and engagement, including responding to student views

Enhancing the student experience: A community approach

- 2.1.1 [Strategy 2020](#) sets out GCU's strategic priorities and provides a structure to deliver an outstanding student experience. To support its delivery and as part of a series of Shaping 2020 projects launched in 2016, a considerable programme of work was undertaken to create a single, overarching strategic plan aimed at enhancing the experience of all students - the Enhancing the Student Experience 2020 Action Plan ([SEAP](#)). The overarching aim of the SEAP is to reinforce GCU's commitment to students being at the centre of the University's activities, actions and focus, and ensure that delivering an excellent student experience is at the centre of all that we do. This

priority will continue as we move forward to [Strategy 2030](#) and its associated operational plans.

- 2.1.2 Following extensive consultation with students, staff and the Students' Association, as well as careful analysis of student survey and feedback trends, four overarching SEAP themes were selected:

Student Engagement and a Sense of Belonging:

- Developed in response to student views on how we gather, use and respond to their feedback.
- Focuses on enhancing the ways in which the student voice can influence change. It also recognises the importance of promoting and encouraging student engagement with their wider student experience.

Programme Organisation, Management and Delivery:

- Developed in response to student feedback on the organisation and smooth running of their programmes.
- Focuses on the ways in which we can improve the systems and process that underpin programme organisation and management and how we can support staff to deliver this effectively.

Assessment and Feedback:

- Developed in response to issues raised by students on their experience of assessment and feedback.
- Focuses on how we can enhance this experience for both students and staff and, specifically, how technology can be used to deliver improvements.

Wider Student Experience:

- Captures a range of issues raised by students relating to their wider student experience and focuses on how we can enhance the support and services we provide to help our students succeed.

- 2.1.3 GCU takes a holistic approach to the student experience, recognising the importance of all aspects of student life, both inside and outside the classroom. Creating an excellent student experience involves every aspect of the University and every member of staff. Therefore, the SEAP has significant reach, encompassing a wide range of activities and projects that touch on all aspects of the student experience and every area of the University. In practice, the SEAP is delivered through a mix of cross-university and local action plans, with all activity mapped to the four overarching themes. A number of sub-themes are identified each academic session, with specific actions agreed with academic Schools, academic Departments, Professional Services and the Students' Association.

- 2.1.4 Our aim is that through consistent implementation of the SEAP we will deliver an incremental and sustained improvement in our student experience metrics. This

approach to enhancement is much wider than achieving improved NSS ratings. The indicators of success for the plan are mapped to the University's overall 2020 Strategic Indicators [\(1.1.11\)](#). While there are overarching KPIs for each theme, we are taking a multifaceted approach to evaluation and review. This takes account of internal and external survey results, ongoing qualitative feedback and a robust timetable of review so that decisions are made on diverse forms of evaluation and feedback. This has allowed us to monitor progress on a thematic basis, celebrate success and target resources where gains need to be made. Progress is monitored by an Enhancing the Student Experience (ETSE) Steering Group, chaired by the DVC Academic and comprising representatives from across the University. Update reports are provided to Executive Board, Senate and Court. [\(AIS, NSS 2019\)](#)

- 2.1.5 As implementation of the SEAP has progressed, the range of activities and projects have been refined to enable a focus on the key priorities which are reviewed and agreed annually. Reporting templates have been refined to facilitate an institutional overview of activities and progress across all areas. Work will begin in spring 2020 to develop the next iteration of the SEAP, to align with Strategy 2030.
- 2.1.6 Crucially, the SEAP is closely aligned with our Student Partnership Agreement, [GCU Community: Working Together in Partnership](#), which was developed by a working group of students, staff and the Students' Association in AY 2016/17. A draft was presented for feedback at the 2016 [Student Experience Summit \(2.1.14\)](#) resulting in a revised version being approved by Student Voice in February 2017 [\(2.1.26\)](#) and by Senate in June 2017. Following the success of this approach to student consultation, we have adopted a similar format for succeeding Summits.
- 2.1.7 Our partnership agreement is structured around a set of four Principles, based on the [GCU Values](#) and [Students' Association strategic priority areas](#). The University and Students' Association are committed to the continuous enhancement of the student experience and the agreement outlines how we will work together to achieve this; it describes our culture of partnership working, which has evolved into a genuine community approach, rather than a list of actions to be undertaken. We believe that the entire GCU community - staff from all areas, students and the Students' Association - are all responsible for partnership working in practice.
- 2.1.8 Raising student awareness and engagement with our partnership agreement is an ongoing priority and there are challenges in ensuring the agreement has as wide a reach as possible and is meaningful for the whole student body. With this in mind, and

in partnership with the Students' Association, we are currently developing an online Student Engagement Framework [\(2.1.12\)](#).

- 2.1.9 Our community partnership approach underpinned the development of the SEAP and has allowed a fresh perspective to be applied to how we promote student engagement and how we receive and respond to student feedback.
- 2.1.10 The SEAP incorporates major areas of enhancement identified in ELIR 3, themes/topics that emerged from student and staff discussion, as well as key sector priorities such as the QAA Enhancement Themes. The four themes represent our collective priority areas for enhancing the student experience and provide an ideal framework for the contextualisation of our RA [\(1.4.1\)](#).

Student engagement

- 2.1.11 We want every student to feel able to participate in and influence their own learning experience. We believe that engaging with our students and working in partnership across the University is central to the delivery of excellence in learning and an outstanding student experience. Activity centred on enhancing and embedding student engagement aligns closely with [Strategy 2020](#), contributing to our Common Good mission and reflecting the key priorities of the [Strategy for Learning](#), SEAP and Student Partnership Agreement. All activity is underpinned by the GCU Values and Common Good Attributes [\(2.3.21\)](#).
- 2.1.12 Students are provided with a wide range of opportunities to engage with the University and influence their learning experience. To ensure that student engagement in learning, teaching and quality enhancement is accessible to all students, regardless of programme, level or mode of study, a 'spectrum' approach is promoted, encouraging participation both formally and informally, and in a broad range of ways. This ranges from relatively simple activities, such as completing module evaluation questionnaires or providing feedback to class representatives or staff, to more in-depth involvement, such as undertaking a student representation role, leading or joining university working groups, or engaging in academic quality processes [\(4.1.24\)](#). We are currently developing an online resource that brings together our Student Partnership Agreement and engagement opportunities into a unified, accessible Student Engagement Framework.
- 2.1.13 Since ELIR 3, we have built on our strong commitment to [student engagement in academic quality](#). Academic quality is now included as part of the Full Time Officer institutional portfolio and Full Time Officers participate in the Enhancement-led

Institutional Subject Review ([ELISR](#)) process as full panel members. In AY 2016/17, the Academic Quality (AQ) Team worked with the Students' Association to introduce the same process for programme approval and review, with student representatives supported to undertake the remunerated role of student panel member. A phased implementation during AY 2016/17 was well received and student involvement in programme approval and review processes was rolled out fully in AY 2017/18. ([AIS](#), [ELISR](#))

- 2.1.14 Introduced by the University in 2013, our annual [Student Experience Summit](#) brings students and staff together to discuss topics identified as important to the GCU student experience. As previously outlined ([2.1.6](#)) the approach taken to this annual event has evolved since its inception. For example, informal evaluation has shown that Summits comprising consultation and in-depth discussion on draft documents or proposals are more valued than those which involve more theoretical discussion. To promote student engagement, Full Time Officers work in close partnership with University staff on topics and format. Examples of the topics discussed at Summits include: The Student Voice: Have Your Say; Mental Wealth: Enhancing GCU Student Wellbeing; and Developing a GCU Student Partnership Agreement. Each event informed the production of a tangible action plan, framework or agreement for implementation and received positive feedback from student and staff participants.
- 2.1.15 GCU has a diverse student demographic with many students commuting to campus, undertaking part-time work and/or placements, or having caring responsibilities. While this diversity is a key strength for GCU, it can make encouraging participation in non-essential activities challenging. An internal audit of student representation undertaken by Ernst Young in AY 2018/19 ([2.1.29](#)) highlighted challenges in ensuring student attendance at university committees, despite there being reasonable processes and steps in place to encourage attendance. Selecting effective strategies to encourage student participation can be a matter of trial and error but is always something that is considered when we are designing any event or activity involving our students. Examples of enhancements that have been put in place include introducing payment for student members on programme approval and review panels, and changing the format and timing of the Student Experience Summit to enable more students to attend by dropping in and out throughout the event.
- 2.1.16 In 2018, as part of our approach to promoting and encouraging student engagement, a [Student Communications and Events Team](#) was introduced as a pilot. Located within our [Student Life](#) Department, the team promotes student-facing activity across GCU.

Targeted communications campaigns have been developed in line with the SEAP to inform students of improvements made to enhance the student experience and to seek their views. Campaigns for AY 2018/19 focused on Personal Tutoring [\(2.3.29\)](#), the Student Voice and Celebrating Success, using a combination of social media, digital and physical campaign material displayed across the campus. A Communications Calendar has been developed to keep students informed about a wide range of activities, news, enhancements and student achievements. In addition to the central team, in AY 2018/19 a hub and spoke model was introduced, with Student Communications and Engagement Assistants aligned to each of the three Glasgow Schools.

2.1.17 The University is aware that closing the loop is crucial and aims to ensure that students are responded to and informed about enhancements that have been made in response to their feedback. Achieving this has been a key priority for the Student Communications and Events Team. This will be further enhanced by an automated Closing the Feedback Loop pilot being introduced in AY 2019/20. [\(2.1.34\)](#) [\(AIS, Closing the Feedback Loop Presentation\)](#)

2.1.18 The Student Communications pilot has enabled a cross-institutional, strategic approach to student communication, using media that appeals to our audience and encourages engagement. The Facebook page now has 10,000 followers. The team continually analyse engagement to improve the reach and effectiveness of their posts and are now utilising Twitter and Instagram to further grow the audience. In July 2019, following a review of the highly successful pilot, the team was made permanent.

2.1.19 We have continued to monitor and evaluate our approach to student engagement and partnership working as part of our Enhancement Themes activity. In AY 2018/19, funding was allocated to the [2020 Student Experience Scholarship](#) PAIRING Project to explore partnership working across the sector and at GCU. [\(3.2.11\)](#).

Student representation

2.1.20 The University has a highly productive and collaborative relationship with the Students' Association, working closely to ensure that students are represented on programme, department, School and university decision-making bodies. This is underpinned by our [Student Partnership Agreement](#) which highlights the GCU commitment to continuous dialogue between students and staff. At the core of student representation are over 500 Class Reps who work at a local level to represent students on their programme.

The inclusivity of the representative framework has been further enhanced by liberation and minority group officers [\(2.1.28\)](#).

- 2.1.21 Training is provided by the Students' Association using a peer to peer model; experienced GCU students are trained by [spargs](#) (student partnerships in quality Scotland) to deliver a majority of the sessions. This training model has been effective: 86% of Class Reps were trained in AY 2018/19, up from 57% in AY 2015/16. To augment face to face training, in AY 2018/19 the Students' Association trialled the use of GCU Learn to host online training. Future plans are to develop this space further with resources to benefit Class Reps.
- 2.1.22 Developments to enhance the effectiveness of student representation include the introduction of a Student Staff Consultative Group (SSCG) reporting template in AY 2017/18. Developed in partnership between staff and students in the School of Health and Life Sciences (SHLS), the template helps ensure the systematic recording of student feedback and outcomes from SSCGs for progression to Programme and School Boards. Following successful adoption in the SHLS, the template is now included in the [Academic Quality Policy and Practice](#) (AQPP) guidance documentation and has been disseminated across the University.
- 2.1.23 From AY 2018/19, students have been represented by Department Reps at School level. This change was made to mirror the refresh of the departmental structure within Schools, with 9 School Officers replaced by 22 Department Reps. Department Reps are responsible for ensuring that the views of UG students, via Class Reps, are considered within Schools. They act as a two-way link between the School and the Students' Association on the student learning experience and represent their constituents at Student Voice and Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE) [\(2.1.25\)](#). There continues to be a PGT Rep within every School.
- 2.1.24 Enhancements have also been made to PGR representation. In AY 2015/16, a two-tier PGR representation system was introduced, comprising Department and School level reps. Thematic Review of the PGR Student Experience [\(2.4.5\)](#) in AY 2018/19 prompted a reappraisal of the PGR Rep role. Consultation with students and stakeholders highlighted inconsistencies in how the role was being enacted with some reps providing one-to-one support in addition to collective representation. As a result, the system was reconfigured to refocus the PGR Rep role on representing thematic issues of PGR students at School Boards. In May 2019, Senate approved a new system with one PGR

Rep and one Deputy PGR Rep in each School to be introduced in AY 2019/20. (AIS, Thematic Review PGR)

2.1.25 At the point of ELIR 3, the newly-formed and student-led [SAGE](#) had been established as an operational vehicle for collaboration between staff and students, and was being supported, in part, by the University. Since then, SAGE has matured into a valuable and self-sufficient Students' Association committee with a clear purpose to 'enable genuine student participation in learning, teaching and quality enhancement, and with the wider student experience'. In October 2017, Senate endorsed the proposal that student facing policies across the institution must go through SAGE at an early stage of development and prior to being approved by Senate. This change has increased both the number and profile of staff who have attended SAGE meetings to consult with students on policy and/or practice. Examples of topics raised by the University and discussed at SAGE in AY 2017/18 include learning capture, VLE refresh, assessment resubmission, closing the feedback loop and ELIR 4. learning capture, VLE refresh, assessment resubmission, closing the feedback loop and ELIR 4. (AIS, Closing the Feedback Loop Presentation)

2.1.26 [Student Voice](#) is the Students' Association's main policy-making body, with 63 representatives from all academic Schools, liberation officers, representation officers and involvement areas to ensure that decisions are legitimate and representative. Ideas are taken on how the University or Students' Association can be improved or what students would like the Students' Association to campaign on. Any student can submit ideas via the Students' Association website; if they are 'liked' by members they are discussed at Student Voice and, if approved, become Students' Association policy. Ideas that have become GCU Students' Association policy include a commitment to work with the University to phase out plastic cutlery, the introduction of a student-led mental health representation officer and abolishing graduation fees.

2.1.27 In AY 2015/16, Student Voice approved a new Full Time Officer (FTO) model that puts School level representation at the core of the FTO roles. This model differs from the traditional Sabbatical Officer model both in how FTOs are elected and their remit. Instead of candidates running for and being elected into a specific role (e.g. Student President, Vice President Education), all candidates run for four full time open remit roles. The candidate with the most votes has the opportunity to become Student President, and the three candidates with the next highest vote count become Vice Presidents. Each Vice President becomes the lead representative for one academic School as well as undertaking a portfolio of thematic areas. The decision to implement this model was to increase engagement and representation at School level, increase

responsiveness and flexibility of FTO remits, improve our election process and increase the diversity of our officer team. The revision to the FTO roles has proven successful in all of these areas. Student Voice was satisfied with the current system when it was reviewed in AY 2018/19. The FTOs are more cohesive and better aligned to the Schools and three out of five Presidents have been female since the change (compared to just four female Presidents from 1993 to 2015). Student participation in elections has increased year on year over the last four years, with AY 2018/19 reaching the important milestone of over 20% voter turnout.

- 2.1.28 In addition to academic representation, the Students' Association supports four Liberation Groups for Black & Minority Ethnic, Disabled students, LGBT+ and Women students, and a number of Representation Groups, including Mature and Part-time, international, care-experienced and student carers, reflecting the Students' Association and University's ongoing commitment to championing equality and ensuring that diverse student voices are heard.
- 2.1.29 As part of the normal cycle of internal audit, in AY 2018/19 a review of student representation was undertaken by Ernst Young to assess the processes and controls in place to support engagement with the Students' Association. The report from auditors was overwhelmingly positive, noting that 'a broad range of engagement and representation mechanisms have been established by the University including widespread student membership of / representation on University Committees, working groups and forums'. One low risk action was identified: to produce a [student representation handbook](#) or guide to strengthen the framework and arrangements to support student engagement with the Students' Association. This guide has now been produced jointly by the Departments of AQ, Governance and the Students' Association and will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure currency.

Student voice

- 2.1.30 Since ELIR 3 we have undertaken a review of the University's approach to [student surveys](#). It was recognised that a co-ordinated approach to surveys was required to provide students with appropriate opportunities to provide feedback whilst minimising 'survey fatigue', and to ensure a more effective use of the available data. A Survey Unit was established in the Department of Strategy and Planning, bringing together our Module Evaluation Questionnaires ([MEQ](#)), institution-wide student experience surveys (including two externally managed surveys - the [NSS](#) and [ISB](#)) and the [Graduate Outcomes](#) survey. This centralised approach ensures a co-ordinated strategy to the

management of surveys and the dissemination of the survey outcomes. Survey feedback is used to enhance the student experience through the identification of best practice and key areas for enhancement. The outcomes from the surveys are analysed in-depth with significant emerging themes incorporated into School Operational Plans and the SEAP. Analysis of survey results are submitted to APPC and Senate. A Student Survey and Module Evaluation Policy was approved by Senate in October 2019. [\(AIS, Student Survey and Module Evaluation Policy AY 2018/19\)](#)

2.1.31 The process is supported by a Student Survey Working Group, which brings together key stakeholders from across the University and the Students' Association to provide institutional oversight and guidance. The group reports to the ETSE Steering Group which considers the outputs of our student experience surveys and MEQ and makes recommendations where appropriate to APPC, Senate and Executive Board.

2.1.32 Since ELIR 3 we introduced an internal [GCU Experience Survey](#) (GCUES), to give students at all stages of study an opportunity to provide feedback. The GCUES collated feedback from UG students who are not eligible to participate in the NSS, and PGT students. Following the successful review of our MEQ process a decision was taken to withdraw from these surveys in September 2019 [\(2.1.33\)](#). In AY 2018/19 we introduced an internal [GCU Experience Survey for postgraduate research students](#). The PGRES is a biennial survey that gathers feedback on the learning and teaching experience of PGR students at GCU. [\(AIS, GCUES and PGRES 2019\)](#)

2.1.33 During ELIR 3 it was acknowledged that there was not a consistent approach to module evaluation across the University; academic Schools were using a mixture of formats (online and hard copy) and the questions were not standardised. This approach did not allow for institutional level analysis of student feedback or for us to respond to any significant emerging themes. To address this, a standardised questionnaire and process was piloted in AY 2016/17, using Explorance Blue, a commercial online survey platform. Following an open tender exercise this centralised approach to MEQ has now been rolled out across the University, enabling the timely analysis of data to be undertaken at module, programme and University level. Individual MEQ reports are disseminated to Module Leaders while Heads of Department, Associate Deans (Learning, Teaching and Quality) and Deans receive individual and aggregated reports. Institutional oversight is monitored via Executive Board and APPC. [\(AIS, Student Surveys and Module Evaluations 2019/20\)](#)

2.1.34 Our survey response rates in 2019 were slightly lower than those achieved in 2018 for both UG and PGT surveys, and for MEQ. The ISB, which is now conducted once a

year, exceeded the global response rate at 31%. To further improve the MEQ and survey process, and to encourage students to engage with surveys, we are exploring the practice of Closing the Feedback Loop, in relation to student surveys. Students report that they primarily receive this type of feedback verbally; however, there is not a consistent approach taken across the University. In the NSS 2019, 89% of GCU students agreed that 'I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course' while only 54% of students agreed that 'It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on'. In 2019-20, a pilot of an automated Closing the Feedback Loop process for module evaluations will be completed using the University's current survey platform to support the automation of feedback. This will help build student engagement with the student survey process at GCU and standardise survey feedback across the University. It will also link to enhanced feedback from SSCGs via the standardised reporting template [\(2.1.22\)](#). [\(AIS, GCUES UG and PGT 2018/19, Student Surveys and Module Evaluations 2019/20, ISB 2018, NSS 2019 and Closing the Feedback Loop Presentation\)](#)

2.1.35 To support module monitoring and annual programme analysis, the Department of Strategy and Planning has developed a suite of interactive dashboards known as GCU Data Analytics Shared Hub (DASH), which all staff can access. GCU DASH has become the central source of information on student demographics, student experience outcomes and student performance monitoring, allowing staff to utilise data as needed for planning and reporting. Automated MEQ and GCUES reports are made available to Module Leaders and Programme Leaders via email and our VLE, GCU Learn. To support the module monitoring process, a data output was created to populate Module Monitoring Report templates. These are uploaded to a central SharePoint site to allow Module Leaders to download the template for their module(s). This ensures that a consistent approach is taken across all Schools, and that there is one version of correct data being used to populate each Module Monitoring Report and inform enhancements to the student experience. If Module Leaders wish to investigate further, additional data is available through GCU DASH. [\(AIS GCU DASH examples 2019\)](#)

2.1.36 In addition to formal feedback mechanisms such as student surveys and SSCGs, we encourage students to provide feedback in a wide range of ways, and to work with staff to develop solutions and implement change. For example, the library developed an abandoned property process in partnership with the Students' Association in response to student concerns over access to PCs. The team had received a number of complaints about students monopolising PCs by leaving unattended possessions at

stations for long periods of time; this was a particular issue at busy times such as the lead up to exams. Working with the Students' Association, the library surveyed students to find out how they wanted this issue to be addressed. This resulted in the introduction of a process whereby roving staff remove possessions which have been unattended for over an hour and deliver them to our security team for secure storage and retrieval.

2.1.37 Since ELIR 3, a major timetabling project has been undertaken following feedback from students that timetables were published too late, were hard to find and difficult to understand. Registry worked with the Schools and Students' Association to create a policy and processes that led to individual timetables for the full academic year now being available to students and staff from the start of each academic session. Timetables are available electronically, including via students' mobile devices. In 2018, individual induction timetables were published. Work continues to review timetables to meet the diverse requirements of our student population and to address any issues raised.

2.1.38 Holding a mid-trimester Pause for Reflection and Feedback Week reinforces the University's commitment to delivering an outstanding student experience and supporting our students to meet their potential. Normally undertaken during Week 6, the now routine feedback week gives students the opportunity to reflect on how they are progressing with their modules, highlight any issues they may have (either as a class or individually), and/or to prepare for upcoming assessments. Academic staff are asked to take the time to seek and gather this feedback, and answer any questions from their students. The Pause for Reflection and Feedback Week allows programme teams to identify areas for enhancement and put provisions in place to correct any issues early in the trimester.

2.2 Recognising and responding to equality and diversity in the student population, including widening access and mode and location of study

2.2.1 As the University for the [Common Good](#), equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of all that we do. Our mission is to make a positive difference to the communities we serve and we do this through our teaching, research and our wider student and staff experiences. The embedding of dignity and respect behaviours in the [GCU Values](#) underpins our approach.

2.2.2 The GCU [Equality Outcomes 2017-2021](#) are designed to meet our Equality Act 2010 obligations, specifically to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and

foster good relations. They support our [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#) which outlines our commitment to providing a culture and environment which is inclusive of all sections of society and responsive to the needs of individuals.

- 2.2.3 The impact of our equality and diversity activities has been recognised by the inaugural [Times Higher Education Impact Rankings](#) April 2019). GCU was placed in the top 15 universities in the world for gender equality and reducing inequalities, according to the new metric, which evaluates the social impact of universities. GCU performed most strongly in achieving gender equality, ranking 12th in the world, and reducing inequalities, ranking joint 14th.

Mainstreaming equality

- 2.2.4 GCU has a strong tradition of tackling inequalities by promoting equality of opportunity through [widening access](#) to HE and providing support for individuals regardless of their backgrounds. We aim to unlock talent, raise aspirations and promote social mobility. We take a 'whole institution' approach to enhancing the lives of people and their communities by eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. The Mainstreaming Equality section of our [Public Sector Equality Duty Report April 2019](#) provides examples of this.

Gender

- 2.2.5 The University is committed to ensuring that we identify and seek to address any gender related barriers to the participation, progression and performance of students at GCU. This is achieved through commitments in our [SFC Outcome Agreement 2019/20](#) and our [Gender Action Plan](#).
- 2.2.6 The Gender Action Plan focuses on six key subject areas in which we have a recognised gender imbalance: Nursing, Social Studies, Psychology, Engineering, Computer Sciences, and Building and Construction. The actions included in the current GCU Gender Action Plan in relation to student gender balance focus primarily on these subject areas.
- 2.2.7 To assess progress and impact, and inform future actions, we annually analyse enrolled student data by gender, mode of attendance and subject area. Although female students make up the majority of first year entrants, males make up the majority of articulating and GA entrants. In the key subjects, enrolments remain heavily weighted towards one gender. However, data over three years to AY 2018/19 entry shows a narrowing of the gender gap in entrants to Building and Construction,

Engineering, and Computer Sciences. We will continue to monitor retention rates of males and females in the key subject areas, identifying any disparities for further exploration. Based on the HESA continuation measure in AY 2015/16 and AY 2016/17, males and females achieved our target for at least 90% retention overall. We recognise however that retention of females has been better than that of males, as is common to the sector as a whole. We continue to undertake detailed analysis of retention differences at programme level as part of the Gender Action Plan actions.

- 2.2.8 Analysis of applicant and enrolment data is undertaken annually to assess if there are areas where the gender balance between applicants and enrolments does not align. The data over the past three years does not indicate an issue in this regard for the key subject areas, although fluctuations in one subject area (Social Studies) will require further monitoring to understand whether a gap that can be seen in AY 2018/19 data is specific to that year.
- 2.2.9 As part of our wellbeing framework we have in place a [Trans Student Policy](#), and are cognisant of the potential needs of trans and gender diverse students.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) attainment gap

- 2.2.10 One of the external drivers that informs our current focus on advancing race equality is the national focus on tackling the BAME attainment gap. In 2018, GCU hosted one of five UK evidence sessions as part of a collaborative project between Universities UK (UUK) and the National Union of Students (NUS) to address the BAME student attainment gap. The event shared BAME student and staff experiences and learnings from a variety of perspectives and discussed the steps required to address the attainment gap, and ultimately informed the final UUK-NUS report.
- 2.2.11 The principles identified in the report have been embedded in our wider work on advancing race equality, which has a short life working group developing a race equality action plan for GCU. A 2020 Student Experience Scholarship [\(3.2.10\)](#) project to explore issues around BAME attainment is planned for AY 2019/20.

Intercultural Awareness Workshop

Developed in collaboration between one of our Students' Association Vice Presidents and staff, a University-wide Intercultural Awareness Workshop has been developed to use as a baseline to which students will build on their understanding of cultural norms and values and the unconscious bias that exists within our academic, social and working environment. The objective is to enhance student awareness in cultural differences and cultural diversity, providing a starting point for discussion and reflection on how this aligns with GCU's Active and Global Citizenship.

The workshop has been embedded into five different year-one modules across all 3 schools and developed to be more sustainable to the teaching curriculum. To date, over 300 students have participated and initial feedback suggests that students agree that cultural awareness is an important and essential part of their personal development at GCU (94%); that it enriches their learning experience and their ability to express their own beliefs and values to others (81%); and that they have a better understanding of cultural norms and values (80%).

However, in terms of developing confidence to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds (62%), there is some work to be done, with over a quarter of respondents stating they do not agree that they have this ability (28%). This work will be further developed under the broader range of activities to advance race equality at GCU, which is being prioritised to respond to internal and external drivers.

The project recently won a sparqs student engagement award where it was selected as the best example of a co-curricular initiative in Scotland which has had a positive impact on student learning across a university or college. It was also shortlisted for the NUS Scotland Diversity Award 2019 and for The Herald Higher Education Awards 2019.

Students with Disabilities

- 2.2.12 Our [Disability Service](#), located within the [GCU Wellbeing Team](#), seeks to promote a learning environment which minimises the impact of disability on the student experience. This includes, for example, encouraging accessible teaching methods and learning materials, and providing campus-wide access to assistive technologies. The team provides information, advice and services to students prior to and following their arrival at GCU, via a range of pre-entry programmes and workshops. They also deliver assistive technology training to students and staff. The introduction of Blackboard Ally software [\(3.4.25\)](#) in 2018 has further enhanced the support available. The central team work closely with Disability Co-ordinators in Schools to ensure a joined up and consistent approach to supporting students. The team utilises data from service user surveys and wider student surveys, such as the NSS, to review their provision and make enhancements as required.
- 2.2.13 Demand for the Wellbeing Team and the number of students disclosing a disability continues to grow. In AY 2018/19 there was a 14% increase in the number of students disclosing a long term condition or impairment (from 1,878 to 2,141); this equates to 11% of the GCU student population. Of the students using our Disability Service, around 20% have disclosed a long term mental health condition. Each year, the Wellbeing Team supports around 1,200 students within the Disability Service, and around 1,000 students by the Counselling Service, Mental Health Advisers and Wellbeing Adviser.
- 2.2.14 An internal audit of the Disability Service was undertaken by Ernst Young in 2019, focusing on the processes and controls in place to support students reporting a disability, including completion and implementation of the reasonable adjustment process (RAP) for teaching and assessment. The audit concluded that 'the Disability Service display a care, culture and commitment to supporting students with disabilities to allow them to have a positive university experience and reach their potential'. A number of recommendations were identified to improve the consistency and monitoring of the RAP process and these are being addressed for AY 2019/20 by the Disability Service and academic Schools.
- 2.2.15 Accessibility was a central part of our Heart of the Campus redevelopment [\(2.5.12\)](#); this has been further enhanced by engagement with AccessAble to audit our accessibility and inform further improvements.
- 2.2.16 Based on our reputation for offering excellent and innovative services for students on the autism spectrum, the University was invited by the National Autistic Society to pilot

an accreditation scheme. In September 2019, the three-year project resulted in GCU being the first university or college in the UK to be awarded accreditation.

- 2.2.17 In 2019, the Disability Service in collaboration with the Careers Service piloted an internal placement project to assist students on the autism spectrum gain the skills needed for the workplace. Participants take part in a series of workshops designed to provide information and develop skills that will help them to seek out and obtain employment. Following on from the workshops, all participants will be set up with a supported placement opportunity. Discussions are ongoing regarding the roll out of the pilot in AY 2019/20.

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan

- 2.2.18 The GCU institutional [BSL plan](#) was published in October 2018, structured to follow the ten long-term goals of the BSL National Plan. Our Plan focuses on the core themes relating to universities: supporting BSL ‘across all our services’ and supporting BSL as a ‘post-school education’ provider. The Students’ Association contributed to development of the Plan, which covers the period 2018-2024 and will be monitored through the University Executive and People Committee.

Widening participation

- 2.2.19 GCU has a long-standing reputation for offering access and opportunity to a diverse range of students, regardless of their background or circumstances. As a university with a strong commitment to widening participation, our approach to teaching, learning and student support is based on a whole-university approach. We put a particular focus on supporting transition into and through university, including preparation for the study approaches required for degree study, and in providing ongoing pastoral and academic support. We seek to support all students in moving into a positive destination after university.
- 2.2.20 In AY 2018/19, a review of our widening participation activities and focus was conducted with the academic Schools and relevant Professional Support teams. A revised framework for widening participation at GCU, underpinned by a detailed action plan, is currently being developed to align with the objectives of Strategy 2030 and to deliver the recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA).
- 2.2.21 Our [contextualised admissions policy](#) was extended for AY 2018/19 entry to include students from SIMD20 and SIMD40 areas who attended any Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP) schools in Scotland, as well as applicants who are care-

experienced or who are young carers. Over 700 contextual offers were made to eligible applicants for AY 2018/19 entry, an increase of 62% on the previous year. We have developed minimum entry requirements (MERs) for AY 2020/21 entry for each programme. They are, in broad terms, at the level of two Higher grades lower than standard entry requirements; and one Higher grade lower than those made through our contextualised admissions process, with some exceptions. The MERs are based on the best evidence currently available on likelihood of success and will remain under review.

2.2.22 We offer a wide range of support to those who declare [care-experience](#) both before and during their university experience. In addition to our Corporate Parenting Plan, we are actively engaged with the Care-experienced, Estranged and Carers West Forum and the Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership Corporate Parenting Network. GCU is a member of the [Scottish Care Leavers' Covenant](#). Our [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#) includes reference to people with a care-experienced background as a group that should not be discriminated against. Our embedded approach to support for all is further enhanced by bespoke support for those who wish to declare. We are currently contributing to a Corporate Parenting training module in collaboration with Who Cares? Scotland and the Open University Scotland, which will be rolled out to all staff in AY 2019/20.

2.2.23 Every year we engage with current and prospective care-experienced students, offering support including provision of financial, learning, wellbeing and accommodation support. Our care-experienced young students are invited to apply for our [Common Good Scholarship](#) which provides financial support of £1,250 per annum. We currently have 15 care-experienced students in free 365-day accommodation and, prior to abolishing graduation fees, we introduced a waiver for the cost of graduation fees and gown hire, supporting nine students in 2018. An expanded mentor scheme was introduced in AY 2018/19, matching new care-experienced students with a staff mentor to help support their progression into study at GCU. The library offers a long-term laptop loan scheme which allows care-experienced students to borrow a laptop for a full year of study. We offer care-experienced students a guaranteed interview to become a paid student mentor for our Outreach Department, resulting in 10 of 165 student mentors with care experience. The GCU Students' Association has a Care Experience Representation Student Officer and Representation Group, which feeds into the University's [Corporate Parent Steering Group](#).

2.2.24 We have expanded our targeted support for applicants and [students who are without family support](#) and signed the [Stand Alone Pledge](#) in September 2018. Support we

have in place includes a named contact, application support, and we invite eligible students to apply for a free accommodation scholarship through our partnership with the [Unite Foundation](#), which offers 365-day accommodation for up to three years.

2.2.25 As part of our student wellbeing framework we have in place a [Student Carer Policy and Plan](#) to enable us to support student carers during their studies. We work with student carers and staff to put adjustments in place to support students in their studies. In 2018, GCU was the first university to achieve the [Going Higher for Student Carers](#) Recognition Award from Carers Trust Scotland. Due to the early development of our support in this area our Student Wellbeing Adviser is a member of the Carers Trust Scotland Going Further and Going Higher for Student Carers Steering Group. Our Students' Association has established a Student Carer Representation Officer and Representation Group.

2.2.26 We recognise that some students, such as part-time, have limited time on campus and our approach to student support reflects this challenge. In our School of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment (SCEBE), for example, VLE content not only provides direct support for modules, but also learning development support for study skills, academic writing and numeracy. The School facilitates VPN connections for students to enable access to software that may be required to develop skills or support assessment, and provides further resources through GCU AppsAnywhere. Back-on-track support for resit students can be arranged in the early evening or weekend where

there is demand, and laboratories have been made available on Saturdays when needed to allow part-time student access to further facilitate learning.

Veterans

We are proud of our commitment to widening participation and believe that those who serve in the military, and their families, should be treated fairly. We support veterans and their families to access education and employment as part of our [Common Good](#) mission. We have a veterans student population of c80 students. In AY 2017/18 GCU became a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant and in 2018 was awarded the Bronze standard in recognition of the work we undertake through the GCU HM Forces Learning Partnership, which was established with the three Glasgow colleges to facilitate progression pathways to higher education for veterans as part of transition from military to civilian life. In autumn 2019, the University's continued work in this area was recognised by the achievement of the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Silver Award.

The work of the partnership in this area is highly regarded by the military and veterans' communities. When established in 2013, it was the first of its kind in the UK. It is based on a pathways model which can commence at college or at GCU and is accessible to all, irrespective of service speciality, length of service or rank. GCU's approach to Recognition of Prior Learning ([RPL](#)) has been used successfully within the pathways model.

We have in place a dedicated GCU Champion in this area who co-ordinates our activity and who sits on the SFC working group; a Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) working group; and Scottish Government Cross Party Group, all supporting the veterans' community. GCU hosted a sector conference on supporting service families and veterans in January 2019, which was attended by every university and the majority of colleges in Scotland.

Retention and attainment

- 2.2.27 One of GCU's key achievements is our success in widening access to a high quality university experience with demonstrated successful outcomes for students. We remain committed to building on our strong track record in student retention, projected student outcomes and graduate employment. According to the latest SFC data, GCU's retention rate for students from SIMD20 backgrounds was 91% in AY 2017/18, ahead

of the Scottish sector rate of 89%. ([SFC Widening Access 2017/18](#) Background Tables Table 2 & 2A)

2.2.28 The [2019 HESA Performance Indicators](#) (tables T3 and T5) demonstrate that the University is a leading institution in Scotland in terms of entrants from state schools and colleges, and performs well in the context of Scottish modern universities in the key teaching quality metrics. Projected degree completion at GCU is 79.3%. For those projected to neither obtain an award nor transfer, the University has broadly maintained its strong performance at 8.9% and GCU is ahead of the Scottish sector average of 9.1%. Non-continuation following year of entry for full-time first degree entrants is at 8.5% for all students. The level of non-continuation of articulating students can be noticeably different, usually higher, than those who start their studies at a university. The data show that GCU effectively supports the retention of mature and articulating students. Even with an increase in non-continuation amongst mature entrants to 9.6%, GCU outperforms the Scottish sector average of 10.8%.

2.3 [Supporting students in their learning at each stage of the learner journey from pre-admission to post-graduation, including outreach, admissions, articulation, graduate attributes, assessment, employability, and enterprise and entrepreneurship](#)

The student lifecycle at GCU

2.3.1 Ensuring the success of all students, regardless of their background, previous educational experience, programme, level, mode or location of study, is a key aspect of the GCU student experience. We aim to support each and every one of our students to maximize their potential. The diversity of our student population is much valued by the University.

2.3.2 The GCU experience is characterised by the wrap-around support we provide for our students, ensuring they have access to the information, support, advice and guidance they need at every stage of their student journey. Our [outreach](#) work, transition support, specialist student services and academic support are central to this. We provide a wide range of co- and extra-curricular opportunities to support students' academic success, personal development and to enable them to contribute to the University's [Common Good](#) mission.

Outreach

- 2.3.3 The University continues to deliver innovative and effective outreach work with nursery, primary and secondary school children, their parents, mature learners and college students. Our award-winning [Caledonian Club](#) aims to deepen its impact for children, school pupils and their families in our local Glasgow communities. The Caledonian Club was included in the [UK's Best Breakthroughs List: 100+ Ways Universities Have Improved Everyday Life](#), published by Universities UK in collaboration with Universities Scotland. In AY 2017/18, the Club engaged with almost 1,900 pupils and c440 parents and family members in Glasgow, and over 230 pupils. Over 1,500 nursery to S3 pupils engaged across eight core programmes, 55 P2 pupils participated in our Literacy Programme, and the Club launched a pilot Celebrating Science Series with P5 pupils in partner schools. In the Senior Phase (S5-S6), 290 pupils participated in targeted activities with multiple points of engagement ensuring support throughout the academic year, including supported study sessions, mentoring and shadowing.
- 2.3.4 Our innovative [Advanced Higher Hub](#) continues to raise attainment, provide greater access of opportunity for S6 pupils from underrepresented communities to Advanced Higher studies, as well as widen access in relation to high demand university UG courses. This unique year-long programme helps S6 pupils become university ready: in their academic and inter-personal skills as well as well as in their confidence, maturity and self-belief. The Hub offers Advanced Highers in Biology, Business Management, Chemistry, English, History, Mathematics, Modern Studies and Physics. In AY 2018/19, 110 pupils from 25 Glasgow City Council partner schools, 69.1% of whom reside in SIMD40 areas, sat 152 SQA exams at Advanced Higher level. Pupils achieved an impressive pass rate of 91%, in relation to the national average pass rate of 77.6% for the same eight Advanced Highers.
- 2.3.5 Through [School Connect](#) we engage with pupils in 12 partner secondary schools throughout the academic year. School Connect complements and enriches the curriculum, assisting pupils to make informed choices about their subject options and supporting them with their applications and transitions to university. Likewise, through [Routes for All](#) - GCU's contribution to the SHEP - we deliver a programme of activity designed to prepare school pupils for Higher National (HN) study at college, ensuring they have suitable information, advice and guidance to make an informed choice on future study.
- 2.3.6 Our commitment to outreach is cross-institutional and we regularly engage for example, with Soapbox Science and The Glasgow Science Festival. Our SCEBE leads on activities that promote STEM to school pupils and supports GCU's commitment to

promoting gender equality. Activities include SmartSTEM, an annual event for girls from P6 to S2 hosted at GCU since 2015, which aims to inspire girls to consider a career in STEM related areas. Normally attended by over 450 pupils, the event is supported by our academic staff, technicians, students and UHatch [\(2.3.54\)](#) members, with contributions from our Engineering Industrial Advisory Board and women working in STEM industries. The School also engages with Inspire events, organised by the Engineering Development Trust (EDT), aimed at S4 pupils with a passion for STEM; and with Headstart (EDT) by delivering residential four-day course for S5 pupils with an interest in the built environment. In September 2019, 1,400 guests are expected at a parents and kids event on campus and the School also contributes to Primary Engineer activities such as the Engineering Leadership awards and to Maths Week in Scotland.

- 2.3.7 By engaging in our outreach activities, GCU students have the opportunity to gain valuable, paid work experience, with 200 student mentors annually acting as role models across a range of projects. Many of our student mentors come from the communities that we work in and are a real inspiration for aspiring learners. In AY 2016/17, an internal study was undertaken to explore the benefits of participation for the student mentors employed by our Outreach Department. It was found that working as a student mentor had a significant impact on the mentors' sense of belonging to the University and that working as a student mentor fostered a strong sense of institutional pride. Likewise, mentors reported gaining valuable employability skills and believed that undertaking the role had impacted positively on their embodiment of the [GCU Values](#).

Articulation

- 2.3.8 GCU makes a major contribution to sector level articulation targets and we play a leading role in promoting successful progression and transition between college and university. Through our College Connect team, our strategic partnerships with Glasgow colleges, and through working in partnership with colleges across Scotland, we have developed an effective infrastructure for articulation which includes joint planning on curriculum design, admission, transition and CPD for staff. A College Connect Advisory Group, chaired by the DVC (Academic) is used as the strategic forum for the ongoing development and monitoring of our college partnerships.
- 2.3.9 In AY 2017/18, College Connect engaged with over 2,700 prospective students as well as providing College Connect membership to 590 offer holders. Our pre-entry support adopts a long-thin induction model through face to face and online interaction. It

concludes with the College Connect Transition Programme which provides subject specific support and introduces students to the key academic skills required to succeed in degree level study at GCU. For example, College Connect staff are supported by current GCU PhD students who deliver subject level academic sessions, giving students a flavour of teaching at the University. In AY 2017/18, 730 students, all eligible to matriculate, participated in the Transition Programme. Our Students' Association works in partnership with College Connect on articulating student induction and a Full Time Officer with articulation policy responsibilities sits on the College Connect Advisory Group.

- 2.3.10 Reflecting the importance that GCU places on articulation, a [Thematic Review](#) of the articulating student experience was undertaken in AY 2018/19. Thematic Reviews [\(4.1.15\)](#) form part of the University's normal quality assurance and enhancement processes; they provide an opportunity to conduct an institution-wide exploration of a major theme that may not be fully captured through [ELISR](#) or Programme [Approval and Review](#). Articulation was selected as a theme in order to take a 'temperature check' of the student experience in its entirety - in, through and out of the University. The review panel met with a wide range of staff and students and found that the articulating student journey appears to be well recognised by the University in its totality. Reflecting normal practice, a short-life working group was established to take forward the recommendations arising from the review and to develop an action plan for implementation. A year-on progress report will be submitted to APPC in AY 2019/20. [\(AIS, Thematic Review for Articulation AY 2018/19\)](#)

Transition support

- 2.3.11 We employ a range of innovative approaches to help bridge the gap between prior and university-level study. This includes delivering targeted support and guidance for articulating students and in specific subject areas. Following a pilot in AY 2018/19, a new system was established for AY 2019/20 that enables articulating students to make their module choices for the forthcoming academic session significantly earlier than in previous years, more closely reflecting the experience of continuing students.
- 2.3.12 In addition to the College Connect summer transition programme for all college applicants who hold an offer for GCU programmes, we provide support at school and subject level. A Maths Summer School is provided for students articulating from college and the workplace into Levels 2 or 3 of degree programmes in SCEBE. This is delivered on campus and on a distance learning basis. In SHLS, an annual Boot Camp runs at the beginning of September and is available to all students who are new to the School,

providing an introduction to fundamental academic and study skills. It also provides an orientation to the University and allows new students and staff to meet prior to the commencement of study. Within our Glasgow School for Business and Society (GSBS), Day in the Life is an annual event for HND/C students who have the opportunity to visit campus, experience a lecture/seminar, meet programme staff and take a tour of the campus and facilities. The last event attracted over 100 college students and received positive feedback from college staff and students.

2.3.13 Targeted transition support is also offered at programme level and is designed to meet the needs of specific student cohorts. Examples include Measurement for Direct Entrants, a pre-induction programme for Quantity Surveying, designed for students who have accepted an offer into Levels 2 or 3 of the programme. Likewise, a Psychology pre-entry programme is open to all students articulating from college, prior to commencing their study with GCU. This is run jointly by the Psychology programme team and the School's Learning Development Centre (LDC) [\(2.3.28\)](#), signposting students to the resources available to support them into their programme of study. Fashion Brand Retailing in our GSBS provides the opportunity for sixth year pupils to attend a twenty-four-week programme to sample university life. Registered as GCU students, they have full access to all university facilities and support networks and engage with lectures, seminars, guest speakers and retail trips.

2.3.14 In partnership with GCU Outreach, the Library and Archives teams support students transitioning from school, further education or the workplace to study at GCU. The teams are embedded in ongoing work to welcome students with specific needs to GCU by, for example, delivering welcome and orientation sessions for students with a disability. Likewise, the Library provides pre-entry workshops and webinars during the summer to support confidence building and familiarisation. Students transitioning from college to university tend to be less confident in accessing and using library resources and the Library team worked closely with GCU Outreach to design tailored Get Ahead sessions to address this need. These sessions have been very well received by the students who participated in them.

Induction

2.3.15 In addition to targeted transition support, we take a cross-institutional approach to student induction to ensure consistency across the University. An Induction Planning Steering Group, comprising representatives from across the University, leads on the annual review and design of induction, and identifies enhancements based on student feedback. This is monitored through an annual New2GCU survey which is distributed

to all new students at the start of the academic session. The development of an induction checklist in AY 2017/18 has enabled us to improve and standardise the approach to School-based induction to ensure that all new and continuing students receive the same induction experience.

- 2.3.16 An Induction App was launched in September 2017 as a central source of induction information. The App has a chat platform to allow new students to interact with each other, and push notification functionality that allows the University to interact with students pre- and post-arrival. For the past two years, the Induction App has achieved over 3,500 downloads and student engagement is increasing year on year.
- 2.3.17 An Induction MOOC, Getting Started @GCU, was introduced in September 2017 to help new students make the transition to university life. This pre-entry online course was developed by a team of staff funded to undertake a 2020 Student Experience Scholarship project aligned to the previous Enhancement Theme on student transitions [\(3.2.1\)](#). In AY 2018/19, Getting Started @GCU was aligned with two online ICT induction courses: TIC TOC, a pre-induction course designed to introduce new students to university systems such as email and GCU Learn before they arrive on campus; and PICTI, a post-induction course which provides more in-depth information about how to use campus ICT facilities such as printers, Wi-Fi etc. The Library delivers a well-received induction designed to welcome new students to the service and enable them to make best use of the wide range of resources available.
- 2.3.18 We are aware that, regardless of the route into GCU, the transition to university can be daunting. We work with the Students' Association to provide a programme of activity during Freshers' Week that is fun, welcoming and aims to engage our new student intake. This includes an on-campus fayre, sports and societies taster sessions, events and activities in the Students' Association and off-campus social events and gatherings. Student feedback on Freshers' Week is always very positive.
- 2.3.19 In addition to Freshers' Week, we have a dedicated Welcome Weekend designed to introduce international and exchange students to Scotland/Glasgow and facilitate a sense of belonging to the GCU community. In 2018, GCU was 1st in Scotland (4th globally) for the arrival experience for new international students. Post-arrival, we have a Global Buddies programme to provide a friendly welcome for new international students and help them settle into University life. We have a dedicated [Visa Immigration Support and Advice](#) (VISA) team who provide ethical and professional

immigration advice and offering a check and submission service for visa applications.
(AIS, ISB 2018)

- 2.3.20 As part of our Student Mental Health Action Plan [\(2.3.40\)](#) activity, we recognise that raising awareness and providing support at the earliest stage possible is crucial. We have expanded our induction activities for September 2019 to include a greater focus on resilience, mental health and wellbeing, and this will include targeted interventions for specific groups of students as well as a general awareness raising campaign.

Common Good Attributes

- 2.3.21 The central focus of the GCU [SfL 2015-2020 \(3.1.10\)](#) is to develop graduates who will be “Proficient in their discipline, enterprising, responsible and capable of fulfilling leadership roles in different organisational and cultural contexts”. In line with our mission and vision, we have developed a framework to support, recognise and embed the Common Good within the curriculum. Through the [Common Good Curriculum](#), we support students to develop four ‘[Common Good Attributes](#)’: **active and global citizenship, an entrepreneurial mind-set, responsible leadership and confidence**. These attributes are underpinned by the GCU Values.
- 2.3.22 All students have the opportunity to develop the Common Good Attributes through the formal taught curriculum [\(3.1.11\)](#). Examples of the ways in which our Schools embed Common Good attributes within modules and programmes include the ‘Triple E’ spine (Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship) in the GSBS. Core modules run in years 1 to 3 for GSBS students; in EEE3: Enterprise Value Challenge, students develop their understanding of how entrepreneurial activity can create both economic and social value. This occurs through experiential learning, where students either provide consultancy to a local organisation (often a social enterprise) or undertake a trading project to raise funds for a charity of their choice.
- 2.3.23 In the SCEBE, students study project-based modules such as Integrated Engineering Studies and Integrated Design Projects in years 1 to 3 and also take an Honours Project module in year 4. The syllabus of these modules includes a range of issues such as employment ethics, intellectual property, sustainability and environmental impact, idea generation and evaluation, design thinking, effective team-working skills and reflection on skills and confidence developed. These modules contribute to the

development of Common Good Attributes and the associated projects are, where possible, also aligned to the Common Good.

2.3.24 In the SHLS, a number of programmes incorporate a core framework where students engage with a range of inter-professional learning modules throughout their programme of study. This Interprofessional Education (IPE) framework aims to encourage confidence in team working; students are challenged to learn with and from others across a diverse range of health and social care professions. Working collaboratively with students from other professional areas affords opportunities for students to experience world views that may not necessarily replicate their own. The IPE framework supports the development of attributes aligned with citizenship and responsible leadership. Further to exposing students to the importance of equality and diversity, empathy and resilience, the framework then immerses students in activities that foster the development of these attributes.

2.3.25 Students are supported to engage in co-curricular activities aligned to their studies. For example, through our partnership with Transnet Foundation, Optometry and Orthoptic students can participate in the [Phelophepa Project](#), volunteering to join a team of full-time professionals on the 'train of hope', which delivers much needed health care to rural and disadvantaged communities as it crosses South Africa. During their placement, students work under supervision within the train's eye clinics, providing eye care to a large number of patients. More locally, the [Law Clinic](#) is a student-led initiative that provides free and confidential legal assistance to individuals within Greater Glasgow who cannot afford professional legal advice and do not qualify for legal aid. Students provide general legal advice, draft legal letters, represent clients in court and negotiate on behalf of clients in contractual disputes. All of the advice provided by law student volunteers is supervised by qualified legal practitioners.

2.3.26 In addition to the formal taught curriculum, we encourage and support students to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities aligned to the Common Good - for example, social innovation, community and public engagement and volunteering. The GCU [Common Good Award](#) was developed to inspire, support and reward students who are engaged in such activities; participating students work towards four badges, one for each Common Good Attribute, then apply to achieve the full award using a digital submission.

2.3.27 While many universities have skills or employability awards, few of these make explicit encouraging civic engagement as a specific objective. What differentiates the Common Good Award is that it has a dual focus: students' personal development, in terms of

employability and social innovation skills, and the impact their engagement has had on the community they have served. This makes the Common Good Award distinctive and encourages students to actively consider common good activities during their academic career and beyond. Our work in this area is underpinned by participation in the prestigious AshokaU network [\(1.1. 5\)](#).

Academic support

2.3.28 We are committed to providing the best possible student learning experience. This includes providing high quality, timely academic support at every stage of the learner journey. Each School has a [Learning Development Centre](#) (LDC) which provides professional academic support for home and international students. This includes advice on writing and study skills, ICT support and other guidance to help students maximise their potential. The LDCs are inclusive and committed to providing support for all students, including those with disabilities or specific learning and teaching needs. They offer face to face and online academic support through a combination of workshops, small group sessions, one to one appointments and tailored teaching within modules. As part of our commitment to widening participation, the LDC teams also work closely with programme and module leaders within Schools to identify and support students who may be at risk and deliver specialist sessions to support student learning.

2.3.29 In AY 2017/18, a cross-university 2020 Student Experience Scholarship project [\(3.3.6\)](#) was funded to review and refresh our approach to Academic Advising [\(4.3.6\)](#). A team of staff and students reviewed the literature and best practice across the sector, consulted widely across the University and developed refreshed role descriptors and updated guidance for students and staff. To better reflect the scope and nature of the process it was decided to change the name of Academic Advising to Personal Tutoring from AY 2018/19. Crucially, we have aligned the role of Personal Tutor into our approach to [Mitigating Circumstances](#) to ensure that students who face challenging personal, health and social circumstances are supported appropriately and compassionately [\(4.1.8\)](#).

2.3.30 A prominent campaign was delivered across campus to communicate the purpose and benefits of Personal Tutoring to students and staff and, importantly, to ensure that all students know they have a Personal Tutor who can offer guidance and support during their studies. E-mails are also now sent to all students at the start of the session, informing them who their Personal Tutor is. We recognise that not all students are picking up on this information, and are continuing to monitor student awareness of and

participation in Personal Tutoring meetings through the SEAP and ETSE Steering Group.

Assessment and feedback

2.3.31 The University's [Student Performance Feedback Policy](#) was introduced in AY 2014/15, formalising the guiding principles of our *Feedback for Future Learning* project (2011-2014), which formed the basis of a case study during ELIR 3. The policy ensures an entitlement for all students to receive feedback which is timely, constructive and designed to provide a point of reflection for future improvement.

2.3.32 Following a sector benchmarking exercise, and in consideration of examples of internal best practice, the policy has been enhanced for AY 2019/20, to provide greater clarity for both students and staff. Fundamentally, the University views feedback as a dialogue, forming an important part of the student learning experience enabling academic staff to continually shape their teaching and students to use feedback to enhance their performance. The core principles identified during the initial Feedback for Future Learning project are retained, with policy enhancement to draw more specific reference to:

- an articulation of student responsibility, to engage with and reflect on feedback as a useful tool for self-assessment of existing skills and capabilities
- make more specific reference to the purpose of feedback and the forms that it may take
- extend the provision of feedback to final level projects/dissertations
- acknowledge that exceptional circumstances may impact on turnaround time - with a revised date communicated to students as soon as possible

2.3.33 In response to student feedback, our [Digital Assessment Policy](#) reflects the University's expectation that from 2018/19, all suitable coursework assignments, both formative and summative, will normally be submitted online. Where student work is submitted online, digital forms of marking and feedback are also the expected norms. We are working towards a goal of 100% online submission and feedback for all suitable forms of coursework.

2.3.34 Data shows that we are making positive progress in this area. We continue to increase use of Turnitin for both electronic submission of assessments and similarity reporting. Electronic feedback to students has also grown year on year. Whilst we do not currently

have learning analytic functionality [\(3.4.24\)](#) to aggregate online submission and feedback data at School and university level, our GSBS undertook a manual analysis of its Trimester A modules in AY 2017/18. The aim was to identify how well staff were adhering to the Digital Assessment Policy in terms of online submission and marking of assessments, and identify how widespread the various online marking tools were being implemented. It was found that all relevant assessments were submitted online. Any assessments that were not submitted online were not of a suitable format, for example, exams, presentations, contribution to seminars etc. Of the assessments submitted online, 84% were marked online with feedback provided via Turnitin. A small number of assessments were marked online with feedback via other methods, for example, feedback on blog posts, emailing feedback directly to students, online tests and using GCU Learn to provide feedback. Overall, online feedback was provided on 91% of assessments. This analysis has helped identify relevant training required for staff across Departments and modules, provided examples of best practice and identified where improvements can be made in assessment and feedback practices.

- 2.3.35 In line with the sector as a whole, assessment and feedback have been persistently challenging areas for the University in terms of student satisfaction. Through the SEAP and our Digital Learning Implementation Plan [\(3.1.6\)](#) we have made concentrated efforts to enhance this key aspect of the student learning experience and were pleased to see improvements in the 2019 GCU Experience Survey. Student satisfaction with Assessment and Feedback improved across all years of study at institution level and in all Schools, with an overall increase of six percentage points from 2018. In the 2019 NSS, student satisfaction with Assessment and Feedback remained static at 71%, still 1% above the Scottish sector. We are aware that student satisfaction with assessment and feedback remains an ongoing challenge, as it does across the sector, and this will remain a key area of focus for the University and academic Schools moving forward. [\(AIS, GCU Experience Survey 2019 and NSS 2019\)](#)

Student services

- 2.3.36 When developing the Student Experience Action Plan [\(2.1.3\)](#), there was recognition that we wanted to transform the student experience in its entirety and not just what happens inside the classroom. The re-location in AY 2015/16 of Student Life, Academic Quality and Development (AQD) and the Library into the Directorate of Learning and Student Experience has been a key element of this. The restructure has facilitated increased partnership working between these Departments, our academic Schools, other Professional Support Services and the Students' Association. It has enabled us

to take a more integrated, whole institution, partnership approach to enhancing the student experience.

2.3.37 Our front of house approach to student enquiries and advice was reviewed as part of the Directorate restructure, enabling us to enhance our [Campus Life Desk](#) provision and how this service interfaced with other support services. Extensive consultation was undertaken with students and staff throughout the redesign, and the team visited a number of other institutions to look at best practice in the sector. We considered staff training, accessibility, opening hours, enquiry management, follow-up, and how services interface to ensure the best possible experience and outcomes for students. Co-locating the services created a truly cohesive service delivery model that allows students to experience a joined-up journey, underpinned by professional support staff operating within a deliberate and strategic framework designed to enhance the student experience. Work to further enhance and expand the services provided by the Campus Life Desk is ongoing.

2.3.38 We are currently undertaking the assessment process for Customer Service Excellence accreditation, which aims to bring professional, high-level customer service into consistent use across an organisation. We are currently seeking accreditation in a cross-institutional approach with the Library, Student Services and teams within Information Services. Achieving accreditation will recognise a step change in the quality of customer service at GCU and the resulting positive impact on the student experience overall.

Student mental health and wellbeing

2.3.39 The Student Wellbeing Service comprises a Disability Team, Counselling Team, Mental Health Advisers and a Wellbeing Adviser, totalling 22 staff. The service operates a multi-disciplinary approach to ensure that all students, particularly those with long term conditions or impairments, get the targeted support they need and, at the same time, assist in the retention of these students. Of particular note is the support those living with long term mental health conditions receive. In recognition of the increasing volume and complexity of student cases, the University has invested in the expansion of the team with two additional 0.5 FTE Mental Health Advisors in AY 2018/19. A mental health campaign is planned and will be developed in partnership between Student Life, People Services, research staff and the Students' Association.

All Student Wellbeing staff are trained in either ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) or SMHFA (Scottish Mental Health First Aid).

- 2.3.40 A GCU Student Mental Health task group was established in May 2017, with representation from across the University and the Students' Association, to review current practice and make recommendations for enhancement. The work of the Student Mental Health task group is now being taken forward by a Student Wellbeing Advisory Group which will oversee the Student Mental Health 2020 Action Plan. In AY 2017/18, we worked in close partnership with the Students' Association to develop a [Student Mental Health Agreement](#) by signing up to [Think Positive](#), a Scottish Government funded student mental health project at NUS Scotland. We committed to this again in AY 2018/19 and it will be an ongoing commitment going forward.
- 2.3.41 The University's commitment to the continuous enhancement of student mental health support is exemplified by our Vice Chancellor chairing the [Universities Scotland Mental Health Group](#), which includes representation from all HE institutions in Scotland. Our aim is to ensure a whole institutional approach to student mental health and our Action Plan is closely aligned with a parallel Mental Health at Work action plan, which focuses on staff support, development and training. Additional funds have been allocated in AY 2019/20 to appoint a fixed term Project Officer (Student Mental Health) who, working closely with the Students' Association, will support the implementation and evaluation of both action plans.
- 2.3.42 The Students' Association [Advice Centre](#) is available to provide confidential advice and support to students on personal or academic issues, operating independently from but in close partnership with the University. This includes supporting students with Mitigating Circumstances or Retrospective Mitigating Circumstances Forms, Academic Appeals, Fitness to Practice, Complaints or Code of Student Conduct allegations. The Students' Association also supports GCU's contribution to [Nightline](#), a confidential and anonymous telephone, text and online service run by trained students from GCU and the University of Strathclyde.

Preventing and responding to gender based violence

- 2.3.43 Gender based violence is a key area of research at GCU, aligned to national policy drivers and evidence. GCU researchers are experts in the field of sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault, institutional responses, stalking, domestic abuse and victimisation of university students. This research base underpins our approach to safeguarding the wellbeing of our students. We have a dedicated Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence Steering Group, reporting to the People

Committee, which advises on and develops work in this area. This includes the implementation, monitoring and review of our [Gender Based Violence Policy](#) and the roll out of a detailed action plan, which ensures that our approach aligns with the policies and procedures outlined in the Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit.

2.3.44 We have developed [student-facing webpages](#) with links to internal and external sources of support and advice. This includes a network of GCU staff trained as [First Responders](#) to support all members of the GCU community (staff or students) who wish to disclose and discuss issues relating to gender based violence.

2.3.45 In 2018, students and staff worked together to create a powerful campaign entitled #GCUerasethegrey, which reiterates GCU's zero-tolerance policy towards gender based violence. The [campaign](#) highlights the important work the University does to combat sexual and gender based violence through a series of messages designed to challenge stereotypical views and raise awareness of the issue. The messaging was displayed prominently on campus and was supported by a social media campaign. This is a prime example both of our commitment to challenging gender based violence and of partnership working at GCU. The campaign was nominated for an Edurank Award in the “Best Campaign Supporting Student Wellbeing” category; GCU was the only Scottish University to receive a ‘Highly Commended’ accolade. The campaign has also been shortlisted in the Outstanding Support for Students category in the 2019 THES Awards.

2.3.46 The University is represented in an EU-funded project ‘It Stops Now’, to tackle and prevent sexual violence in the HE sector.

2.3.47 In 2019, the University took the lead in initiating a West of Scotland wide forum - Fearless Glasgow - involving all FE and HE institutions and other relevant agencies in a co-ordinated approach to preventing and responding to gender based violence across the city. A launch event will take place at GCU in November 2019.

Employability

2.3.48 GCU has a longstanding focus on employability. All three Schools offer a wide-range of career-focused courses: in Glasgow, 76% of our UG programmes and 45% of our PGT programmes are accredited by professional bodies. The support that we provide

- academic, professional and pastoral - is designed to prepare our students for the best possible outcomes and destinations following graduation.

- 2.3.49 [Strategy 2020](#) focuses on enhancing employability by ensuring students are equipped with the skills to succeed as global citizens. We foster strong employer and industry links in relation to curriculum development, placement opportunities, professional accreditation, guest lectures, industry workshops, site visits, careers support and outreach. Each of our academic Schools has close links with business, the professions and the public and voluntary sectors.
- 2.3.50 Industry links and collaboration with employers to inform the curriculum is managed through a combination of structured programme-specific advisory boards, dialogue with subject matter experts and business development outreach and engagement. In addition, many programmes have Industrial Advisory Groups which provide guidance on careers, as well as supporting programme delivery. The ongoing development of our portfolio is informed by employers, professional accrediting bodies and, where appropriate, Scottish Government workforce planning objectives.
- 2.3.51 Placement opportunities are an important aspect of our provision and contribute to the development of employability skills by our diverse student population. Placements are available across the majority of our UG programmes and we continue to find ways to develop placement opportunities and industry links. For example, our GSBS hosted around 60 business partners at a reception to celebrate GCU's links with industry and develop internships, placements, and student research opportunities. Representatives from Morgan Stanley, IBM, Bank of Scotland, Glasgow Social Enterprise Network, City Building LLP, and Change Recruitment attended. Our campus is geared towards providing students with real-life practical experience through facilities such as the Vision Centre, Interprofessional Simulation Centre, Broadcasting Suite and Fashion Factory.
- 2.3.52 The Students' Association continues to run the successful [Student Leaders Programme](#), a co-curricular employability programme designed to help students identify and develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to be an effective leader. The programme is open to any GCU student who volunteers or is a representative at GCU, the Students' Association or within the community. University staff, employers and GCU alumni support the delivery of Student Leaders by

contributing to the delivery of [skills development workshops](#), for example in social innovation, unconscious bias and developing a growth mind-set.

Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

2.3.53 Our [SfL](#) supports the development of entrepreneurial skills through core and co-curricular activities such as volunteering, internships and authentic projects, and for such activity to count towards a degree award. These activities are highlighted in our Annual Enterprise Fair, Enterprise Funding availability (through our partnership with Santander Universities) and in our bi-monthly Enterprise lunch workshops, showcasing successful GCU entrepreneurs and Enterprise Mentors. We continue participation in Converge, RSE Enterprise Fellowship, AccelerateHer, Scottish Edge, Entrepreneurship Scotland and other programmes, as well as organisation of regular seminars and workshops.

2.3.54 We actively promote graduate enterprise through our [UHatch](#) enterprise incubator which has registered over 45 graduate businesses with a collective turnover of £1.4 million. Our graduate companies are active recipients of awards from RBS Edge Funding, Enterprise Campus, Converge Challenge, Virgin Money (Vroom), Santander Enterprise Universities, Stirling District Council and the Enterprise Value challenge (via trading projects). We are refining the process and governance of UHatch, to ensure that its activities work within the Framework defined by the RCDG Entrepreneurialism working group. We will further develop long term enterprise support for long term users of the UHatch incubator. For example, two enterprises from UHatch, Hippo and Hedgehog (a social enterprise which has developed a baotic health drink) and Giraffe Healthcare (a CIC engaged in the remote delivery of high quality, personalised health care services backed by expert advice and support) have both emerged from RSE fellowships and will be re-integrated within the University.

Careers

2.3.55 As a university with a diverse student population, we strive to support all students to develop the confidence, skills, attributes and professional networks needed to succeed. The [Careers Centre](#) offers a full range of professional services to support students to manage their career and employability. The Careers team establishes effective working relationships with employers and external agencies, offers help and advice on how students can maximise their time at GCU, and works in close partnership with the academic Schools to embed career management and employability skills within modules and programmes. Advice and guidance is provided

in group and one to one settings with information provided via the website, portal, leaflets and social media.

- 2.3.56 We recognise that there are complex issues surrounding careers and employability when supporting a diverse student population. For example, the gender pay gap, higher levels of unemployment and under employment for graduates with disabilities, and the unemployment figures for BAME male graduates remain national challenges. Almost half of our students are the first in their family to attend university. Our Careers Service, in partnership with the academic Schools, is highly responsive to changing students' needs and adapts its service provision based on student feedback and student outcomes, including [Destination of Leavers from Higher Education](#), Longitudinal Education Outcomes and forthcoming Graduate Outcomes Survey datasets.
- 2.3.57 In 2015, the Careers team introduced an innovative new approach to employer campus visits in response to disappointing student engagement at traditional employer events. [Career Conversations](#) allow employers to host informal drop-in sessions within the heart of the campus to discuss their job opportunities and recruitment practices with students, and explore a range of employability topics, work experience and career options. Students can drop in for one to one conversations or in small groups. This approach has proven to be very effective and student attendance at employer events has increased by 200% since the conversations were introduced.
- 2.3.58 In addition to these smaller, more targeted events, the Careers Service also hosts larger Career Fairs which cover as many areas of employment as possible. They advertise part-time, voluntary and graduate job opportunities, along with internship and placement vacancies to students and graduates via CareerHub, our vacancy and employer management system. There are currently over 9,000 students registered in the system and over 3,000 vacancies posted.
- 2.3.59 In recognition of the growing demand on our services and the need for more self-access resources and support for students, we implemented a pilot of Abintegro (an online careers management resource) in 2019. Student engagement and feedback has been extremely positive and it has been agreed to extend the provision for a further three years. This will enable us to develop the resources to provide more targeted support for specific subject areas.
- 2.3.60 In 2018, the Careers team piloted two innovative personal development programmes for students: Grow, Aspire, Lead (GAL) - a 10-week programme for female students on confidence, leadership and skills development; and Grit - an externally-facilitated three-

day personal development programme that draws on areas of coaching and challenges fixed or limiting ways of thinking. In 2019, a Careers Planning programme for students with disabilities was developed by the Disability Service with Careers Service support. This expands on existing Disability Service provision, offering additional support in the transition out of university. The Careers team are currently scoping the provision of a leadership and careers development programme for BAME students and plan to hold a Careers Convention for BAME students in AY 2019/20.

2.3.61 The 2018 [HESA Employment Performance Indicators](#) shows that 95% of GCU graduates are in employment or further study after six months. Currently 74% of our graduates enter professional occupations within six months, an improvement of four percentage points on the previous year. We continue to review graduate employment rates by subject areas, and aim to grow graduate level employment in line with our [Strategy 2020](#) ambitions.

2.3.62 A Thematic Review ([4.1.15](#)) of careers and employability is planned for AY 2019/20 to review activity across the University and ensure alignment with objectives and ambitions of the 2030 strategic plan.

Internationalisation

2.3.63 We encourage our students to become global citizens and graduates, and actively promote international study experiences with partner institutions, organisations and employers. In AY 2017/18, 13% of final year first degree leavers had undertaken a mobility experience during their time at GCU, a similar rate to the previous year. We have an exchange partner network of around 120 institutions worldwide, which sees 150-200 students per year spending one or two semesters studying abroad. A further 20-40 staff members undertake on average one-week exchanges for teaching or training each year. These mobilities are managed by the [Exchange and Study Abroad](#) team within our Directorate of Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions. This team also administers outgoing summer school exchanges to three partner institutions in Finland and South Korea, for up to 40 students per year. Growing short-term mobility is considered a GCU priority to allow more students, particularly those whose circumstances may preclude them from longer exchanges, to have an international experience during their studies and to build confidence in our widening participation students who may have never travelled.

2.3.64 We are committed to growing international mobility, and continue to provide opportunities for our students to travel. For example, our [Travel Awards](#) are supported by generous donors including Sir Alex Ferguson CBE, Santander, alumni and friends.

These awards enable students to take up life-changing opportunities that enhance their employability and equip them to become truly global citizens. Our [Magnusson Awards](#) provide students with the opportunity to fulfil their own potential whilst making a positive impact on the lives of others around the world. Students can pitch for up to £5,000 to support their dreams and ambitions, including volunteering in developing countries, delivering community projects or starting their own business. The awards have now supported more than 100 students who have gone on to undertake projects in more than 35 countries. Projects have included volunteering as an occupational therapist in the Philippines; expanding a charity to help young people struggling with mental health issues; and implementing a project to provide families with clean water in Rwanda.

2.4 Postgraduate taught and research student experience

PG research student experience

- 2.4.1 There are currently over 600 research students (includes a broader range of students than the HESA return) from over fifty countries at GCU studying towards a PhD, Professional Doctorate or Master of Research degree. Students join one of our academic Schools in Glasgow or London and are supported throughout their studies by the GCU Graduate School. The Graduate School works in close partnership with the academic Schools, Professional Support Departments, the Students' Association and external collaborators to enhance all aspects of PGR students' personal and professional career development as emerging researchers(3.4.48). Provision is based on the [Vitae Researcher Development Framework](#) and includes an extensive workshop programme of Researcher Development; tailored academic writing provision for research students; and supervisor training and support (3.4.43).
- 2.4.2 Our academic Schools provide supervision and academic support through a network of supervisory teams, Directors of Study, PGR Tutors, Senior PGR Tutors and Associate Deans (Research). Through the Graduate School and academic Schools, we offer a range of events throughout the year to foster a research community of students and staff. This includes a dedicated space in the Library to allow research students (taught and research) to access quiet study space and to facilitate cross-discipline interaction. This was created on Level 4 of the Saltire Centre in response to student feedback and in collaboration with the Students' Association. The PG study space offers individual study booths and an area for discussion and collaboration. The

room has been well received by students who have given positive feedback to the library team.

- 2.4.3 PG students are provided with a full library induction and also receive embedded workshops covering search skills, strategic searching and reference management. The Library has also developed a [Research Data Management](#) intranet site to assist staff and students in managing their data across the research lifecycle. The site offers advice and guidance on data management planning, creating, managing, storing and sharing data during research projects and archiving data at the end of a project. The Library is leading on the procurement and implementation of systems for Research Data Management and Digital Preservation which will be launched in summer 2020.
- 2.4.4 We are committed to the continuous enhancement of the student experience and in AY 2017/18 conducted a [Thematic Review \(4.1.15\)](#) of the PGR student experience. The PGR student experience was selected in response to ELIR 3 recommendations to explore enhancements in this area, and disappointing student feedback in the 2017 PGR Survey (PRES), where Overall satisfaction was 72%, six percentage points lower than in 2015. [\(AIS, PRES 2017\)](#)
- 2.4.5 The PGR Thematic Review utilised a reflective Self-Evaluation Matrix aligned with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education; specifically Chapters B3 (Learning and Teaching); B5 (Student Engagement); B8 (Programme Monitoring and Review) and B11 (Research Degrees) as the review pre-dated the publication of advice and guidance documentation aligned to the revised Quality Code. A series of meetings were held throughout June and July 2018, attended by research students (Glasgow and London), research-aligned taught PG students, Research Supervisors, Programme Leaders, PGR Tutors, Associate Deans (Research), Research Centre

Directors, Research Student Leads and the Students' Association. The review explored five broad areas: [\(AIS, PGR Thematic Review\)](#)

- The Research Environment
- Training and Development
- Student Engagement
- Academic Regulations and Procedures
- Formal Committee Mechanisms

2.4.6 The review panel was impressed by the clearly articulated commitment of staff in support of the research student experience and by the willingness of students to engage fully and openly in the Thematic Review process. It was clear that students regard the quality of supervision as good or satisfactory and have beneficial relationships with their immediate supervisory teams.

2.4.7 Themes for enhancement largely coalesced around communication, academic quality and process. A lack of clear articulation of academic quality and processes beyond the immediate supervisory team and the Director of Studies creates difficulties in closing the feedback loop for students. It was found that inconsistencies remained in capturing and responding to the PGR student voice, and in consistency of access to opportunities such as teaching, training and CPD. However, the need to build a sense of community and belonging is something that staff remain very aware of, and there was good evidence of Schools working towards a model of inclusivity which builds around the discipline, in line with current strategic university thinking. [\(AIS, Closing the Feedback Loop Presentation\)](#)

2.4.8 Following the Thematic Review, a short-life working group comprising staff, the Students' Association and PGR Representatives was established to develop a detailed action plan to address the recommendations made by the panel. This was approved by Senate in May 2019 with a follow-up progress report expected in one year. In addition, the impact of refreshed PGR student representation structure [\(2.1.24\)](#) will be monitored by the Students' Association during this period.

2.4.9 The results of our first internal PGR Experience Survey (PGRES) in 2019 indicate positive improvements in the PGR student experience, with 84% Overall satisfaction. Although direct comparison with the PRES is not possible due to changes to the questionnaire, the Overall satisfaction rate was 72% in the 2017 PRES. Scores of 80%

or more were achieved in 7 out of the 11 themes in the 2019 PGRES. The best performing themes were Resources, Supervision and Research Skills (all 88%). The lowest three performing themes across the University were Student voice (51%), Research community (57%) and Teaching (71%), suggesting that further enhancements need to be considered in these areas. (AIS, PGRES 2019 & PRES 2017)

PGT student experience

- 2.4.10 We have a comprehensive portfolio of taught programmes in areas including business, accounting, computing, IT, health, science and engineering. We invest in industry-standard teaching and learning facilities including our Interprofessional Simulation Centre, Vision Centre and Broadcasting Suite, and work closely with industry advisors to ensure that our PG courses remain relevant and valuable, and equip students with the skills and knowledge to succeed in their chosen career.
- 2.4.11 We offer PGT provision across both Glasgow and London campuses. London is predominately a PG campus, offering specialised Masters programmes that are closely aligned with industry (5.2.62). To help foster a research community and sense of belonging within GCU London, a Research Club has been established to allow PhD students to present and share their research. The meetings are whole campus events with both PGR and PGT students actively encouraged to attend.
- 2.4.12 PGT provision is managed by our academic Schools and departments. Historically the PGT student experience at GCU has had greater focus at local, department and discipline levels. This is because of the nature and attendance pattern of a large cohort of part-time PGT students. Traditionally PGT students have utilised the University to support career development and career change and the pattern of attendance has tended to be employer sponsored day release or attendance at evening classes. This varied attendance pattern is now reflected in contemporary apprenticeship and online programmes (5.2.58).
- 2.4.13 In 2016, an internal research project was undertaken to explore students' views of their expectations and experiences of PGT study at GCU (Glasgow and London), in order to consider if enhancements to the PGT student experience were required. Key recommendations included action planning by the academic Schools to support the PGT student experience, and ensuring the provision of a robust evidence base for PGT students, for example through continued use of the GCU Experience Survey PGT (GCUES PGT). We have since introduced an annual internal GCUES PGT, following a successful pilot, which ran for the second time in March 2019. Students were

encouraged to take an overview of their whole course and had the opportunity to give positive and/or negative comments on their student learning experience as a whole. The survey achieved an Overall satisfaction score of 81%, a +5% improvement on 2018. There were positive improvements across all survey themes (excluding Student support and Student voice, which were new to the 2019 survey) with the single exception of Learning resources, for which there was a slight drop of -2%. The most notable improvements were for Assessment and feedback (+7%), Propensity to recommend (+6%), and Overall satisfaction (+5%). (AIS, GCUES PGT 2019)

- 2.4.14 We continuously monitor the feedback and experiences of our PGT cohorts at programme, School and university level. Actions for enhancement are identified through our Quality Enhancement and Assurance processes, including module monitoring and Annual Programme Analysis. (AIS, Annual Monitoring Reports)

2.5 Learning environment, including the use of technology

Library Service

- 2.5.1 Since our innovative and award-winning [Saltire Centre](#) was opened in 2006 the [Library](#) has been a key resource supporting the learning, teaching and research of GCU. It is one of the top performing GCU services in student feedback surveys. In 2019 it achieved 89% satisfaction in the NSS and 97% in the ISB, both above the sector average. The Library regularly consults users on the quality of its provision and seeks feedback on how the service can be improved. (AIS, NSS 2019 and ISB 2018)
- 2.5.2 As part of the Heart of the Campus project (2.5.12) we improved the connectivity of the Library to the rest of the campus by improving the front (external) entrance to the building and creating an internal entrance to the new Campus Life Lounge and university restaurant. This provided an opportunity to evaluate and improve the use of some key library spaces. Level 0 contained group study and soft seating areas as well as the library café, and was viewed primarily as a social space. Library staff carried out an observational study which found that many students were in fact using the area for concentrated study; a substantial amount of individual study was taking place. The floor was redesigned to better support these students' needs, with furniture chosen and placed in zones. This has enabled both group and individual study and allows greater flexibility in the use of the space. The library desk was redesigned and moved to the main entrance to provide an easy to find and user-friendly welcome point. The creation of an [Archives Centre](#) has brought together internationally significant archival resources of the University into a purpose designed space for the first time. The

increased visibility the service now has, in a prime location at the centre of the library, has led to sustained year-on-year increase in service usage and the hours the service is available have been increased to meet this demand.

- 2.5.3 The Library seeks to continually improve the study environment it offers to meet user need. In 2017, Level 3 of the Saltire Centre was changed from quiet to silent study in response to student feedback. Students felt that quiet study was open to interpretation and preferred silence for concentrated individual study. In 2018, in response to student demand for more individual study spaces the library repurposed high quality benching from staff areas to create further study spaces on Levels 3 and 4 of the Saltire Centre taking the total on offer to 1,363.
- 2.5.4 When the Saltire Centre was opened in 2006 the physical collections were split over two types of shelving: static open shelving which contained high use material, and mobile shelving which contained extended reading and research material. The library received consistent feedback that students found the mobile shelving off putting and difficult to use. In 2019, the library completed a major project to reconfigure the layout of its shelving and integrate the collection into a single run across Levels 2, 3 and 4 of the Saltire Centre. This makes the collection much easier to navigate for students who can now find all of the physical material on each topic in a single location and aids browsing and the serendipitous discovery of resources. Space freed up by the shelving reconfiguration also allowed the library to create an additional 36 group study spaces on Level 0.
- 2.5.5 The Library has introduced a roving support model to enhance the student experience. Information points with smart tables are available on all floors which can be used by staff to give demonstrations, or by students to find resources or book an appointment. An Ask & Learn Space has been created with a group study area, a teaching room and desks for Academic Librarians to deliver appointments and drop-in sessions. Prior to this development there was no teaching space in the library; its introduction has allowed expansion of the range and number of tailored classes and workshops on offer. By replicating face to face workshops with webinars, the library is working toward parity of service and access for all users whether on campus, on placement or at a distance.
- 2.5.6 In line with the [GCU Digital Strategy](#), the library has focused on improving its online presence. The library and archives websites have been redeveloped with user feedback central to driving improvement. The use of online resources far outstrips use of physical library stock and the team continually strives to improve access for users, for example through the introduction of single sign-on to all library resources. A major

project was undertaken in 2017 to migrate to a new library management platform; key benefits include the ability to use a single search box for all library resources for the first time, and the ability to browse the library shelves online. The Library is currently developing a new collection management policy to reflect user preference for online resources and to ensure its collection best supports teaching, learning and research at GCU.

- 2.5.7 In January 2017, the library introduced a laptop vending machine in response to student feedback that they required access to more PCs. In addition to 350 fixed PCs, there are now an additional 50 laptops available to borrow to increase the capacity and flexibility of the IT resources on offer. Students can also access a 24 hour computer lab all year round in the Students' Association Building. The Library offers extended 24 hour opening each assessment period which receives consistent positive feedback from students.

Digital learning environment

- 2.5.8 In 2017, a cross-institutional Digital Learning Implementation Group (DLIG) was established to monitor and drive forward digital developments across the University [\(3.4.24\)](#). During AY 2017/18, we renewed our contract with Blackboard to supply the institutional VLE (GCU Learn) in an updated form. This refresh includes features that will enhance usability and accessibility for students, such as the implementation, in session 2019/20 of Blackboard Ally [\(3.4.25\)](#). For a small investment of their time staff can now expand the accessibility of their materials for all students. For example, students who prefer to listen to rather than read learning resources can access them in audio format through Blackboard Ally.
- 2.5.9 Staff and students have been consulted on their views on the future direction of GCU Learn. Organised by the Students' Association, students were invited to meetings with members of the Academic Development team during AY 2018/19 and asked to give their views electronically. They were then encouraged to participate in an open question and discussion session on which features of GCU Learn they most value, and which feature they would most like to see in a refreshed GCU Learn.
- 2.5.10 During AY 2019/20, we will undertake widespread consultation with students and staff around the concept of learning capture as a key pedagogical feature in our digital transformation. Learning spaces and learning design will be explored for opportunities to provide learning capture to support student revision, reflection and insight into how knowledge and skills emerge through the learning process. This is an exciting direction for the University and differentiates GCU from the more traditional lecture capture

approach. Our rationale is informed by the limited impact or indeed use made of recorded lecture materials by students. Our approach focuses on all aspects of the student learning experience, not only lectures, and will align with our [Strategy 2030](#) aspirations. Use of technology also facilitates the delivery of other university priorities, such as supporting upskilling and work-based learning, and online and off-campus learning.

- 2.5.11 During AY 2018/19, the University invested over £250,000 to upgrade classrooms on the Glasgow campus into active learning spaces. Two former computer labs now offer opportunities for students to engage in active and collaborative learning. Both rooms feature large interactive CleverTouch Screens with one also offering flexible group work space and a central teaching station. Staff CPD is underway to support use of the technology and explore learning design that maximises the potential of the new features. Evaluation of the user experience, both staff and student, is ongoing throughout the summer of 2019 and will inform proposals to extend and transform our physical estate as part of a Digital Learning Enhancement Plan (DLEP) to be developed by the end of AY 2019/20.

Physical learning environment

- 2.5.12 At the point of ELIR 3, the University was undertaking a £32million Heart of the Campus transformation project. This is now complete; we have a contemporary new restaurant on the ground floor of the George Moore Building and the first floor is dedicated entirely to Student Services, making it easier for students to access everything they need to support their wider GCU experience. A glass pavilion at the front of the Hamish Wood provides a gateway to the University and leads to a 500-seat lecture theatre and conference facility. The ground floor also features flexible seminar rooms while a suspended glass meeting room provides a striking focal point. We aim to provide multi-purpose learning and social spaces on campus; our Real Learning Cafes are ideal for relaxed study, offering flat screen terminals on group study tables and on bar height study areas.
- 2.5.13 Landscaping was a major element of the Heart of the Campus project and three new courtyard gardens were designed to rejuvenate our external spaces. Following a successful campaign by the Students' Association we opened up the previously closed Saltire Centre Roof Garden as an outdoor learning space in April 2019.
- 2.5.14 We have a multi-purpose gym on campus which houses a specialist [Physiotherapy Clinic](#) and is used by students, staff, members of the public and student-led sports clubs. We also have a purpose built [Vision Centre](#) which is open to students, staff and

members of the public. In 2016 we received the Cycle Friendly Campus Award from Cycling Scotland - the first of its kind in Scotland - reflecting a range of measures that have been implemented to encourage students and staff to travel to campus by bike. In 2019, GCU was rated first in Scotland in the [People and Planet University League](#) for its environmental and ethical performance.

2.5.15 During 2019, a review of all formal learning spaces was conducted and a plan to transform the learning and teaching estate is currently being developed.

2.6 Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience.

2.6.1 Since ELIR 3, we have developed a systematic, whole institution approach to enhancing the student experience. To support the delivery of [Strategy 2020](#) we consulted widely with students and staff, analysed sector and university data, reviewed our existing structures, policies and practices, and produced a holistic, institution-wide enhancement plan. Our approach to enhancing the student experience recognises that creating an excellent student experience takes time and involves every aspect of university business and every member of staff.

2.6.2 One of the defining features of the GCU student experience is our approach to community and partnership working between staff and students. This approach underpins all that we do and ensures that our students are active partners and have a voice in shaping their learning and wider student experience. It is reflected in our [GCU Student Partnership Agreement](#).

2.6.3 When undertaking consultation for the production of our RA, we were reassured that this ethos resonates with students and reflects their lived experiences of studying at GCU. Students spoke very highly about the GCU campus: both the physical campus and the campus 'feel' came through strongly - as central, modern, compact, friendly and relaxed. Aligned to this was a strong message of community, which students described as diverse, inclusive, helpful and approachable. This reflects another strong theme of support: students told us that they value the supportive nature of staff across the University, including academic Schools, Professional Support Services and the Students' Association. They cited open door policies as well as friendly, helpful and supportive colleagues. We are very proud of our community approach at GCU and remain committed to maintaining a culture that is collegiate, supportive and inclusive for all students and staff. We will continue to enhance our physical and digital learning

spaces to ensure equality of opportunity for all students, regardless of their programme, mode of study or personal circumstances.

- 2.6.4 Our Students' Association has achieved the [NUS Quality Students' Unions](#) award, a quality mark endorsed by the Committee of University Chairs, Universities UK, GuildHE and The Leadership Foundation (now Advance HE). The Students' Association established a working group that included university stakeholders to achieve this award in April 2017. We were the first modern university and only the second in Scotland to do so. The Students' Association received the highest rating in many areas including representation and campaigning, with the audit report highlighting 'areas of excellence particularly around academic representation and the Student Leadership Programme'. Strong partnership working is a theme within the Students' Association strategic plan and there are many examples to demonstrate how the University and Students' Association work together to effectively enhance the student learning experience. This includes an Academic Rep Review, Full Time Officer Model Review, Student Mental Health Partnership Agreement, Guide to Student Representation and a Full Time Officer Accountability Review.
- 2.6.5 In partnership with the Students' Association we have robust processes in place for student representation and since ELIR 3 we have enhanced the ways in which we listen and respond to the student voice. This includes via student representatives, SSCGs, internal student experience surveys, Programme and School Boards, the mid-trimester Pause for Reflection and Feedback week and the new Student Communications and Events Team. We are continuing to enhance our processes for responding to student feedback, including developing processes to ensure greater consistency in closing the feedback loop. However, while we are beginning to see some improvement in student survey results for Student Voice, the ways in which we listen to and respond to student feedback remains a key area of focus for enhancement. ([AIS, GCUES 2019 and Closing the Feedback Loop Presentation](#))
- 2.6.6 Monitoring the impact of SEAP activities requires us to take a multifaceted approach to evaluation and review. We have adopted a 'basket of measures' approach that utilises a number of quantitative and qualitative KPIs, including the [Strategy 2020](#) Strategic Indicators of: achieving excellent student satisfaction; ensuring positive outcomes for our students and graduates; enhancing staff engagement; and growing the proportion of our staff holding a doctoral and PG qualification. Progress against SEAP objectives is overseen by the Executive Board, ETSE Steering Group, APPC and Senate. This is an iterative process; progress is regularly reviewed, considered and used to identify where further improvements can be made. GCU is committed to

the continuous enhancement of the student learning experience and we will continue to work in close partnership with our Students' Association to make improvements as required at programme, School and University level.

3. Strategy and practice for enhancing learning and teaching

3.1 Strategic approach to enhancement

Philosophy and Strategy

- 3.1.1 Our strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching is inspired by the University's mission for the Common Good and, through its implementation, supports key elements of [Strategy 2020](#) goals, in particular that of *Transforming Lives Through Education*. This goal centres on delivering '*excellence in learning and an outstanding student experience which equips students with the employability and entrepreneurial skills to succeed as global citizens and enables them to make a positive impact within their communities, transforming their lives and the lives of others*'. Strategic direction for Learning and Teaching is overseen by the DVC (Academic) on behalf of the Executive Board.
- 3.1.2 [The SfL 2015-2020 \(3.1.10\)](#) was developed through a consultative process with staff, students, Students' Association, college partners and employers and is informed by international and national developments and effective practice in learning, teaching and assessment. The SfL, which articulates our vision for teaching and learning, and acts as a guide for academics during programme design and re-approval, was refreshed in 2015 to align with Strategy 2020. The strategy will be reconsidered in 2020 to align with the new University [Strategy 2030](#).
- 3.1.3 As part of the implementation of Strategy 2020 and the SfL, in AY 2016/17, the University developed a model to support, recognise and embed our commitment to the Common Good within the curriculum and wider student experience as part of its core mission. The [Common Good Curriculum \(3.1.11\)](#) builds upon GCU's accreditation by Ashoka U [\(1.1.5\)](#) as a Changemaker Campus (2014) for our commitment to social innovation through teaching and research.
- 3.1.4 A key strategic priority for the University is the provision of an outstanding student experience. In 2016, a considerable programme of work was undertaken to create a single, overarching strategic plan aimed at enhancing the student experience and to ensure an excellent student experience is at the centre of what we do- The [SEAP \(2.1.1\)](#). This plan has four themes carefully selected in response to the consistent messages received via student feedback: 1. Student Engagement and a Sense of

Belonging; 2. Programme Organisation and Management; 3. Assessment and Feedback; 4. Wider Student Experience.

- 3.1.5 To continually enhance our learning and teaching, it is important to support our staff to develop their skills and expertise. Professional development for staff is offered across a number of pathways under a unified [Academic Development Framework \(3.4.2\)](#) introduced in 2017. The framework maps development opportunities appropriate for staff at different stages of their academic career
- 3.1.6 The University recognises the need to coordinate digital learning and digital infrastructure developments to expand the use of learning technologies & to support and develop digital capabilities and confidence in our staff and students. For AY 2018/19, the University produced the DLEP (3.4.24) covering a range of actions around Curriculum Design for Online Programmes, Electronic Management of Assessment, Development of Staff Digital Capabilities, Learning Analytics, Upgrade of Learning Technology Systems and Integrated Module Evaluation.

Structures

- 3.1.7 Strategic responsibility for learning and teaching rests with the DVC (Academic) who oversees the three academic Schools based at the Glasgow campus as well as a Directorate of Learning and the Student Experience comprising three sections: The Department of AQD, Student Life & Student Communications, and Library Services. The DVC (Academic) chairs APPC (previously the Academic Policy Committee) which advises and make recommendations to Senate on: Sfl development of programmes, recruitment, widening participation, progression and retention, student experience, quality assurance and enhancement in learning, teaching and assessment, policy for awarding qualifications and student regulations. Its' associated sub-committee, LTSC, currently chaired by the Head of Academic Quality (HoAQ), is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation and monitoring of the University's quality assurance and enhancement agenda. The DVC (Academic) also chairs the ETSE Steering Group which oversees implementation of the SEAP, reporting to Executive Board, Senate and Court. Working Groups are established to oversee specific aspects of learning, teaching and quality as necessary. For example, we have recently made use of the Thematic Review approach to monitor PGR and Articulation experiences. Once reported, their recommendations were then taken forward by working groups. Within our three Schools, Associate Deans of Learning Teaching and Quality (ADLTQs) provide leadership for implementation of University key priorities and local strategy, supported by Assistant Heads for Learning, Teaching & Quality. At GCU London, the

ADLTQ role is fulfilled by the Learning and Teaching Quality Lead. ADLTQs provide the key link between the centre and the Schools through their presence on APPC, and the ETSE Steering Group. ADLTQs (or equivalent) also present school Annual Monitoring Reports at LTSC each year.

- 3.1.8 Up until the end of AY 2016/17, monitoring of the effectiveness of Academic Quality Processes was overseen by the Academic Quality Working Group (AQWG). A key activity of the work of the group was to refresh the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook (QEAH) which was relaunched in November 2018 as the AQPP [\(4.3.2\)](#). At the start of AY 2018/19, AQWG was repositioned as the Academic Quality and Development Advisory Group (AQDAG) to reflect the close alignment of Academic Quality and Academic Development. AQDAG now has additional oversight of the Academic Development Framework across the institution. AQDAG reports to the Academic Policy and Practice Committee. The Assessment Regulations Working Group (ARWG), a sub-group of APPC, was established to review and make recommendations regarding changes and enhancements to Assessment Regulations and Policies, and to oversee any revisions undertaken as a result of policy changes or external audit. At the request of APPC, a series of 'Task & Finish Groups' have been established in AY 2018/19 to cover short term projects such as data analytics, degree classification and banded grading. The DLIG with representation from a wide range of stakeholders including the Students' Association, oversees the DLEP, monitoring and driving forward the key actions across the institution, and will oversee future progress of the digital learning activity.

- 3.1.9 Governance of provision for PGR is overseen by the [Research Degrees Committee](#) (RDC), and operationalised through the Registry, School Professional Services and the Graduate School. The Graduate School leads provision of researcher and supervisor development [\(3.4.43\)](#) with professional development for initial teaching skills provided from the central AQD in line with the Academic Development Framework.

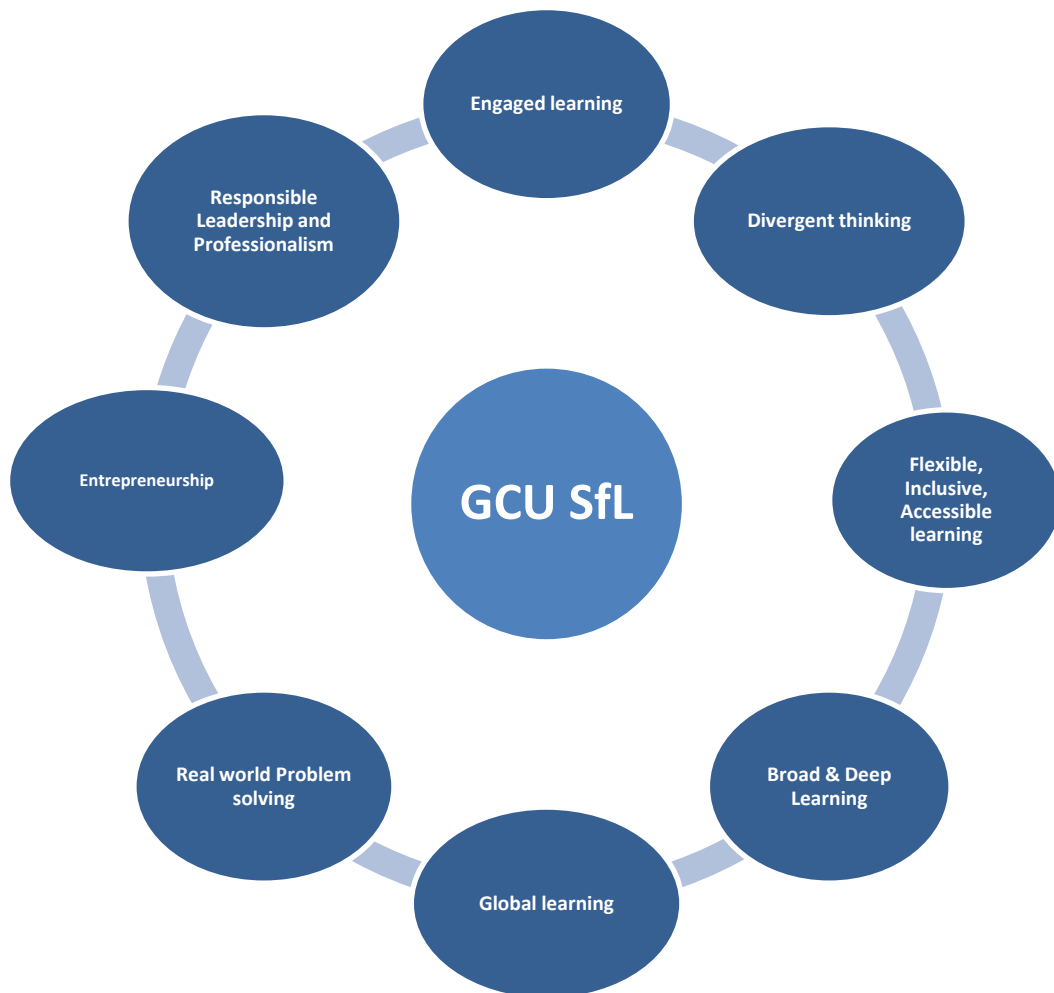
Practice

3.1.10

SfL: The SfL is centred on a single goal. It aims to develop graduates who will be "Proficient in their discipline as well as entrepreneurial, confident, responsible and capable of fulfilling leadership roles in different organisational, cultural and global contexts." The SfL focuses on articulating a distinctive approach to learning, teaching and assessment. This is based on engagement-led learning and real-world problem solving, coupled with inter and multi-disciplinary curricula with opportunities for the co-

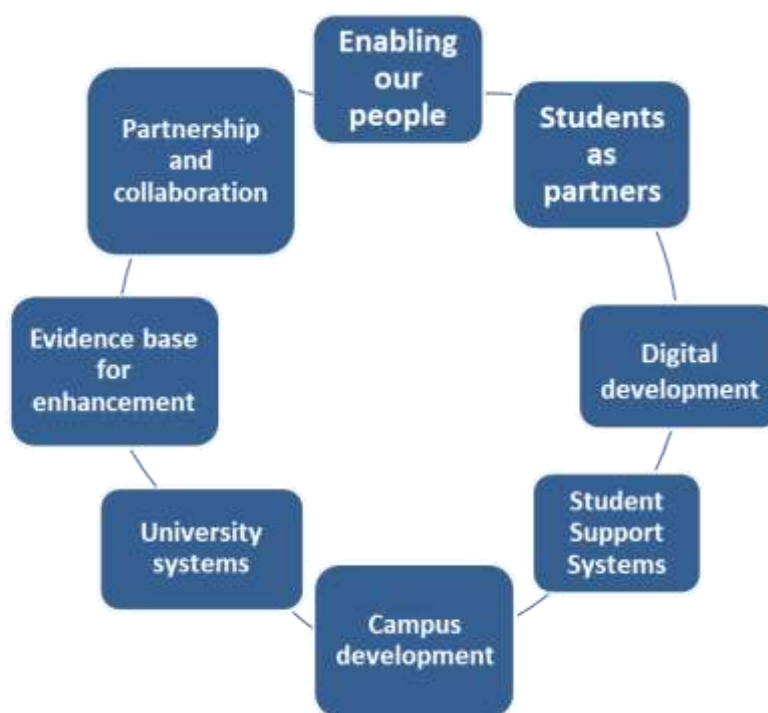
creation and personalisation of learning. This approach is underpinned by a GCU model comprised of eight curriculum design principles (*see figure 3.1*) and eight enablers.

Figure 3.1: The eight design principles of the SfL



The enablers (*see figure 3.2*) required to achieve the objectives of the SfL are aligned to the 2020 Strategic Enablers.

Figure 3.2: The eight enablers of the SfL



The SfL demonstrates the following characteristics for both UG and PG study:

- (i) **An outstanding student experience** in terms of learning, student support and wider opportunities for personal, professional and career development as part of the GCU Student Experience Framework
- (ii) **Learning and teaching excellence** underpinned by research and scholarship, linked to GCU's Research Strategy, as well as through the professional development of our staff and the recognition of excellence in teaching and supporting student learning.
- (iii) **A curriculum which is flexible, inclusive, accessible, engaging and internationalised.** The curriculum reflects the University's commitment to the Common Good through a distinctive 'Common Good Framework' which will provide opportunities for all GCU students to become 'Changemakers': making a positive difference to the communities they serve.
- (iv) **Inspirational approaches to learning, teaching and assessment** which embrace innovation and the imaginative use of learning technologies

3.1.11 Integrated within the SfL, the Common Good Curriculum supports the development of four 'Common Good Attributes': *active and global citizenship, an entrepreneurial mind-set, responsible leadership* and *confidence*. These attributes are underpinned by the GCU core values of *Integrity, Creativity, Responsibility* and *Confidence*. A Curriculum Mapping Tool was developed to aid mapping of programmes to the Common Good

Attributes, and included in the AQPP. The mapping exercise is now undertaken by all programmes undergoing approval or re-approval.

- 3.1.12 The SEAP (2.1.1) encompasses a wide range of activities and projects which touch on every aspect of the student experience and is overseen at university level by the ETSE Steering Group (3.1.7). At school level, the dialogue around Enhancing the Student Experience is maintained through structures such as Programme Boards, School Boards, the Senior Management Group (SMG) and recently formed Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Forums. Programme Boards provide a vehicle for maintaining a contextualised dialogue relating to the enhancement of the student experience. This discussion forum ensures that the student experience is kept central to the core business of the programme. With contributions from key internal and external stakeholders, the Programme Board ensure that strategies related to the enhancement of learning and teaching are considered at programme level, and monitored at School (through School SMGs) and University level (through APPC, Executive Board and Senate).
- 3.1.13 The wide engagement of staff, Students' Association and students from across all areas of the University in the development and implementation of the SEAP is embedding a greater awareness of the centrality of the student experience and to a step change in culture. Every member of the GCU community should recognise the role and responsibilities they have in the delivery of excellence in the student experience. For example, in SHLS, student listening events have been introduced to engage students, develop their sense of belonging and work in genuine partnership with academic staff. Hosted jointly by the ADLTQ and the Students' Association Vice President, the listening events provide a dedicated forum for student groups to share and discuss their student experiences. The listening events afford an authentic means of engaging students as partners, and provide a vehicle to drive areas for enhancement whilst also acknowledging areas of excellence and good practice. In a bid to close the feedback loop, relevant points are then raised with Programme Leaders who are asked to respond accordingly, providing an explicit means of valuing and responding to the student voice.
- 3.1.14 In GSBS, an example of this closer focus on the student experience is evident in work undertaken to address poor performance in the NSS for questions regarding Assessment and Feedback. This work (carried out alongside an analysis of online marking) (2.3.34) identified a lack of awareness among Level Four students regarding how to use, and even how to access feedback through GCU Learn. As a result, a guide

to accessing feedback in GCU Learn was developed, and further guidance for module leaders was developed.

3.1.15 In SCEBE, NSS data was used to identify poorly performing programmes, with the focus on the programme leader as a key agent of change within a programme-led structure. Previously successful programme interventions including the introduction of Induction at Level 3 and 4 to communicate expectations to students were rolled out across the School. A portfolio refresh was also undertaken alongside the University-wide School Refresh. Key subject themes aligned to emerging School structures were identified as the basis of the portfolio. This review has laid the foundations for a more detailed examination of the portfolio to determine programme demand and viability. A simpler portfolio structure lays the foundations for sustainable growth through focusing resources on successful programme areas and highlighting the distinctiveness of our programmes.

3.2 [Impact of the national Enhancement Theme and related activity on policy and practice](#)

3.2.1 The [Student Transition Enhancement Theme](#) ran for three academic years from 2014-2017. During this Enhancement Theme we explored the transitions of students into, through and out of study at the University through a range of activities overseen by a cross-institutional team to ensure a link to policy and practice. The overarching aim of these activities was to introduce guided enhancements to induction and transition including dedicated transition at all levels.

3.2.2. The Enhancement Theme has had a useful and insightful impact in supporting the institution to view its many different transition support approaches through a continuum - in, through and out of GCU - and as a lens through which to explore the learner journey. During the Theme staff used this continuum to locate their own student support and developed and shared approaches across the institution rather than within their own School.

3.2.3 At institutional level, a strategic move to develop online learning programmes provided a focus for activities to support 'transition' to the online learning environment from both student and staff perspectives. Principles and guidance for developing online programmes are included in the our '[Peer Support to Develop Online Programmes](#)' resources. For students: module handbooks and module online sites now provide information on what it means to be an online or blended learner, implications and expectations. This guidance supports the provision of a high-quality student learning experience in the online environment to replicate, support and enhance that provided

in the face to face environment, and to develop the digital capabilities of both staff and students.

- 3.2.4 The Enhancement Theme, through its development funding, supported a series of projects undertaken by Enhancement Theme Scholars and the Students' Association, with other activity focused on encouraging students to engage with questions on transition during the Annual Student Summit [\(2.1.14\)](#). Students' Association led projects included (i) a project that explored how the Students' Association could improve its provision of services and activities for PG Students. (ii) activities designed to enhance the support of articulating students from the Students' Association and the production of a range of new resources to provide guidance and support for articulating students, to complement those already provided by the University.
- 3.2.5 Staff-led projects included: an investigation of staff transitions, exploring the motivating factors for staff making the transition to doctoral-level study and the impact of this on their learning and teaching practice; the design and delivery of a research informed, pre-induction mini Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) to support the transition of new students in AY 2017/18; and an investigation of peer assessment to develop intercultural competence as a vehicle to ease transition for international students. The MOOC was revised and extended for delivery in AY 2018/19 and has now been integrated fully into induction activities for AY 2019/20.
- 3.2.6 Five of the case studies developed as part of our Theme activity explored our students' lived experience. These were captured and embedded into an end of theme video made by and for our students as a tangible output of the University's commitment to partnership working. This video was subsequently used in the induction mini MOOC, the University's core induction activity, and on the Students' Association website. Transition sessions are now held for all programme levels at the start of each academic year, a move from induction that previously only focussed on year 1 and direct entry students.
- 3.2.7 The current QAA Enhancement Theme is Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience, launched in AY 2017/18. The main aim of this theme - evidencing enhancement of, and improvement in the student experience - is wholly coherent with the strategic goals and priorities of the University, particularly the SEAP with which it is aligned and integrated. The ETSE Steering Group has provided an established and solid infrastructure to support the work of the Theme and ensures that the work of the Theme links directly to the SEAP and Strategy 2020 priorities and helps us to be

discerning in our activity and focus on those areas that have meaning to the University and directly link to the Enhancement Theme.

3.2.8 Since ELIR 3, the University has significantly increased its use of data in decision making across the University. GCU DASH, GCU's interactive suite of data dashboards [\(3.4.28\)](#), provides staff with a range of metrics to monitor student performance and the student experience. An additional key source of data for the University is student feedback. In recent years, GCU has utilised internal surveys to monitor the UG and PGT student experience [\(2.3.32\)](#). Survey questions are structured around similar themes to the National Student Survey (NSS) which enables some degree of benchmarking. Analysis of survey results provides valuable insight into the student experience, giving the opportunity to identify good practice and address issues raised by students and feed into the quality enhancement process. This data, and the outcomes of associated analysis is fed back to ADLTQs and programme leaders for use in Annual Programme Analysis (APA), to inform enhancement plans, implementation of which is monitored at school level. For PGR Students, the university has designed a PGR GCU Experience Survey that allows similar monitoring of this group's learning experience. The PGR Experience Survey was run for the first time in Spring 2019 [\(2.1.32\)](#). While we are committed to collecting meaningful data from student feedback, we are mindful of our responsibility to not over-survey our students and these activities are overseen by the Student Surveys Working Group [\(2.1.31\)](#). (AIS, GCU DASH examples 2019 and APA)

3.2.9 One strand of activity that is closely aligned to the current enhancement theme is the provision of [2020 Student Experience \(SE\) Scholarships \(3.3.6\)](#) which replaced the Caledonian Scholars Scheme towards the end of the previous Enhancement Theme. These team-based Scholarships are cross-school, underpinned by student engagement and intended to operationally impact on academic practice and policy using evidence-led approaches. Projects have student representation and include key staff from the relevant strategic area to ensure they are aligned with related activity. Projects have focused on a range of strategic issues such as support for International students and the provision of a revised approach to academic advising. The Contemporary Academic Advising Model (CAAM) project aimed to co-create a core set of academic advising values and principles as well as sustainable, embedded and technology enhanced policy and practices for academic advising at GCU. The team, which included staff, Students' Association and student members, surveyed national and local practice, running focus groups with staff and students to identify key local requirements. The recommendations of the project were operationalised as a set of

revised Personal Tutoring arrangements introduced at the beginning of AY 2018/19. Personal Tutoring provision is now supported by dedicated [student](#) and [staff](#) webpages on the scope of the provision and role of students and staff in Personal Tutoring. The launch of revised Personal Tutoring procedures was accompanied by a communications and marketing campaign to raise awareness of the new Personal Tutoring process for all students and staff, including cross-campus posters and videos.

3.2.10 The 'Understanding Student Attendance' 2020 Student Experience Scholarship Project has undertaken (AY 2018/19) a quantitative analysis of the relationship between attendance and performance (as reflected by marks) and the mediating/moderating roles of module delivery (online, on campus, blended), level of study, school and assessment types. The project collected attendance records and end of trimester academic performance data from up to 10 modules within each of the three Glasgow-based schools. The two datasets were combined and regression models developed to explore the relationships between the factors of interest. Results highlight a clear positive relationship between attendance and achievement across all Schools, complemented by additional qualitative data and a literature review. The findings from the Scholarship Project will be disseminated through events and briefings in Trimester A of AY 2019/20.

3.2.11 The PAIRING 2020 Student Experience Scholarship Project (PArtnership woRking IN Gcu) was funded to explore good practice in partnership working practices across GCU in the context of wider UK practice. This cross-university scholarship has surveyed students and programme leads for their experiences and perceptions of partnership working. Encouraging good practice in partnership working has the potential to improve scores in the Learning Community and Student Voice sections of the NSS. The project found that key partnership working activities included: Professional & career development for students; creation of a Programme community; module learning and teaching approaches; programme organisation and management, e.g. timetabling; GCU Learn; etc.; and module learning resources, e.g. reading lists; online resources; etc. The project also found evidence of widespread use of Peer Assessment (62% of sample), Peer Mentoring (46%) and Peer Assisted Learning/Teaching (42%). Student focus groups highlighted ways in which students felt they could partner with staff, with co-design of curricular resources and activities, and analysing and responding to student feedback both popular suggestions. The project is collecting case studies to drive greater adoption and is due to report in AY 2019/20.

3.2.12 Beyond institutional activity, we have led and engaged in Collaborative Cluster work with our peers throughout Scotland. The University has been a co-lead of the

[Enhancing Programme Leadership](#) collaborative cluster along with Edinburgh Napier University. The cluster work addresses a key sector issue and brings together thinking and learning, and practice, from across the sector and explores evidence for enhancement from the vantage point of programme leadership. Four cluster roundtables have been held during AY 2018/19, with one held at GCU and the theme was explored further during an additional internal seminar for GCU colleagues. The outcomes from the cluster activity include practical conversations and collated resources aimed at understanding - and closing - the gap between evidence and action. The outputs of the cluster activity will be utilised in our Programme Leader activities [\(3.4.15\)](#).

3.3 [Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice.](#)

- 3.3.1 The University's approach to identifying and sharing good practice in learning and teaching is one based on partnership and collaborative working across the University and is embedded within all key quality management processes; the dissemination of good practice is supported through a wide range of activities.
- 3.3.2 In addition to the activities described below, the University's quality management processes provide opportunities to highlight and share good practice. The [Enhancement-led Internal Subject Review \(ELISR\)](#) process [\(4.1.11\)](#) has been deliberately designed as an enhancement-led review which positively seeks out areas of good practice for dissemination to the wider University audience. Programme approval and review events routinely involve staff from other schools as internal panel members, or Chair, allowing for exchange of good practice at a key milestone in programme design. Supported by the AQD, staff taking part with these events review programme documentation and enter into collegiate and enhancement focused discussion with programme teams and key stakeholder groups. The involvement of peer review allows staff to share ideas, learn about innovative practice, and to identify commendations and recommendations for enhancement, as agreed by the review panel. Involvement in these events is beneficial for staff development, and can be an informative and supportive way to learn with, and from, peers across the institution.
- 3.3.3 External Examiners and Programme Leaders (via Annual Programme Monitoring and Programme Approval and Review processes) identify good practice in School Annual Monitoring Reports prepared by ADLTQs and tabled at a dedicated meeting of the

Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee in Trimester B of each academic year. (AIS, Annual Monitoring)

- 3.3.4 Staff who have innovated in their practice are given the chance to share their experience with other staff through an annual [Learning & Student Experience event](#). These events provide a focus for conversations around teaching and learning practice and give the Students' Association a platform to speak about its work. External keynote speakers including Professor Mark Stubbs from Manchester Metropolitan University, Dr Lisette Bakalis, from the University of Groningen and Ian Dunn, Coventry University, provided an opportunity for staff to hear how other innovative universities have transformed the learning experience of their students. In AY 2018/19, the event was presented as a week of activities, following the format of the University's Research Celebration (3.4.38) and Working Well Week (3.4.21) and reflecting the extensive activity in this area. These cross-university events provide an ideal opportunity to showcase student-staff partnership working.
- 3.3.5 The AQD has hosted and participates in national events organised by a variety of bodies including Quality Assurance Agency Scotland, Society for Research in Higher Education, Advance HE, Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), and the Association for Learning Technology (ALT). As well as providing opportunities for our staff to share their expertise more widely, these events are important as they bring high quality external speakers to the campus to share their expertise with a local audience. Staff in the Department of Academic Quality and Development (AQD) have played leading roles in ALT and participate in national networks such as the Scottish Higher Education Developers Forum and the Staff and Educational Developers Association.
- 3.3.6 The University has established an [Educational Research & Evaluation \(ER&E\)](#) Team within (AQD) to support staff across the University to develop a robust evidence base that reflects learning and teaching policy and practice, informs university developments in learning and teaching and enhances the student experience more broadly. Each year, the ER&E team support a small number of team-based 2020 Student Experience Scholarships that directly align with the SEAP themes and seek to have a direct impact on student experience. These year-long projects are awarded through a competitive process with a small amount of funding (£1-3k) is made available for each successful project. Scholarships include a direct element of partnership working with students and project teams include student representation and key professional services staff. Scholarship of Learning and Teaching is valued across the University and the ER&E Team runs workshops and provides informal support for staff seeking to publish

education research. The ER&E team also hosts seminars to allow academic staff to share practice internally.

- 3.3.7 Within Schools, ADLTQs act as champions of good practice, providing the link between central Academic Development provision [\(3.4.2 and following\)](#) and school-specific provision. Each of the Schools run an annual learning and teaching event and these provide opportunities for local discussions around enhancement of learning and teaching and for sharing good practice. At GCU London, a workshop series covering topics such as Student Feedback and Plagiarism is offered by local development staff. To ensure that all individuals who teach students at GCU London have access to these local development opportunities, occasional lecturers are also invited to the workshops. Feedback from staff is that including all staff helps to build a stronger academic community.
- 3.3.8 A series of 12 CPD workshops focused on the Module Leader role was piloted in AY 2018/19 within the School of Health and Life Sciences. These workshops were designed to support new module leaders in establishing practices aligned to their role, and cover a range of topics related to learning and teaching, policies and processes, and quality enhancement. Mindful that new module leaders may already be experienced teaching staff, the workshops utilise a peer community approach to provide an enhancement driven CPD opportunity. Learning with and from peers is hoped to have a positive impact upon the confidence and efficacy of individuals, and to develop a sense of belonging to the School learning and teaching community. The workshops will be evaluated through a two stage process with an initial evaluation of data from pre and post workshop instruments (in progress) followed by longer term follow up of workshop participants (to complete in March 2020). It is anticipated that the evaluation of the workshop series will inform the development of recommendations relating to CPD for academic staff within the School, and shared with colleagues across the University.
- 3.3.9 The Glasgow School for Business and Society (GSBS) has used Lunchtime Brown Bag Sessions for informal practice sharing for a number of years. This forum enables colleagues across the University to share learning and teaching experiences of existing technologies online and within GCU Learn, facilitated by the technical expertise of the learning technologists. This year the brown bag sessions have been hosted in one of the new digital classrooms to enable staff to experience the new technologies in these dedicated digital learning spaces. GSBS has also developed a Learning & Teaching

Hub Staff Community on GCU Learn to share examples of good practice, as well as staff resources and guidance booklets covering a range of technologies.

3.4 Engaging, developing and supporting staff

Developing staff

- 3.4.1 The University recognises that our staff play a vital role in the successful delivery of its vision and strategic objectives, to create an excellent student learning experience and is committed to supporting their wellbeing and development.
- 3.4.2 In 2017, the University introduced a new Academic Development Framework which sets out structured pathways for new and experienced teaching staff to engage in CPD to develop knowledge and skills to support a high-quality student learning experience. Key priority areas are supporting the digital capabilities of staff (3.4.13), embedding quality assurance as *'everybody's business'* through the Back to Basics programme and development of Academic Pillars (4.3.4), and supporting the development of Academic Leadership (3.4.14) across our discipline communities. The framework presents a cohesive structure for all staff development and supports career progression.
- 3.4.3 The Academic Development Framework encompasses a longitudinal induction pathway for those new to teaching into Higher Education and CPD pathways for experienced teaching staff. The framework highlights key career development stages: recruitment and induction, orientation to teaching, new to teaching, and experienced teacher CPD and identifies school and University level development activities and responsibilities, allowing alignment between academic development and overarching performance and development processes overseen by People Services. The scope of

the Academic Framework is presented visually below in figure 3.3.



Figure 3.3: The Academic Development Framework

- 3.4.4 **Orientation to Teaching:** All new academic staff have the opportunity to undertake an [online orientation module](#) introduced in AY 2018/19. This module provides an overview of, and key information about the University and our approaches to learning, teaching and quality, aligned with the principles of the SfL.
- 3.4.5 In response to areas for development in ELIR 3, the University offers the Introduction to Teaching Skills programme to support PhD students at GCU who intend to take on teaching responsibilities as GTAs. It is now essential to successfully complete the [Introduction to Teaching Skills](#) programme prior to embarking on teaching as a PhD student at GCU (58 completions in AY 2016/17, 55 in AY 2017/18 and 65 in 2018/19). Topics explored in the series of four workshops include: Working with small groups and exploring digital learning; teaching large groups; giving effective feedback and feedforward; and managing classroom behaviour. Initial GTA workshops were evaluated, with participants rating the quality and utility highly, whilst providing feedback of additional topics to be covered. Through People Services we are

continuing to review our casual hours process to ensure transparency in the recruitment and opportunities available to PGR students.

- 3.4.6 Professional Recognition of Teaching and Supporting Student Learning: The University's Learning and Teaching CPD Framework supports staff to gain recognition as Associate Fellows, Fellows and Senior Fellows; Principal Fellows are supported to apply through the Advanced HE direct route with support from the Head of Academic Development who is a Principal Fellow and an Advance HE Accreditor. Both new and experienced teachers are supported to achieve fellowship through the UKPSF for Teaching and Supporting Learning. New staff are supported through the University's PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching and Higher Education (re-accredited by Advance HE in AY 2018/19 as a [PG Certificate in Academic Practice \(PgCAP\)](#)). Experienced staff are supported to achieve Fellowship and Senior Fellowship through the [Accelerate RPL](#) route.
- 3.4.7 The new PgCAP, revised in response to student feedback, adopts a much more applied approach, structured around eight assessment tasks aligned to day-to-day teaching. The certificate foregrounds essential elements of teaching skills to complement the previous theory-led approach. The PgCAP has an early exit award of the Post Experience Certificate in Student Engagement that supports non-academic staff in student learning support roles to achieve Associate Fellow status. At least one Full-time Officer of the Students' Association (Student Presidents and Vice Presidents) has completed this award in each of the last four years (six in total). We believe this is an innovative element of our student partnership approach.
- 3.4.8 As well as the PgCAP, the Academic Development team also oversee Accelerate RPL routes to professional development and recognition aligned to the UKPSF. The RPL route supports experienced staff to gain professional recognition and offers opportunities for experienced staff already holding fellowship to engage as peer reviewers in making judgements on fellowship applications from experienced GCU Staff through the Academic Development Framework. This has been successful in building a sense of ownership of professional recognition across the institution. The approach also supports staff to gain experience to develop their own applications for Senior Fellow.
- 3.4.9 In AY 2016/17, there were 13 new Associate Fellows, 40 Fellows (24 following the RPL route) and 29 Senior Fellows. In AY 2017/18, there were 4 new Associate Fellows, 42 new Fellows (13 following the RPL route) and 19 Senior Fellows. As of AY 2018/19, 54% of teaching staff across the institution now hold professional recognition, against

a UK sector average of 42%, supporting the University KPI to 'Increase the number of staff holding higher level qualifications including professional recognition' and the SMART target of 75% achievement by 2020.

- 3.4.10 The key priority of professional development for new staff is to gain recognition as a Fellow within their first two years of employment. Once professional recognition of learning and teaching has been achieved, all staff are expected to engage in ongoing CPD aligned to key strategic areas of learning and teaching (specifically those related to the SEAP). These include courses covering a range of topics including peer observation, developing programmes, and digital innovation. Professional recognition is now embedded in [selection](#) and [promotion](#) criteria for Lecturers, Senior Lecturers and Professors (where there is now a learning and teaching focused route for promotion to Professor).
- 3.4.11 The [Peer Support](#) process was refreshed in AY 2018/19 and offers opportunities to give and receive peer feedback on teaching, learning and assessment practice. Peer Support can take many forms including mentoring and peer observation; the University mentoring network aligns with this process [\(3.4.15\)](#). For new teaching staff peer observation is an integrated part of the assessment strategy. After the school refresh at the beginning of AY 2018/19, new Heads of Department have been asked to monitor CPD engagement in Peer Support. For example, CPD logs that have been designed to provide a focus for learning and development conversations are being piloted in Trimester C of AY 2018/19.
- 3.4.12 Curriculum Design: GCU is a programmes focussed University as we appreciate that it is at the programme level where a sense of belonging is developed by our students. Support for programme development is provided through face to face sessions, and online learning resources, online learning units and templates to support staff to design for blended and online learning. Online resources to support module design, an online guide to Internationalising the Curriculum, and a wider range of curriculum development resources are all available through the [Academic Development](#) website. A Carpe Diem programme design workshop supports programme teams to create or enhance programme design and Academic Development have provided peer review where this is requested including to support the successful African Leadership College initiative. (5.2.21)
- 3.4.13 Digital Learning Innovation: With digital developments a key goal of the University, we recognise a need to provide academic staff development in digital skills. Now in its' third year, the annual Digital Capabilities Survey is undertaken to benchmark staff skills

and professional development requirements and allow decisions to be based on robust evidence. This survey highlighted a need for development in digital assessment and in AY 2018/19, staff development was offered through a combined central Academic Development and School Learning Technologist CPD offer to support staff to engage in online marking and feedback. This support underpinned the successful introduction of GCU's [Digital Assessment Policy](#), with 100% of relevant assessment submitted and marked online.

- 3.4.14 Academic Leadership: The University has established a working definition of academic leadership which underpins our aspirations for senior teaching staff. "Academic leadership at GCU is the process by which staff in the organisation take ownership of, and responsibility and accountability for those areas of learning and teaching, research and scholarship that fall within the scope of their role. The practice of academic leadership is characterised by setting a shared vision, encompassing an individual's contribution to the development of their discipline and the priorities of the institution, achieved through collaborative working and motivational leadership in line with the institutional values and behaviours of integrity, creativity, responsibility and confidence." We are currently exploring how to embed this in practice throughout our academic Schools, enabled by the Academic Development Framework.
- 3.4.15 As a programme led University, we recognise the importance of the Programme Leader role in providing academic leadership and underpinning a coherent student experience for our learners. Part of a review in AY 2016/2017 consulted with PLs across all schools and informed the establishment of development-led Programme Leader fora. The new mentoring network, resulting from collaboration across Academic Development and People Services, offers mentors to new teachers and is being extended to offer mentors to new Programme Leaders. Experienced staff are supported through a flipped classroom approach to engage online with the University's preferred [GROW](#) model of mentoring. This model is consistent with that used in the Aurora leadership for women programme co-ordinated by People Services and led by the DVC (Academic). Staff are able to attend a half day face to face session where they practise mentoring skills in a safe environment and subsequently submit a short reflection on embedding mentoring into their practice. Those completing the workshop are provided with a certification of completion and join the University's mentoring network which has bi-monthly meetings to explore challenges facing mentors and explore new models of mentoring and supporting colleagues. The mentoring network is a collaborative initiative across People Services and Academic Development and has developed over AY 2018/2019.

The model has been adopted by the Graduate School to provide mentoring support for new research supervisors.

- 3.4.16 Staff are encouraged to adopt scholarly approaches to learning and teaching and the Educational Research & Evaluation team supports staff to adopt evidence-led approaches to improve learning and teaching practice through the 2020 Student Experience Scholarship Scheme [\(3.3.6\)](#), workshops focused on supporting staff to publish education research, and informal mentoring arrangements for those wishing to develop their skills and practice in this area.
- 3.4.17 For some staff, an additional route for development is to embark upon a PhD focused on Learning & Teaching, or a [Professional Doctorate](#) offered by the University. The Professional Doctorate is structured in two stages. Stage One involves four taught modules. The modules develop the students' knowledge by framing and exploring their experiences in relation to theory. This mechanism provides both a source of learning, but also creates a supportive network for students that helps them meet the demands of combining full time work and part time study, supporting them through Stage Two which requires the students to research and write a thesis on an organisational problem, thus fulfilling the Economic and Social Research Council demand that the student's work contributes to both theory and practice. A number of GCU staff have chosen the Professional Doctorate to understand, explore and enhance a broad range of areas aligned with learning and teaching experiences. Each January students present their research at the Annual Research Conference in a forum designed to provide further support and feedback on developing their thesis.

Wider Staff Development

- 3.4.18 Staff development on equality and diversity focuses mainly on general Diversity and Inclusion in HE training (an online course) and unconscious bias (offered online and through tailored face to face sessions delivered to over 120 front line staff from a range of services including the Library, Information Services, Security, Student Wellbeing and Campus Services, after scoping and feedback identified gaps in staff awareness around race equality). These courses aim to support our broader commitments to dignity at work and study and our GCU Values, as well as our legal duties, to ensure a fair and inclusive working and learning environment. Equality and diversity are also key elements of our People Managers programme and the core staff induction.
- 3.4.19 Over the last two years the University has invested in developing General Data Protection Regulation and Information Security online training for all staff in the University in response to changes to legislation and heightened risk of cyber security.

Given its significance, participation is monitored by Heads of Departments alongside People Services. Where staff have indicated that they are unable to participate in online learning (e.g. Domestic Staff) face to face training is offered by the Academic Development team.

Supporting staff

- 3.4.20 A key element of our People Strategy 2020 is our commitment to Working Well, and creating an environment which fosters physical, psychological and social well-being, where people can give their best is one of our key goals. We have introduced processes and policies on recruitment, academic promotions, and flexible working guidance that focuses on creating a climate to support staff to do their work effectively. We have worked (and continue to work) in partnership with our campus Trade Unions to undertake equal pay reviews which then inform our Resourcing and Reward processes. To support these aspirations, we have enhanced the skills of managers to understand equality and diversity through our People Passport (essential training for people managers) training and briefings. The University has also appointed an Assistant Vice-Principal for Health and Wellbeing to work with the Director of Student Life to ensure staff development aligns with student needs. The role supports the University's commitment toward creating and sustaining a positive and healthy learning and working environment and culture for all staff.
- 3.4.21 Our biannual [Working Well Week](#), which promotes physical and mental health and wellbeing, has been a key feature of our staff development calendar since 2015. These weeks, held in January and June, see staff engaged in a range of staff development activities (e.g. unconscious bias, aspiring managers) and wellbeing offerings (e.g. massage, reflexology, lifestyle checks and mini MOTs). These activities have contributed to the successful achievement of the [Healthy Working Lives](#) Gold Award for five consecutive years. Working Well Weeks are routinely evaluated and currently the format and delivery of future activities is being reviewed based on staff feedback, so that reach and impact can be maximised.
- 3.4.22 The [Athena SWAN](#) accreditation process is the vehicle for delivery of our commitment to advancing gender equality, which is a core objective of the [People Strategy](#), which in turn supports Strategy 2020. We have engaged with a wide range of staff to identify key challenges, perceptions and experiences relating to inequalities faced by female academic staff. The DVC (Academic) led a steering group which collated and analysed the quantitative and qualitative data, and developed the narrative to articulate where action needed to be focused. Actions focused on advancing gender equality, enhancing

organisational culture, and supporting female academics, and are resourced by core operational areas as part of our mainstreaming approach to embedding equality. The University currently holds Athena Swan Bronze Award and is working towards applying for the Silver Award. We have supported the development of 70 female staff through the Leadership Foundation in Higher Education's (now Advance HE) Aurora programme which encourages women in academic and professional roles to think of themselves as leaders, to develop leadership skills, and to help maximise their potential, and complemented these with internally designed and delivered development activities. Our key achievements in relation to our commitment to advance gender equality include: a reduction of our [gender pay gap](#) for female academic staff; embedding of gender equality principles in recruitment and academic promotion processes where all panel members are trained in unconscious bias, and our language and criteria used in our documentation is fair and inclusive.

Digital Focus

- 3.4.23 The University recognises the importance of providing a robust digital infrastructure to support our staff to provide high quality learning and teaching. A 'Digital 2020' programme of strategic projects is in place, starting with the replacement of the [Student Information Management System \(SIMS\)](#). Projects have been established to accelerate the enhancement of the University's website and intranet, and a suite of business intelligence dashboards has been rolled out for academic staff.
- 3.4.24 Whilst decisions around digital developments had taken place previously at School level, it had become apparent that a more cohesive approach was required to ensure that developments were resourced effectively and efficiently. For example, purchasing licences at an institutional level allows cost savings to be made and importantly, ensures equality of opportunity of student learning. In response, the Digital Learning Implementation Plan, and now the DLEP have been developed to direct activities aimed at enhancing the digital learning and teaching potential of the University, and to ensure that digital developments relating to learning and teaching will be embedded in and inform the ongoing evolution of the SEAP, the SfL and the University's developing Digital Strategy. The DLEP is structured around four strategic objectives, namely to (i) Enhance digital learning and teaching systems; (ii) Enhance learning spaces; (ii) Enhance digital learning and teaching capabilities; (iv) Enhance the effective use of data through learning analytics. This plan is being evaluated and extended as part of a consultation during AY 2019/20 to establish a five-year Digital Enhancement Plan to guide digital developments from AY 2020/21 which will take an integrated approach to

transforming skills, technology including the VLE and to align with the [GCU Estate strategy](#).

3.4.25 The principal learning and teaching system is the Blackboard VLE (GCU Learn) which is integrated with the student record system and Turnitin (for online marking). With the recent addition of Collaborate Ultra our core digital learning technology provision is growing. Our commitment to Blackboard has been confirmed with a phased move to Blackboard Ultra. Phase I of this move was completed during AY2018/19 and involved migration to cloud hosting (Software as a Service; SaaS) which provides better uptime, seamless updates and greater potential to support learning analytics. Phase 2 of the migration took place early in AY 2019/20 and provides a refreshed look and feel, new functionality related to usability and accessibility (Blackboard Ally) and responsive design for consistency of experience across desktop and mobile platforms. Phase 3 integration will provide new tools and workflows. Timing for this final stage of migration is still to be decided with the University working with other UK HEIs to identify migration strategies as we await full release of functionality from the vendor. Staff from Academic Development and Information Services form the VLE Project Board and meet on a three weekly basis to oversee new integrations. Academic Development liaise closely with School Learning Technologists and meet formally on a bi-monthly basis to ensure effective co-ordination of technical aspects of the VLE including the introduction of any new functionality at Academic School level. The University has also made a significant investment, as part of the Digital Learning Implementation Plan, to provide teaching staff with a laptop, dual monitors and headset/ microphone. This equipment upgrade ensures all staff are able to provide timely feedback and marking and supports alternative forms of feedback provision through the use of audio feedback communicated through GCU Learn.

3.4.26 Most of the formal learning and teaching spaces in the Glasgow campus are currently designed for traditional teaching but have the potential to be transformed into flexible digital learning spaces. We have undertaken a comprehensive audit of learning spaces across the Glasgow Campus with a view to bringing together pedagogical developments and infrastructure to provide more flexible and digitally integrated spaces. During AY 2018/19, the University invested over £250,000 to upgrade classrooms on the Glasgow campus into active learning spaces. These two former computer labs now offer opportunities for students to engage in active and collaborative learning. Both rooms feature large interactive CleverTouch Screens with one also offering flexible group work space and a central teaching station. Staff CPD is underway to support use of the technology and explore learning design that maximises the

potential of the new features. Evaluation of the user experience, both staff and student, is ongoing throughout the summer of 2019 and will inform proposals to extend and transform our physical estate as part of the Digital Learning Enhancement Plan. SCEBE has recently commissioned a new lab space with specialised computers and software for Serious Games, which is being used extensively for teaching and is also used for events such as [Game Jams](#). Two other computer labs have been combined and are currently being refurbished to create a large specialised Cyber Security lab.

3.4.27 A strong technical infrastructure must be accompanied by a focus on enhancing Digital Learning and Teaching Capabilities to ensure that the digital skillsets held by teaching staff and others supporting the student learning experience are matched to the infrastructure provided. Ongoing development needs are monitored through the annual Digital Capabilities Survey [\(3.4.13\)](#).

3.4.28 Learning Analytics: The introduction in AY 2015-16 of GCU DASH, GCU's interactive suite of data dashboards, provides staff with access to a range of metrics to monitor student performance and the student experience. Development work has taken place to provide enhanced key datasets to improve GCU's reporting capabilities and to allow staff to access and interrogate data to support continual improvement of the student experience. This includes monitoring of module pass rates, progression and completion and student experience surveys. Information is monitored and reported at programme, department, School and institution levels and contains demographic information to support in depth analysis of the data. This is an area of development for GCU and a Task and Finish Group will be exploring the learning analytics options to further inform learning and teaching at GCU during AY 2019/20. [\(AIS, GCU Dash examples 2019\)](#)

3.4.29 The Library [\(2.5.1\)](#) has focused on improving its online presence, unifying access to all library resources online and many other benefits as communicated in the [Library blog](#). The library is currently developing a new collection management policy to reflect user preference for online resources and to ensure our collection best supports teaching, learning and research at GCU.

3.4.30 In 2016 the library developed [EdShare@GCU](#), the University's educational resources repository. The repository enhances learning and teaching by enabling staff to manage, store and share digital resources, providing broader and deeper learning opportunities for students. The repository enables GCU staff to make some or all of their digital resources openly available online supporting learning and research in developing communities by providing free access to educational resources as part of our Common Good mission. The library has also developed an online [Copyright Advisor tool](#) which

helps staff and students to quickly answer the most frequently asked copyright questions on commonly used resources. The library led on developing the “[How Do I?](#)” intranet resource in AY 2016/17 to address staff feedback regarding ease of access to help and information. The “How do I” resource gives guidance to staff on a huge number of topics including how to deal with student enquiries on areas such as wellbeing has grown both in content and users, with very positive feedback.

Engaging Staff

- 3.4.31 In addition to the activities described above, the University seeks to engage its staff by encouraging them to take part in events and activities beyond our core academic function. Extensive staff consultation events are held to shape the University’s thinking regarding key priorities (e.g. in Spring 2019, staff and student consultation events were held to inform both ELIR and the new [Strategy 2030](#)). Students, Students’ Association and staff are also consulted during key strategic activities including Learning Capture, Digital Classroom Consultation ([3.4.26](#)), and the GCU Learn Refresh ([3.4.25](#)).
- 3.4.32 The University has surveyed its staff to check satisfaction and aspiration with questions exploring views on topics including University Values, Support, Line Management, Health and Wellbeing, and Job Satisfaction. In 2016, the Staff Pulse Survey showed an overall improvement in staff perception with all statistically significant differences (12/17 questions) showing improvement. Another Staff Pulse Survey is currently taking place. ([AIS, Staff Pulse Survey 2016](#))
- 3.4.33 In January 2019 the University conducted a Staff Mental Health Survey. 54% of our staff participated in the survey which focused on awareness, training needs and support issues. The responses collected have been used by the Mental Health at Work Taskforce to shape our staff [Mental Health at Work](#) Staff Action Plan.
- 3.4.34 Celebrating Success: The University celebrates our success and effective practice in Learning and Teaching at our annual [Learning and Student Experience Showcase](#). We are keen to extend an appreciation of GCU’s quality teaching and support staff in pursuing external recognition for their practice. In AY 2018/19, a team from the University won a prestigious [Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence](#) for the international [PEETS](#) project (Promoting Excellence in Employability and Transversal Skills) to promote employability through providing opportunities for students to work abroad. Current development work is ongoing to align and embed support structures to pipeline success at a local level and provide more structured support for developing practice worthy of national recognition through the wider range of teaching awards available nationally. The names of staff who achieve Higher Education Academy (HEA)

fellowships are presented to Senate and local celebrations are also held at School level. A task and finish group including representation from the Students' Association, reporting to the ETSE Steering Group, is exploring ways to extend the impact of teaching awards and celebrate successes in learning and teaching.

3.4.35 The Points of Pride Awards give the University community an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the activities that have brought to life the University's Values over the past year. Individuals and activities are nominated by University staff and an exhibition held to showcase nominees and their work.

3.4.36 The University supports the [Students' Association Teaching Awards](#), an annual, student-led campaign to gather positive feedback about learning, teaching and support at GCU. The Teaching Awards provide an opportunity for GCU students to recognise outstanding teaching and non-teaching staff members who have made a positive impact on their learning experience. These awards allow students to nominate members of GCU staff in six categories which recognise excellence in different areas of teaching and support, namely: Terrific Teaching, Fantastic Feedback, Creative Curriculum, Super Support (teaching staff), Super Support (non-teaching staff), and Sensational Supervision & Support. In addition, there is an Inspiring Individuals Award for teaching staff in each School who best reflected the Values of the Students' Association and University. The shortlisting panel comprises a Vice President, academic reps, and academic and professional services staff. During AY 2018/19 there were 447 Teaching Award nominations for 169 GCU staff by 243 students. The awards highlight student perspectives of good practice that can then be used by the University to further improve the learning experience.

3.4.37 Staff are encouraged to develop academic leadership by engaging in opportunities for co-curricular activity. [Collaborative On-Line International Learning](#) (COIL), a global network coordinated by the State University New York (SUNY), promotes a learning and teaching approach that uses internet-based tools and innovative on-line pedagogies to connect students and staff from universities in different countries. Integrated into the taught curriculum at module level it aims to enhance the intercultural competence of academics and for students. COIL offers the opportunity for intercultural experiences without the need to travel; many GCU students have responsibilities that exclude their ability to engage in international visits and COIL offers an effective alternative. GCU is one of COIL's 17 Global Network Partners and has approximately 15 active projects co-ordinated through a COIL institutional lead based in SCEBE reporting through Academic Development. GCU is also part of the [Enactus Network](#) dedicated to creating a better world while developing the next generation of

entrepreneurial leaders and social innovators. EnactusGCU brings together staff and business leaders to support Enactus students in applying business concepts in community outreach projects, thereby improving the quality of life and standard of living for people in need, locally and internationally. GCU also hosts a [Game Jam](#). This annual event brings staff, students and computer games experts and enthusiasts together on campus for a weekend of game development activities linked in to [Global Game Jam](#) events all around the world. Activities such as these engage staff beyond their core role, and provide attendant benefits for learner employability.

3.4.38 The GCU Research Celebration, now in its thirteenth year, has become an established part of the calendar at GCU, bringing together the research community, PGR students external industry partners, staff from other local Higher Education Institutions (invited through our ScotHERD and Universities Scotland contacts) and members of the public. Established in 2015, this annual event now attracts over 200 researchers to participate, share their research and enhance the research culture. Keynote Speakers invited for the Research Celebration include, in 2018, Louise Scott of PwC, who highlighted the importance of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), while in 2019, [Derek McKay](#), Finance Secretary described the way UN SDGs inform the Scottish Government's National Performance Network and welcomed the key role they play in the University Research Strategy. The conclusion of the University Three Minute Thesis competition, where PhD students are encouraged to present a precis of their work to a University audience forms part of the celebration. Aligned with Research Celebration, GCU Citizen Science Days ([part of the Glasgow Science Festival see 3.4.40](#)) provide an opportunity for our Researchers to engage with the local communities, sharing research and giving public lectures.

Community & Public Engagement

3.4.39 The University has a long and rich heritage of Community and Public Engagement (CPE) which is embedded in our core activity across our three campuses. This longstanding commitment to working in partnership with people in their communities decisively strengthens research impact and quality for knowledge exchange. CPE enriches the student experience and fulfils the University's Common Good mission in many different ways.

3.4.40 At GCU, we define CPE as 'varied activities led by communities and individuals in partnership with GCU staff and students to jointly find solutions to societal issues and shape our research, learning and teaching'. The University engaged senior academics to consider a research-informed, impactful approach to CPE at GCU. Building on the

University 's success, 'Imagine Community' emerged from extensive consultation. This work has helped GCU to move towards a more ambitious, progressive and sustainable set of evidenced-based high impact goals in keeping with our Common Good mission. At GCU, Community and Public Engagement work is valued, supported and embedded across all aspects of GCU's strategic portfolio, staff group and activity. This extends to the curriculum - maximising opportunities to introduce CPE as part of the Common Good Curriculum; as well as to Research - where we provide opportunities for staff to take their research into the community through public events organised with local schools and the Glasgow Science Festival. Our Community and Public Engagement Coordinator has worked in partnership with the Graduate School to support and deliver the university's programme since 2016-2017 including current activities such as the GCU Citizen Science Day 2019.

Research

- 3.4.41 As the University for the Common Good, the focus of Strategy 2020 is upon transforming lives, enriching cities and communities, creating societal benefit through social innovation and engaging globally. This provides the platform for research at GCU to achieve global impact by addressing multiple UN SDGs via three societal challenges of Inclusive Societies, Healthy Lives and Sustainable Environments. Our research strengths inform our curriculum. Examples include researcher participation in teaching and curriculum design, planning modules for engagement of students in research, addressing real world problems via research, and ensuring experience from Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and related innovation activities are transferred into teaching examples.
- 3.4.42 The Graduate School is responsible for PGR development [\(2.4.2\)](#), in partnership with Schools, and structured around the national [Researcher Development Framework](#). This responsibility includes development of the staff associated with the researcher experience - supervisors and PGR Tutors.
- 3.4.43 The Graduate School facilitates the sharing of good practice in research, research supervision and the research student experience through an extensive range of workshops. Building on our success of delivering these workshops for the last 8 years in partnership with external trainers, our ["How To Be An Effective Doctoral Supervisor"](#) have been moved to in-house delivery (from AY 2019/20) to enable our provision to be more responsive to supervisor needs and more tailored to the specifics of the GCU PGR Student Journey. These workshops are mandatory for those with no doctoral completions (monitored through the [RDC progression forms](#) completed by the

[supervisees](#)) and provide specific insights into the supervisory process and student/supervisor relationship. Experienced supervisors can also attend the “How To Be An Effective Doctoral Supervisor” workshops as refresher courses in areas where they would like to update or enhance their practice and understanding. There is an ongoing requirement for existing supervisors to engage with professional development activities by attending at least one refresher training session every two years. Experienced staff involvement in these workshops provides an opportunity for practice sharing and networking.

- 3.4.44 A further [programme of workshops](#) runs throughout the academic year and is open to experienced and novice supervisors, to enable them to focus on topics like ‘*Wellbeing*,’ ‘*Working with Students Whose First Language is Not English*’ and other relevant topics chosen to respond to demands and policy changes.
- 3.4.45 One to one support is provided through opportunities for Research Mentoring, an extension of the general mentoring network [\(3.4.15\)](#). Support for the development of Research Mentors is provided via blended learning with part of the course on our GCU Learn platform, plus a dedicated face-to-face workshop. This is currently being piloted for experienced supervisors who mentor new supervisors, but the content is intended to support all Research Mentors, with further mentoring workshops planned for AY 2019/20.
- 3.4.46 Academic writing has become a key component of Researcher Development in the Graduate School and now operates to aid the development of research staff across GCU. [Writing Retreats](#), specifically for research staff and PhD researchers, are now offered at least once a month and more frequently when specific requests have been received. Staff have visited GCU London to deliver Academic Writing workshops with support provided by a local Academic Writing Lecturer. Workshops, focussed on early career researchers, have been delivered in collaboration with SCEBE and have also featured this year as part of the annual Research Celebration. Bespoke workshops have been offered, and will continue to be offered to research groups, such as the Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit, both on this campus and at other sites (e.g. University of Stirling). The Systematic Literature Review Series has been delivered in conjunction with Glasgow University; all four sessions have been provided on the GCU campus and are available to all research staff. One-to-one

appointments are available for all research students with GCU London students accessing support via telephone or skype.

3.4.47 GCU has been a signatory to the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) since its inception in 2009, and took part in the review of the concordat earlier in 2019. We now await the revised Concordat to further inform and enhance our future practice. We have also held the [HR Excellence in Research \(HREiR\)](#) award since 2013. The HREiR Award acknowledges the University's alignment with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their recruitment. The award recognises the support we offer to research staff across all areas of the Concordat and is reviewed every two years to support continued enhancement. Activities for the current period are covered in the 2017-2019 [HR Excellence in Research Award Action Plan](#).

3.4.48 The new Developing Academic Researcher Excellence (DARE) Steering Group has been established to monitor the development of our Early Career Researchers (ECRs), a group comprising 94 members across the University. Members of DARE are drawn from this ECR group to identify the developmental needs of ECRs, to ensure best practice can be shared and to facilitate a joined-up approach to maximise impact of ECR support activities. Key ongoing activity includes a programme of workshops on various aspects of the researcher development for ECRs with all DARE activity coordinated through the DARE Steering Group, aligned to the institution's HREiR Action Plan. (AIS, Steering Group ToRsTBC)

3.5 Effectiveness of the approach to implementing institutional strategies and enhancing learning and teaching

3.5.1 In the period since ELIR 3, the University has focused on the creation of a whole institution approach to student experience, embedding partnership working in all aspects of the university. The specification and implementation of the SEAP reflects the centrality of the Student Experience to all our activities at the University. The ETSE Steering Group has become a key focus for efforts for enhancement across the University providing a forum for aligning programme, School and University level activities. This coherent approach has been complemented by increased use of working groups and 'task and finish' groups to align effort across the University including Strategy and Planning, Academic Development and Quality, Students' Association, the Graduate School, and Student Life. The SEAP complements our SfL which now embeds the principles of the Common Good Curriculum demonstrating how

the University's overarching mission can be reflected in its pedagogic approach and the quality processes that assure the student learning experience we provide.

- 3.5.3. An increased use of data to underpin decision making is evident across the institution, with the GCU DASH facility now providing all relevant staff, including Academics, Module and Programme Leaders with robust datasets that are routinely used to monitor and report on our student profile and performance. These data sources can be used to highlight the need for local action (for example if progression and retention rates change) as well as to inform strategic decisions such as how to target new markets. We now collect and monitor student feedback through a range of mechanisms (NSS data, GCU Experience Survey, Module Evaluation Surveys and PGR Experience Survey). This data is used as evidence to target new interventions and efforts are ongoing to increase student awareness of how we act on the feedback they provide. The close alignment of the SEAP and the current QAA Enhancement Theme (Evidence for Enhancement) has provided opportunities to align institutional and sectoral activity, for example through our participation in the 'Enhancing Programme Leadership' Collaborative Cluster whose outputs will inform future support for programme leaders at GCU. Elsewhere, the 2020 Student Experience Scholarship projects, which are directly aligned to the current Enhancement Theme raise awareness of enhancement approaches and strategies across the institution. (AIS, GCU DASH examples 2019)
- 3.5.4 The introduction of the Academic Development Framework represents another key development over this period. There is now a clear alignment of personal development processes and individual development opportunities at all stages of academic careers, with suitable, aligned opportunities at all levels; informed by the external UK Professional Standards Framework. In AY 2017/18 the proportion of teaching staff with professional recognition increased to 54% of GCU teaching staff, against a UK sector average of 42%. An increasing number of students nominated an increasing number of staff for the Students' Association Teaching Awards. The setting of a 2020 Strategic Indicator on academic staff qualifications signalled the importance the University places on its academic staff as the guardians of our academic quality and drivers of excellence in teaching and research. In 2017-18, the proportion of academics holding a doctorate was 53% (a year-on-year increase of 1% and moving towards the 2020 target of 55%) and the proportion of academics holding a PG qualification is at 85%, meeting the 2020 GCU KPI.
- 3.5.5 As we move towards developing our 2030 Strategy, the coherent plan for our digital infrastructure and practice set out in our DLEP provides a comprehensive roadmap which underpins our current and future digital activities. The DLEP highlights the

importance of investing not just in infrastructure and equipment, but in ensuring that staff have the appropriate skills to use these new technologies effectively.

4. Academic Standards and quality processes

4.1 Key features of the institution's approach to managing quality and setting, maintaining, reviewing and assessing academic standards.

Introduction

- 4.1.1 GCU academic quality processes align with [GCU Strategy 2020](#) and are designed to meet the expectations of the 2018 UK Quality Code for Higher Education which continues to articulate the fundamental principles that apply to UK higher education. At GCU we promote an inclusive approach to learning by embedding the principles of [equality and diversity](#) throughout the institution, valuing individuals regardless of background or groups to which they belong. At GCU, we commit to providing opportunities for staff and students to engage in meaningful professional conversations to foster effective [partnership working](#) in an environment that is sensitive to the diverse student population. Partnership in this sense reflects the QAA concept of joint working, based on a mature relationship and mutual respect and not a formal legal relationship. Student engagement is a key principle and a fundamental dimension of GCU's [AQPP](#). Every member of staff contributes to the creation of an excellent experience for all students.

University arrangements for the oversight of academic quality standards and processes

- 4.1.2 AQ at GCU is part of the remit of the AQD and is the strategic responsibility of the DVC Academic. [AQD](#) in partnership with Schools and Departments, in line with the Quality Code guiding principles for monitoring and evaluation, monitor the ongoing effectiveness of academic quality standards and processes ([Assessment Regulations and Associated Policies](#)), [GCU Qualifications Framework](#) and [AQPP](#). These are public access documents and published (in line with QAA advice and guidance) on the university website. The AQ Team is led by the Head of Academic Quality (HoAQ) who has operational oversight of and responsibility for academic quality standards and processes at university level. Academic Quality Business Partners ([AQBP](#)), are senior members of the team who work centrally with the [HoAQ](#) and in a school facing role to partner academic Schools and departments. [AQBPs](#) provide advice and guidance to academic and administrative staff, and the Students' Association on academic quality

process and practice including; [ELISR](#), [Thematic Review](#), local application of the [AQPP](#) and [University Assessment Regulations](#) and associated policies.

- 4.1.3 Academic Quality Officers ([AQO](#)) are based centrally and work with the [AQBPs](#) and directly with Schools and Departments to support [New Programme Approval](#), [Programme Monitoring](#), [Programme Review](#), [Module Quality Enhancement and Assurance](#), [External Examiners](#), and key policy areas such as [Academic Appeals](#) and [Mitigating Circumstances](#). The Department includes a TNE Team who support the development of [TNE and Academic Partnerships](#) across the University and a Policy and Development Officer who leads on the area of student engagement with academic quality. In addition, there are a number of [roles](#) in academic Schools and Departments that are aligned with academic quality, enhancement and assurance.
- 4.1.4 As a result of the Schools Refresh, a cross-School Curriculum, Quality and Accreditation (CQA) Team was created from a previously school specific service. Consequently, the refreshed central CQA Team are able to be more agile and responsive in their support of local department based quality assurance processes. This centralised approach ensures that resources are targeted and department requirements are prioritised. The School based CQA Team work with the central AQ team, particularly with the AQO, to ensure continuity of AQ process and procedure.
- 4.1.5 As part of a cross School approach to the development of academic quality, AQD has two main working groups; the Academic Quality and Development Advisory Group (AQDAG) and the Academic Regulations Working Group (ARWG) ([3.1.8](#)). GCU Students' Association Representatives are members of both these groups. Examples of activity include; in AY 2018/19, the ARWG developed a new Assessment Procedures Staff Handbook, and in line with the sector, monitored Degree Classifications. More recently the Group have explored the use of Banded Grading across the sector to inform potential university development in assessment and feedback. The AQDAG focussed on a major review of academic quality policy and practice, detailed later in this chapter.
- 4.1.6 Support for the main university committees and sub-committees in relation to academic quality (Senate, APPC, LTSC, External Examiners Sub-committee and School Board) and the remit of [the Department of Governance](#) are referenced throughout this chapter. For research degrees (PhD, MPhil, PhD by Previous Published Work, Professional Doctorates programmes framework and Master of Research programme framework)

both APPC and the University Research Degrees Sub-committee have joint oversight of the quality assurance and quality enhancement processes.

Assessment Regulations and Associated Policies

- 4.1.7 [GCU Regulations and Associated Policies](#) align with the Quality Code guiding principles on expectations and practices for assessment, and meet sector expectations identified the [SFC Guidance to Institutions on Quality \(2017-22\)](#). These include the University policy on [RPL](#) and the [GCU Qualifications Framework](#). The GCU Qualifications Framework sets out the requirement for awards of the University in line with the [QAA Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland](#). The QAA framework has been developed as part of the wider [Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework](#) (SCQF). All awards of the University, with the exception of MPhil and PhD which are research degrees, are credit based, use the SCQF and conform to the QAA framework. All Programmes and their associated [Assessment Boards](#) adhere to the GCU Assessment Regulations for [UG](#) and [TPG](#) programmes. [Regulations and Guidelines](#) for MPhil and Doctoral Students are the responsibility of the Graduate School. The assessment process for taught and professional doctorates is the responsibility of the School based Post Graduate Assessment Boards (PGAB).
- 4.1.8 The Associated Policies are designed to be clearly understood by staff and students across the institution; illustrated by an ‘*end to end*’ approach to assessment including; [Assessment Preparation and Guidance for Academic Staff](#), [GCU Moderation Policy](#), [Regulations for the Appointment and Responsibilities of External Examiners](#) and [Terms of Reference and Standard Operation of Assessment Boards](#). In addition, in 2017 the university introduced a [Digital Assessment Policy](#) and [Guidelines for Staff on the use of Social Media for Learning and Teaching](#). The University has robust processes in place to manage [Mitigating Circumstances](#) and [Academic Appeals](#). In AY 2018/19, we revised our approach to Mitigating Circumstances to address challenges to and implementation of decision making across the University. This new approach recognises that mental health challenges and adverse social circumstances can impact on student performance. Crucial to this operationally is the role of the [student support services](#), the [Advice Centre](#) within the Students’ Association and the re-invigorated role of the [Personal Tutor](#). At GCU we take a compassionate approach to policy development and with Mitigating Circumstances ensure that those students who face very challenging personal, health and social circumstances are identified at an early stage and referred to the appropriate student support service. This is undertaken at a University Mitigating Circumstances Board, (piloted in AY 2018/19) to support schools

to make decisions regarding the most complex submissions and ensure that we deal with students in a consistent, fair and compassionate way.

The University's approach to quality enhancement and assurance

- 4.1.9 Quality Enhancement is defined by the QAA Scotland as; *'taking deliberate steps to bring about continuous improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students'*. At GCU all staff are accountable and responsible for the quality assurance of the Student Learning Experience. We commit to providing meaningful opportunities for academic and professional support staff and students to engage in professional dialogue through active participation in University Committees and in activities around the QAA Quality Enhancement Framework ([QEF](#)); ELIR, [ELISR](#), and [Thematic Review](#), [Student engagement with academic quality](#) and the GCU contribution to the [Enhancement Themes](#). GCU assurance and enhancement strategies support [Strategy 2020](#) priorities, [SfL](#) and the [Common Good Mission and Vision](#). We foster effective [student engagement and partnership working](#) in an environment that is sensitive to the diverse population on and off campus. [Enhancement statements](#) link to and promote reflection and evaluation at University, School, Department and Programme level and provide an internal and external articulation of quality enhancement and assurance processes, evidencing process in practice.

Enhancement-led Internal Subject Review

- 4.1.10 [ELISR](#) at GCU is a key element of the [QEF](#) which provides public assurance regarding the security of academic standards and quality of learning opportunities at GCU. The ELISR process meets the expectations of the [QAA Quality Code for Institution-led Review](#) and [SFC Guidance to Higher Education on Quality \(2017-22\)](#). Reviews follow a five-year cycle, normally take place at subject/discipline level and can subsume programme approval/review activity. Closing the loop, completed ELISRs are tabled for discussion and approval at LTSC and key findings further discussed at APPC. In addition, the subject area reviewed prepares a 'year on' update on progress via the delivery of the approved enhancement plan. This is reviewed by the Chair of the Panel, a representative from the Department of AQD, the Head of Department and the Dean of School. Any issues impacting on the delivery of the enhancement plan will be reported to the LTSC at this point. Thereafter progress is monitored via the annual monitoring and school and department planning processes. The Schools Refresh leading to increased visibility of the departments and disciplines has impacted on the ELISR

programme for AY 2018/19 and AY 2019/20 (**Exemplars of an ELISR Report are included in AIS**).

Programme Review and Approval

- 4.1.11 [Programme Review](#) normally takes place as part of the ELISR. The University is committed to the ongoing enhancement of programmes, grounded in the development of the discipline, pedagogic practice and crucially, responding to external and student feedback. Regardless of the mode of delivery, GCU is a programme centred institution. Normally modules that are accessed by a single or multiple academic units belong to a host programme. GCU complies with the [SFC Guidance to Higher Education Institutions on Quality \(2017-22\)](#) which states that *'All aspects of provision are expected to be reviewed systematically and rigorously on a cycle of not more than six years to demonstrate that institutions meet the expectations set out in the QAA Quality Code and the standards set out in the European Standards and Guidelines'*.
- 4.1.12 For [New Programme Approval](#), once School support for has been secured (via Programme and School Board), the Concept Paper is submitted to the Deans Group for approval, modification or rejection. This initial high level screening process ensures that proposed new programmes are a fit for both the School and the University portfolios. Once approval of the concept has been granted, a full academic case is presented to APPC for discussion prior to the programme team developing the full programme for approval. (**An example of a Programme Approval Report is included in the AIS**).
- 4.1.13 Academic Schools, via School and Programme Boards, are responsible for the ongoing monitoring, review and enhancement of the programmes and [modules](#) within their portfolio as part of the [Annual Monitoring Process](#). The formal review of programmes that takes place at least once every 5 years ensures that programmes remain viable, fit with the School/University mission and strategy and continue to deliver a high quality student experience, however Schools review programme performance, student feedback and associated metrics such as the NSS and PRES Survey annually. [Programme Review](#) will normally take place as part of the [ELISR](#). All GCU processes meet the Quality Code expectations for learning and teaching and monitoring and evaluation. Where possible, the accreditation of programmes forms an integral part of the approval process with representatives of relevant professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) as members of Programme Approval Panels. The aim is to allow the quality enhancement and

assurance requirements of the University and the PSRB to be satisfied by a single event. To close the loop, Programme Reviews and new Programme Approval Reports are submitted to LTSC for approval and a collective report is submitted to LTSC on an annual basis. **(Examples of Programme Review/Approval documents and the most recent LTSC Report are included in the AIS). (AIS, NSS 2019, PGRES 2019)**

Thematic Review

4.1.14 [Thematic Reviews](#) are the University's opportunity to conduct an institution wide exploration of a major theme that may not be fully captured through the Enhancement-led Internal Subject Review (ELISR) or the Programme Approval/Review process. Thematic Review is articulated as part of the University's commitment to quality enhancement in learning and teaching. The purpose of which is to reflect on the operation of existing processes and procedures and/or to assess current practice across all relevant aspects of the Quality Code. Thematic Review provides assurance of academic quality, and crucially fulfils an enhancement function through the dissemination of good practice, and, where weaknesses are identified, recommends appropriate action for improvement. Thematic Reviews are a way of uncovering the opinions of the diverse range of students on campus and illuminating the experiences of specific and intersectional groups.

4.1.15 In AY 2017/18 the university carried out a [Thematic Review](#) of the *Post Graduate Research Student Experience* and in AY 2018/19 instigated a Thematic Review of the *Articulating Student Experience*. These are discussed in Chapter 2: Section 2.2 (*Articulating Student Experience*) and Section 2.4 (*PGR Student Experience*). **(Both reviews are included in the AIS: Thematic Review PGRSE and Thematic Review ASE)**

Programme Monitoring

4.1.16 Annual [Programme Monitoring](#) is a continuous enhancement process carried out 'in-year' formally commencing at the beginning of each new academic session and following the flow of the academic year as data, such as admission statistics, first diet examination results and NSS results are released. Programme [Monitoring](#) and [Review](#) is the process by which the University: Programme Boards evaluate and reflect on their academic provision, highlight where the student learning experience can be enhanced, and identify areas of good practice. This is a core activity and while all staff collectively

have a responsibility to uphold standards some staff have specific roles, such as Programme Coordinators and Programme and Module Leaders. (AIS, NSS 2019)

- 4.1.17 To close the loop on annual monitoring, programme level monitoring feeds into School Monitoring Reports via Departmental Monitoring Reports. School Monitoring Reports are considered at School Boards prior to a presentation by the Associate Deans (Learning, Teaching and Quality) and equivalents, at an annual LTSC forum for discussion. Key areas arising from the LTSC discussion are discussed at [APPC](#). **(Examples of School and Programme Monitoring Reports, and associated minutes from relevant University committees are included in the AIS).**

External Examiners

- 4.1.18 [External Examiners](#) are appointed to provide external oversight of academic standards and contribute to safeguarding of university quality assurance processes. External Examiners provide the University with impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on standards and student achievement in relation to these standards. Senate appoints External Examiners via the External Examiners' Approval Panel on the basis of nominations from Schools. Each award bearing degree programme will normally have two External Examiners. While External Examiners will most commonly be appointed to Programmes with an allocation of modules within the programme, they may also be appointed only to modules within their specialism. A proportion of External Examiners are appointed from industry, business, and the professions because of their relevant discipline expertise. The University approves all new examiners through the External Examiners' Approval Panel. The panel ensures that the appointment process reflects the QAA Quality Code advice on external expertise and that there is a balance of professional and academic expertise and experience within each programme. Closing the loop, a collective report is provided to LTSC on an annual basis **(The most recent External Examiner LTSC Report is included in the AIS).** (AIS, Closing the Feedback Loop Presentation)

Student evaluation and feedback

- 4.1.19 [Student evaluation and feedback](#), from students on their experience of programmes, modules and university processes forms the core of the [Student Performance Feedback Policy](#). Student Staff Consultative Groups (SSCGs) are one of the principal mechanisms used within the University to evaluate the student experience on

programmes, and to communicate to students details of actions resulting from the evaluation. The purpose of the SSCG is:

- to act as an effective and representative consultative forum in which students and staff meet to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern arising from the content, teaching, and development of the programme, and any other aspects of the student experience at the University.
- to provide an opportunity to obtain views representative of students on all levels and modes of the programme, and to take these into account in contributing to the programme monitoring and development processes
- to provide feedback to students on how the programme, or the University more widely, has responded to concerns raised by students

4.1.20 As well as the [SSCG](#), students currently utilise [GCU Learn](#) to provide feedback on modules. Module leaders are asked to make some time available to encourage students to complete formal module evaluation surveys. It is the responsibility of the module leader to ensure that such feedback is incorporated into the [module evaluation process](#). The University has also introduced a 'pause for feedback' at the midpoint (week 7) of every trimester. This pause allows time for students to reflect on their experience of the module and feedback to academic staff. Staff are then able to address any points raised by students and close the feedback loop prior to the conclusion of the module. In addition to the internal mechanisms for student feedback (SSCG and end of module evaluation mechanisms), the University receives feedback on the student experience via various surveys. Student satisfaction is measured at every level, from entry to GCU to the NSS in the final year of UG study. While the NSS is completed by students at most UK universities in their final year, GCU also utilises a range of other [student surveys](#). In addition, and in line with many UK Universities, the ISB Survey and an (in-house) PGRSE survey is also undertaken. The University's LTSC and APPC each receive a yearly report from Schools and support departments on the actions taken in response to these surveys as part of [annual monitoring](#). In addition, the APPC considers University-wide implications of the survey results, resulting actions and impact. (AIS, ME 2019, Close the feedback NSS 2019, ISB 2018 and PGRES 2019)

Student participation and engagement

4.1.21 At GCU we want every student to feel able to participate in and influence their own learning experience. We believe that engaging with our students and [working in partnership](#) across the university is central to the delivery of excellence in learning and

an excellent student experience. Student engagement, achievement and success involve academic, professional, and support staff across the University. The University's [Strategy 2020](#) and [Sfl](#) seek to develop students, as a body and individually, to be '*the best that they can be*'. These strategies take account of, and respond to, the collective and individual student life stages of learning by enabling and supporting students to take responsibility for their own learning through a commitment to an engaged relationship with the University, achieved through institutional dialogue and partnership working. Student engagement at GCU aligns with the Quality Code expectations for student engagement.

- 4.1.22 To ensure that engagement with the university is accessible to all students, at GCU we encourage students to participate in a broad range of ways, requiring varying degrees of time and commitment; from relatively low key activities, such as completing the module evaluation questionnaire or providing feedback to class reps; or students can opt for deeper involvement, such as undertaking an academic representative role or engaging in academic quality processes. The UK Quality Code (Enabling Student Achievement) sets out the expectation that students should be actively engaged with key aspects of learning and teaching. Academic Reps receive training and ongoing support from the Students' Association, exemplified by the Student Representative Agreement.
- 4.1.23 At GCU we consider students to be partners and promote [student engagement with academic quality](#). Students play a crucial role in this process and are asked to provide regular feedback on their academic and student experience including module evaluation questionnaires and periodic student surveys. There are robust formal representation processes in place to ensure the student voice is heard throughout the University, for example via SSCGs, Programme Boards, School Boards and University

Committees and Senate. The vignette (below) provides the detail of this in relation to Programme Approval and Review

Student Engagement in Programme Approval and Review
<p>At GCU students are actively involved in all aspects of internal and external review; at programme, subject and university level. The student voice is clearly articulated in any supporting documentation and during the event itself. All levels of review involve meetings with groups of students to allow the panel to hear directly about the student learning experience at GCU. In addition to this, we also directly involve students in internal subject review (ELISR) and as full (and fully remunerated) Panel Members in the process of Programme Approval and Review. This may be a Full Time Officer from the Students' Association, or a trained academic representative. We support Student Panel Members at all stages of the process and introduce the concept of participation through a short information document which succinctly introduces students to the role. Once a student has been chosen to become a Panel Member they are provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Programme Submission Documentation• Guidance on how to read and navigate the documentation• The timetable for the day including dates and times of where the event will take place• Guidance for Panel Members on what to look for and what to discuss at the event• A briefing session with the Panel Secretary to go over everything before the event• The option to meet with the Chair in advance of the event
<p>Ongoing support is provided by the AQO who undertakes the role of Panel Secretary for the event. After the event all Panel Members, including the student, receive the draft event report from the Secretary to review and provide comments. Student Panel Members are also invited to a group face to face (post event) debrief facilitated by members of the Academic Quality Team where they are encouraged to evaluate their experience. The feedback from these sessions, in turn, informs the future pre-event briefings. Recently, members of the Academic Quality Team have also contributed to the Students' Association annual Academic Rep Gatherings, where they introduced the concept of student participation in the Approval and Review process to promote and maximise student engagement and participation in this area.</p>

4.2 Use of external reference points in quality processes

4.2.1 The UK QAA Quality Code is the definitive external reference point for all UK higher education providers. The Code states what is expected of higher education providers and articulates the standards that students, staff and the general public can expect of the University. In preparation for ELIR 4, we have undertaken a comprehensive review, mapping our policies and processes to the recently revised (2018) UK Quality Code for

Higher Education, taking account of the associated advice and guidance. The review and the mapping exercise confirmed that our policies and processes remain compliant with all expectations and core and common practices within the Code (**The mapping document is included in the AIS**). GCU adheres to the overarching values of the new Quality Code (e.g. enabling student achievement) and is committed to demonstrating this in line with the [GCU Values and Behaviours](#): **(AIS Quality Code Mapping)**

- every student is treated fairly and with dignity, courtesy and respect
- every student has the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of their learning experience
- every student is properly and actively informed at appropriate times of matters relevant to their programmes of study
- all policies and processes relating to study and programmes are clear and transparent
- strategic oversight of academic standards and academic quality is at the highest levels of governance of the University
- all policies and processes are regularly and effectively monitored, reviewed, and enhanced
- sufficient and appropriate external involvement is in place for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities

4.2.2 GCU refers to external reference points such as; the QAA Annual Discussion, Subject Benchmark Statements, the SFC) Outcome Agreement, Universities Scotland Strategic Plan (2018-2021), External Examiners and Subject Discipline Experts. The University also has a large number of programmes that meet PSRB requirements. GCU is represented at Universities Scotland, Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC), Teaching Quality Forum (TQF), QAA Enhancement Theme Leaders Group, Theme Leadership Team, sparqs University Advisory Group. In addition we participate in sector level QAA events and Projects such as [Focus On](#). The GCU Students' Association contributed to the [Post-Graduate Research Student Experience](#) Project in AY 2016/17 and in 2017/18 staff and students contributed to the *Feedback from Assessment Project* ([Express yourself: Striking the right note with audio](#)

[feedback](#)). A member of GCU academic staff also co-chairs the Enhancement Theme Collaborative Cluster; [Enhancing Programme Leadership](#).

- 4.2.3 The [SCQF](#) supports the identification of the academic level of Under/Post Graduate (Taught) Programmes. Schools and Departments develop programmes based on the Framework. The level of a qualification is indicative of the level of challenge. This is a Scotland wide framework and supports growing areas of national and institutional interest such as the [RPL](#).

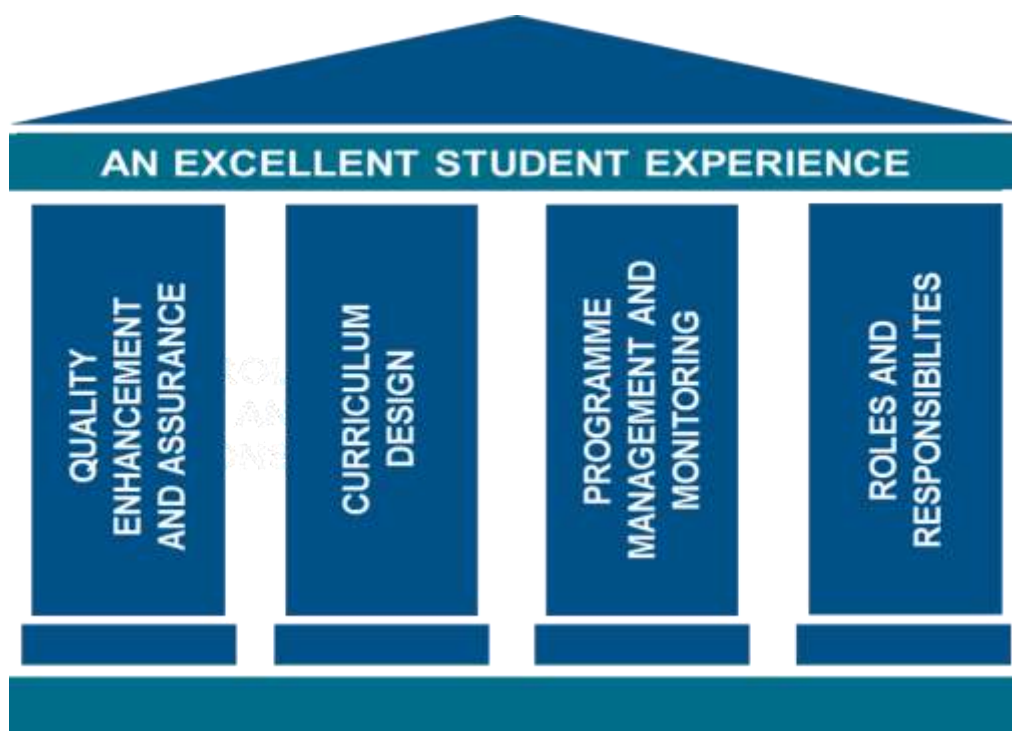
4.3 **Commentary on action taken since ELIR 3 and identification of matters arising from the AIS not otherwise explored.**

- 4.3.1 The points of positive practice reported in the [GCU ELIR 3 Outcome Report](#) included commentary on our commitment to the [Common Good](#), generation of a sense of community, a partnership approach to student engagement, widening participation, student transitions support and employability. All these key areas have been developed further since ELIR 3 and are threaded through the chapters of the RA. The University now has a DVC Academic, who has executive level responsibility for the Directorate of Learning and the Student Experience. This Directorate includes an extended network of student support and offers bespoke support for internationalisation and external collaborations via a TNE/Academic Collaborations Team ([5](#)).
- 4.3.2 One of the key areas of development since ELIR 3 has been a review and revision of the *Quality Enhancement and Assurance Standards and Processes*. In AY 2015/16 we implemented a *'Back to Basics' with Quality Assurance* CPD Programme. This cross university initiative was approved by Senate and delivered in response to a request by academic Schools including GCU London. The sessions focussed on areas such as *Programme and Assessment Boards*, *Annual Monitoring* and the role of the *Programme and Module Leaders*. The sessions were aimed at the preparation of new academic and administrative staff, however all staff were encouraged to attend to refresh their knowledge base and discuss best practice and challenges in current quality assurance practice. In total 250 members of staff attended the sessions. The outcome was a recommendation to build on this work to meet the needs of more

experienced staff and draw on the expertise in Schools and Departments from both academic and administrative perspectives.

- 4.3.3 In AY 2016/17 building on the *'Back to Basics'* programme, a further Senate approved programme of work; *'GCU Academic Pillars for Learning, Teaching and Quality'* was implemented across the University. The conceptual diagram is shown below:

The GCU Academic Pillars



- 4.3.4 The academic pillars programme was based, as recommended, on a consultation with Schools. The programme focussed on the areas illustrated in the diagram above. The outcomes informed an interim review of the (then) GCU Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook (QEAH). The interim review was the beginning of the process of streamlining our approach to quality assurance. In AY 2018/19, responding to further academic and professional staff feedback, the cross- university AQDAG, comprising students, academic and professional services staff worked with Schools and the Students' Association to review key areas for development. Four main areas were identified for review by AQDAG task and finish subgroups; Programme Review New Programme Approval, Programme Monitoring, and External Examiners. The overall aim of this review was to streamline academic quality processes while continuing to

assure the quality of the student learning experience and promote its continual enhancement. The result is academic quality processes which:

- are streamlined, underpinned by technology and adaptive in relation to sector developments, such as the Quality Enhancement Framework and Teaching Excellence Framework
- are supported by guidance and resources for staff to ensure clear and consistent understanding and implementation across the University
- are responsive and address effectively the increasing diversity of our provision - such as online learning, work-based learning, TNE and academic collaborations
- integrate effective mechanisms for student engagement and partnership working

4.3.5 The [AQPP](#) was approved by Senate in AY 2017/18 and implemented across the University in AY 2018/19. The AQPP reflects key quality aspects of the Bologna Process (Quality and Relevance) which states that there is a need for increasingly flexible and innovative approaches to learning and learning delivery which can simultaneously improve quality while expanding student numbers. This is demonstrated by the distinctive academic quality model that underpins GCU [GA \(AQPP Section 5: New Programme Approval 5.8. p26.\)](#) and as part of the wider move towards greater digitisation the university has recently started the process of implementing a new Student Management System (SIMS).

4.3.6 The University's approach to [student engagement with academic quality](#) has matured since the last ELIR including, supported and remunerated Student Panel members. Staff, (professional and academic) now regularly attend SAGE. School based student support is provided by [LDCs](#). These centres provide valuable and valued academic support within Schools. Additionally we have also enhanced our approach to academic advising (highlighted as an example of positive practice in ELIR 3), to produce a more contemporary approach to [Personal Tutoring](#).

4.4 [Approach to using data to inform decision-making and evaluation.](#)

4.4.1 The University has a key focus on evidence based decision making and the evaluation of initiatives and interventions in Learning and Teaching. Strategy and Planning undertake regular reporting on student data and performance for the Executive Board, Deans Group, Senate and other key institutional committees, in order to support

effective decision making and timely interventions. The university Planning and Performance Forum, which reports to the Executive Board, focuses on evaluating performance data through an annual review of the university corporate key performance indicators and through analysis of performance against the SFCs National Measures ([Outcome Agreement process](#)). ([SFC, OA 2019](#))

4.4.2 GCU uses metrics on admissions, progression and completion and survey data (Module Evaluation, NSS, and GCU Experience Survey for UG, TPG and PGR students) to monitor student demand, performance and experience within Programmes. As part of our work with the current QAA Enhancement Theme GCU staff have contributed to the [Learning Analytics Collaborative Cluster](#), and students and staff are participating in the [Student-led Project](#) focussed on how students could use evidence in their work with institutions and Students' Associations/Unions. (AIS, Progression and Completion 2019, ME Surveys 2019, NSS 2019 and GCU Experience Surveys)

4.4.3 DASH is an interactive suite of dashboards developed by Strategy and Planning to communicate information relating to the University to staff members, under the following four main categories: *External Environment*, *Student Demographics*, *Student Experience* and *Student Performance Monitoring*. Staff can directly access statistical information at School, Departmental, and Programme and Module level via DASH to inform [Annual Monitoring](#), [Programme Review](#) and [ELISR](#) and to support and underpin decisions including those made at School Annual Portfolio Review which is undertaken by School Boards in collaboration with Programme Boards. Other data support for local level decision-making include annual School indicators based on the corporate KPIs and department packs for Heads of Department, which highlight key metrics and performance of programmes within each Department. Since DASH was introduced we have seen a significant increase of the use of data by staff at local levels. (AIS, GCU DASH examples 2019)

4.5 Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

4.5.1 At the outcome of ELIR 3, in March 2015, the University was found to have effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience, and an acknowledgement that these arrangements were likely to continue to be effective in the future. Updates on these areas, both positive practice and areas for development are articulated throughout the RA. Improvement and achievement are

captured in the vignettes, a key feature of our approach to self-evaluation and utilised throughout the RA.

- 4.5.2 To support the practical application of academic quality standards and processes, we provide a comprehensive range of face to face and online resources that assist staff to develop and design Programmes; including the peer support for [Curriculum Design](#), development of [Online Programmes](#), and support for [Internationalising the Curriculum](#). This rounded approach to academic development works in tandem with, and reinforces the utility of the standards and processes described in this Chapter. The [Developing People](#) programme ensures that individuals are supported from the beginning of their career at GCU to develop an understanding of university practice and our quality culture. Collectively the combination of robust and transparent arrangements for academic quality processes and support for staff to use them in their everyday practice ensures the ongoing operational effectiveness of the provision of learning and teaching at GCU.

4.6 Effectiveness of the institution's approach to self-evaluation, including the effective use of data to inform decision-making.

- 4.6.1 Effective approaches to self-evaluation, developed since ELIR 3 are evidenced throughout the wider RA. The use of data to inform decision making has significantly increased since the previous ELIR. Schools routinely use internal and external survey data and metrics on progression and retention to measure student success, underpin operational plans and annual monitoring and to make considered changes to their educational portfolios. The data is also utilised by Programme Leaders and Programme Teams to enhance and improve programmes and modules and to create a positive student experience. [\(AIS, Progression and Retention 2019\)](#)

5. Collaborative provision

5.1 Key features of the institution's strategic approach (to include collaborative activity, online and distance learning where delivered with others and work-based learning).

- 5.1.1 The University is involved in a wide range of arrangements and opportunities for delivering learning and teaching, supervision and support at all academic levels, both within the UK and overseas.
- 5.1.2 The University recognises partnership activity as a key enabler to support its strategic goal to engage globally; and internationalisation is a core theme that runs across all the University's 2020 goals [\(1.1.10\)](#) and [SfL](#). This final chapter of the RA will discuss our collaborative arrangements and specifically arrangements where we formally and legally engage with others through academic partnership for the delivery of our awards.
- 5.1.3 The [University's Strategy 2020](#) sets out our objective to further develop our global reputation for delivering social benefit and impact through education, research and social innovation; in support, the overarching goal of the University's [Internationalisation Strategy](#) is to strengthen and enhance GCU's position as globally networked community that is attractive to international students, academic staff and partner organisations in key areas around the world. For all universities, international partnerships have the potential to bring many benefits to both staff and students, and extend and enhance their global reach and reputation. Since the last ELIR the University has made notable progress in expanding its reach and growth in its transnational education and discussion of this forms the substance of this final chapter.
- 5.1.4 Over the period since the last review, our academic partnership arrangements have expanded significantly in terms of scale and type. The consolidation of our existing arrangements and development of new models of collaboration has been a key focus of our partnership activity over the last five years.
- 5.1.5 The University's approach to its collaborative provision is fully aligned with the expectations and practices of the UK QAA Quality Code and associated advice and guidance. In September 2018, as part of the review and update of the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook, now the [AQPP](#), our previous section titled

'Managing Provision delivered in Partnership' was updated to reflect our focus on growing our transnational education (TNE).

- 5.1.6 The University's [TNE and Academic Partnership policy](#) forms a key part of the AQPP and provides an outline of the quality assurance framework for academic partnership development and approval, monitoring and review. The policy applies to all instances where the University is involved in the provision of HE leading to formal credit of the University and where the achievements of the learning outcomes for the programme or module, including research degrees, are dependent on a partnership arrangement with another organisation. Within the policy a set of guiding principles to ensure currency with GCU strategy 2020 and the role of the Executive Board and [Senate](#) has been clearly defined encompassing strategic intent, financial viability and compliance.
- 5.1.7 The strategic leadership of internationalisation across the University currently lies with the DVC (Strategy) and includes executive level oversight of our TNE partnership arrangements led by our academic Schools. For all our other UK based arrangements, once agreements are established, responsibilities for securing academic standards of provision will lie with the relevant academic school through the University's standard QE&A processes and reporting through School Board and the Senate Standing Committee structure. (Possible reference)
- 5.1.8 Each School has an Associate Dean (International) (ADI) whose role is to contribute to the strategic leadership, development and delivery of the School's strategic plan for international matters engaging with key stakeholders locally, nationally and internationally. The International Director based at GCU London Campus broadly mirrors the role of the ADI and leads the development of the University's internationalisation agenda for the London campus. The ADIs and International Director report to the DVC Strategy at the Executive level on international matters.
- 5.1.9 For TNE the ADI leads the development and delivery of School international partnerships working with the Heads of Department and the ADLTQ to maintain quality. The Heads of Department play a key role in overseeing the academic integrity of the portfolio which sits within their department and work with their ADI to deliver the internationalisation agenda for their Department and wider School. This includes oversight and maintenance of any collaborative arrangement falling within their portfolio either based in the UK or across boundaries in a TNE setting. In addition to the strategic role that the ADI contributes, two schools (GSBS and SHLS) have also established academic leadership roles for internationalisation while the other (SCEBE) operates through a network of international staff leads. The leadership roles are

thematically based and cover areas such as global staff and student mobility; international student experience; and international partnership development and student recruitment.

5.1.10 Since the last ELIR, new academic quality assurance roles with a specific TNE focus were introduced to support School development and realisation of new TNE programmes and academic collaborations. The introduction of the new roles was also strategically placed around wider University strategy to develop and build capacity and expertise in support of its internationalisation goals from the perspective of our academic quality assurance provision; additionally, a key outcome of the Department's 2019/20 Plan is to ensure that TNE and international partnerships are compliant with AQPP policies and procedures and that portfolio developments are compliant with GCU. [AQD](#) includes a dedicated team who supports the development of [TNE and Academic Partnerships](#) across the University in relation to ensuring and maintaining standards from partnership conception through to delivery. A key factor in the efficient administration of our most recent large scale partnership with African Leadership College ([ALC](#)) ([5.2.21 to 5.2.45](#)) has been the alignment of these professional support staff within AQD to act as front line support for the academic administration, project and programmes co-ordination for the ALC partnership.

5.1.11 The procedures for the approval, monitoring and review of arrangements also vary according to type and the degree of risk involved. As such, some arrangements will require a higher degree of oversight than others such as TNE partners and/or providers relatively new to the HE arena. The development and approval of partnership arrangements is split into four main stages commencing with initial approval of the partnership concept; strategic approval; academic approval; and concluding with implementation (action planning to support delivery implementation). The first two stages of the process are prime importance in establishing early the prospect of engaging with a partner in terms of strategic alignment, due diligence, risk assessment and financial viability. It is only after these stages have been completed and approved by Executive Board can a partnership proposal continue to the next stage of development and approval. The [AQPP](#) outlines policy around the identification of a new partner and emphasises the University's expectation around early notification to key stakeholders and supporting structures. The provision within the partnership approval process to allow a reasonable lead-in time is key and particularly important to our future external partners in establishing expectations around process and the necessary timelines required to complete key stages of the process. Further complexity is often added as a consequence of in-country third party involvement in the approval process

to ensure the necessary professional, regulatory and legal standing to implement a TNE partnership e.g. from government agencies, ministries and [PSRBs](#).

5.1.12 Within the [University's framework](#) of academic governance and Senate Standing Committee structure, the International Committee (IC) has lead responsibility for the formulation, promotion, implementation, monitoring and review of the University's [Internationalisation Strategy](#). The Committee's role is further defined in its Terms of Reference as it relates to international partnership development and collaborative arrangements, and specifically, to consider new partnership proposals to be developed and progressed in accordance with the relevant approval processes for international partnerships and collaborative arrangements to ensure good practice and consistency. The 'relevant approval processes' consequently establishes the interlinked role that the [APPC](#) undertake on behalf of Senate. This substantially relates to the institutional responsibility and oversight for the quality enhancement, assurance and approval of partnership and collaborative arrangements, in a TNE and UK setting. The APPC has its primary role in the academic approval and monitoring of our collaborative arrangements, namely the consideration and approval of the Academic Case and the monitoring and enhancement of the student experience established through a collaborative arrangement. For the last two academic sessions and in addition to standing items, update reports and items considered routinely in line with the APPC Terms of Reference, the committee set an additional specific objective to oversee academic developments in relation to new and existing overseas initiatives in recognition of our current and future growth of activity around this aspect of our provision. As a result of the 2017 Senate Effectiveness Review recommendations were made with the intention of further improving effectiveness of Senate and its Standing Committees. These recommendations included consideration being given to whether or not the most appropriate place for the IC to sit was as a sub-committee of Senate and what matters it should be dealing with as it had become more focussed on operational than strategic matters. It was agreed in 2017/18 that a revised Terms of Reference and Composition was required and given that internationalisation remained a significant focus for university business it was recommended that the IC should remain as a sub-committee of Senate.

5.1.13 In October 2018, Senate endorsed a review of [School Board Terms of Reference](#) as an outcome from the 2017/18 academic Schools' refresh and parallel 2017 Senate Effectiveness Review. As part of the review, a wider refresh of School governance arrangements was completed resulting in the reframing of current standing committees as either formal committees or forums. It was agreed by Senate that each School

should have an International Forum as a replacement of their previous committee arrangement. For consistency of operation across the academic schools, draft terms of reference were developed in 2018/19, led by the School Professional Services in consultation with the School ADIs; reporting to the School Board, the International Forum is responsible for the oversight, review and enhancement of international activity within the School. A key remit of the Forum will be to oversee and review the School's international partnerships and collaborative arrangements, including the development of existing and new transnational education activity.

5.1.14 All our partnership agreements are supported by a written agreement setting out the objectives and activities of the arrangement, the respective rights and responsibilities of the parties and standard contractual terms. Discussion and negotiation with our partners is always required in order to formulate a successful partnership agreement; and not until this is finalised and signed by the authorised signatories can activity within the scope of the agreement commence. It is always helpful at the outset of the partnership development to fully understand any particular nuances or aspects which need to be additionally captured in an agreement e.g. in-country government requirements for approval and delivery; professional, regulatory and statutory body involvement. These are key elements of the due diligence process and formation of the academic and business case. Our agreements are subject to regular monitoring and review as defined and agreed by parties and as stated in the agreement clauses. For GCU, an agreement is normally established for a period of 5 years to align with the standard approval agreement attached to academic provision and subsequent periodic programme review. All agreements are held centrally by the Directorate of Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions. The University's Partnership Register, administered by the Partnership Administration Team within the Directorate is the definitive record of the University's partnership and collaborative arrangements. It aims to capture key management information to support the administration, ownership and oversight of partnership activity and key for partnership liaison and risk management activity.

5.1.15 The [AQPP](#) additionally states some high-level principles of action where the decision has been taken to terminate or withdraw from a partnership. These are also key clauses and contextualised within the formal agreement essentially to safeguard the interests of any student on a collaborative programme of study. From our perspective and in line with QAA Quality Code guidance, the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience remains at the forefront of the residual responsibilities that GCU and its partner institution has in the event of any termination or withdrawal. It is also important to reflect why particular partnerships have come to

an end or indeed have not progressed to improve our understanding for future collaborative and partnership development.

5.2 Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative provision including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience.

5.2.1 Since the last ELIR there have been a number of developments which have significantly shaped our landscape of collaborative arrangements over the period and inform our discussion within the RA. The following sections of the RA will set out these key developments and provide contextual demonstration of the University's overall approach to its arrangements for the approval, oversight, maintenance and review of our collaborative arrangements; in particular, this will aim to provide primary assurance to the ELIR team of the effectiveness of our current and future arrangements for securing the academic standards and enhancement of the student learning experience of our collaborative arrangements.

5.2.2 The following developments have been specifically identified for discussion:

- GCU's long-standing partnership with the [Caledonian College of Engineering](#) in Oman has been a positive force in supporting the College to gain University status through amalgamation with two other institutions in Oman to form the National University of Science and Technology ([NUST](#)) in Oman;
- GCU's partnership with the [ALC](#) in Mauritius, which began in 2015, delivers GCU degree programmes accredited by the Mauritian Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and focuses on building ethical leadership capability in Africa. This has been the first TNE encompassing all three academic Schools and has been transformative for staff and students on the GCU Glasgow campus.
- GCU's University to Business partnership with [TFR](#) in South Africa and extension of delivery to Honours and Masters level;
- GCU's strategic response to the political and economic changes in the UK employer market as a consequence of the apprenticeship levy and

subsequent development of its [Apprenticeship Model](#); and by association the University's formal and legal agreements with our employer partners;

- The granting of a Charter by the New York State Education Department for [Glasgow Caledonian New York College](#) (GCNYC) to become a degree granting authority;
- The development of [GCU London](#), the University's first branch campus;
- The ten-year anniversary of our joint venture [INTO Glasgow Caledonian University](#); and QAA review under the Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements method.

Caledonian College of Engineering

- 5.2.3 The University's collaboration with the now NUST in Oman represents the University's mainstay and largest programme of TNE and dates back to 1996. The NUST, following Sultanate of Oman ministerial decision was formed in September 2018 with formal inauguration on 4 December 2018. NUST was formed from the merger of Caledonian College of Engineering, Oman Medical College and the College of Pharmacy. The NUST is regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in Oman who licenses the University and accredits its programmes. Institutional and programme accreditation is carried out by the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) on behalf of the MoHE. The College of Engineering at NUST is now fully accredited by the OAAA with this valid for 5 years from March 2018, and is the first engineering college in Oman to be accredited by the OAAA.
- 5.2.4 Our collaboration with the College of Engineering at NUST (CENU) is currently based on two contractual agreements. The first of which is the UG agreement renewed in 2013 with the College delivering eleven BEng/BSc accredited/approved programmes with GCU awards underpinned with GCU QA, staff exchange and visits, support for staff development and research collaboration with the latter primarily centred on offering opportunities for CENU staff to complete PhDs at GCU.
- 5.2.5 The UG agreement lapsed on 1 April 2018 and is now in transition (teach-out) as CENU commence recruiting to new programmes not associated with GCU under the auspices of the new university. The teach-out timeline agreed between GCU and NUST is

detailed in the 2013 agreement and is scheduled to conclude in 2022/23 for full-time students and 2023/24 for part-time students.

- 5.2.6 The nine BEng (Hons) and one BSc (Hons) programmes accredited by GCU at CENU were introduced in 2013 and replaced the then suite of BSc (Hons) programmes. In July 2018 these were considered for re-accreditation by the University resulting with recommendation to the [LTSC](#) that they be re-accredited and placed in indefinite approval from September 2018 subject to the normal process of annual monitoring and periodic review. The re-accreditation of the programmes at CENU covers the transition (teach-out) period which commenced with final level 1 intake in 2018/19.
- 5.2.7 In addition to the programmes accredited by the University, the BSc (Hons) IT Management for Business (ITMB) was considered and approved for delivery at CENU at a GCU Quality Assurance Event in June 2017 with the programme commencing its first intake in February 2018. The ITMB programme is currently included in the 2013 agreement (an annex to the agreement was signed in January 2018 to include programme delivery at CENU), but is also due to take its last intake in 2018/19 as a consequence of the termination of the UG agreement [\(5.2.5\)](#) and teach-out timeline.
- 5.2.8 Our second agreement is for Masters and was signed in December 2017 for a period of two years. The agreement consists of two part-time cohorts on three GCU MSc programmes - Maintenance Management, Construction Management, International Operations and Supply Chain Management - commencing from February 2018. These programmes are the same as those offered at GCU and are jointly delivered (shared teaching with CENU) with GCU the sole awarding body. To allow for the introduction of a common joint delivery and support model across the three MSc programmes and the new agreement for Masters, the programmes were considered and approved for delivery at CENU at the same GCU Quality Assurance Event in June 2017 for the ITMB programme. Indefinite approval was granted subject to annual monitoring, review and the establishment of an agreement covering this. The Academic Cases from GSBS and SCEBE respectively for extending GCU taught provision at CENU were approved by School Board and the [APPC](#) on behalf of the University [Senate](#).
- 5.2.9 The current suite of MSc programmes and the BSc (Hons) ITMB offered at CENU are differentiated from those of the accredited provision in that they are approved GCU programmes with the same educational aims and objectives, learning outcomes, programme structure and content, and learning, teaching and assessment strategy. In

response to local industry requirements and applicable local regulations the delivery in Oman may be contextualised as appropriate, and as expressly approved by GCU.

- 5.2.10 The Masters Delivery and Support Model for the current MSc programmes delivered at CENU provides a framework of the shared academic roles and responsibilities to deliver and support the programmes. It also details the criteria for transition between the agreed three phases of delivery as CENU take a greater share of the teaching and delivery but with GCU maintaining oversight, complimented by rigorous quality assurance and assessment procedures. As the key responsibility of the programme resides with GCU, the module teaching is led by the GCU module leader. The GCU module leader will co-ordinate with CENU staff for planning the delivery and facilitate teaching team planning meeting (both onsite and online) and module induction for both CENU staff and students. The learning resources for the taught modules are designed and developed by GCU. Students and CENU staff have on-line access to learning materials hosted and/or sign-posted from within GCU Learn. At the time of writing the RA the Masters programmes remain in phase one.
- 5.2.11 GCU is wholly responsible for the assurance of the integrity of its academic awards, the maintenance of standards and the quality of the students' learning experience for all its accredited and approved programmes delivered at CENU. This is undertaken through a range of well-established principles and processes which are specified in the contractual agreement between GCU and CENU and operationalised as specified in the Liaison Handbook (LH). The LH has been our mainstay in this regard and details the areas of liaison between the two institutions, highlighting the role of CENU and GCU in ensuring the quality and maintenance of GCU academic standards and the quality and enhancement of the student learning experience. All the normal GCU arrangements for the governance and management of programmes are undertaken in accordance with GCU policy and regulation (Programme Boards, [SSCGs](#), [Assessment Regulations](#) and Assessment Boards). The LH is used in conjunction with the GCU [AQPP](#) and University Assessment Regulations, and is consistent with the relevant clauses of the UG contractual agreement and the separate agreement covering the Master's programmes signed by GCU and CENU. A full review of the LH is undertaken every 5 years however amendments can be made on an annual basis if there are major changes to the stated operational procedures. Any updates made to the LH are initially considered through the College of Engineering (CENU) Liaison Group at GCU and then approved by [School Board](#). At the College of Engineering, updates are approved

through the Learning and Teaching Committee and Quality Enhancement and Assurance Department (QEAD).

- 5.2.12 The College designate staff to support and share the delivery of the MSc programmes based on staff expertise, research and professional profile. GCU will initially approve staff nominated by CENU for contribution to the delivery of the MSc programmes following GCU's process of granting Associate Lecturer Status as detailed in LH and AQPP. The criteria for approval of staff include consideration of relevant qualifications and experience and ongoing engagement with an approved programme of personal and professional development. A staff development policy is in place at CENU and consists of a range of research and scholarly activity consistent with that required to underpin delivery of master's modules in the subject area. In addition, CENU staff are provided with opportunities to peer observe GCU delivery of the programme, engage in marking and moderation activity and be provided with support and resources to underpin CENU input to the teaching of modules including consolidation activities.
- 5.2.13 The responsibility for the day to day administration and management of the accredited and approved programmes lies solely with CENU in Oman. For liaison and monitoring purposes the University has a designated senior staff member as academic link from within the longest standing Host School at GCU (School of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment). The academic link is responsible for oversight and will facilitate communication and flow of information between the Host School at GCU and CENU. The academic link is supported administratively by the TNE, Doctoral and Bespoke Team within the Directorate of School Professional Services. This team liaises regularly with academic administration and admissions services at CENU to manage coordination of the programmes and related activities at GCU. Regular teleconferences take place between the key operational personnel in GCU and CENU. The above excludes Senior University Staff visits which generally take place twice annually to correspond with graduation activities. Also, typically a Senior Staff team from CENU will visit GCU to engage with strategic level discussion with GCU.
- 5.2.14 The CENU Liaison Group has been established for a considerable time and is firmly embedded within our processes for the oversight of the academic and administrative liaison arrangements relating to the GCU awards delivered by CENU. The Group meets on an informal basis and its meetings are arranged through the TNE, Doctoral & Bespoke team, as the shared schools support service with the substantive administrative responsibility for the relationship management and partnership liaison between GCU and CENU. The Group's main undertaking is to ensure that the liaison arrangements (as set out in the LHs and Academic Collaboration Agreement) are

maintained and to monitor their effectiveness. In particular, the Group monitors the key aspects of the GCU/CENU liaison and quality assurance and delivery arrangements, including, teaching and exchange visits of relevant staff between the two institutions; financial and operational updates including the GCU (CENU) Risk Register and monitoring UG quality arrangements through the APA process. The Liaison Group also reviews the CENU Academic Council minutes and makes recommendations as required to the GCU Host School Boards and SMGs.

- 5.2.15 The CENU Liaison Group ensures all programmes and modules in operation at CENU has associated [External Examiners](#) coverage. All examiners are approved by GCU and report annually on the conduct of assessment and comparability of standards. For the UG accredited provision at CENU, the appointment of a Chief External Examiner for each of the engineering subject provision and built environment subject provision has been in place for a considerable time. At CENU it is important to ensure we have an appropriate balance of UK based and regional based EEs. The two chief EEs have always been UK based and can provide that level of assurance we need regarding fit with UK HE and corresponding QAA code. This level of oversight sits well with the status of Chief EE. While regional based EEs do not tend to have UK experience they clearly are otherwise qualified as EEs. External Examiners and the GCU Academic Link from GCU attend the local Assessment Boards held at CENU and the Chief EE also 'report-in' to the host Assessment Boards held at GCU where results are ratified and a summary of the Chief EE report is received. EE are also involved in the moderation of assessments, scrutinise marked work and meet with students and staff.
- 5.2.16 For our awards at CENU, CENU must ensure, in liaison with GCU that the examinations and other assessments follow the regulations established in the GCU Assessment Regulations. Any deviations from these Regulations are defined in the specific Programme Specification Documents for the accredited programmes at CENU. Such deviations must be approved by GCU. All deviations of substance are submitted with appropriate justification for consideration by the School's Host Programme Board, who will then on agreement pass to the Host School ADLTQ for approval and onward submission to the University [Exceptions Sub-Committee](#) of the APPC for approval, via the AQD.
- 5.2.17 The approach to annually monitoring the UG and MSc programmes at CENU is set out in the respective LHs for the UG and MSc programmes. This details the process for the production of the Annual Programme Analysis (resulting in a Programme Enhancement Plan) for consideration by the Host Programme Board. In addition to monitoring at programme level, an annual report on the wider collaborative arrangement with CENU

is prepared to provide assurance by APPC in terms of their institutional oversight of academic partnership arrangements. The report draws from the most recent APAs submitted by the College and discusses key elements such as the ongoing 'fit' of the arrangement with current and emerging strategy; effectiveness of partnership liaison; KPIs and objectives; ongoing maintenance of academic standards; and quality and enhancement of the student learning experience. At College level, review is undertaken through the GCU's [ELISR](#) process and methodology. This is in the form of a Quality Enhancement Review and specific aim to evaluate the student experience and to identify good practice and areas for enhancement over the review period. Each programme operates local SSCGs and students are represented on Programme Boards. The evidence from APAs points to a very effective interaction between students and staff with issues raised, discussed and appropriate responses provided. There is also a Student Council which has a formal link to Academic Council. The College operates a Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) twice per academic session. The results are analysed and actions derived through consideration at Departmental and Programme Boards. It is clear the College has taken the student voice very seriously and a range of enhancements have followed from this, for example: more focused support provided to students experiencing difficulties with particular modules, more exposure to industry and practical/real-life examples and an increase in personal and professional development (PDP) activities. The College hosts a very active range of Student Chapters linked to professional bodies (e.g. IEEE, IET, IMechE, SPE and CIOB) and this provides opportunities for students to organise events which underpins their PDP. In March 2017 the [Caledonian Women Engineers Forum](#) was launched, becoming the first of its kind in HEIs in Oman. Through its collaboration with the Women in Engineering Chapter under the Oman Society of Engineers it aims to provide a wider network, visibility and opportunities to women in engineering. The Forum has set out a five-year strategic plan aligned for gender inclusivity and gender balance in all aspects of teaching and learning of Omani female engineers and students. This commitment is also evidenced through female student registration numbers and in 2017 the College had over 50% (52%) of female students registered on engineering programmes.

- 5.2.18 GCU has considerable knowledge and confidence of the infrastructure and the quality assurance philosophy at the College through CENU delivery of UG degree programmes and more recently Masters provision. GCU as primary affiliate with NUST is committed to its collaboration with CENU and to building on its twenty-three-year academic partnership, both in relation to extending our current contractual arrangements and introducing new partnership activity. The strength of the partnership between GCU and CENU is the academic capability of CENU to deliver the current

suite of UG and master's programmes which are embedded in a rigorous culture of quality assurance and enhancement based on GCU's quality assurance policies and systems operating within the framework defined by the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, developed with the partner over many years.

5.2.19 Through its strategic development plan for the partnership, GCU and CENU are working together to not only enhance the educational offering at CENU, but importantly to open up new opportunities for curriculum development and internationalisation. In May 2019, a framework for future collaboration with NUST was developed for consideration and approval by Executive Board. In our renegotiations and renewal of the 2017 Masters agreement, CENU indicated their wish to continue with two of the Masters programmes and add up to two new MSc programmes to the portfolio. In addition to wishing to extend Masters provision with GCU discussions have also explored other areas including research collaboration, a Doctoral Hub (local PhD programme) and contributing to CPD for NUST staff for learning, teaching and research. Our most recent programme development has been our joint application to the MoHE in Oman setting out our proposal to offer the GCU approved MSc Applied Instrumentation and Control programme. GCU and NUST have also entered into further discussions around our current and future awarding arrangements with NU. The focus of these discussions has involved the future transitioning of GCU as the sole awarding body for its current approved UG and PG programmes delivered at NU to one of a dual award arrangement, whereby GCU, with NU together provide a programme(s) leading to separate awards conferred by GCU and NU. Transitioning to this dual award arrangement, for programmes and cohorts commencing from September 2019, will be subject to agreeing new contractual arrangements which are currently in discussion. In doing so, we have asked NUST to fully advise of any prevailing legislation or regulation of the Sultanate of Oman, which will have an impact on securing the proposed new dual award arrangement and to inform our next steps in our respective institutional approval processes.

5.2.20 Our long and healthy partnership with NUST has given GCU confidence in its ability to develop capacity (in GCU staff to deliver transnationally and understand the cultural diversity within the classroom setting) and capability (in partner organisations to develop knowledge and understanding of quality assurance processes for effective implementation). The structure and organisational processes of this first large scale TNE collaboration has been adapted and used for our other TNE partnerships providing a contemporary approach and stable framework from which they can grow. This is

further exemplified in the project management methodology and approach to the ALC partnership (5.2.21).

African Leadership College

5.2.21 The academic partnership between GCU and [ALC](#) in Mauritius, the inaugural institution of the African Leadership University (ALU) network, was formed in 2015. It is the University's most recent large-scale provision of TNE and established in the collaborative agreement (contract) between the University Court of GCU and African Leadership (Mauritius) Limited signed in March 2016. The initial concept for the partnership is founded on the joint ambition of GCU and ALU to provide high-quality, affordable tertiary education and to specifically address the shortage of tertiary education on the African continent. In the partnership, GCU serves as the founding and lead academic partner and acts as the awarding body to ALC providing academic programmes, oversight and governance, to support ALU in the creation of their first tertiary education institution, ALC in Mauritius. The aim is for the College to ultimately become an awarding higher education establishment in its own right and to be able also to jointly award degrees with GCU (the requirements placed on new HEIs in Mauritius are strict and prevent a new institution applying for university status until programmes have been successfully delivered for between 8 and 11 years). Future transition to joint and independent awards will not only be subject to TEC approval, but will also require meeting GCU quality assurance requirements. GCU continues through its partnership with ALC to provide the relevant academic and technical assistance to ensure the highest quality learning experience at ALC that equips students to develop effective careers and become future leaders in Africa and beyond. The University also has insight into the activities of ALU's Board, the ALU Global Advisory Council, through GCU's Vice-Chancellor, who is a founding member of the Council.

5.2.22 The partnership, including the model for delivery of academic programmes, was developed under an initial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ALU and GCU signed in January 2015. The development of the partnership was managed by a working group led by the DVC (Academic). The development of the partnership included robust due diligence and a detailed and comprehensive business plan was produced for approval by Executive Board and the University Court. Following the development phase of the partnership, responsibility of the day to day running of the relationship was passed to a delivery team also led by the DVC (Academic). A GCU Project Director was subsequently appointed to lead the partnership for GCU and took

up post in March 2016. The key principles in which the academic partnership was founded are summarised below:

- ALC will develop and operate an educational institution which will conform to the standards already in practice at GCU. The programme management structure specified in the programme specific documents will be developed (recognising the different organisational structures and personnel of ALC) to maintain the University's quality assurance standards;
- The ALC, acting under the auspices of GCU, will be responsible for the day to day administration of the GCU degree programmes delivered at ALC;
- A liaison model will be established between GCU and ALC which outlines the operational aspects and the respective roles and responsibilities of both the University and College in relation to the academic administrative management and liaison between both institutions for the delivery, assessment, progression and award, quality assurance and enhancement arrangements for the GCU degree programmes delivered at ALC. The model will be used in conjunction with the University Quality Enhancement and Assessment Handbook now AQPP, University [Assessment Regulations](#) and other relevant academic regulations of the University and ALC;
- The programme delivery model for ALC is over three trimesters per year and includes a placement where university study is combined with learning in work. The pedagogical approach to learning on the programmes is based on a constructively aligned curriculum in a blended mode;
- ALC shall recruit academic staff that, in the reasonable opinion of GCU, shall be appropriately qualified to support the delivery of the programmes. Prior to the recruitment or provision of academic staff, ALC shall provide to GCU a copy of each proposed academic staff's curriculum vitae for review and approval.

5.2.23 The ALC partnership will run for an initial period of five years following which a formal review will take place to review the programme and terms under which they are delivered; although the contract is valid for a period of up to 12 years from the commencement date. The long-term goal for the partnership is for ALC to take responsibility for most aspects of delivery with the exception of programme governance and quality assurance which will remain with GCU. Three interim milestone academic

and contract reviews have now taken place to assess the progress of ALC and their capacity to deliver GCU programmes independently. [\(5.2.31 & 5.2.32\)](#)

5.2.24 An application to the Mauritian TEC was lodged in July 2015 in conjunction with ALU's application and request for a license to establish their first tertiary education institution. Initial scrutiny of the application by TEC included detailed discussions with key GCU and ALU staff. Additional documentation was requested and supplied to TEC. Following this scrutiny, a decision, was taken (much earlier than TEC's normal licence decision making period of no longer than 90 days) for initial consideration, and a registration and programme accreditation event was held in Mauritius at ALC's Beau Plan Campus, Pamplemousses on 19-20 August 2015. Key GCU staff and nominated UG programme leads met with the TEC accreditation panels over the course of the two-day event alongside ALC staff. The outcomes for all programmes and the establishment of the campus were successful. Following the success of the accreditation event and confirmation of approvals from the TEC, planning activity was implemented over the course of the 2015/16 academic session.

5.2.25 The first set of students from across 30 African countries commenced their degree specific programmes at ALC in January 2017 and there are now just under 400 students registered over the four GCU approved and TEC accredited programmes including BA (Hons) Social Sciences, BA (Hons) Business Management, BSc (Hons) Computing and MEng Electrical Power Systems Engineering. The first cohort of Business Management and Social Sciences students graduated at the inaugural graduation ceremony in Mauritius on 12 June 2019. The first cohort of Computing and Engineering students will graduate on 28 February 2020. The MEng EPSE programme is additionally approved by the Council of Registered Professional Engineering (CRPE) in Mauritius and was a key condition of the programme accreditation by the TEC. The BSc (Hons) Applied Psychology was one of the original four programmes considered for accreditation in July 2015 but did not commence due to an acknowledged low market demand during the early period of accreditation. The MEng EPSE programme was added to the portfolio later in December 2016 as an addendum to the agreement following accreditation by the TEC in November 2016. This replaced the current provision within the contract for the BSc (Hons) Applied Psychology.

5.2.26 All students registered at ALC on the four degree programmes are also registered with the University as the degree awarding body and main delivery HEI. ALC staff and students have full access to the GCU Library's electronic and online resources and GCU Learn. The qualification conferred at the end of the degree programmes is equal

in academic standing to that conferred on successful completion of the same or comparable internal GCU programmes.

5.2.27 The UG portfolio of programmes was carefully selected to fit a start-up context and market demand (established through ALU primary pan-African market research data). While the programmes seem quite standard in theme they were adapted to meet the African context (primarily through the contextualisation of module syllabus) and include key components developed with ALC:

- A mandatory ALC 'Leadership Core' curriculum delivered in Year 1, mapped against the SCQF by GCU and accredited with 120 credits at SCQF Level 7;
- Pre-requisite module learning for the BA (Hons) Business Management and BA (Hons) Social Sciences programmes;
- Delivery of GCU's curriculum over three trimesters. The curriculum for all four programmes is accelerated whereby all 3 trimesters within an academic session carry modular credit allowing students to complete their studies in a short time frame;
- The inclusion of a work placement (internship). The partnership at ALC ensures that students will have completed at least 24 weeks of internship while undertaking their degree.

5.2.28 The academic model is a blended one through a combination of online delivery and GCU staff teaching visits supported by ALC faculty. The majority of the face to face teaching of ALC students is undertaken by our approved Associate Lecturers in Mauritius however GCU staff developed online resource material and activities to support the learning and teaching for each module. For many this required significant development of their digital capabilities and has resulted in more resource material for home students and the ability to reuse educational material for other programmes delivered by the University.

5.2.29 Over the past 4 years, 97 staff have now travelled to ALC for the delivery of learning, teaching and assessment to students and work with staff. Working on the project has also assisted the internationalisation of the curriculum across the programmes enabling staff to use scenarios and teaching methods employed by the faculty at ALC creating more divergent thinking around topic areas and wider global contextualisation.

5.2.30 In addition, many more staff have been involved in the development and implementation of the partnership. The benefits of staff involvement in the ALC

partnership have been many and varied with a demonstrable impact on the student learning experience of our home students in GCU Glasgow. There has also been the opportunity for students from both institutions to undertake reciprocal study visits between our organisations. Both groups of students, from ALC and GCU, have found their visits very rewarding. They had the ability to engage within academic classes and also experience the cultural aspects of education in another institution and another country with a diverse population of students.

- 5.2.31 The collaborative agreement sets out the University's quality assurance framework for the delivery of the programmes at ALC. These are detailed in part one of the agreement under 'Performance and Contract Management Arrangements'. The key elements of the framework set out our contractual expectations and high level arrangements for our maintenance of the academic standards and quality assurance of the programmes delivered at ALC; the recruitment and selection of academic staff; teaching environment; assessment and external examining; and the recruitment and selection of students. In addition to all standard programme and module level monitoring and review and enhancement planning activities which equally applies to our provision at ALC, additional checkpoints, 'academic milestones' were set out in the contract. In the context of our agreement, the academic milestones were defined as specified transition points during the period of the contract whereby the University would formally review the academic capacity and infrastructure of ALC. The review, formally referred to as 'Academic Review' specifically focused on the capacity of ALC academic staff to transition to providing a greater input to the overall programme delivery, support and assessment and subsequent reduction of GCU academic staff input to delivery. The

capacity of ALC was reviewed against tolerances defined by GCU in consultation with ALC and other academic aspects, including:

- Compliance with the academic staffing requirements for the programmes;
- ALC governance and academic management;
- Academic quality arrangements;
- Scholarship and pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff;
- Academic environment supporting the delivery of the academic programmes;
- Student experience;
- Programme and module performance.

5.2.32 Three Academic Reviews were scheduled early in the first two years of the contract. The outcomes of the first review (June 2017) were considered by the APPC for academic oversight and Executive Board for contractual performance. The second review (April 2018) took place in GCU Glasgow with senior staff visiting from ALC and a follow up visit to Mauritius in June 2018; and concluded with the third review (April 2019) returning to the ALC campus in Mauritius. Standard terms of reference based on the academic aspects above were established for each of the reviews with some additional contextualisation. The milestone reviews have provided the University with an update on ALC progress and completion of key areas for development as it relates, for example, and looking back to the 2nd academic and contract review, a positive update on progress was noted including: the ongoing development of the College's academic governance framework and organisational leadership structures to manage academic affairs; further policy development and implementation; the development of a strategic risk management process and incident management protocol; the development of an ALC Staffing and Recruitment Plan; and corresponding module expertise mapping.

5.2.33 In advance of the third formal Academic Review a small delegation from GCU (ALC Project Director and Quality Lead TNE) visited ALC as part of the preparatory underpinning and evidence base capture required for the third milestone review. This took the form of a quality audit over the 10-12 December 2018. The outcomes of the audit were drafted shortly after the visit and shared with ALC prior to the third formal milestone review in April 2019. The audit report, key outcomes, areas of positive

practice and areas for enhancement were considered by APPC at its meeting in December 2018.

5.2.34 In between the Academic Reviews discussed above, in April 2017, to maintain our assurance over the ALC Partnership since its start up, the University's external auditors performed a deep-dive review of the partnership to determine the extent to which key financial, operational, academic and reputational risks and on-going performance were being effectively managed. The auditors raised a total of four low risks in their findings and a number of recommendations based on best practice designed to support the University in ensuring governance processes are robust. The review also noted six areas of good practice, including:

Robust Framework for Academic Quality

"A robust framework for academic quality and review has been implemented for ALC which is aligned to the GCU QEAH. This framework gives assurance regarding the consistency and delivery with provision on core GCU campuses, supporting a consistent educational experience for students" (AIS, EY IA April 2017)

Development and delivery of the ALC Partnership Represents Good Practice

"Our audit has highlighted that the development and delivery of the ALC partnership to date represents good practice in a number of areas. The process for the development of the partnership was closely aligned to procedures included in the QEAH. Robust due diligence was undertaken and a detailed and comprehensive business plan produced for approval. Since handover from development to delivery, the day-to-day management of the partnership has been delivered through a model of shared responsibility and collaboration with open lines of communication between ALC and GCU. Although some hurdles have been met in terms of building capacity and understanding within ALC of the importance and reason for academic quality mechanisms and controls, these have been, and continue to be addressed openly and clearly"
(AIS, EY IA April 2017)

5.2.35 In addition to the reporting discussed above, the Executive Board and Court have also received interim update papers on the progress of the partnership.

5.2.36 The academic quality management arrangements for the programmes delivered at ALC are set out in the Partnership Handbook and based on best practice established

for our collaboration with CENU, Oman. The handbook sets out the primary role of the GCU Programmes Boards in these arrangements. The monitoring and maintenance of academic standards, the comparability of delivery and quality of the student experience, and the academic coherence and development of programmes delivered at ALC sits within the respective Host Programme Boards at GCU. The direct association to the Host Programme Board as opposed to a standalone Programme Board is more advantageous. The programmes and modules delivered at ALC are comparable to Glasgow delivery and the direct association to provision as close to this delivery should be more effective and consistent, and will ensure that any programme and module changes (content and assessment) are closely aligned. At an operational level, Programme Leaders, in partnership with the Programme Board Chair ensures that a standing item is added to the respective Host Programme Board agenda to capture the monitoring and maintenance of ALC provision as defined for Programme Boards within the QEAH. The purpose of the standing item is to essentially capture discussion and agreement around delivery aspects which would then be formally minute as standard and the appropriate allocation of action(s) to Programme Board member(s) and including outside Programme Board membership.

- 5.2.37 All programmes hold [SSCG](#) meetings and these take place during scheduled teaching visits by GCU staff. Students at ALC also complete the University's Module Evaluation Questionnaire and the GCU Experience Survey. Any trends and challenges in student engagement and feedback is captured through these mechanisms and fed into programme level monitoring and enhancement planning. The student evaluation feedback for ALC has, on the whole, been positive and has demonstrated a commitment to and identification with GCU as well as ALC. (AIS
- 5.2.38 In order to effectively manage the assessment process for programmes and modules at ALC and student progression, the initial Trimester Review Boards were reconstituted as formal Assessment Boards. The rationale for the reconstitution has its basis on the accelerated nature of programme delivery at ALC and to offer intra-sessional reassessment, where, for programme specific circumstances, it was deemed beneficial to student progression, completion and achievement.
- 5.2.39 To support the administration of the assessment process for the degree programmes at ALC, the University engages the services of a third party in Mauritius, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) to conduct our formal examinations and invigilation process. The University has established a secure and trustworthy partnership with the MES. There are currently no plans to shift this responsibility to ALC and MES will continue to provide their services. The arrangement will be reviewed as the partnership

matures and the capacity and processes for assessment administration at ALC develops and strengthens.

- 5.2.40 The strategic leadership and oversight of the ALC partnership lies with the DVC Academic working closely with the ALC Project Director and Quality Lead TNE and Academic Collaborations. The GCU ALC Academic and Operational Group continues to meet bi-weekly to ensure operational matters are dealt with promptly and to ensure robust forward planning ahead of each stage of the project. Chaired by the ALC Project Director, the Group includes key stakeholders from each of the academic schools delivering programmes at ALC and representation from professional support services including academic quality, library, student life, registry and academic development. The group has been a cornerstone of the partnership; meetings have been instrumental in dealing with emergent issues from the early phase of implementation to present day programme operations. In addition to the operations group, strategic dialogue meetings take place between senior staff from GCU and ALC on a monthly basis to discuss strategic issues and forward planning which are cascaded down to the teams responsible for operations and delivery. Along with these formal communication channels academic teams across the university maintain regular contact with their counterparts at ALC to ensure teamwork and collaboration in the delivery of the academic programmes and modules and to ensure the quality of the student experience.
- 5.2.41 The University's collaboration with ALC has been important on many levels however the alignment of both institutions to create life changing opportunities through education is perhaps the most significant. The changing demographics in the African continent demands a new approach to ensuring the educational needs of a rapidly expanding younger generation is met; delivering flexible, affordable high-quality tertiary education on the continent is crucial to keep Africa's younger generation within its boundaries. On graduation these students will be ready to help build a stable and prosperous environment for the future. It is hoped that GCU has facilitated the beginnings of this journey for many students.
- 5.2.42 Challenges are expected when delivering higher education in the transnational context. GCU found staff at ALC well qualified with excellent experience however many had not taught within the UK higher education sector. A number of strategies were therefore adopted to enhance staff members' knowledge and understanding in this area. In consultation with our partner, interactive workshops were arranged to induct ALC staff to our norms and expectations around academic quality assurance and standards

including assessment regulations, and associated policies such as mitigating circumstances. Staff were encouraged to bring real world scenarios to the workshops bringing an authenticity to their understanding. As discussed earlier the partnership Handbook was developed to bring together all pertinent information for staff at both GCU and ALC, helping to ensure consistent messaging to all. Our Associate Lecturers at ALC were supported and mentored by the GCU programme team at least weekly in the initial stages of delivery to ensure common understanding of any issue or topic relating to the delivery of the degree programmes at ALC. Developing professional relationships across the continents and time zones is an additional challenge. As with any transnational education project effective communication is paramount to the success of the partnership. This can prove challenging when the strategic and operational teams are on different continents.

- 5.2.43 To extend the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff at ALC delivering on our programmes and to ensure academic standards, GCU's PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (now the PgC Academic Practice (PgCAP)) was also implemented at ALC. A number of staff successfully completed the programme in 2017/18 and a further cohort of staff is currently working towards completion in 2018/19. ALC continues to support staff participation as a reflection of their investment in enhancing the quality of the student experience and in recognition of the GCU's [Academic Development Framework](#). A new cohort of staff is expected to register on the programme in 2019/20. A member of ALC academic staff has been appointed as ALC Module Tutor to support learning and teaching to staff on the ground in Mauritius and to provide linkage to the GCU Programme Leader.
- 5.2.44 The four degree programmes delivered until now were developed solely by GCU with elements of the content contextualised to meet the needs of the environment in which it is delivered. GCU and ALC have now collaborated further to jointly develop a new UG programme for delivery at ALC Mauritius. The BSc (Hons) Entrepreneurial Leadership programme has been developed taking cognisance of the changing global landscape and the variety of new and emerging challenges facing society. The collaborative development provides evidence of our approach to ensure that any new extension to provision with a delivery partner must again ensure strategic alignment which otherwise would not meet initial concept, academic and business case approval. The programme was approved for delivery through the normal approval processes at GCU in April 2019 and a further accreditation event is anticipated within the next few months with the Mauritian regulator, the TEC. A successful outcome from the event

would enable new and innovative programme to be added to the UG portfolio at ALC and further extend our collaborative arrangement with ALC.

5.2.45 In terms of evidencing the significant and demonstrable impact that our recent collaborative arrangement with ALC has had to our internationalisation plans. The GCU/ALC partnership has had to date over 350 students registered across four GCU degree programmes. The students have come from across the African continent and are committed to ALC's vision of transforming Africa through the next generation of ethical leaders which directly aligns with GCU's commitments to support students to achieve the GCU [Common Good Attributes](#). At our inaugural graduation at ALC, 83 students graduated in June 2019 and we will watch with interest the professional trajectory of our GCU Alumni from ALC. It is also at this point that we can reflect on the many benefits to the students, staff and our institutions that have emerged from this successful partnership between GCU and ALC. The online learning materials developed for ALC modules have now been utilised for other university programmes, such as the GA and other transnational education partnerships; therefore the significant time taken to create these resources has been beneficial to educational delivery in a variety of contexts. GCU now has an established presence in Mauritius and has already started to share good practice and network with other educational establishments on the island. The partnership in Mauritius has helped to highlight further our presence and brand within the African continent building on our already successful partnership with [TFR](#). Our partnership with ALC has resulted in over 90 academic staff travelling to Mauritius to work with the Associate Lecturers in country and teach on the specific modules. This has been a beneficial experience. The individual staff members have been exposed to a diversity of students' cultures within class which brings with it a myriad of learning experiences and staff's knowledge and understanding of students' learning strategies. The partnership has sought to establish GCU's delivery of key aspects of [Strategy 2020](#), particularly internationalisation, TNE, student and staff mobility and employability. It has been clear that the mission, vision and values of GCU resonate strongly with those of ALC. A shared mission to create work ready global graduates empowered to become future leaders is at the heart of both organisations. The commitment of ALC to build a generation of ethical leaders resonates deeply with our common good curriculum attributes of: active and global citizenship;

entrepreneurial mind-set; responsible leadership and confidence. Our institutions are firmly aligned in their mission to create life changing opportunities through education.

Transnet Freight Rail

- 5.2.46 Since its first cohort in 2012, the TFR Railway Operations Management (ROM) programme has been delivered through a quadripartite partnership between GCU, Institution of Railway Operators, TFR and University of Johannesburg (UJ). The partnership represents a positive and differentiated model of our TNE, namely a University-to-Business, Work-Based, blended learning, UG and PG programme. The key aim of the partnership is to build capacity and capability within the TFR organisation in South Africa. The programmes are part of a closed suite co-created and delivered solely for TFR. They are designed to help TFR contribute positively and directly to the South African Government's National Development Plan. State owned companies such as Transnet are required to drive the developmental agenda of the state by addressing specific developmental goals such as education, employment creation, poverty eradication and rural development while remaining financially sustainable. This aligns strongly with GCU's [Common Good](#) ethos and mission.
- 5.2.47 To date, our contract with TFR has been delivered in two phases - phase one (covering cohorts one to four) and then phase two (covering cohorts five and six) and after the last periodic review of the programme in January 2016 which signalled a key milestone in the partnership. The recent extension to Honours under the phase two delivery emanated from both an identified need within TFR, for a continuing pathway to develop higher level skills to meet existing business needs, the logical incremental expansion of the programme to provide the opportunity to allow employees to obtain higher level qualifications and the exemplification of the GCU mission for the common good. The first cohort of students started the Honours programme in August 2017. Whilst the BSc (Hons) programme was designed mainly to support the operational requirements of TFR it was recognised that meeting future challenges and achieving the TFR aspiration of becoming one of the top five global freight rail companies in the world would require a core staff with strategic and leadership skills, a critical understanding of the railway industry and its operations and a global perspective. The Masters programme was therefore designed to address this need, both in terms of curricular content and the provision of a vehicle that would permit staff to either follow a pathway from Certificate through to Masters or, where appropriate, attain an academic award that recognises

and accredits work experience. The inaugural group of Masters students are due to graduate in December 2019.

- 5.2.48 The recent extension to Honours and Masters has resulted in the expansion of the teams at GCU and UJ, including new programme leaders for Honours and Masters levels and GCU Academic Development Tutors (ADT) to support students with their individualised academic development. IRO additionally created the new core learning materials for the railway-specific content and UJ again provided the South African contextualisation. As part of the last programme review and approval, deliberate steps were taken within the organisation to raise the status of the programmes. TFR Champions (Senior Managers within the organisation) were appointed to connect the ROM programme more strongly to TFR management, particularly around choice of projects at Honours and Masters level so that projects were strategically aligned to business needs (as well as individual development). The Champion also coordinates a team of industry experts from current TFR staff, and together, in an advisory capacity, they confirm the relevancy of railway specific module content; advise on changes to practices in the industry; deliver 'masterclasses' where appropriate; input to creation of 'real world' case studies; and gather intelligence and draft relevant work based projects proposals.
- 5.2.49 Staff development and relationship building has been integral to the success of the TFR partnership and the enhancement of the programme specifically from the aspect of programme management and quality assurance and enhancement. The introduction of 'One Team' professional development events has proven to be a successful means of rekindling and strengthening relationships, of providing support and to update the UJ team on current GCU strategy, policies and processes. They also provide an opportunity to reflect on programme specific issues and to revise and amend these to ensure a quality student experience. The One Team events are held at least twice per year in South Africa to support ongoing professional and programme development and knowledge sharing.
- 5.2.50 At all levels of the programmes, students elect a 'Class Captain' for each cohort and this is the primary route for gaining student feedback. While unique to TFR in terms of terminology, the role of the Class Captain is similar in nature to a student representative. The Class Captain plays a key role in representing the experiences of their class, working alongside staff to make improvements so that they and their peers can enjoy the best university experience possible. A dedicated handbook has been

developed to outline the role of the Class Captain, as well as some ideas and tips to help them to be as effective as possible within the role.

- 5.2.51 A longitudinal evaluation of the ROM programme and case study has recently been completed by the Institute for University to Business Education, fusing alumni, partner and current student perspectives around the personal and organisational impact that the ROM programme has had to date. The evaluation outcomes confirm that clear personal and professional impact is evident to students and alumni since 2012, including increased confidence, increased respect within the organisation and a better understanding of the railway value-chain. Graduates of ROM are bringing benefit to TFR through enhanced problem-solving abilities and a wider pool available for succession planning. A deepening relationship between the four partners has underpinned this success, being possible due to a shared vision and collective belief in a work-based learning approach that supports professionalization of employees.

GCNYC

- 5.2.52 At the time of the last ELIR, the University was in the process of opening its branch campus in New York. In June 2017, the New York State Education Department granted [GCNYC](#) a Charter degree awarding authority. GCNYC is an independent graduate college, it is strongly linked with GCU in the UK and is committed to providing a rewarding higher education opportunity and experience to applicants with the potential to benefit from, and contribute to our mission and values, and in doing so have a positive social impact in the city of New York and beyond. This September 2019 will see the 6th cohort of students commencing Master level study. GCNYC is currently a candidate for Accreditation by the Middle States Commission, approved by the Commission at its meeting of June 21, 2018. The next evaluation visit will be in 2020/21. In 2019, GCNYC was officially recognised as part of the US Department of Homeland Security [SEVP](#) and will see its first intake of international students in September 2019. GCNYC's governing body, its Board of Trustees, is solely responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being accomplished. The provision at GCNYC sits external to the GCU awards portfolio and is excluded from the University's framework for assuring academic quality and standards.
- 5.2.53 With campuses now in Glasgow, London and New York, this has become fundamental in supporting the implementation of our [Internationalisation Strategy](#), thus forming a global hub model in which to promote our international profile. This will additionally

create opportunities for our students to gain an international experience while studying on PG programmes in Glasgow or London enabling them to consider further the global context of their academic studies.

Graduate and Degree Apprenticeships

- 5.2.54 The apprenticeship levy being paid by organisations who have a wage bill of £3million or over creates a fundamental change in the UK market and this change has provided significant opportunity for GCU through its Institute for University to Business Education to share best practices of work-based education across the new Apprenticeship standards and frameworks both within Scotland and England.
- 5.2.55 In parallel to GCU's strategic decision to pursue initially Graduate Apprenticeship funding via the SDS tendering process, it was acknowledged that the additional expertise in work-based education at both UG and PG through the work of the Institute and a GCU London presence could provide additional opportunities to create a new kind of work-based provision for GCU. Cultivating the strategic decision to extend into the Degree Apprenticeship market in England, the University applied for and was accepted onto the Education and Skills Funding Agency Register of Training Providers in April 2017. The University currently delivers three Degree Apprenticeships out of GCU London - the MBA Applied Professional Practice; BA (Hons) Business Management Degree Apprenticeship; and BSc (Hons) Construction and the Built Environment (Quantity Surveying) Degree Apprenticeship.
- 5.2.56 During early 2017, the University made a strategic decision to adopt an institutional approach to Apprenticeships. A cross-School Short Life Working Group was created to explore models, processes and directives to ensure GCU was positioned as a high quality provider of responsive and flexible Degree Apprenticeship (England) and Graduate Apprenticeship (Scotland) programmes. A model was developed and approved by the [APPC](#) and included characteristics intended to be distinctive to GCU and to be included in the design and delivery of all our Apprenticeships. (AQPP)
- 5.2.57 Our Apprenticeship programmes align with the [SfL](#), SEAP, and GCU [Strategy 2020](#) and reflect the [GCU Values and Behaviours](#). The GCU model is based on the SDS Frameworks and the Trailblazer Standards (England). Together these frameworks define and bound the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to perform the specific job role. The GCU apprenticeship model is designed to explicitly meet the Degree Apprentice (England) and the Graduate Apprentice (Scotland) criteria drawing additional reference to the QAA guidance. The GCU model outlines a number of core principles which are intended to demonstrate a flexibility that can take account of the

needs of organisations, their employees and also specific subject and discipline requirements, including PSRB, where applicable. Our Apprenticeship portfolio has provided the opportunity to mainstream work-based education as a route to addressing the strategic and operational needs of organisations and at the same time delivers a high quality University experience to employees from existing and/or new corporate clients at GCU. GCU's Institute for University to Business Education (IU2BE) leads intra-university department collaboration for GA in Scotland. This collaboration spans the life-cycle of the recruitment, application, offer, induction process involving departments such as academic subject departments, marketing and communications, admissions, academic registry and Professional School Support Services and library and information services.

The University's academic schools currently deliver the following funded GA programmes:

- IT Software Development for Business SCQF Level 10
- Engineering: Design and Manufacture SCQF Level 10
- Cyber Security SCQF Level 10
- Cyber Security SCQF Level 11
- Construction and Built Environment SCQF Level 10
- Business Management SCQF Level 10
- Civil Engineering SCQF Level 10

From September 2020 under Phase 4 funding the University aspires to deliver the following new frameworks, for which clear rationale and evidence of demand has recently been submitted to SDS through their formal tender process in September 2019:

- Data Science SCQF Level 10
- Accountancy SCQF Level 11

5.2.58 The University's provision of bespoke work-based transnational and national education programmes involve a three-way partnership between GCU, the employee and the employer. This tripartite relationship is supported by a staffing model through which U2B's core academic team work with Subject Matter Experts (SME) from Partner Organisations in the design and delivery of work-based education. Approved as GCU

Associate Lecturers following GCU's process of granting Associate Lecturer Status as detailed in [AQPP](#), SME are experienced professionals in their field of practice. Their contribution to the facilitation of student learning is based upon their extensive knowledge and understanding of the subject area and industry and business contexts. This ensures the curriculum is robust and relevant and permits a proactive and innovative stance to supporting work-based education whereby the 'real world' meets academia. However, it is recognised that the situated practices of SME do not originate from HE, and as such there is a need to facilitate transition into this community, and support learning, teaching and assessment practices in this secondary field. To further strengthen tripartite relationships and build capability of these professionals, a staff facing ADT role has been introduced to enable the academic development of SME. This ADT is responsible for supporting Associate Lecturers as detailed in the IU2B Associate Lecturer Support Protocol in the provision and enhancement of high quality, evidence-based learning, teaching and assessment practices that contribute to a positive student experience. Working closely with Programme Leaders, student facing ADTs and Partner Organisations, academic development is tailored to meet the requirements of individual programmes, and learning needs of the Associate Lecturers.

GCU London

5.2.59 In September 2015 GCU London became the fourth academic School of the University following [Senate](#) approval of its creation and associated governance structure at its meeting on 5 June 2015. The change to School status for the London campus has afforded the following benefits:

- Ownership of the London portfolio being transferred to the London School enabling the Dean of GCU London to determine its future programme suite, academic viability and validity;
- Academic quality processes such as programme approval; monitoring and review and the operation of assessment fully delegated to GCU London staff with oversight by the University;
- Direct management of the GCU London campus resource envelope (academic and operational) to deliver a high quality student experience specific for the London market.

5.2.60 Four years on the University is currently conducting a review to enhance further the integration of Glasgow schools and London. It is anticipated a set of recommendations will emerge. In line with the other GCU Schools, GCU London engages in strategic

planning, financial management and risk management processes that are overseen by the Deans' Group, Executive Board, and [Court](#) and supported by the Strategy and Planning and Finance functions. GCU London is fully integrated with all GCU policies, procedures and processes. The School reports annually on the academic health of its subject provision. This incorporates the same information levels of importance as the wider university via its annual monitoring report to the [LTSC](#). ([AIS, Annual Monitoring Reports London](#))

- 5.2.61 To date GCU London has developed a strong reputation with its links with industry and practitioners with evidence of this being the launch of the British School of Fashion in 2013 and more recently the formation of the British School of Management and Leadership in 2018. Since its inception as a School in 2015, a niche portfolio of PG MBA and MSc programmes have been developed with a view to meeting the expectations of international businesses to ensure students are equipped with the skills needed to thrive in the global marketplace.
- 5.2.62 GCU London has recently become ideally positioned to deliver our apprenticeships portfolio outside of Scotland ([5.2.57](#)). In addition to delivering our Graduate Apprenticeship programmes in Scotland, the University is also an accredited provider on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) in England funded through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). This has allowed GCU to develop Degree Apprenticeship programmes and further extend our London portfolio to offer a Degree Apprenticeship BA (Hons) Business and Management (CMI Accredited) in September 2018 and from September 2019 a DA BSc (Hons) Chartered Surveying (RICS accredited).
- 5.2.63 At Masters level we have also created and launched with our long standing work based education partner, the IRO, an MBA Applied Professional Practice (Rail) Degree Apprenticeship (January 2019) which is designed to leverage the employer levy within the MBA trailblazer pathway; provide the UK's only railway operations specific apprenticeship programme at Masters level; and create an opportunity for levied rail industry employers to connect with a rail specific programme for senior managers. This MBA is industry-applied through the provision of a programme 'champion'; subject matter experts from relevant industries; work place mentors and work-based projects.
- 5.2.64 The [GCU Students' Association](#) has an office and a member of staff at GCU London. The Students' Association Co-ordinator supports the Class Representatives at GCU London, GCU London Officer and London PGR Representative, who are all included within the overall GCU Academic Representative Structure. The Student President,

GCU London Officer and London PGR Representative sit on the GCU London School Board. In addition to academic representation, the Students' Association offers independent advice, clubs and societies, events and the London Leadership Programme at GCU London.

INTO Glasgow Caledonian University

- 5.2.65 In the academic session 2018/19 a major milestone was reached for our joint venture with INTO University Partnerships. [INTO GCU](#) celebrated its ten-year anniversary in September 2018.
- 5.2.66 The approach to the management of academic standards and the enhancement of the student learning experience has been updated since the last ELIR. At the time of the last ELIR, discussions were underway to establish a joint academic management board to oversee and develop the academic aspects of the delivery. This is now firmly in place and a key aspect of our INTO GCU Governance Framework.
- 5.2.67 The Joint Academic Liaison Group (JALG) acts as the formal channel of communication between the University and INTO GCU to oversee the academic and administrative liaison arrangements relating to the GCU programmes and modules delivered by INTO GCU are maintained and to monitor their effectiveness. The JALG has oversight of the implementation of all Senate approved academic policies and strategies at INTO GCU and for the co-ordination, development and implementation of the enhancement of the student learning experience at INTO GCU. This oversight is undertaken in partnership with the Host Schools for the academic pathway programmes delivered by the Centre and the relevant professional support departments and services at GCU. The strategic direction of INTO GCU, with particular reference to strategy and planning, finance, estates and resources, marketing and recruitment, progression and performance remains the responsibility of the Joint Venture Board.
- 5.2.68 The formal legal agreement between the University and INTO University Partnerships outlines the responsibilities of each party for academic standards. These are further contextualised within the INTO GCU Academic Programmes Liaison Handbook. The Liaison Handbook established between GCU and INTO GCU outlines the respective roles and responsibilities of both in relation to the administrative management and liaison for the delivery, assessment, quality assurance and enhancement arrangements for the academic pathway programmes delivered at INTO GCU. The

Liaison Handbook is used in conjunction with the GCU [AQPP](#) and [Assessment Regulations](#).

- 5.2.69 INTO GCU was subject to QAA review under the Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements method on 15 November 2018. The external driver for the review had arisen from UK Home Office that in order to comply with UK Visas and Immigration guidance under 'Sites and Partnerships', and therefore to recruit international students on a Tier 4 visa, all INTO University Partnerships JVs would need to be in receipt of a successful [educational oversight report](#) by Summer 2019. This was the first QAA review of INTO GCU. The University and INTO GCU worked in partnership to ensure readiness for review and preparation of the Self Evaluation Document. The Self Evaluation Document provided a critical self-reflection on INTO GCU's approach to the management of academic standards, the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities and information about its higher education provision. The preparation of the Self Evaluation Document enabled objective and critical evaluation of provision, confirming the ongoing alignment of INTO GCU process and policies to the QAA Quality Code and the identification of areas that would further strengthen the quality of provision and delivery of the student learning experience.
- 5.2.70 The outcomes of the review were received by GCU and INTO GCU on the 29 November 2018. The QAA panel placed their highest statements of judgement (confidence and reliance) on INTO GCU; identified two key features of good practice and one area for recommendation. In line with the QAA process and timelines, an action plan was developed against the key findings and published by INTO GCU on the University's website. INTO GCU submitted their annual return in September 2019 and on the basis of this the QAA will determine whether a monitoring visit or a partial or full review visit will be necessary.
- 5.2.71 The Centre was reaccredited by the British Council following a visit in March 2018. A successful audit by IELTS took place in 2017; and the pathway programmes were formally reviewed by the University in May 2018.
- 5.2.72 Looking to the future, the University and INTO University Partnerships held a strategy day in March 2019. The outcomes of the day identified a number of joint working actions to bring about a step-change growth in the recruitment of international students to the Joint Venture. From an academic product perspective the day also included a review of the current INTO GCU offering and whether there were any gaps in our existing

provision. The majority of actions were completed over the summer of 2019 with some due for completion by September 2020.

5.2.73 Within INTO GCU, methods used for gathering student feedback and involving students in INTO GCU quality management processes, include focus groups, questionnaires and surveys, together with formal staff and student forums. The GCU process for capturing feedback is well articulated throughout the Centre. [SSCGs](#) are one of the principal mechanisms used to gather feedback on and evaluate the student experience, and to communicate to students any details of actions resulting from that evaluation. Induction for class representatives occurs at the start of each academic year, assisted by the GCU Students' Association.

5.2.74 The results from the 2019 INTO University Partnerships Annual Student Experience Survey (ASES) were published in July 2019 and indicate positive student satisfaction with their experience. INTO GCU performed well again with an overall student satisfaction rate of 98.4% (satisfied or very satisfied). The Centre was ranked 1st across INTO University Partnerships in the UK for satisfaction with 'Support Received' and 'Propensity to Recommend'; and ranked 2nd in the UK for 'Satisfaction with Living' and 'Learning'. The three-year trend indicates upward for most key metrics for INTO GCU.

Glossary of Terms

Academic Development Framework (ADF)

Academic Development Tutors (ADT)

Academic Policy and Practice Committee (APPC)

Academic Quality (AQ)

Academic Quality and Development (AQD)

Academic Quality and Development Advisory Group (AQDAG)

Academic Quality Business Partner (AQBP)

Academic Quality Officers (AQO)

Academic Quality Policy and Practice (AQPP)

Academic Regulations Working Group (ARWG)

Academic Quality Working Group (AQWG)

Academic Year (AY)

Advance Information Set (AIS)

African Leadership University (ALU)

Annual Programme Analysis (APA)

Assistant Vice-Principals (AVPs)

Associate Dean (International) (ADI)

Associate Deans Learning, Teaching and Quality (ADLTQ)

Association for Learning Technology (ALT)

Collaborative On-line International Learning (COIL)

College of Engineering at NUST (CENU)

Commission on Widening Access (CoWA)

Computing, Engineering and Built Environment (SCEBE)

Contemporary Academic Advising Model (CAAM)

Continued Professional Development (CPD)

Curriculum, Quality and Accreditation (CQA)

Data Analytics Shared Hub (DASH)

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC)

Developing Academic Researcher Excellence (DARE)

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Early Career Researcher (ECR)

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

Educational Research & Evaluation (ER&E)

Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)

Enhancement-led Institutional Subject Review (ELISR)

Engineering Development Trust (EDT)

Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU)

Glasgow Caledonian University Experience Survey (GCUES)

GCU Experience Survey Postgraduate Taught (GCUES PGT)

Glasgow Caledonian University London (GCUL)

Glasgow Caledonian New York College (GCNYC)

Glasgow School for Business and Society (GSBS)

Graduate Apprenticeships (GA)

Head of Academic Quality (HoAQ)

Higher Education (HE)

Higher Education Academy (HEA)

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Higher National (HN)

HR Excellence in Research (HREiR)

Institute for University to Business Education (IU2BE)

International Committee (IC)

International Student Barometer (ISB)

IT Management for Business (ITMB)

Joint Academic Liaison Group (JALG)

Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)

Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

Liaison Handbook (LH)

Learning and Teaching Sub-committee (LTSC)

Learning Development Centre (LDC)

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)

Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES)

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)

Minimum entry requirements (MERs)

Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE)

Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQ)

National Student Survey (NSS)

National University of Science and Technology (NUST)

Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA)

Partnership Working in GCU (PAIRING)

Postgraduate (PG)

Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP)

Postgraduate Research (PGR)

Postgraduate Research Experience Study (PGRES)

Postgraduate Taught (PGT)

Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)

Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB)

Promoting Excellence in Employability and Transversal Skills (PEETS)

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook (QEAH)

Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF)

Railway Operations Management (ROM)

Reasonable adjustment process (RAP)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP)

Research Degrees Committee (RDC)

Reflective Analysis (RA)

Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Satisfaction Survey (SSS)

Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP)

School of Health and Life Sciences (SHLS)

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

Scottish domiciled undergraduate entrants (SDUE)

Scottish Funding Council (SFC)

Scottish Higher Education Research Developers (ScotHERD)

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

Senior Management Group (SMG)

Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

Software as a Service (SaaS)

Strategy for Learning (SfL)

Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE)

Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP)

Student Experience Action Plan (SEAP)

Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs)

Student Staff Consultative Groups (SSCG)

Subject Matter Experts (SME)

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)

Transnational Education (TNE)

Transnet Freight Rail (TFR)

UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)

Undergraduate (UG)

United Nations (UN)

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG)

University of Johannesburg (UJ)