Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow Caledonian University

Technical Report

March 2015

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About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

A dedicated page of the QAA website explains the method for Enhancement-led Institutional Review of higher education institutions in Scotland and has links to the ELIR handbook and other informative documents.[1] You can also find more information about QAA and its mission.[2]

Further details about the enhancement-led approach can be found in an accompanying ELIR information document,[3] including an overview of the review method, definitions of the judgement categories, and explanations of follow-up action. It also contains information on the Scottish Funding Council's response to ELIR judgements.

About this review

This is the Technical Report of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Glasgow Caledonian University. The review took place as follows: Part 1 visit on 20-22 January 2015 and Part 2 visit on 2-6 March 2015. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Dr Lorraine Anderson (Academic Reviewer)
- Anne Gifford (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Diane Meehan (Academic Reviewer)
- Dr Tess Goodliffe (International Reviewer)
- Paul Greene (Student Reviewer)
- Dr Linda Bruce (Coordinating Reviewer).

In advance of the review visits, the University submitted a self-evaluative document (the Reflective Analysis) and an advance information set, comprising a range of materials about the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards. In addition, the University submitted two case studies: Enhancing the Student Experience: feedback, and Enhancing the Student Experience: transition, retention and progression.

About this report

In this report, the ELIR team:

- delivers an overarching judgement on the current and likely future effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

The overarching judgement can be found on page 3, followed by the detailed findings of the review given in numbered paragraphs.

ELIR Technical Reports are intended primarily for the institution which hosted the review, and to provide an information base for the production of thematic reports that identify findings across several institutions.

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[1] Further information about the ELIR method:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/enhancement-led-institutional-review
[2] Further information about QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus.
[3] ELIR information document: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=61.

Technical Reports set out the ELIR team's view under each of the report headings. Shorter Outcome Reports are provided that set out the main findings of the ELIR for a wider audience. The Outcome Report for this review is on the QAA website.[4]

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[4] Outcome Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007762

Overarching judgement about Glasgow Caledonian University

Glasgow Caledonian University has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience. These arrangements are likely to continue to be effective in the future.

This is a positive judgement, which means the University has robust arrangements for securing academic standards and for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

1 Institutional context and strategic framework

1.1 Key features of the institution's context and mission

1   Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU; the University) was formed in 1993 by a merger of Glasgow Polytechnic and the Queens College Glasgow and is now Scotland's fifth largest university. The University's main campus is in central Glasgow. There are also satellite campuses in London (GCU London) and New York (GCU New York). The former is now well established and offers postgraduate provision. While GCU New York does not currently offer credit bearing activity, a range of masters degrees will be offered in 2015-16 subject to approval by the State Education Department of New York. In 2012-13 the University had a student population of 13,526 full-time equivalent (FTE) of whom 11,820 were undergraduate, 1,298 postgraduate taught and 408 postgraduate research.

2   The University is entering the final year of its 2015 strategy and is focusing on future priorities in its Strategy 2020. The University will use the goals and underpinning actions highlighted in Strategy 2020 to prioritise activity. The University vision of a 'commitment to the common good' underpins the development of organisational strategies including the Strategy for Learning (SfL). The University views engagement, integration and partnership as central to the institution's culture. Commitment to the 'common good' vision is widely understood throughout the University.

3   Development of Strategy 2020 and underpinning Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to prioritise initiatives provides a coherent approach for strategy implementation during a period of change. At the time of this ELIR, Strategy 2020 had not yet permeated into school-level plans. The University is encouraged to continue to progress their focused and coherent approach to strategy setting and implementation. The ELIR team believe there would be benefit in ensuring the aims of the new Strategic Plan are consistently reflected at school level.

4   The period since the last ELIR has seen significant change. There has been considerable investment in infrastructure, most significantly through the Heart of the Campus project, a £30 million redevelopment project designed to transform the campus, student learning environment and frontline service delivery. Additional investment in ICT has also been provided, in particular, the Integrated Student Information Systems (ISIS) project. The organisational re-structure, moving from a six to a three school structure, was undertaken. Portfolio refresh allowed the University to focus on its strengths, scale up and internationalise. There has been ambitious development of the University's approach to global reach through the establishment of the hub campuses in London and New York. Plans to establish GCU London as an autonomous school were underway at the time of the ELIR.

5   The key institutional academic policies have been revised. In particular, the SfL was established following comprehensive consultation with staff, students and external stakeholders, and is responsive to the demands of the external environment. Inclusion and internationalisation have been identified as key strategic imperatives.

6   Strategic overview of the matrix of projects and roles used to drive enhancement of the student experience is supported by recent changes to senior manager portfolios and the new Pro Vice Chancellor Learning and Teaching assuming full-time leadership for the student experience (see paragraphs 69 to 72). Strategy 2020 will support the prioritising of enhancement activities as will full implementation of the Performance Development Annual Review (PDAR) process. The move to a five year planning cycle and the establishment of high level KPIs reflected in school plans is considered, by the University, as a significant positive step to establishing shared goals and providing a framework for personal and professional development through the PDAR process.

7   The University identified the promotion and enhancement of student engagement and their strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching during a time of change as key considerations for the University and asked the ELIR team to consider these areas during the review. These themes are reflected throughout this report.

1.2   Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

8   The University recognises its ambitious approach to enhancing the student learning experience, placing an emphasis on an integrated, cross-institutional, partnership approach with staff-student engagement embedded at all levels of the organisation. Staff and students are regarded as 'co-creators' of the student experience. The University identifies the learning experience as active, challenging, authentic and collaborative. This experience is reinforced at all levels within the institution and reinforced in policy, curriculum design and pedagogy. The introduction of School Officers, student representatives appointed jointly between the School and Students' Association, has improved the effectiveness of student engagement across the schools through their active involvement in initiatives such as Portfolio Refresh, co-creation of the curriculum, and development of the SfL.

9   The University's commitment to integrate and align policy and practice is evidenced by the alignment of Phase Two Portfolio Refresh with Strategy 2020. This involved reviewing and developing the curriculum to place an emphasis on graduate attributes and employability in accordance with the curriculum design principles defined in the SfL. The Student Experience Framework (SEF) defines the strategic direction for, and management of, the delivery of the GCU student experience. The Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook (QEAH) has been revised to support and underpin the implementation of the SfL and SEF, reflect new academic structures, and ensure quality enhancement processes remain fit for purpose as academic structures change.

10   The University's Internationalisation Strategy sets out key priorities. These include strengthening existing partnerships, increasing international student numbers, growing student exchange activity, and establishing more research collaborations. The University has targeted geographical regions where it will expand its global network and form new transnational educational partnerships. The London and Glasgow campuses provide a focus for recruiting international students who are already in the UK. There is an emphasis on direct recruitment, the development of global hubs, a focused approach to partnership management, and a commitment to enhanced online support. The University seeks to maintain a commitment to an excellent international student experience.

11   A number of new frameworks, strategies and partnerships are in the process of being implemented and evaluated. Data from quality assurance mechanisms is used to measure the impact of change. Deans' Group meetings, which include the newly appointed Dean GCU London, will play a key role in the sharing of good practice and ensuring consistency of approach in implementing the University's strategies across the schools.

12   The Engage initiative, a cross-university initiative led jointly by the GCU Learning Enhancement and Academic Development department (GCU LEAD) and the Student Experience Directorate and working in partnership with the Students' Association is key to the University's successful strategy implementation. Driven by SfL and SEF, it utilises a team partnership approach to co-construct a cross-institutional understanding of the distinctive nature of the GCU student experience. This approach ensures staff and student contribution to strategy policy and practice as well as institution-wide dissemination and implementation.

13   The University has taken a strategic approach to addressing areas for development highlighted in the last ELIR: feedback on assessment, management information, annual monitoring, and changes to the Enhancement-led Internal Review process. These areas are addressed throughout the report.

1.3   Effectiveness of the approach to implementing strategies

14   The University's vision, 'commitment to the Common Good', is reflected across the institution in its strategies and in the engagement by staff and students. The vision acts as a driver for activity and is reflected in the culture of the organisation.

15   The University has an effective approach to implementing strategies and there is a clear link between strategy, planning and student success. This is evident in the link between implementation of the SfL, SEF and accompanying increase in achievement of the University's KPIs. This provides a quantitative evidence base that reflects a positive impact on progression, retention and completion since the last ELIR without compromising the University's commitment to widening access.

16   Since the previous ELIR, the University has made positive progress in ensuring consistency of practice across the institution, for example through the revised PDAR process, school boards, the Deans' Group and the work of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Network (LTQEN). The University is encouraged to continue promoting work in this area to ensure equivalence of student experience across schools and campuses.

2   Enhancing the student learning experience

2.1   Composition and key trends in the student population, including typical routes into and through the institution

17   The University has a socially diverse student population. In 2012-13, eight per cent of the total student population was international students, three per cent was EU students and four per cent was Rest of the UK (RUK) students. These proportions have remained relatively constant over that last 4 years. The overall balance between undergraduate and postgraduate students across the period has remained relatively stable at 87 per cent undergraduate, 9.5 per cent postgraduate taught and 3.5 per cent postgraduate research in 2012-13. Over the same period, research students have increased from 310 to 408 FTE.

18   The University offers flexible routes into programmes and has seen a significant increase in the number of HNC and HND students articulating into years 2 and 3 of its undergraduate programmes, from 490 FTE in 2011-12 to 834 in 2012-13. The Scottish Funding Council awarded the University an additional 157 articulation places for the academic year 2013-14. These places are delivered in partnership with local colleges and support for transition provided through the University's College Connect Academy. Data suggests the University has increased the proportion of entrants from a disadvantaged background from 32 per cent of the total student population to 34 per cent in 2014.

19   The University highlighted that data indicates a trend of improvement across a range of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) performance indicators, in particular, narrowing the gap in performance between students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and the overall student population. The University has identified its student demographic and city centre location as key challenges with regard to student engagement: 26 per cent of the University's most deprived students (MD20 students) work more than 21 hours a week in addition to their studies. The University is increasingly using data on demographics as an analytical tool to identify and establish interventions, for example, the Outreach and Community Engagement department deliver a number of programmes including the Advanced Higher Hub to support transition from schools to higher education and the Caledonian Club which will be rolled-out to widen access to the London and New York campuses (see paragraph 28).

Postgraduate students

20   While the overall proportion of international, EU and RUK students has remained relatively constant, the number of Scottish domiciled postgraduate taught students has fallen from 1,760 in 2010-11 to 1,298 in 2012-13. The University faced challenges in the recruitment of these students following changes to the funding of postgraduate study in Scotland. The opening of a branch campus in London, which delivers postgraduate taught programmes and the development of GCU New York are aimed at diversifying the student population, increasing master's provision and extending the University's global reach.

21   The University's revised Research Strategy, approved in June 2014, includes plans for an increase in postgraduate research students (from 500 to 1,000) over the five year planning period. This significant shift in student population will require further strengthening and re-focusing of capacity and resource. The role of the Graduate School and development of a staff and student research community have been identified as key priorities to supporting expansion.

International students

22   The proportion of international students has remained stable at 8 per cent of the total student population over the last four years. Support for international students' transition into education is provided by the International Student Support Department and includes a number of academic access programmes and English language classes. In addition, there is a joint venture between the INTO University Partnerships and GCU which intends to ensure an enhanced provision for international students wishing to pursue their studies either at undergraduate or postgraduate level at the University or other higher education institutions in Scotland.

23   The Global Perspectives Project is the strategic change initiative for internationalisation of the curriculum led by GCU LEAD (see paragraph 40). This project supports academic staff in embedding international and intercultural aspects in all programmes. Steps have been taken to meet the needs of students from different backgrounds in relation to teaching methods and through training for teaching staff.

Discussion with staff and students during the ELIR visit confirmed the curriculum has been informed and enhanced by the engagement of international students. Evidence acquired through the International Student Barometer provides evidence of the Internationalisation Strategy having a positive impact on the international student experience.

2.2   Supporting equality and diversity in the student population

Equality and diversity

24   The University has an effective approach to supporting equality and diversity, linked to its vision of being a university for the common good. This focus on equality and diversity is reflected in the SfL (see paragraph 9) and evidenced in the implementation of the Dignity at Work and Study policy, which sets out the University's aim to provide an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Access, inclusion and excellence are enshrined in the University's mission statement and reflected in the student population. The University's Equality Outcomes Framework defines a series of actions that aim to mainstream and embed equality and diversity throughout the institution. The Flexible, Accessible, Inclusive and Relevant (FAIR) curriculum project works in partnership with school and support services to support the SfL and Equality Outcomes Framework

25   The University's College Connect strategy continues to support the engagement and transition of articulating students. The Strategy seeks to develop the University's relationship with partner colleges and aims to increase the number of students coming to the University through the articulation route from 610 to 1,000 in 2016-17, representing 30 per cent of their undergraduate intake.

26   This approach to equality and diversity provided by the Equality Outcomes Framework is cascaded down through the University and supported by staff equality champions in each department. Equality champions work with academic advisors and the support services provided by Learning Development Centres (LDCs) (see paragraph 49) to understand the needs of the diverse range of students and provide support, including for those with disability.

Widening participation

27   HESA data indicates that 34 per cent of the University's students came from disadvantaged backgrounds in the 2012-13 academic year.

28   The Caledonian Club was identified by students in discussion with the ELIR team as an important and effective dimension for engagement. It is a key widening participation and community engagement initiative which works with local communities in a structured way to address lower than average rates of progression to university. This approach provides an opportunity for the University's students, recruited from all schools, to take on the role of Caledonian Club student mentor. This role is linked to the University's Student Leadership Programme (SLP), the GCU Students' Association's leadership and employability award designed to develop leadership, communication and teamwork skills.

29   The Advanced Higher Hub delivers advanced higher awards to senior school pupils from the University's partner schools and is based on the Glasgow campus. The Hub provides pupils with full access to all University facilities and the chance to experience student life. This approach supports transition into higher education and inspires pupil confidence in their abilities and skills to cope with university life.

30   The University's Schools and Colleges Engagement and Transition Team (SCETT) provides support to ensure senior secondary school and college students, applying to the

University from the University's partner schools and colleges, develop the personal resources needed to gain the maximum benefit from their university studies. This is achieved by targeted school and college programmes with a focus on awareness raising and early engagement.

31   The University ensures these initiatives interface effectively with taught programmes within the University's schools.

GCU London students

32   The University provides support for GCU London students via online resources available in the virtual learning environment, GCULearn. Academic staff, support staff from the careers service, and student officers provide support for the GCU London postgraduate student community. This is achieved using online technologies for student services, including the library, Skype and visiting staff. For example, the Glasgow-based careers service populate the resource base in partnership with GCU London staff, provide VC sessions, take email enquiries and video conference interviews. This is supported by structured visits to the London campus. The University recognises the need to enhance provision of support services for GCU London students and highlighted enhancement of the GCU London careers service as an area for development.

33   Postgraduate students on the London campus engage with Glasgow-based teaching staff through flying faculty and electronically and would welcome the opportunity for more direct face to face interaction, particularly in relation to assessment feedback.

2.3   Engaging and supporting students in their learning

Partnership approach to student engagement

34   There is clear evidence of a partnership between students and staff at the University, particularly with undergraduate students. The student experience at the University is linked to the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and evidenced in the University's mapping against the Quality Code.

35   Engage, the cross-university initiative for enhancing the student experience through partnership working, is based on the sparqs framework for student engagement. The Engage initiative is led by the student experience directorate and GCU LEAD, the University's central academic department which directs and supports academic development and enhanced approaches to learning, teaching, assessment, participation and progression. Engage works closely with the Students' Association, academic schools and professional support services to promote cross-university understanding of student engagement through a defined programme of activity.

36   The University's partnership approach is evident through effective working relationship with the Students' Association and student-led initiatives such as the teaching awards and Student Leadership programme. The Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE) parallels the staff-led LTQEN and operates in collaboration with the Students' Association. While SAGE is at an early stage of development, it provides a useful tool for engagement and has the potential to positively impact upon the student experience by capturing and reporting on the views of all the University's students.

37   The University has an effective student representation structure, delivering student representation on all key University and school committees on the Glasgow and London campuses. Representation is provided by formally appointed class representatives and school officers. Feedback from students during the ELIR confirmed they consider

themselves part of University consultations on policy and strategy.

38   The ELIR team learned from discussion with senior staff and formal student representatives that these formal student representation structures and engagement processes relate to the University's students in Glasgow and London. While the University has collaboration and accreditation arrangements with a number of institutions such as Caledonian College of Engineering (CCE) Oman, formal feedback from students in these institutions does not feed in to the University's representative and enhancement structures. To further enhance the student experience, consideration should be taken to ensure parity of the student experience at all locations such as other campuses or institutions with collaborative arrangements, including postgraduate students

Internationalisation of the student experience

39   Internationalisation of the student experience is identified as an area of positive practice. The SfL aims to create global citizens to contribute economically and socially to the communities they serve. The University encourages and supports students to have an international experience by promoting student mobility through a range of study-abroad opportunities such as Erasmus and links with partner institutions in other countries. In discussion with the ELIR team, students highlighted many positive study abroad experiences. A range of opportunities are offered to students on most programmes to study abroad, with events in place to encourage students to take up study abroad.

40   The University also engages students by internationalising the curriculum, for example through the strategic initiative, Global Perspectives, which supports staff in embedding international aspects within the curriculum. This initiative has had a successful pilot and is managed by GCU LEAD. A range of resources has been developed including defined principles for an internationalised curriculum and self-assessment and audit tools.

41   In addition, the University is a Global Network Member of the Collaborative On-line International Learning (COIL) community. The COIL approach has the potential to connect students and staff from 43 institutions in 14 countries using internet-based tools. COIL also supports use of blended learning and technologies, such as use of video capture in teaching and learning. A COIL pilot in 2014-15 is intended to impact on each school.

Student feedback

42   The University provides formal and informal mechanisms for gathering feedback from students, including student representatives, student-staff consultative groups (SSCGs) and use of internal and external surveys. Student feedback is actively taken into account in the design and development of the curriculum: output from SSCGs is considered by programme boards and student representation is embedded in programme board membership. During the ELIR visit, students were able to identify examples of their feedback initiating change such as the introduction of role play in nursing modules and rescheduling building work on the Glasgow campus to ensure the most disruptive work was completed out with key study times.

43   Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) are used and acted upon but both the format and content of MEQs varies across the institution. The University is working to achieve a more consistent approach to module evaluation through its pilot of an automated survey tool.

44   While there is evidence of effective use being made of National Student Survey (NSS) data, there is less evidence of the use of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES). Postgraduate

taught and research students were also less familiar with SSCGs and representative structures than those studying at undergraduate level.

45   Monitoring and reflection of the learning experience is followed through in Annual Programme Analysis (APA) and then used to inform ongoing programme development, for example, through the mapping of assessment to avoid overload.

Learning technologies

46   There is evidence of effective use of learning technologies to support and engage students in their learning. Online library support and a number of support services are also accessible online.

47   The University's approach to adopting technology to enhance learning, teaching and assessment is defined in the SfL and led by the blended learning team at GCU LEAD. Classroom and technology-based approaches are combined to develop student workplace and life skills, and include the use of blogs and wikis as formative coursework and to enhance communication with students on placement, and exploration of the impact of mobile technology for student feedback. The University has identified areas for further development such as e-assessment and e-submission policy development with related actions and targets defined in the Blended Learning Roadmap.

48   The virtual learning environment, GCULearn, is used to host teaching materials, assessments and discussion boards, and facilitate student engagement. Some variability in staff engagement with the VLE and associated learning technologies has been identified and is being addressed through training, sharing best practice and the use of Blended Learning Champions to introduce new and innovative ways of learning.

Student support

49   There is an effective approach to student support at the University. Since the 2011 ELIR, student support has been restructured and devolved to school level, with the formation of Learning Development Centres (LDCs). LDCs are embedded within each school to provide support for students that is contextualised, targeted and accessible. Services available to students through LDCs include academic writing support for home and international students, ICT support, advice on study skills and guidance for students. The academic development tutor role is key, providing discipline-specific support working in partnership with the programme and module teams to embed support within the curriculum. There is evidence of good practice being shared between LDCs. The University identified this devolved model of student support as having a significant positive impact on achievement, retention and progression. This is reflected in the University's recent thematic review of GCU LDCs and in feedback from staff and students during the ELIR. Students now engage with LDCs to enhance their understanding and performance, not simply to address perceived weaknesses. The University has recognised there will be value in reviewing the sustainability of this model as increasing numbers of students seek to access the service.

50   The academic advising process supports students in developing personal, academic and professional skills at the University. The University uses the PPACT (Personal, Professional, Academically informed, Consolidated, Transitional) standard of academic advising, developed in response to cross-university consultation. The model, introduced across the University in 2013, covers academic and social matters and seeks to develop a strong sense of belonging in all students. The PPACT standard provides staff with a clear set of guidance for advising students, ensuring parity of provision. The standard supports partnership working between students and staff by implementing a series of regular meetings between the student and their academic advisor to identify and review

interventions and opportunities. Staff are positive about this model of academic advising, and recognise benefits of the formalised approach including ample training for advisors and positives in building relationships with students.

51   A range of support mechanisms are promoted across the University, such as the Positive Living and Disability Team, the Careers Centre, and International Student Support team. Mentoring and peer support is also provided through MAPS@GCU, which can help students adapt and engage with their new environment by offering a point of contact, reassurance, information and advice.

Research student experience

52   The revised Research Strategy, approved in 2014, and associated plans to double research student numbers by 2020 place an increased focus on the research student experience. The University described the Graduate School as being at the heart of the research community, providing specific support for research students including induction, development workshops, and research writing skills support. Allocating coordination of postgraduate training and development to the Graduate School has seen an increase in completion rates for full-time doctoral students to above the sector average over the last planning period. While postgraduate research students commented positively on the Graduate School provision and engage with existing structures, they also stated that they often form their own community groups for additional social support. Postgraduate research students suggested to the ELIR team that they would welcome more social and formal opportunities to meet and liaise with all research students on a departmental and cross-disciplinary basis.

53   The ELIR team learned from discussion with research students that the research student experience across the University's three schools often varies. These students provided examples of variation in the flexibility of funding for conference attendance, training opportunities for those who teach, and the availability of workspace for group work. The ELIR team heard from senior staff that the University plans to address these workspace issues by building new study spaces.

54   The ELIR team recognised that levels of learning and staff resources adequately support the current research student population. However, discussions with postgraduate research students and senior staff highlighted the need to review learning resources and supervisory staff numbers to ensure adequate space and supervision for a 100 per cent increase in the research student population. The ELIR team learned from senior staff that the University is actively planning to address the need for an increase in supervisory staff numbers, and is willing to revisit their postgraduate research student targets if necessary.

55   Discussion with postgraduate research students indicated formal representative structures at postgraduate research level are not as clear or established as those at undergraduate level. While postgraduate research students were aware of the student representative system, there was less knowledge of, and engagement with, the SAGE and SSCG. Similarly, engagement with, and use of, PRES and PTES as external mechanisms for gathering student feedback were not as extensively used as the NSS in the undergraduate community. The planned increase in research student numbers means that the University should review the representative structures for postgraduate research students.

56   The University is asked to ensure the availability of appropriate physical space, learning resources and staff resources to provide supervision in support of the research student population, particularly in view of the strategic intention to double research student numbers by 2020.

2.4   Approaches to promoting the development of graduate attributes, including employability

57   The SfL aims to develop attributes linked to employability and career development and places employability skills for global citizens as a core principle for curriculum design. This focus on employability is also reflected in the SEF, where employability at every level of study is a priority theme. This approach is reinforced by embedding employability within portfolio and curriculum design. The Real WoRLD (Realising work-related learning diffusion) project aims to enhance students' employability skills through giving them the opportunity to solve real-world problems during their studies.

58   The University's approach to embedding graduate attributes and employability within the student learning experience is highlighted as an area of positive practice. This was confirmed by staff and students during discussions with the ELIR team. The University's employment rate of 95 per cent, published in 2014, placed the University as the fourth top University in Scotland for employment of graduates.

59   The University has a well established strategic partnership with industry and professional bodies aimed at developing employability and graduate attributes as well as improving employment statistics. This approach is positively received by students and identified by staff as a key contributor to student success. Students highlighted examples including positive placement experiences and guest speakers from organisations engaging with students. This 'work-ready' dimension of the GCU learning experience is recognised and valued by staff and students, and cited as a reason many students choose to study at the University.

60   Support services also contribute to the development of employability attributes. Academic development tutors have a role through the academic advising standard PPACT to ensure students consider professional career planning and employability. While key to widening access, the Caledonian Club also plays a part in developing employability skills by appointing students as mentors and providing part-time job opportunities to engage with the community.

61   The University has engaged with sector work in the area of employability, including the national Enhancement Theme, Graduates for the 21st Century (see paragraph 76). This can be seen through the development of five key graduate attributes produced by the University in response to the Enhancement Theme, which set out the knowledge, capabilities and values that students develop during their time at University.

2.5   Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

62   The University has an effective approach to enhancing the student experience. The SfL is the basis for a strategic, consistent and collaborative approach to enhancing learning and teaching. Enhancement of the student learning experience is embedded at programme level through implementation of the SfL curriculum design principles. There is clear evidence of a partnership between the University and its undergraduate students. This can been seen in a variety of ways including student engagement with the key quality assurance and enhancement processes, the relationship with the Students' Association and

the wider representation arrangements, and the range of student-led initiatives, such as the SAGE.

63   The University demonstrates a positive and successful approach to promoting widening participation and supporting a wide variety of student transitions into the institution. This is demonstrated through its progression and retention data and by the University's wide range of activities, including implementation of its College Connect Strategy, designed to enhance and support students articulating form college to the University, and the Caledonian Club, which provides targeted community engagement as well as an opportunity for current University students to act as mentors for school pupils.

64   LDCs are embedded within each school to provide support for students that is contextualised, targeted and accessible. There is sharing of experience between the three LDCs to further support the enhancement-led approach. The Academic Development Tutor role is key in this context, providing discipline-specific support and working in partnership with programme teams. As the University has recognised, there will be value in reviewing the sustainability of this model as increasing numbers of students seek to access the service.

65   The University displays a strong commitment to employability. Employability skills and graduate attributes are embedded in the University's SfL curriculum design principles which drive curriculum development and delivery. The University has strong links with business and industry which benefit its students. The commitment to employability is supported by the PPACT standard of academic advising. This standard ensures each student engages with employability skills and related opportunities that are appropriate to their study and career ambitions.

66   The University encourages and supports the international experience of its students through a variety of means including promoting student mobility and embedding internationalisation in the curriculum by engaging students in international projects and drawing on international case studies and perspectives. Following a successful Global Perspectives pilot project, the University plans to implement a range of tools across the institution, including the COIL approach to 'internationalisation at home'.

67   The University is asked to continue to develop the research student experience in a range of ways including reviewing the effectiveness of the structures and systems in place aimed at establishing a research community. The University should ensure the availability of appropriate physical space, learning resources and staff resources to provide supervision in support of the research student population, particularly in view of the strategic intention to double research student numbers by 2020. The University should also review the representative structures and arrangements for responding to the research student voice to ensure these are as effective as those in place for the undergraduate student population.

3   Enhancement in learning and teaching

3.1   Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice

68   Overall, the University has an effective approach to identifying and sharing good practice. The University comprises three schools, with the GCU London campus developing as a fourth school. The identification and sharing of good practice takes place at a number of levels and through a variety of mechanisms and vehicles both within and across schools and through pan-University approaches. The range and diversity of these mechanisms reflects a progressive and developmental approach to sharing and disseminating good practice which is reflective and enhancement-focused.

69   A number of these mechanisms are systematically embedded in the structures and processes of the University's approach to enhancement, including GCU LEAD, the LTQEN and annual monitoring. There are also a number of developing topic-related mechanisms such as annual School Learning & Teaching events, the Caledonian Scholars scheme, sessions over lunch (known as 'brown bag' sessions) and Teaching Awards. There are also a number of vehicles whose primary purpose is not dissemination but whose activities include sharing and promoting good practice, such as the LDCs.

70   GCU LEAD is the University's central academic department which directs and supports the development of academic development and enhanced approaches to learning, teaching, assessment, participation and progression. There have been a variety of models of interaction between the schools and GCU LEAD, with the current approach focused on a matrix model, with themes reflecting priorities within the SfL. Current activities include Academic Advising, Blended Learning, Employability and Internationalisation. Each activity has a lead, and GCU LEAD staff work actively within the schools. Generic approaches, such as PPACT, are developed by GCU LEAD and implemented as appropriate within each school.

71   GCU LEAD also facilitates and supports the University-wide Caledonian Scholars and Associates initiative which aims to encourage scholarship and innovation in learning and teaching through a distributive leadership model. The initiative forms part of GCU's AcceleRATE Framework for continuing professional development in learning and teaching. Caledonian Scholars meet once a trimester to discuss their activities and it is anticipated that outputs from their work will be implemented across the institution, as appropriate. A developing team approach has the potential to lead to further embedding of practice. The work of GCU LEAD also extends to other GCU campuses through, for example, GCU LEAD staff attending the London campus and the development of an online version of the Postgraduate Certificate Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PgC LTHE) with potential for delivery worldwide.

72   The LTQEN is an inclusive group which operates as an issues-based and discussion-driven forum. It is a relatively new development in the University and, although it is not part of the formal governance structure, it is a formally constituted group with co-chairs, agendas and minutes/action points. The LQTEN describes itself as a 'forum where members can share their ideas' which works 'to enable cross fertilisation of current effective practice and exploit opportunities to develop new approaches based on sharing of perspectives, approaches and experience'. The inclusive nature of this approach ensures engagement from a wider group of colleagues than those who can participate as part of a formal committee. The group appears to be developing a role as an advisory body which deals with topics such as the introduction of peer review, and provides scope for discussion, before relevant points are then reported to the Learning and Teaching Sub Committee (LTSC). It is anticipated that the role of the LTQEN to highlight good practice will provide an opportunity to embed such practice across the institution. The systematic capture of good practice is being facilitated through issues being raised with, and papers submitted to, LTSC as appropriate. It is intended that an annual overview report will also go to LTSC. The structure of the LTQEN, the processes being developed around its operation, and the clear link to LTSC give it the potential to develop as an inclusive and focused vehicle, not just for sharing but also embedding good practice across the University. A similar vehicle in the field of research, Research Programmes Enhancement Committee (RPEC), also exists but the ELIR team learned that its position within the governance structure was under review.

73   Annual monitoring provides an effective vehicle for the identification of good practice within and across programmes, where the theme of professional practice comes through strongly. The reporting format encourages the identification of examples of good

practice for distribution to the wider academic community.

74   At school level there are a number of vehicles to support the sharing and embedding of good practice. These include school celebration events, and a champions' model for areas such as blended learning. The blended learning champions work with staff to provide support for consistency of practice across the institution and in support of equivalence in learning opportunities through, for example, the establishment of a minimum presence for each subject area on the VLE. All schools hold annual learning and teaching events which are used by academic and learning support staff to share practice. Academic Development Tutors (ADTs) use these events as a vehicle to communicate their work to staff and students across their respective school.

75   The activities and outputs of the range of vehicles and mechanisms to share and disseminate good practice are communicated in a variety of ways including the GCU LEAD website, the staff portal GCYou and through formal and informal meeting structures. Opportunities to celebrate approaches to learning across schools, for example in e-learning, also raise the profile of areas of practice to staff and students as do the Principal's Learning and Teaching Awards.

3.2   Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity

76   The University has a history of very positive engagement with the national Enhancement Themes. The concept of graduate attributes has had a significant impact across the institution resulting in graduate attributes being clearly identified and embedded in curriculum design. Employability is another topic which has become similarly embedded throughout the curriculum from level one upwards and plays a key role in bringing authentic learning opportunities to the student experience through site visits, engagement with employers, work-based learning opportunities and real-world examples. The previous Enhancement Theme, Developing and Supporting the Curriculum has had a particularly significant impact through its articulation with the development of the SfL which impacts across GGU. The current Theme, Student Transitions, which is still in its early stages, resonates with activity already underway, including approaches to employability and graduate attributes.

3.3   Engaging and supporting staff

77   The importance placed on engaging and supporting staff in the enhancement of learning and teaching at the University is reflected in the range of opportunities available for this purpose, including the devolution of LDCs to the school level, the establishment of an HEA-accredited CPD Framework, PDAR and other vehicles, which although not focused solely or directly on learning and teaching can be used as enhancement-led development tools for this purpose, such as People Achieving Collaborative Excellence (PACE), which proved a highly effective approach in dealing with a challenging library issue. Funding is also available to support learning and teaching projects including Caledonian Scholars and Senior Scholars, and provides opportunities for pan-University recognition at the highest level through the Principal's Award for Teaching.

78   AcceleRATE offers two routes for continuing professional development (CPD). The first route is credit-bearing programmes that lead to either the award of Post Experience Certificate in Supporting Student Learning or Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Achievement of these awards provides eligibility for professional recognition as an Associate Fellow or Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. This certificate route is aimed at new and inexperienced staff and those in student support roles. Another route is based on Recognition of Prior Informal Learning and is aimed

at experienced staff seeking recognition in any of the four HEA Fellowship categories - Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow and Principal Fellow. One staff member has recently achieved Senior Fellowship status with the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The Caledonian Scholars scheme also articulates with the AcceleRATE CPD Framework.

79   The LDCs were established in 2011 and underwent Thematic Review in 2014. The University has identified student engagement as a key challenge and a number of mechanisms are in place to support staff in developing their approach to engaging students, with the LDCs providing an effective approach to engaging students from across the institution. The LDC structure follows a devolved model and ADTs work closely with programme teams at the school level. The impact of the LDCs has been strengthened and enhanced by this inclusive approach where ADTs are increasingly involved as part of local teaching teams. The activities of the LDCs provide evidence of a partnership-based and enhancement-led approach to development, and have been described as representing a 'fusion of learning'. Each School Associate Dean, Learning, Teaching and Quality (ADLTQ) meets with the LDC Director and staff regularly and LDC Directors now meet together on a regular basis. There would be benefit in the University reflecting on the re-introduction of a pan-University LDC forum, as recommended in LDC Thematic Review, in order to further enhance the sharing and embedding of good practice from the LDCs.

80   The latest revision of induction for new staff is viewed positively with comments made by staff members on a range of ongoing supportive approaches for new staff, including mentoring and peer review of teaching; although there is some variation across the schools. A pan-University peer review scheme was under development at the time of the ELIR visit.

81   The PDAR is deemed to be a widely accepted pan-University initiative and is identified as playing a critical role in staff development, through goal setting and reviewing with line managers. Workload model allocation discussions are linked directly to the PDAR. The transparency of, and feedback from, the process are valued by staff and overall the PDAR is regarded as working well. In discussion with the ELIR team, staff indicated that significant professional and personal development is fostered through this approach.

82   Projects and pilot activities, including the COIL and Flexible, Accessible, Inclusive and Relevant curriculum (FAIR) are also valued by staff. PGC LTHE is regarded as very useful, providing a network and community of practice across the University.

83   Postgraduate students who teach - graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) - undertake a wide range of teaching and assessment activities across the University. Students are invited to teach, enjoy it, and are informally mentored in the role by the module tutors. Formal training opportunities are provided through GCU LEAD. GTAs have capacity to impact on the undergraduate student experience which places significant importance on their being supported in the role. This has implications for the encouraged, but voluntary, rather than mandatory, nature of the training available. Postgraduate research students also act as writing support tutors and receive credit for this activity. The University is asked to establish arrangements for providing institutional oversight of the variety of roles being fulfilled by GTAs. The University should encourage GTAs to participate in the available training and development opportunities, and monitor engagement to ensure all those carrying out this role have adequate support.

3.4 Effectiveness of the approach to promoting good practice in learning and teaching

84 The range of approaches and vehicles employed to identify and share good practice and to support positive engagement with learning and teaching demonstrate an effective approach overall to promoting good practice in learning and teaching.

85 The University employs a number of embedded approaches, such as GCU LEAD and the PDAR process which reflect strategic institutional priorities in addition to local initiatives, such as school good practice events and local champion-led activities. GCU LEAD ensures the University has the capacity to continue to provide cross-institutional staff development to underpin the implementation of institutional strategies including internationalisation and academic advising. There are a range of opportunities for engagement with development opportunities for staff at all levels through the AcceleRATE CPD Framework, including credit-bearing qualifications, professional recognition for excellence in learning and teaching, and continuing development through the Caledonian Scholars and Senior Scholars initiative.

86 The University recognised ongoing refinement of the workload allocation model to support staff in engaging with development opportunities, and scholarship activities in relation to learning and teaching will continue to grow the community of practice and knowledge in this area. Further roll-out of project and pilot schemes that are demonstrating positive engagement and outcomes, such as COIL, the Feedback Enhancement Initiative and the automated survey tool pilot, will ensure that learning from these initiatives is similarly embedded across the institution. The ELIR team acknowledges the effective models currently in place will be beneficial to the roll-out and embedding of the new digital strategy.

4 Academic standards

4.1 Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards

87 In the Reflective Analysis (RA) the University noted that its approach to the management of the academic standards of its provision is designed to encourage critical reflection and enhancement of the student learning experience and that this is achieved through its committee structure, organisational management structure, and quality enhancement and assurance processes, policies and procedures. This approach was particularly evident in the University's periodic review processes, both subject-based review (ELISR) and Thematic Review (such as its recent review of its LDCs).

88 The University's framework for managing the quality enhancement and assurance of its provision and the student learning experience is set out in its comprehensive Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook (QEAH), which is available on the University's website. The University has updated and enhanced its quality enhancement and assurance procedures since the previous ELIR, these are mapped against the Quality Code and this is reflected in the updated QEAH. Staff confirmed the usefulness and accessibility of the QEAH. The consistent implementation of policies and procedures across schools is supported by the Associate Deans for Learning Teaching and Quality (ADLTQs) who are responsible for adherence with quality management processes, the implementation and embedding of the SfL and enhancement activities.

89 The quality enhancement and assurance arrangements for postgraduate research degrees are underpinned by the University's Code of Practice on Research Degrees, the Guidelines for Research Students and the Guidelines for Research Student Supervisors, which have been mapped against the Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*.

The Associate Deans for Research support the research student experience.

90   Overall, the University's committee structure makes an effective contribution to the oversight of standards and management of quality assurance and enhancement. *Senate* is the University's senior academic body; key standing committees include the Academic Policy Committee (APC), Research Committee, International Committee and school boards. There is appropriate student representation on these Committees. Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has reviewed APC and its subcommittees; LTSC has taken on additional work and its membership has been expanded and the International Steering Group redesignated as the International Committee.

91   The ELIR team considered minutes from Senate, APC, LTSC, Research Committee, school boards and programme boards. Annual overview reports arising from committees and processes help support effective institutional oversight of standards and quality assurance and enhancement processes. APC provides the main focus for strategic discussion regarding matters of policy relating to quality assurance and enhancement, while the sub-committee, LTSC, oversees the implementation of policies and procedures relating to the approval, monitoring and enhancement of the University's taught provision. At school level, school boards oversee implementation of academic policies and strategies approved by the Senate; programme boards are responsible to school boards for all aspects of programme quality enhancement and assurance. The Higher Degrees Committee (HDC) has oversight of research degrees and reports to the Senate through the Research Committee.

92   The University has robust processes for programme approval, monitoring and review which use a range of external reference points. These processes are set out in the QEAH and are mapped against the Quality Code.

93   Following initial approval to proceed by APC, programmes are approved through an approval panel which includes external membership. Guidance is provided for programme teams. The requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) are incorporated where appropriate. Programme review follows a similar process. Minutes of LTSC show careful consideration of the outcomes of programme approval and review, and of the formal responses by programme teams to the requirements and recommendations of the panel. LTSC and APC receive a useful annual overview report on the approval and review process which highlights issues for consideration and good practice, the latter being posted on the University's staff portal.

94   The Annual Monitoring process, revised from 2013-14 to be in-year rather than retrospective, is set out in the QEAH and Programme Leaders produce Annual Programme Analyses which are considered by programme and school boards; programme enhancement plans are an integral part of the process.

95   Schools, the Graduate School and GCU LEAD prepare and submit an Annual Report on Monitoring, Quality Assurance and Enhancement of Programmes and the minutes of LTSC demonstrated a thorough approach to their consideration. The Department of Governance and Quality Enhancement provides an annual overview report for consideration by LTSC and APC. Outcomes from Annual Programme Monitoring form part of the Annual Statement of Assurance to the Scottish Funding Council signed off by the Court. The ELIR team concluded that this is a robust process, reports are comprehensive and address a range of KPIs and a commentary on implementation of the SfL. Staff who met with the ELIR team commented positively on this revised approach which enables matters to be identified and addressed promptly to the benefit of the student experience and promotes greater staff engagement with the process. The revised annual monitoring system is considered to be an area of positive practice.

96   The University's ELISR process is set out in the QEAH; the University has revised its ELISR schedule since the last ELIR to better reflect its current subject groupings. Reviews are conducted on a five-year cycle. Panels include external and student membership. Self-evaluation documents produced by the subject area in preparation for the event are comprehensive and the review process is thorough, although the ELIR team noted that there was less emphasis placed on the postgraduate research experience in comparison to taught programmes. The team concluded that this process operates in line with sector expectations and clearly demonstrates the University's self-critical approach. Reports identify good practice as well as issues to be addressed and the former is shared through the University's staff portal. Action plans are produced which are considered and approved by LTSC and APC and a one-year-on follow-up visit is held to assess progress. The University is encouraged to ensure sufficient coverage of postgraduate research student experience in ELISR in order to support the institution's strategic aim in respect of postgraduate research student numbers (see paragraph 21).

97   Since 2005, the University has subsumed the review of its student-facing professional support service review into the ELISR process. The University has recently decided that this would be supplemented by a three-year programme of Thematic Review covering three themes: academic development support; student engagement; and CPD in learning and teaching. The report of the first of these reviews which considered the work of the University's LDCs was thorough and reflective. It made four recommendations concerning the strategic direction of the LDCs, their professional standing, sustainability of the model, and feedback, monitoring and evaluation of their effectiveness. The report and its action plan were approved by LTSC in January 2015.

4.2   Management of assessment

98   Overall, the University is managing its assessment processes effectively although students expressed some ongoing concerns regarding the quality and timing of assessment feedback.

99   Responsibility for assessment lies with the Senate, exercised through the deans of school and the school boards which are responsible for the conduct of the Assessment Boards. Assessment Boards are chaired by senior members of staff within schools. External examiners attend, as does a member of staff representing University governance to ensure consistency across the University. External examiners generally report satisfaction with the administration and conduct of Assessment Boards, although some would welcome more timely notification of the dates of Board meetings.

100   The University has a comprehensive set of assessment regulations and associated guidance. Assessment of students at undergraduate and postgraduate taught levels is governed by the University Assessment Regulations. The assessment of postgraduate research students is governed by the Higher Degrees Regulations. The assessment regulations for taught provision were recently reviewed, with a number of revisions being approved by the Senate in June 2014, for introduction in 2014-15. The University has highlighted the changes on its website along with a series of frequently asked questions. In discussion during ELIR, staff commented that these were relatively minor changes which had not impacted significantly on students in 2014-15. Students gave variable feedback in relation to changes; some had received communication regarding the changes and others were unaware that changes had been made.

101   Feedback on assessment was an area for development in the 2011 ELIR. The University addressed this through a Feedback for Future Learning initiative which

formed the basis of the case study submitted for the current ELIR. The University highlighted the initiative as having contributed to improvement in the 2014 NSS score. The University also acknowledges that there is a need for continued focus on improving student satisfaction with assessment feedback. The University has a three week turnaround policy. Students who met the ELIR team made variable comments in relation to feedback, some considered it had improved, others believed it took too long for feedback to reach them and was bland, although they also commented that they could follow feedback up with staff on an individual basis. The team heard from staff that the University has approached the further enhancement of assessment feedback in a number of ways including through the use of grading software and the use of additional staff support such as Graduate Teaching Assistants. The team encourages the University to build on the progress made since the previous ELIR in providing feedback to students on their assessed work to ensure greater consistency in the quality and timeliness of the feedback provided, in accordance with University policy.

4.3   Use of external reference points in managing academic standards

102   Overall, the approach is effective. The University has reviewed its policies and procedures against the Quality Code. The mapping process has demonstrated general alignment with the Quality Code but has led to enhancement of some processes and in particular those relating to external examining.

103   The University's programme design, approval, monitoring and review processes require consideration of a range of external reference points including the Quality Code, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), Subject Benchmark Statements, and PSRBs. This was evident in documentation read by the ELIR team. There is appropriate externality in approval and periodic review processes and the latter includes student representation.

104   The University has extensive links to PSRBs. In 2013-14, around 43 per cent of the University's undergraduate provision and 35 per cent of its postgraduate provision was accredited by a professional body. Approval and review of programmes is normally conducted jointly with the accreditation process and is reported and considered by LTSC.

105   The University changed its terminology in relation to external examiners in September 2013, previously referring to them as external assessors. The University's procedures for the appointment of external examiners, their role and responsibilities and consideration of their annual reports are set out in the University's Assessment Regulations and the QEAH. These procedures were revised in 2014-15. The University's process improvement initiative, People Achieving Collaborative Excellence (PACE), was utilised effectively to achieve this**.** The Department of Governance and Quality Enhancement (DGQE) is responsible for the administration and management of the process for appointing external examiners, the distribution of reports to schools for consideration and institutional oversight of reports. On appointment, external examiners receive a contract letter, an External Examiner Guidance Handbook and Assessment Regulations. In 2014-15, the University reintroduced a central face-to-face induction workshop for new external examiners.

106   External examiner report on a standard report pro forma which has recently been revised. External examiner reports seen by the ELIR team confirmed that programmes are aligned with external reference points such as subject benchmarks and that the standards achieved by the students are comparable with other UK higher education institutions. A commentary on external examiner reports forms part of the Annual Programme Analysis. Programme boards are responsible for ensuring that External Examiners receive feedback on their reports. The DGQE considers external examiners report and prepares an overview

report on external examiner comments for the LTSC and the APC. The University is committed to the publication of external examiner reports and the team was told by senior staff that this will be taken forward in 2015.

107   In addition from 2014-15, External Examiner nominations have been considered and approved by the External Examiner Approval Panel (EEAP) which reports to LTSC. The set of minutes available at the time of the ELIR visit demonstrated that the panel was operating appropriately and that processes are in line with the expectations of the Quality Code. However, the ELIR team noted that there were still instances in recent documentation of reference to external assessors rather than examiners, that minutes of one school board apparently showed that it was approving external examiners and extensions to their contracts and that there was reference to an External Assessors Subcommittee on the University's website. The ELIR team recognised that the changes to processes and terminology in this area were recent, but would encourage the University to expedite the consistent use of nomenclature and the embedding of its new policies, procedures and structures.

4.4   Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

108   Overall, the University's committee structure makes an effective contribution to the oversight of standards and management of quality assurance and enhancement. The University's Quality Enhancement and Assurance Framework is reviewed regularly. Mapping of processes and procedures against the Quality Code has confirmed that they are aligned with the expectations and indicators with some areas identified for enhancement. The revised structures and processes relating to external examining, while appropriate, would benefit from further embedding.

109   The University has robust, well established enhancement and assurance processes for programme approval, monitoring and periodic review. There is evidence of student engagement with quality and enhancement processes, promotion of an active culture of self-reflection and enhancement, and appropriate levels of externality embedded in processes. The University's revised annual monitoring system enables matters to be identified and addressed promptly to the benefit of the student experience and promotes greater staff engagement with the process, and is a feature of positive practice. The ELISR process is thorough and operates in line with sector expectations, although it gives less consideration to the postgraduate research student experience than to that of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. The revised Thematic Review process is making a useful contribution to the University's quality assurance and enhancement agenda.

110   The ELIR team found that the University was making effective use of external reference points and meeting the expectations of the Quality Code. The University's approach would be enhanced by the further embedding of its new processes and procedures in relation to external examiners and the more consistent usage of its revised terminology.

111   Since the 2011 ELIR, progress in providing students with assessment feedback has been made, ensuring greater consistency in the quality and timeliness of the feedback provided. The University is encouraged to build upon progress to date.

112   The ELIR team concludes that the University has effective and comprehensive arrangements for maintaining, monitoring and reviewing academic standards.

5 Self-evaluation and management of information

5.1 Key features of the institution's approach

113 In the RA, the University emphasised the importance of self-critical analysis in effective quality enhancement and assurance processes. The ELIR team saw opportunities for self-critical analysis provided through the University's monitoring and periodic review processes: ELISR and Thematic Review. These processes involve staff, students and external participants, and reflect the University's partnership approach which students confirmed in meetings with the team.

114 The University has also utilised its process improvement initiative, People Achieving Collaborative Excellence (PACE), effectively to encourage staff to develop a wide range of qualitative and quantitative measures and to reflect on these to effect change. For example in relation to changes to its external examining procedures

115 The University evaluates its performance against institutional KPIs approved by the Court. KPI updates are submitted to the Executive Board and comprehensive annual reports are presented to the Court. KPIs are used in the annual strategic and financial planning processes for schools and professional support departments. The University has utilised its management information effectively to improve its performance against its KPIs relating to progression and retention.

116 At programme and school level, opportunities for self-evaluation are built into the University's monitoring and review processes, for example, the production of a Self-Evaluation Document for ELISR which analyses and responds to a range of external and internal benchmarking data and the revised Annual Programme Monitoring process which requires programme teams to reflect on a range of KPIs provided by the Strategy and Planning Department and to comment on implementation of the SfL. Advice and guidance on self-reflection is incorporated into the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook.

117 Annual Programme Analyses are considered by programme and school boards. Schools, the Graduate School and GCU LEAD prepare and submit an Annual Report on Monitoring, Quality Assurance and Enhancement of Programmes to LTSC. The DGQE provides an annual overview report for consideration by LTSC and APC. These various reports, together with the agendas and minutes of the Senate and its standing committees, demonstrate that the University has an effective system for enhancing the learning experience of its students. There is evidence at all levels of the University of a culture of self-reflection which promotes enhancement as well as addressing areas in need of improvement.

118 The University is working towards improving the production of, and access to, management information through the implementation of a business intelligence tool and a system of standardised and integrated reports across the student life cycle. This is supported by the Information Services Department. The University's current student information system, ISIS, was rolled out in June 2010; the RA noted that considerable effort by all parts of the institution has been made to ensure that the system is now fully functional, and this was reflected in discussions with staff. First line user support is provided through the Operational Business Support Unit (OBSU). In addition the University operates an ISIS Senior User Group and a number of user forums to support discussion and communication. The University is currently developing a series of online training modules and video-casts to support training in relation to the system. Staff confirmed that data utilised in the annual monitoring process is made available through the GCYou staff portal, that it is both much improved and is now 'trusted' as the single source of accurate data. The University

confirmed that work is ongoing in relation to systems integration, facilitation of the extraction of specific data sets, paperless assessment boards and timetabling. The ELIR team encourages the University to continue making progress to improve the availability and accessibility of data and information to support its evaluative processes.

119   The ELIR team concluded that the University's approach to self-evaluation and the management of information meet sector expectations including the Scottish Funding Council guidance and the Quality Code.

5.2   Commentary on the advance information set

120   The University provided an advance information set, as well as other additional information before and during the ELIR visits, which helped the ELIR team to develop an understanding of the University's arrangements. From the information provided, the team recognises that the University has appropriate arrangements in place for maintaining, monitoring and reviewing academic standards, and for assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience. These arrangements include appropriate externality and there is strong student engagement. The institution's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook is subject to regular review and the University has undertaken a comprehensive mapping of its processes against the Quality Code.

5.3   Use of external reference points in self-evaluation

121   In the RA the University stated that the use of external reference points to support and encourage self-evaluation is central to the University's approach. The University makes use of a range of external reference points to support its Quality Assurance and Enhancement policies and procedures; these include Subject Benchmark Statements, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), external examiners and subject experts. The University has engaged actively with the national Enhancement Themes.

122   The Higher Education Academy (HEA) provides an external reference point for the University in the area of continuing professional development (CPD) in learning and teaching, through the provision of HEA-accredited CPD opportunities, fully articulated with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF).

123   The University makes effective use of feedback from external surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and the International Student Barometer (ISB) to enhance its student learning experience; use of feedback from the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Student Experience (PRES) was less extensive in the evidence provided to the team. The University is currently reviewing its approach to student surveys.

124   The ELIR team concludes that the University is meeting sector expectations in the range of reference points it utilises.

5.4   Management of public information

125   The University's Marketing and Communications Department supports the provision of public information. The main delivery of public information is through the University's website which is overseen by the Digital Team based in the Marketing and Communications Department. Named staff within academic and professional support departments are responsible for generating content. The University is planning to update its website and its staff portal. The ELIR team noted that the website does contain some inaccuracies and the GCYou staff portal is inconsistently populated by the schools. The University has recently

appointed a Chief Information Officer whose role includes assisting in the updating of its internal and external websites.

126   A team within the Strategy and Planning departments manages the Key Information Sets (KIS). The team works in collaboration with schools and other departments. Schools and the Senate receive a preview of KIS data and an analysis of the outcomes of KIS is disseminated. Annual 'roadshows' and training sessions are held to raise awareness of KIS and the roles and responsibilities of different departments in relation to KIS.

127   Students are provided with module and programme handbooks; these are usually provided online. Students who met the ELIR team confirmed that they found them useful and generally accurate although they noted that sometimes they contained minor errors, such as incorrect dates. The University sets out standard expectations regarding the content of student programme handbooks, which are produced by the schools. A template is provided in the QEAH.

128   Overall, the University is managing its public information appropriately. As it updates its website the ELIR team would encourage the University to ensure all information keeps pace with internal changes and that the GCYou staff portal is populated in a more consistent manner.

5.5   Effectiveness of the approach to self-evaluation and management of information

129   The University has an effective approach to self-evaluation and is making appropriate use of management of information to support its quality processes.

130   The University has a strong culture of self-evaluation, a key feature of which is engagement of staff, students and other external stakeholders in its quality assurance and enhancement processes. There is increasing involvement of students in policy and planning. Deliberative structures provide a focus for evaluation and review. Annual overview reports arising from committees and processes help support effective institutional oversight of standards and quality processes.

131   Programme approval, and annual monitoring and review are generally effective and well established components of the University's quality management processes. They require the University to review provision regularly in a systematic, self-reflective way. Processes result in action planning which support enhancement of the student experience.

6   Collaborative activity

6.1   Key features of the institution's strategic approach

132   The Internationalisation Strategy 2012-15 states that the University aims to deliver excellence, competitiveness and cultural diversity through its collaboration with partners in Scotland and around the world. The University has recently established an International Committee, a standing committee of the Senate chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, to replace the International Steering Committee and oversee both the implementation of the current strategy and the development a revised Internationalisation Strategy. The University intends to ensure that future collaborations build on the model used to develop current successful collaborations and to ensure these are meaningful in terms of the University's future direction. The Internationalisation Strategy Refresh aims to align with the University's Strategy 2020 and is due to be submitted to the Court in June 2015. The University intends to use its digital education environment to support collaborative activity and it is encouraged

to pursue this as it develops its institutional Digital Strategy.

133   Three associate deans international support the implementation of the Internationalisation Strategy at school level. The Internationalisation Strategy also features in school plans and there are current moves to identify key collaborative activities at school level and to review any memoranda of understanding and memoranda of agreement that are not actively contributing to the University's internationalisation agenda.

134   A key development since the 2011 ELIR is the establishment of the University's first branch campus in London, offering postgraduate provision. The University is also in the process of opening another branch in New York which will offer non-credit bearing courses in the first instance. These developments are important to support the implementation of GCU's Internationalisation Strategy, forming a global hub model. These campuses are seen as key to the University promoting its international profile. Plans are underway for GCU London to become the fourth University school.

135   The University underwent a QAA Thematic Review of London Campuses in July 2014. The ELIR team had access to the review findings, discussed the University's approach to these findings and are content with its response. The ELIR team recognises that the University is responding to the conclusions of this report.

136   The University has a number of existing collaboration activities which lead to a GCU award: accreditation arrangements with Caledonian College of Engineering (CCE) Oman for School of Engineering and Built Environment BEng (Hons) programmes; activity formerly under Business Academy (now the School for Work-Based Education); a number of joint delivery and joint awards with other partners in Scotland; joint delivery of the BSc Railways Operational Management in the UK and South Africa; off-campus delivery in Oman (BSc with Institute of Health Sciences and MSc programmes for CCE); and the delivery of academic pathway programmes through GCU INTO. The University also has academic relationships with 80 universities and academic institutions, largely focused around student and staff exchanges and research collaborations

137   The CCE Oman collaboration has been in place for 17 years and now has over 3,000 students. CCE Oman now has an accreditation arrangement with the University whereby a bachelor's programme of study (or constituent modules) is designed, delivered, and assessed by CCE, awarded by the University, and subject to the quality assurance procedures of the University.

138   The RA noted that, numerically, the most significant type of collaborative activity is articulation. By 2020, the University intends to increase the number of articulating students from 610 in 2012-13 to 1,000 post-2015-16, representing a third of the undergraduate intake. Underpinning this aim are the College Connect Strategy (2013-20) and College University Subject Partnerships (CUSPs). CUSPs are subject level areas of activity built on existing working relationships between the college and university sector to create a sustainable infrastructure for articulation. CUSPs were highlighted by the Scottish Funding Council in 2012 as a model of good practice.

139   GCU INTO is a joint venture between INTO University Partnerships and the University that provides foundation certificate/diploma/graduate diploma programmes and English language tuition to international students intending to progress to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. There are further plans to develop a partnership with INTO and GCU London and establish a Joint Academic Management Board, reporting to APC, to oversee the provision. The ELIR team heard from senior staff that there are plans to carry out an INTO Thematic Review.

6.2   Securing academic standards of collaborative provision

140   The University 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 programmes delivered at international partner institutions. Quality assurance procedures are set out in the revised QEAH. This is also reiterated in Assessment Regulations, through the use of external examiners and included in each memorandum of agreement.

141   The oversight of quality assurance, enhancement and approval of partnership and collaborative arrangements is undertaken by the International Committee and Academic Policy Committee on behalf of Senate. The level and scope of oversight is dependent on the nature of the partnership and/or collaborative arrangement. The Executive Board may also be involved in the decision and approval processes.

142   The approach to monitoring collaborative arrangements, such as the CCE Oman, is set out in the Liaison Handbook with clear roles and regulations for supporting quality assurance including expectations of CCE and the University. The module content from programmes delivered at CCE is from the University and has the same learning outcomes which have been contextualised for Oman. Marking schemes for the University and CCE assessments are checked for comparability. CCE external examiner reports form part of CCE's annual monitoring reports and are considered at the GCU School Programme Board. School programme teams are responsible for monitoring the academic standards of collaborative provision through the programme boards.

143   As GCU London and GCU New York are branch campuses, quality assurance structures from GCU Glasgow campus are replicated. The host Programme Board at the Glasgow campus oversees the student experience at the satellite campuses. Institutional oversight of the GCU London campus is through the London Campus Board which currently reports to the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee of the Academic Policy Committee. Arrangements will change when the London campus becomes the fourth school in the University structure. When the GCU New York campus is fully operational it will be managed in the same way that GCU London currently operates, before GCU London becomes another school in its own right. Both satellite campuses have a Dean who reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

144   The DGQE works with schools in the development, approval and monitoring of collaborative provision, and partnership approvals and agreements. The key stages for selecting a partner are set out in the QEAH. The DGQE also maintains the University Register of Collaborative Activity and holds central records of agreements. A single database of all partnerships is being developed.

145   An internal review of international partnerships was conducted in 2012-13 following the launch of the Internationalisation Strategy 2012-2015, as well as an audit by PricewaterhouseCoopers. A number of recommendations emerged from both the internal review and the audit which were implemented in 2014-15. These recommendations included the need to ensure that the QEAH processes for partnership and collaborative arrangements were consistently followed; to ensure that there was clear oversight of international partnership development at institutional level; to ensure that the collaborative register reflected all activity; and ongoing monitoring of collaborative partnerships to assess whether planned benefits had been achieved.

146   In January 2015, a follow up to the PricewaterhouseCoopers audit report was carried out by Ernst and Young. This confirmed that all four issues highlighted in the earlier

report had been addressed. An International Partnerships Office (IPO) was established in May 2014 and plays a key role in international partnership development, negotiation and relationship management, and contributes to oversight activity. The IPO has developed an International Partnership Proposal template to set clear criteria for establishing international partnerships and a Partnership Engagement Plan template to support the monitoring of collaborative activities.

6.3   Enhancing the student learning experience on collaborative programmes

147   The University notes that its approach to enhancing the student learning experience within collaborative agreements centres on two key elements: the selection of collaborative partners and adherence to the principles of *Chapter B10* of the Quality Code. The University emphasised that the student experience, whether at home or abroad, on campus or in college, is equitable.

148   The University recognises that, while the student experience needs to be equitable, it also needs to be tailored to the context of the student cohort, wherever located. While all aspects of curriculum design and delivery are implemented in accordance with the QEAH, the local context needs to be taken into account. The University aims to enhance the learning experience of students on its London campus through building networks with the London-based fashion industry.

149   The University is aware of challenges in the delivery of provision at its GCU London campus, such as space issues associated with increased intake; limited opportunities for face-to-face student interaction with fly-in faculty; and the need to provide more support services such as careers advice. The ELIR team was informed that plans are in place to address these issues, especially as the intention is for GCU London to become the fourth University school with the provision of undergraduate programmes.

150   According to the Liaison Handbooks, responsibility for quality enhancement lies with the collaborative partner and the Host School. In the case of CCE Oman, the partner is expected to develop a Programme Enhancement Plan as a result of Annual Programme Analysis for consideration by the School Board.

151   The ELIR team was informed that staff from the Glasgow-based School of Engineering and the Built Environment had recently been to CCE Oman to deliver workshops on the SfL and SEF. The University also undertook an Enhancement-led Internal Review at CCE Oman in November 2014, the report of which is to be discussed at the LTSC in April 2015. The findings highlight features of the enhanced student learning experience in Oman, such as the use of guest lectures, and encourage further staff exchange opportunities between GCU and CCE staff.

152   For its visits to South Africa to deliver the BSc in Railway Operations Management, the University has included Academic Development Tutors to support induction and plans to have Tutors involved to support the enhancement of the student learning experience. While students in South Africa have access to digital library resources, there are plans to look at developing a platform based on mobile technology.

153   The University cites partnership working with INTO as an example of the approach it takes to enhancing the student experience; the responsibility for the delivery of a high quality student experience is shared between the University and INTO. The University's modules provide the basis for the pathway programmes and subject-specific teaching is carried out by associate lecturers approved by LTSC. The University's professional support

staff work in close partnership with INTO colleagues to ensure that students are prepared to study in the University environment.

154   The ELIR team was informed by staff charged with college collaboration enhancement that the University was successfully implementing the Scottish Funding Council initiative to provide college students with GCU associate student status.

6.4   Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative activity

155   The University demonstrates an effective approach to the management of collaborative activity through having formal academic programme collaborative arrangements which are subject to periodic approval and review, and arrangements which are embedded within quality enhancement and assurance procedures. An example of this is the recent ELISR carried out at CCE Oman which included external panel members. Draft Strategy 2020 highlights the University's intention to extend its global reach and impact and its reflective approach to monitoring its activities in this area provides a solid basis for this expansion.

156   The International Partnerships Office provides support for emerging collaborations and, once approved, the ongoing relationship management. The Department of Governance and Quality Enhancement is responsible for the ongoing quality assurance and enhancement of the collaborative programmes. All strategic partnerships leading to an award of the University are underpinned with a Liaison Handbook setting out the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

157   The ELIR team concurs with the University's recognition of its strengths such as the successful collaboration with CCE Oman, the growth and quality of articulation partnerships with colleges across Scotland, Strategic Partnership Boards with the college sector, College University Subject Partnerships (CUSPs), the development of the Joint Venture Partnership with INTO, and the development and establishment of satellite campuses in London and New York. The success of the work with GCU INTO is demonstrated through the high learner satisfaction levels, specifically evidenced by a 99 per cent student satisfaction with learning recorded in the 2012 International Student Barometer survey.

158   The University has been proactive in monitoring risk with regard to its collaborative activity and the use of external consultants has reflected this. The University has responded effectively to recommendations made in the resulting reports.

159   The University is aware of challenges in the delivery of provision at its London campus. It has also recognised the need to capture the student voice in collaborative activity. While structures, such as the Student Staff Consultative Group are replicated in GCU London and CCE Oman, it is not clear how student feedback from off-campus collaborative activity is incorporated into the University's enhancement agenda or how feedback from students involved in collaborative activity is responded to. As the University implements its Strategy 2020, which aims to harness its campuses and educational activities overseas, it is encouraged to provide opportunities for these students to engage fully with GCU Glasgow.