



Glasgow Caledonian University

Follow-up Report to the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)

June 2016

Preface

One year after publication of their ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports, institutions are asked to submit a Follow-up Report to QAA Scotland. These reports are also submitted to the Scottish Funding Council. Follow-up Reports are written in the institution's own words and require to be endorsed by the institution's Governing Body prior to publication on the QAA website. Guidance on the content and structure is provided by QAA Scotland.

Institutions are asked to focus on the action they have taken since the review and to include an indication of the effectiveness of that action. ELIR reports highlight positive practice as well as areas for development, and institutions are encouraged to comment on key areas of activity relating to good practice that they have prioritised since the ELIR.

Follow-up Reports are discussed with institutions as part of the ELIR annual discussion meetings. They also form the basis of a follow-up event which involves institutions that were reviewed around the same time coming together to explore the ways they have responded to their ELIR outcomes. This activity is intended to emphasise the enhancement-led nature of the review method.

GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY

Year-on response to the Enhancement – led Institutional Review

June 2016

1 INTRODUCTION

An Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) of Glasgow Caledonian University was undertaken in March 2015 with the Outcome Report published in June 2015. The ELIR Outcome Report confirms that the University has “effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience and that these arrangements are likely to continue to be effective in future”. The University welcomed the opportunity to reflect on its strategic direction and implementation of policies and procedures to enhance the student learning experience. The spirit of engagement and dialogue with the review panel was very much appreciated by all staff and students involved.

2 ELIR 2015 OUTCOME

The university was pleased to see that the institutional priorities identified in the Reflective Analysis (RA) were endorsed by the panel. In particular, that the University’s mission as the “University for the Common Good” is reflected across the institution in its strategies and engagement by students and staff. This driver for activity is fully reflected in the culture of the organisation. It was also pleasing to note the University’s effective approach to implementing strategies and the clear link between strategy, planning and student success being highlighted by the panel.

In terms of the student learning experience the panel endorsed the effective approach to enhancement of learning and teaching based on the Strategy for Learning. Clear evidence of a partnership between the university and its undergraduate students, in particular the engagement of students in key quality assurance and enhancement processes, the relationship with the Students’ Association and wider representation arrangements were highlighted. Other areas of positive practice included:

- Successful promotion of widening participation and student transitions
- Contextualised student support
- Clear focus on employability
- Internationalisation of the student experience
- Strategic approach to delivering staff development

3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF ELIR REPORT

The ELIR report was considered by the Executive Board and presented to Senate and Court. This report has been developed under the auspices of the ELIR Steering Group reporting to the PVC Learning and Student Experience and the Academic Policy

Committee. The ELIR Steering Group has wide representation from the Students' Association, Academic Schools and professional support departments. The draft response to the ELIR report was considered and approved by the Academic Policy Committee, Senate, and endorsed by Court.

The ELIR report asked the University to consider five areas for development and commentary is provided below:

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

3.1 Implementation of institutional strategies and consistency of practice

At the time of the ELIR, the panel noted that Strategy 2020 had not yet permeated into School level plans. Since the ELIR, the planned rollout of Strategy 2020 has been formally launched across all schools and professional service departments using a cascade methodology to ensure consistency of approach. This has been well received by staff at all levels and is a model the university intends to adopt when cascading key information in the future. All local level plans have been explicitly aligned to the Strategy 2020 and key performance indicators. The planning process focuses on the interdependency of the academic Schools and professional service departments working together to achieve the 2020 goals. Following approval of Strategy 2020, the Executive Board have agreed a suite of projects to focus on delivering on the University's ambitious strategic aims. These projects make up the "Shaping 2020" programme, a rolling programme of work.

A SharePoint site has been developed to provide an internal-facing communication channel, to ensure staff can engage with the Shaping 2020 programme, find out how they can get involved with the projects, and track progress towards our 2020 strategic goals. The site includes announcements, a shared calendar, a document library and discussion boards with additional features and content being added over time.

The Shaping 2020 Programme Board has responsibility for overseeing, monitoring, and driving forward the projects to agreed outcomes. Programme Board agrees each project's parameters and resources, and makes sure the different parts of the programme work in harmony, resolving any strategic and directional issues between projects. The Shaping 2020 Programme Board reports to the Executive Board.

The ELIR panel commented that the University had made positive progress in ensuring consistency of practice across the University through the revised PDAR process, School Boards, the Deans Group and the work of the Learning Teaching and Quality Enhancement Network (LTQEN) and encouraged the University to continue promoting work in this area to ensure equivalence of the student experience across Schools and Campuses. Ensuring consistency of practice across the institution remains a priority. In addition to the mechanisms listed in the Technical Report, further developments include the establishment

of an Operations Group which operates in parallel to the Deans Group and which ensures an integrated approach across professional services across all campuses. The establishment of GCU London as a School has further enhanced the governance mechanisms that provide oversight of the comparability of the student experience across campuses, whilst recognising differences in delivering the student experience. Work is currently underway with Schools, academics and professional support staff to refresh policies and procedures to ensure the comparability of student experiences regardless of location and delivery model. In addition the University will be reviewing the student experience, in consultation with the Students' Association, in preparation for the formal review of the student experience framework in session 16/17.

3.2 The Post Graduate Research Student Experience

In considering the Post Graduate research student experience the panel noted the University's Research Strategy 2020 and plans for an increase in postgraduate research students over the five year period to 2020. The Technical Report commented that this significant shift in the PGR population would require further strengthening and re-focusing of capacity and resource. Dialogue with PGR students indicated that there was variability in their experiences including funding for conferences, payment for teaching and workspace for groupwork.

3.2.1 Research Structures and Governance

The University recognises the challenging and ambitious nature of its aspirations whilst sustaining and growing a quality PGR student experience. To enable this growth the University has committed to a significant step change in strengthening and refocusing research structures; the PGR student programme governance and research communities across the University. The revised Research structures approved in June 2015 have been designed to expand the University's research capacity and environment by focusing staff and student research communities in research centres and research groups under the key themes of the Research Strategy. A comprehensive review of research structures and governance is one of the 2020 strategy workstreams.

Senate approved changes to the PGR student programme governance arrangements in October 2015. The monitoring, progression and awards of individual students has now been devolved from the central Higher Degrees Committee and Graduate School into the Academic Schools through the formation of School PGR Progression and Awards Boards. This has engaged a wider range of academic supervisors in the scrutiny of the PGR student progression within their School and is enabling a broader and deeper sharing of best PGR student experience practice. The Graduate School will now focus on the enhancement of the research student experience, research degrees provision and the development of researchers. Working in close partnership with the Academic Schools and Research champions, it is driving these areas forward by leading, facilitating and co-ordinating cross university teams.

The University Research Committee (URC) (a standing committee of Senate) has refreshed its governance arrangements and terms of reference to maintain institutional oversight of the PGR student experience and replaced the Higher Degrees Committee with the Research

Degrees Committee (RDC) as a standing sub-committee of URC. The RDC takes a strategic focus of University wide PGR activity including benchmarking against international policy and best practice; oversight of the research degrees portfolio and scrutiny of the overall PGR student experience.

3.2.2 Research Communities

Work has commenced on building stronger student research communities via leadership and champion structures for both staff and research students. This includes the establishment of School (wide) Postgraduate Research tutor (PGRT) roles to provide additional support and guidance to PGR students beyond their supervising teams. The Graduate School, Students' Association and Academic Schools have worked together to create a new structure of Research Student leads which will mirror the new PGRT structure with a School Research Student leader roles. Together the student leads will form a Research Student Leaders Network that works with the Graduate School and the Postgraduate Research Tutors to develop the research student experience. The University is also keen to support more student led social activities and develop greater opportunities for PGR students to meet on a research discipline and cross disciplinary basis. This will be aided by the recent physical move of PGR students back to the main University campus. The Graduate School and the Students' Association will explore with the PGR student leader network ways in which they can support the students further in these activities.

3.2.3 Equivalency of PGR Experience

The ELIR panel also commented on the equivalency of the PGR experience citing examples of variation of experience in terms of funding for conference attendance, training opportunities for those who teach and the availability of workspaces for groupwork. The URC conducted an internal review, following ELIR, to evaluate the consistency of practice and to listen to feedback from students on their experiences. Variability of practice across Schools which involve School funding is being addressed via the Deans Group to ensure clarity, transparency and equitable treatment across the university. The issue of variability on teaching opportunities and payment has also been addressed. All research students must now complete a programme of GTA training before delivering any teaching (see 3.3). This is mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), with core elements that ensure a consistency of approach across the University. Payment to PGR Students for teaching work has been standardised and the University's People Services department has confirmed new processes and contract entitlements for research students working as GTAs. A separate broader review of the career development support provided to PGR students is underway and will be completed by June 2016.

To assure itself of the effectiveness of the new arrangements the University plans to conduct a thematic review of the PGR experience once the new processes have fully embedded in session 2016/17.

3.3 Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

The ELIR panel commented in the Technical Report that GTAs are provided with formal training opportunities and noted that this was voluntary rather than mandatory. The

University has redesigned its procedure for GTA support for teaching. The GTA training programme is mapped to the UKPSF and can provide a progression pathway to the PgC LTHE for those research students who wish to move into a teaching career. Under the revised procedure GTAs undertake core training which is consistent across the university and encompasses practical skills training as a preparation for teaching. This is enhanced with tailored, contextualised elements to meet School and subject requirements thereby enhancing the student experience and the tutors' skills. The Associate Deans Learning, Teaching and Quality help to shape the portfolio of GTA teaching skills workshops in line with the needs of their disciplines and their current student profile. Engagement and attendance of GTAs is monitored to ensure institutional oversight. The Department of Academic Quality and Development has also taken the opportunity to refine the design of the certificate provided to those GTAs who successfully complete a GTA teaching skills workshop. In addition to highlighting the topic of the workshop and the duration, the certificate now maps explicitly to the UKPSF (2011) to identify how GTAs are developing their practice in line with this national sectoral framework for teaching and supporting learning in Higher Education. The university is confident that these measures will ensure consistency of approach and equivalency of the GTA experience and preparation for teaching activities, thereby enhancing the student experience.

3.4 Feedback on Assessment

The ELIR panel noted that feedback on Assessment was an area for development in the University's 2011 ELIR. This was addressed through the Feedback for Future Learning Initiative which was presented as a case study in the 2015 ELIR. The Feedback for Future Learning Initiative has since been mainstreamed into the Academic School activities, in relation to programme delivery and academic support and advising

The initiative contributed to an improvement in the 2014 NSS scores and the 2015 NSS has confirmed that feedback on assessment remains steady against the initial improvement in 2014. In reviewing the 2015 results and preparing action plan responses to the NSS, under the oversight of the DVC and PVC Learning and Student Experience, the Academic Schools have focused on Assessment and Feedback as a priority area for improvement. All Schools will focus on and monitor the 3 week feedback policy to ensure that feedback principles are fully embedded. In addition Schools will continue to align assessment and feedback with the Strategy for Learning enablers and design principles. This will include the use of digital learning technology utilising e-submission/assessment and feedback tools, staff support systems and working in partnership with students.

In the meantime the Academic Schools will continue to monitor feedback from students via Module Evaluation Questionnaires on the GCU Learn VLE. The university has continued to scope a student survey strategy, which would include the institutional approach and monitoring of module evaluation and would be operationally managed by a newly established Survey Unit, to gauge feedback from all students both off and on campus and provide institutional oversight of the overall student experience.

3.5 Capturing the off-campus student voice

The ELIR report confirmed that the University has robust quality assurance processes in place to capture the student voice in all collaborative activity via student staff consultative groups. The Panel felt it was less 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. The University will be re-introducing thematic review across all aspects of the student experience and this aspect will be encompassed within the programme of review.

The University currently utilises the Enhancement-led Internal Subject Review methodology in assessing the effectiveness of the student experience and engagement of students in their learning for all collaborative activity. The review Self Evaluation Document contains information on feedback from students and students meet with the external peer review panel to discuss their experiences. The outcome reports identify the deliberate steps to enhance the student experience; the areas of good practice and areas that would benefit from further enhancement.

What is more challenging is how students studying at a distance in a particular type of relationship identify with the awarding institution. Currently this is mainly through the relationship between the academic School in GCU and partner with regular visits by GCU staff and Graduation process which include a strong GCU presence attending. There are also strong links between the academic, quality office, registry and library staff on the Glasgow campus and those in overseas campuses. CCE Oman students have their own well developed Students' Association.

The University is engaging in the sector wide debate and series of workshops on collaborative activities (including the off campus student voice) currently hosted by the QAA Scotland. It is clear that this is an issue for the sector as a whole and one which the University will explore, in partnership with the Students' Association, to maximise the contribution off campus student voice in enhancement activities.

4 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY SINCE ELIR 3

Since the University's last ELIR the following changes have taken place:

- Appointment of new Depute Vice Chancellor
- Appointment of new Pro-Vice Chancellor International
- Collaboration with Academic Leadership College Mauritius
- Digital Strategy
- Review of programme administration (role and structure)
- Review of academic delivery, engaging with programme and module leaders to inform future practice
- Portfolio refresh
- Heart of Campus infrastructure

There has been a redesign of functions across student experience to enhance student support, avoid duplication of activity and mitigate against student receiving conflicting advice/information, for example closer alignment between Schools and College Outreach team, Campus Life team and Careers.

5 SUMMARY AND ENDORSEMENT OF RESPONSE BY GOVERNING BODY

The ELIR methodology has been an important driver in enhancing the student learning experience and the opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of the implementation of strategies and policies designed to deliver an overall excellent student experience. Looking ahead actions arising from the review report include:

- A thematic review of the post graduate research student experience in session 2016-17 following a number of changes to structures, governance and arrangements to ensure equivalency across the University.
- The monitoring of the Shaping 2020 programme of work to ensure delivery of the 2020 Strategy.
- The continued monitoring of the effectiveness of Feedback on Assessment via the Enhancement led Internal Subject Review process; Annual Programme Monitoring process; the NSS feedback and the development of the University's survey strategy to gauge and respond to student satisfaction with their learning and teaching experience.
- Implementation of strategies to ensure capturing the off campus student voice based on sector wide good practice and engagement in QAA workshops. Such strategies must be proportionate to the type of relationship and take cognisance of cultures and context of the student cohort.
- Ongoing review of services, systems and processes supporting the student experience.

The ELIR one year on response has been endorsed by Court at its meeting on 23rd June 2016 for submission to the QAA Scotland and publication.

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