



Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow Caledonian University

Outcome Report March 2015

Contents

About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method.....	1
About this review.....	1
About Glasgow Caledonian University	2
Overarching judgement about Glasgow Caledonian University	3
Areas of positive practice	3
Areas for development	4
What happens next?	5
Further information.....	5

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 Outcome 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).

This report sets out the overarching judgement formed by the ELIR team 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

It is possible for the overarching judgement to be expressed in three levels which indicate that the institution's arrangements are: effective; have limited effectiveness; or are not effective. More detail on these categories is provided in the ELIR information document.

The overarching judgement for this report can be found on page 3, followed by the areas of positive practice and the areas for development.

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review.⁴ The Technical Report sets out the ELIR team's findings under each of the headings in the ELIR 3 method.

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

⁴ Technical report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007762

About Glasgow Caledonian University

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 located in central Glasgow. There are also satellite campuses in London (GCU London) and New York (GCU New York). GCU London is well established and offers postgraduate provision. Plans to establish GCU London as a separate School in its own right are now well underway. While GCU New York does not currently offer credit bearing activity, it plans to offer a range of master's degrees following approval by the State Education Department of New York.

The University has recently undergone a period of significant change. There has been considerable investment in infrastructure, most significantly through the Heart of the Campus project and additional investment in ICT, in particular the Integrated Student Information Systems (ISIS) project. The organisational re-structure, moving from a six to three School structure, is now established. Portfolio refresh allowed GCU to focus on its strengths, scale up and internationalise.

GCU is entering the final year of its 2015 strategy and is focusing on future priorities via Strategy 2020. Strategy 2020 aims to ensure GCU is a successful and sustainable university with a distinctive social mission and dynamic outlook.

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.

Areas of positive practice

1 The ELIR has identified a number of areas of positive practice and these are summarised below.

2 **Development of a clear vision and engagement of University community**

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

3 **Partnership approach to student engagement** - there is clear evidence of a partnership between the University and its undergraduate students. This can be seen in a variety of ways including student engagement with the key quality assurance and enhancement processes, the relationship with the Student Association and the wider representation arrangements, and the range of student-led initiatives, such as the Student Action Group for Enhancement (SAGE).

4 **Successful promotion of widening participation and student transitions**

- the University has 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 entering the University from college, and the Caledonian Club, which provides targeted community engagement as well as an opportunity for current GCU students to act as a mentor for school pupils.

5 **Contextualised student support** - Learning Development Centres are embedded within each school to provide support for students that is contextualised, targeted and accessible. There is sharing of experience between the three Learning Development Centres (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.

6 **Clear focus on employability** - employability skills and graduate attributes are embedded in the University's Strategy for Learning 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 GCU Personal, Professional, Academically-informed, Consolidated, Transactional (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.

7 **Internationalisation of the student experience** - 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 Collaborative On-line International Learning (COIL) approach to 'internationalisation at home'.

8 **Strategic approach to delivering staff development** - the GCU Learning Enhancement and Academic Development (GCU LEAD) department 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. GCU LEAD also has the potential to play a central role in the development and implementation of the digital strategy.

9 **Dynamic annual monitoring process** - the University introduced an in-year annual monitoring process in 2013-14 which enables matters to be identified and addressed promptly to the benefit of the student experience. The nature of the process, with the move away from a more retrospective focus, has promoted greater staff engagement with the activity.

Areas for development

10 The University is asked to consider the areas summarised below.

11 **Research student experience** - 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.

12 **Graduate teaching assistants** - establish arrangements for providing institutional oversight of the variety of roles being fulfilled by graduate teaching assistants (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 important role have adequate support.

13 **Feedback on assessment** - 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.

14 **Capturing the off-campus student voice** - consider the ways in which the existing arrangements could be developed further to capture and reflect on the views of the University's students who are studying away from the Glasgow campus in order to inform institutional strategy and policy setting and implementation, with a view to enhancing the student experience overall. This would be particularly valuable as the University extends its reach beyond Glasgow.

15 **Implementation of institutional strategies and consistency of practice** - continue to progress the focused and coherent approach the University has adopted to

strategy setting and implementation. There would be benefit in ensuring the aims of the new Strategic Plan are consistently reflected at School level. 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 LTQEN. The University is encouraged to continue promoting work in this area to ensure equivalence of student experience across schools and campuses.

What happens next?

12 QAA Scotland will continue to engage with the institution through the annual discussion visits which, among other matters, consider the ways in which the institution is responding to the ELIR outcomes.

13 One year after publication of the ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports, institutions are asked to provide a follow-up report to indicate how they are responding to the outcomes of ELIR. Institutions also engage in a follow-up event with colleagues from other institutions to explore the ways in which the ELIR outcomes are being implemented. The final version of the institution's follow-up report is published on the QAA website.

Further information

14 A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review. The Technical Report sets out the ELIR team's findings under each of the headings in the ELIR 3 method.

15 This review and its findings relate to the institution as a whole and do not provide information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information about those, contact the institution or visit its [website](#).

16 University sector institutions in Scotland also engage in systematic Enhancement Theme activity. Further information about that work, which has a sector-wide and institutional focus, can be found on the [Enhancement Themes website](#).

17 Further information about QAA Scotland and the enhancement-led approach, including the ELIR method, can be found on the [QAA website](#).

18 For further information about the Scottish Funding Council see www.sfc.ac.uk

QAA1240 - R4497 - June 15

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786