# Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow Caledonian University

## Outcome Report

November 2020

# Contents

# About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)](#) and has links to the ELIR handbook and other informative documents.[1] You can also find out more about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)](#).[2]

Further details about ELIR can be found in an accompanying [brief guide](#),[3] including an overview of the review method, information about review teams, and explanations of follow-up action.

# About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the ELIR conducted by QAA at Glasgow Caledonian University. The review took place as follows: Planning Visit on 6 February 2020 and Review Visit on 16-20 November 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Review Visit was postponed from 23-27 March 2020. The review was conducted by a team of five reviewers:

- Professor Phil Cardew (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Diane Meehan (Academic Reviewer)
- Mr Edward Pollock (Student Reviewer)
- Dr Kathleen Shennan (Academic Reviewer)
- Mr Peter Watson (Coordinating Reviewer).

This report sets out the threshold 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.

The threshold judgement for this report can be found on page 3, followed by commendations and recommendations.

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

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[1] About ELIR:
www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/reviewing-higher-education-in-scotland/enhancement-led-institutional-review
[2] About QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland
[3] Brief Guide to ELIR: www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/reports/brief-guide-to-elir-method.pdf
[4] Technical Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Glasgow-Caledonian-University

# About Glasgow Caledonian University

Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU/the University) was formed by a merger of Glasgow Polytechnic and the Queen's College Glasgow in 1993, with a history dating back to 1875. The University has a particular commitment to widening participation which is reflected in the diversity of its student population. The University's main campus is in central Glasgow. There is also a small London campus, opened in 2010, called GCU London. GCU has also operated in New York since 2014, and as the sole member for Glasgow Caledonian New York College (GCNYC), established in 2017. GCNYC operates as a separate legal entity and does not award GCU degrees. Awards made in New York are accredited under US rules by the New York State Education Board of Regents. In addition, the University has a portfolio of collaborative partnerships around the world where students are registered for GCU degrees.

The University has a clear mission and vision, articulated as 'the University for the Common Good', which is strongly embedded in all aspects of its strategic planning and implementation. This mission was a key driver in *Strategy 2020*. At the time of the ELIR, *Strategy 2020* was drawing to a close and the University's plans for the development and launch of its *Strategy 2030* were at an advanced stage. The COVID-19 pandemic had impacted this launch date with this rescheduled to January 2021.

Based on 2019-20 figures, the University has a student population of 17,540 students (actuals) of whom 14,165 are undergraduate and 3,375 postgraduate - 2,930 of whom are postgraduate taught (PGT) and 445 postgraduate research (PGR). Almost 19% of the overall student population study part-time (3,330 students) and some 1,310 students are international. The University's student population includes a substantial number of students from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD20) postcodes, amounting to 22% of its Scottish domiciled undergraduate entrants in 2018-19 (the latest published data available). This proportion has remained largely unchanged over the previous four years. The University is particularly proud of its tradition of successfully recruiting students from SIMD20 areas and the fact that these students are retained at virtually the same rate as that for the wider student population.

# Threshold judgement about Glasgow Caledonian University

Glasgow Caledonian University has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience.

This is a positive judgement, which means that the University meets sector expectations in securing the academic standards of its awards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience it provides, currently and into the future. This judgement confirms there can be public confidence in the University's awards and in the quality of the learning experience it provides for its students.

## Commendations

1        The University is commended for the following areas of good practice.

2        **Institutional approach to articulating and implementing strategy** - the University has a clearly articulated strategy and vision, which is effectively embedded as part of its culture. In particular, the University's desire to align all goals with its 'Common Good' mission is clearly articulated and consistently communicated, adopted by staff and well recognised by students.

3        **Student Experience Action Plans** - The University makes effective use of Student Experience Action Plans (SEAPs) which ensure that activities that drive enhancement to the student experience are coherent, consistent and well-focused across the University's schools and professional services areas. These plans - which are dynamic, regularly reviewed and updated in partnership with students - ensure ownership of institutional targets by staff at all levels and provide clear accountability for action.

4        **Student partnership** - the University and GCU Students' Association have a long-standing, embedded and collaborative relationship which is based on genuine and effective partnership working across all aspects of university life. This relationship brings a wide range of benefits to the student experience - for example, a well-established Student Partnership Agreement updated in partnership with students and the Students' Association and representation structures that support the diversity of the University's student population. The Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE) provides students, and their representatives, with the opportunity to play a full part in the development of University policy and practice associated with learning, teaching and the wider student experience. Students are clear that their contributions are valued and acted upon.

5        **Strategic approach to widening participation** - The University's long-standing strategic commitment to widening participation has been effectively embedded in the institutional culture and represents excellent practice. Examples of effective outreach initiatives include the well-established Caledonian Club, the Advanced Higher Hub and the School Connect programme. The evidence-based approach taken ensures proactive interventions to support student success are evident at all stages of the student journey. This is demonstrated by the University's progression and retention data, and the development of ongoing targeted support for the University's diverse student population - which includes a dedicated team who work with care experienced students, estranged students and young carers.

6        **Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion** - the University has made significant progress to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of university life,

adopting an approach which is based on a genuine and respectful appreciation of the diverse needs of its students. This is demonstrated through initiatives, such as school and directorate-based Equality Champions, its approaches to tackling gender-based violence and racism, and a range of policy developments including the Dignity at Work and Study Policy, the Trans Student Policy, and the Gender and Race Equality action plans. Progession and retention data provide evidence of its successful approach.

## Recommendations

7        The University is asked to consider the following recommendations.

8        **Feedback on assessment** - building on progress made through a range of recent improvements in policy and practice relating to feedback on assessment, the University should continue to work with students, across all modes of study, to address the improvements they would like to see around consistency in both the quality and timeliness of assessment feedback.

9        **Streamlining quality assurance and enhancement processes** - further reflect on ways the University can streamline its quality assurance and enhancement processes, which while ensuring these continue to maintain academic standards and assure the quality of the student learning experience, also provide greater discipline focus and deliver more effective ways of promoting enhancement. In parallel, undertake a programme of communication and consultation on resultant changes made to ensure ownership of quality processes by staff at all levels, in turn providing clear accountability for action.

10       **Communication approach** - ensure care is taken across all forms of communications to ensure that the University is clear to staff, students and members of the public about what aspects of the student experience are common/shared (mission, culture) and those that are not (accreditation, GCU degree), with particular reference to the relationship between Glasgow Caledonian University and Glasgow Caledonian New York College.

## What happens next?

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

12　　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. The final version of the institution's Follow-up Report is published on the QAA website. Institutions also engage in a range of enhancement and development activities including Focus On projects where institutions work collaboratively to improve policy and practice relating to topics that are frequently occurring in ELIR outcomes.

## Further information

13　　A more detailed Technical Report is also available for this review. The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the ELIR 4 method.

14　　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.

15　　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.

16　　Further information about QAA Scotland and the enhancement-led approach, including the ELIR method, can be found on the QAA website.

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