



## End of Year 2 Report for: Glasgow Caledonian University

The key purposes of this report are to:-

- provide a framework for HEIs to report on their Theme activity that has taken place over the year
- help share information across the sector on the benefits and challenges around Theme engagement.

Please report under the headings below. The report should be about 6 to 8 sides of A4 in length.

### Institutional team

Identify any changes in Theme leadership, TLG and institutional team membership since details were reported in the institutional plan developed at the start of the academic year.

The institutional team membership has been relatively stable over the duration of this theme with changes made only where there have been external personnel changes.

Claire McGuinness was seconded to another role outside the University and was replaced by Jamie McDermott as representative for the School of Health & Life sciences.

Heather Gray led a collaborative cluster on Mental health and wellbeing but left the University. Her position was not replaced on the Institutional Team.

Our student reps Tabitha Nyariki and Olivia Hall have now completed their tenure. We thank them for their contributions to the Enhancement Theme work. In the next AY they will be replaced by John Mavileth.

### Evaluation

Title of project/activity

**Further Investigation of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students Views on their student experience at GCU.**

1. What change **has been** made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

Focus Groups were held to collect the views of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students in the areas of:

- Sense of belonging
- Inclusive learning and teaching
- Inclusive curriculum
- Wider student experience

The team included staff and Students Association representatives.

2. Why **have we made** it? (Rationale for the change)

The University undertook a survey of all UG, PGT, PGR students from a BAME background, registered at GCU in Tri A, AY 2020-21. The survey (adapted from an established instrument) was intended to collect the experiences of this student group with particular reference to their learning experience, views on attainment, wider student experience, and experience of racism while studying at the University.

Unfortunately, due to COVID, no qualitative data could be collected at that time. The focus groups reported here were designed to extend our understanding of these students' experience.

The original study led to the preparation of a key report outlining their experiences of learning at the University, complementing previous University work which had led to the development of our Tackling racism at GCU Action Plan

<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/aboutgcu/commongood/equality/tacklingracismatgcu>

Adding qualitative data to the quantitative data collected in 2021 was seen as vital to developing a full understanding of these students' experiences.

3. What difference **will hopefully occur** as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)

Although the Tackling Racism Action Plan has been formulated, activity is ongoing and it is vital that we continue to collect further data to understand our students lived experience of studying at GCU. Qualitative data provides real world examples of the experiences of our students that can be used to explore the suitability of specific services and processes and to present persuasive narratives for change.

4. How **will we** know? (How is the change measured)

This work builds on the previous quantitative data collection using an established method. Focus group questions were designed around the 'AIDA'<sup>1</sup> model. The AIDA model is commonly used in focus group design to encourage engagement with and discussion around the topic in question. The four levels or 'needs' of the acronym represent, **A**ttend attention, maintain **I**nterest, create **D**esire, and get **A**ction. By formulating the focus group questions according to the 'needs' of the AIDA model, the researcher is able to direct the attention of group participants to the topic in question, to maintain their interest in the discussion with the aim of generating contributions and suggestions that can be translated into action points to take forward, in this case, by the Tackling Racism at GCU group. Integration with key existing institutional activity was an essential consideration during the design phase of the activity.

5. Who **has been/is** involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)

A report is in preparation and will be shared with the PVC L&T who will then decide further action. This should include: reporting at Executive Level, reporting at university committees (e.g. Learning Enhancement Sub-Committee) and consideration by Tackling Racism at GCU Group and associated Anti-racism working groups.

6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)

Findings focused on the following topics:

- Induction and freshers Week
- Micro-aggressions.
- Reporting incidents
- Inclusion beyond the classroom

7. Any things you **have stopped** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

<sup>1</sup> For examples, see: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ILS-04-2018-0028/full/html?skipTracking=true>

No

Title of project/activity

### The Evidencing Impact Model

1. What change **has been** made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

A set of tools to support evaluation and evidencing impact has been developed. These tools are intended to increase the quality of evidence available to demonstrate the efficacy of interventions and to support staff in their professional development.

2. Why **have we made** it? (Rationale for the change)

The University launched its new Strategy 2030 in 2021. This overarching strategy is supported by a new Strategy for Learning with five key priorities which together seek to support our students to develop their **learner agency**, to set their own goals, reflect and effect positive change.<sup>2</sup> This is articulated through revised Common Good Attributes (e.g. 'Confidence'). Similarly, one of our Going Digital Principles that operationalise the SfL states that: *We will create learning communities which enhance students' sense of belonging, and enable them to develop as independent, self-directed learners.*'

Internal funding has supported a number of Innovation Projects to operationalise the Strategy for Learning. 12 projects aligned to the key intentions of the SfL were funded after an Open Call. To ensure that the Strategy for Learning is as effective as possible, a comprehensive evaluation strategy was needed and part of the strategy was the development of tools to empower staff to take control of evaluation and support design for impact and effectiveness. Projects are being supported throughout their funding with evaluation and research support (from ADSL) and the 12 projects together form a peer-support network and evolving community of practice.

3. What difference **will hopefully occur** as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)

The tools consist of

- an impact matrix, to help project teams think through where impact emerges, and to help them plan to record evidence of impact. This tool emerged from data collected in GCU, and linked to an Impact Model derived in the NHS (Harper, L.M. Madden, M., & Dickson, R., (2020) Across Five Levels: The Evidence of Impact Model, Evaluation 26(3) 350–366)
- a simple participatory evaluation model structured to ensure that evaluation is designed into project activities (derived from GCU existing evaluation practice (Dr Karen Campbell)
- an evaluation checklist (adapted from the current Enhancement Theme Evaluation Tools (Jones-Devitt, S., & Austen, L. (2021) 'A Guide to Basic Evaluation in Higher Education')) to support design decisions.

The key benefits of the development of these tools will be:

- (a) better use of evidence to support strategic decisions and to record good (or otherwise) practice.
- (b) More Evidence of the impact of activity both for individuals (evidence for future career development) and the University as a whole (clear evidence of the efficacy of projects against useful metrics such as – are these projects aligned with strategic activity).

4. How **do we/will we** know? (How is the change measured)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/teaching-and-learning/learning/student-agency/>

Tools are being piloted with SfL Innovation Fund projects. There is an expectation that they will be refined during the life of these projects and project members will be asked to provide feedback on their utility and ease of use as part of the overarching evaluation of these projects.
5. Who <b>has been/is</b> involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
<p>The model and tools have been developed in-house, building on published resources tailored to the specific needs of the University community (through workshops held to capture staff understanding and expectation of impact).</p> <p>The tools have been trialled with staff, presented at an Enhancement Theme Institutional Team Meeting and have been approved by the University's Learning Enhancement Sub Committee.</p> <p>So far, several of the SfL Innovation Fund projects have used the Impact Tools and we have received anecdotal feedback highlighting their utility for both individual and team planning.</p>
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
So far, the tools focus on supporting 'Designing for Impact' and 'Designing for Success' but we recognise that the tools developed thus far are designed to be used during planning and delivery. In the next AY we plan to develop a second component of the tools to support retrospective identification of impact. Our plan is to adapt tools from Enhancement Theme funded 'Intangibles' work to support reflection and identification of evidence of impact. These tools should be useful for staff preparing applications for PFHEA and NTF/CATE Awards.
7. Any things you <b>have stopped/need to stop</b> doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
No

Title of project/activity
<b>Features linked to health, wellbeing, productivity and resilience among non-traditional students' groups</b>
1. What change <b>has been/is being</b> made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>The research project sought to understand what the word resilience means to GCU students, or if they perceive becoming resilient is necessary and whether it could be more effectively supported by GCU.</p> <p>Views were sought from non-traditional student groups including the Graduate Apprenticeship Programmes (GCU runs programmes in Business, Construction, Engineering and Cybersecurity and Computing: SCQF Levels 7-10), and TNE Students (the Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) Railway Operations Management (ROM) programme which runs in South Africa (SCQF level 7-11)). These groupings of students will permit an element of compare and contrast and inform the nature of GCU services.</p>
2. Why <b>have we made/are we making</b> it? (Rationale for the change)
These non-traditional student groups experience particular challenges to studying, largely around developing a student identity and sense of belonging.
3. What difference <b>will hopefully occur</b> as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
The findings of the study will be used to plan developmental activities and additional support provision for our students. For example, understanding student needs and expectations will be used to inform the development of in-house career resilience training being planned by our Careers Service. A project output is planned, for presentation at the University's Learning Enhancement

Sub-Committee (LESC) with recommendations on how students as a whole, and particular groups of students, can be further supported to develop resilience within and alongside their study.

4. How **do we/will we** know? (How is the change measured)

An initial analysis of the data has been conducted. A full report with recommendations will be produced. Initial findings indicate:

- Time management and work-life balance are the key challenges faced by these student groups
- Peer-support (and also support from staff) is vital in helping students deal with uncertainty and unforeseen challenges.
- Most students are content with current support provision; however, few have used these services and there is evidence that they would not be their first port of call.

After approval by LESC, success will be determined by emergence of new training and support structures that fit the identified needs of these students. The Initial findings led to the introduction of a Student Wellbeing Lead to provide targeted support to these students.

5. Who **has been/is** involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)

The project was specified by the programme leaders for our TNE/GA programmes and overseen by the academic lead for this area of our portfolio. The project was ethically approved, and the ET Theme lead was consulted during the design phase. Once the report is delivered, the Learning Enhancement Sub-committee will ensure recommendations align to existing strategic activity and are actioned appropriately.

6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)

Not yet.

7. Any things you **have stopped/need to stop** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

No

## Dissemination of work

Which mechanisms have been most effective in disseminating outcomes and resources internally, and to the sector? Please provide examples.

If there are materials and resources you can share with the sector, please provide details below.

The Institutional Team has been the primary mechanism for planning, discussing and internal dissemination of Theme activity with team members cascading information to local level. Our Institutional Team includes staff from across the University with strong representation from professional services departments, Academic Development & Student Learning, Student Life, Quality Assurance & Enhancement, Strategy, Planning & Business Intelligence, Equality, Diversity and inclusion. These meetings are an effective decision-making forum. Institutional Team meeting discussions and Theme updates are shared on the Inst. MS Teams Pages. Annual Reports, Plans, and interim updates, are tabled at LESC meetings.

Several of our collaborative cluster projects have consulted local staff and students.

It has been more challenging to engage our wider student community in the work of the theme to date. In previous years, this has been through on campus campaigns but with all students studying remotely, this tried and tested route has been unavailable.

The Enhancement Theme was featured as part of our internal Learning and Teaching Conference (19<sup>th</sup> May, our first face to face L&T conference since 2019 and attended by well over 100 people) and it is hoped that, as we return to campus, further events based around Theme activity will be held in the coming year.

We encouraged staff and student reps attend the QAA Enhancement Themes Conference in June this year (online or in-person) to encourage direct engagement with Theme activity. A healthy number of staff attended the conference both in person and online, and a number of staff presented Theme related work at the conference.

Dissemination is a key component of each of the activities described above. The Evidencing Impact Tools are being introduced across the University and once exemplars of use become available, then open workshops will be developed to encourage other staff to use it in their practice. The EIM will also be part of the new Academic leadership Development Framework being developed in ADSL. The BAME Student Experience findings will be disseminated through workshops to allow our community to explore the issues raised. The Student Resilience project findings provide a baseline understanding of our diverse student population needs that can be informative for staff across the University (both academic and professional services staff) in helping to plan future interventions and support.

### Collaboration outwith your institution

How have you collaborated with other institutions? This could be informally by growing networks or contacts, or more formally for example, through collaborative clusters or sector work. If you have been collaborating with others, briefly explain what this has involved and what have been the benefits and challenges.

Our main collaboration with the sector has been through participation in collaborative cluster projects. We have been involved in two projects this year:

- Colin Milligan (Senior Research Fellow) has been involved in **PARC (Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community)**. This cluster, now finishing its second year, has brought together a vibrant community (the core team extends into the rest of the UK and the online community is international) of practitioners focused on supporting student resilience through developmental use of diagnostic tests, to allow students to better understand their development needs and to signpost support resources. Workshops have been held to identify key issues that will make our approach useful to the widest possible community. A number of pilots have been run, and from these, Case studies are being developed to share our experiences with the ET community.
- Alen McKinley (Associate Academic Registrar) has been involved in the **Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials**. This collaborative cluster, led by Heriot-Watt University aims to establish a Scottish central point for advice, guidance, discussion and expertise regarding the sector understanding and delivery of micro-credentials and small qualifications.

Previous Theme work has continued to have an impact. For example, the Resilient Academic Leadership Collab. Cluster team continued to disseminate findings around and foster dialogue on resilience as an intangible asset. This included presentation by Alison Nimmo of a keynote at a Scottish HEI, presentation at the South West Principal Fellow Forum, presentation to senior leaders of Scottish HEIs at SHEEC in Spring 2022 and leading a workshop at the recent Enhancement Theme Conference. The Cluster work has featured in a number of blogs on the ADSL/GCU Wordpress blog and a forthcoming article in a SEDA Special expected July 2022.

In addition, GCU staff have been closely involved in work on **Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning and Experience**, work led by one of our former Directors (Prof Ruth Whittaker, now PVC at U of Brighton) to revise and update the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) National Framework in Scotland developed in 2014. Marty Wright (Academic Lead of IU2B) coordinated and is co-lead author on Chapter 5 of the new Framework which focuses on Employers and Professional Bodies. Work will progress in 2022/23 with the creation of new resources and support aimed at encouraging employers and Professional Bodies to develop partnerships with education institutions. The purpose of this work will be to mutually encourage and acknowledge the value of personal and professional development in the workplace, be it through internal courses or initiating and progressing change and enhancements to working practices.

## Supporting staff and student engagement

How have staff and students been supported to engage in Theme activities? Please provide examples.

Theme activities are discussed at the Institutional team to identify which parts of the University should be involved and how funding should be allocated (e.g. open bidding, or identifying a key actor).

One of this year's activities was to develop our understanding of the wider student experience of our Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Students. A small grant was given to design and run a small study. The project team worked with the Student Association to identify students for two focus groups.

## Processes

What are you learning from the processes, approaches and structures you are using to support this Theme? How will this report be used/distributed within your institution?

The remote nature of work over the duration of this theme has made engagement with staff and students somewhat challenging and the Institutional team is committed to improving communication and visibility by linking Theme work to institutional strategic priorities. For Year 3, we intend to link funding to our 5 Strategy for Learning Priority Intentions. The Institutional Team has agreed to reserve part of our Yr 2 funding to fund a larger pool of projects in year 3 and complement the investment this year through the SfL Innovation Fund.

In addition, we hope to improve visibility of theme work through embedding dissemination alongside other learning and development activity: the Department of Academic Development and Student Learning (ADSL: where leadership of the theme resides) is planning a 'welcome to AY22-23 staff campaign for all academic and professional services staff to set out expectations for teaching on campus for the new academic year including support for staff who have either never taught on campus previously or are seeking some re-familiarisation of the on campus classroom kit and delivery options. We are keen to invest and recognise our staff as a resilient learning community to complement the planned enhanced induction for students this year as many return to on campus. This welcome campaign will include a summary of our intentions for Year 3 of the theme, alongside a link to resources from previous years, including this report.

The timing of changeover of student reps, and the delay while portfolios are chosen, has, in the past, impacted the development of early good working relationships with our student team members. This year, we asked our outgoing student representative how we could build better relationships with student reps early in the Enhancement Theme planning cycle. Her suggestion has led to early identification of our Student Representative for Year 3 of the Theme. We have already had preliminary discussions with John about possible activities and we will continue these in August as we prepare our Yr 3 plan.

## Looking ahead

In session 2022-23 we will be starting to consider what the next Enhancement Theme might focus on. We are interested to know about the discussions, hot topics and issues that are emerging in your practice and gaining increasing attention. Please share your thoughts and views below.

As we have recently launched our new Strategy for Learning, there is a focus in the institution on the key priorities of this Strategy:

- Champion equality of participation and attainment for all students
- Deliver excellence in teaching and the student experience, underpinned by our holistic approach to student support

- Enhance the employability of our students and graduates through collaborative and active learning
- Embed a commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals within our research-led, globally-aware curriculum
- Facilitate innovative learning which supports flexible provision and a blend of campus, off-campus, and multi-campus experiences.

Alongside these strategic priorities, there are ongoing discussions around a range of sectoral issues:

- The recent SFC report, and emerging issues such as the Tertiary Quality Framework.
- The return to campus and developing efficient models of blended learning and teaching,
- New assessment pedagogies and problems associated with assessment reform (e.g. plagiarism and student academic integrity).

<b>Report Author:</b>	<b>Colin Milligan</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>31 JULY 2022</b>



## **Resilient Learning Communities**

**End of Year Report for: Name of Institution**

<b>Author:</b>	<b>Colin Milligan</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>31 July 2022</b>