QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

2016 V6.3

Section 2: Quality Enhancement and Assurance Strategy

Contents

2.   QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND ASSURANCE STRATEGY

2.1   Introduction

*The GCU Quality Enhancement and Assurance Strategy[1] has been updated for Version 6.2 of the QEAH.

The Quality Enhancement and Assurance Strategy aligns with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education[2] (HE), which is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education providers. Internally the Strategy for Learning[3] underpins the delivery of Strategy 2020 and the GCU Student Experience.

The UK Quality Code for HE[4] makes clear what higher education providers are required to do and articulates and makes transparent the standards students, staff and the general public can expect of the University. The Strategy for Learning (SfL) and the Student Experience Framework (SEF) ensure that the GCU enhancement strategy meet the needs of all students whether they are full-time, part-time, undergraduate, or post-graduate, and encompasses learning and teaching, research, and knowledge transfer. GCU adheres to the overarching values of the UK Quality Code for HE[5] and is committed to demonstrate that:

In line with GCU Values and Behaviours:

- every student is treated fairly and with dignity, courtesy and respect
- every student has the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of their learning experience
- every student is properly and actively informed at appropriate times of matters relevant to their programmes of study
- all policies and processes relating to study and programmes are clear and transparent
- strategic oversight of academic standards and academic quality is at the highest levels of governance of the University
- all policies and processes are regularly and effectively monitored, reviewed, and improved
- sufficient and appropriate external involvement is in place for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities
- all staff are supported, enabling them to support student learning.

2.2   Quality Enhancement

Quality Enhancement is defined as '*taking deliberate steps to bring about continuous improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students*'[6]. GCU enhancement strategies seek to promote an inclusive approach to learning by embedding

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[1] The first GCU Quality Enhancement Strategy was approved by Senate in June 2003; updated and approved in June 2007; further updated and approved in June 2010; further updated in May 2014 and approved by Senate in June 2014.

[2] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality

[3] http://www.gcu.ac.uk/gaq/strategyforlearning2015-2020/

[4] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality

[5] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality

[6] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/ELIR-handbook-3.pdf

the principles of equality and diversity throughout the institution, valuing individuals regardless of background or groups to which they belong. GCU commits to providing opportunities for staff and students to engage in meaningful professional conversations to foster effective partnership working in an environment that is sensitive to the diverse population on campus. Partnership in this sense reflects the UK Quality Code concept of joint working, based on a mature relationship and mutual respect and not a formal legal relationship[7].

It is accepted that enabling student development and achievement involves academic, professional, and support staff across the University. The University's Strategy 2020 and SfL seek to develop students, as a body and individually, to be *the best that they can be*. These strategies take account of, and respond to, the collective and individual life stages of learning by enabling students to take responsibility for their own learning through a commitment to an engaged relationship with the University, achieved through institutional dialogue and partnership working.

Taking into account key messages from the QAA UK Quality Code, Strategy 2020 and SfL the following enhancement statements link to and promote reflection and evaluation at University, School, Department and at Programme level. These are designed to promote self-evaluation at the point of programme Approval and Re-approval and provide an internal and external articulation of quality enhancement and assurance processes, evidencing process in practice.

At GCU we:

- articulate and implement our strategic approach to learning and teaching, and promote a shared understanding of this approach to staff, students and external stakeholders, including the general public

- apply the strategic aims of key policies such as the Quality Code, the SfL and SEF to the everyday practice of learning and teaching

- maintain the physical, virtual and social learning environments, ensuring that these are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity in learning and respect in their use

- shape our learning and teaching and assessment activities and associated resources to provide every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes? Allied to this, what deliberate steps do we take to assist students to engage with the opportunities that the University provides to shape their learning experience

- enable students to self-monitor and further their academic progress through opportunities to reflect on feedback and take advantage of our comprehensive approach to academic advising

- ensure our learning and teaching practices are informed by reflection, deliberate and engineered evaluation of the professional practice of teaching, and discipline-led programmes of educational scholarship

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[7] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B5.pdf

- collect and analyse appropriate information to ensure the continued effectiveness of our strategic and discipline-specific approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practice
- involve students in quality enhancement and assurance processes, resulting in the improvement of their educational experience

- motivate students to engage in learning and to learn independently

- take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience?

- create an integrated environment in which students, academic, professional, and support staff can engage in professional discussions to bring about demonstrable and sustainable enhancement of the educational experience

- put arrangements in place to ensure that we promote the collective student voice at all levels of the University

- demonstrate the value we place on teaching that aims to be inspirational

- support staff to gain professional recognition and enhance their own and the University's reputation through CPD

- engineer the co-production and enhancement of creative and transformational learning

In addressing these statements the institution will make use of a wide variety of reference points including:

- Programme approval and review
- GCU Strategy 2020
- GCU Academic Pillars for Learning, Teaching and Quality
- GCU Values and Behaviours
- SfL
- SEF
- **Digital Strategy**
- **GCU Common Good Attributes (from session16/17 replace GCU Graduate Attributes)**
- **GCU Values and Behaviours**
- Outputs of annual monitoring
- Performance statistics
- Subject-specific ELISR
- Partnership working with GCUSA and network of student representatives
- NSS and ISB feedback
- Programme and module evaluation
- Student Staff Consultative Groups and student engagement and feedback strategies
- External Examiners' Reports
- Public engagement and involvement opportunities (including where appropriate service user and career)
- Outreach work
- Employer feedback
- Institutional conversations and professional dialogue
- University and School-based Teaching and Learning Events

- The SCQF[8], subject benchmark information, and the QAA Quality Code[9]
- Guidelines and reports from professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies
- Experience gained through participation in the Enhancement Themes[10]
- Reports and publications from the QAA and Higher Education Academy[11] and other similar bodies
- Publications and guidelines from learned societies and subject associations, both UK and overseas
- reports from employers: employment-sector specific and general, national and international
- Relevant government, SFC and [EC] publications
- Guidelines, frameworks and legislation for promoting equal opportunities
- Institutional policies and strategies
- International reports and guidelines on good practice available from, e.g. the Higher Education Academy.

Every member of staff contributes to the creation of an excellent student experience for all students and all members of academic and professional staff ensure that the highest academic standards are adhered to.

The GCU Quality Enhancement and Assurance Strategy seeks to:

- safeguard the academic standards of the University
- assure the quality of the learning opportunities that GCU offers to students
- promote continuous and systematic improvement in GCU education provision

Regardless of the mode of delivery, **GCU is a Programme based institution. All modules, regardless of whether they are accessed by a single or a number of academic units belong to a host programme.** To ensure consistency, transparency and fairness, all module assessment results are considered at the host Assessment Board and the ratified results reported to the associated academic unit Assessment Boards. In a similar way any proposed module changes should be deliberated and discussed with the other academic units at the host PB[12] and any module changes mediated via the host PB.

To ensure the University complies with and adherers to consumer law (CRA/CMA) there is a need to ensure that programme and module amendments are conducted in a timely manner, with due consideration to the impact on current and potential students. **The Programme Specification on the website must be the actual and most up to date specification,** and the content of the programme, the modules offered and the approach to learning and teaching must adhere to and comply, in practice, with all detail included in the Programme Specification. **Altering a programme and not providing an amended and accurate Programme Specification means that the University is not compliant with University requirements or consumer law (CRA/CMA**[13]**)**.

The **Programme Leader** is and remains the cornerstone of Programme and Module Approval/Reapproval and Review and holds overall responsibility for leadership and

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[8] http://www.scqf.org.uk/
[9] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code
[10] http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/
[11] http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/
[12] The host Programme Board is the owner of all the modules that make up the programme regardless of the number of academic units that may access an individual module.
[13] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/428549/HE_providers_-_advice_on_consumer_protection_law.pdf

academic integrity of the programme and all associated modules. The PB is the hub of programme activity and monitoring, and under the leadership of the Programme Leader is responsible for the APA **(Section 5; Appendix 5(b).** A summary of **Annual Monitoring Roles and Responsibilities** is available in Appendix 5(c) of the Programme Monitoring Manual.

The University recognises the valuable contribution that key programme and department staff make to the learning, teaching and quality process, including LTQ Leads, Programme leads, Module Leads and professional support staff.

GCU is committed to the enhancement of the student experience at the University. This commitment is articulated externally in the UK QAA Quality Code for Higher Education[14] and internally in Strategy 2020 and the SfL. Together the QAA UK Quality Code and the internal policies define and set out the direction of travel for GCU staff and students. The interface between them is crucial in ensuring that we provide an engaging and personalised student experience at GCU. The GCU 'Commitment' is far reaching and touches on every aspect of the student experience. The delivery of the Commitment; offering a truly outstanding student experience, can only be achieved through partnership. Partnership in GCU reflects the QAA UK Quality Code principles of openness, trust and honesty, agreed shared goals and values, and promotion of regular communication between the partners.

As part of the implementation of GCU Strategy 2020 and the Strategy for Learning, the University has developed a model which will support, recognise and embed the **Common Good** within the curriculum and the wider student experience as part of its core mission. The learning experience at GCU will prepare students to develop four **'Common Good attributes':**

- **Active and global citizenship,**
- **Entrepreneurial mind-set**
- **Responsible leadership**
- **Confidence**

GCU students will develop the Common Good attributes through their formal taught curriculum. The Common Good Curriculum will also provide opportunities for students to enhance and develop these attributes further through engaging in co- and extra-curricular activities aligned to the Common Good – for example, social innovation, community engagement and volunteering. These new attributes replace the previous **GCU Graduate Attributes** and will be reflected within Programme Approval/Reapproval.

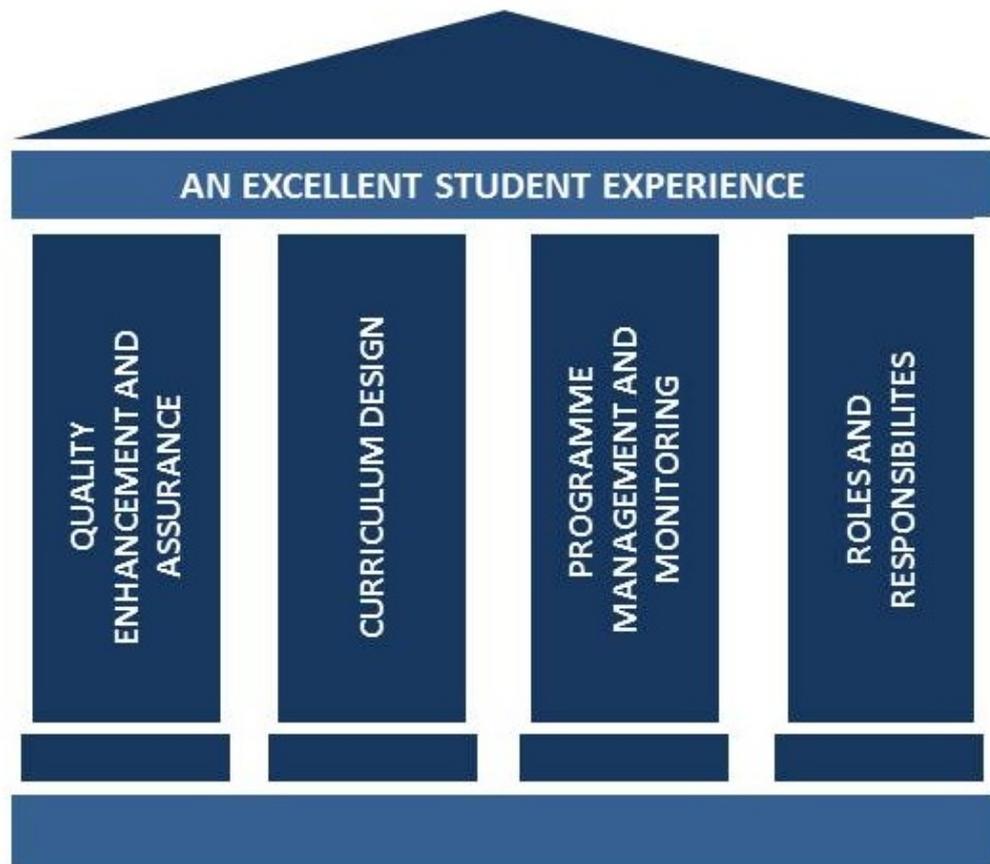Additionally the **GCU Values and Behaviours of:**

- Integrity
- Creativity
- Responsibility
- Confidence

act as guiding principles for all aspects of Programme and University QEA activity and associated behaviours.

All programmes at GCU maintain a clear focus on academic rigour and coherence bound by a set of key minimum threshold standards for curriculum design and academic quality assurance shown in the diagram below, illustrating the **'GCU Academic Pillars'.**

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[14] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b

Figure 1: GCU Academic Pillars

2.3 Components

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- GCU Strategy 2020
- **GCU Academic Pillars for Learning, Teaching and Quality**
- Strategy for Learning
- Student Experience Framework
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- Annual monitoring and approval activities, e.g. annual monitoring of programmes and modules, and programme approval/review
- External Examiners' reports
- Thematic Review
- **Digital Strategy**

- Performance Development Annual Review (PDAR)
- Enhancement-Led Internal Subject Review (ELISR)
- SFC Outcome Agreement[15]
- QAA Enhancement Themes[16]
- Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR 3)

2.3.2   The following features are highlighted as part of the Enhancement Strategy:

- GCU conducts subject review on a five-year cycle by academic department or other appropriate grouping

- Scope of subject reviews encompasses all taught provision, research-student supervision and CPD activity, consultancy and knowledge transfer, and the connection between research and industry and curriculum development

- Achieving student engagement with enhancement and quality processes.

- Subject review process is aligned, wherever possible, with the programme approval/review process and with professional/ statutory/regulatory body reviews.

NB.
- The School facing **Business Partners (Academic Quality)** and a **member of the Development Team** from the Department of Academic Quality and Development will work with **Programme Development Teams** to provide bespoke input into the quality assurance and academic development of new programmes including advice and information on curriculum design and digital delivery.

- School based Senior Academic Staff act as Panel Chairs for Programme Approvals and Reviews and other members of academic staff act as Panel Members.

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[15] http://www.gcu.ac.uk/policyandplanning/outcomeagreement/
[16] http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/

Common Good Curriculum mapping tool

What is the common good curriculum?

As part of the implementation of Strategy 2020 and the Strategy for Learning, the University has developed a model which will support, recognise and embed the common good within the curriculum and the wider student experience as part of its core mission.

It represents a distinctive approach to learning and teaching, which develops graduates capable of tackling real-world issues and translating problem-solving ideas into action.   The goal is to ensure that our students develop the attributes needed to make a positive difference in the communities they serve, in addition to acquiring the knowledge, skills and values associated with their particular professional or disciplinary areas.

What are we trying to achieve?

The learning experience at GCU aims to prepare students to develop and implement new strategies and ideas that address societal challenges and needs, whether on a local, national or global scale. The Common Good Curriculum supports the development of four 'Common Good attributes': **active and global citizenship, an entrepreneurial mind-set**, **responsible leadership and confidence** (see mapping tool   for more detailed definitions). These Common Good attributes are underpinned by the GCU core values of Integrity, Creativity, Responsibility, and Confidence

It is important to recognise that a great deal of learning which is currently taking place in all Schools does not necessarily bear the label of these attributes but the approaches taken and the behaviours developed meet their criteria. This tool can be used to make them visible to students, staff and external audiences such as employers.

How can you use the mapping tool?

This tool aims to assist teams in developing or reviewing their programmes to highlight the ways in which the development of Common Good attributes are embedded within the programme, identify potential gaps in their current approach, build on existing good practice, identify areas for enhancement and associated action. This mapping should be undertaken by programme teams as part of programme development, approval and review processes and the outcomes of the process should be summarised, and made explicit to students, staff and external audiences through programme handbooks and other appropriate forms of communication.

Given that the overarching aims and objectives of the common good curriculum need to be contextualised and interpreted differently in different subject disciplines, this tool provides an overall framework for debate. In addition to its use within   the programme approval and review process , the mapping tool can be used as a starting point for a thought provoking exercise to raise awareness among colleagues and inspire them to review and refresh their teaching. It can be adapted to suit specific programme requirements and student cohorts.

What is the aim of the curriculum mapping process?

The curriculum mapping process aims to identify and critically evaluate how the students *through learning on the programme* are enabled to:

- develop the Common Good attributes
- build on learning from previous experiences and enhance it progressively throughout their studies

Embedding the Common Good attributes involves three main areas:

1. Curriculum content and design : *What we teach*
2. Learning and teaching activities: *How we teach*
3. Assessment practices: *How we measure*

Common Good Attributes	Curriculum content and design (*what we teach*)	Learning and teaching activities (*how* we teach)	Authentic assessment practices (how we measure)	Action points
Active and Global Citizenship: Acting honestly, fairly and ethically in: - Recognising and actively seeking to address global social trends and challenges - Viewing the world from the perspective of different cultures - Participating in the community at a local, national and global level - Taking account of and valuing diversity - Exploring social problems and taking action to build a more just and sustainable society - Addressing inequality and disadvantage	*Please provide specific examples at each level of the programme*	*Please provide specific examples at each level of the programme*	*Please provide specific examples at each level of the programme*	
Entrepreneurial mind-set - Being curious and prepared to take calculated risks - Identifying opportunities for change - Creating solutions , and putting these into practice, in response to identified real-world problems - Thinking creatively, critically and divergently, drawing on a range of ideas and unexpected connections - Dealing with complexity and uncertainty - Actively seeking a diversity of				

experiences and concepts from different cultural contexts			
Responsible leadership: Exercising: • Empathy • Resilience • Professionalism • Inspiring and influencing the thinking, attitudes and behaviour of others • Working collaboratively towards a common vision and common goal • Building communities through the development of trust • Developing solutions that are ethical, visionary, realistic and sustainable • Actively demonstrating a personal commitment to equality and diversity			
Confidence : • Acting assertively and reasonably • Challenging yourself and continually learning from experience • Respecting your own and others' rights and needs • Making a positive difference • Being able to understand, respect and engage with a diverse range of audiences and stakeholders			