Marketing Strategy
2013-15
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Executive summary

This strategy has been developed to enhance the esteem of the University by recognising and promoting the quality and commitment of its staff and students, which underpins the University’s approach in managing its reputation, developing its brand and maintaining and establishing relationships with opinion makers and stakeholders.

The strategy has been developed after extensive consultation internally with the Executive Board and management teams and externally with external advisors and competitors, a detailed competitive review and full analysis of the market research available. The strategy also addresses the issues emerging from the external relations review and reflects the demands of the University’s 2015 strategy, vision, ambition and the challenges of its key markets.

An environmental context assessment was undertaken and key issues have informed the strategy including: Government policy; the economic situation; international markets; student recruitment; and technological development.

For the University to achieve its aims, a number of key priorities have been identified that must be addressed and are central to the delivery of the strategy.

The 5 key priorities of the strategy are:
1. ‘Brighter futures’ brand proposition
2. Domestic and international profile and reputation
3. Domestic and international promotion
4. Business marketing
5. Research profile and GCU reputation

The strategy covers the mechanisms which need to be put in place to address the key priorities. These will include: implementing the GCU brand proposition; annual PR and marketing plans; focused targeting models; partner promotional plans; development of a competitive pricing model and tailored corporate, school and programme narratives.

These mechanisms will enable the delivery of targeted outcomes including: improvements in student satisfaction, improvements in market profile, increase the number of PG and international students and be seen as a top modern university. To ensure robust leadership and effective delivery of the strategy across the University, it is proposed that a University marketing board is formed.

Great care has been taken to ensure that the strategy is fully aligned with GCU’s corporate goals and will remain consistent with the University’s mission and commitment to serve the common good.

This strategy addresses the issues emerging from the external relations review and reflects the demands of the University’s 2015 strategy, vision, ambition and the challenges of its key markets.

Marketing planning and delivery will be integrated across the University (Glasgow and London) to ensure efficient use of resources and alignment of strategy with a robust focus on delivering value for money and a return on investment. How we deliver is just as important. Therefore the common good, which is at the heart of our brand, will be a theme which will inform everything we do.

This will be delivered within the context of a market place which is becoming increasingly more competitive, with higher levels of marketing spend.

The Marketing Strategy builds upon the recommendations of the external relations review and the marketing planning conducted within the University over the last six months.

Part 1: Introduction

This strategy addresses the issues emerging from the external relations review and reflects the demands of the University’s 2015 strategy, vision, ambition and the challenges of its key markets.

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The document outlines the key marketing priorities which the University must address if it is to meet its future challenges.

Several of the areas covered within this document are joint initiatives with the communications team, particularly in the areas covering profile and reputation management.

The 5 key priorities of the strategy are:
1. ‘Brighter futures’ brand proposition
2. Domestic and international profile and reputation
3. Domestic and international promotion
4. Business marketing
5. Research profile and GCU reputation

The document will be supported by more detailed marketing plans which will focus on:
• Student recruitment
• Business
• Research
Part 2: Background

1. The University’s strategic goals
   The Marketing Strategy is aligned with the University’s key strategic goals. Each key marketing priority addresses a number of the University’s goals:
   1. Globally networked
   2. Excellence in education
   3. Excellence in research
   4. Delivering for business, the public sector and voluntary sectors

2. Environmental context for GCU’s strategic external relations
   The University’s marketing response to its strategic priorities must be considered within the challenges of the environmental context. Key issues for GCU include:
   1. Policy change
      Government policy is changing rapidly and often unpredictably. This places pressure on institutional planning and demands increased institutional capability in areas such as market scoping and forecasting. In addition, GCU must consider the potential impact of such changes on the University’s positioning, credibility, competitive advantage and business sustainability. Inevitably, the University’s response to these issues will influence stakeholders’ perceptions and expectations of the institutions: profile and reputation management will be critical.
   2. The economic situation
      The introduction of tuition fees in England will drive shifts in student expectations and perceptions of value for money. In such an environment, it will be critical for GCU to articulate a robust and evidenced-based proposition and demonstrate clear propositional differentiation from its peers.
   3. International markets and recruitment
      The growth of in-country provision outside the UK, an over reliance on international markets by some UK higher education institutions and policy changes regarding student visas will place pressure on universities’ ability to recruit effectively and sustainably. For some institutions, this will have a subsequent effect on business sustainability. This, in turn, will affect stakeholder perceptions of institutions within the sector, making a recognisable and credible institutional proposition in international markets, critical to success.
      International profile
      Off-shore campuses and international alliances now enable many UK institutions to claim they possess global networks or an internationalised portfolio and reach. In such circumstances, effective communications and reputation management become critical, as does the ability to differentiate between UK institutional offers and portfolios.

   English-based recruitment
   Tuition fees in England and rising costs across the sector will raise consumer expectations, place pressure on marketing and effective brand differentiation and encourage UK, Australian and European institutions to recruit actively within the UK to a wide variety of programmes taught in English. This places pressure on some traditional UK applicant pools and increases domestic/EL competition levels.

   Scottish-based recruitment
   Key areas of Scottish Government focus are to widen participation and to increase student articulation numbers. Consolidation in the FE market will change how we engage with colleges and highlights the importance of strategic partnerships. The introduction of Curriculum for Excellence will mean changes to admissions and teaching and learning. The change in the funding model for postgraduate students from grant to loan funding may impact market demand.

4. Technological innovation
   Accelerated change in digital and online communications and learning means that many UK institutions are preoccupied with ‘running to keep up’, rather than demonstrating real innovation. In the future, institutional capability and competence in these areas will be critical to success. It will be essential for GCU to keep pace with digital initiatives and communications opportunities. However, it must do so in a way that is coherent across the institution and that enables involvement and fulfilment from the Schools and other departments, enabling them to maximise the new opportunities provided by GCU initiatives to reach their target stakeholders effectively.

Part 3: Key Priorities

1. ‘Brighter futures’ brand proposition
   **Objective**
   Development and implementation of the University’s brand proposition to its targeted stakeholders.

   **Mechanism**
   1. The GCU brand proposition has been developed through customer insight and articulated through Brighter futures as a way of differentiating the University in the market place.
   2. The core dimensions of the brand are:
      - The common good
      - Career ready
      - Student experience
      - Vibrant community
      - Global reach
      - Research
      - People matter
   3. Implementation and alignment of the brand proposition will be across all areas of the University and be reflected within the people strategy, student experience, student and staff recruitment, and employer and business engagement.

   **Outcomes**
   - Improve student satisfaction as measured by the NSS, achieving minimum overall satisfaction of 85%
   - Become a Top 10 UK Modern University

2. Domestic and international profile and reputation
   **Objective**
   Ensure the University is able to develop, manage and maintain a positive reputation through proactive strategies and actions.

   **Mechanism**
   1. Implement an annual plan to fully harness the University’s PR opportunities at a domestic and international level, to target and influence each of the University’s key audiences and stakeholder groups.
   2. External relations to support GCU’s development of an institutional-wide international culture, for example, curriculum and support for international students through the International team.
   3. Develop an advocates strategy (for example, star academics, thought leaders, students, alumni and opinion formers) to support marketing and communications activity and to add gravitas and credibility to the University’s communications and align with a Glasgow and London event strategy.

   **Outcomes**
   - Achieve growth in positive news stories which support core messages
   - Increase the research profile in media
   - Become a Top 10 UK Modern University
Part 3: Key Priorities

3. Domestic and international promotion

Objective
Develop and implement a domestic and international promotional strategy to achieve student recruitment targets.

Mechanism
1. Develop a data driven approach to student recruitment with the development of a recruitment pipeline approach which will enable improvement in both applications and conversion rates.
2. Develop a compelling proposition by UG and PG programmes and by market to attract prospective students based on the key features and benefits of each programme.
3. Ensure our pricing model and levels are competitive and reflect GCU’s market positioning.
4. Increase the focus on driving PG growth and prioritise, within budget allocation and the level of targeted marketing activity, to drive student applications.
5. Develop targeted promotional plans by priority markets identified within the internationalisation strategy, by UG and PG, through the most effective media channels and events.
6. Develop an integrated marketing plan with INTO GCU to deliver targets through joint working to develop the most effective approach.
7. Identify key university recruitment partners by market and develop and agree joint targets and promotional plans, working with the International teams and the Associate Deans of International from each of the Schools to deliver targets.
8. Fully exploit digital and social media channels to both stimulate interest from new potential students and to improve engagement with existing students through generating effective advertising solutions and added value content.

Outcomes
• Increase income from international activities
• Increase the proportion of postgraduate students from 17% to 20% of the student population by 2015 (baseline 2009-10)
• Improve conversion of domestic and international applications.

4. Business marketing

Objective
Develop a marketing strategy that assists in the delivery of the University’s revenue and reputational aims and objectives with the private and public sector.

Mechanism
1. Develop an integrated marketing plan across the University to generate growth in income from each of the following business areas for Glasgow and London through engagement with RIE and the Associate Deans Business Development from each of the Schools.
   a. Long-term R&D focused strategic collaborations with business partners
   b. Contract research and consultancy
   c. Grant-based programmes including Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs)
   d. IP-licensing opportunities/spin-out companies
   e. Business education programmes including Business Academies
   f. European funded programmes – research collaboration involving universities and business partners.
2. Develop our relationship with target employers regarding student engagement and employment by communicating more effectively the high quality of GCU students, alongside the support available from GCU.
3. Develop a targeting model by business sector for each of the above services.
4. Exploit GCU’s competitive advantage with regards its expertise in Work Based Learning.
5. Increase international engagement and collaboration among academic staff, leveraging GCU expertise, leading to successful project bids.
6. Through partnering with industry, harness GCU’s academic and research expertise to help grow the economy.

Outcomes
• Increase the proportion of news stories showcasing research activity.
• Create and promote the REF impact website to showcase the University’s case studies by the end of 2013.
• Position as a top 20 UK university in the key areas of the 2014 REF.

5. Research profile and GCU reputation

Objective
Enhance GCU’s research profile with the public and business sector, domestically and internationally.

Mechanism
1. Ensure the necessary marketing resources are fully aligned with the research areas which will be the focus of GCU’s REF submission.
2. Development of tailored communications and marketing plans for these areas, encompassing collateral development, digital communications, events, campaign activity and PR.
3. Utilise the tailored corporate narratives to inform PR and lobbying activity and ensure that research and business engagement are priority issues within corporate media relations management.
4. Working with the Schools, identify willing champions and advocates appropriate to specific research themes, to support media and PR activity and to add credibility and gravitas to the GCU proposition in these areas.
5. Maximise opportunities for external broadcast opportunities and ‘expert directory’ use by the media.

Outcomes
• Increase the proportion of news stories showcasing research activity.
• Create and promote the REF impact website to showcase the University’s case studies by the end of 2013.
• Be positioned as a top 20 UK university in the key areas of the 2014 REF.
6. Develop a market focused and integrated marketing team

Objective
Enhance the capability of the marketing team to assist the University in the delivery of its revenue and reputational objectives.

Mechanism
1. Provide marketing leadership across the University to inform, influence and achieve consistency across the University.
2. Develop and deliver Glasgow and London marketing plans that will assist in the delivery of targets, are based on market and customer insight, and which have measurement and controls to ensure we maximise return on investment.
3. Embed marketing planning and the business partner model within the Schools and RIE and provide them with the necessary support to deliver value.
4. Introduce customer relationship management (CRM) system to enhance the management of the customer journey, manage the sales pipeline and optimise the conversion process from enquiry to application and application to enrolment.
5. Enhance the internal marketing support services (print, design and creative support) and the effective management of external suppliers. This will reduce costs and provide the University with access to an agreed range of professional marketing support services.

Outcomes
• Increase income from international activities. Increase the proportion of postgraduate students from 17% to 20% of the student population by 2015 (baseline 2009-10).
• Improve conversion of domestic and international applications.

7. Enhance Market intelligence

Objective
Enhance the capability of the University’s market intelligence functions to inform and deliver insight for both University and marketing planning.

Mechanism
1. Develop an annual market intelligence programme to support a more proactive and analytical approach to marketing planning i.e. a move from a core focus on UG recruitment issues and research to address the broader range of the University’s priorities.
2. This new approach to market intelligence should address: new markets; market trends and new product development; pricing; income generation; business opportunities; stakeholder behaviours; motivations; and decision-making issues, encompassing ‘current, real-time’ research, not just retrospective research.
3. The market intelligence planning model for student recruitment will be based on the student life cycle to ensure we are fully informed and develop insight into each of the key student decision making points, student experience and competitive benchmarking.
4. Establish an annual market research roadmap by February 2013.

Outcomes
• Improve the value delivered to key customers across the University.
• Improve the perception of the Market Insight service by key internal customers across the University.

8. Governance

To ensure robust leadership and effective delivery of the strategy across the University, it is proposed that a University marketing board is formed. It is proposed that this group should include representation from:
• Each of the Schools
• Planning
• Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE)
• Communications
• Admissions
• International

9. Mitigating the risks

The strategy is mindful of protecting the reputation of GCU and mitigating risk wherever possible. The whole approach has been to ensure that activities are fully aligned with the University’s corporate goals and mission.

In particular we will ensure our activities:
• Remain consistent with our mission and commitment to serve the common good
• Maintain quality and standards
• Protect the University’s reputation domestically and overseas.

As we scale-up our marketing activities, we will keep our policies and any additional mechanisms, under review, to protect the GCU reputation.

10. Conclusion

Marketing planning and delivery will be integrated across the University (Glasgow, London and New York) to ensure efficient use of resources with a robust focus on delivering value for money and a return on investment.

How we deliver is just as important as what we deliver. Therefore the common good, which is at the heart of our brand, will be a theme which will inform everything we do.

This is an exciting and demanding time for the University with significant market growth opportunities. However, the market is undergoing a period of significant change, with increasing levels of competition.

Marketing leadership and performance management have to be at the heart of both the culture and operational approach of the University to implement successfully this strategy, exploit the market growth opportunities and ensure we continue to improve our capability and performance.