

Candidate brief for the position of

Director of Student Life

February 2025



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Welcome from the Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Glasgow Caledonian University transforms lives, delivering excellent education and research that is accessible and impactful for the communities that we serve. We work in partnership with diverse organisations in the city of Glasgow, across Scotland and the UK, and globally.



Glasgow Caledonian University is a vibrant, values-led, multicultural, civic university with a global outlook. Our welcoming community of over 1,600 staff and more than 23,000 students from over 130 countries enjoy state-of-the-art facilities at our campuses in Glasgow and London.

With a wide range of professionally accredited courses and links with over 300 industry partners, we have the highest proportion of graduates in highly skilled occupations (82%) compared to other Scottish modern universities - with 91% of our students in employment or further study within 15 months of graduating (HESA 2024). We are Scotland's leading provider of Graduate Apprenticeship.

We are passionate about helping more young people from diverse backgrounds into university. Scottish Funding Council figures highlighted that 22% of our Scottish full-time, first-degree entrants were drawn from the country's 20% most disadvantaged backgrounds. This puts the Glasgow Caledonian ahead of its competitors for widening access, and retention of this cohort is also ahead of the sector at 89% (SFC 2023).

Our research is addressing many of today's biggest global challenges. We are unsurpassed by any other Scottish modern university for the level of research (72%) considered to be world leading or internationally excellent, and our health research is surpassed only by King's College London for outstanding impact (REF2021).

We are the only Scottish university with EcoCampus Platinum accreditation and were ranked first in Scotland for sustainability in the most recent People and Planet league table.

Thank you for applying for this exciting role and your interest in Glasgow Caledonian University.

Professor Stephen Decent
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

The University for the Common Good

Glasgow Caledonian – the largest and leading modern university in Scotland – is a vibrant, values-led organisation with campuses in the heart of Glasgow and London. Through our strong commitment to delivering high-quality education and research we are responsive to the needs of the communities we serve.

We have been named the UK’s Modern University of the Year 2025 in the Daily Mail’s recent university guide and ranked in the top 50 universities in the UK in the Guardian University Guide and the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide.

We perform exceptionally at subject level too. We’re the leading University in the UK in key health areas including Radiography and Physiotherapy, and in the top three for Subjects Allied to Medicine, and Hospitality, Leisure, Recreation and Tourism (first in Scotland), according to the Times and Sunday Times. The latest Guardian University Guide also ranked Glasgow Caledonian University first in the UK for Social Work, third for Games Design and in the top 10 for Marketing (first in Scotland) and Hospitality, Event Management and Tourism.

Glasgow Caledonian had the highest intake of Scottish full-time undergraduate students in the sector in the latest academic year (UCAS 2023). We deliver an outstanding student experience, as demonstrated by excellent HESA performance indicators for student progression and degree completion. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in its last Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) report commended the University for its achievements in many areas including widening participation and the effective use of Student Experience Action Plans.

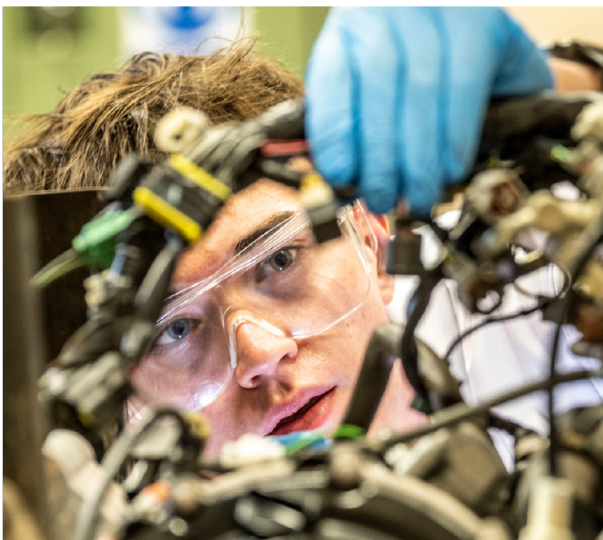
An independent report by BIGGAR Economics highlighted that our University is a valuable asset to the city of Glasgow, not only bringing economic and employment opportunities, but working to address the deep-rooted economic, social and health inequalities in the city.





Our Chancellor, Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE, is one of the UK's most influential women in tech and a major advocate of diversifying talent in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

As the University for the Common Good, equality and diversity are at the heart of everything that we do. We recently achieved Advance HE's Race Equality Charter Bronze Award. Our Equality Outcomes 2021-25 specify our actions to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. They are clearly aligned with our mission and strategic priorities, as well as our values, with the overall aim of reducing inequalities and making a positive difference. We take a whole-institution approach and are committed to ensuring that equality and diversity are mainstreamed into our core functions.



At heart we are a civic university with a global outlook, dedicated to building productive relationships and driving positive social change for current and future generations.

The University's close partnerships range from the Scottish Government, Public health Scotland and NHS Scotland to the Chambers of Commerce and Scottish Women in Technology. We have transnational partnerships in China, South Africa, Oman, Bangladesh and Mauritius.

Glasgow Caledonian's success as a globally connected university is demonstrated by the large number of international students studying at our UK campuses. We achieved excellent results in the latest International Student Barometer (2024), with 94% satisfaction ratings for the learning experience, arrival experience and happiness with life at Glasgow Caledonian.

Our leading-edge facilities include the award-winning Sir Alex Ferguson Library, a state-of-the-art visualisation suite and an interprofessional simulation centre which provides a range of realistic clinical and community environments to assist our health and social care students.

Guided by our mission as the University for the Common Good, and our values – integrity, responsibility, creativity and confidence – we work with others to transform the lives of our students and the communities we serve.

Strategy 2030

- Our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Steve Decent, is leading an exciting and ambitious new strategy for the University's success. Staff and students across our Glasgow and London campuses, the Students' Association, trade unions, alumni and external stakeholders engaged and informed the development of the Strategy in a range of ways including discussion sessions and workshops.
- Our new University Strategy builds on our deep-rooted mission for the Common Good and our values of confidence, integrity, creativity and responsibility. It sets out a new Vision for Glasgow Caledonian to 'Transform lives through excellent education and research that is accessible and impactful for the people of Glasgow and our communities locally, nationally and internationally'.
- The Strategy outlines an academic approach based on our core purpose to deliver excellent education and research, and how we can ensure Glasgow Caledonian is a great place to work and a destination of choice for students. The Strategy also encompasses internationalisation, engagement, employability, equality, diversity and inclusion, sustainability, our digital, estate and infrastructure, reputation, finance, governance and compliance.

Education

- Education is at the core of Glasgow Caledonian University's Strategy. We aim to deliver an excellent education for our students, working closely with business and the public sector to ensure our graduates have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to enter their desired careers when they graduate. We are committed to widening access to higher education to people from diverse backgrounds, and supporting our students throughout their academic and personal journey.

- We promote an inclusive approach to education by embedding the principles of equality and diversity throughout the institution and valuing individuals regardless of the background or group to which they identify with. We believe every member of staff contributes to the creation of an excellent student experience.
- Our distinctive approach to learning, teaching and assessment is shaped by the University's recognised strengths in its disciplines, widening access, work-based education and its research-led, interdisciplinary and enquiry-based approaches to student learning. Placements are an integral part of the Glasgow Caledonian learning experience.
- Our School of Health and Life Sciences leads the field in developing interprofessional learning that is inclusive of all health and social care professions. Interdisciplinary learning is also a fundamental aspect of education in our School of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment and our Glasgow School for Business and Society. Further, all programmes in the Glasgow School for Business and Society align to the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME).
- Based in the heart of London's Spitalfields, GCU London delivers a range of dynamic postgraduate programmes to ensure forward-thinking students get the skills, tools and experience they need to secure the careers they dream of and deserve.
- We offer diverse academic, wellbeing and pastoral support for all our students, recognising too the consequences of the exceptional pressures that students have experienced over the years of the pandemic.
- The University is dedicated to developing the use of technology to enhance learning, teaching and assessment. We invest in new facilities, learning spaces and academic development to continue to enrich student and staff experiences.



Research

- Research is at the heart of Glasgow Caledonian's mission as the University for the Common Good. Our research focuses on three core areas - Inclusive Societies, Healthy Lives, and Sustainable Environments – which align with our three Schools (the School of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment, the Glasgow School for Business and Society, and our School of Health and Life Sciences) and research centres.
- Our Research Excellence Framework (REF) performance has flourished in recent years. We are now unsurpassed by any other Scottish modern university for the level of research (72%) considered to be world leading or internationally excellent. Our health research is surpassed only by King's College London for outstanding impact.
- We have a clear focus on developing our thriving research culture and environment. This includes a targeted approach to investment in research-active staff and infrastructure, and the development of high-profile, prestigious research centres.
- We have a postgraduate research student body of around 500 at any one time, overseen by our award-winning Graduate School, and a suite of researcher development opportunities for staff and students.
- The University has a number of thematic interdisciplinary research centres including the Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health, the Research Centre for Health (ReaCH), the Mary Robinson Centre for Climate Justice, the BEAM Centre (Built Environment and Asset Management), the WiSE Centre for Economic Justice, and the SMART Technology Centre. The centres' work is underpinned by an intersectoral approach to addressing the challenges posed by the Sustainable Development Goals promoted by the United Nations.
- We work in close partnership and collaborate with numerous bodies such as the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland, Glasgow City Council and local businesses, as well as internationally with the World Health Organization, the African Development Bank, the European Commission and others.
- We sustain research grant income levels of £6 million per annum, winning competitive grants from bodies such as the Economic and Social Research Council, the European Commission, the Medical Research Council, National Institute of Health Research, the Chief Scientist's Office, and the Wellcome Trust.
- Our globally recognised researchers regularly advise governments, industry and international bodies on policy development and delivering impact.



Globally connected

- The University is extending its global impact and engaging in new ways with learners, global businesses and communities.
- We are the key partner in the African Leadership College in Mauritius, which educates students from 29 African countries.
- We are committed to staff and student international mobility, opportunities to study or volunteer abroad and providing excellent student exchange support.
- Our alumni community has 155,000 graduates based in 150 countries.

About Glasgow

Glasgow is one of the UK's leading metropolitan centres with a lively culture, leisure and sports scene. Glasgow ranks in the top 10 in Europe or top 25 globally for the quality of its education and cultural provision. It has the buzz and cosmopolitan feel of a great international city, while being within easy reach of some of the most spectacular countryside and scenery the UK has to offer.

The city

Culturally, Glasgow has much to offer – it's won the titles of European City of Culture and UK City of Architecture and Design in recent times. The city is home to Scottish Ballet, Scottish Opera, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, numerous other concert venues and theatres, the Scottish Event Campus and the OVO Hydro, one of the largest and busiest entertainment venues in the UK.

Free galleries and outstanding museums such as the refurbished Burrell Collection and Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum add to a stimulating environment in which Charles Rennie Mackintosh's world-famous art nouveau design is just one feature of the city's architectural richness.

Sport also features prominently in the life of the city which offers excellent facilities and benefits from the legacy of hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

Glasgow is home to people from many nationalities who enrich the experience of life in the city, resulting in a welcoming city for all. The city's many diverse centres of worship reflect its multi-faith community.

Living and travel

Glasgow offers a range of attractive rural and urban living opportunities and housing styles within and beyond the city. Good transport links and the University's city centre location make travel-to-work times manageable from numerous locations. Glasgow's setting in central Scotland means there is easy access to the whole of Scotland and the North of England. The area is well served by the largest suburban rail network outside London.

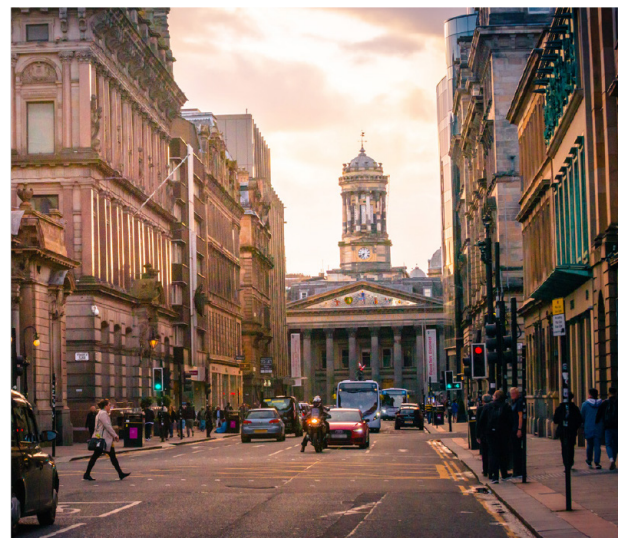
There's a comprehensive motorway system with the M74/M6 giving direct access to the south and the M8 to the east and Edinburgh.

The West Coast Main Line provides direct, fast rail services to London and major English cities. There's also a fast rail link from Glasgow to Edinburgh, normally every 15 minutes during peak hours and otherwise half hourly.

The city is served by a major international airport only a 15-minute drive from the city centre, and Scotland's other major international airport in Edinburgh is readily accessible.



Glasgow, a European City of Culture and UK City of Architecture and Design in recent times.



Department of Student Life

Student Life supports more than 23,000 students and over 1,600 staff and associates across two campuses.

The services and support delivered by Student Life are part of a whole university, inclusive approach to academic, pastoral, mental health and wellbeing support, with the aim to collectively enable students to succeed in their studies and career planning whatever their background or the stage they are at in their learner journey. Partnership and co-creation with students, academic schools and other professional support areas across the University is core to our approach to student support.

The success of the University's whole institution approach to student wellbeing and mental health is evidenced by the award of the University Mental Health Charter – GCU was among the first universities in the UK, and remains the only university in Scotland, to have achieved the award.

Student Life is comprised of three distinct but interrelated services who work closely together in the delivery of a joined up and accessible mode of student support: Careers, Student Wellbeing and Student Enquiries, Advice and Events.

Each service provides a range of specialist face to face and online support, advice and resources for students:

- Careers: careers information, education and guidance, employer engagement, career mentoring, the Common Good Award and vacancy services
- Student Wellbeing: counselling, priority response team, student disability service, mental health and student wellbeing advisory services and gender-based violence prevention and response
- Student Enquiries, Advice and Events: Campus Life enquiry desk, student funding, private and rented accommodation advice and support, student events and engagement and the student website.

In addition to the provision of specialist services, the department also delivers and contributes to a wide range of cross-institutional activities, initiatives and co-curricular opportunities, including student induction, the international student welcome programme, Peer Assisted Learning (PALS) mentoring programme, Keep in Touch campaigns (to support student retention and success), and the Grow Aspire Lead (GAL) leadership programme for women studying at GCU.



Role summary and responsibilities

Purpose: The Director of Student Life plays a critical leadership role in fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and supportive environment for students. This position is responsible for developing and implementing strategies, programs, and policies that enhance student engagement, wellbeing, and personal development. The role works collaboratively with academic and administrative departments to ensure the student experience is central to institutional priorities.

Main accountabilities and responsibilities of the role:

Strategic leadership

- Lead the design and delivery of programs and initiatives that promote student engagement, inclusion and personal development.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of student life initiatives and adapt strategies to meet the evolving student needs.
- Contribute to the achievement of the University's strategic objectives through its enabling strategies, such as the Education Strategy and EDI implementation plan, developing appropriate policies and procedures to support the effective delivery of a range of high-quality, integrated services to students.
- Develop and maintain strategic relationships with relevant external bodies to understand trends and upcoming governmental policy changes and its implications on services.

Operational leadership and oversight

- Provide operational leadership in relation to all functions and services provided by the department, ensuring effective, efficient operational delivery.
- Lead and develop a team of student support professionals, fostering a culture of excellence and collaboration.
- Drive a culture of continuous development and improvement within the area of student services, taking a lead on making a positive impact on a range of metrics, which will enhance the league table positions.
- Lead the planning and budgeting process for the service and contribute fully to planning across the directorate, ensuring the effective allocation of resources to support strategic priorities.
- Ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and institutional policies related to student services.
- Be responsible for the performance and development of the staff within the department, setting clear expectations and targets, which are well-communicated and monitored.

Crisis Management

- Act as a key decision-maker in student-related crisis, ensuring timely and appropriate responses.
- Collaborate with other departments to manage critical incidents impacting students.

Stakeholder engagement

- Promote collaborative working across and between academic Schools, and other professional service areas, establishing/further developing excellent working relationships to develop and deliver programmes and services to meet user needs.
- Work closely with the Students' Association to ensure a shared understanding of the services delivered and the student needs, to ensure that these complement each other.
- Build productive relationships with current external stakeholders and identify and develop new external relationships, to represent and promote the University at relevant strategic external groups.
- Ensure that all business processes are developed and adapted to ensure an excellent student experience which meets the wide range of varying needs.
- Lead cross-university projects and initiatives as directed by the Vice Principal People and Student wellbeing and University Executive Group.
- Chair relevant internal committees and working groups.
- Create and promote the sharing of good practice and the development of a culture of continuous improvement to provide an excellent student and staff experience, within the department, and across the University.
- Represent the University at relevant external groups and on national committees. Identify and adopt key developments and innovations to ensure the delivery of a sector-leading student experience.

Person specification

E=Essential, ie candidate must meet all essential criteria to be considered for selection, D=Desirable

Education and/or professional qualification

E1 Educated to degree level or equivalent experience, plus an appropriate professional qualification or experience.

E2 Appropriate professional qualification or experience.

Knowledge and skills

- Strong strategic leadership skills with evidence of leading a diverse team.
- The ability to develop and foster a strong internal and external network.
- Strong influencer.
- Clear business acumen
- Demonstrate a breadth of knowledge, skills and experience such that an effective service provision can be developed and delivered.
- Understanding of current challenges and opportunities within the HE environment specifically in the area of Student wellbeing and mental health and employability.
- Professional credibility and authority
- Ability to think and act strategically
- Ability to command the respect of peers and stakeholders
- Effective communicator, with a collaborative and collegiate approach
- Strong presentation and interpersonal skills, with the ability to inspire and lead a successful team, and interact with all levels of staff and management across the University.
- Exceptional scholarly skills with a practical, business-focused orientation.

Experience

- Experience of networking at a senior level, for example with Scottish Government.
- Significant experience of service provision across a large organisation.
- Previous experience of working in a strategic or leadership role
- A track record in the management and delivery of change initiatives
- Proven experience of formulating and implementing high-level strategies and plans
- A track record in successfully managing teams, ensuring their high performance and personal development.
- Experience of managing complex budgets



How to apply

For further information and details about how to apply, please contact Alan Walter at alan@dixonwalter.co.uk or call 07876 766972.

Further information and details about how to apply can be found at dixonwalter.co.uk/opportunities/gcu-director-student-life

Applications should be made via email to alan@dixonwalter.co.uk by midnight on Sunday, 30 March 2025 and should consist of:

- A curriculum vitae detailing relevant qualifications and experience, full employment history, and achievements
- A two-page cover letter describing briefly how you feel you meet the criteria outlined in the Job Summary Form, your achievements, why the appointment is of interest, and what you would like to achieve in the role
- Details of three referees and notice period (referees will not be contacted without your permission)
- A completed Personal Details Form (available from the link above).

Interviews held on Friday, 2 May 2025. Shortlisted candidates will also be asked to make a presentation to members of the panel prior to the interview. Preliminary interviews with Dixon Walter will be held on the weeks commencing 31 March and 7 April.



University for the Common Good

Glasgow

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