

The Moving Forward Initiative

Report

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moving forward

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Section 1: Executive Summary

Overview

Moving Forward is a university-wide initiative that represents a coordinated institutional strategy for transition, progression and evidence-based practice focusing on partnership working between the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning, the Caledonian Academy, all academic schools, Learner Support, the Students' Association, Academic Registry, Marketing and Communications, and other support departments. The aims of Moving Forward are to:

- improve progression rates;
- enhance the student experience in terms of transition to GCU;
- develop, support the implementation of, and evaluate the GCU Transition and Progression Framework (GCU TPF) in conjunction with the Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) and other relevant university policies;
- provide greater support for staff in developing and implementing strategies to address issues associated with transition and progression.

The work of Moving Forward was undertaken in six key stages:

- Consultation
- Development of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework
- Mini Communities of Practice
- Interim evaluation
- Partnership Agreements
- Moving Forward Development Funding Awards

High Level Outcomes

- Improvement in progression rates;
- Enhancement of cross-institutional communication;
- Evidence gathering on issues associated with student transition, engagement and progression through an extensive consultation exercise;
- Engagement with staff and students across the university;
- Partnership working (including colleges);
- Development and ratification of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework (GCU TPF);
- Development and continued expansion of six Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs);
- Development, negotiation and establishment of Partnership Agreements (PAs) with the six academic schools and Learner Support;
- Introducing Moving Forward Development Funding Awards (MDFAs) and launching ten pilot projects with the potential for a university-wide roll-out;
- Sharing of practice, issues and ideas – internal and external;
- Dissemination through GCU events and through national and international conferences.

Impact of Moving Forward

Moving Forward has succeeded in supporting the improvement of progression rates across the university, by encouraging and sustaining wide-spread staff and student engagement through its extensive and continuous consultation, Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs), partnership agreements (PAs) with academic schools and Learner Support, introducing Moving Forward Development Funding Awards (MDFAs), dissemination and sharing of practice.

The GCU Transition and Progression Framework has enabled the Schools and Student Services to tackle issues of transition and progression by allowing them to identify their priority areas of action and by offering guidance and examples of practice. The fact that the GCU TPF incorporates both, learning and teaching approaches as well as additional student support has increased awareness of how to embed transition and progression support into the curriculum and, thus, moving towards an inclusive curriculum that encompasses transition pedagogy.

The Mini CoPs have been highly successful in encouraging and sustaining cross-institutional and inter-institutional communication. The themes of the Mini CoPs were agreed by staff and students involved in the extensive consultation that took part at the beginning of Moving Forward and this has ensured that they remain relevant and beneficial for all participants. They cover a range of aspects that relate to the student experience at GCU:

- Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Feedback
- Student Empowerment and Staff-student Communication
- Liaison with Schools and Colleges
- Preparation and Induction
- Peer Support and Mentoring
- Communication and Marketing

The Mini Cops have enabled staff and students to share practice and learn from each other in order to develop new and creative approaches to transition and progression support either within their schools/departments or university-wide. As such they have proven to be an excellent vehicle for staff development as well as staff engagement with the university, even during difficult times.

The interim evaluation evidenced the success of Moving Forward, providing positive feedback on the GCU TPF, the partnership approach and the Mini CoPs. It was successful in gathering relevant suggestions about the future direction of Moving Forward, such as the development and establishment of formalised partnership agreements. Moreover, it has formed the basis for a continuous evaluation strategy that Moving Forward has since applied to its activities, such as feedback exercises at Mini CoP meetings. Continuous evaluation combined with iteration and review of processes and levels of engagement is essential to sustain staff and student engagement and sense of belonging.

The Moving Forward partnership agreements (PAs) were a direct outcome from the interim evaluation. Feedback from the School Deans and some of the HLTQs asked for more pro-active involvement of Moving Forward within the Schools and the PAs were seen as the best way forward to achieve this. The success of the PAs has been that fact that they allow the Schools and Learner Support to identify their own areas for key priority actions and, thus, providing them a sense of ownership and control.

One of the key outcomes of the PAs has been the move of one School towards rethinking programme delivery in relation to 'long-thin' induction by embedding transition and progression

support within some of its programmes. This sets a positive example for enhancing the student experience by adopting different approaches to learning and teaching, one of the main areas of the GCU TPF.

Additionally, the PAs have prompted discussions and a reflection on the existing learning and teaching practice within the Schools and student support within Learner Support. This development has played a major role towards improving progression and retention rates across the institution.

The Moving Forward Development Funding Awards proved to be successful for all those involved. This is mainly due to the fact that one of the conditions of funding was pro-active student involvement. The creativity and enthusiasm of students cannot be underestimated and their involvement in the MFDFAs has contributed to the innovative and creative approach of the projects. Additionally, the projects have fostered cross-institutional collaboration and, thus, ensured that their outcomes are both sustainable and transferable to other areas of the university. This has also led to an increase in staff and student engagement with Moving Forward and the university as a whole.

The strategic approach and the work of Moving Forward has been acknowledged externally at national and international conferences, forums, symposia, seminars. It has been selected as an example of excellent practice by the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions programme (SPA); the Quality Assurance Agency, linked to the Quality Enhancement Themes and the Northwest JISC Forum and has been positively commented on by internationally renowned researchers in the field of student engagement (Kerry Krause, Griffith University) and inclusive pedagogy (Sally Kift, Queens University of Technology). This highlights the impact of Moving Forward on the University's reputation externally and internally.

Recommendations for the way forward

- **CLD representation on university-wide working groups that directly impact on the student experience**, such as the Learning and Teaching Quality Group, the new Learning Development Centres Group, the Assessment and Feedback Steering Group, the proposed Social Mobility Working Group, the Induction Working Group, the Blended Learning Implementation Group, the Flexible Entry Working Group, the GCU Mentor Group, the Frank Buttle Trust Group and the Student Services Group, to help provide an overview of initiatives and activities that take place at GCU and to put people in touch with each other in order to encourage cross-institutional collaboration.
- Continue to support **cross-institutional communication, collaboration and sharing of practice through a community of practice model**, as part of wider Learning and Teaching Community of Practice developments facilitated by the Centre for Learning and Development. This requires senior management and executive level endorsement for developmental Communities of Practice to enable members of staff to engage in cross-institutional activities. The supporting of the Community through GCU Learn will enable the development of a central repository /resource for learning and teaching development projects and scholarly activities which are being undertaken across the institution in order to streamline activities and to avoid duplication of effort.
- Continue to develop and sustain **staff engagement in centralised initiatives, themes and key areas through partnership working and feedback mechanisms** to enable staff and students to retain a sense of ownership/belonging. This requires the development of an effective partnership working model between the Widening Participation and Progression team within the CLD and the academic schools and central services. This will include shared and clear understanding of the roles of the CLD and the academic schools in undertaking initiatives and

activities related to enhancing transition, progression and retention which should include a combination of long and short-term key action points/outcomes, rather than focusing solely on short-term (annual) deliverables.

- Clarify **linkages and interdependencies between the various university policies and strategies that impact on the student experience** in order to enable members of staff to demonstrate how their development work impacts on multiple aspects of the student experience and supports various university policies and strategies.
- **Continue to coordinate WARP-funded development projects targeted at priority areas of development within the schools in relation to transition, progression and retention.** Schemes and programmes should be linked to financial incentives that build upon each other (gradual increase of funds per programme/scheme) to encourage members of staff to develop projects and activities gradually, step by step, learning from the previous experience, increasing their confidence and enhancing their professional development. Development activities should be streamlined in order to avoid overburdening staff with competing funding bids. Closer links between WARP development funding and the Caledonian and Associate Scholarship scheme should be developed. Cross-institutional team working should be a criterion for university-wide development projects, as should proactive student involvement, where possible, beyond the Students' Association. This enables us to be responsive to the student voice and provides students with opportunities to engage with the institution, to be creative and to benefit in terms of employability skills/graduate attributes.
- The **Widening Participation and Progression Team (WPPT)** to provide **a leadership role within GCU and an 'observatory' role beyond GCU, in terms of learning and teaching policy and practice in relation to transition, progression, retention, an inclusive curriculum, and student engagement** (regionally, nationally and internationally) in order to help to embed contextualised best practice and identify areas for further development within the university.
- The **WPPT to continue to engage in external research and network activities** in partnership with the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning (CRLL) and other colleagues across the university.

Section 2: Background and Context

About Moving Forward

Moving Forward is a university-wide initiative that represents a coordinated institutional strategy for transition, progression and evidence-based practice focusing on partnership working between the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning, the Caledonian Academy, all academic schools, Learner Support, the Students' Association, Academic Registry, Marketing and Communications, and other support departments. This development forms the basis of the University's Strategic Plan for the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) Widening Access and Retention Premium allocation (now Horizon Fund).

The aims of Moving Forward are to:

- improve progression rates;
- enhance the student experience in terms of transition to GCU;
- develop, support the implementation of, and evaluate the GCU Transition and Progression Framework (GCU TPF) in conjunction with the Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) and other relevant university policies;
- provide greater support for staff in developing and implementing strategies to address issues associated with transition and progression.

The initiative is closely informed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland First-Year Experience Quality Enhancement Theme (QET). It is based on the outcomes of the QET Transition project (Whittaker, 2008), research on the first-year student experience (Krause, 2003; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; McInnis & James, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998; Thomas et al, 2005) and research on the need for a coordinated institutional approach to transition strategies (Campbell, 2006; Cook, Rushton, McCormick & Southall, 2005; Harvey, Drew & Smith, 2006). The need for 'more major cultural, philosophical and pedagogical shifts regarding the nature and purpose of the first year' (Whittaker, 2008, p. 4) has been recognised. The need to motivate as many stakeholders as possible, including students, to participate in the development of new policies and frameworks is crucial for gaining support and endorsement for change. Therefore, Moving Forward's university-wide partnership model constitutes a central element of the university's strategic approach to the first year and student engagement (Barrie, Ginns & Prosser, 2005; Harvey, Drew & Smith 2006; Kift, 2009; Kift, Nelson & Clarke, 2010; Krause 2003, 2005, 2006; QAA 2005; Whittaker 2008) and a move away from a utilitarian model towards an all-inclusive, transformational model of widening participation (Thomas, 2005). This approach also incorporates the latest HEA recommendation that:

'Institutions should seek to develop a coherent strategic approach to student engagement which incorporates key elements and aims to achieve the key outcomes list above [multiple engagement opportunities; interaction of engagement opportunities; build students' capacity to engage; promote staff responsibility for student engagement; monitoring student engagement; evaluating impact], overall aiming to improve all students' sense of entitlement and belonging in higher education.' (HEA, 2011)

'Moving Forward' has provided an opportunity for the university to think critically and creatively about the way in which it supports transition and progression. This has been undertaken by drawing upon GCU's existing evidence base as well as considering the broader, or more integrated application, of existing strategies, and the introduction of new approaches informed by practice

elsewhere. Some of the solutions and strategies identified through this process may be relatively quickly implemented; others may require more fundamental changes to practice and culture, in terms of the university's pre-entry role, the nature of the curriculum and the nature of support services.

Key Stages of Moving Forward

Stage One: Consultation

A consultation with all stakeholders (academic staff, students, support staff and administration) across the university was undertaken to identify the causes of lack of student engagement and progression. Consultation sessions were run at each of the academic schools and student-facing support departments. The academic schools and support departments were asked to invite a wide range of their members of staff to participate in those sessions. The consultation exercise began with a presentation of the findings by the University's Student Experience Project (SEP) in relation to student engagement, progression and retention. This was followed by a discussion of four main questions:

- What are the issues associated with progression and engagement within your programmes/services?
- What strategies are you currently using to address these issues?
- In what ways would you like to improve transition and progression support?
- What examples of practice/case studies could be included in the framework resource from your School/Department?

The consultation notes were iterated between the Moving Forward team and the participating School/Departments until a final version was agreed. These notes have been since made available on the Moving Forward website for staff and students. The consultation process also saw the establishment of a large Moving Forward Community of Practice (MF CoP), that to date counts about 400 members.

A Service Design event consolidated the consultation. A stimulus paper based on the findings of the consultation sessions was circulated prior to the event. The event itself focused on the first year at GCU, which includes Levels 2 and 3 for direct entrants from college. Acknowledging that successful transition to first year underpins successful progression and is linked to student engagement with the university in both academic and social terms. The event's purpose was to inform and support the development of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework (GCU TPF), engage more members of staff and students in our partnership working and, thereby, encourage support for the implementation of the framework.

The discussions centred on three major aspects of transition:

- Pre-entry and transition
- Transition support throughout the first year

- Learning, teaching and assessment ('first-year pedagogy'), including a closer fit between the curriculum content of HN qualifications and degree programmes In relation to college entrants.

The outcomes of the consultation were underpinned by student focus group discussions, research by the Student Experience Project, and outcomes of the National Student Survey, the university's New2GCU and ReviewGCU surveys and the Students' Association's Class Rep Conference.

By the end of the day, there was a shared consensus on three main themes that emerged as focuses of action, upon which nine project streams are based:

- Enhanced communication
 - Learning, teaching and assessment
 - Feedback
 - Student Empowerment
- Developing a sense of community/sense of belonging
 - Communication (internal and external)
 - Marketing (brand)
 - Staff-student Communication
- Developing the independent/self-regulated learner
 - Liaison with Schools and Colleges
 - Preparation and induction
 - Peer Support and Mentoring

Stage Two: Development of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework (TPF)

The GCU TPF represents a holistic approach to the student experience. It integrates and supports all activities linked to student engagement and to supporting student transition and progression within the academic schools, and at central level. Its development was an iterative process, asking the members of MF CoP to comment on the framework in relation to content and format by circulating an early version of the Framework among the Moving Forward Community of Practice for feedback and any points of criticism. The main outcome of the feedback was two-fold: it was decided that the examples of practice should be presented separately. This would shorten the document and, therefore, make it more accessible to staff and students. It was also recommended to include a guidance statement at the start in order to advise staff and students how to use the Framework.

As it stands, the Framework offers strategies and guidance. It is flexible and reflects the diverse nature of the university and as such allows the academic schools, support departments, the

administration and the Students' Association to identify their own action plans to support transition and progression. The framework covers two main areas: pre-entry/transition and Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Feedback, encouraging a reflection and review of current practice. It lists strategies and possible action points against the principles of effective transition support identified by Whittaker (2008), promoting approaches to embed support within the curriculum. These include the development of a 'first-year pedagogy', more project-based work, enabling and empowering students to help shape the learning and teaching experience, personal development planning, feedback as a dialogue and early formative assessment. Thus, the framework is directly linked to the implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS). Moreover, the framework is continually being developed as a resource for staff and students, providing examples of practice as well as information on national as well as international research and development on progression and retention. These resources are gathered by the Moving Forward team as well as through the Moving Forward Community of Practice and are made available on the Moving Forward website.

Stage Three: Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs)

The GCU TPF was ratified in December 2008 and officially launched in February 2009. Based on the main themes that had emerged as a shared consensus at the Service Design event, six Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs) were established at the launch event, with attendants joining one or more Mini CoP(s). As mentioned before, the Mini CoPs are based on main areas identified by students and staff throughout the consultation, such as Learning and Teaching, Assessment, and Feedback; student empowerment; liaison with schools and colleges; induction; peer support; internal and external communication. They have been facilitated by Moving Forward, count between 10 and 53 members (staff, students and members from partner organisations), meet twice during every semester, and have been well attended throughout. The Mini CoPs are specifically designed to encourage cross-university communication and discussion. Current activities include a student-led development of a feedback poster and the development of a guidance document in support of a shared understanding of independent learning by students and staff.

In order to enable them to turn some of their discussions into practice, Moving Forward has also offered development funding awards (£4,000 per Mini Cop) and two projects are currently underway.

The Mini CoP activities offer tangible outcomes that can be monitored and evaluated. They provide a platform for members of staff and students to engage with each other across the university and, thus, enhance communication and the sharing of practice.

Stage Four: Interim Evaluation

In summer 2009 it was decided to conduct an interim evaluation of Moving Forward and its activities. However, Glasgow Caledonian University offers a wide range of activities aimed at enhancing the student experience and, therefore, it is difficult to discern the impact of any individual initiative, like Moving Forward. Additionally, the National Student Survey and the International Student Barometer cannot measure the complexity of factors that impact on the student experience and, therefore, it requires more in-depth research with the inclusion of qualitative data to measure the impact of Moving Forward.

The interim evaluation included a web-based survey, evaluation pro-formas handed out at events and Mini CoP meetings, and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including Deans and Heads of Learning and Teaching Quality. It focused on four key aspects of the work of Moving Forward – aspects that could reasonably be assessed before December 2009:

- Moving Forward’s partnership approach
- How the GCU Transition and Progression Framework is perceived by the wider GCU community
- Feedback on the impact of the Mini CoPs
- What kind of priorities the wider GCU community would like to be seen taken on by Moving Forward

Data derived from the interim evaluation was exceptionally positive:

- More than 70% of respondents were aware of the partnership approach;
- A strong view was expressed (survey, pro-formas and interviews) that the schools need to be more actively involved and collaborate closely with Moving Forward to ascertain the sustainability of the partnership approach, allow the schools to take ownership, and to turn policy into practice;
- 67% of respondents to the web-based survey find the Framework useful/very useful.
- Over 70% of survey respondents view the Mini CoPs positively, providing strong evidence that Moving Forward has been successful in enabling cross-institutional communication and discussion.

Most importantly, the outcomes of the interim evaluation provided Moving Forward with a set of suggestions on which future activities could be developed and planned, such as developing formalised Partnership Agreements with the Academic Schools and Learner Support.

Stage Five: Partnership Agreements with the Academic Schools and Learner Support

While Moving Forward has been successful in developing a collaborative relationship with staff with responsibility for student support and the implementation of the LTAS, work needs to focus on engaging more programme and module leaders in the initiative. Pedagogical change is required, if the university is to effectively enhance the transition process and improve student engagement and progression (Kift, 2009; Kift et al., 2010; Thomas, 2005; Whittaker, 2008). For this reason, formal partnership agreements with the academic schools, and Learner Support, signed by the Deans and the Heads of Learning and Teaching Quality or equivalent, were introduced and negotiated. These partnership agreements were a direct result of an interim evaluation of Moving Forward and have been considered the best way forward.

The aims of the partnership agreements are to enhance partnership working across the University in order to support the implementation of the GCU TPF, the LTAS and other relevant university policies, enabling the academic schools and other departments to identify their own priority areas. Some of the areas identified are: induction (long thin, covering the whole of the student life cycle throughout all levels of study); academic advice; online assessment; feedback; blended Learning/e-learning; researching the part-time student experience; staff development.

The partnership agreements offer a long-term, sustainable approach to improving transition, progression and retention as well as student engagement. They also provide the university with tangible outcomes, enable staff and student to engage with, and participate in, processes of change across the institution as a whole. The latter is essential given the current economic climate and the prospect of funding cuts within the higher education sector.

Stage Six: Moving Forward Development Funding Awards

The Moving Forward Development Funding Awards were initially established in order to enhance the process of implementation of the GCU TPF, in conjunction with the LTAS and particular areas requiring support within Schools. Following feedback on the MF initiative this was seen as an opportunity to involve students and staff in supporting creative, sustainable and transferrable approaches to supporting students' transition into and throughout their GCU experience, while targeting a central theme/area of strategic priority (as identified in the Mini Cops and in the partnership agreements).

The aims of internal development funding awards included supporting curriculum development, providing opportunities for collaboration, encouraging student participation and promoting professional development of staff.

Moving Forward offered development funding awards to the academic schools (£6,000 per school) as part of the partnership agreements and in order to enable the Mini CoPs to turn some of their discussions into practice, Moving Forward has also offered funding awards to the Mini CoPs (£4,000 per Mini CoP).

Ten projects were successful in gaining funding, all of which include pro-active student involvement; of those six were school based projects, one Students' Association, one Learner Support and two projects were from the Mini CoPs.

Section 3: Key Achievements and Outputs

Moving Forward Key Achievements and Outputs to date

Since the beginning of the Moving Forward in October 2007, the initiative has accomplished many outcomes and achievements, most importantly the improvement of progression rates, which is its main objective. Additionally, it continually evolves and adapts to new circumstances.

Its key achievements and outcomes include:

- Improvement in progression rates;
- Enhancement of cross-institutional communication;
- Evidence gathering on issues associated with student transition, engagement and progression through an extensive consultation exercise;
- Engagement with staff and students across the university;
- Partnership working (including colleges);
- Development and ratification of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework (GCU TPF);
- Development and continued expansion of six Mini CoPs;
- Development, negotiation and establishment of Partnership Agreements with the six academic schools, Learner Support;
- Introducing Moving Forward Development Funding Awards and launching ten pilot projects with the potential for a university-wide roll-out;
- Enhancement of cross-institutional communication;
- Sharing of practice, issues and ideas – internal and external;
- Dissemination through GCU events and through national and international conferences.

The GCU Transition and Progression Framework

The GCU Transition and Progression Framework integrates and supports all activities linked to supporting student transition and progression with the schools and at central level. The framework offers guidance and strategies that can tackle these. It has been used to guide schools in developing action plans to support transition and progression. These action plans have been linked to the implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) at school level. Moreover, the framework will continue to be developed as a central resource for staff and students, providing examples of practice as well as information on national as well as international research and development on progression and retention in higher education. These resources will continued to be gathered by the Moving Forward team as well as through the Moving Forward Community of Practice (comprised of academic and support staff and student representatives).

The GCU Transition and Progression Framework is divided into two parts:

Part One (Strategy):

- Vision
- Principles/strategies for effective transition support
- Reflective questions
- Approaches/action plans mapped to principles

Part Two (resource):

- Vision
- Principles/strategies for effective transition support
- Reflective questions
- Examples of practice (GCU and beyond)

The framework is flexible and reflects the diverse nature of the university. It provides the academic schools, support departments, the administration and the Students' Association with the opportunity to identify their own key priority areas, action plans, and strategies to support transition and progression. As mentioned before, these action plans are linked to the implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) at school level. As a central resource the framework will continually be updated, providing examples of practice and further information on national as well as international research and development on progression and retention in higher education.

The academic schools as well as Learner Support and other departments have now been tasked with the implementation of the GCU TPF. This activity is being supported by the Moving Forward initiative which continues to provide expert advice and guidance in relation to transition, progression and retention and the enhancement of the student experience.

Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs)

Following on from the launch of the GCU TPF, Moving Forward established six Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs), based on main areas identified by students and staff throughout the consultation and at the event:

- Learning and Teaching, Assessment, and Feedback
- Student empowerment and staff-student communication
- Liaison with schools and colleges
- Preparation and induction
- Peer support and mentoring
- Communication (internal and external) and Marketing (brand)

The Mini Cops include members of staff, students as well as members from partner organisations (Colleges, West Forum, SWAP West, SQA) and have between 10 and 53 dedicated members. They are facilitated by Moving Forward, meet regularly, about twice during every semester, and have been well attended throughout. Themes and activities of the meetings cover a wide range and are based on feedback from the members to ensure continued staff engagement. Therefore, the first round of meetings focused on setting themes for future meetings and identifying potential facilitators/presenters. The following themes emerged from those discussions:

- Learning and Teaching, Assessment, and Feedback

- Feedback
- Developing a shared understanding of independent learning
- Sharing of Practice
- Pre-entry preparation
- Student empowerment and staff-student communication
 - Ownership/transparency of communication
 - Sense of belonging
 - Liaison and cross-communication
 - Evaluation: how do we measure student empowerment?
- Liaison with schools and colleges
 - Develop good communication between all sectors
 - Curriculum development (Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), curriculum alignment)
 - Pre-entry guidance
 - Transition
- Preparation and induction
 - Socialisation during first week at university
 - Better internal and external communication
 - Supporting students to become independent learners
 - Funding
 - Sharing of practice
 - (lack of) soft skills
- Social networks and peer support
 - Mapping of peer support and mentoring activities
 - Peer-assisted learning
 - Student recruitment
 - Diversity of student body
 - Access to resources/linkages
- Communication (internal and external) and Marketing (brand)
 - Sharing of practice
 - External communication (expectation gap)
 - Improving internal communication lines

The outcomes of the first set of meetings led to a range of Mini CoP meetings based on the agreed themes. Invitations to the Mini CoP meetings have always been sent to members of all the Mini CoPs, since many of the themes represent shared interests. Sometimes a decision was made to combine two Mini CoPs, if a shared theme of interest was covered. The meetings have also always been open to other members of staff and external partners. As such, the Mini CoP meetings have always attracted a good turn out (on average between 10 and 20) and, subsequently, have expanded their membership beyond the original group members.

From February 2009 to May 2010 five rounds of meetings were held covering a wide range of topics, some of which were:

- Learning and Teaching, Assessment, and Feedback
 - What is learner Independence? (I. Falconer)
 - Defining the independent learner (V. Boyd & S. McKendry)
 - Curriculum for Excellence (I. Butchart)
- Student empowerment and staff-student communication
 - Mapping of practice/communication lines
 - Sharing of good practice, e.g. benefits of using 'Youthwire'
- Liaison with schools and colleges
 - Communication between the sectors and ways of improving it
 - ELRAH presentation on their CPD Transition Module (A. Comrie)
 - Experiences with articulation in CBS (S. Nawaz)
 - Curriculum for Excellence (I. Butchart)
- Preparation and induction
 - Sharing of practice
 - Presentation on the GCU Summer School (H. Martin)
 - Presentation on New2GCU (S. Campbell)
- Peer support and mentoring
 - Mapping of peer support and mentoring activities
 - Presentation on Peer-assisted Study Support (PASS) (B. Moran)
 - Presentation on Routes for All (J. Marshall)
- Communication (internal and external) and Marketing (brand)
 - Sharing of Practice
 - Understanding types of existing communication and identifying ways of improving communication lines across GCU

In order to retain relevancy and staff engagement for the Mini CoPs, a decision was made to hold a combined meeting of all Mini CoPs under the headline of 'What's next', allowing members to express their views, offer feedback and also provide feed forward for future Mini CoP meetings. The meeting took place in June 2010 and the MF team started the meeting by looking back at the past year and drawing attention to the current GCU priority areas. There was also a discussion of how the Mini CoPs could support the projects undertaken through the Moving Forward Development Funding Awards (£4,000 per Mini Cop) that were introduced in Spring 2010 in order to enable the Mini CoPs to turn some of their discussions into practice. Additionally, it allowed an update of topics/themes to be taken forward over the next academic years:

- Preparation and Induction
 - Opportunities to support Julie Rattray's pre-entry resource hub
- Articulation
 - Problems with articulation routes at present due to limited funding

- Backlog at colleges from both ends, i.e. those unable to progress to degree level study and those who are unable to enter due to high competition rates and ltd places
- College is a stepping stone to University now
- GCU Articulation Policy
- Consideration to have GGAP colleagues run a session at one of the Mini CoPs to update the members about their work.

- Student Empowerment
 - GCU Culture, Gary Brown – MFDFA

- Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Feedback
 - SQA Framework and links with GCU courses
 - Feedback continues to be problematic. Students should be given a realistic understanding/expectation of feedback. i.e. what is expected from the student and the staff member and also timelines etc
 - Collate/research examples of practice/findings on student expectations from feedback from both staff and student perspective
 - Collate an overall picture of what is 'currently happening' – i.e. Catriona MacDonald and Agnes Rae have undertaken work in this area
 - Consider inviting externals i.e. David Nicol from Strathclyde
 - Look towards 'feed forward'
 - Link with student empowerment – benchmarking
 - Offer alternative mechanisms for feedback
 - MF will email the group to start this process
 - The three-week turnaround requirement per the 'assessment policy' is not always being met and because it's three *academic* weeks, it can actually take up to five weeks.
 - Students do not always understand the feedback they are being given
 - Communication is vital
 - Look at it from the part-time and Mature Student point of view
 - Language of feedback has also to be taken into consideration
 - The new academic year changes will be problematic for feedback around Christmas time and may result in students having to wait five weeks
 - What can be done as a group, which is both practical and problem solving? Need to capture this and take realistic action measures (i.e. what issues, if raised, can MF take any further?)

- Schools and Colleges liaison
 - Need to include more secondary school involvement, i.e. Passion for Fashion and Biorama
 - 'Passion for Fashion' is on Curriculum for Excellence website
 - Link in with Caledonian Club
 - Talk to Jackie Riley about work she is undertaking

- Peer Support and Mentoring

- Focus on provision of mentoring services for part-time and mature students

Other thoughts that were discussed at the meeting were:

- Should we be merging some of the groups?
- Summer School will be affected by changes to the academic calendar. Perhaps Helen will be able to provide an update at the start of the new session
- Understanding students in the 21st Century: what are their expectations? This could complement research which will be undertaken by the SA as part of their MFDFA
- Part time and mature students should be an area of priority and this should be covered in the themes within all Mini CoPs
- Who talks to students who withdraw from University?

Taking on board some of the feedback given at the combined Mini CoP meetings, the next set of meetings took place in November 2010 and were run as themed workshops, that is to say that members of all Mini CoPs were invited to attend the meeting they were most interested in attending, rather than run one meeting per Mini CoP.

The themes were:

- Feedback, the Student Perspective: *Facilitated by Kieran Livingston, VPSD.*
- Defining the Independent Learner
- Effective Engagement with Secondary Schools: *Facilitated by Lorraine Judge (Focus West) and Eleanor Wilson (Caledonian Club).*
- Supporting Transition and Progression through Curriculum Alignment: GGAP College University Subject Partnerships (CUSPS): *Facilitated by Margaret Hawthorne (GGAP).*
- Exploring the Part-time Student Experience: *Facilitated by Kevin Ward (SA)(Cancelled - rescheduled for February 2011)*

The meetings were attended by enthusiastic participants keen to take the themes forward. As part of MF's continuous evaluation and to find out more about what motivated the participants to attend and how they want the Mini CoP to continue, MF undertook a post-it exercise at each session in order to identify three things:

1. Why the participants came to the meetings?
2. What the participants wanted to get out of the meetings?
3. What the participants thought the next steps should be?

Most of those who attended the meetings did so because they were either involved in previous meetings of a similar theme, currently work/ have an interest in the area or wanted to learn more about/share ideas on the themes. The majority of participants all wanted to learn more about what is happening in GCU on the themes, gain an understanding of what could realistically be achieved and establish some forward plans for concrete outcomes.

One of the key outcomes of the meetings were that all participants were keen on taking action in relation to the themes discussed, while acknowledging in some cases that more cross-university participation would be required to enable this. When asked what the participants thought of the next steps forward would be, most highlighted that they would feedback on the meetings to other colleagues, encourage communication with Mini CoP members via the MF Blackboard module on taking themes forward and to enhance wider communication with colleagues.

The key points to take forward include:

- In terms of feedback, develop user friendly leaflet/guidance about feedback, with possible examples to enhance students' as well as staff's understanding, working along with the SA
- Engagement with secondary schools: Further information on how GCU could engage more beneficially with secondary schools and how GCU and other HE establishments support widening participation/access.
- Independent Learner: Wider consultation and trigger diagram on defining the independent learner, reflecting the range of independent learners
- Enhance communication within GCU (including between MF/GGAP) about the CUSPS
Identify possible overlaps/ existing examples of practice and encourage potential CUSPS

Following on from the set of meetings, the Mini CoP members were sent a brief summary of the meetings and the outcomes of the evaluation exercise. They were also informed that a Moving Forward Blackboard module had already been set up and has been available to all members of the large MF community of practice, to encourage and enhance discussions and to keep everyone up to date with the latest developments.

The latest set of Mini CoP meetings were again held as themed workshops, focusing on a follow-up to the Feedback workshop, facilitated by the Kieran Livingston (VSPD) gather views on the feedback campaign run by the SA with a sharing of ideas for posters and information leaflets. The rescheduled workshop on 'Exploring the part-time student experience' was very well attended and the outcomes of the MFDFA project were discussed further by the attendants. There was also a workshop on induction, presenting two MFDFA projects focusing on generic induction and school-based induction aimed at gaining some cross-university support for the projects.

Overall, the Mini CoPs have provided a platform for staff and students to meet and discuss themes and issues of interest and, thus, enhance cross-university communication, resulting in an overview of activities that helps identify gaps, but also overlaps, within the university provision. They have also enabled staff and students to share practice and learn from each other in order to develop new and creative approaches to transition and progression support either within their schools/departments or university-wide. As such they have proven to be an excellent vehicle for staff development as well as staff engagement with the university, even during difficult times. The positive feedback of the interim evaluation was echoed in the feedback offered at the combined sessions and the specific evaluation exercise in November last year.

Interim Evaluation

In summer 2009, Moving Forward undertook an interim evaluation in order to assess its impact and to identify ways in which staff at central and school level can be supported further in implementing the GCU Transition and Progression Framework.

Evaluation Methodology

The interim evaluation of Moving Forward focused on the following four key aspects of the work of Moving Forward:

- *Moving Forward's partnership approach*
 - staff and student engagement with the consultation process;
 - staff and student engagement with the development of the Framework
- *How the GCU Transition and Progression Framework is perceived by the wider GCU community*
 - usefulness and practicality of the Framework
- *Feedback on the impact of the Moving Forward Mini-Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs)*
 - Staff and student engagement with the Mini CoPs
 - Usefulness and practicality of the Mini CoPs
- *What kind of priorities the wider GCU community would like to be seen taken on by the Moving Forward Initiative*
 - Feedback on what motivates staff and students to participate
 - Feedback on continuing staff and student engagement

The main tools of data collection were a web-based survey, short evaluation proformas and in-depth one-to-one interviews. Mixing tools in this way served not only to ensure both breadth and depth of coverage but also to enhance the validity of the evaluation findings.

- Web-based Survey
 - The web-based survey was specifically constructed to generate data in relation to each of the four key aspects of the work of Moving Forward to be evaluated. The survey link was circulated to the 400 members of the Moving Forward CoP which, apart from colleagues at GCU, also extends to, for instance, college partners, On-Track and the West of Scotland Wider Access Forum. A total of 92 CoP members responded to the survey - a response rate of 23 per cent.
- Evaluation proformas
 - Evaluation proformas have been employed at key stages/events and have provided a simple, yet effective, tool for gathering data. Proformas were used, for instance, to generate data in relation to Moving Forward's Mini CoPs and to the process of the development, and perception, of GCU's Transition and Progression Framework, and will continued to be used to gather feedback on the work of Moving Forward.
- In-depth Interviews
 - 20 in-depth interviews have been conducted with key stakeholders such as Deans, HLTQs, ADTs and the Students' Association. The interview topics have broadly concerned the four key aspects of the work of Moving Forward to be evaluated and, importantly, have offered the flexibility to explore some of these areas in more detail. A number of further one-to-one interviews have been conducted with GCU Deans in light of the fact that they play a crucial role in the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework, as well as other colleagues at GCU and beyond.

Outcomes of Interim Evaluation

Feedback on the Partnership Approach:

Data derived from the web-based survey in relation to Moving Forward's partnership approach was exceptionally positive.

More than 70% of respondents were aware of the Moving Forward partnership approach and agreed that it is important to listen to the voice of staff and students, that Moving Forward has enabled them to express their views, that Moving Forward has encouraged feedback, and that they are regularly updated about the project. This is corroborated by data drawn from in-depth interviews where the overwhelming consensus was that the university-wide consultation process as a positive way of engaging people.

The view on the development of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework was slightly less favourable, with 58% agreeing that their views helped inform the GCU Transition and Progression Framework.

A strong view was expressed (survey, proformas and interviews) that the Schools need to be more actively involved and collaborate more closely with Moving Forward in order to ascertain the sustainability of the partnership approach, allow the schools to take ownership, and to turn policy into practice, i.e. to implement the GCU Transition and Progression Framework.

Feedback on the GCU Transition and Progression Framework (GCU TPF)

The majority of people who completed the web-based survey are aware that the GCU TPF has been developed by Moving Forward and 67% find the Framework useful/very useful. Feedback on the Framework collected through evaluation proformas employed at key stages/events shows that 97% of those who completed an evaluation sheet after attending the Moving Forward LTAS follow-up event find the Framework useful or very useful and 81% of those who attended the first round of Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs) meetings find it useful or very useful. The in-depth interviews mirror this general pattern the majority stating that the Framework is useful. However, a small number of interviewees criticised the GCU TPF for being too complex and, when the specific issues of complexity were probed further, it became apparent that the GCU TPF flowchart designed by Moving Forward has already addressed this issue and that Moving Forward will incorporate further steps to address this issue into the next phase of the project.

Feedback on Moving Forward Mini Communities of Practice (Mini Cops)

Feedback on the Moving Forward Mini Communities of Practice (Mini Cops) and its continuation of the consultation and encouragement of feedback is exceptionally positive, providing strong evidence that Moving Forward has been successful in enabling the sharing of practice and cross-institutional communication and discussion. Over 70% of survey respondents state that Moving Forward has made them aware of other networks/groups, that they have learnt about other practice, that they have discussed concerns with others across the university and beyond, and that the Mini Cops provide a good platform for sharing of practice. Yet, the feedback also points towards a future challenge for Moving Forward. Although, for example, a majority of (58%) feel that Moving Forward has enabled them to contribute to more to learning, teaching, and student support, this still means that 42% have not yet had that opportunity. With the aim of developing a 'first-year pedagogy' and embedding of transition and progression support into the curriculum, more ways need to be found to enable members of staff to contribute to approaches to learning and teaching as well as student support.

Main Recommendations based on Interim Evaluation

Firmly rooted within the Moving Forward partnership approach, the final part of the initial evaluation was concerned with the priorities that the wider GCU community would like to see the Moving Forward focus on during its next phase. Unsurprisingly, there was a wide range of priorities listed in the responses to the web-based survey, the pro-formas and the interviews, but there were also very strong indicators for high priority areas, such as embedding transition support into the curriculum, feedback, assessment and induction. This particular feedback has directly informed the following recommendations:

- Establish partnership agreements with schools to support the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework.
- Moving Forward team to participate in review of:
 - first year
 - role of academic advisors
 - PDP
 - Feedback processes, including mechanisms that enable students to utilise feedback effectively.
 - Assessment processes within the context of changes to the academic year with the aim of embedding more formative assessment and more balanced timing of assessments
- Moving Forward team to participate in university-wide review of induction (i.e. school-based induction, HN induction and core induction). This includes induction to each level of programme (levels one, two, three, and four) and induction for international and postgraduate students.
- Moving Forward team to participate in review of Student Engagement Strategy; consistent support for student representatives within schools.
- Moving Forward team to develop and implement an evaluation strategy that will assess:
 - impact on staff engagement with issues associated with transition and progression
 - impact on changes to policy and practice
 - impact of university-wide, and school-based activities/initiatives, on student experience
- Moving Forward team to establish a sample of comparator HEIs for reference/collaboration

Following on from the interim evaluation, MF were consulted during the review of the Student Engagement Strategy and MF was invited to join the Feedback Working Group, the Induction Working Group and the Flexible Entry Working Group, the Blended Learning Implementation Group (BLIG) and it continued to attend the Website Re-design Board and the University's Services Group meetings allowing the team to express their views on issues raised and providing the groups with additional information based on national and international research. MF continued to evaluate its activities by including post-it exercises at Mini CoP meetings and building evaluation strategies into the partnership agreements and the MFDFAs. Other recommendations formed part of the partnership agreements with the Schools. Finally, MF has used attendance and participation in national and international conference to establish contacts and communication with potential comparator HEIs, to develop a benchmark against which its outcomes can be measured:

- University of Ulster
- University of Roskilde, Denmark
- University of Massachusetts, Boston
- Griffith University, Australia
- University of Bielefeld, Germany
- Queensland University of Technology, Australia
- Queens University, Belfast

Moving Forward Partnership Agreements

Developing the template for the Partnership Agreements:

The support for the implementation of the GCU TPF alongside the LTAS and other relevant policies has been informed by feedback on the work of Moving Forward, gathered during an interim evaluation, and formal partnership agreements with the academic schools. Learner Support and the Students' Association, signed by the Deans and the Heads of Learning and Teaching Quality or equivalent were seen as the best way forward.

Tasked with fulfilling the interim evaluation recommendation of developing and negotiating of Partnership Agreements (PA) with the academic schools and Learner Support, MF developed a draft template for the PA and asked two schools (LSS and BNE) to feedback on it with suggestions for change. Once the template was agreed it went to the MF Steering Group for approval. The MF Steering Group acknowledged that fact that the responsibility of implementing the GCU TPF lies with the academic schools, but that the Moving Forward team would support the Schools with this task on the basis of the individually negotiated PAs. Finally, the PA template was presented to the Strategic Implementation Group (SIG) for approval and to ensure endorsement by the School Deans.

The Aims of the Partnership Agreements

The aims of the partnership agreements were to establish more formalised partnership working with the Schools in order to support the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework in conjunction with the LTAS and other relevant university policies. Moving Forward/CRLI were tasked with providing expert advice and support to school-based and Learner Support staff on ways of addressing transition issues and developments in relation to:

- Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- Blended Learning/e-Learning
- Pre-entry and Induction
- Employability
- Internationalisation
- Widening Participation
- Equality and diversity
- Integrated student support
- Longitudinal monitoring/evaluation of student journey
- Evaluation of the Student Experience

The partnership agreements aimed to identify:

- Key routes of communication and mechanisms of participation of Moving Forward team in School activities in relation to transition and progression support.
- Key priority areas of development within each School in relation to transition, progression, retention, and student engagement.
- Specific activities the Moving Forward team will undertake to support the schools with the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework

Moving Forward Role

Moving Forward's tasks were to work with members of staff in the Schools in order to identify and map priority areas for partnership working, to liaise with staff to jointly agree key priority areas which Moving Forward/CRLC can support, based on the agreed routes of communication and mechanisms of participation, and to undertake agreed activities to support the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework as agreed with the Schools. Such activities, for instance, include:

- facilitating workshops;
- provide pedagogical expertise to support the development of new ideas;
- participate in the school-based induction groups;
- supporting the development of an evidence base to inform activities and initiatives;
- participate in the development and design of small scale strategic development initiatives (projects), supported by MF funding awards;
- informing members of staff about relevant research findings and examples of practice elsewhere, and exploring the relevance to GCU and the School context.

An action plan and timeline for the 2010-2011 session formed part of the agreement.

Role of Schools

It was agreed that the Schools would be tasked to nominate members of staff who work with Moving Forward Initiative to implement the GCU Transition and Progression Framework in conjunction with the LTAS and other university policies, to identify key priority areas, ways of communication, and participation in school activities. Both, the Schools and Moving Forward, set timelines and agreed specific activities to allow the Moving Forward team to provide expert advice and support.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The final part of the template covered the monitoring and evaluation of the activities conducted as part of the PA. It has been necessary for both, Moving Forward and the Schools, to provide evidence of implementation internally (GCU Executive Board) and externally (SFC). Therefore, both parties were asked to develop an effective monitoring and evaluation strategy together as part of the agreement, including the sharing of transition, progression and retention data gathered over the course of the partnership, to assess the impact of the activities addressing the identified key priority areas. Mechanisms of this process would have to be negotiated and agreed by the partners. Possible

forms of dissemination might include collaboratively authored papers for peer-reviewed journals. Successful publication could feed into GCU's research strategy leading to the REF exercise.

Negotiation of Partnership Agreements

Depending on their availability, the first meetings with Deans/Directors and HLTQs were held in Spring 2010. These were followed up with either HLTQs or working group meetings during the summer, following several reminders (Deans and PVC copied in). Additionally, the MF team were invited to attend the Learning and Teaching events of some of the Schools. Furthermore, MF was in a position to offer funding for development projects (MDFAs) of up to £6,000 per School (incl. Learner Support). Only the Students' Association declined to engage in such negotiations, arguing that it was already working in close partnership with MF and, therefore, did not see the need to formalise this in form of a partnership agreement.

Despite a positive start to the negotiations with the Schools and Learner Support, there was a significant delay in taking the PA negotiations forward and the Schools named the following as the main reasons:

- problems with ISIS throughout the whole of the summer
- restructuring of university (from six to three schools)
- loss of key staff (e. g. HLTQs, Deans, ADTs)

The negotiations focused on the following key priority areas (listed by school):

1. School of Law and Social Sciences:

- e-Learning:
 - induction website (programme specific and school specific)
 - returning students (induction) website
 - using Blended Learning more creatively in relation to plagiarism and referencing
 - using Blended Learning for supporting transition to honours level and dissertation support
 - supporting LSS MF Development project
- academic advisors:
 - how can the system be improved? (online, texting, letters...)
- online assessment:
 - more diagnostic, formative assessment

2. School of Engineering and Computing

- Induction for direct entrants based on GGAP pilot: roll it out across the school, plus
 - Exit interviews
 - Exit FGs
 - DE performance analysis (by college)
 - Supporting SEC MF Development projects

- Employability
 - Sem B PDP modules
 - 3rd year project work (40 credits)
 - Placements in industry or simulated placements

3. School of Built and Natural Environment

- Feedback
 - using technology to help staff improve turn around time (looking at SEC's ELF)
 - Staff development and support

4. Caledonian Business School

- Staff development and support with focus on practice
 - Internationalisation
 - 2nd, 3rd and 4th year progression/transition support with focus on increasing number of honours students
- Supporting CBS MF Development project

5. School of Life Sciences

- SLS Induction Hub
 - New students
 - Direct entrants
 - International students
- Supporting SLS MF Development project
- Academic advice
 - Audit of the current system
- Online assessment
- Blackboard/blended-learning provision

6. School of Health

- Longitudinal process of induction
 - Pre-registration
 - Undergraduate programmes
 - Part-time students
 - Postgraduate/post-qualification and international students
 - Transition between levels 2 and 3 and levels 3 and 4

- Pre-entry guidance and support
 - Potential to expand 'College on Campus' across SoH to be explored.

- Focus on Enhancement
 - Support SoH MF Development 'Blogging placement' project
 - Explore potential to expand across whole of SoH

7. Learner Support

- Blended Learning (esp. GCU London)
- Pre-entry and induction
 - Supporting MF Development project
- Employability
- Workshops for staff

At the end of the negotiation process, four PAs (School of Health, School of Life Sciences, School of Engineering and Computing, and Learner Support) were agreed and signed. With three of the schools (School of Built and Natural Environment, School of Law and Social Sciences, and the Caledonian Business School) no PA was signed, mainly due to the restructuring of the university, the subsequent consultation period, and loss of key members of staff, some of whom were the main negotiators for the PAs.

Agreed key priority areas and action points

Each agreed PA included support for the school-based MFDAs. Apart from that, the key priority areas of each of the four agreed PAs varied considerably. The School of Health firmly focused on

implementing a long-thin induction, aiming to offer embedded transition support at key times throughout the first year initially, before reviewing similar options for the second, third and fourth year of a degree programme. A couple of workshops for staff were run by Moving Forward, introducing some of the work the School's ADTs offered in relation to transition support, accompanied by a presentation of an Australian model of a 'transition pedagogy' (Kift 2009), following by a discussion on how this could be transferred to School's programmes. According to feedback from the ADTs, these workshops proved to be a success, with staff not only asking the ADTs for more support, but also working with the ADTs to embed transition support into their programmes (particularly Health and Social Care programmes).

The School of Life Sciences' key priority areas covered an assessment review against the background of the changes to first-year assessment (move away from exams), the use of PDP to enhance the role of the academic advisor (dependent on the appointment of a new ADT), and induction (linked to the school-based MFDFA project). The Moving Forward team was invited to attend a Learning and Teaching event, at which assessment was discussed in detail, and the team supported the work of the MFDFA.

The School of Engineering and Computing decided to focus on developing an employability strategy, the evaluation of an online student support for students who have to re-sit their exams and the review of existing online PDP provision with a view to extend best practice across the School. Additionally, MF agreed to support the school-based MFDFA project. MF, the HLTQ and ADT have met on several occasions to discuss the evaluation of the online re-sit support in more detail.

The key priority areas for Learner Support were building induction resources (MDFFA project), student experience, transition and employability (inviting MF to join the PASS evaluation Steering Group), supporting the GCU Culture MFDFA, and running workshops for staff on awareness raising in relation to students' health and wellbeing, disabilities, and learning needs.

Although the activities agreed in the PAs made a good start with some promising achievements, most of them came to a halt once the consultation period for the university restructure began. Moreover, the loss of a few more key members of staff also hampered the progress of the activities agreed in the PAs. However, it can be said that the agreed PAs provide a good foundation for future partnership working, showing that this approach works and achieves tangible outcomes. For future developments, a risk register and agreements on procedures, if changes are necessary, should be part of an agreement.

The Moving Forward Development Funding Awards (MDFAs)

As previously noted, the Moving Forward Development Funding Awards were established to enhance the process of implementation of the GCU TPF, in conjunction with the LTAS and particular areas requiring support within Schools. With additional funding available, this was seen as an opportunity to involve students and staff in supporting creative, sustainable and transferrable approaches to supporting students' transition into and throughout their GCU experience, while targeting a central theme/area of strategic priority (as identified in the Mini Cops).

Several aims of internal development funding awards were identified. These included:

- to support curriculum developments, learning & teaching action research, and other innovations which will enhance the student experience in relation to transition and progression;

- to provide individuals with the opportunity to engage and collaborate on learning & teaching developments within their School as well as across the institution as a whole;
- to provide opportunities for individuals, departments and institutions to collaborate, share and transfer practice;
- to encourage students to participate in the development of new approaches;
- to recognise existing staff expertise, and identify and encourage fresh talent;
- to offer opportunities for professional development of staff;
- to disseminate examples of practice, with clear indicators for sustainability and transferability to the wider community.

Overview of the MFDFA process

MF developed a timeline for the MFDFA process (commencing February 2010, with final reports being requested by 31st July 2011), guidelines, recording table, scoring criteria, proposal templates, funding award templates, letter templates and reporting templates (bi monthly and final reports) for the MFDFA's. Communication with Management Accounting occurred regarding the processes and procedures for budget transfers and so on.

The MF SG supported this process and following the scoring of applications (by the MF team) they were responsible for making recommendations for approval and so on. Successful award recipients saw their funds transferred and projects commenced in July 2010.

Communication with participants

In the first instance (February 2010) emails were sent to the Deans of the academic Schools/Heads of Departments in order to ask them to discuss with their SMTs/or equivalent whether or not they would like to consider bidding for funds which would fund activity/activities which would address particular priority areas within their school/department.

A further email with an initial proposal template and further information was then issued to this group. Forms for expressions of interest were to be completed and returned to MF by 19th March 2010. During a round of MF Mini CoP meetings, the MFDFA's were introduced to members, who were encouraged to work together in cross-institutional teams to bid for funding. Sums of up to £6000 were offered to Schools, Learner Support and the Students' Association and up to £4000 for the Mini Communities of Practice.

Those successful in this phase were then contacted and given recommendations for enhancing their full proposals. They were also asked to include details on how the project was going to be evaluated and how the outcomes of the project were going to be disseminated. Following a scoring and approval process (noted below) MF recipients had to:

- Provide formal written acceptance of the formal funding offer from Moving Forward.

- Agree to participate in any related events organised by Moving Forward, including conferences, seminars, or other dissemination activities.
- Be aware that MF has to report to the university executive on the expenditure of allocated funding and you will, therefore, be required to participate in audit activities organised by Moving Forward.

Successful projects commenced in July 2010 with regular communications and offers of advice from the MF team. The first phase of the MFDFA was completed on 31st July 2011. Some of the projects have since received additional funding for the academic session 2011/12 on the condition of examining ways of rolling their projects out to the whole of the institution.

Overview of applicants and successful recipients

In total there were 15 applications for MFDFA originally received. A criterion for selection was established which all project proposals were matched against:

- Moving Forward aims and objectives
- Aligns with a principle/principles of effective transition support listed in the GCU TPF
- Aims of internal development funding awards
- Transferability
- Sustainability
- Evaluation
- Innovation/creativity
- Student involvement
- Value for money

Of the 15 applications received, ten were initially successful; of those 6 were school based projects, one Students' Association and one Learner Support. Two projects were from the Mini CoPs. Each School/Department was awarded a total of £6000 per department and Mini CoPs were awarded £4000 each. MF team undertook the scoring exercise. However, overall approval came from MF SG in March 2010.

The successful projects included:

- **MFDFA01 - School of Health:** Blogging placement - the development of reusable learning objects for transition and induction to the placement environment
- **MFDFA02 & 03 - School of Engineering and Computing:** Supporting Adult Learners make the transition to HE **and** The Application of Science and Reporting
- **MFDFA06 - School of Law and Social Sciences:** www.youemploy.me: Employability E-Forum for LSS

- **MF DFA07 - Learner Support:** Building resources for integrated induction
- **MF DFA09 - Student Empowerment Mini CoP:** GCU Culture: bringing together the students at GCU
- **MF DFA10 - Preparation and Induction Mini CoP:** Pre-induction Resource Hub
- **MF DFA12 - Students' Association:** Effective Service Provision for Part time Students
- **MF DFA13 - School of Life Sciences:** Induction Microsite
- **MF DFA 14 - Caledonian Business School :** Supporting Progression in a Connected Digital Age

Overview of Evaluation of MF DFAs

Each MF DFA was asked to provide an evaluation strategy, which had to be reported on in bi monthly and final reports. Therefore MF have used these updates and highlighted key features to assist in the provision of the overall evaluation in terms of how the MF DFAs have assisted in meeting the original aims which were established. Overall it would appear the majority of MF DFAs (while facing some barriers) have been very successful and all projects had element of each of the objectives. An overview of the evaluations of each project, matched against the main aims is provided below:

- **Support curriculum developments, learning & teaching action research, and other innovations which will enhance the student experience in relation to transition and progression;**

The majority of MF DFAs looked in particular at supporting transition and progression of students both prior to and during their time in GCU, in addition to longitudinal induction.

While research has been undertaken by the SA on the experiences of Part-time students this was more to explore their experiences/involvement with the SA and less so on learning and teaching.

While the subsequent sections look in more detail at transition and progression support, consideration should be given to encouraging more initiatives which would support curriculum development in these areas.

- **Providing individuals with the opportunity to engage and collaborate on learning & teaching developments within their School as well as across the institution as a whole;**

The majority of projects met this particular aim and had elements of cross institutional working, thus enhancing the opportunities for staff to engage and collaborate on L&T development. For example:

MF DFA06 has encouraged individuals from two different schools and three other departments to work together- enhancing learning and teaching developments in terms of employability.

MF DFA14 has seen CBS work with IT services, OD and Blended Learning to pilot a project which supports students in a 'connected digital age', enhancing their performances and thus assisting progression.

- **Providing opportunities for individuals, departments and institutions to collaborate, share and transfer practice;**

The following is a brief summary of evaluation strategies/methods and outcomes from MFDFA recipients:

- Web based survey
- Evaluation questionnaire – paper based
- Semi-structured qualitative interviews
- Statistical tracking of web usage
- Recording interviews (students' spoke of their experience at GCU)
- Evaluation of webinars (pilot undertaken) – Electronic student survey
- Focus Groups
- Usage statistics of Virtual Learning Environments

Yet another example of how the MFDFA's have worked well. Most of the MFDFA's have successfully managed to collaborate both internally with other GCU colleagues and also externally with other institutions. A good example of this includes MFDFA02 and 03, who have successfully worked not only with staff in SEC, but also collaborated with Student Services, Mentoring services, GGAP, Coatbridge College, Stow College, North Glasgow College and SWAP WEST to meet the projects aims and objectives.

Another excellent example is MFDFA06, which not only sees LSS work collaboratively with SEC, but also with Alumni, Careers service, CA, IT Services and CRL.

MFDFA09 saw the GCU SA work with the International Student Support Services (ISSS) to coordinate events which aimed to develop a sense of belonging and community at GCU for all students and to promote integration of key student demographics.

MFDFA13 provided opportunities for SLS staff within each department to identify a number of projects which could be part of the Induction Microsite.

MFDFA14 saw members of staff in CBS work closely with IT services, OD and BLIG to develop webinars.

MFDFA10 and MFDFA13 ('Pre Induction Resource Hub' and the 'Induction Microsite') have had a positive response and is en route to expanding to other areas of the university.

- **Encouraging students to participate in the development of new approaches;**

Without doubt, one of the major successes of the MFDFA's has been the opportunity for student involvement in all projects. All projects aimed to have student involvement and for the majority this would appear to be very successful. For example MFDFA01 recruited student bloggers to share their experiences and knowledge with new students. This not only enhanced the students' skills, this also enhanced their sense of belonging, enabling them to provide support for other students, enhancing their learner independence skills and 21st century Graduate Attributes. Similarly MFDFA13 recruited students as virtual mentors on programme specific social network sites.

MFDFA06 has successfully engaged current honours computing students in creating the e-forum. MFDFA09 had an exceptionally successful year involving students in participating in developing new approaches – in this case in particular to enhancing the student experience in terms of sense of belonging at GCU. This was done by including students in coordinating a series of successful events (thus empowering students), including Caley Olympics, Global Cafes

and Caley's Got Talent. Attendance at events varied from between six and 400 (either as participants or spectators) enhancing the raising of cultural awareness at GCU. The projects evaluation highlights in great detail the value of such initiatives. For example *'this event provided a way for students to become involved by minimising barriers.....to express themselves as part of their GCU experience'* and *'good to see all students together even though they were from different backgrounds'*.

Similarly MFDAF12 saw the SA engage with MF and part-time students to undertake research on the part-time student experience, enabling valuable outputs/recommendations, some of which will be put into action to improve the part-time student experience, thus supporting students' transition to and their experiences of GCU.

MFDA10 involved students from varying entry backgrounds being involved producing induction resources and delivering them via central/school/social network and virtual learning environments.

- **Recognising existing staff expertise, and identify and encourage fresh talent;**

As noted in the section above, MFDA06 has successfully seen two schools working together (LSS and SEC) recognising expertise in both areas (i.e. employability and computer skills) and encouraging students to enhance their skills in this area.

- **Offering opportunities for professional development of staff;**

The funding awards provided opportunities for staff buy out within Schools/departments allowing them the opportunities for their own professional developments. This has included MFDA06 (30hours of staff buy out). Some of the MFDA have also built on previous Scholars and Associates projects, thus taking the professional development of those members of staff a step further.

- **Dissemination of examples of practice, with clear indicators for sustainability and transferability to the wider community.**

Dissemination is noted in more detail in the next section and is to be highly appraised in the majority of MFDA projects. Not only have the majority of projects disseminated internally within GCU, several have gone on to write for publications/conferences and so on and used innovative methods for dissemination including Social media/Radio Caley and so on.

Dissemination

Dissemination of findings was one of the key aims for the MFDA recipients (as noted above). In addition MF are going to host a one-day MFDA Show case event in November 2011. All MFDA were advised that they would be required to present/discuss at this event.

Other dissemination activities, which have been reported for the MFDA include:

- Conferences
- Peer reviewed papers
- Journal articles
- Final reports
- Internal reports/i.e. schools/departments/boards etc/blended learning group
- Dissemination events
- Study skills for Engineers and Scientists' book (electronic and paper based)

- Blackboard
- Social Media
- Posters
- Student emails
- Radio Caley
- Photographs
- Direct mailings to other SAs
- MF Mini CoPs

Other achievements of MF

The Moving Forward Initiative was chosen as a case study for the institution's ELIR and its achievements have been noted in a positive way. Its work has also informed the university's new Widening Participation Strategy, which is based on a transformational model of WP (Thomas, 2005).

Externally, the work of Moving Forward has been presented at numerous conferences on a regular basis. These, for instance, include regularly presenting papers/posters at the annual QAA Enhancement Theme conference and the annual European First Year Experience conference. Additionally, there have been paper presentations at the international CRLI conference, the international SRHE conference, the HEIR Forum, the international RANLHE conference. Feedback received at those events has been exceptionally positive, emphasising the fact the Moving Forward is seen as a groundbreaking initiative and an example of excellent practice.

Section 4: Reflection on Lessons Learned

Moving Forward has proven to be a highly successful initiative, not least because of its partnership approach. The foundation for the initiative was built on an extensive consultation period without which the success of Moving Forward could not have been achieved. By bringing together key players within individual Schools and Central Departments, sharing information on research conducted into the student experience at GCU, and discussing a set of questions aimed at tackling issues of transition, progression and retention, Moving Forward was able to engage a large number of staff as well as students. The iterative process that underpinned the development of the GCU TPF consolidated the consultation stage and allowed those who participated to develop a sense of ownership, something which is extremely rare with regards to official university policy and practice documents.

Acknowledging that staff and student engagement is key to achieving transformational change, the partnership working continued in form of Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs), providing a platform for cross-institutional and inter-institutional communication. These Mini CoPs have proven to be vital in sustaining staff and student engagement and supporting the implementation of the GCU TPF. However, there are also challenges accompanying the Mini CoPs that need to be addressed in order to guarantee future success.

The fact that the Mini CoPs required continued facilitation by the Moving Forward team shows that contrary to the traditional model of Communities of Practice (CoPs), where a group of researchers interested in the same area of research come together and work towards a common goal without external facilitation (Wenger, 2002), CoPs that focus on developmental aspects within higher education require more formal organisation to ensure long-term sustainability. However, there is an increased fear of commitment by members of staff due to the recent changes with the institution and the higher education sector in general. With an increasing workload combined with a decrease in resources, developmental CoPs that focus on learning and teaching will need to concentrate on highly relevant key areas, be endorsed by senior management, since there is rarely extra funding available for such activities (in contrast to externally funded research projects), and set a clear strategy for delivering outcomes and/or products that achieve recognition across the university. Furthermore, there is a necessity to avoid any duplication of effort that may arise when various different CoPs or working groups work in parallel on similar areas without being aware of each other. Not only do these impact on time available for staff to engage in various CoPs or working groups, they can also lead to frustration and disillusionment, once the duplication of effort becomes clear. The MF Mini Cops have sought to minimise the risk of duplication of effort by encouraging cross-institutional communication between the Schools and the Central Departments, whilst at the same time opening up opportunities to network and collaborate with colleagues across the University.

Another basis for sustaining staff and student engagement is continuous feedback that helps to retain a high level of relevancy for activities associated with strategic institutional initiatives. A thorough interim evaluation offered MF the chance to respond to the needs of staff and students involved in MF as well as further optimise its approaches towards supporting the implementation of the GCU TPF alongside the LTAS and other relevant university policies. It provides an important opportunity for staff and students to voice their views and concerns in relation to Moving Forward. The outcomes of the interim evaluation indicated clearly that Moving Forward successfully supported cross-institutional communication and collaboration and that the MF Mini CoPs were much appreciated and seen to be the right way forward. It also prompted MF to develop and subsequently negotiate and agree formalised Partnership Agreements with the Schools and Learner

Support. It also resulted in adopting a continuous evaluation approach that offered different opportunities for staff and students involved in Moving Forward to feedback on themes and key areas that should be taken forward. This allows staff and students to retain a sense of ownership/control which is vital in sustaining long-term engagement and participation.

Although the MF Partnership Agreements (PAs) resulted directly from the interim evaluation feedback, particularly from School Deans and HLTQs, there were some hindrances that impacted on some of the progress that was made. In line with the MF partnership approach, the iterative process allowed two of the Schools to participate in developing the formalised PA and the subsequent discussion of the PAs at the SIG meeting offered opportunities to all Schools to feedback and influence the format of the PAs. However, the negotiations that followed were at times difficult and occasionally progressing at a very slow pace. Dependant on the availability of Deans and HLTQs for initial meetings and further follow-up meetings with other members of staff to be organised, the negotiations of the PAs took considerable time. It also emerged that occasionally there was a misunderstanding about the role of MF and the form of support and guidance that MF would be able to provide. This was partly due to the fact that there was a lack of understanding of both CRLL and the Caledonian Academy (both hosting MF at some point) as centres for excellence in relation to Learning and Teaching, Lifelong Learning, Widening Participation etc.

The decision to leave the choice of key priority areas to the Schools proved to be essential for both, the relevancy and reliability of the PAs. This flexibility allowed the Schools to address their particular transition, progression and retention issues and ensured that they had vested interest in the success of the PAs. The sustainability of the PAs, however, was tested against the background of a major restructuring exercise and consultation period that resulted in a drastic slowdown, if not a complete halt, to the PA activities. The loss of key members of staff (incl. PA signatories) and the fear and uncertainty accompanying the restructuring led to a degree of disengagement with the PAs as other school-based issues rose in priority. This development highlighted the fact that the PAs require a more robust structure and/or endorsement to ensure delivery at school and university level. Those responsible for the outcomes of PAs need not only be agreed, but procedures must be put in place in case such a person leaves the institution, for instance. That is to say that, apart from the signatories, there needs to be named contacts from all levels of staff (lecturers, module and programme leaders, school managers, etc.) who take responsibility for the delivery of agreed PA outcomes. Sustainability of the PAs could also be improved further by incorporating a mixture of long and short term key action points, rather than focusing solely on short term deliverables.

Additionally, the experience with the MF PAs has demonstrated the need for more clarity on how different university policies, strategies, frameworks as well as initiatives and projects interrelate and interdepend on each other to allow a coherent approach to issues regarding the student experience at GCU. With its central position and overview of university-wide initiatives and strategies, Moving Forward has been in a unique position to offer such guidance. However, with such a high number of different projects and initiatives happening at any one time, even Moving Forward was not able to keep on top of all the latest developments across the university. Nevertheless, MF has provided the university with an excellent starting point from which a strategy for enhanced cross-institutional communication and sharing of practice in its truest sense can be developed.

Overall, it can be said that those PAs that were agreed and got underway succeeded in achieving many of the aims and objectives that were set. They have also succeeded in increasing staff engagement with Moving Forward, thus raising awareness of its work and the GCU TPF. Learning from the experience of piloting formalised partnership agreements, they offer a way forward to engage staff and students in processes of transformational change.

The introduction of the Moving Forward Funding Awards (MDFAs) signified an acknowledgment that financial incentives are necessary to a certain extent to foster staff and student engagement, especially during difficult times. Nonetheless, there were instances when even the provision of funding was not sufficient to alleviate some of the workload of members of staff, underlining that 'buying-out staff time' is not always the best possible option, especially for those with a high teaching responsibility.

Overall, the MDFAs have proven to be a tremendous success, showcasing a wide variety of approaches combined with some genuine creativity boosted by the (required) pro-active involvement of students. Reflecting on the MDFAs, it seems appropriate that in the reflection section, some time is spent considering some of the reflective questions that form part of the GCU TPF aimed to initiate discussion on how the GCU TPF can be implemented and the MF vision can be taken forward. Bearing in mind that the main purpose of the MDFAs has been to support the implementation of the TPF, it is relevant to revisit some of these questions at this stage. It can be said that many of the MDFAs have incorporated many of the reflective questions noted below:

- *How can we ensure that transition and progression support is targeted at all students? How can we move away from a deficit model towards a model of enhancement and empowerment?*
- *How do we equip students with the skills and disposition to achieve their full potential?*
- *What needs to be done to ensure clear communication and collaboration across the whole university?*
- *How do we avoid duplication of effort and achieve more resource-effective as well as a more joined up approach?*
- *How do we learn about diverse students needs?*
- *Do we listen to students and understand their issues?*
- *How can we be flexible enough to provide a 'one size does not fill all' approach?*

The MDFAs are excellent examples of practice which should be carried on in a similar format, since most of them, if not all of them, are transferrable. Great care however, must be taken to monitor such projects to ensure they are meeting their original aims/objectives and that they complement other initiatives, rather than duplicate them. Therefore, consideration should be given to introduce a centralised scheme that can oversee this by providing overviews and guidance. Although Moving Forward is in a position to do so, it does not have an absolute overview of all ongoing initiatives and/or projects. It also needs to be noted that some of the MDFAs represent a further development of previous CA Scholars and Associates projects, for instance, Julie Rattray's Micro site, something that indicates that there is a wealth of potential within GCU and that these schemes can and should build upon each other, further enhancing staff engagement, personal and career development.

One of MF's key strengths is its partnership approach and this is especially true in relation to the MDFAs. Not only does the MF team work in partnership with our MFDA colleagues, they have also encouraged them to work in partnership with other staff and students across the institution and externally. The MDFAs have, in part, supported this by encouraging pro-active student involvement in all projects. The fact that most projects have incorporated cross-institutional working allows them to be more successful and transferrable than other similar projects.

Some members of staff involved in the MDFAs faced difficulties in combining differing workloads in order to meet MFDA project objectives. For example some project leads have underestimated how much of their time would be required to coordinate and work towards their agreed objectives.

Similarly on several occasions, timelines have been underestimated and progress hindered due to IT difficulties, such as implementing specific systems and applying with rules/regulations.

There have been two occasions where internal departments (i.e. ISSS) have collaborated with the SA. This poses potential problems in relation to the transfer of funds etc (SA must invoice the internal department for their share of the funds) and can be impacted upon when a new student executive comes on board (for example, the main contact for MFDFA09 'GCU Culture: Bringing together the students at GCU' had left her post prior to the completion of the final report, but fortunately this was picked up by other members of the SA).

The first stages of the process (from announcements/application and so on to transfer of funds and commencement) are very time consuming and depending on the nature of proposals being submitted, can be problematic. However, these are part of any bidding process and setting aside sufficient time for planning and organising of the process helps tackle any potential difficulties. The bi-monthly reporting has been very successful and several reminders have been beneficial during the latter stages of the process. This aided MF to keep an eye on what was happening and help the projects, if they were experiencing any difficulties.

The success of the MFDFA's is highlighted in the fact that six of the ten 2010/11 projects have received additional funding for the 2011/12 academic session. This will enable them to roll out their current projects across the university, highlighting their creativity and sustainability. The Pre-Induction Resource Hub (MFDFA10) and the school-based Induction Microsite (MFDFA 13) have been actively promoted by the chair of the Induction Working Group as an excellent example of practice, with a recommendation to transfer their activities to the whole of the institution.

There was one perceived gap in relation to the areas tackled by the MFDFA's: assessment. It was commented upon by the MF SG at the time of approval: 'it would have been nice to see some initial proposals which focussed on assessment'. However, the reason for this gap was partly due to the fact that, simultaneously to the MFDFA's, the Caledonian Academy ran a programme of so-called 'Transformational Change Projects (TCPs)' with a focus on assessment, offering the Schools £1,000 for a TCP. This highlights the aforementioned necessity of streamlining development activities in order to avoid overburdening staff with competing funding bids.

Although only small amounts of funding were made available (£4,000-£6,000), they proved to be high enough to make a difference. They allowed individual members of staff to benefit in terms of enhancing their PDP and career prospects and to be creative and innovative without being responsible for too big a project. The fact that many of the MFDFA project leaders have built on previous smaller projects, like the Scholars and Associates programme, demonstrates that staff are strategic about what they engage in and what they take forward, but it also shows that the university as a whole benefits from small funding streams that build upon each other, providing opportunities to develop projects and activities gradually, step by step, learning from the previous experience and increasing confidence and enhancing professional development. The MFDFA's also encouraged pro-active student participation, providing students with opportunities to engage with the institution, be creative and benefit in terms of performance and employability. The success of the MFDFA's has relied heavily on the fresh perspectives, ideas, and creativity that students bring to such projects. It also highlights the fact that we, as an institution, still do not provide enough opportunities for students to engage with university projects as an equal partner in a meaningful and pro-active way.

The Moving Forward activities centre on partnership working and enhancing cross-institutional communication and it is here where MF's overall success is based. This fact has been acknowledged

in feedback from staff and students, in the fact that MF was chosen as a case study for the ELIR, and that external agencies such as the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions programme (SPA), the Quality Assurance Agency, linked to the Quality Enhancement Themes, and the Northwest JISC Forum have used MF as an example of excellent practice. The ability to sustain cross-institutional communication has been supported by the MF Mini Cops, the PAs, the MFDAs, the bi-monthly meetings with the ADTs and SA as well as MF representation on various working groups and committees (for instance: Induction Working Group, Feedback Working Group, Blended Learning Implementation Group, Student Services Group, Flexible Entry Working Group, GCU Mentor Group, Frank Buttle Trust Group) help provide an overview over many of the initiatives and activities that take place at GCU and enabling MF to put people in touch with each other in order to encourage cross-institutional collaboration.

Section 5: Recommendations

5.1. **CLD representation on university-wide working groups that directly impact on the student experience**, such as the Learning and Teaching Quality Group, the new Learning Development Centres Group, the Assessment and Feedback Steering Group, the proposed Social Mobility Working Group, the Induction Working Group, the Blended Learning Implementation Group, the Flexible Entry Working Group, the GCU Mentor Group, the Frank Buttle Trust Group and the Student Services Group, to help provide an overview of initiatives and activities that take place at GCU and to put people in touch with each other in order to encourage cross-institutional collaboration.

5.2. Continue to support **cross-institutional communication, collaboration and sharing of practice through a community of practice model**, as part of wider Learning and Teaching Community of Practice developments facilitated by the Centre for Learning and Development. This requires senior management and executive level endorsement for developmental Communities of Practice to enable members of staff to engage in cross-institutional activities. The supporting of the Community through GCULearn will enable the development of a central repository /resource for learning and teaching development projects and scholarly activities which are being undertaken across the institution in order to streamline activities and to avoid duplication of effort.

5.3. Continue to develop and sustain **staff engagement in centralised initiatives, themes and key areas through partnership working and feedback mechanisms** to enable staff and students to retain a sense of ownership/belonging. This requires the development of an effective partnership working model between the Widening Participation and Progression team within the CLD and the academic schools and central services. This will include shared and clear understanding of the roles of the CLD and the academic schools in undertaking initiatives and activities related to enhancing transition, progression and retention which should include a combination of long and short-term key action points/outcomes, rather than focusing solely on short-term (annual) deliverables.

5.4. Clarify **linkages and interdependencies between the various university policies and strategies that impact on the student experience** in order to enable members of staff to demonstrate how their development work impacts on multiple aspects of the student experience and supports various university policies and strategies.

5.5. **Continue to coordinate WARP-funded development projects targeted at priority areas of development within the schools in relation to transition, progression and retention**. Schemes and programmes should be linked to financial incentives that build upon each other (gradual increase of funds per programme/scheme) to encourage members of staff to develop projects and activities gradually, step by step, learning from the previous experience, increasing their confidence and enhancing their professional development. Development activities should be streamlined in order to avoid overburdening staff with competing funding bids. Closer links between WARP development funding and the Caledonian and Associate Scholarship scheme should be developed. Cross-institutional team working should be a criterion for university-wide development projects, as should proactive student involvement, where possible, beyond the Students' Association. This enables us to be responsive to the student voice and provides students with opportunities to engage with the institution, to be creative and to benefit in terms of employability skills/graduate attributes.

5.6. The **Widening Participation and Progression Team (WPPT)** to provide **a leadership role within GCU and an 'observatory' role beyond GCU, in terms of learning and teaching policy and practice in relation to transition, progression, retention, an inclusive curriculum, and student engagement** (regionally, nationally and internationally) in order to help to embed contextualised best practice and identify areas for further development within the university.

5.7. The **WPPT to continue to engage in external research and network activities** in partnership with the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning (CRL) and other colleagues across the university.

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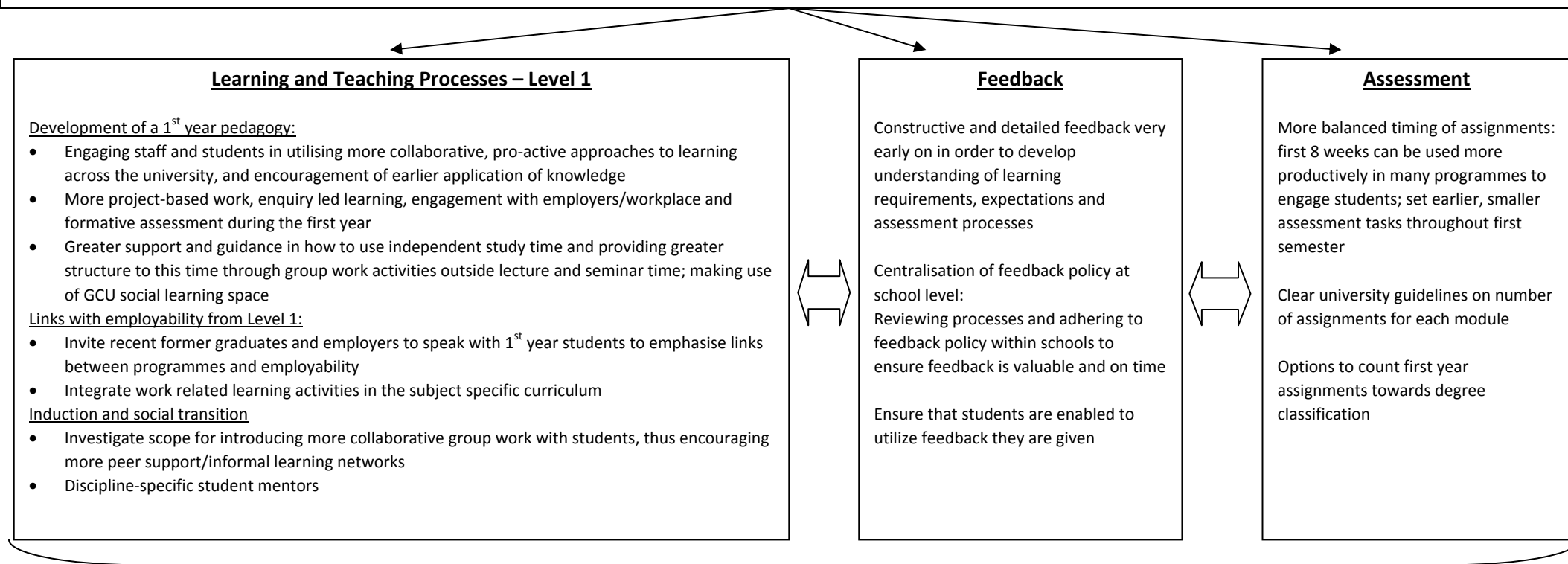
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Appendix 1: GCU Transition and Progression Framework - Flowcharts

Moving Forward: enhancing progression through partnership:

Strategies/Principles of effective transition support: LTAS - Goal One

“To equip students with the knowledge, skills and attributes to operate as flexible, independent lifelong learners”



- Current University-wide initiatives**
- Use of new Blackboard system
 - i-Learn Framework
 - REAP
 - CA Scholars & Associates
 - Real World
 - Academic Development Tutors
 - Attendance monitoring and pro-active follow-up
 - Induction 2009
 - Earlier follow-up for failed assignments and non-submissions
 - Effective Learning Service

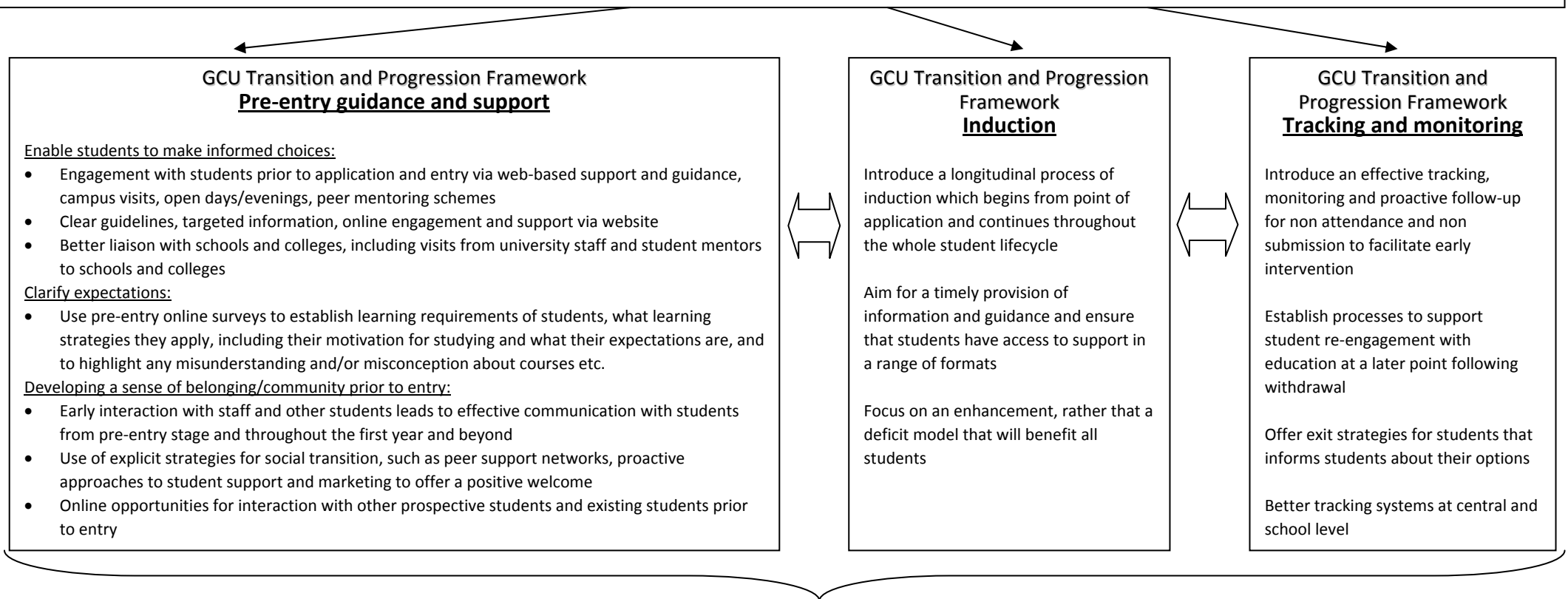
- University-wide Policy Proposals:**
- Block timetabling
 - Exams prior to Christmas
 - Summer school for all students

GCU TRANSITION AND PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK; STRATEGIES/PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE TRANSITION SUPPORT									
Pre-entry guidance and support – allowing for informed choices and clarifying expectations	Developing a sense of belonging/community	Longitudinal process of induction	Early formative assessment with meaningful feedback	Focus on enhancement	Effective tracking, monitoring and pro-active follow-up	Embedded transition support	Develop independent, self-regulated learner	Encourage sense of Commitment/civic responsibility	Student engagement – integrate project-based, work-based and/or work-related learning

Moving Forward: enhancing progression through partnership

Strategies/Principles of effective transition support: **pre-entry and transition**

“To promote a greater understanding of particular issues of transition and progression and to work towards a productive and collegial collaboration between central support services and teaching staff, and student representatives”



Moving Forward Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs)

- ❖ **Marketing and Communication**
- ❖ **Liaison with Schools and Colleges**
- ❖ **Preparation and Induction**
- ❖ **Peer Support and Mentoring**
- ❖ **Student Empowerment and Staff-student Communication**
- ❖ **Learning, Teaching, Assessment, and Feedback**

GCU TRANSITION AND PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK: STRATEGIES/PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE TRANSITION SUPPORT

Pre-entry guidance and support – allowing for informed choices and clarifying expectations	Developing a sense of belonging/community	Longitudinal process of induction	Early formative assessment with meaningful feedback	Focus on enhancement	Effective tracking, monitoring and proactive follow-up	Embedded transition support	Develop independent, self-regulated learner	Encourage sense of Commitment/civic responsibility	Student engagement – integrate project-based, work-based and/or work-related learning
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Appendix 2: Interim Evaluation – Questionnaire

Moving Forward feedback survey June 2009

Welcome to the Moving Forward feedback survey.

To move through the survey please use the Next and Prev buttons and not the forward and back buttons on your PC.

1. Where do you work in the University?

Academic School

Support Services

College

Students Association

Other (please specify)

2. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements in relation to aspects of the Partnership Approach used by Moving Forward in its consultation process?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I'm aware that the partnership approach is one of the overarching principles of Moving Forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's important for staff and students to have a voice in relation to Moving Forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moving Forward created an atmosphere that enabled me to express my views	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have been kept informed of developments in Moving Forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have been encouraged to feedback on any developments in relation to Moving Forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel my views have helped to inform the development of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Please feel free to comment on the partnership approach.

Moving Forward feedback survey June 2009

4. Are you aware of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework that was developed by Moving Forward?

Yes

No

5. How useful do you find the GCU Transition and Progression Framework?

Unsure

Not at all
useful

Not very
useful

Neither/nor

Useful

Very useful

6. Please feel free to comment on the GCU Transition and Progression Framework

7. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Moving Forward has made me aware of other networks/groups within the university that are helpful for my area of work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have learnt about practice in other areas of the university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have discussed concerns with others across the university and/or beyond	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Moving Forward Mini Communities of Practice are an effective way of discussing issues with others across the university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Moving Forward Mini Communities of Practice provide a platform for sharing of practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moving Forward has enabled me to contribute more to learning, teaching and student support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Please feel free to comment on any of the areas mentioned above.

Moving Forward feedback survey June 2009

9. Thinking about the future of Moving Forward, please name three key priority areas that you would like to see progressed.

Key Priority A

Key Priority B

Key Priority C

10. Please tell us how Moving Forward could support you in relation to implementing the GCU Transition and Progression Framework and the LTAS in order to enhance the student experience at GCU.

11. Please feel free to add any additional comments on any of the areas covered in this questionnaire.

Thank you very much for completing the survey. Please now click 'Done' to submit your responses.

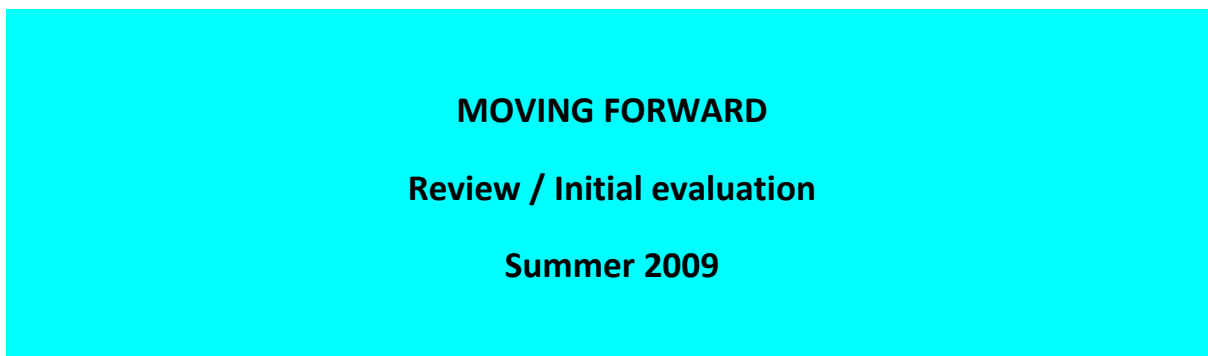
Appendix 3: Mini Communities of Practice – Post it exercise

1. Why did you come to the meeting today?

2. What do you want to get out of today's mini CoP?

3. What do you think is the next step forward?

Appendix 4: Interim Evaluation – Interview Template



<p>Interviewer:</p> <p>Person/s interviewed:</p> <p>Date of interview:</p>	
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All information gathered will be regarded as confidential and all views and opinions will be confidential and voluntary. The survey is conducted in accordance with the University's ethics policy.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (max. 30min)

- 1. Please tell me about your role within the university (college).**
- 2. What do you know about Moving Forward?**
- 3. How do you view the university-wide consultation process by Moving Forward?**
Have your views been heard?
Do you feel that your views have informed the development of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework by MF?
- 4. What are your views on the GCU Transition and Progression Framework?**
How useful is it?
Does it address transition, progression and retention issues in your area?
Does it link well to other policies like the LTAS or i-Learn Framework?
- 5. What action plan(s) is/are your school/department taking forward in order to support the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework?**
What is happening in addition to current activities?
Are there any specific action plans/initiatives/projects that have been informed/inspired by MF?
Any examples?
- 6. How can the Moving Forward team support you with the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework?**

7. **What do you think about the Moving Forward activity in relation to the MF Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs) and/or encouraging cross-university communication, collaboration and sharing of practice?**

Explore in more detail, if there is involvement in Mini CoPs or other networks re: MF

8. **Which key priorities would you like to be taken forward by MF and why?**

1. **Please tell me about your role within the university (college).**

2. **What do you know about Moving Forward?**

3. **How do you view the university-wide consultation process by Moving Forward?**

Have your views been heard?

Do you feel that your views have informed the development of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework by MF?

4. **What are your views on the GCU Transition and Progression Framework?**

How useful is it?

Does it address transition, progression and retention issues in your area?

Does it link well to other policies like the LTAS or i-Learn Framework?

5. **What action plan(s) is/are your school/department taking forward in order to support the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework?**

What is happening in addition to current activities?

Are there any specific action plans/initiatives/projects that have been informed/inspired by MF?

Any examples?

6. **How can the Moving Forward team support you with the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework?**

7. **What do you think about the Moving Forward activity in relation to the MF Mini Communities of Practice (Mini CoPs) and/or encouraging cross-university communication, collaboration and sharing of practice?**

Explore in more detail, if there is involvement in Mini CoPs or other networks re: MF

8. **Which key priorities would you like to be taken forward by MF and why?**

Partnership Agreement

Moving Forward and XXXXXXXX

January 2010

Context and aims:

The Academic Schools have been tasked to implement the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) and the GCU Transition and Progression Framework alongside other frameworks and policies. It was agreed by the Moving Forward Steering Group that the Moving Forward team will support the Schools with this task.

The **aims** of this **partnership agreement** are to establish partnership working with the Schools in order to support the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework in conjunction with the LTAS and other relevant university policies. Moving Forward/CRLI will provide expert advice and support to school-based and Learner Support staff on ways of addressing transition issues and developments in relation to:

- Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- Blended Learning/e-Learning
- Pre-entry and Induction
- Employability
- Internationalisation
- Widening Participation
- Equality and diversity
- Integrated student support
- Longitudinal monitoring/evaluation of student journey
- Evaluation of the Student Experience

These partnership agreements will identify:

- Key routes of communication and mechanisms of participation of Moving Forward team in School activities in relation to transition and progression support.
- Key priority areas of development within each School in relation to transition, progression, retention, and student engagement.
- Specific activities the Moving Forward team will undertake to support the schools with the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework

Moving Forward Initiative Role

Moving Forward will work with members of staff in the Schools in order to identify and map priority areas for partnership working. Moving Forward will liaise with staff to jointly agree key priority areas which Moving Forward/CRLI can support, based on the agreed routes of communication and mechanisms of participation. Moving Forward will undertake agreed activities to support the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework as agreed with the Schools. Such activities would, for instance, include:

- facilitating workshops;
- provide pedagogical expertise to support the development of new ideas;
- participate in the school-based induction groups;
- supporting the development of an evidence base to inform activities and initiatives;
- participate in the development and design of small scale strategic development initiatives (projects), supported by MF funding awards (Subject to approval and availability...);
- informing members of staff about relevant research findings and examples of practice elsewhere, and exploring the relevance to GCU and the School context.

An action plan and timeline will be developed and agreed.

Role of Schools

Nominated members of Schools will work with members of the Moving Forward Initiative to implement the GCU Transition and Progression Framework in conjunction with the LTAS and other university policies. Together with Moving Forward the Schools will identify key priority areas, ways of communication, and participation in school activities. Both, the Schools and Moving Forward, will then set timelines and agree specific activities to allow the Moving Forward team to provide expert advice and support.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is necessary for both, Moving Forward and the Schools, to provide evidence of implementation internally (GCU Executive Board) and externally (SFC). Therefore, both parties should aim to develop an effective monitoring and evaluation strategy together as part of this agreement, including the sharing of transition, progression and retention data gathered over the course of the partnership, to assess the impact of the activities addressing the identified key priority areas. Mechanisms of this process will have to be negotiated and agreed by the partners. Possible forms of dissemination might include collaboratively authored papers for peer-reviewed journals. Successful publication could feed into GCU's research strategy leading to the REF exercise.

Table

List of agreed priority areas and activities linked to the appropriate strategies/principles of effective transition support as outlined in the GCU Transition and Progression Framework

Priority Areas (based on Strategy/principle number....)	Agreed Partnership Action	Agreed Timeline

Partnership Agreement

School: _____

Dean: _____

Signature: _____

HLTQ: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Moving Forward Initiative

Moving Forward Manager: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 6: Moving Forward Development Funding Awards – Rationale

Moving Forward: enhancing progression through partnership

Internal Development Funding Awards

Rationale:

Changes of practice and the development of new ideas are encouraged by incentives, such as funds to buy out staff time, to allow staff and students to conduct research and attend conferences and seminars etc. as well as appraisal and recognition, such as offering awards for the most creative new developments.

Therefore, the Moving Forward team plans to allocate small sums of money to motivate staff and students to become engaged in supporting the implementation of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework, in conjunction with the LTAS and other relevant policies, within their school as well as across the university as a whole.

This will support the university's vision and mission 'to deliver the highest quality education and research - and to promote the "common weal"' by helping 'to create civic-minded, employable graduates, to raise GCU's profile and involvement in learning, teaching and research and to help more people to access the University'.

Within the development funding awards, we are looking for creative, sustainable and transferable approaches to easing transition into and progression through university that pro-actively involve students. **Project proposals for the MF development funding awards must target an area of strategic priority for the School within the context of the GCU Transition and Progression Framework.** The conditions of funding are listed in more detail in the project proposal guidelines that will be published soon.

Aims:

- to support curriculum developments, learning & teaching research, and other innovations which will enhance the student experience in relation to transition and progression;
- to provide individuals with the opportunity to engage and collaborate on learning & teaching developments within their School as well as across the institution as a whole;
- to provide opportunities for individuals, departments and institutions to collaborate, share and transfer practice;
- to encourage students to participate in the development of new approaches;
- to recognise existing staff expertise, and identify and encourage fresh talent;
- to offer opportunities for professional development of staff;
- to disseminate examples of practice, with clear indicators for transferability to the wider community.

Available funding:

- From a total of £48,000 available for the Schools, Learner Support (LS) and the Students' Association (SA), there will be between £1,000 to £6,000 per School, incl. LS and SA.
- From a total of £24,000 available for the six Moving forward Mini Cops, there will be between £1,000 and £4,000 per Mini CoP.

Timeline:

Time	Action
w/c 15 February 2010:	Announcement of MF development funding awards
19 March 2010	Deadline for initial project proposals

w/c 5 April 2010:	Announcement of project bids to be funded (subject to full project planning)
May 2010	Full project planning, incl. all costs and evaluation strategy
31 May 2010	Deadline for full project plans
June/July 2010:	Commencement of pilot projects
From July 2010:	Bi-monthly reporting on progress of projects
August/September 2011:	Evaluation of projects
October/November 2011:	Dissemination event

Projects are expected to begin latest in July 2010 and be completed by August 2011; allowances will be made for pilots that aim at changing existing programmes/developing new programmes.

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