

## Case study

**USING BIG DATA INSIGHTS FOR  
INFORMED STRATEGY PLANNING  
IN STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

## Meet Carolyn Bowick

Director of Marketing, Recruitment & Conversion



Carolyn is the Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Conversion at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU). She's responsible for raising awareness of the university's programme portfolio around the globe, recruiting students to their campuses in Glasgow, London and New York.

She oversees a team of marketing, recruitment and conversion professionals who are tasked with developing strategies which will drive recruitment in multiple (very different) markets, ensuring that the university's growth targets can be met.

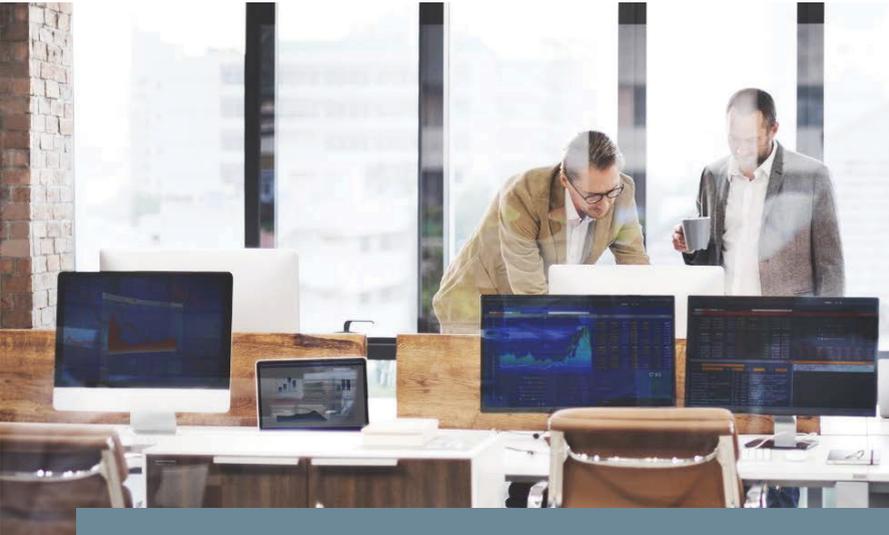


Ranked in the world's top 150 universities under 50 years old, GCU offers programmes across various subject areas and a range of undergraduate, postgraduate, research and continuing professional development programmes.

Currently, there are over 20,000 students studying at GCU, of whom over 1,000 are overseas students. As part of their international strategy, GCU aims to increase the proportion of students joining them from outside the EU, as well as increasing student numbers from the rest of the UK, in addition to all student groups at postgraduate level.

## GCU's challenge

Informed decision-making and strategic planning



GCU was limited in their access to high-quality, high volume data on prospective student demand for international study. Whilst their own enquirer records provide a richness of data, it is limited in scope, and doesn't offer a clear picture of global student destination trends, or market opportunities that they may have been missing out on.

# Solution

Deciding to further investigate Studyportals' real-time student interest dashboard



“Our previous working relationships with Studyportals gave confidence that they would be a good partner to develop the dashboard with. Additionally, we wanted to gain a greater quantitative insight into real market trends and opportunities, rather than relying on anecdotal or historical insights, which was an important driver in this decision. The ability to obtain very specific insights, granting increasing levels of sophistication in our activities, is key. As GCU operates globally, we can't afford to take a blanket approach, and need a targeted one instead.”

## **How has the dashboard helped you with overcoming the challenges that you were facing?**

“We now have a deeper insight into quantitative data of regional trends, visibility of student interest in competitor markets such as the US and Australia, and are able to combine regional with subject based insights into student demand for international education. This allows our discussions and strategy to be driven from an evidence-base, which challenges our assumptions in many cases, and provides confirmation of existing views in others.”

## **What was the most obvious advantage for you?**

“Working with one of the largest global organisations in this area, giving us access to the search behaviour of over 30 million unique visitors to the Studyportals websites, meant that we could be confident that the information shown via the dashboard would give us real insight into student demand, and allow us to obtain a competitive advantage in our strategic and operational planning.”



“We were often only looking back to previous years, whereas the dashboard now allows us to forecast the future and look forward with a greater level of accuracy.”

## **Has the dashboard been instrumental in getting you closer to your desired results?**

“Some of our users have been particularly impressed with the ability to drill right down to sub-discipline level to match our current portfolio offering, for specific markets. This allows a level of detail, whilst still keeping reasonable sample sizes, that some had not anticipated. At a programme-level, we can now clearly identify key markets, as well as competitor programmes and key information about those, which is incredibly valuable.”

# Who at GCU is using the dashboard for their daily work?



Directorate of Internationalisation,  
Marketing and Strategic Enrolment

Regional Strategy Groups

Strategy and Planning Team

Associate Deans (International),  
across Academic Schools

“There is a core team of 10-12 colleagues utilising the dashboards at present, and it has been introduced to an increased body of staff. Most of our current colleagues using the dashboard are based within our Directorate of Internationalisation, Marketing and Strategic Enrolment, and in teams such as Conversion, Recruitment and Marketing Campaigns, and Strategy and Planning. In addition, our Associate Deans across Academic Schools are working with the dashboard, as are our academics tasked with leading Regional Strategy Groups.”

## Measuring success

How do you measure the value of the Studyportals student interest dashboard?

“With the relatively recent introduction of a new role, Head of Strategic Enrolment Management, we are now tracking lead volumes more closely and the fact that the dashboard allows us to quantify this helps us calculate our prospective student pipeline to a great degree, by market and subject area. For our key strategic regions we will now be closely monitoring level of demand seen, to help decide upon whether they hold sufficient potential to remain a key market for us, and also any potential new markets to consider. The dashboard will also allow us to take forward the introduction of targets by region and subject area.”

## Service & implementation

“Throughout the project, I had regular conversations to fine tune the set-up, layout and functionality contained within our customised dashboard, whilst I liaised with our stakeholders internally to gather feedback at various stages. This approach of regular communication with key contacts on either side worked well, and allowed us to make quick decisions, whilst also incorporating feedback from wider stakeholders. Studyportals visited our campus to deliver in-person training, which made a really positive difference in ensuring that the teams were able to engage with the dashboards and work through any initial queries most effectively. The ‘train-the-trainer’ approach that was adopted and a lot of time put into by the Studyportals team also allowed us to up-skill relevant staff and adopt a ‘train-the-trainer’ approach to roll out usage more widely across our institution.”

## Get in touch

Curious to know how your institution's strategy could benefit from using real-time student data?



Send us a message  
[consulting@studyportals.com](mailto:consulting@studyportals.com)

### Or get in touch with the team directly



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