Glasgow Polytechnic was awarded university status in 1993 and became Glasgow Caledonian University with a mission to deliver good quality undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The university has always had close links to the community and this has been a major part of the vision of the organisation and how it communicates its core values. The mission of the university states that ‘Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) is the University for the Common Good. Our mission is to make a positive difference to the communities we serve and this is at the heart of all we do, especially in our social innovation teaching and research’. The university has made a transformative change to the way it achieves its aims by developing and implementing Common Good principles. Common Good principles help staff when they develop courses for teaching or do research. It also helps them to make contact with the wider community in Scotland and abroad. These help the university to differentiate from other universities and attract more fee-paying students at postgraduate level who are attracted to a university with a good social mission. Thus, it is evident that the mission not only sets out the core values of the university but also helps the process of growing the number of students as an important source of income for the university. This means that the Common Good principles act as an economic driver as well as a means of building reputational capital as an institution that embeds social value into its wide-ranging activities. The main goals linked to the Common Good principles are high-quality teaching; research that has Common Good values; activities that enhance the reputation of the university; and an increase in student recruitment at postgraduate level.

As part of the Common Good ethos, the university has been proactive in embedding social responsibility, ethics and sustainability into teaching and research as part of a commitment to develop future business leaders with skills, knowledge and mindset that support these values. The university is a signatory to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) and demonstrates a willingness to progress the principles by developing teaching and learning programmes that are informed by the values of PRME, many of which align closely to the principles of the Common Good. The commitment also extends to research outputs where issues of social justice, gender equality, climate justice, responsible leadership, and many others are key features of the research strategy. Dr Alec Wersun is the GSBS Lead for the Common Good and recipient of the inaugural UN Pioneer Award at the Global Forum in New York in 2017 for ‘leadership and commitment’ to PRME. Dr Wersun sums up the GCU contribution by stating that: The potential of higher education institutions to make significant contributions to this UN agenda is widely acknowledged, be that through research, community engagement and education, to produce the responsible citizens and leaders of tomorrow. GCU is playing a leading role in this area and is committed to delivering economic and social benefits at home and across the world. It is important that higher education institutions, business and civil society come together to discuss matters of wider public concern and GCU is delighted to create a space where these important conversations can take place.

There are also opportunities for students to extend their experience of sustainability actions by participating in many of the initiatives developed with partner institutions. For example, students are encouraged to tackle some of the world’s most pressing challenges through a leadership programme backed by the Clinton Foundation. GCU is part of the Clinton Global Initiative University Network, set up by former US President Bill Clinton, to help young people turn their ideas of how to make the world a better place into practical action.

Case Study 5: Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland
Participating GCU students receive support to develop projects to reduce consumer waste, tackle poverty in the developing world, and promote sustainable food production. The students, who will join scholars from institutions including Cornell University, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Chicago, will have access to a wide range of networking, mentoring and funding opportunities throughout their year of study.

As part of GCU, the Glasgow School for Business and Society (GSBS) is a member of Business in the Community (BITC), a Prince of Wales charity that promotes responsible business. The school aims to contribute through:

- developing a new generation of business and community leaders capable of managing the complex economic, social and environmental challenges faced by business and society in the twenty-first century
- leading relevant research and sharing findings with policy makers, business leaders and community leaders
- increasing engagement of staff and students with the wider community.

Membership of BITC is an important means of reinforcing connections in international networks that are committed to building a sustainable future for people and the planet. BTIC members come from both public and private sectors and commit to transforming communities by tackling key social and environmental issues where organisations can make a real difference. The expertise, resources and capacity of BITC and its members helps GSBS to become recognised as a socially responsible school that serves both business and society.

In research, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) inform the ethos around the research strategy which addresses three major societal challenges of inclusive societies, healthy lives and sustainable environments. To support these developing areas of expertise, GCU management created thematic interdisciplinary research centres that are underpinned by research groups using an inter-sectoral approach to addressing societal challenges locally and internationally. As the output and recognition from the groups has developed, the reputation of the university as being a centre of excellence in business, social and environmental research has gained traction. In the Times Higher Education Global Impact rankings for 2020, GCU was placed 43rd in the world out of 766 universities and 8th in the UK (THE World University Rankings, 2020).

Alongside GSBS, two other schools that comprise the university are similarly involved in taking forward the Common Good ethos and aligning teaching and research to the principles of the SDGs. For example, the School for Computing, Engineering and Built Environment is actively engaged in addressing sustainable environments through the Built Environment Asset Management research centre which tackles climate change issues affecting man-made structures. The centre for Climate Justice addresses climate inequality and promotes a transformative approach to tackling the root cause of climate change. The School of Health and Life Sciences hosts the Research Centre for Health (ReaCH) and draws on expertise from other schools and the Yunus centre for Social Business and Health.

The vision of GCU to be recognised as a world leading university for social innovation by 2030 forms the basis of the Strategy 2030. The commitment to SDGs provides the guiding framework for the delivery of the strategic aims. The examples highlighted above give an indication of the direction of travel and some of the achievements that have already been recognised. The Common Good ethos is one that is supported, recognised and embedded within teaching, research and management at the university and sets guiding principles that make Glasgow Caledonian University a distinct and socially valuable educational asset.
Questions

1. What is the Common Good mission of Glasgow Caledonian University?

2. What three major societal challenges feature in the GCU research strategy?

3. What are the benefits for students of GCU membership of the Clinton Global Initiative University Network?