

Minutes of the 1st Caledonian Student Voice Meeting of Session 2021/22

Meeting held on Monday, 25th October 2021, on Microsoft Teams, at 5.00pm.

Sign In:

Present: Vincent Waters (Chair); Jonnie England (Deputy Chair); Adil Rahoo (Student President); Olivia Hall (VP SCEBE); Priscilla Otuagoma (VP GSBS); Tabitha Nyariki (VP SHLS); Stefan Fisher (SF); River Gowans (RG); Joshua Foster (JF); Erin Rooney (ER); Jodie Murdoch (JM); Noemi Buracchi (NB); Natalie Timoshkina (NT); Natalie Lindsay (NL); Christiana Opoku Afriyie (CO); Maryam Chishti (MC); Katie Moffat (KM); Georgia Smith (GS); Charles Gribben (CG); Mubeen Mahmood (MM); Maeve Curtin (MAC); Laiba Tareen (LT); Zorena Shanks (ZS); Bhavanishanker Sharma (BS); Kelly Dwyer (KD); Zainab Ali (ZA); Rachael Hutchison (RH); Hailee Wilson (HW); Syed Ali Hasan (SA); Raiyen Mehmood (RM); Afia Kazmi (AK); Reece Manson (REM); Vamsi Chaitanya Suriseti (VC); Hamza Saleem (HS); Nicola McMaster (NM); Robert Gallacher (RGA); Douglas Livingston (DL)

Absent: Sohaib Saleem (SS); Jessica Greig (JG); Kenneth Heap (KH); Ghulam Siddique (GUS); Catherine Mackie (CM); Monica Day (MD); Helen Bolland (HB); Julius Cesar Alejandre (JC); Angelika Magiera (AM); Tun Nadia Aminuddin (TN); Rebecca Lawlor (RL); Rida Munir (RMU); Zeinab Farhat (ZF); Kamalpreet Badi (KB)

Apologies: Louise Dunn (LD); Sadida Hasan (SH); Rachel Gibson (RG); David Grimm (DG); Karolina Syrek (KS); Cols Young (CY); Raisah Khan (Clerk)

In attendance: Sara MacLean (Student Voice Team Leader)

Any member of Student Voice, excluding Full Time Officers, who miss two meetings of Student Voice without apologies in an academic year, will have automatically deemed to have resigned as a member, Officer, Department, PGT or PGR Rep.

1. Chair Announcements

The meeting started at 5.00pm. The Chair welcomed all members to the first digital meeting of Student Voice for 2021/22. Members were asked to keep their cameras on and microphones off unless they wanted to discuss something or present a paper. The Chair asked members to raise their digital hand if they wanted to speak to help the Chair keep order. Members were reminded of what conduct is acceptable during the meeting.

It was noted that item 3, Elections Schedule, is now a paper for discussion rather than approval giving Student Voice the chance to discuss the proposed changes.

2. Full Time Officers Team and Individual Objectives

The Chair invited members to ask questions relating to the Full Time Officer Team Objectives.

The Vice Chair raised concerns regarding the lack of information on Team Objectives in the Student President (formerly Vice President GSBS) reports at all the Student Voice meetings of 2020/21. The Chair explained that this agenda item is to be used for discussion about the proposed Objectives for 2021/22 only. There were no further questions asked about Full Time Officer Team Objectives.

The Chair invited members to ask questions relating to the Full Time Officer Individual Objectives.

CO asked how the Vice President SHLS will achieve her first objective of running a racism education campaign through organised events. The Vice President SHLS explained that the objective is intended as an awareness campaign and will not be an event or a conference. The success of the awareness campaign will be measured through looking at how many people engage with the online campaign, making sure the University is having conversations about racism education and creating safe spaces for students.

CO asked the Vice President GSBS what the Community app will be like for student communications and engagement. The Vice President GSBS explained that the app will be an online community and specific to GCU students. This will create a space where communications can reach students more efficiently.

The Vice Chair asked the Vice President SCEBE for the motivation behind her third objective, the need for a social support network for students who have graduated. The Vice President SCEBE explained that a few GCU graduates who graduated during the pandemic have been in contact to raise some issues. Some of them have highlighted social issues such as isolation since leaving University. These concerns may be addressed through creating a support network for GCU graduates.

RG asked how the Student Presidents first objective, to create a mechanism in GCU for Female and Trans students to not be disadvantaged due to menstruation, can be achieved so that other members do not feel excluded. The Student President intends to have conversations with the University and create a system where students will not face any disadvantages in their education due to medical reasons. The Vice Chair asked whether this is good for managing the expectations of students for the future as they may not have a similar mechanism in their work places. The Student President explained that as University for the Common Good, it is important to set a good standard and be a catalyst for changes in other organisations.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Full Time Officers Team and Individual Objectives. **Vote: For: 27; Against: 4; Abstention: 2.** The Full Time Officers Team and Individual Objectives were approved.

3. Elections Schedule

The Deputy Returning Officer presented the Elections Schedule which is a part of the Students' Association constitution that governs elections. It works in conjunction with the Election Rules. If there is a conflict with the Election Rules, the Election Schedule supersedes the Rules. Further, as it is part of the constitution, changes to the schedule must be approved by Student Voice, Trustee Board and GCU Court. GCU Students' Association revises its Election Rules yearly incorporating learning from previous years and feedback from candidates and other stakeholders. The rationale for the proposed changes were outlined within the paper presented by the Deputy Returning Officer for discussion. The paper will be brought back to the next Student Voice for approval. The Vice President SHLS asked for clarity on how non-compliance to the election rules can result in disqualification. The Deputy Returning Officer explained that the different rules have different values and so they will be dealt with according to their severity. There will also be increased transparency about the decisions that are made. The Chair asked Student Voice members to provide any further feedback directly to the Deputy Returning Officer before the paper comes back to Student Voice.

4. Ideas

Student Voice was asked to discuss and decide whether to approve the Ideas.

4.1. Ensure Core texts are available in the GCU Library

'More than a few of my core texts and recommended reading texts have not been available on GCU Library and I feel that lectures should not be pushing us to buy our own textbooks only to reference it a few times in one essay. If text is deemed as core, it should be made available to students to access online.'

There were no concerns raised against the Idea.

The Chair called for a vote for the Idea to Ensure Core texts are available in the GCU Library. **Vote: For: 28; Against: 1; Abstentions: 2.** The Idea was approved. The Vice President SCEBE agreed to take forward this Idea. **Action: Vice President SCEBE.**

4.2. Discretionary and Childcare Applications

'Better clarity on evidence required for those involved in self-employment. There needs to be a series of possible evidence that can be provided that all staff should be aware of. Currently, it is very vague and if the income doesn't match what is expected, then it is rejected. People in self-employment don't always have a set income level and can increase/decrease monthly. This makes it very difficult to fulfil the criteria and only adds additional pressure on a very stressful situation.'

The proposer explained that the Idea is asking for clearer guidance on evidence needed for discretionary and childcare applications.

NL agreed with the proposal and gave further feedback on the application being time consuming as it requires sending multiple emails. The Vice President SHLS suggested an improvement to include a better system for submissions so applicants don't need to send multiple emails.

The Chair called for a vote to consider the improvement. **Vote: For: 31; Against: 0; Abstentions: 1.** The improvement was approved.

The Chair called for a vote for the Idea with an improvement to include a better system for submissions so applicants don't need to send multiple emails. **Vote: For: 30; Against: 0; Abstentions: 3.** The Idea was approved. The Vice President SHLS agreed to take forward this Idea. **Action: Vice President SHLS.**

4.3. Accommodation Page Review

'Have applied for Caledonian Court this year for my halls of residence and the move has went extremely well however I have identified some problems around the application process for Caledonian Court that I think needs changing and have spoken to several different students and we identified some issues that the student association should try and change for prospective room mates:

- 1. The accommodation page of the website needs some more up to date photos of the flat rooms to give students an idea of what they are expecting as some who couldn't attend the open day weren't able to access up to date photos due to the accommodation page not having been updated in a long time.*

- 2. The accommodation application process was on a paper form, for students who don't hold a printer and given COVID-19 with libraries being closed, it may be ideal for the student association to look at introducing an online application form for students to fill in if they wish to apply for accommodation which also helps the environment in terms of paper being printed to fill in the form and then scanned and returned to the accommodation team e-mail address.*

I think this would make the application process more modern and more efficient and something that would bring some real change to students applying for accommodation at Caledonian Court and something the student association should look into.'

The proposer has been working with the Student President on this Idea and has identified that the accommodation page on the GCU website is out of date and does not have up to date pictures or information on the Caledonian Court halls of residence. The application form is not available to submit electronically as it needs to be printed off which can be inconvenient.

The proposer suggested an improvement to the proposed Idea. After researching, it appears some other halls of residence have a resident's portal which is an easy and efficient way to report maintenance issues and pay rent. The Chair explained that the improvement is different to the initial Idea and should be submitted as a separate Idea for consideration.

The Chair called for a vote for the Idea of Accommodation Page Review. **Vote: For: 28; Against: 0; Abstentions: 1.** The Idea was approved.

4.4. GCU should buy back textbooks from graduating students

'Expecting students to be spending £40+ on a book for a course to only require it for one module and then be left with it is a ridiculous concept. GCU should either provide a safe platform for students to sell their old textbooks to other/new GCU students or simply buy them back from students and sell themselves.'

RG highlighted that a similar Idea has previously been submitted for creating an official Facebook page for students to buy and sell course books. The Chair explained that although the Idea is similar, this Idea is asking the University to buy the books instead.

NL asked for clarity on where the books will be kept once they are bought by the University. The Chair spoke on behalf of the proposer and explained that it was envisaged the books would be made available to students again through the library or by selling them for a cheaper price to students.

The Chair called for a vote for the Idea for GCU should buy back textbooks from graduating students. **Vote: For: 22; Against: 2; Abstentions: 6.** The Idea was approved. The Vice President SCEBE agreed to take forward this Idea. **Action: Vice President SCEBE.**

5. Standing Orders

The Chair presented the Standing Policy paper for discussion and explained that any Idea (otherwise known as motions) passed becomes the policy of GCU Students' Association for five years unless overturned by a future Idea. After five years the policy will lapse unless brought forward as a new motion. The Standing Policy document outlines current progress with each Idea. The Chair said that the Ideas (motions) from 2015/16 are no longer policy unless a member brings forward a new Idea. Student Voice were asked to discuss and note the current Standing Policy. No questions were asked. The motions for 2015/16 will no longer be policy.

6. Elections

The Chair called for nominations for the remaining Student Voice Elected Positions 2021/22.

6.1. Learning and Teaching Sub- Committee

The Chair called for nominations for the positions of Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee Rep (1x PGT ; 1x PGR)

PGT:

- Bhavanishanker Sharma

PGR:

- Maeve Curtin

The Chair congratulated Bhavanishanker Sharma and Maeve Curtin for becoming members of the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee.

6.2. Equality and Diversity

The Vice Chair called for nominations for the positions of Equality and Diversity (x2)

- Joshua Foster

The Vice Chair congratulated Joshua Foster for becoming a member of the Equality and Diversity Committee.

The remaining position will be carried forward to the next Student Voice meeting.

7. Full Time Officer Reports

The Chair invited the Full Time Officers to present their written reports for this meeting.

No questions were asked in relation to the Full Time Officer Reports and the Chair invited members to take a vote to approve all the reports. **Vote: For: 21; Against: 1; Abstention: 3.** The Full Time Officers Reports were approved.

8. Student Voice Officer Reports

The Chair asked the Student Voice Officers to introduce themselves and to give a brief verbal update.

LGBT+ Officer

- Attended first meeting on campus which had high engagement.
- Arranging future meetings for the Trimester.
- Working on rewriting Students' Association LGBT student handbook.

The Chair explained that Student Voice Officers will be required to provide a written update at the next Student Voice meeting of 2021/22.

No questions were asked in relation to the Student Voice Officer report and the Chair invited members to take a vote to approve the report. **Vote: For: 25; Against: 2; Abstention: 1.** The Student Voice Officer report was approved.

9. Clubs and Societies Proposed for Affiliation

The Chair presented the list of new clubs and societies which have affiliated to the Students' Association. This list included:

- PENSA Glasgow
- GCU Tourism Society
- GCU Sign Language

CO asked what the objective is for GCU Tourism Society. Unfortunately, the Societies Council Chair was not present to answer this question. The Chair provided some clarity on what PENSA is. This is a Christian based movement which has been taking place across numerous Universities and is based

on the promotion of Christianity. The Societies connections with the wider community of PENSA is unknown. BS asked if GCU Learning and Development could work together with the GCU Sign Language Society. The Chair explained that the University departments are separate to the Students' Association clubs and societies.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Clubs and Societies Proposed for Affiliation. **Vote: For: 10; Against: 11; Abstention: 8.** The Clubs and Societies Proposed for Affiliation were not approved.

The Chair invited members to vote for each Club and Society separately.

The Chair called for a vote to approve GCU Tourism Society. **Vote: For: 23; Against: 2; Abstention: 5.** The GCU Tourism Society was approved.

The Chair called for a vote to approve GCU Sign Language Society. **Vote: For: 26; Against: 0; Abstention: 3.** The GCU Sign Language Society was approved.

The Chair called for a vote to approve PENSA Glasgow Society. **Vote: For: 6; Against: 16; Abstention: 9.** The PENSA Glasgow Society was not approved.

10. The Bigger Plan 2020- Year 5 Progress

The Student President highlighted some of the key progress made in the Bigger Plan 2020 which started during the academic year 2017/18 and is a five-year plan. On Monday 16th March 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic the Students' Association took the decision to stop all in person student activities and on Tuesday 17th March 2020 the Students' Association Building and London Office closed. The Students' Association Building and London Office and in person student activities did not resume until Monday 20th September 2021. Despite the challenges, GCU Students' Association was able to meet a lot of the KPI targets of the five-year plan as highlighted in the written report. The annual student survey response asking students if their Association has contributed positively to their experience at University has continued to increase. The Student President explained that the KPI targets which were not fulfilled were linked to changes introduced by the pandemic. For example, the election turnout was effected by elections taking place online rather than in-person. Also, some social media KPI's were not able to be achieved due to changes in algorithms.

The Vice Chair noted that it has been encouraging to see the growth in the Students' Association despite the setbacks by the Coronavirus pandemic. He congratulated the Full Time Officers for their hard work over the years which has contributed to the Students' Association success.

11. Audited Accounts 2021

The Students' Association External Auditors, Wylie & Bisset LLP, have completed the annual audit of the Students' Association Accounts 2020/21 (31st July 2021). The Trustees Annual Report outlines the achievements and performance of the Students' Association. This has been a challenging year for the Students' Association with the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and moving most activities and services online. The Students' Association Building and London Office remained closed during the academic year 2020/21. With the exception of the limited return of some Sports Clubs for three weeks there were no in person student activities. The Coronavirus outbreak also had a financial impact on the ability of the Students' Association to generate other income.

The total expenditure was £649,887 (2020; £733,173). The expenditure is broken down as £296,219 (2020; £312,869) for Student Engagement, £127,743 (2020; £152,612) for Student Support and £225,925 (2020; £267,692) for Student Activities. The final surplus for the year was £41,320 (2020; £16,083), which includes £17,783 of funding from the Scottish Funding Council to be spent in

2021/22. Excluding the Scottish Funding Council, the surplus was £23,536. A total of £181,900 was retained within the reserve accounts (2020; £140,580).

The accounts have been submitted to the GCU Finance and General Purposes Meeting (GCU Court Sub Committee) on 18th October 2021 for information and the Trustee Board on 18th October 2021 for approval. No questions were asked and Student Voice noted the Audited Accounts 2020/21.

12. External Affiliations

The Student President presented the external affiliations for 2020/21. Section 22 of the 1994 Education Act requires the Students' Association to present the current list of affiliations for approval by members annually.

The Students' Association will remain affiliated to the following organisations:

| | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|--|---------|---------|
| National Union of Students (NUS) | £25,156 | £15,723 |
| British Universities and College Sports (BUCS) | £5,097 | £5,271 |
| Scottish Student Sport (SSS) | £3,733 | £2,856 |
| National Nightline Association (NNA) | £130 | £155 |
| Advice UK | - | £258 |

The External Affiliations are included within the annual audited accounts available from www.GCUstudents.co.uk/financial. The Student President explained that the additional cost for Advice UK this year is the cost of insurance to cover the Advice Centre at the Students' Association.

The Code of Practice relating to the operation of the Students' Association outlines the process for disaffiliation.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the External Affiliations. **Vote: For: 17; Against: 2; Abstention: 8.** The External Affiliations were approved.

13. Minutes of Student Voice meeting on 22nd March 2021

The Chair invited members to consider the minutes of the previous Student Voice meeting held on 22nd March 2021. No questions were raised by members in relation to the minutes. The Chair said that only those present at the previous meeting could vote to approve the minutes of the meeting at Student Voice held on 22nd March 2021. **Vote: For: 12; Against: 0; Abstention: 11.** The previous Student Voice minutes from 22nd March 2021 were approved.

14. Matters Arising from meeting on 22nd March 2021

The Chair asked the members if there were any questions about the matters arising.

The Vice Chair asked for an update on the referendum on exams before Christmas during the academic year. The Student President will be taking this up with the University and will evaluate whether a referendum would be necessary. The Chair asked the Student President to provide an update on the University's intentions for when exams will be at the next Student Voice meeting.

15. Student Voice Committees

The Chair called for a vote to approve the previous minutes of all Student Voice Sub Committees.
Vote – For: 13; Against: 2; Abstention: 8. The previous minutes of all Student Voice Sub Committees were approved.

16. Elections Rules

The Deputy Returning Officer explained that GCU Students' Association revises its Election Rules yearly incorporating learning from previous years and feedback from candidates and other stakeholders. As part of this consultation, Student Voice is encouraged to read and feedback their thoughts on the current direction of the revision of the rules. The areas for discussion this year are how to define the beginning of campaigning as opposed to preparation work, rules on social media, how can GCU Learn (or associated tools such as MS Teams) be used for campaigning whilst ensuring fairness to access and issues surrounding copyright. The rationale for the proposed changes were outlined within the paper. There were no questions asked but Student Voice members were encouraged to provide feedback to the Deputy Returning Officer before the 2nd Student Voice meeting.

17. National Student Survey Results 2021

Student Voice noted the National Student Survey Results 2021.

18. Elections Timetable 2021/22

Student Voice noted the Elections Timetable 2021/22.

19. Full Time Officer Remuneration

It was noted that the Full Time Officer pay remained the same due to a pay freeze across the organisation. Student Voice noted the Full Time Officer Remuneration.

20. NUS Conference Delegate Nominations Close on Friday 29th October at 12noon

Student Voice noted that the NUS Conference Delegate Nominations Close on Friday 29th October at 12noon.

21. A.O.C.B

- 22.** The Vice Chair asked how the block grant could be increased from the University. The Chair suggested writing a motion asking for an increase to the block grant from the University which can be discussed at the next Student Voice meeting. The Student Voice Team Leader offered to help with how to write a motion.

The Chair thanked all members of Student Voice for their attendance and engagement at the first Student Voice meeting 2021/22.

The meeting was concluded at 7pm.