

Minutes of the 2nd Caledonian Student Voice Meeting of Session 2022/23

Meeting held on Monday, 05th December 2022, in-person in NH208, at 17:00pm.

Sign In:

Present: Robert Gallacher (ViceChair); Laiba Tareen (Student President); Chukwuma Egbujor (VP GSBS) John Mavileth (VP SCEBE); Jennifer Abali (VP SHLS); Ryan Brown (RB); Derthinn Bushell (DB); Kanwal Chaudhry (KC); Sofia Congradyova (SC); Gordon Edwards (GE); River Gowans (RGO); David Grimm (DG); Pranali Khatri (PK); Liam Loporini (LL); Dorota Makaruk (DM); Jessica Michael-Odobi (JM); Aspen Milledge (AMI); Aliyah Noel (AN); Gino Obaseki (GO); Taiwo Olaleye (TO); Louisa Richardson (LR); Miranda Romero Torres (MT); Peter Scheibenhoffer (PS); Eilidh Stewart (ES); Daniel Williams (DW)

Absent: Hafsa Abu Baker (HAB); Victoria Aderaju (VA); Tarik Basbugoglu (TB); Noemi Buracchi (NB); Annamae Burrows (AB); Daniele Giustini (DG); Zoe Ingram (ZI); Alireza Mahdian-Amroabadi (AM); Carly McCallum (CM); Jodie Murdoch (JMU); Chidozie Nwaigwe (CN); Christian Nwazuloke (CNW); Felix Oluwatobi Olowokere (FO); Chris Opoku (CO); Bolaji Oyewo (BO); Hemantkumar Parmar (HP); Anoop Pk (AP); Ahmer Riaz (AR); Jaik Robertson (JR); Priyaben Solanki (PSO); Sreejith Suresh (SS);

Apologies: Hammad Amer (HA); Stacey Cornish (SCO); Eben Crichton (EC); Sheryl Cunningham (SCU); Emma-Clare Darby (ED); Lewechi Emeana (LE); Stefan Fisher (SF); Joshua Foster (JF); Rachel-Louise Gibson (RG); Louise Hannah (LH); Joel Jacob (JJ); Jayalakshmy Mololath (JMO); Karolina Syrek (Chair)

In attendance: Paul Queen (Director of Finance, GCU), Fiona Campbell (VP for People and Student Wellbeing, GCU), Douglas Chalmers (UCU), Sara MacLean (Student Voice Team Leader), Philip Morton (Clerk),

Observers: Anthony Ojukwu (AU), Aryan Srivastava (AS), Laura Yapp (LY)

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 Vice Chair took over the duties of Chair in their absence.

The meeting commenced at 17:00pm. The Chair welcomed all members to the second meeting of Student Voice for 2022/23.

Members were made aware that this meeting was being recorded for the purpose of minute taking and would be deleted once the minutes had been collated and approved at the next Student Voice meeting. The Chair asked members to raise their voting card if they wished to speak. Members were reminded of what conduct is acceptable during the meeting.

Observers were reminded not to place a vote throughout this meeting.

2. GCU Divestment

The Director of Finance gave an introduction to GCU Divestment and commented on the student ran campaign which highlighted potential issues surrounding the universities investment portfolio. It was acknowledged that the Director of Finance had met with the campaigning student to provide

additional information on these investments as well as a background to why and how this is being rectified for the future.

It was commented that GCU does not have direct investment in fossil fuel companies etc. Information had previously been made available on the university website on protected investments but did not include specifics on the investment portfolio. There is to be further information uploaded to the website for transparency, this has not yet available due to online technical issues.

It was raised that these discussions are less on the direct investments that the institution holds, but rather the indirect investments placed through banks or other financial institutions where the university does not own the equity. Due to this, it is harder to monitor indirect portfolios and it there is no policy on what these indirect investments could or could not include. The work happening now, is to find a solution to get to the position of increased visibility and how risks can be mitigated. It was further commented that there was a meeting scheduled with the financial advisors the day after the meeting of Student Voice to establish how the university can invest in portfolios with reduced risk and include more sustainable and clean investments. It was acknowledged that the university must ensure a return on investments although they are attempting to work to a tight timescale to be in a much more transparent and improved position over the next six months.

ES raised concern on how these indirect investments were able to fly under the radar, taking a student member to raise them. The Director of Finance commented that direct investment used to be held in government bonds but with changes in the financial market, these did not have a strong rate of return meaning there needed to be a move to indirect equity although the previous policy processes has not kept up to date with this. It was further commented that the university want an investment policy that is in line with the university values.

DG asked if transparency surrounding investments could be improved. It was noted that as a student body, it would be beneficial to know what the university invests in, which may prompt more students to become politically involved. The Director of Finance commented that if there needs to be a response to freedom of information requests, then there is no difference to making this publicly available with the possibility of being updated annually.

3. GCU Strike Action

The VP for People and Student Wellbeing gave an overview of salary negotiations, the process of action and where we currently stand. The 2022 negotiations that resulted in a 7% increase to the lowest salaried staff members, with a minimum of 3% award, was commented on but it was acknowledged that circumstances have changed and the mechanisms of negotiation are being investigated to see if raise awards may be opened earlier this year. It is expected that there will be two open pay rounds in 2023, in February and August. It was further made clear that salary changes need to be handled on a national level with UCEA. It was acknowledged that learning and teaching will be disrupted from industrial action although the university are doing as much as possible to mitigate this.

DG asked in relation to the two subsequent pay rises next year, if this will match the current rate of inflation of around 11-12% as anything less than this would result in a real-term pay cut. VP for People and Student Wellbeing answered that this will remain unknown until negotiations are confirmed.

TO commented that there is a cost of living crisis that is affecting everyone, further asking if there will be incentives, particularly for international students, to aid those suffering during these unprecedented times. VP for People and Student Wellbeing answered that it is not always clear cut on how to manage incentives. In terms of the free breakfast for students and staff, it is a great incentive that the university are still dealing with in terms of implementation when it comes to staffing, supply, queues etc. A number of other incentives that the university are currently

considering (but not confirmed) were highlighted, including; microwaves on campus for student use, increasing hardship funding both in the Students' Association and Student Life and low cost lunch initiatives. It was further commented that support for predominantly international students when it comes to accommodation is a huge issue right now that is being tackled through a number of routes.

4. Full Time Officer Reports

The Full Time Officers presented their reports and invited Student Voice members to ask any questions.

LL asked the Student President if the video and information regarding Fit to Sit will be available before Trimester B as it is currently scheduled in the plans for next meeting when some students would like information on this before assessments in trimester A. The Student President confirmed that it is recognised that students may not be entirely familiar with the policy, that there is a video being made with the university communications team shortly as well as a Students' Association video currently being worked on, the latter will be released before the end of Trimester A.

VP GSBS was asked, in relation to their catering remit and ongoing plans for the introduction of African food dishes to the Re:Union menu, if this was an everyday item or a theme day as there are students from other nationalities that may wish to have their countries food included as new menu items. VP GSBS commented that they are discussing several catering options including international offerings on the menu. As it stands, student response is to be gathered and evaluated and it is an aim to ensure that there are options that suit everyone.

DG asked VP SCEBE how students may come forward with ideas for U-hatch. VP SCEBE signposted to the head of advanced gaming and welcomed students from all schools to come forward with any ideas in relation to this. It was further acknowledged that collaboration and funding is being sought from Barclays.

VP SHLS highlighted the think positive mental health partnership agreement as well as the work with the GCU Wellbeing team and student response to mental health programmes they wish to see implemented.

DG asked if there was an update on the rise to 45p travel allowance for SHLS placement students. VP SHLS confirmed that this was presented to the Executive Board who were not aware that the current allowance is 25p per mile and will look to move forward on this. It was further confirmed that an update would be sought before the next meeting with the Executive Board.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Full Time Officer Reports.

Vote: For: 22; Against: 0; Abstentions: 0. The Full Time Officer Reports were approved.

5. Student Voice Officer Reports

Student Voice members were asked if there were any questions in relations to the Student Voice Officer Reports. There were no questions.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Student Voice Officer Reports.

Vote: For: 18; Against: 3; Abstentions: 3. The Student Voice Officer Reports were approved.

6. Censure: Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer

The Student President presented the censure on behalf of the Chair due to their absence.

The motion of censure on the current mental health and wellbeing officer was raised to seek a vote of no confidence so that the position can be filled with an active officer. This is due to a lack of participation in any Student Voice or EDI committee this year, nor have they sent their apologies or written report on the work undertaken in their role. This has left students without a MHWO at a critical time of re-adjusting to on-campus teaching and the cost of living crisis.

It was further commented that this has caused reputational damage for the role and the request is for a new officer who is more active to take this position.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Censure: Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer.

Vote: For: 21; Against: 0; Abstentions: 3. The Censure: Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer was approved.

7. Clubs and Societies Proposed for Affiliation

Vice President SHLS presented the list of new sports clubs seeking affiliation to the Students' Association in the absence of the Sports Council Chair.

The following are affiliations for starter societies. Some were affiliated last year but missed the registration period so need to be affiliated again:

- Pensa
- Racing Society
- Forensic Society
- Research in Psychedelic Medicine
- Fashion Society (GCU London)
- Book Society

Affiliation for sports clubs:

- Women's Rugby Club
- Mountaineering Club
- Men's Gaelic Football Club
- Cricket Club

SC asked for clarity on what the PENSA society was. The Societies Council Chair confirmed that this is a faith based group on campus which had prior affiliation and is looking to affiliate again.

DG commented on the affiliation of the Women's Rugby Club and Men's Gaelic Football Club and if there is an inclusivity policy for them to include transgender and non-binary members. VP SCEBE answered that they understood clubs were inclusive under the equality policy.

DB asked what psychedelic medicine entailed. The Societies Council Chair confirmed that this is a course based society focussing on a specific element of a module in which speakers are invited to discuss the research of psychedelic medicine.

AS raised the point that there is already a Fashion Society in Glasgow and if there will be duplicity between the two societies. The Society Council Chair confirmed that they had initially objected to the society on this basis although after conversations, it was established that this was for a London only event with no connection to the Glasgow society. VP GSBS asked if this meant that any society could have both a Glasgow and London branch. The Society Council Chair commented that if possible, there should only be one society, if they were to focus on their two separate areas without subsidising funding from the other society, then this would be evaluated on a case by case nature. VP SHLS asked why we cannot have the same society on different campuses, and commented that

the London campus is for post-graduate students, are we trying to stop them from starting societies or having their own branch? The Societies Council Chair commented that they did not expect any other London societies to come forward although if this was solely for London based activities, that this would be allowed.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Clubs and Societies Proposed for Affiliation.

Vote: For: 15; Against: 6; Abstentions: 3. The Clubs and Societies Proposed for Affiliation were approved.

8. UCU, EIS and Unison Strikes

Trade Union representatives were welcomed to provide statements on strikes on GCU.

Unfortunately, the EIS representative was unable to attend due to time constraints but the UCU representative discussed industrial action with Student Voice.

The representative of UCU highlighted the financial income received by universities in the UK last year and the surplus increase in the sector. It was acknowledged that staff are being asked to teach and support students on a much greater level than before with the vast increase in students on campus and those seeking face time with staff. A paper was highlighted in which GCU was presented as the third bottom university in Scotland in terms of the number of students to each member of staff (student:staff ratio). The £12 million surplus earlier this year as well as the money spent on GCU New York were highlighted as areas that have been previously raised that could facilitate staff pay rises within GCU.

It was commented that when trade unions strike, that staff do not get paid for the days off they take for this action and that they have insisted for this loss in wages to be invested in student hardship funding as it is their belief that the interests of the university should fundamentally be its students and staff.

It was acknowledged that there was another meeting on a UK level for negotiations on this issue although it is believed that these would not be entertained by the trade unions. Further to this, it was commented that there is not a want to strike, it is a need before deteriorating student experiences are felt. It was further noted that students can contact the current principal and the next principal when they enter their term to put pressure on UCEA (University and Colleges Employer Association) to further negotiate as students have the loudest voice.

VP GSBS commented that the Students' Association is in support of the strike actions and asked what the next plan of action could be. The UCU representative commented that UCU members are currently working short of a strike with the possibility of an assessment-marking boycott. It was acknowledged that this boycott would be disruptive and is not taken lightly. ES added that they are currently setting up a student solidarity strike group.

The UCU representative further commented that the free breakfast for students and staff is a great initiative and should continue for students, but the fact that staff are included shows the need for greater pay. As well as the issues regarding pay, stress, poor mental health and burnout are becoming real issues faced for staff doing more work for little return.

DW commented that online petitions can show a real number of people showing support to add pressure. The UCU representative commented that a petition of solidarity created by students would show the voice of those students reacting to the current conditions.

9. Motion: Strikes at GCU

The Student President presented the Full Time Officer policy position on ongoing industrial action and seeking approval from Student Voice as a motion to become the policy of the Students' Association.

It was commented that the Full Time Officer's recognise the impact on learning, teaching and wider student experience but are mindful of the work done by every member of staff. It was further stated that this is not just at a local level, NUS have also fully supported strike action.

DG asked for clarification on if this was a vote on the policy stance or a vote for Student Voice to take further action. The Student President confirmed that this vote is to approve the Full Time Officers position on strike action to become Students' Association policy.

AMI asked how students can further support the strikes. The Student President commented that students can email the principal showing support and asking for further negotiations, on strike days students can ask staff on the picket line questions, read their leaflets and learn more on their reasons for striking. It was further added that the responsibility of missed learning and teaching lies with the university and not the staff on strike.

RB asked if Full Time Officers would be in support of a student led protest in solidarity of the strike actions. The Student President confirmed that they would support students showing solidarity with these actions.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Motion: Strikes at GCU.

Vote: For: 18; Against: 3; Abstention: 0. The Motion: Strikes at GCU was approved.

10. Revised Sports Policy

VP SCEBE presented the Revised Sports Policy due to the Sports Council Chair not being in attendance.

It was noted that the following changes had been made to the sports policy:

- Updated sports awards rules
- Amendment to the requirement to have a safety code of practice; as this is covered by each club's risk assessment
- Advisory notification for a swim test for water based sports

AMI asked if by eliminating the code of practice, could this allow for harassment and hazing to occur, and if so, why would this be eliminated. VP SCEBE understood these concerns but was unsure on the details of the policy change and asked for this to be directed to the Sports Council Chair at the next meeting of Student Voice.

The Chair called a motion for this paper to be deferred to the next meeting of Student Voice in order for the Sports Council Chair to answer questions prior to a vote for approval.

11. Motion: Repeal Yearly Approval of Affiliated Societies

The Societies Council Chair presented their motion to Repeal Yearly Approval of Affiliated Societies which was proposed at Student Voice 4, 2021/22 without adequate consultation on the impact this would have on the Societies Council. It was commented that if implemented, this motion renders the Society Council redundant as well as arguably being a breach of non-discriminative policies. Further to this, it would consume a vast amount of Student Voice's time. It was added that this policy only seeks to regulate societies, not sports clubs or student media.

VP SHLS added that it is logical to approve this repeal, as there should be no difference between the regulations of sports, societies and student media.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Motion: Repeal Yearly Approval of Affiliated Societies.

Vote: For: 10; Against: 8; Abstention: 2. The Motion: Repeal Yearly Approval of Affiliated Societies was approved.

12. Ideas

The Chair noted that due to time constraints, only the top three ideas (based on the number of votes submitted on the Students' Association website) would be presented for approval.

GCU End Investment in Top Polluters & Reinvest in Climate and Social Justice Solutions

LY confirmed that they have had discussions with the Director of Finance and that the university are making positive steps although there are still issues to highlight. It was conveyed that GCU do not have any direct investments which means there is no transparency where their money is being invested by Rathbone Investment Management. It was commented that GCU must ensure that indirect investments are being regulated and in-line with the universities ethical and environmental policies and commitment to the common good as opposed to allowing for investment in fossil fuels, the alcohol and tobacco industry and the armaments sector. It was further commented that the university finance department must be held accountable and there must be a change in policy that regulates both direct and indirect investments.

There were no questions or improvements to the above idea.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the idea: GCU End Investment in Top Polluters & Reinvest in Climate and Social Justice Solutions.

Vote: For: 18; Against: 6; Abstention: 1. The idea: GCU End Investment in Top Polluters & Reinvest in Climate and Social Justice Solutions was approved. **Action: Vice President SCEBE.**

Investing in the GCU Campus

Due to the proposer not being present, AMI gave an overview of the idea and improvements that could be made to the GCU campus.

SC commented that the list of improvements outlined should be shortened and prioritised, as there were a number of proposals included within a single idea. JM commented that this is a broad idea, that perhaps the top three proposals should be highlighted for prioritising and specifying the main areas of improvement. SC added that this should be submitted as separate ideas which could be responded to at the next meeting of Student Voice.

RG asked for clarification on the mentioning of the Students' Association as they were under the impression that this was a previous matter for Full Time Officers. The Chair confirmed that this was for renaming the Re:Union Bar & Grill and not strictly for updating the facilities within the Students' Association.

DG commented that to accomplish even the top improvements outlined would come at a large financial expense. It was acknowledged that if we are currently supporting strikes, complaining that staff are not being paid enough and the current cost of living crisis, is investing in the buildings on campus a top financial priority when it still functions well. It was commented that they do agree with the idea and that the university does need invested in, but that investing in our staff is more important.

The Chair acknowledged that this idea contains a lengthy number of proposals and will be delayed to the next meeting of Student Voice to allow the proposer to prioritise their proposal.

Improving Wifi within the Library

AMI proposed their idea for improving the wifi within the library. It was commented that particularly during the cost of living crisis, many students may not have reliable wifi at home and rely on this lifeline within the university. As well as this, with the university currently delivering a hybrid approach to learning, it is essential that good wifi facilities are provided for those studying on-campus. It was added that some students have had to upgrade their data plans on their phones to use as hot spots or buy personal hot spots when it should be the universities duty to provide a service that is fit for purpose and benefits all students who wish to use it.

RB proposed an improvement for the idea to be extended to the whole university campus as students study in various buildings and not just the library.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the changed improvement for Improved Wi-Fi Across all of the GCU Campus.

Vote: For: 18; Against: 1; Abstentions: 0. The revised improvement was approved.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the full idea proposed including the revised improvements.

Vote: For: 21; Against: 2; Abstentions: 0. The Idea was approved. **Action: Vice President SCEBE.**

13. Elections

The Chair presented the Student Voice Elected Positions needing filled for 2022/23. It was noted that anyone wishing to volunteer should ensure that they are available for the meetings their position holds as to not impact studies.

The following Student Voice Members ran for each Student Voice Elected Position:

- Senate Student Representative (1 position):

Aryan Srivastava

This position was duly elected.

- Elections Committee (5 positions):

Kanwal Chaudhry, David Grimm

These positions were duly elected.

14. Minutes of Student Voice Meeting on 24th October 2022

The Chair invited members who were present at the last meeting of Student Voice to consider the minutes of the previous Student Voice meeting held on 24th October 2022.

There were no corrections or comments added.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Minutes of Student Voice Meeting on 24th October 2022.

Vote: For: 14; Against: 1; Abstention: 1. The Minutes of Student Voice Meeting on 24th October 2022 were approved.

The Chair called for a vote to raise the meeting time guillotine by 15 minutes.

Vote: For: 7; Against: 15; Abstentions: 1. The raising of the meeting time guillotine by 15 minutes was not approved.

15. Matters Arising from Meeting on 24th October 2022

The Chair invited members of Student Voice to ask the Full Time Officers any questions regarding the Matters Arising. There were no questions asked.

16. Minutes of Student Voice Committees

The Chair invited members of Student Voice to ask any questions regarding the Minutes of Student Voice Committees. There were no questions asked.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Minutes of Student Voice Committees.

Vote: For: 17; Against: 2; Abstention: 2. The Minutes of Student Voice Committees were approved.

17. National Student Survey Q26 Report

Due to time constraints, there was no discussion on this agenda item.

18. NUS Conference Delegation Nominations Closing

The Chair noted that the closing date for NUS conference delegations is Friday 09th December at 12 noon.

19. AOCB

There was no other business to be discussed.

The meeting was concluded at 19:00pm.