

Committee Title	Student Voice
Date of Meeting	23 rd October 2017
Item Number and Title/Subject	Full Time Officer Model Review
Paper Presenter	Kevin Campbell, Student President (or nominee)
Brief Summary of Issues/Topic	<p>In 2014, Student Voice voted to change our Full Time Officers model and how our Full Time Officers are elected. The changes to the system are summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather than having four separate elections for our Full Time Officers, we have one election with four candidates being elected using the Single Transferable Vote method. • The candidate who comes first in the election is offered the role of Student President. • The other three successful candidates will each become a Vice President with responsibility for each representing students in one of GCU's three academic schools. • All officers are responsible for promoting student representation alongside our activities and services in their schools. • The former remits of Education, Wellbeing, Activities and some of the current Student President remit will be broken down and the winning candidates will then assemble their own remits after the election in agreement with each other. <p>At the time that the new process was approved, it was agreed that it would be reviewed after three election cycles, the third of which was completed in March 2017. In April 2017 a mini tender was undertaken for a consultant to review our Full Time Officer Model. Four companies were approached, with two submissions. Lucidity Solutions were appointed.</p> <p>This review forms part of the Democracy Review, which is a Big Action within The Bigger Plan 2020. The review was carried out using desk research, interviews and an electronic survey. Interviews were arranged with two current Full Time Officers, two former Full Time Officers, three members of the GCU Executive Board, one senior manager within GCU Professional Services, three Deans, the Chief Executive and three School Officers. The electronic survey was conducted with Student Voice and Student Voice Sub Committee members 2016/17. Other Unions with a similar model were also contacted.</p> <p>The review demonstrates that the new structure is working well, and has continued to cement the partnership between the Students' Association and the University. Students felt well represented overall and were satisfied with the model. Recommendations are also included within the report.</p> <p>The report was endorsed by Trustee Board and circulated to stakeholders.</p>

Recommendation(s)	Information		Discussion	X	Approval	
	<p><i>Any member can ask a question by raising their voting card and being recognised by the Chair to speak.</i></p> <p>Student Voice is asked to discuss and note the Full Time Officer Model review paper.</p>					
Who have you consulted when developing the paper?	Stakeholders, outlined with paper Trustee Board					
Staff/Student Protocol	Yes	X	No		N/A	
Will any decision approved directly affect the work of staff?	The Chief Executive was consulted.					
Should the paper be submitted to any other committee following its consideration/approval at this meeting? If yes, please state the committee and proposed date of submission.	<p>Executive Committee</p> <p>The report will be made available to members and stakeholders on the Students' Association website.</p>					



Review of GCU Students' Association Full-Time Officer model



Conducted by Jo Edwards, Lucidity Solutions Ltd

September 2017



Executive Summary

Glasgow Caledonian University Students' Association introduced a new model of student representation in 2014, changing the responsibilities of the Full-Time Officers. Three years on, the Students' Association called for a review of the effectiveness of this model, particularly in relation to the academic representation of students and the relationship with the University. This report captures the outcomes of that review.

The review was carried out through desk research, interviews and an electronic survey. Details of the approach are outlined in the report and captured in the appendices.

The review demonstrated that the new structure is working well, and has continued to cement the partnership between the Students' Association and the University. Students felt well represented overall and were satisfied with the model.

At the same time, the review identified a number of opportunities to enhance the model:

- **Recommendation 1:** Develop a clear, more detailed matrix of responsibilities for each Full-Time Officer, and communicate widely with staff across the University.
- **Recommendation 2:** Explore ways to communicate these remits and responsibilities more broadly to students.
- **Recommendation 3:** Revisit the representation structure within the Schools, to ensure that roles and responsibilities, and the interactions between them, are understood.
- **Recommendation 4:** Introduce regular meetings between the Full-Time Officer and the representatives from their assigned School.
- **Recommendation 5:** Ensure that the representation structure within Schools is well understood by Students' Association staff, and forms part of all relevant training and induction.
- **Recommendation 6:** Consider whether role-specific elections for a Vice President for each School could be a future model enhancement.
- **Recommendation 7:** Consider how to make more use of volunteers for areas that are not covered by the School remits, such as sports and activities.
- **Recommendation 8:** Use the new, flatter structure within the Full-Time Officer team to take joint responsibility for themes that cut across all Schools.
- **Recommendation 9:** Prioritise attendance at University meetings.
- **Recommendation 10:** Explore opportunities for Full-Time Officers to work more closely with Students' Association staff, and for the latter to work with University colleagues.



Introduction

Glasgow Caledonian University Students' Association's Mission is 'to represent and enable GCU students to enhance all aspects of their student experience'. Central to the delivery of this Mission is the model of electing and organising the responsibilities of the Full-Time Officers within the Association. Having introduced a new model three years ago, the Association has identified the value of a review of that model, to provide an early view of its effectiveness in improving representation and enhancing partnership working.

This report presents the findings of the review, focusing on how well the model supports student representation and engagement with GCU.

Approach

The review has been carried out in three phases:

1. Interviews with GCU staff and students, Students' Association staff and current and former Full Time Officers
2. Input from other UK universities using similar models
3. An electronic survey, circulated to members of Student Voice and Student Voice Sub Committees during 2016/17.

Responses from each of the sources have been evaluated, and used to inform the development of the recommendations. Further details of the approach are included in the appendices.

Outcomes

Added value

The overall impression from both students and staff was that the new model was working well in terms of student representation and engagement with the University. Starting from a strong base, improvements were noted, particularly in relation to academic representation within Schools, with the new Vice President School remits identified as delivering real improvements. University staff also noted the strength of the partnership with the Students' Association, which was open and honest, and one where the Full-Time Officers were able to play the role of 'critical friend' to many University developments. This was borne out through a wide range of interactions – both formal and informal – between University staff and the Full-Time Officers.

From a Full-Time Officer perspective, the changes had been positive. The flatter structure put more emphasis on team working, which was sometimes difficult to achieve but worth the effort. The Full-Time Officers were passionate about the positive benefits of being able to choose the majority of remit areas, as the process allowed them to focus on what they were most interested in. The process of allocating remit areas has also worked well.

Although the review has not focused on diversity, interviewees and survey respondents were positive about the perceived benefits that the new model has had, particularly in encouraging a broader range of

candidates to stand for election. The initial data supports this view. However, it is too early to make any firm conclusions on enhancements to diversity, and this should be reviewed in due course.

Challenges and concerns

At the same time, the interviews and survey responses suggested a range of limitations, not all connected to the model but important to note. These reflections are captured in table one, below.

Table one: summary of concerns

Area of concern	Comments
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some confusion from GCU staff and students about who is responsible for areas outside of School remit. Opportunities to improve. Some confusion about formal processes and procedures within the Students' Association, particularly in relation to dealing with student feedback Communications from GCU to the Students' Association can be inconsistent – overwhelming at times, and sometimes changes in policies not shared, leading to confusion.
Processes and roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the majority agreed that the new election model was fairer, some respondents suggested that it may put prospective candidates off, if they were not interested in becoming Student President. Concerns were raised by University staff about the length of time the Full-Time Officers had to make an impact in the role, and the challenges associated with rebuilding relationships each year. However, all noted that this was not a symptom of the new model. There is recognition on the on the challenging nature of preparing Full Time Officers for all aspects of their wide ranging roles, including being elected representatives, members of staff and trustees. The question of the timing of elections, and subsequent handover, was questioned, with the potential to push elections later in Trimester 2 to give the Full-Time Officers more time to deliver. However, student coursework priorities after week 6 of Trimester 2 mean that this approach might not be viable.
Engagement with GCU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted by the majority of GCU staff interviewees to be positive and moving in the right direction, but some questions about how manifesto pledges align with the University priorities – and whether they should. Particular confusion around structures within Schools, and how the Vice Presidents, School Officers and Class Representatives work together. Interactions with governance structures strong, but sometimes there is a lack of clarity about which Full Time Officer should be



	invited to specific meetings within the University.
Engagement with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Concerns raised by staff and Full Time Officers that scope of role can impact on time available to engage with students.▪ Survey responses reflect student concerns that some activities/ areas are not well represented in the new model, particularly if none of the Full-Time Officers were enthusiastic about them. However, it is noted that committees felt more student-led, such as Sports and Societies Council.

Reflections from other models

Responses to enquiries were received from two other institutions: Liverpool Guild of Students and University of Salford Students' Union. Both unions had implemented a similar model before GCU, and provided useful feedback in terms of its success.


- **Liverpool Guild** introduced the model in 2008-09, and have since seen an improvement in the diversity of candidates, although are still struggling to encourage female candidates to step forward. In response, the Guild are proposing a campus-wide consultation this Autumn on whether there should be reserved places for female candidates. In other areas, the model generally worked well, with no plans to change the fundamental structure. Areas of concern included representation of postgraduate and international students.
- **University of Salford Students' Union** had seen a very positive increase in the diversity of elected officers since the introduction of the model, although there is no evidence of a causal link. The model was changed in 2015, from a block election with all candidates running in the same election to a separate election for each role – the President and each of the Schools. This has resulted in a large uptake of candidates from the School that traditionally has been under-represented and increased voter turnout. It has also created a much smoother handover within the Schools. Salford have addressed concerns about perceived gaps in representation by introducing volunteer officers for areas like societies and sports. This has had some success, although is still early to judge.

Developments at both institutions could present options for GCU Students' Association, when considering amendments to the model.

Recommendations

Feedback from the interviews and survey questions was wide ranging, covering topics that related directly to the new Full Time Officer model and topics that were related more generally to student representation and the relationship between the University and the Students' Association. What was clear was a structure, in itself, would not provide the solutions. It was up to the people working within the models to make them work effectively.

The recommendations that follow have been developed with this in mind. Some may be beyond the



responsibility of the Students' Association, but have been included to provide some structure for potential discussion with the University.

Communication

Feedback was received from Full Time Officers, Students' Association staff, students and University staff about the clarity and transparency of information about the new model.

- **Recommendation 1:** Develop a clear matrix of responsibilities as soon as possible after remits are decided, including a short description of what activities each area covers and – if possible – what steps the Officer will take to represent students in that area. Publish on the Students' Association website and circulate to all Schools and Professional Services areas.
- **Recommendation 2:** Explore ways to communicate these remits and responsibilities more broadly to students, for example, using social media to post regular updates, publicizing on the posters inside the Students' Association, and including progress on delivery on the Students' Association website. An example can be found at: <https://www.liverpoolguild.org/main-menu/about-us/your-officers/sean-turner-president>.


Structures for school representation

School representation – and the interaction of the different roles within each School – was commented on by all interviewees, with all suggesting that greater clarity was needed. Two thirds of students responding to the survey knew which Full Time Officer represented their School, also suggesting room for improvement.

- **Recommendation 3:** Revisit the representation structure within the Schools, to ensure that roles and responsibilities are understood, including how and when to share feedback. Suggestions for areas to examine include renaming the School Officer to Departmental Officer/ Representative, to clarify the role, and to revisit the payment structures to ensure class reps and school officers are carrying out their roles effectively.
- **Recommendation 4:** Introduce regular meetings between the Full-Time Officer and the representatives from their assigned School, either as one of the Full-Time Officer objectives or as a part of the formal structure. This could be managed by being before/ after each Student/ Staff Consultative Group.
- **Recommendation 5:** Ensure that the representation structure within Schools is well understood by Students' Association staff, and forms part of the training/ induction for class reps, School Officers and Full Time Officers.
- **Recommendation 6:** Consider whether role-specific elections for a Vice President for each School – as per the Salford model – could be a future model enhancement.

Cross-cutting remit areas

Concerns were raised across the board that some areas were not being represented effectively, because of the way the remits were divided across the four Full Time Officers.

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- **Recommendation 7:** Consider how to make more use of volunteers for areas that are not covered by the School remits, such as sports and activities.
 - **Recommendation 8:** Use the new, flatter structure within the Full-Time Officer team to take joint responsibility for themes that cut across all Schools, sharing ideas and allocating tasks at regular intervals, with progress explicitly tied to individual and team objectives. This might take the form of the Full-Time Officer team deciding an objective for, say, student wellbeing, and each taking responsibility for delivering that within their own remit areas.

Creating time for representation

A number of respondents felt that there simply wasn't enough time in the new Full-Time Officer role to represent students effectively, not least due to the number of meetings each Officer was invited to attend.

- **Recommendation 9:** Prioritise attendance at University meetings by: seeking clarification on the purpose of each meeting; encouraging the Full-Time Officers to discuss amongst themselves and with the Chief Executive who would be most relevant to attend; and identifying potential representatives from a broader pool, including Students' Association volunteers.
- **Recommendation 10:** Explore opportunities for Full-Time Officers to work more closely with Students' Association staff, and for the latter to work with University colleagues on strategic projects that span more than one Full-Time Officer term.

Conclusions

The new Full-Time Officer model at GCU Students' Association can be said to be working well, creating a strong partnership with most areas of the University and representing GCU students. As with all structures, there are aspects that could be enhanced, and opportunities to consider more fundamental changes in the future. However, the feedback demonstrates that model has cemented the mutually beneficial relationship between the University and the Students' Association, to the benefit of GCU students.


Appendices:

Appendix one: List of interviewees

Name	Position
Kevin Campbell	Student President, former Vice President
Jodie Waite	NUS Vice President 2017/18; two years as Vice President
James Miller	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Strategy
Jan Hulme	University Secretary & Vice-Principal Governance
Jackie Main	Director of Student Life
Iain Cameron	Dean, SEBE
Toni Hilton	Dean, GSBS
David Carse	Chief Executive
Sean Turner	President, Liverpool Guild of Students
Luke Newton	Student Engagement Coordinator, University of Salford Students' Union

Appendix two: interview questions

1. How closely were you involved with the Full-Time Officer Model before the changes were made? How effective was the previous model, in terms of representation and diversity? What challenges were there?
2. How much do you understand about the changes that have been made, and why they were made?
3. How easy is it to understand who is representing the different areas? Would you know who to contact with a specific question?
4. How aware are you of the process used to allocate roles and responsibilities? Would you like to know more? Could the process be improved?
5. In your view, has the new structure strengthened the engagement between the School/ Professional Services Area/ Committee and the Students' Association?
 - a. If yes, please provide examples
 - b. If no, what are the challenges/ issues?
6. In your view, have the new roles enhanced student representation?
 - a. If yes, please provide examples
 - b. If no, what are the challenges/ issues?
7. Have you identified any duplication within the new model? Are there any areas that aren't clearly represented?

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8. Are there aspects of the model that are adding particular value?
 9. Do you have any feedback from any other staff/ students?
 10. In your view, has diversity in the Full-Time Officers increased?

Appendix three: Student Voice survey questions

1. How successful do you think the model is in supporting student representation?
2. How successful do you think the model is in supporting greater diversity of candidates standing in the Full-Time Officer elections?
3. How satisfied are you with the Full-Time Officer Model overall?
4. Do you know which Full Time Officer to contact with questions about:
 - a. Your school
 - b. Library
 - c. IT
 - d. Equality & diversity
 - e. Societies
5. Can you see any challenges or problems with how the model works?
6. Are there any areas that aren't well represented by the model?
7. What aspects of the model work best?
8. Do you have any other comments?