Guide to Student Representation at GCU

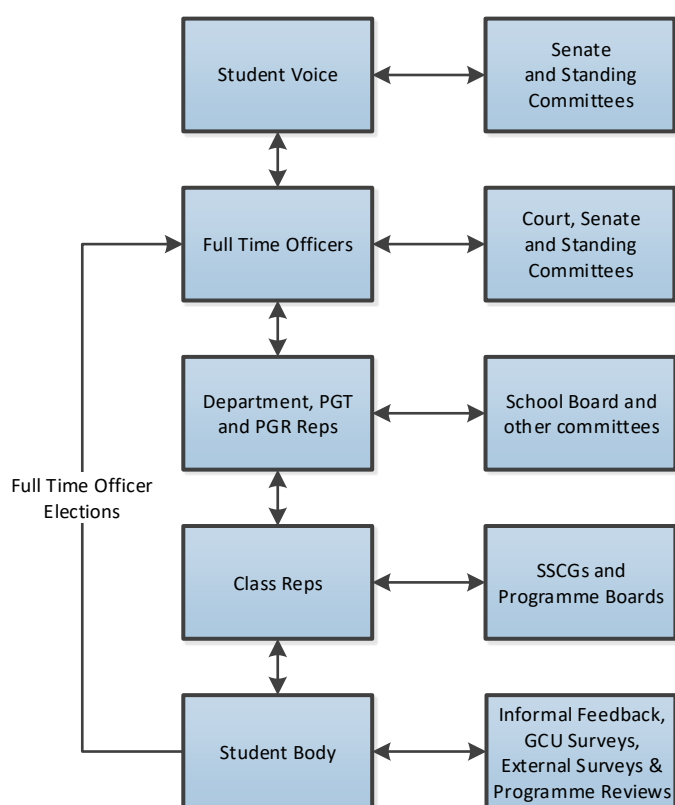|	
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Guide to Student Representation at GCU

Foreword

This Guide has been produced to provide an easy reference summary of the key aspects of how student representation works at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU). Primarily, the Guide is intended to support the induction of the new Full Time Officers but may also be useful as a reference document for all GCU staff as an overview of how the University and the Students' Association work together to ensure effective student representation.

1. **Student Representation**

GCU, in partnership with GCU Students' Association, encourages students to become actively involved in providing constructive feedback about all aspects of University life. Student representation is a key element of student engagement. The University has worked with GCU Students' Association to produce this Student Representation Structure that is fully aligned with our Student Partnership Agreement.

The Education Act 1994 outlines that the primary purpose of the Students' Association is to represent students. The Code of Practice relating to the operation of the Students' Association outlines how the Education Act 1994 is managed between GCU and the Students' Association.

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Full Time Officer Elections (link from Student Body to Full Time Officers)
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Student Representation at GCU

2. **Academic Representation**

2.1 **Academic Rep Structure**

GCU has an Academic Rep Structure that was created by GCU Students' Association and the University to facilitate the collection and dissemination of students' views on the quality of their learning experience at all levels across the institution, and to provide students with feedback on the actions taken by the University to enhance their student experience. Academic Reps and student feedback form a critical element of the GCU Quality Enhancement and Assurance processes and that students are partners in the formulation, operation and evaluation of the institution's approach to enhancement. The Academic Rep Structure is managed between GCU Students' Association, the Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement and academic schools. Further guidance and support is available from the Academic Rep Co-ordinator in the Students' Association by emailing academicreps@GCUstudents.co.uk.

The Academic Reps consist of Class Reps, Department Reps, Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Reps and Postgraduate Research (PGR) Reps. The role description for each academic rep can be found in Appendix 1 and on www.GCUstudents.co.uk/academicreps.

2.2 **Class Reps**

2.2.1 **Role of Class Rep**

The role of each Class Rep is to work with the students and staff to improve the student learning experience on their course, also known as an academic programme. Class Reps are expected to seek student opinion on the academic experience and feed this back to members of staff through both formal and informal channels.

Class Reps are encouraged to tackle any issues as informally as possible, initially with the Module Leader or Programme Leader. Class Reps should work with their Department Reps (or Vice President for their academic school) to escalate any unresolved issues with the Head of Department.

2.2.2 **Class Rep Recruitment**

The Programme Leader is responsible for recruiting Class Reps, at least one per level of each taught undergraduate or postgraduate programme. The Students' Association preferred method for selection is by election within the programme/cohort being represented. Guidance on running a Class Rep Election is available from the Academic Rep Co-ordinator in the Students' Association by emailing academicreps@GCUstudents.co.uk. Whatever selection process being utilised should normally be concluded by the end of week 3 in Trimester A.

2.2.3 **Class Rep Training and Support**

The details of all Class Reps are sent as soon as practically possible by the Programme Leader to the Academic Rep Co-ordinator in the Students' Association in order to provide training and support, including the Academic Rep Gatherings, organised by the Students' Association in Trimesters A and B.

2.3.4 **Student Partnership Forums**

The Programme Leader is responsible for inviting Class Reps to the Student Partnership Forum, normally held once per Trimester.

The purpose of the Student Partnership Forum is:

Class Reps may in addition be invited to attend Programme Board meetings. Details of the operation and composition of Student Partnership Forum can be found in Appendix 2.

2.3 Department, PGT and PGR Reps

2.3.1 Role of Department Reps

The role of the Department Rep is to liaise with the Class Reps on undergraduate programmes within their department to identify key areas to improve the student learning experience and raise any identified issues with the Head of Department. The Department Rep is invited to attend School Board, SAGE Group and Student Voice meetings. The Department Rep should work closely with the Vice President for their academic school.

2.3.2 Role of Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Reps

The role of the Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Rep is to liaise with the Class Reps on postgraduate programmes within their academic school to identify key areas to improve the student learning experience and raise any identified issues with the Dean, Vice Dean or Associate Dean, Learning, Teaching and Quality. The PGT Rep is invited to attend School Board, SAGE Group and Student Voice meetings. The PGT Rep should work closely with the Vice President for their academic school.

2.3.3 Role of Postgraduate Research (PGR) Reps

The role of the Postgraduate Research (PGR) Rep is to work with the Deputy PGR Rep to represent and act as the voice for all PGR students within their academic school (and the London Campus) and to feedback key issues that affect the research student experience to both the University and GCU Students' Association. Between the PGR and Deputy PGR Reps they are invited to attend the University Research Degree Committee, School Board, School Research Committee, SAGE Group, Research Student Lead Network and Student Voice meetings. The PGR Rep should work closely with the Full Time Officer who is the policy lead for research students.

2.3.4 Appointment of Department, PGT and PGR Reps

The Students' Association is responsible for working with the academic schools on the appointment of the Department, PGT and PGR academic reps. The Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement and the academic schools will be informed of the appointments of academic reps.

	Recruitment	Term of Office
Department Reps	Normally recruited at the end of Trimester B	Trimester A and Trimester B (September to May)
PGR Reps	Normally recruited at the end of Trimester A	Trimester B, C and A

|		(January to December)
PGT Reps	Normally recruited at the beginning of Trimester A	Trimester A, B and C (September to August)

2.3.5 Department, PGT and PGR Rep Training and Support

The Students' Association is responsible for providing training and support for the Department, PGT and PGR Reps. The Department and PGT Reps are invited to the Academic Rep Gatherings organised by the Students' Association in Trimesters A and B.

The PGT and PGR Rep receive expenses each Trimester and Department Reps receive expenses in Trimesters A and B. The expenses are provided by the University, with the payments facilitated by the Students' Association on behalf of the University. The current expenses are outlined within the academic rep role descriptions.

3. Students' Association Representation

The mission of GCU Students' Association is to represent and support GCU students to have the best university experience. The Students' Association is a student-led organisation with its own Governance Structure and Democracy Structure.
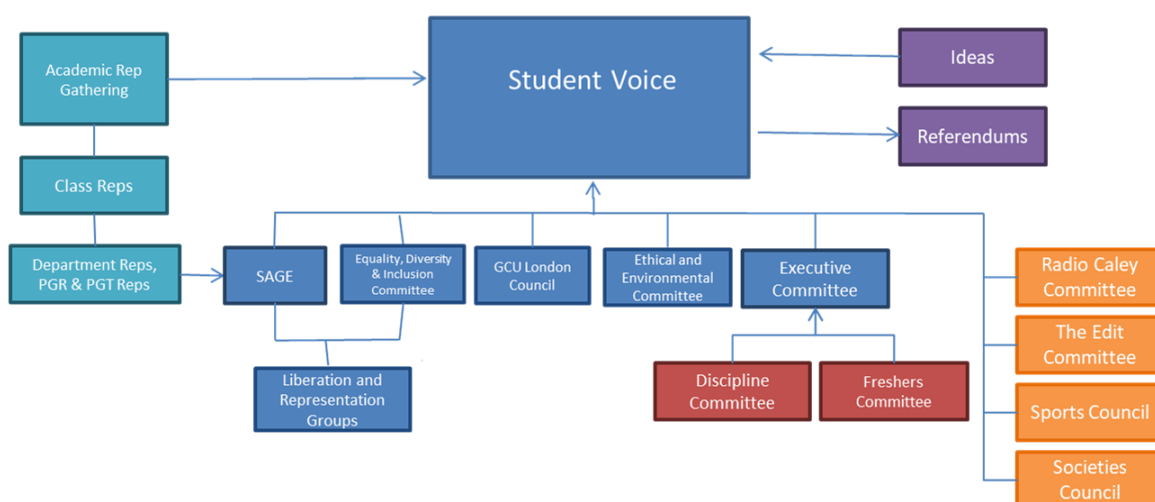
GCU Students' Association Democracy Structure

3.1 Student Voice

Student Voice is an elected body of students that ensures linkage between the student body and the Students' Association. It comprises the Full Time Officers, Department, PGT and PGR Reps, Representation Network Officers, Society and Sports Council Chairs, Magazine Editor, Radio Station Manager and ordinary members. Students can apply to join Student Voice and submit Ideas that can be debated and become the policy of the Students' Association. Student Voice holds the Full Time Officers to account for their manifesto commitments and the conduct of their political activities.

The Students' Association provides an induction for each Student Voice member and staff within the Students' Association provide ongoing support to Student Voice Officers.

These are the Student Voice Sub Committees:

- Executive Committee
- SAGE (Student Action Group for Engagement)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- Ethical and Environmental Committee
- GCU London Council
- Sports Council
- Societies Council
- Radio Caley Committee
- The Edit Committee

The remit of Student Voice and each Sub Committee and the remit for each Student Voice Officer can be found in the Students' Association By-Laws available from www.GCUstudents.co.uk/keyinformation.

Student Voice elects GCU students to sit on the following University committees:
- Senate (x5)
- Senate Disciplinary Committee (x5)
- Learning Enhancement Subcommittee (x1 UG, x1 PGT and x1 Open)
- Honorary Degrees Committee (x1)

The Department of Governance and Legal Services will be informed of the appointments of Student Voice members to Senate and Senate Standing Committees.

3.2 Full Time Officers

There are four Full Time Officers that are annually elected by the student body to represent students within the University, nationally through MPs, MSPs and the National Union of Students (NUS) and locally through Councilors and Community Councils. The Full Time Officers are the Executive Committee who consists of:

1. Student President
2. Vice President Glasgow School for Business and Society (VP GSBS)
3. Vice President School of Health and Life Sciences (VP SHLS)
4. Vice President School of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment (VP SCEBE)

Each Full Time Officer has a responsibility to work with the Dean, Vice Dean, Associate Deans and academic reps within their academic schools to improve the student learning experience within that school. These Full Time Officers, also known as Sabbatical Officers, negotiate their policy area responsibilities.

The current Full Time Officer Policy Areas can be found on www.GCUstudents.co.uk/executive.

3.3 Full Time Officer Elections

Any current GCU student can be a candidate and vote in the annual Full Time Officer Elections. The candidate with the most votes using the single transferable vote method has the opportunity to become Student President, and the three candidates with the next highest vote count become Vice Presidents. Each Vice President becomes the lead representative for

an academic school, with the Student President retaining responsibility working with the GCU London Officer for GCU London campus student experience.

3.4   GCU London Officer

Any GCU student studying a programme that is being delivered at GCU London can be a candidate to become the GCU London Officer and is elected by the students studying a programme that is being delivered at GCU London. The role of the GCU London Officer is to liaise with students, Class Reps and PGR Rep at GCU London to identify key areas to improve the wider student experience and raise any identified issues with the Campus Director and Senior Academic Lead for GCU London. The GCU London Officer is invited to attend the GCU London Campus Board and Student Experience Committee, is the Chair of GCU London Council and is an Observer on Student Voice meetings. The GCU London Officer should work closely with the Student President.

3.5   Key University Contacts

The nature of the Full Time Officer role means they have contact with a wide range of staff across all areas of the University. However, to support Officers in their liaison with staff who cover their specific policy areas key contacts are provided in Appendix 3.

Introductory meetings are arranged with key contacts as part of the induction process for new Full Time Officers. Additionally, the Full Time Officers meet regularly with senior university staff throughout the year:

Officer(s)	Meeting with Exec/Deans	Frequency
Student President	Principal	Monthly
Student President	Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Operations	Monthly
All Full Time Officers	Principal	Annually during Handover Period
All Full Time Officers	Students' Association-GCU Executive Joint Discussion Group Principal Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Operations PVC Research PVC Learning and Teaching University Secretary VP People and Student Wellbeing VP Global Engagement VP Strategy and Planning Chief Financial Officer Deans of the Schools Director of GCU London	Monthly

VP SCEBE	Dean of SCEBE	Monthly
VP GSBS	Dean of GSBS	Monthly
VP SHLS	Dean of SHLS	Monthly

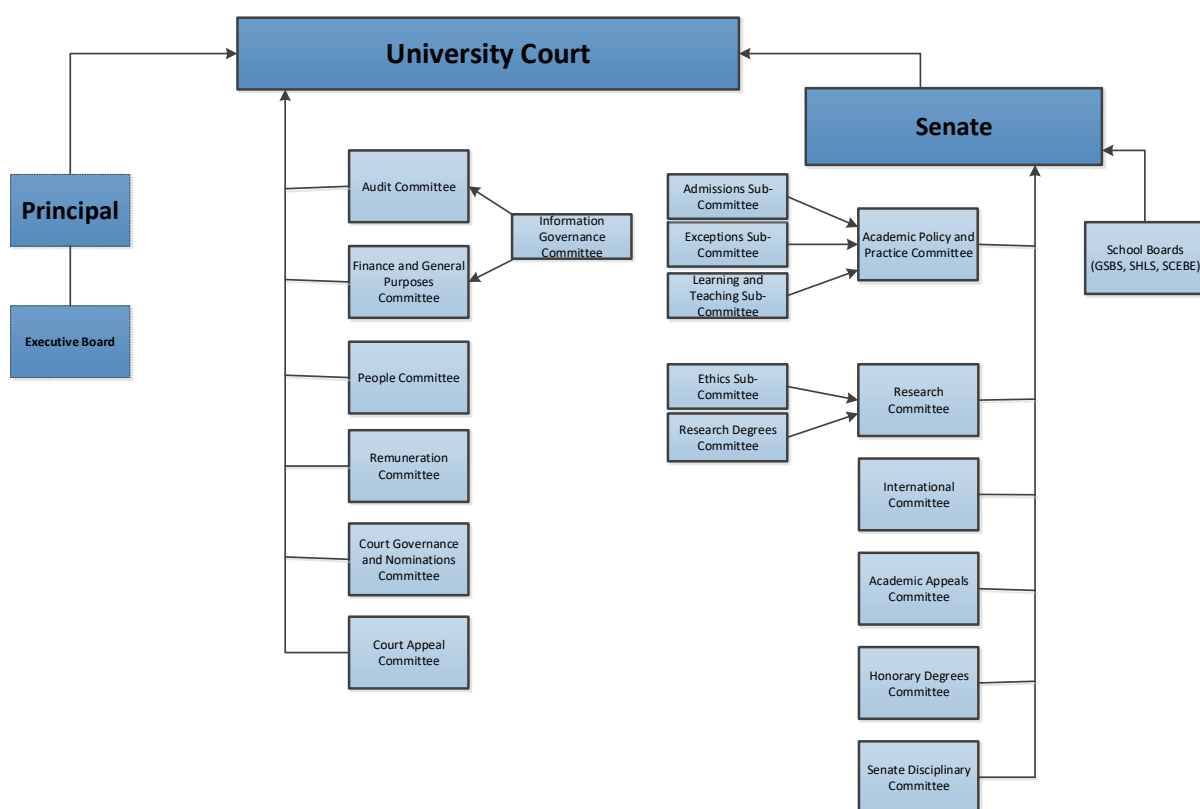**4.** **Student Representation on University Committees**

There is student representation on Court and Senate and their standing committees as follows:-

University Court

- Finance and General Purposes Committee
- People Committee
- Court Governance and Nominations Committee
- Remuneration Committee
- Audit Committee
- Court Appeal Committee

Senate
- Education Committee International Committee
- Learning Enhancement Subcommittee
- Research Committee
- Honorary Degrees Committee
- Senate Disciplinary Committee
- School Boards

GCU Governance Framework

Appendix 4 outlines all the standing committees where there is student representation within the University. Student representatives on committees are normally the Full Time Officers, academic reps, Student Voice Officers or elected Student Voice members.

5.   Student Engagement in Quality Processes

The Quality Code is a key reference point for UK higher education, protecting the public and student interest, and championing UK higher education's world-leading reputation for quality. It enables providers to understand what is expected of them and what to expect from each other. One of the Core Practices under Expectations for Quality sets out that *"the provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience"*.

5.1   Programme Approval and Reviews

There is a student panel member at Programme Approval and Programme Review events. Programme Approval events take place when a new academic programme is proposed for delivery. Programme Review events take place periodically for all current programmes, usually every five years, to assess the ongoing viability of a current programme and scrutinise any changes the programme team would like to make.

The Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement works with the Students' Association to select the student panel member. This is normally a Department, PGT or PGR Rep but can be a Full Time Officer or Student Voice Officer. For academic reps and Student Voice Officers this is a paid opportunity.

When academic programmes within the University are being reviewed, the panel aims to meet a group of current students and/or recent graduates to hear their views. Students and academic reps may also be invited to contribute to, or comment on, the documentation produced by the academic team in advance of an event.

5.2   Enhancement-Led Internal Subject Review (ELISR)

There is a student panel member on an Enhancement-Led Internal Subject Review (ELISR). An ELISR evaluates the student experience across a subject area (or Department) within the University.

The Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement works with the Students' Association to select the student panel member. This is normally a Full Time Officer but can be any Department, PGT or PGR academic reps. For academic reps this is a paid opportunity.

When subject areas (or Departments) within the University are being reviewed, the panel aims to meet a group of current students and/or recent graduates to hear their views. Students and academic reps may also be invited to contribute to, or comment on, the documentation produced by the academic team in advance of an event.

5.3   Thematic Review

Thematic Reviews form part of the University's normal quality enhancement and assurance processes. They provide an opportunity to conduct an institution-wide exploration of a major theme that may not be fully captured through ELISR or Programme Approval and Review. The format and scope of each Thematic Review is designed in relation to the theme being reviewed.

When undertaking a Thematic Review, the panel aims to meet with groups of students to hear their views. There is normally a student representative involved in undertaking the review, usually a Full Time Officer.

5.4   External Quality Review

All universities in Scotland undergo independent external reviews, carried out by a team of staff and students from other institutions, on behalf of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland. Until recently, this was known as Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR), which took place every five years.

GCU most recently participated in ELIR 4, which culminated in a Review Visit in November 2020. The panel concluded that the University has effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience. One of the commendations from the panel was the effective partnership working between the Students' Association, academic and student reps, and the University.

In September 2022, new guidance was published on quality arrangements for 2022/23 and 2023/24; this acts as the first stage of a new review cycle centred on the development of a Tertiary Quality Framework (TQF). Over these two academic sessions, each university will have an Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM) and undergo Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR). GCU's ILM tool place in November 2022 and our QESR visit is scheduled for 6 December 2023. The outcomes of QESR are based on evidence considered by the review team. This comprises documentation submitted by the University in advance of the visit, and discussion by way of meetings with staff and students on the day.

Further information about student engagement in academic quality processes can be found on the GCU Quality Assurance and Enhancement website.

6.   Student Surveys

Students have an opportunity to provide feedback through a range of mechanisms including a number of centrally administered internal and sector-wide surveys. The Student Survey and module Evaluation Policy outlines how students are surveyed within GCU and how students can provide feedback on their module, programme and wider student experience. The policy states that academic schools are expected to ensure that students are made aware that their feedback has been considered, and where appropriate actioned, as well as considered at the relevant Board or Committee, including Student Partnership Forums.

For more information on student feedback mechanisms, including how to provide meaningful; and constructive comments, please see our Student Guide to Giving Feedback.

7.   Annual Review

The Student Representation Structure will be annually reviewed and agreed between GCU Students' Association, the Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Department of Academic Development and Student Learning and the Department of Governance and Legal Service.

This Guide to Student Representation at GCU will be reviewed next in August 2024.