

Minutes of the 1st Caledonian Student Voice Meeting of Session 2022/23

Meeting held on Monday, 24th October 2022, in-person in NH208, at 17:00pm.

Sign In:

Present: Karolina Syrek (Chair); Robert Gallacher (ViceChair); Laiba Tareen (Student President); Chukwuma Egbujor (VP GSBS); John Mavileth (VP SCEBE); Jennifer Abali (VP SHLS); Hammad Amer (HA); Kanwal Chaudhry (KC); Sofia Congradyova (SC); Eben Crichton (EC); Lewechi Emeana (LE); River Gowans (RGO); David Grimm (DG); Zoe Ingram (ZI); Pranali Khatri (PK); Dorota Makaruk (DM); Jessica Michael-Odobi (JM); Aspen Milledge (AM); Chidozie Nwaigwe (CN); Chris Opoku (CO); Bolaji Oyewo (BO); Hemantkumar Parmar (HP); Anoop Pk (AP); Louisa Richardson (LR); Miranda Romero Torres (MT); Priyaben Solanki (PSO); Eilidh Stewart (ES); Daniel Williams (DW)

Absent: Hafsa Abu Baker (HAB); Victoria Aderoju (VA); Noemi Buracchi (NB); Sheryl Cunningham (SCU); Emma-Clare Darby (ED); Rachel-Louise Gibson (RG); Louise Hannah (LH); Alireza Mahdian-Amroabadi (AM); Carly McCallum (CM); Jayalakshmy Mololath (JMO); Jodie Murdoch (JMU); Aliyah Noel (AN); Sreejith Suresh (SS)

Apologies: Tarik Basbugoglu (TB); Ryan Brown (RB); Annamae Burrows (AB); Derthinn Bushell (DB); Stacey Cornish (SCO); Stefan Fisher (SF); Joshua Foster (JF); Daniele Giustini (DG); Joel Jacob (JJ); Liam Luporini (LL); Felix Oluwatobi Olowokere (FO); Jaikie Robertson (JR); Peter Scheibenhoffer (PS); Gordon Edwards (GE)

In attendance: Sara MacLean (Student Voice Team Leader), Philip Morton (Clerk),

Observers: Daniel Dunn (DD); Danny Gallacher (DG)

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 commenced at 17:00pm. The Chair welcomed all members to the first 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 that whilst they may ask the chair to speak they may not vote

2. Change to Committee Meeting Rules – use of Mentimeter

The Chair proposed a change to committee meeting rules to allow for the use of Mentimeter, an online voting platform, instead of raised hands as the meeting rules outline. It was asked if all members had access to a mobile device and use of the platform was explained. This change would be for Student Voice meetings for the duration of Academic Year 2022/23.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Change to Committee Meeting Rules.

Vote: For: 19; Against: 0; Abstention: 2. The Change to Committee Meeting Rules was approved.

3. Representation Officer Appointments

The Chair explained that as part of the redrafting of the Elections Schedule in 2021-22, a new process was introduced for Representation Networks and other Student Voice Officer roles that do not have an Officer after a nomination/voting period and a by-election nomination period.

A co-opted Officer must be voted on at the earliest meeting of Student Voice to confirm their office and as such, co-opted Officers proposed were brought forward to this meeting. Elections and by-elections for Representation Officers were held in the Representation Networks at the end of Trimester 2 of the last academic year. After this time, four positions were vacant. Throughout the summer, the Students' Association continued to try to recruit Officers for these positions.

The Executive Committee has co-opted the following students for these positions:

- Student Carers Officer – Stacey Cornish
- Disabled Students Officer – Chidozie Nwaigwe
- Mature and Part-Time Students Officer – Hammad Amer
- Women's Officer – Louisa Richardson

The Chair called for a vote on the Representation Officer Appointments.

Vote: For: 25; Against: 0; Abstention: 1. The Representation Officer Appointments were approved.

4. Fit to Sit

The Student President presented the Fit to Sit Policy for discussion, introduced by GCU for the academic year 2022/23 to replace the previous Mitigating Circumstances (MITS) process.

It was confirmed that any student undertaking exams can declare unfit to do so in exceptional circumstances with a submission to be made five days prior to an exam or two days afterwards.

The Student President highlighted that the Executive Committee campaigned in University Senate for submissions to be available five days prior and five days post exam although this was not successful. The campaigning of this change will continue as the Fit to Sit policy is reviewed and evaluated throughout the academic year.

It was clarified that we were able to win the Extenuating Circumstances clause in the policy allowing for a second re-sit attempt available under extreme circumstances. DG commented that there needs to be better communication to University staff as there has already been incidents in which students have been told that they will have two attempts to re-sit through Fit to Sit when they are only due one. The Student President further added that they are working with the University communications team to ensure information is passed to both staff and students on how Fit to Sit works and how and when it may be used.

It was further asked how Fit to Sit applications would be counted in the event of a withdrawal for reasons outside of a student's control. The Student President confirmed that the policy will be reviewed after this academic year for any changes necessary and that the Full Time Officer team are dedicated to rectify any issues with the policy in favour of student needs.

5. Full Time Officers Team and Individual Objectives

The Full Time Officer team presented their team and individual objectives for the academic year 2022/23 and invited the Student Voice members to ask any questions.

DW asked Vice President GSBS, in relation to a GCU App and digital student card, if there would be restricted login details for students that wish to be data conscious. Vice President GSBS replied that the initial discussions on integration and implementation are still underway although every means of safety and ease of use for students whilst retaining strict data protection is being considered.

DG commented that the Wi-Fi in the University can be temperamental and slow which may need to be assessed. It must also be considered that not every student may have a mobile device or data for internet use. Security issues were further raised on network use.

It was further acknowledged from Vice President GSBS that policy is still to be drafted and that the use of a physical card option as well as digital is to be consulted to ensure the best interests of students who do not have access to a mobile device. Vice President SCEBE commented that the implementation of digital student cards would be an excellent addition to our green impact campaign to reduce plastic on campus.

DG commented that Vice President SHLS's objective on raising travel allowance for SHLS students on placement is an extremely positive initiative and will allow for students not to be paying as much out of their own pocket in-line with other sectors. The Vice Chair asked if these travel scholarships would only be available to select students on placements or if it would be available to other groups and SC asked if this travel allowance would also be available for international students. Vice President SHLS confirmed that, as this is a SHLS school based objective, currently this would be for those students on placement, they also noted that they are campaigning for this across the board for all students on placement whether home or international.

The Chair called for a vote on the Full Time Officers Team and Individual Objectives.

Vote: For: 25; Against: 0; Abstention: 0. The Full Time Officers Team and Individual Objectives were approved.

6. Societies Policy Changes

Vice President SHLS presented the Societies Policy Changes on behalf of the Society Council Chair who were unavailable for the meeting.

The policy was to be made clearer by refining the Societies council positions and clarifying their roles. It was noted that the Chair would remain the same (defined in schedule 2 of the Students' Association constitution). The new titles proposed were:

- Change of Head of Memberships to Head of New Societies
- Head of Communications to stay the same
- Head of Logistics change to Head of Events
- Combine Head of Academic, Cultural and Faith, and Hobbies, Politics and Social Societies to create 2 Society Liaison's
- Introduce a Head of Fundraising
- Introduce Vice Chair as an additional committee role taken on by an existing council member

The clarification on each of these roles may be found in the Society Policy Changes cover sheet and paper.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Societies Policy Changes.

Vote: For: 24; Against: 0; Abstention: 1. The Societies Policy Changes were approved.

7. Ideas

The Chair noted that each Idea needed a vote for approval. Due to time constraints, only the top four Ideas (based on number of votes submitted through the website) would be discussed at the meeting.

- Free Gym Memberships for all GCU Students

A statement sent in by the proposer was read aloud to Student Voice outlining their idea for free gym memberships for all GCU students. The rationale behind this idea is to make the gym accessible to benefit physical and mental health, and to alleviate financial concerns during the cost of living crisis in which students may not be able to afford a gym membership or rely on travel to gyms outside of the university.

RGO commented that, as minuted from the previous meeting of Student Voice, this topic had been discussed previously and Student Voice amended the idea to become a social prescription available on a case-by-case basis through wellbeing services. DG added that in terms of the cost of living crisis, that other factors need to be considered such as, if every student was to receive a free gym pass, how will the university pay for this, how will the ARC generate income and which resources will lose funding due to this subsidy? It was further commented that there would be students that could benefit from this service due to low income but there are other students that can afford the gym membership and would use the facilities regardless of whether it was free or not.

The Vice Chair mentioned that a previously attended college offered free gym memberships on a social prescription as well as members of Student Voice and Class Reps as gratitude for their university commitment. DW asked that rather than provide a free membership to every student, if students could qualify for a membership based on a cost of living threshold for fairness in the ability to use the service.

The Vice Chair proposed an improvement that free gym memberships should not be available to all students but to extend the current standing policy (which says that the Students' Association stance is that it be offered free to students under a social prescribing model from the Wellbeing centre or Advice Centre) to Student Voice members, Class Reps and other roles that directly benefit GCU. DG and CN added the improvement that free gym memberships should be provided to those who have applied for a discretionary fund due to this being an income based assessment.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the changed improvement for free gym memberships for those who have applied for a discretionary fund as well as Student Voice members and Class Reps.

Vote: For: 21; Against: 2; Abstentions: 1. The revised improvement was approved.

HA added an improvement for international students to be applicable for free gym memberships due to higher fees for studying at GCU.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the changed improvement for free gym memberships for international students.

Vote: For: 20; Against: 1; Abstentions: 5. The revised improvement was approved.

The full idea proposed with revised improvements is for free gym memberships to be made available to those that have applied for a discretionary fund, Student Voice members, Class Reps and international students.

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

Vote: For: 20; Against: 2; Abstentions: 2. The Idea was approved. **Action: Vice President SCEBE.**

- Access to Microwaves and Kettles in Student Common Areas

A statement sent in by the proposer was read aloud to Student Voice outlining their idea for access to microwaves and kettles in student common areas. The rationale behind this idea is to help aid students during the cost of living crisis who may not be spending as much time in their accommodation due to rise in financial costs. It was commented that there was a microwave previously installed in the Students' Association which was removed due to misuse. It was suggested that this was due to inappropriate placement and lack of maintenance, instead proposing that these be installed in the canteen areas of the George Moore building and several other areas on campus to provide the ability to heat up food as providing hot water, providing a positive impact on health and finances.

Vice President SHLS agreed with this idea for student common areas and an appropriate position in the Students' Association.

RGO commented that this is their fourth year in Student Voice and that this idea has been proposed with no implementation due to health and safety conflicts although the availability of kettles would be great. CN added that microwaves could also pose a fire risk but kettles would be a positive addition particularly during winter months. DW further noted that although microwaves are a great idea, there is a large potential for misuse. As well as this, people may microwave food in different ways, meaning that contamination is unavoidable, making these unsafe and dangerous for use by students with allergies.

The Vice Chair proposed an improvement to separate microwaves and kettles as two separate ideas. It was also added that it would likely be safer and more fitting to implement hot water taps as opposed to kettles in common areas.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the changed improvement for hot water taps to be installed in student common areas.

Vote: For: 20; Against: 3; Abstentions: 2. The revised improvement was approved.

It was further added that the microwave idea should be improved to be available in catering areas where staff could heat up student's food on their behalf.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the changed improvement for microwaves to be installed in catering areas on campus for staff to heat up meals for students.

Vote: For: 19; Against: 4; Abstentions: 2. The revised improvement was approved.

The full proposal with revised improvements is for this idea to be split into two ideas; for hot water taps to be installed in student common areas and for microwaves to be available in catering areas on campus, used by staff to heat up student meals.

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

Vote: For: 24; Against: 3; Abstentions: 0. The Idea was approved. **Action: Vice President GSBS.**

- Remove Calories from Menus

ES championed this idea on the proposer's behalf. It was commented that calories on menus can be disastrous to those with eating and food disorders and that if someone would like to view calories, this should be provided on request but not shown as standard.

AMI clarified that there is an issue with as it is UK law calorie information needs to be provided but could perhaps be a separate menu. DG commented that although this may be UK law, that there are workarounds such as the previously mentioned idea of a second menu. ES further added that calories have been added on menus in other establishments in an almost unreadable size or font. LE added

that from another angle, people monitoring calories for specific dietary and health needs should have the option to request a menu with this information as opposed to simply making it unreadable.

It was added that the standard menu could omit calories whereas a QR code menu could be available with the information or a separate calorie menu available on request.

It was asked if the UK law allows for a hidden display of calories, such as it only being available on request. The Chair explained that there is no specification on how this must be provided.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the changed improvement for two separate menus, the standard menu to omit calorie information and the second menu to be available on request as well as a QR code that can provide this information.

Vote: For: 19; Against: 5; Abstentions: 2. The revised improvement was approved.

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

Vote: For: 17; Against: 6; Abstentions: 2. The Idea was approved. **Action: Vice President GSBS.**

- 24hour Library Access before Dissertation Submission

DG championed this idea on the proposer's behalf. It was commented that in fourth year you need to be on placement on many courses as well as finding time to study out-with 'normal' study hours. It was further pointed out that some students may not have the ability to study in their accommodation or need somewhere warm to go which can benefit overall mental health.

RGO asked in relation to this being specific to dissertation submissions, that dissertations are due all year round depending on course, so would 24hour access be all year round or is this specific to the primary deadlines of the student majority. CN added that this should be all year round as some students find working at nights better for them as well as these services being provided elsewhere.

KC proposed the improvement that the library should have 24hour access from Monday – Friday throughout the year as well as an increase in opening hours at the weekend for those wishing to study in the evenings.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the changed improvement for 24hour access to the library Monday to Friday as well as increasing the opening hours on Saturday and Sunday to 10pm all year round.

Vote: For: 27; Against: 0; 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: 24; Against: 0; Abstentions: 0. The Idea was approved. **Action: Vice President GSBS.**

8. Elections Rules

The Deputy Returning Officer presented the proposed amendments to the Students' Association election rules based on feedback from candidates and stakeholders, learning from previous years and what the overall sector is doing.

Staff related rules (as opposed to candidate) were removed from the elections rules and added to the elections schedule. References to GCU Covid-19 health and safety guidance were also removed.

The biggest change highlighted was the reduction in candidate expenses from £60 to £50 and for the removal of the £30 non-reimbursed expense.

DG asked for clarification on the non-reimbursed expense. The Deputy Returning Officer replied that this is an extra expense where a candidate can use up to £30 of their own money that they do not receive back. It was further noted that due to the rising cost of living that this is not fair across all candidates as some will not be able to afford an additional spend.

AMI asked why there is a reduction in general candidate expenses. The Deputy Returning Officer commented that the Students' Association are reducing paper use to promote environmental sustainability and that the bulk of expenses often gets used for flyer printing that don't always get used. Further to using the budget more environmentally wisely, it was acknowledged that there has been budget cuts in elections as a whole as well having an increased number of candidates. It was noted that we would need to cut the candidate budget or cut the budget on promoting the vote and elections overall which we established from last year to be a point of focus for this academic year.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Election Rules.

Vote: For: 22; Against: 4; Abstention: 0. The Election Rules were approved.

9. Full Time Officer Reports

The Student President invited Student Voice members to ask the Full Time Officers questions about their written reports.

There were no questions or comments raised to the Student President, VP SCEBE, VP SHLS or VP GSBS regarding their reports submitted.

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

Vote: For: 22; Against: 0; Abstention: 4. The Full Time Officer Reports were approved.

10. Student Voice Officer Reports

The Chair asked if any Student Officers wish to present a verbal report or update to Student Voice members.

There were no reports, updates, questions or comments raised in relation to the Student Voice Officers Reports.

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

Vote: For: 19; Against: 1; Abstention: 6. The Student Voice Officer Reports were approved.

11. Clubs and Societies Proposed for Affiliation

Due to the Societies Chair being unable to attend the meeting, Vice President SHLS presented the list of new clubs and societies seeking affiliation to the Students' Association. This list included:

- Astronomy Society
- Motorsports Society
- GISA Society
- Risk and Finance Society
- Art Society
- Believers' LoveWorld Society

DG asked for clarification on what Believers' LoveWorld society was. Vice President SHLS confirmed that this is a faith-based society. The Chair added that their objectives are to build a happier world with love, inspire students, help young people find and understand Jesus and to spread the love of God.

RGO acknowledged the Societies Chair's note on the cover sheet with concerns about outside community group involvement with the setting up of the society and questioned whether this would be a student-led group. The staff member in the meeting confirmed that to become a society, they must have ten students involved and signed up to ensure for it to be student-led.

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

Vote: For: 20; Against: 1; Abstention: 5. The Clubs and Societies Proposed for Affiliation were approved.

12. External Affiliations

The Student President listed the current list of external affiliations that need approved annually for the Students' Association to remain affiliated as;

- National Union of Students (NUS)
- British Universities and College Sports (BUCS)
- Scottish Student Sport (SSS)
- National Nightline Association (NNA)
- Advice UK

BO asked in terms of the affiliation fees, if this is what the Students' Association pay to be affiliated or if this is paid to us. It was confirmed that this is the fee that the Students' Association pay to affiliate. DG added an explanation that NUS links us to all other affiliated universities, campaigns and opportunities as well as allowing us to seek their support with our own campaigns and issues. It was explained by a Nightline committee member that this fee is used for electricity, phone bills etc. to keep the service alive for use.

The Chair called for a vote to approve all of the External Affiliations.

Vote: For: 20; Against: 0; Abstention: 3. The External Affiliations were approved.

13. Minutes of Student Voice Meeting on 4th April 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 04th April 2022.

There were no corrections or comments added.

The Chair called for a vote to approve the Minutes of Student Voice Meeting on 04th April 2022.

Vote: For: 5; Against: 1; Abstention: 0. The Minutes of Student Voice Meeting on 04th April 2022 were approved.

14. Elections

The Vice 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 we need active representations but do not wish it to impact studies. Members who are or have been involved with each committee were asked to speak about the role.

The Student President gave an overview of representing the student body at Senate. It was commented that Senate discuss then decide on policy passing meaning that the elected student will have an active role in policy consultation. The Chair added that it is important for students to raise their voice and speak up as it is here where decisions that may directly affect students are made.

DG informed Student Voice on the Senate Disciplinary Committee and how they have the power to grant students exam re-sits, overturn appeals and also suspend studies. It was noted that the Senate Disciplinary Committee ethos is in favour of what is best for students although every presented case is different.

RGO spoke on the Learning Enhancement Subcommittee, how the elected student would work with staff at all levels of the university to discuss student issues, the enhancement of learning and the impacts this may have on students. These are active consultations before being raised at senate. The Chair added that if there are issues affecting all students, that this is the exact place to raise and discuss the matters.

DG described the Honorary Degrees Committee and the discussions held on possible nominations for honorary degrees.

RGO explained the role within the Equality and Diversity Committee and the commitment to developing equality and diversity policy and campaigning matters relating to Equality and Diversity.

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

- Senate Student Representative (4 positions):
Aspen Milledge, Hammad Amer, Chidozie Nwaigwe, Bolaji Oyewo, Kanwal Chaudhry
- Senate Disciplinary Committee Student Representative (3 positions):
Aspen Milledge, River Gowans, Jessica Michael-Odobi, Robert Gallacher
- Learning Enhancement Subcommittee Student Representative (1 Undergraduate, 1 Postgraduate and 1 Open position):
Kanwal Chaudhry (Undergraduate), Jessica Michael-Odobi (Postgraduate)
These positions were duly elected.
- Honorary Degrees Committee (1 position):
Kanwal Chaudhry
This position was duly elected.
- Equality and Diversity Committee Open Place (2 positions):
River Gowans, Jessica Michael-Odobi, Lewechi Emeana

Before progressing with candidate contesting, the Chair asked for approval to raise the meeting time guillotine by 30 minutes.

The Chair called for a vote to raise the meeting time guillotine by 30 minutes.

Vote: For: 9; Against: 13; Abstentions: 0. The raising of the meeting time guillotine by 30 minutes was not approved.

BO acknowledged the understanding that Senate is the highest decision making body within the university and wishes to champion students and their perspectives.

CN commented that they have previously been part of Senate in another university as well as involvement in assisting many students on campus. They would like to join Senate to give the best help possible in supporting and developing students.

AMI acknowledged their application for two positions. As a Department Rep, they have had extensive experience dealing with student feedback and would like to continue this at Senate level. As they

work with Nightline, they would like to join the Senate Disciplinary Committee to help others seek a second chance and show compassion for those in need.

HA noted that they are a mature, part-time student who would like to be involved in Senate to know how university decisions are made and contribute to policy discussions.

KC stated that they are currently a Department Rep for biomedical science as well as previous being a class rep. With this experience, they are very familiar with the level of university meetings and would like to make further positive change by being involved in these meetings.

RGO has had many years of Student Voice experience as well as previously being the LGBT+ Officer and being involved previously with the Senate Disciplinary Committee. They feel that their previous experience would be beneficial.

JM expressed how they would like to stand up for those that may not be able to express themselves as they know what it is like to not have someone to speak up and provide support.

LE wants to bring their previous experience to the Equality and Diversity Committee to ensure that all students' interests are protected.

The Vice Chair would like to continue their place in the Senate Disciplinary Committee having previous experience in the role.

Due to the meeting ending as the extended guillotine did not pass, voting on these positions will occur through the use of an online voting platform with voting opening on Wednesday 26th October at 10am and closing on Thursday 27th October at 12pm. Notification of results will be supplied by email.

The Chair thanked all members of Student Voice for their attendance and engagement at the first Student Voice meeting of 2022/23.

The meeting was concluded at 19:00pm.