



Student Action Group for Engagement (S.A.G.E.)

21st February 2018 (13:00 – 13:50) in NH209

Present:

Chris Daisley, VP SEBE (**Chair**)
Alan Adamson, E School Officer
Kirstin Bouma, SHLS PGT Representative
Susan Docherty, M&PT Students' Officer
Brendan Owen, LS School Officer
Alexandra Radoescu, BM School Officer
Tamsin Ross, GSBS PGT Representative
John Templeton, NCH School Officer
Keir Thomson, PSWAHS School Officer
Lesley McAleavy, GCU Policy and Development Officer

Apologies:

Callum Smith, CCIS School Officer

Absent:

Olubunmi Ajayi, SEBE PGT Representative
James Chilembwe, International Students' Officer
Maura Daly, SHLS Research Student Lead
Rachel Hewitt, GSBS Research Student Lead
Sennan Mattar, SEBE Research Student Lead
Ross Wilson, LEAR School Officer

In Attendance:

Kevin Campbell, Student President
Yetunde Ogedengbe, VP SHLS
Rachel Simpson, VP GSBS
Gary Kyle, Student Rep Assistant
Paul Stalker, Student Voice Co-ordinator
Avril Williams, GCU Student Wellbeing Manager

1. Approval of S.A.G.E. Minutes (13/12/2017)

The Chair made reference to the minutes of the previous S.A.G.E. meeting (13/12/2017) and asked for all those who attended that meeting to approve whether this was an accurate reflection or not. The minutes were approved without further amendment required.

2. “Fitness to Study” Policy

The GCU Student Wellbeing Manager introduced herself to the committee and discussed that, as part of her role, she has oversaw the implementation of multiple wellbeing policies with the latest being the “Fitness to Study” policy currently undergoing consultation before formal implementation.

It was noted by the LS School Officer that this policy was brought before the latest SHLS School Board meeting (16/02/2018). The LS School Officer went on to state that he had concerns with the currently proposed “Fitness to Study” policy acting out-with, rather than alongside, the existing “Fitness to Practice” policy. Reassurance was provided that this is not intended to be a formal, disciplinary process but rather a support mechanism for students. Concerns were raised regarding the language used within the current policy document but reassurance was provided that this policy is designed to help support students by finding a solution that is beneficial for their ongoing health and studies; this may mean that students require their studies to be put on hold whilst their physical/mental wellbeing is being reviewed; after which, students return to their studies rather than being removed. LS School Officer asked for clarification that the reporting mechanism would be via teaching staff to Programme Leader to Wellbeing staff. The GCU Student Wellbeing Manager confirmed that would be the case.

This policy is for the use of Wellbeing staff and responsibility will not rest with academic staff to determine whether students are or are not fit to study. This will take into consideration clusters of behavioural changes rather than isolated incidents. The GCU Student Summit on 26/02/2018 will explore how this process can be implemented in a more active way as part of the overall Mental Health Action Plan.

The Chair invited VP SHLS to discuss the GCU Students’ Association response to the current policy paper. VP SHLS articulated to the committee that this is a good idea and ensures that students are supported across their learning experience. The Chair stated that further guidance is required and that the GCU Students’ Association executive committee are trying to understand the specific details of this “Fitness to Study” process before making a formal decision. The Advice Centre within GCU Students’ Association has provided guidance and the Chair will share this with GCU Wellbeing staff. The Student President stated that there were two key areas of concern: the hostile/disciplinary language used within the documentation alongside the composition of the “Fitness to Study” panel in that there was no GCU Students’ Association representative on the proposed panel. As Student President, it would not be within the students’ best interests to endorse a policy that does not ensure that the student voice is fairly represented in a process that has a significant effect upon the overall learning experience. The Student President urged the university to take this into consideration.

The E School Officer asked when this policy is predicted to be formally implemented with the response being that it is hopeful this will be implemented in summer 2018 but this is subject to further changes/feedback during this consultation period.

VP GSBS sought clarity from VP SHLS as to whether the “Fitness to Study” policy had been brought before any committee within GCU Students’ Association as it was stated that this project was being oversaw by VP SHLS as part of their Full Time Officer remit. VP SHLS stated that this had not been presented to any committee and VP GSBS requested confirmation whether any student(s) had been consulted for their opinions on this proposed policy. VP SHLS stated this had not happened. VP GSBS stated that she had to circulate information to the Advice Centre and GCU Wellbeing because nothing had been communicated previously. VP SHLS stated that she was unaware of when committees (that she is not policy lead for) take place and therefore had no opportunity to present this to the wider student body.

The Chair welcomed future discussions to return to the S.A.G.E. committee when necessary.

3. Full Time Officer Update

- Student President Update

The Student President made reference to the previous meeting and that the academic advising project was still ongoing. A survey conducted across GCU staff had been carried out alongside a student focus group. Both of these feedback mechanisms have relayed similar information and this will be communicated back to the university for approval.

Additionally, the Student President, VP SEBE and the CCIS School Officer have been approved as student reviewers for the ELIR4 panel. This is great news because, as far as the Student President is aware, this is the first time that GCU students have been selected for this process.

- VP GSBS Update

The GCU Student Summit will take place on 26/02/2018 and VP GSBS emphasised the importance for students to attend this event. The event will review the report on the Mental Health Partnership Agreement (which has been provided in draft format to Student Voice and will soon be presented to the GCU Students’ Association’s Equality & Diversity committee and university committees) and encourage students to facilitate discussion on this. VP GSBS’s work on free and accessible sanitary products will be launched on a trial basis over March and April 2018.

VP GSBS is also in the process of planning a GSBS Academic Rep Gathering.

- *VP SHLS Update*

VP SHLS has been planning the SHLS Academic Rep Gathering. Additionally, VP SHLS has been working on formalising volunteer recognition on student transcripts with meetings taking place with the GCU Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to explore the potential in facilitating this.

VP SHLS has also been continuing work on embedding intercultural education into programmes with modules being implemented across all three Schools. Meetings will take place in March to review the progress of this.

- *VP SEBE Update*

VP SEBE and the Dean for SEBE have met with SEBE Class Reps and emphasised the purpose/importance of the National Student Survey. Additionally, VP SEBE has been working on implementing the Postgraduate Social Space on the 4th floor of the Saltire Centre. Finally, VP SEBE has been working on promoting the Teaching Awards.

4. Academic Quality & Development Update

The GCU Policy and Development Officer informed the committee that the handbooks and relevant documentation for student engagement on quality panels have been uploaded onto the GCU website and that hopefully it is accessible for students but, if not, the GCU Policy and Development Officer is happy to accept feedback and make any necessary changes. Additionally, the student partnership agreement has been uploaded onto the GCU website and this information will be circulated.

The Chair asked for an update on Programme Approval and Review Board panels and was informed that there were no dates for Trimester B but as soon as there is, this will be communicated to the appropriate people.

5. GCU Student Summit (26/02/2018)

The Student President echoed comments made in VP GSBS' earlier update (agenda point three) encouraging students to attend and help facilitate the GCU Student Summit event taking place on 26/02/2018. Both the LS School Officer and the Mature and Part-Time Students' Officer volunteered to assist at the event.

The GCU Policy and Development Officer stated that last year's event was very successful in terms of feedback provided and measurable outcomes so by presenting draft policies to students, they are able to shape them in a way that ensures beneficial outcomes for student wellbeing. The Student President added that no other institution, to his knowledge, had held a university-wide event such as this specifically focusing on mental health and

therefore this will be a positive step forward for the institution. VP GSBS highlighted the various ways this event has been advertised via Radio Caley, social media, university e-mails, etc. VP SHLS also added that GCU Learn has a prominent article uploaded also.

6. Teaching Awards

The deadline for submissions for this year's Teaching Awards will be at noon on Friday 13th April 2018. The Chair stressed the importance of ensuring that students are recognising teaching excellence across the university. This year, a new category has been added for "Research Student Supervision and Support Teaching Award".

A lot of promotional material has been made available for students to take and distribute to their peers. The E School Officer pointed out that students need to be aware that some of last year's posters may still be present within the university and, if so, they need to be replaced with this year's posters.

7. Student Elections

The Student Voice Co-ordinator is the Deputy Returning Officer for this year's student elections. He highlighted some relevant election rules in regards to sending out information to Class Reps, etc. and what could/could not be done. Additional details regarding elections can be found on the GCU Students' Association website.

8. AOCB

- NUS Motions

The Chair informed the committee that the GCU Students' Association executive committee had submitted a motion to NUS Scotland regarding the UK Quality Code review (the policy which governs practices by universities/colleges in terms of quality of learning and teaching). Currently, the new review does not equally consider all four nations within the UK. The motion, submitted by the executive committee, has been endorsed by Student Voice. The motion implores a reconsideration of the policy to ensure that an equal and robust quality enhancement approach is incorporated across the UK higher/further education institutions and, in particular, the best practices adopted by Scottish institutions are not referred to as "supplementary practices" but rather "core practices" as, currently, this suggests an element of flexibility regarding quality enhancement that should not be encouraged.

The GCU Policy and Development Officer pointed out that this new Quality Code is still a proposal and is yet to be officially ratified. The QAA have sent out information to ask that the policy is reviewed. The Student President added that NUS Scotland have a limited influence regarding the Quality Code review as this is something NUS UK have to endorse;

however, with a unified disapproval across the country, it is hoped that NUS UK will have to act upon this in the best interests of all UK nations.

The Chair agreed that a more forceful stance is required to ensure that a proactive response is achieved and further discussion from the committee regarding this matter would be welcomed.

- *Volunteer Recognition*

VP SHLS informed the committee that, as part of a shared Full Time Officer objective, the role description for Class Reps was undergoing a review. As part of this review, the current Class Rep Certificate is being redesigned and the GCU Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) has agreed to provide a signature alongside the existing signature provided by the Student President.

However, to continue to build on this theme of volunteer recognition, VP SHLS is exploring the possibility of Class Reps, School Officers, Wellbeing volunteers, Student Media volunteers, *etc.* all having formal recognition of their contributions by having this added either to their Higher Education Achievement Report (H.E.A.R.) or presented alongside a student's academic transcript.

The next meeting for S.A.G.E. is scheduled to take place on 21st March 2018 (13:00-14:30)