



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

**13<sup>th</sup> December 2017 (13:00 – 13:45) in NH209**

### **Present:**

Kevin Campbell, Student President (**Acting Chair**)  
Alan Adamson, E School Officer  
Maura Daly, SHLS Research Student Lead  
Susan Docherty, M&PT Students' Officer  
Brendan Owen, LS School Officer  
Alexandra Radoescu, BM School Officer  
Callum Smith, CCIS School Officer  
John Templeton, NCH School Officer  
Keir Thomson, PSWAHS School Officer  
Ross Wilson, LEAR School Officer  
Lesley McAleavy, GCU Policy and Development Officer

### **Apologies:**

Olubunmi Ajayi, SEBE PGT Representative  
Kristin Bouma, SHLS PGT Representative  
Chris Daisley, VP SEBE (**Chair**)  
Rachel Hewitt, GSBS Research Student Lead  
Tamsin Ross, GSBS PGT Representative

### **Absent:**

Idris Akormadu, International Students' Officer

### **In Attendance:**

Yetunde Ogedengbe, VP SHLS  
Rachel Simpson, VP GSBS  
Nicola Andrew, Head of Academic Quality  
Gary Kyle, Student Rep Assistant  
Paul Stalker, Student Voice Co-ordinator

The Student President, as Acting Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **1. Approval of S.A.G.E. Minutes (01/11/2017)**

The Student President made reference to the minutes of the previous S.A.G.E. meeting (01/11/2017) and asked for all those who attended that meeting to approve whether this was an accurate reflection or not. The minutes were approved.

## **2. Full Time Officer Update**

### **- *Student President Update***

The Student President and the GCU Policy and Development Officer have met to discuss programme approval and review boards (which the Student President had participated in as a student panel member). They are keen on continuing to have students sit on these panels to ensure that the student voice is taken into consideration when approving or reviewing programme structures; in that it best reflects the needs and expectations of students' educational and career aspirations.

The GCU Policy and Development Officer thanked everyone at GCU Students' Association for their ongoing assistance and added to the Student President's update by stating that all Trimester A panels had now concluded with a student panel member on each one. Initial feedback from both students and staff appear to be positive but further analysis will take place at a later date. All student panel members engaged well with the process and their input was invaluable which emphasises the continued importance of having students engage within these quality enhancement processes.

Additionally, the Student President has also successfully encouraged Senate to consult S.A.G.E. regarding new policies prior to their ratification. The next step is to ensure that both Senate and S.A.G.E. work in partnership across a wide spectrum of matters.

Finally, working with the other Full Time Officers, the Student President is continuing to work on reviewing the academic representational structures; alongside working on the academic advisor project with VP SEBE. From January 2018, the Student President is keen on organising focus groups to gather feedback from students.

### **- *VP GSBS Update***

VP GSBS continued on the discussion of the academic representational structure review and that it is going to be wide-managing (the Student President will be reviewing the FTO model; VP SEBE will be reviewing Postgraduate Rep model; VP GSBS will be reviewing the School Officer model; VP SHLS will be reviewing the Class Rep model).

VP GSBS has also been involved in the preparation for both a GSBS Postgraduate Careers Fair (with workshops that will cover LinkedIn, CVs, etc.) and the 2018 Student Experience Summit (which will focus on mental health and student wellbeing; which is one of VP GSBS's policy remit areas). Additionally, VP GSBS worked with the Student Rep Assistant and the Student Voice Co-ordinator on promoting and delivering the Trimester A "Academic Rep Gathering" that took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017.

- *VP SHLS Update*

VP SHLS is focusing on reviewing the intercultural skills taught to students on modules across the university and the skills/benefits this education will provide. There are already components of intercultural education embedded within Master's degree programmes. The GCU Policy and Development Officer queried if this was building upon a pre-existing structure or whether this was a new model altogether. VP SHLS said that it was already existing but there is potential for further improvement and to embed this intercultural education module across all programmes (the benefits for this being that the university is increasingly more keen on promoting internationalisation; and many employers are seeking graduates who have knowledge and experience of interacting with multiple cultures as this promotes collegiality, professionalism and global awareness).

VP SHLS has proposed the introduction of a working group on this matter. The PSWAHS School Officer asked if there is scope to expand this awareness of societal diversity by incorporating all liberation groups into this. VP SHLS agreed and VP GSBS added that there have been elements added to the "Student Leaders Programme" (delivered by GCU Students' Association) such as "Unconscious Bias" or workshops where keynote speakers from specific liberation backgrounds (B.M.E. and/or Women) discussed leadership, diversity and inclusion. However, this suggestion could be explored further.

### **3. Academic Quality & Development Update**

The Head of Academic Quality made reference to the "Enhancement Themes – GCU Institutional Plan 2017-18" paper that went through the university working group for Enhancement Themes to improve the student experience. VP SEBE and the Head of Academic Quality are working together on developing a proposal on how the university will specifically address the new enhancement themes launched in September 2017. Data will be gathered from various sources (such as the National Student Survey, Annual Monitoring, etc.)

The Student President expressed his opinion that this was an exciting opportunity for students to get involved in and asked the S.A.G.E. committee members if they had any initial feedback on this matter. The LS School Officer asked if this enhancement theme project would incorporate GCU New York. Currently this is not the case but the proposal is still in early stages of development.

The data used for this enhancement theme proposal will be both qualitative and quantitative data with comparisons being made across the sector based upon multiple data sources. Hopefully, this will have a positive influence on other areas such as progressions stats (such as the National Student Survey). The university is keen to get students involved

and the Head of Academic Quality expressed her interest in returning to S.A.G.E. meetings periodically to provide updates on this matter and discuss things further with students.

The GCU Policy and Development Officer had no further update to provide.

#### **4. UK Quality Code Review & Consultation**

The Student President explained that the Quality Code is what governs quality standards across all of the UK further and higher education institutions and is currently undergoing a review process which will introduce dramatic changes to the current structures and how institutions operate. The Student President went on to highlight concerns raised throughout the ongoing review process and the lack of focus given to institutions in Scotland and Wales alongside concerns over how quality assurance will be measured under the new proposal.

The review currently uses languages such as “supplementary principles” which suggests a level of flexibility in quality assurance practices which ought to be central to the core functioning of educational institutions and therefore not optional. The Student President reaffirmed the belief that students must be treated as partners in their education rather than consumers and these similar viewpoints have been echoed by other colleges and universities across the country.

The LEAR School Officer asked if GCU Students’ Association could lobby the Scottish government to intervene on this review process so that the views of Scottish institutions are taken into consideration. The Student President responded that they would have to wait and see what happens next. The LS School Officer asked how quality processes differ in Scottish institutions compared to English institutions. The Student Voice Co-ordinator made reference to English institutions being heavily measured through quality assurance whereas Scottish institutions focus more on quality enhancement. Due to organisational shifts across the UK, it is difficult to get a unified approach to quality processes. The Student President stated that there may be additional influences through the increase in privately-funded universities. Whilst all universities did not deliver a coordinated response to this quality review process, they have delivered similar views within their individual responses and this matter will be given further consideration as time progresses.

#### **5. Trimester A “Academic Rep Gathering”**

The Student Voice Co-ordinator sought additional feedback regarding the Trimester A “Academic Rep Gathering” that took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017. The LS School Officer stated that he was very pleased with the delivery of the event but did note that there was a lack of interaction with other Schools which led to a lack of insight about cross-School issues. The PSWAHS School Officer said that he did not feel very prepared and would have

liked additional support prior to the event taking place so that he could have more active involvement during the event.

The E School Officer suggested a consolidation process to happen after future events for both Full Time Officers and School Officers. The Student Voice Co-ordinator asked whether it would be beneficial for all representatives coming together during future events to discuss a specific theme, etc. The E School Officer said that such a thing would have to be structured and not have the event turn into a debate.

## **6. Teaching Awards**

Due to VP SEBE being unable to attend this meeting (see Apologies), this agenda point was postponed to the next meeting.

## **7. AOCB**

### **- *Student Support Review***

The Student President highlighted that the NUS and the Scottish government had released an independent review on student support called “A New Social Contract for Students in Scotland” and how this will hopefully improve students through the financial support they receive throughout their education.

The review recommends an increase in bursary support to students alongside the total financial support given (tied to the cost of living). The terms and conditions to student loans will change; ultimately raising the loan repayment threshold, choosing when loan payments are made to students (allowing for 12 month payments), and a write-off for student loan debt for students who are articulating from college to university education. The E School Officer asked if students who are articulating from college have to pass their university degree in order to receive this write-off for their student loans. This is not covered in explicit detail in the briefing document provided.

The recommendations from this review will come into action in 2019.

**The next meeting for S.A.G.E. is scheduled to take place in Trimester B (to be confirmed)**