

## Executive Summary Paper

<b>Committee:</b>	Senate			
<b>Title</b>	GCU Student Partnership Agreement: Refresh			
<b>Sponsored by</b>	Prof Alastair Robertson, PVC Learning and Teaching			
<b>Author (if different from sponsor)</b>	Lesley McAleavy, Senior Quality Officer (Policy and Student Engagement)			
<b>Please tick ✓ as appropriate)</b>	For information		For discussion	x
	For noting		For approval	
	For endorsement	x		

### 1. Purpose of the Paper and Summary of Key Issues and Information

*What is the purpose of the paper and what key issues do you want to bring to Court's/Senate's/the committee's/Executive Board's attention?*

During AY 2016/17, the University and Students' Association worked together to develop a new Student Partnership Agreement, [GCU Community: Working Together in Partnership](#). Since then, the University has launched its ambitious Strategy 2030 and new Strategy for Learning, and the Students' Association has launched its Strategic Plan 2025. In spring 2021/22, the Students' Association Full Time Officers and Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, PVC L&T and Senior Quality Officer (Policy and Student Engagement) met and agreed that it was timely to refresh and renew our commitment to partnership working using the current Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) as a springboard for discussion. This working group, which now includes the Head of Student Enquiries, Advice and Events, is responsible for overseeing the consultation and development of a refreshed SPA.

Following a series of student and staff consultation sessions in Tri B 2021/22 and Tri A 2022/23, a refreshed SPA has been prepared. This is based on feedback received from students and staff on the structure and content of the document, including its high-level principles and the detail contained within them. Some refinements have been made to the language and tone of the document following feedback from UEG, APPC and the Students' Association Executive Committee, but this has not affected the content or meaning.

### 2. Recommendations

*What decisions or actions are required by Court/Senate/the committee/Executive Board?*

Senate is invited to consider the document and provide any feedback on the content, language and tone of the Principles.

**3. Freedom of Information**

*Unless you specify otherwise, this paper will be deemed available for unredacted release under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) 2002 Act. If some, or all of the paper, should not be released, briefly explain the reason. Examples include: commercial sensitivity, personal information.*

**4. Consultation undertaken/required**

Who have you consulted when developing the paper?	COO, Students' Association, Student Life
Has this paper been submitted to the Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE)?	Consultation was undertaken with SAGE on 7 April 2022 and 30 Nov 2022.
Have you already submitted this paper to any other committee for discussion and/or approval? If yes, please state which committee	APPC on 25 January 2023 University Executive Group on 26 January 2023 Students' Association Executive Committee, 31 January 2023
Will you require to submit this paper to any other committee following its consideration/approval at this meeting?  If yes, please state the committee and date of meeting[s.]	Will be submitted through the remaining GCU and SA Committee structures as outlined in the paper.

**5. Promulgation of Decision/Actions and Implementation**

Who will be responsible for ensuring the decision taken by the Court/Senate/committee and/or actions arising from the meeting are promulgated to the relevant people for implementation?	PVC Learning & Teaching.
Who will be responsible for overseeing any resultant changes or implementation plan as a result of the decision taken or actions arising from the meeting?	PVC Learning & Teaching.

**NB. Please ensure that all sections of the form have been completed. Incomplete forms will be returned which may result in your paper not being included in the meeting papers and will have the result of delaying business.**

# GCU Student Partnership Agreement: refresh

## Background

In 2011 the Scottish Government published a white paper “Putting Learners at the Centre” which considered a number of learning, teaching and access issues in higher education. One of the recommendations was that universities and colleges should co-develop a document which sets out students and their institution work in partnership. Sparqs subsequently developed sector [guidance on the implementation of “Student Partnership Agreements”](#) in 2013.

In response, during AY 2016/17, the University and Students’ Association worked together to develop our first new Student Partnership Agreement, [GCU Community: Working Together in Partnership](#).

Following consultation with students and staff, the Agreement was structured around a set of four Principles that inform and underpin our approach to partnership working in practice. The Principles are based on the GCU Values (**Responsibility; Creativity; Integrity; Confidence**) and Students’ Association strategic priority areas at the time of development (**Partnership; Belonging; Empowerment; Innovation**).

The Partnership Agreement is underpinned by the concept of community, based on the premise that all members of the Glasgow Caledonian University community – students, staff and the Students’ Association – are responsible for partnership working in practice. The University and Students’ Association are committed to the continuous enhancement of the student experience and the Partnership Agreement outlines how we will work together to achieve this; it describes our culture of partnership working, rather than a list of actions to be taken. At the time of the implementation of the Partnership Agreement in 2017/18, priority areas of partnership working between the University and Students’ Association were captured through the Student Experience Action Plan, reporting to the now disbanded EtSE Steering Group (superseded by the Learning Enhancement Sub Committee of APPC, 2021).

## Refreshing the Student Partnership Agreement

Since the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) was first approved, the University has launched its ambitious Strategy 2030 and new Strategy for Learning, and the Students’ Association has launched its Strategic Plan 2025. In spring 2021/22, the Students’ Association Full Time Officers and Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, PVC L&T and Senior Quality Officer (Policy and Student Engagement) met and agreed that it was timely to refresh and renew our commitment to partnership working using the current Student Partnership Agreement as a springboard for discussion. This working group, which now includes the Head of Student Enquiries, Advice and Events, is responsible for overseeing the consultation and development of the refreshed SPA and has met regularly to progress.

## Student and Staff Consultation

Student consultation commenced in Trimester B of 2021/22, with feedback obtained at the Spring Academic Rep Gathering and through the Students' Association committee structures via the Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE), EDI Committee and Societies Council. Staff consultation commenced in June 2022 at the Learning Enhancement Sub-Committee (LESC), followed by a series of open sessions in September 2022. Further consultation on the direction of travel was undertaken at APPC, LESC and SAGE in November 2022.

The initial consultation focused on seeking student and staff feedback on the existing Student Partnership Agreement, including its high-level principles, the detail contained within them, and any other areas such as the structure or layout of the Agreement. All comments were welcome but student and staff stakeholders were particularly asked to consider:

- Are the current four principles still sufficient and appropriate?
- Have any of them morphed, shifted or changed since the SPA was last written?
- Are any important principles not captured?

## Student and Staff Feedback: Themes

High-level feedback from staff and students is summarised below. This, along with detailed feedback received specific to the individual principles and their content, has informed the development of a refreshed SPA.

- SPA should focus on the **student-university partnership** throughout; currently, some sections are focused on the student alone.
- **Greater focus** and **consistency** of each of the principles is required. Some are action-based and collaborative; others are more statement-based.
- More **proactive, accessible and less formal language** required throughout; some updating needed to make the SPA more **contemporary** and **ambitious**. Principles need to be **more concise** and **memorable**. From a student perspective, this extends to **meaning** and **currency of some terminology**.
- Build on **existing culture** of partnership working and bring in important themes of **empowerment, inclusion** and **mutual respect**.
- Be clear that the SPA encapsulates all students and staff, and all **modes of learning**, including face-to-face, online and hybrid.
- **Practical application of the SPA** – Need supporting resources, including examples of good practice for staff, and signposting students to the different ways they can get involved. The SPA needs to be **meaningful** to staff and students.
- Make **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** more explicit.
- Make **Mental Health and Wellbeing** more explicit.

## SPA: Proposed Layout

Taking into account feedback received from students and staff, the following structure is now proposed for a refreshed SPA:

1. A short introduction, outlining our commitment to student engagement and partnership working, identifying the GCU community of students, staff and the Students' Association, and articulating the purpose of the SPA.
2. Four Principles, each with a clear overall intention and outlined in more detail through a number of concise bullet points.
3. Link(s) to examples of practice, opportunities to get involved and current GCU/SA priority areas. Supporting resources for students and staff will be contained on separate web pages and updated regularly.

## SPA: Draft Principles

Taking into account feedback and input from student and staff stakeholders, some refinements have been made to the language and tone of the document which is presented below:

### *GCU Student Partnership Agreement*

*The University and Students' Association are committed to the continuous enhancement of the student experience at Glasgow Caledonian University. Student engagement and partnership working are at the heart of all that we do. Together we form a strong partnership built upon trust, mutual respect and our Common Good mission. We are proud to have a strong and recognised track record of involving students as partners in all aspects of their learning and wider student experience.*

*The whole of the GCU community – students, staff and the Students' Association – is responsible for partnership working in practice. Through shared values and mutual respect, all members of the GCU community are empowered to contribute to, and enhance, the student experience. This commitment to partnership working is outlined within the University and Students' Association strategic plans and is central to the delivery of our Strategy for Learning.*

*We encourage 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 and Students' Association have co-produced the Guide to Student Representation at GCU.*

*Our Student Partnership Agreement outlines how we will work together to achieve this; it describes the culture of partnership working at GCU, rather than a list of actions to be taken. Our priority actions, and the focus of our joint activity, is captured through strategic and operational planning, underpinned by open and collaborative working practices.*

*We believe that through partnership we have a shared responsibility to:*

## *1. Ensure all members of our University's community feel a strong sense of belonging*

*Through:*

- *Co-creating opportunities to connect with others, both on-campus and online*
- *Adopting a holistic and embedded approach to equality, diversity and inclusion*
- *Creating opportunities for everyone's voice to be heard*
- *Showing respect and empathy in our interactions with one another*
- *Taking a proactive approach to positive mental health and wellbeing*
- *Tackling racism and racial inequalities in our community and structures*
- *Building positive connections with students from their first engagement, throughout their studies and continuing after they graduate*

## *2. Enhance our high quality learning, teaching and research*

*Through:*

- *Using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as the framework for our transformative education and impactful research excellence*
- *Developing inclusive communities of learners within the University to co-create, challenge and share knowledge*
- *Ensuring that the student voice remains central to shaping learning, teaching and the wider student experience at the University*
- *Providing more opportunities for personalisation of our learning experience, for example mode of study and pace of learning*
- *Empowering our students to set their own goals, reflect and effect positive change*

## *3. Enrich our wider GCU experience*

*Through:*

- *Recognising the wider transformative effect of a university experience in developing our students' confidence, transferable skills and peer networks*
- *Taking a holistic approach to student support, incorporating academic, mental health, wellbeing and career development*
- *Developing our students' employability and success in their future careers through a wide range of curricular and co-curricular activities and work-based experiences*
- *Valuing our students' engagement with clubs, societies, networks and extra-curricular activities within the University, Students' Association and wider community*
- *High quality student facilities, social spaces, library and student accommodation*

## *4. Enact positive change in our communities for the Common Good*

*Through:*

- *Our strategic commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*
- *Taking a proactive approach to the development of inclusive societies, healthy lives and a sustainable environment*
- *Developing our people to make a positive change in society through seeking solutions to real world problems*

- *Nurturing our community to become global citizens equipped with key intercultural skills and open to international experiences*
- *Adapting to a fast-changing world; demonstrating resilience in the face of global challenges*

## Next Steps

The draft SPA is being presented at University and Students' Association Committees for further consultation and approval in Trimester B. At this stage, consultation is focussing on the content, language and presentation of the refreshed SPA. The full approval process and associated timeline is outlined in the table below.

In parallel, the University and SA are working together on the development of website content and examples of partnership working in practice, to bring the document to life. The intention is to formally launch the refreshed SPA for the beginning of next academic year (2023/24) with associated communication campaigns for students and staff.

University			
Committee	Date	Purpose	Progress
LESC	Wednesday 13 April 2022	For information	Complete
LESC	Wednesday 15 June 2022	Consultation	Complete
Executive Board	Tuesday 23 August 2022	Consultation	Complete
APPC	Wednesday 14 September 2022	Update	Complete
APPC	Wednesday 2 November 2022	Update	Complete
LESC	Wednesday 30 November 2022	Consultation on draft SPA	Complete
APPC	Wednesday 25 January 2023	For discussion	Complete
Executive Board	Thursday 26 January 2023	For discussion	Complete
LESC	Wednesday 15 February 2023	For endorsement	On track
Senate	Wednesday 22 February 2023	For endorsement	On track
APPC	Wednesday 15 March 2023	For endorsement	On track
Executive Board	Tuesday 4 April 2023	For approval	On track
Court	Thursday 20 April 2023	For approval	On track

Students' Association			
Committee	Date	Purpose	Progress
Student Voice	Monday 4 April 2022	For information	Complete
SAGE	Thursday 7 April 2022	Consultation	Complete
EDI Committee	Wednesday 13 April 2022	Consultation	Complete
SAGE	Wednesday 12 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	Update	Complete
SAGE	Wednesday 30 <sup>th</sup> November 2022	Consultation	Complete
Executive Committee	Tuesday 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2023	Consultation	Complete
Student Voice	Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> February 2023	Consultation	On track
SAGE	Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2023	Consultation	On track
Trustee Board	Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> February 2023	Consultation	On track
Student Voice	Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2023	For approval	On track
Trustee Board	TBC (extraordinary meeting)	For approval	On track

## Recommendations

Senate is invited to consider the document and provide any feedback on the content, language and tone of the Principles.