

## Executive Summary Paper

<b>Committee:</b>	Senate			
<b>Title</b>	Student Consultation Policy			
<b>Sponsored by</b>	Fiona Campbell, VP People and Student Wellbeing Prof. Louise Dixon, PVC Education			
<b>Author (if different from sponsor)</b>	Oluwatomisin (Tom Tom) Osinubi, Student President Sara MacLean, Student Voice Team Leader Chinaenyenwa Ugo, Vice President SHLS			
<b>Please tick ✓ as appropriate)</b>	For information		For discussion	
	For noting		For approval	X
	For endorsement			

### 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?*

The Students' Association has worked in partnership with Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Student Life and Governance and Legal Services to explore how the University can work more consistently in partnership with the wider student body on matters that impact the student experience. This paper proposes that the University 1) co-creates with the Students' Association a Student Consultation Policy and associated guidance that provides a framework for consultation with the Students' Association, academic and student reps, and where relevant the wider student body, on issues that have a direct or significant impact on the student experience; 2) amends the GCU Committee Coversheet to in a manner that asks University staff to reflect on how they have consulted the Students' Association and what concerns and recommendations they identified, and how these were addressed.

### 2. Recommendations

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

The Students' Association is proposing the following recommendations for approval by Senate:

1. That the University co-creates a Student Consultation Policy and associated guidance with the Students' Association that is approved in the academic year 2026/27 or before.
2. That the Committee Coversheet:
  - a) Is updated from "Has this paper been submitted to the Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE)?" to "How have you consulted the Students' Association? If so, what concerns and recommendations did they identify and how were these addressed?"

<p>b) Encourages authors to record consultation with academic and/or student reps and students within the Consultation Undertaken section of the Coversheet.</p> <p>c) That the Committee Chair satisfies themselves that there is suitable consultation with the Students' Association, academic and student reps and where applicable students before the paper progresses.</p>
<p><b>3. Freedom of Information</b>  <i>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.</i></p>
<p>n/a</p>

<b>4. Consultation undertaken/required</b>	
<p>Who have you consulted when developing the paper?</p>	<p>Pro Vice-Chancellor Education  Vice-Principal People and Student Wellbeing  Director of Student Life  Director of Education  Deputy Director of Governance and Legal Services  Associate Academic Registrar (QA and Enhancement)  Senior Quality Officer  Academic Registrar and Director of Future Students  Director of Strategy and Planning  Director of Library Services  Chief Executive, Students' Association</p>
<p>Has this paper been submitted to the Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE)?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Have you already submitted this paper to any other committee for discussion and/or approval? If yes, please state which committee</p>	<p>University Executive Group  Learning Enhancement Sub-Committee  Education Committee  SAGE, Students' Association  Executive Committee, Students' Association  Student Voice, Students' Association</p>
<p>Will you require to submit this paper to any other committee following its consideration/approval at this meeting?</p>	<p>No</p>

<b>5. Promulgation of Decision/Actions and Implementation</b>
---

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?	VP People and Student Wellbeing Pro Vice-Chancellor Education
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?	VP People and Student Wellbeing Pro Vice-Chancellor Education Student President, Students' Association

# Embedding Student Partnership in University Governance: Proposal for Student Consultation Policy

## Purpose

The Students' Association has worked in partnership with Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Student Life and Governance and Legal Services to explore how the University can work more consistently in partnership with the wider student body on matters that impact the student experience. This paper proposes that the University 1) co-creates with the Students' Association a Student Consultation Policy and associated guidance that provides a framework for consultation with the Students' Association, academic and student reps, and where relevant the wider student body, on issues that have a direct or significant impact on the student experience; 2) amends the GCU Committee Coversheet to in a manner that asks University staff to reflect on how they have consulted the Students' Association and what concerns and recommendations they identified, and how these were addressed.

## Why we request this approach

### *The Current Context*

Our Student Partnership Agreement commits us to working together in partnership, built on trust, mutual respect and the Common Good mission. This policy makes that commitment real by providing clear guidance on when and how consultation should happen, removing uncertainty and supporting staff to engage students appropriately.

Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) establishes foundational principles that explicitly require universities to put students at the heart of quality assurance and enhancement processes. The framework emphasises meaningful student partnership in institutional development and decision-making, moving beyond tokenistic consultation towards genuine co-creation of policy. Under TQEF, universities complete annual Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs) that reflect on institutional quality enhancement activities. The Scottish Funding Council explicitly requires that institutions partner with their students, meaning the Students' Association and academic and student reps, in the underpinning activities that contribute to and inform the production of their self-evaluation, and that institutions work collaboratively with the Students' Association to identify and take forward key enhancement activities. We have shown that co-creation is possible through our work with Full Time Officers, and the academic rep system including the Academic Rep Gatherings. There is a current action within the SEAP 2024/25 on exploring the effectiveness of approaches to student consultation.

GCU Senate agreed in October 2017 that all GCU student-facing policies with significant impact across the institution should go through the Student Action Group on Engagement (SAGE) at an early stage of development and prior to being approved at Senate. However, understandably, achieving consistent wider student consultation on matters that impact the student experience remains challenging due to short timelines, staff workload, student availability and the complexity of university change processes. The impact remains that wider students' perspectives are sometimes excluded from shaping decisions that significantly affect them. This could also impact the University by creating challenges in implementation and unintended consequences. University paper coversheets include a section asking whether consultation with SAGE has occurred, in practice, we believe, this sometimes doesn't happen when it should. Recent examples include proposed changes to the Student Code of

Conduct and new initiatives affecting student experience, such as the introduction of SEATs. The challenge here is ensuring that when policies, initiatives or decisions affecting student experience are at the early stages of being developed, we embed clear processes and guidance in place to ensure appropriate partnership working happens consistently from initiation to implementation.

### Proposed Solution

The Students' Association is proposing the following recommendations for approval by Senate:

1. That the University co-creates a Student Consultation Policy and associated guidance with the Students' Association that is approved in the academic year 2026/27 or before.
2. That the Committee Coversheet:
  - a) Is updated from "Has this paper been submitted to the Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE)?" to "How have you consulted the Students' Association? If so, what concerns and recommendations did they identify and how were these addressed?"
  - b) Encourages authors to record consultation with academic and/or student reps and students within the Consultation Undertaken section of the Coversheet.
  - c) That the Committee Chair satisfies themselves that there is suitable consultation with the Students' Association, academic and student reps and where applicable students before the paper progresses.

These changes to practice would build on our [Student Partnership Agreement](#) (SPA) and [Guide to Student Representation at GCU](#) and establish a clear process for systematic student consultation with the Students' Association, academic and students reps and where applicable the wider student body on proposed changes affecting the student experience. This is not about creating new requirements but about enhancing the consultation practices that already reflect what the University stands for. We recognise that good consultation is already happening across the University, and mechanisms will simply facilitate consistent and properly documented partnership working. It will demonstrate our leadership in student partnership across the wider sector.

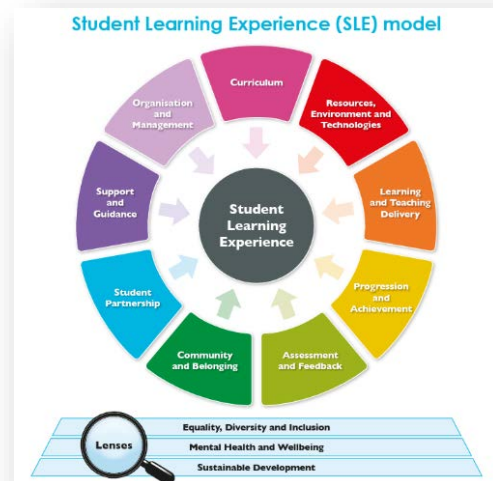
### *Supporting Effective Governance Across All Committees*

Rather than focusing only on Senate and Senate Standing Committees, the change to Coversheets should apply across all University committees and departments where matters affecting student experience are considered. Whether decisions are made at Court and their Standing Committee, Senate and their Standing Committee (including School Boards) or operational committees, the same principle applies: students, through the Students' Association, should have meaningful input into initiatives and policies that shape their experience at GCU. The Student Consultation Policy should provide clear guidance for staff across all areas of the University about when and how to engage with the Students' Association, academic and student reps and where applicable the student body, supporting consistent partnership working regardless of which the structure decisions flow through.

### *What Needs Student Consultation: Using the Student Learning Experience Model*

To provide clarity for staff about when student consultation, through the Students' Association, is needed, we propose using Scotland's Student Learning Experience (SLE) model developed by sparqs. Papers, proposals, or initiatives should come to the Students' Association when they relate to matters that directly or significantly impact the student experience in any of the nine building blocks of the SLE model:

1. *Learning Community* - Course design, programme structures, cohort experience
2. *Learning and Teaching* - Teaching methods, learning approaches, assessment design
3. *Support for Learning* - Academic support, learning resources, accessibility
4. *Student Voice* - Representation systems, feedback mechanisms, partnership structures
5. *Organisation of Learning* - Timetabling, academic calendar, course administration
6. *Physical and Digital Spaces* - Campus facilities, online learning environments, study spaces
7. *Employability and Skills* - Career preparation, graduate attributes, work-integrated learning
8. *Student Wellbeing* - Health services, welfare support, community and belonging
9. *Assessment and Feedback* - Assessment policies, feedback practices and academic regulations



Consultation with the Students' Association applies to both:

- Policies: Formal policy documents affecting how students learn, where they learn, support for learning, and the broader university experience that shapes their education
- Initiatives and Decisions: Significant changes or new approaches to services, facilities, support, or programmes that impact current students' experience

Student-facing matters encompass: Academic regulations and assessment policies, student support services and wellbeing provisions, campus facilities and student spaces, fees and charges affecting current students, policies and frameworks for student conduct and disciplinary procedures, admissions and enrolment policies affecting the student journey, student experience and engagement initiatives, and academic calendar and timetabling decisions.

This does not include: Purely operational matters with no direct student impact, confidential personnel or legal matters or financial/commercial decisions without educational implications.

The Student Consultation Policy and associated guidance should take note of the legislative requirements for consultation with learners outlined in the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) 2026.

### Benefits for Everyone

*For Students:* Meaningful input into decisions and initiatives affecting their experience, not just a reaction to finalised policies. Ensures student voices are heard on matters that affect them most significantly.

*For Staff:* Clear guidance about when consultation is needed removes uncertainty. Better policies and initiatives informed by student perspectives lead to smoother implementation and fewer unintended consequences. Access to essential student insight on policy and initiative implications.

*For the University:* Demonstrates authentic partnership aligned with our values. Provides concrete evidence of student engagement for SEAP submissions and TQEF processes. Enhances our reputation as a leader in student partnership. Supports effective governance across all committees by establishing clear consultation pathways.

## Alignment with GCU Priorities

### Student Partnership Agreement

This policy makes real our commitment to work together in partnership and shared responsibility, moving from aspiration to systematic practice.

### Education Plan: A Caring and Holistic Student Experience

A genuinely caring and holistic student experience requires that students have a meaningful voice in shaping the policies, services and environments that affect their daily lives at GCU. The Student Consultation Policy ensures students aren't just recipients of institutional decisions but active partners in creating the conditions for their own success. By systematically consulting with the Students' Association on matters affecting student wellbeing, support services and the broader university experience, we demonstrate care through partnership recognising that students understand their own needs and challenges better than anyone else.

### Education Plan: Accessible and Inclusive Education

Meaningful consultation strengthens accessibility and inclusion by ensuring policies and initiatives are tested against diverse student experiences before implementation. The Students' Association brings together perspectives from across our student community, including those often marginalised in decision-making processes. The requirement for broader consultation with affected student groups, particularly students with disabilities, care-experienced students, and international students for example, ensures policies and initiatives work for all students, not just those already well-served by existing structures.

### TQEF and SEAP: Student Partnership in Quality Enhancement

This policy provides the systematic mechanism for student partnership that TQEF principles require. Embedded consultation creates ongoing evidence of meaningful partnership in quality enhancement: each consultation documented, each recommendation considered, each implementation reviewed becomes part of our story of continuous improvement driven by student-staff collaboration.

Each consultation documented, each recommendation considered, each implementation reviewed becomes part of our story of continuous improvement driven by student-staff collaboration. This positions GCU as exemplifying TQEF's vision of students at the heart of quality enhancement rather than simply responding to external frameworks.

## References

sparqs (2023). Student Learning Experience Model. Available at:  
[https://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/SLE\\_model\\_digital\\_resource.pdf](https://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/SLE_model_digital_resource.pdf)

GCU (2024). Student Partnership Agreement. Available at:  
<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/currentstudents/getinvolved/gcu-community-working-together-in-partnership>

Scottish Funding Council (2024). Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework. Available at: <https://www.sfc.ac.uk/assurance-accountability/learning-quality/scotlands-tertiary-quality-enhancement-framework/>

Scottish Funding Council (2024). Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities AY 2024-25 to AY 2030-31. Available at: <https://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications/sfc-guidance-on-quality-for-colleges-and-universities-2024-25-to-2030-31/>

sparqs (2024). Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership. Available at: [https://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/Partnership\\_Ambition\\_resource.pdf](https://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/Partnership_Ambition_resource.pdf)