Measuring the Impact of the Student Leaders Programme

Mapping Exercise

An initial mapping exercise was carried out to capture all of the resources, inputs, outputs and outcomes associated with the Student Leaders Programme. All of the entries under each heading were categorised in terms of who they affected: students, the Students' Association, the University or employers. The Impact Map produced from this exercise can be found in Appendix 1.
The Impact Map attempted to capture all possible outcomes of the Student Leaders Programme based on the known outputs of the programme and what is hoped is achieved through these outputs.

In the mapping exercise the indicators of success for these outcomes were identified as well as the sources of data that would need to be analysed or created in order to measure them. Primarily, changes to the Students' Association's Annual Student Survey and Student Leaders Programme Survey would be required to provide the necessary data.

Lastly, in the mapping exercise, the Students' Association sought to group the outcomes for the student participants thematically and identify the appropriate level of attribution to assign to the Student Leaders Programme. This part of the exercise would help form the basis of the survey questions to be sent to students, university staff and employers.

Focus Group

A focus group was held with students on the Student Leaders Programme to check that the Impact Map was a reasonable representation of what they felt that they got out of the programme. A check was also done on how much the focus group felt different outcomes should be attributed to the programme.

The students agreed with the outcomes presented in the map and were generally more inclined to give the programme a higher level of attribution than Students' Association staff had during the Mapping Exercise.

Data collection

Much of the data regarding what would have happened without the SLP was known to be widely available such as degree classifications, graduate employment destinations and National Student Survey scores. What was needed was to find out how the SLP students compared with the student population as a whole and to determine an appropriate level of attribution.

Using the details of 88 students from the 2012/13 Student Leaders Programme who could be identified as final year undergraduate, data was requested from the university as to how this group compared in terms of degree classifications and employment outcomes compared to the full final year undergraduate student cohort for that year.

The Mapping Exercise suggested that we would see a positive difference in favour of the students who had completed the SLP. If this was the case then we would need to know how much it was reasonable to claim was due to the SLP. Therefore surveys were sent out to university staff involved in the SLP, employers involved in the SLP and questions on attribution were included in the end of year survey sent to the students on the programme.

The 2013 National Student Survey provided data on how students answered about themselves on several questions about personal attributes such as confidence and problem solving. Similar questions were included in the end of year survey for students so that a comparison could be made with how final year students felt they university had contributed to these attributes.
Each of these surveys is included in Appendix 2.

Attribution

Below is a comparison between the original Students' Association estimates of attribution for different outcomes from the SLP and the average responses received from students, employers and university staff.

In each case, the question asked "What percentage (on a scale of 0% to 100%) of each of the following outcomes do you feel is as a result of taking part in the Student Leaders Programme?

	Students' Association	Students	Employers	University Staff
Academic Progress	10%	36%	40%	43%
Leadership Development	10%	67%	67%	69%
A greater awareness of the need for employability skills	80%	71%	73%	66%
Improvement in volunteering/mentoring role	40%	64%	64%	76%
A sense of belonging to the GCU/GCUSA community	10%	60%	76%	82%
Ability to understand strengths and weaknesses	60%	72%	74%	68%
Sense of self esteem	20%	61%	70%	69%
Ability to reflect upon and articulate skills	60%	68%	74%	76%
Desire to continue volunteering after university	50%	68%	47%	66%
Feeling valued and recognised at GCU	20%	72%	73%	80%

Table 1: Attribution assigned to outcomes by each surveyed group

Perhaps surprisingly, the employers and university staff surveyed assigned a higher attribution to more of the outcomes than the students. In most areas all were higher than the Students' Association estimate that was deliberately conservative.

Comparison with NSS

The following table summarises the questions that were asked to allow a direct comparison with National Student Survey responses on questions relating to personal development.

National Student Survey 2013		SLP Student Survey 2013	
Statement	% Agree	% Agree	Statement
The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.	82	77	The Student Leaders Programme has helped me to present myself with confidence.
My communication skills have improved.	85	73	As a result of taking part in the Student Leaders Programme, my communication skills have improved.

Table 2: Comparison of personal development questions in NSS and SLP Survey 2013

We can conclude from these questions that while the SLP does improve confidence and communication skills for the majority of students on the programme, that more students in general believe that they get this personal development from their course.

Employability skills awareness

In our annual student survey we asked student whether they agreed with the following statement: "It is important to develop my employability skills outwith my course".

In total 216 students answered the question, 54 of whom had joined the programmed. The following table summarises their responses.

	SLP responses (%)	All responses (%)
Strongly Agree	85.2	75.5
Agree	14.8	22.2
Neither agree nor disagree	0	1.9
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0.5

Table 3: Extract from SA Annual Survey 2013 regarding employability skills development

As can be seen from the table above, all respondents who were on the programme agreed with the statement.

In addition, the strongly agree response was given by nearly 10% more of the respondents on the programme compared with respondents generally.

Impact

Before discussing the specific impact of the programme we can draw some conclusions from the data gathered around personal development and employability skills awareness.

We have shown that approximately three quarters of students on the programme believe that it improves their confidence (77%) and communication skills (73%), which is not far from what the

2013 final year student population think about their entire degree programme (82% and 85% respectively). Given the relatively small amount of time students spend engaging with the SLP compared to their entire course, this is a positive comparison.

In addition, we can see from the annual student survey that students who participate in the programme are more likely to strongly agree with the need to develop their employability skills outside of the classroom. This is well established and therefore this statistic shows the greater understanding of the need to develop employability skills. This is further emphasised by the attribution of 71% that students assigned to how much the programme contributed to their need to develop these skills.

In terms of direct impact there were several direct outcomes that could be measured but with limited time and data, focus was directed on two significant outcomes – employment and academic outcomes for students.

To avoid overstating what impact we should assign to the Student Leaders Programme we will select the lowest attribution score from students, employers and university staff for this analysis.

Graduate employment

With regards to the graduate employment outcomes for final year students who had completed the Programme in 2012-13, a comparison was made with the general destination of GCU graduates in the same cohort through the results of the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey:
- Out of the 87 student leaders whose names were provided 7 were not in the 2012/13 survey
- Out of the 80 surveyed 18 were either unobtainable or did not respond
- Out of the 62 who did respond
  - 48 were employed with 26 of those being in professional employment and 22 of those being in non professional employment
  - 6 have gone on to do further studies
  - 2 were unemployed and looking for work
  - 3 were not employed because they were taking time out to travel
  - 3 were not employed because they were doing something else

- Of the 48 in employment
  - The overall picture is broadly similar to the University cohort as a whole, which anticipates c65% in graduate level employment
  - Of the 26 in graduate level employment, looking at their degree disciplines, their job roles and their employers, their status is similar to the rest of the cohort with no unique or unusual destinations or patterns
  - Of the 22 in non-professional employment there are no differences from the rest of the cohort.

Therefore, from the available data we cannot show any difference in the outcomes in terms of graduate employment for those who completed the Programme. Given the size of the sample, it may be worth repeating this analysis in future years in order to see if this is consistently the case.

Degree classification

A similar comparison was carried out between this group of students and the full GCU cohort on the basis of their degree classification:

Final Year on Student Leaders Programme	Count	
(re)enter Modules Before Final Award Decision	1	1.4%
Awarded - Honours Degree	5	6.8%
Awarded - Honours Degree 01	13	17.8%
Awarded - Honours Degree 21	38	52.1%
Awarded - Honours Degree 22	16	21.9%
Grand Total	73	100%

All Final Year UG	Count	
(re)enter Modules Before Final Award Decision	94	4.4%
All Legitimate Attempts Exhausted: Required To Withdraw	17	0.8%
Awarded - Honours Degree	349	16.3%
Awarded - Honours Degree 01	210	9.8%
Awarded - Honours Degree 03	27	1.3%
Awarded - Honours Degree 21	871	40.7%
Awarded - Honours Degree 22	495	23.1%
Awarded - Honours Degree F	14	0.7%
Awarded - Unclassified Degree	18	0.8%
Failed Honours: Re-assessment Not Permitted	27	1.3%
May Not Continue On Honours: Awarded Unclassified Degree	7	0.3%
Please Contact Prog Lead Regarding Transfer To Generic Award	13	0.6%
Grand Total	2142	100%

Table 4: Degree classification outcomes for students on SLP and the GCU student population in 2013

On the basis of the above data 69.9% of students on SLP achieved a 2:1 degree classification or better compared with 50.5% of the GCU student population.

This means that a student who had completed SLP was 19.4% more likely to achieve one of the top two degree classifications. This is not surprising as in preparation for this work it was assumed that the type of student who would participate in the Programme would also be more likely to be a higher achiever academically.

Combining this with the lowest attribution score given for academic progress (36% given by students on SLP), we arrive at the conclusion that due to the Student Leaders Programme participants are 6.9% more likely to achieve an upper second or first class degree classification.

Conclusion

Across the different questions asked and surveys undertaken it is clear that the Student Leaders Programme is viewed as a positive contribution to the development of our students by participants, university staff and employers.

A majority of participants see the development of confidence and skills development coming from the programme at a level close to what GCU students think is provided from their course. This is a positive comparison given the much greater level of time spent on course related activities.

Participants are all aware of the need to develop employability skills and are more likely to strongly agree with this than the general GCU student population.

Comparisons in terms of graduate employability and degree classification show no real different in terms of employability but an improved outcome in terms of degree classification which remains significant even after attribution is applied.

In order to improve and build on these results, a combination of repeating the analysis in subsequent years to build a more substantial sample size and improved record keeping with regards to Student Leaders Participants is recommended.