

GLASGOW UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL  
**STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2015**





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# INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME



It is our pleasure to present the University of Glasgow Students' Representative Council's (GUSRC's) Strategic Plan for the period of 2011 to 2015.

Informed and shaped through extensive consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders, including senior University staff, student volunteers and GUSRC staff members, this document sets out the direction in which we feel the organisation needs to progress in order to continue to build on past successes.

In the three years that have passed since the previous Strategic Plan (covering 2008 to 2011) was adopted, GUSRC has made significant progress against our stated aims. We've continued to report back on our progress through our Annual Reports, which are designed to ensure that we complete the 'feedback loop' by acknowledging progress made in the areas of our three high-level aims. We recognise, particularly in these challenging financial times, the importance of demonstrating that we are providing high quality, value for money services of benefit to students and the University.

Our key funder, the University of Glasgow, without whom we could not function, has recently produced a new five-year strategy, in addition to a new Learning & Teaching Strategy. We have endeavoured to ensure that the strategy of GUSRC as laid out in this document, is both complimentary and supportive of the University's aims, whilst retaining the organisation's independent status and role as critical friend of the University.

GUSRC President 2010/2011

Although we're incredibly proud of what we have achieved in the past three years, we do not intend to become complacent. It is our intention that this document acts as motivation, ensuring we evolve, improve, and achieve even more in the period up to 2015. We have aimed to acknowledge every aspect of GUSRC's activities within this document, and this plan will help signpost the way for the GUSRC to progress its aims, goals and operational activities. This strategy will also help to ensure that going forward, our work is effective, efficient and based upon the democratic representative principles that the GUSRC has had at the core of its work over the past 125 years.

Student organisations are diverse and ever-changing, reflecting their democratic base, the students they represent and the annual influx of ideas and innovations delivered by elected officers.

This document aims to provide the officers of the organisations, alongside its staff and the students it represents, with a framework that, whilst ensuring that GUSRC continues to build on past successes and continually improves over the next three years, allows the democratically elected office bearers to achieve their ambitions during their period of office.

Most importantly, what this document makes explicit is the common aim of all involved at GUSRC: the aim to ensure that the students of the University of Glasgow get the best possible student experience in choosing to study here.

GUSRC Permanent Secretary



**STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN A GUSRC LANGUAGE CAFE EVENT**

## STATUS & MEMBERSHIP

Glasgow University Students' Representative Council (GUSRC) is a non-incorporated charitable organisation registered in Scotland, no. SC006970.

All students registered at the University of Glasgow are automatically members of GUSRC. Students can opt out once per academic session. Membership entitles students to vote and stand for election. Where students opt out they can still use GUSRC facilities and services.

The legislation relating to students' unions and representative bodies is contained in the Education Act 1994. This sets out in broad terms, how such organisations should operate and stipulates the duties of the 'governing body' (i.e. the parent institution) to ensure that any student body "operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances".

## PURPOSE & ROLE

GUSRC was founded on 9 March 1886. The key role of GUSRC is to represent the interests of students registered at the University of Glasgow (the University). Two elected GUSRC representatives sit on the University Court and sixteen on Senate. GUSRC is represented throughout the University's decision making structure. The representative function is augmented by the delivery of services aimed at enhancing the student experience of those studying at the University.

# CONSTITUTION & GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The trustees of the organisation are the members of Council and the Executive Committee. Council members are elected through secret ballot a minimum of twice annually. Following the restructuring of the University's Academic composition GUSRC undertook its own review. The framework outlined below was introduced for session 2010/2011 and may be subject to further review.

The constitution makes provision for a full Council of no more than 46 members, a council committee of not more than 27 members and an executive of four members who are also sabbatical officers.

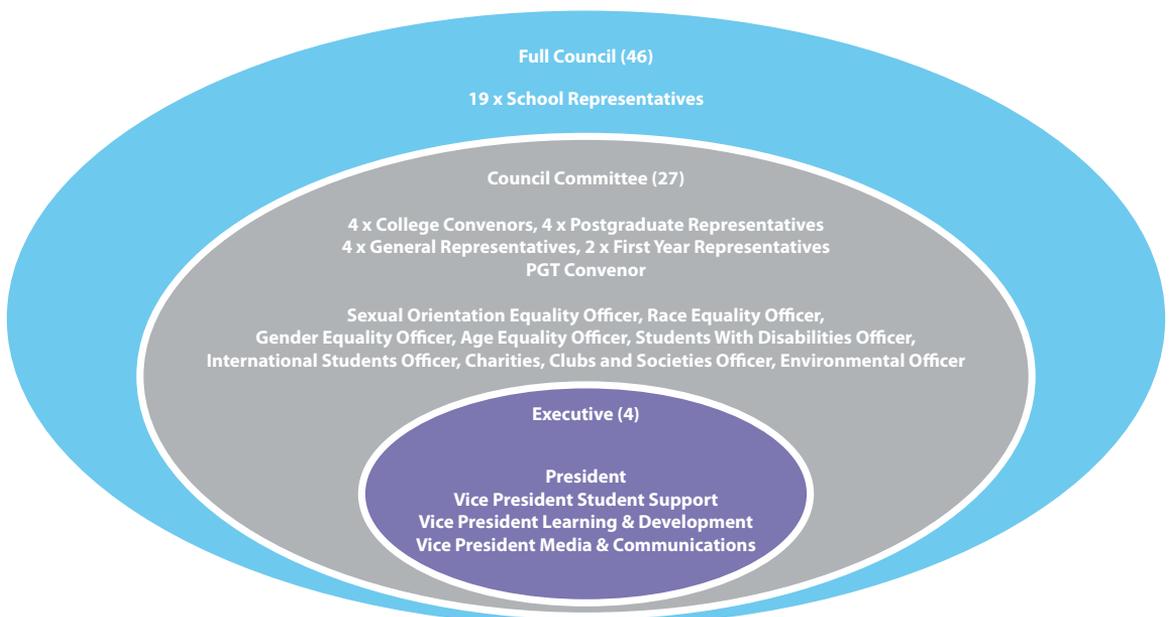
An executive committee is elected from within Council with the exception of the four sabbatical positions which are directly elected by the membership on an annual basis.

There are two standing sub-committees:

- The Finance Sub-Committee which meets three times per year and to which two representatives appointed by the Secretary of Court attend.
- The Staffing Sub-Committee which meets on an ad hoc basis, and whose membership is made up of the Sabbatical Officers and the Permanent Secretary.

Council has the capacity to establish additional sub-committees which often take the form of working groups which may include additional stakeholders (e.g University staff, students who are not council members).

The Permanent Secretary fulfils a Chief Executive role and undertakes operational management on behalf of the Executive; the Executive implement Council policy on a day-to-day basis. To do so, the Executive (on behalf of the Council and through the Permanent Secretary) has operational financial power and responsibility. Various checks and balances, as required by the University, are provided for.



# CORE ACTIVITIES

The Objects of the organisation as set out in the GUSRC Constitution are to:

- Represent and promote the general interests of students of the University.
- Advance civic responsibility by providing a recognised means of communication between students and the Court and Senate of the University.
- To prevent and relieve poverty and advance health by providing welfare services for students and potential students.
- To advance the arts, culture, education, heritage, science and sport by providing amenities and supporting activities for students.
- To promote equality of opportunity amongst students and challenge all forms of discrimination whether based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, religion, cultural background or other such status.

GUSRC's core activities can be defined by three main categories. It should be recognised that there is a degree of overlap with some services providing additional outcomes relating to a heading different to that which they are primarily categorised.

## REPRESENTATION & ENGAGEMENT

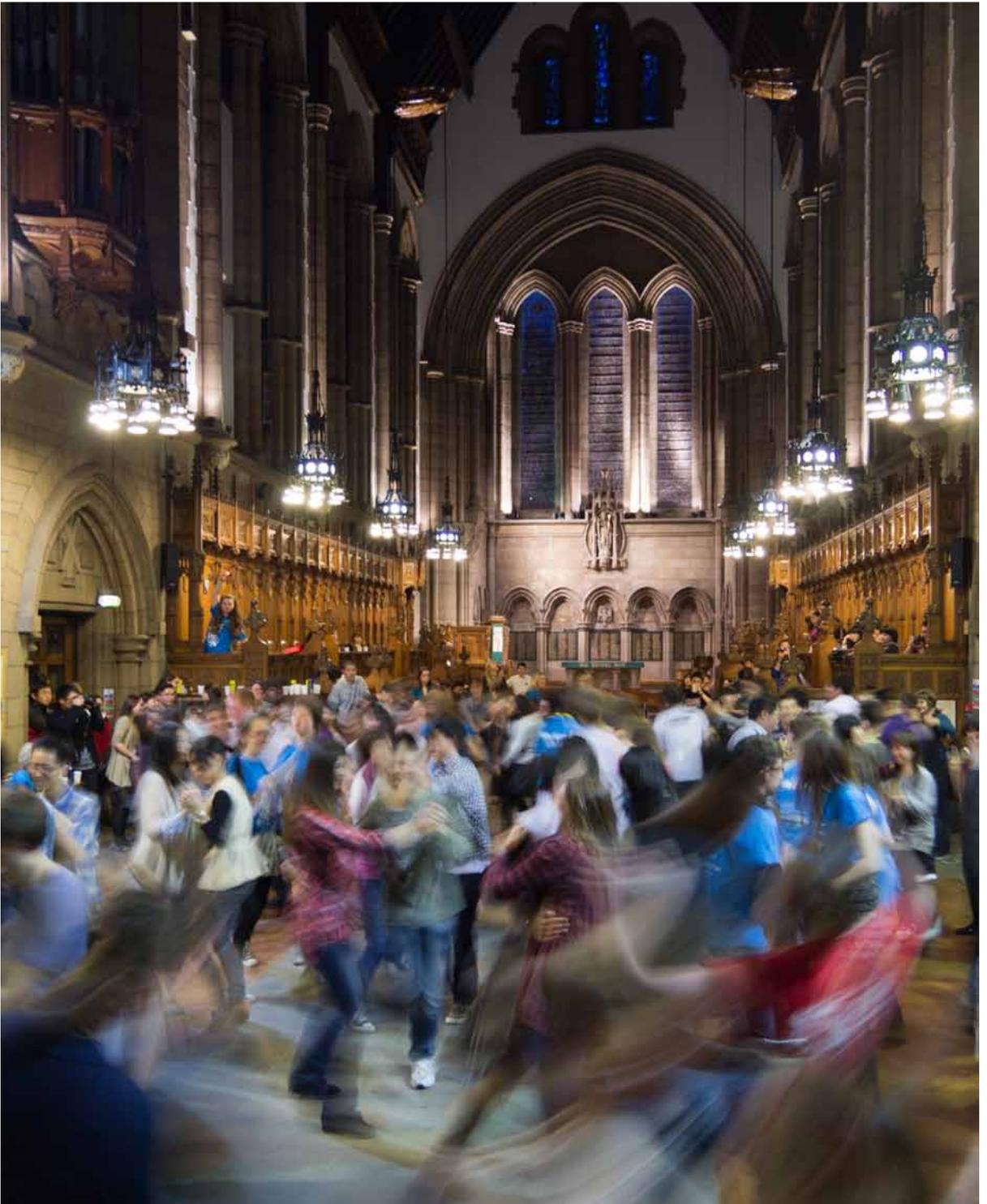
- Course Representatives
- Quality Enhancement
- Surveys & Consultation Exercises
- Website
- Glasgow University Guardian
- Glasgow University Magazine
- National Student Survey
- Political lobbying and campaigns
- Training and Support
- RAG Week
- Subcity Radio
- Media Week
- Social Networking Activity
- Glasgow University Student Television
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey
- University Committees/Working Groups

## STUDENT WELLBEING

- Campus / Halls Minibus Service
- Disability Benefits
- Photocopying, Printing & Binding
- Housing Issues
- Freshers' Week
- Employment Rights
- Council Tax
- Assistance with Complaints
- Second Hand Book Shop
- Budget Workshops
- Faxing and Scanning
- Academic Appeals
- Consumer Rights
- Annual Student Guide
- Benefits advice
- Representation under the Code of Student Conduct
- Small Claims Court Representation

## VOLUNTEERING & GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

- Nightline
- Classroom Support
- Residential Care Home Visiting
- Job Shop
- Language Cafe
- Clubs & Societies
- Conversational English
- Language Cafe
- Glasgow University Settlement
- Disclosure Service
- Sports Coaching
- Campus Tours
- Glasgow University Service for Homeless People





## STRENGTHS

- Positive working relationship with University and access to University decision making structures.
- Respected by senior University decision makers.
- Central campus location.
- Bulk of income through block grant. Enables focus on core purpose rather than income generation.
- Good internal working relationships between staff and officers with united sense of purpose.
- Staff team facilitating continuity.
- Strong emphasis on training and development support for staff and officers.
- Quality of annual report, linked to strategy is highly regarded and valued.
- Not NUS affiliated. Student officers focus on University Issues directly affecting membership.
- Sound management, financial, personnel and monitoring policies in place.
- Capacity to represent student concerns to University but maintain positive relationships.
- Social networking presence and reach.

## WEAKNESSES

- Develop recording and reporting systems for more useful data regarding outputs and impacts.
- Need to communicate the importance of "added value" to University whilst retaining independence.
- Scope to expand existing engagement and representation activities to wider student body.
- Current accommodation not fit for purpose.
- Increasing dependence on IT for virtually all operational functions.
- Reliance on temporary and transient IT support staff.
- Operational planning process; more limited resources require increased prioritisation.
- Inconsistent branding of activities, supported events etc. annual variations.
- Lack of appropriate facilities and space to achieve full potential benefit for diverse student body activities.



# OPPORTUNITIES

- Yearly change in elected officers generates new ideas and innovations.
- Increasingly culturally-diverse campus.
- Potential to expand space and facilities as additional accessible space in John McIntyre Building becomes available.
- Clear University commitment to student engagement.
- GUSRC restructuring; potential to build and expand on existing engagement.
- Greater use of social networking as the communication tool of choice.
- Development of Campus Tours and graduate attributes developing programmes to build profile.
- Graduate Attributes Agenda, potential to build on role as main volunteering opportunities provider.

# THREATS

- Future block grant allocation reduction has potential to impact directly on services.
- Lack of capacity to trade-fill potential funding deficit.
- Students' commitments leading to lack of time to commit to extracurricular activities.
- Pressure from unions threatening GUSRC revenue.
- Loss of Development Fund, removal of opportunity for future capital investment.
- Instability due to yearly changeover in senior office bearers.
- Although feedback on GUSRC is currently highly positive, danger of complacency.
- Influence of minority political factions on decision making.
- Higher expectations from University and students, with limited resources to meet them.
- Loss of partner agencies due to funding reductions (eg. sparqs).



**STUDENTS AWAITING RESULTS OF GUSRC ANNUAL ELECTION, SPRING 2011**

## SITUATION REVIEW: EXTERNAL & INTERNAL

GUSRC has a close relationship with the University of Glasgow and shares many of the University's aims and aspirations for students of the institution. There is considerable collaborative work undertaken between the two parties with a particular focus on the student experience, student engagement and well-being. Inevitably then, GUSRC's fortunes are closely linked to those of the University of Glasgow.

The table on the preceding pages summarises the main factors emerging from a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities & Threats) analysis carried out following consultation with various stakeholders. On the subsequent pages are the results of both external and internal reviews of GUSRC's current position, focusing on areas considered key issues emerging from the SWOT analysis. The data in these reviews comes as result of the extensive consultation undertaken by GUSRC with its key stakeholders in preparation for compiling this plan.

The external situation review relates, in the main, to our current position within the University and how we will continue to work with the University in the forthcoming four years, whilst the internal review relates to our own operations as they stand and how they will be developed going forward.

# EXTERNAL REVIEW



# WORKING WITH THE UNIVERSITY

GUSRC is one of four student-led organisations on campus; it is, however, the only student representative organisation and its functions are unique. With a statutory basis and focus on enhancing the student experience, GUSRC works together with the University for the benefit of students. The organisation's day-to-day role as working partner and critical friend of the University has helped ensure that student engagement and representation are key components of the University's future strategy. GUSRC's achievements during the period of the previous strategic plan have cemented a culture of mutual understanding and respect.

"The SRC was universally praised for its professionalism, attitudes and culture and is considered to be a real asset to the student body. Staff described the SRC as vital to the development of University policy and described the working relationship as excellent."<sup>1</sup>

The information below is taken from an options appraisal of the student bodies at Glasgow commissioned by the University, carried out in 2009. The data was collected via a series of interviews with members of University staff in regards to their engagement with the student bodies. The table illustrates current involvement with the student bodies amongst the University staff is concentrated around the work of GUSRC. There was only very limited involvement and understanding of the range of services offered by the Unions.

## Summary of interviewee involvement with the student bodies<sup>2</sup>:

### GUSRC

- Committees
- Steering Groups
- Student Advocacy
- Projects
- Induction/Orientation
- Meetings
- Student Representation
- University Events

### QMU

- Meetings (occasional)

### GUU

- Meetings (occasional)





GUSRC'S FIRST ANNUAL STUDENT-LED TEACHING AWARDS

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

In its latest strategic plan the University has reiterated its commitment to “Providing an Excellent Student Experience”. The plan describes a range of mechanisms through which the University will facilitate this. The commitment to student engagement is explicit: “Our Commitment to student engagement means that all key decision making bodies have student representation”.<sup>3</sup> GUSRC has responsibility for providing representation on all the key decision-making bodies, over and above the academic committees at school and college level. GUSRC’s role is to ensure that student involvement is more than tokenistic; we work hard, therefore, to ensure these bodies are populated by well informed and aware student representatives, fully briefed on all the relevant matters. Representation on the high level committees is usually by sabbatical officers; GUSRC has systems in place to ensure a degree of consistency and continuity in representation.

The Enhancement Led Institutional Review acknowledged GUSRC’s working relationship with the University and highlighted some of the key successes gained through the engagement process:

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“It is evident that the partnership approach between the University and the SRC has been productive in delivering a range of enhancements to provision and practice.

Examples of the successful outcomes of this partnership approach include: work on a Code of Practice on Student Representation and Guidance for the operation of staff; student liaison committees; the review of the Advisers of Studies system; the development of policies on a range of matters, including late submission of coursework and a text messaging service for students; a Harassment Policy and Maternity, Paternity and Carer Policy for students; and a Student Diary.”<sup>4</sup>

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# STUDENT SUPPORT

The factors which impact on the student experience do not relate purely to academic matters. Students continue to struggle through low income and high levels of debt, often requiring them to undertake part time work which in turn impacts on their capacity to study as well as participate in additional extracurricular activities which are part of university life. Students are often open to exploitation by a variety of selling agents; from landlords, to banks, to mobile phone companies, as they are usually negotiating from a position of weakness or ignorance. It is not necessarily one factor which can impact on a student's achievements at University but usually a mix of several.

GUSRC provide a number of services free or at minimum cost which compare favourably to those offered by private companies and offer significant savings to students. We continue to advise and represent individual students on a wide range of welfare related issues from small claims court actions against landlords, to disability benefits, to employment rights. Further, our Advice Centre is the only source of independent specialist advice on academic appeals, complaints and student conduct matters.

The problems experienced by individual students continue to inform our campaigning role ensuring our work is relevant and focused on addressing issues which will impact on the quality of life of our members.



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## THE ADVICE CENTRE

Many students benefit from the GUSRC Advice Centre through accessing the range of information produced on the web and in paper form.

In addition The Advice Centre dealt with 4,903 cases/enquiries totaling over 35,678 casework entries between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2011. This is approximately 7,777 hours on casework, including face-to-face meetings with clients, phone calls, emails, research, letter-writing and representation at meetings, hearings or court.

Whilst an informal resolution is the usual outcome, outcomes through formal process over the last 3 years include 65 successful appeals, 39 successful disciplinary (student conduct) cases, and 14 successful complaints. Through Advice centre intervention clients have obtained £249,505 in financial gains. (NB These are only reported financial gains; it is likely that this figure could be 3 or 4 times as much)

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GUSRC's unique Minibus Shuttle service between campus and student halls has continued to expand and increase in usage. The addition of a morning service proved an instant success on its introduction. The table below illustrates number of journeys made over the duration of the last plan. Numbers decreased slightly in the past academic year due to service interruptions caused by extreme weather conditions.

Year Ending	Morning Service	Evening Service	Total
2011	25347	41090	66437
2010	27185	54364	81549
2009	3242	40913	44155
2008	n/a	31315	31315



## ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION

The University has recently undergone considerable structural change. Consequently, GUSRC has redefined its own structure to ensure its academic representation structures map those of the University. The academic year 2010/2011 was a transitory year, running with two parallel systems. The new structure in full is implemented in 2011/2012. Academic year 2011/2012 will be a pilot period after which the effectiveness of the new structure will be reviewed. The new GUSRC academic representative structure will enable the organisation to provide representation on all relevant school and college committees. GUSRC's course representative training programme will be reviewed annually to ensure it facilitates effective student representation and engagement throughout the University. Further, GUSRC will continue to support student representation on institution led subject review panels. GUSRC has worked with the University in developing the latest learning and teaching strategy which is strongly supportive of student engagement throughout and expresses a commitment to continuing to work with GUSRC on the implementation of the strategy, as shown below.

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*"We will continue to evolve our student support systems and infrastructure in partnership with the Students' Representative Council and will maximise the benefits of new developments in our academic advisory system and student facing data systems."<sup>5</sup>*

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## QAA

Student engagement remains an integral part of the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework and is a key element in the University's strategic plan. The Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) in 2009 at Glasgow highlighted the hard work undertaken by the University and GUSRC in enhancing the student experience through student engagement. The QAA continue to stress student involvement as a key factor in the quality framework, referring to the "fundamental" elements of student engagement as: *"the role of student reviewers within ELIR teams, as well as effective student engagement with internal quality and representative structures and processes."* However, the guidance also advises that it is helpful to *"acknowledge current thinking about the meaning of 'student engagement', which now extends well beyond the specific issue of engagement with quality processes, into broader discussion about students' engagement with their own learning"*<sup>6</sup>. The guidance suggests a more qualitative approach to evaluating the work of institutions on student engagement: *"we think the emphasis in future will not be on the particular mechanisms by which students interact with their institution, but on the quality and effectiveness of these interactions, and the potential to amplify the 'student voice.'"*<sup>7</sup>

The University and GUSRC have demonstrable positive outcomes from their joint work on enhancing the student experience, as highlighted in the ELIR Report 2009-10: *"There is clear evidence of a strong and effective partnership between the SRC and University, which has developed significant developments in policy and provision, all of which contribute positively to the student experience of Glasgow"*. The challenge is likely to be in maintaining the quality of dialogue whilst developing (or enhancing) opportunities for interaction and incorporating frameworks for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of our feedback and engagement systems.




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## DISTANCE TRAVELLED

*"Scope for improved consistency and effectiveness in the working partnership between the University and the SRC"*

- University ELIR report 2004

*"Clear evidence of a strong and effective partnership between the SRC and University, which has developed significant developments in policy and provision, all of which contribute positively to the student experience of Glasgow"*

- University ELIR report 2010

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# INTERNATIONALISATION

The University has affirmed its “ambitious plans” to continue to grow the community of international students attending the University. It acknowledges the importance of supporting international students’ “integration into city and University life and providing them with high quality experience”<sup>7</sup>. It is a firm belief of GUSRC that its operations and activities make a significant contribution to the international student experience.

The number of international students utilising GUSRC services is disproportionately high in comparison with the overall international student population at Glasgow. The unique halls to campus minibus service, The Advice Centre as well as the information and reception services, and the Student Volunteering Service and Clubs and Societies all enjoy high uptake from international students. In the forthcoming years GUSRC will continue to seek to ensure that we work with the University in meeting the support and social needs of Glasgow’s expanding international student community.

GUSRC has established links with Glasgow International College, many of whose students participate in GUSRC activities, e.g. language café and use our services, particularly the Shuttle Bus Service.

GUSRC Council includes an International Officer position. There have been doubts expressed however, about the effectiveness of having a volunteer, elected, position and expecting a full time student to cover the needs of such a broad

constituency. The remit of the position is under constant review, with the International Officer working closely with Vice President - Student Support throughout their term.

GUSRCs performance with regard to international students is generally highly rated. Over the period of the previous strategic plan GUSRC commonly received a 95% or above satisfaction rating amongst international students in the i-graduate International Student Barometer. On several occasions GUSRC achieved the highest rating of any of the University of Glasgow “Support Services” and was frequently one of the top two highest ranked ‘Student Unions’ in the Russell Group and as well as making the top ten top ten in the international rankings. GUSRC hopes to continue to deliver a quality service to international students which will be demonstrated by achieving a 95% average rating in the ISB over the four years of this plan.

GUSRC supports over one hundred student clubs and societies; the ISB rate clubs and societies support separately and they scored highly with an average rating over 95% over the past three years. The ISB of Summer 2009 ranked the University of Glasgow’s clubs and societies first in the UK and internationally! GUSRC will continue to provide funding and support to the diverse range of clubs and societies which make an incredible contribution to Glasgow’s thriving campus life, promote integration and provide an opportunity for many students to develop new skills and perspectives which will serve them throughout their lives.

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Over 25% of GUSRC’s clubs and societies, of which there are more than one hundred, could be regarded as having an international focus, with a much greater larger percentage of others including international students as participants and volunteers.

Over the period covered by the previous GUSRC Strategic Plan (2008 to 2011), a significant proportion of Advice Centre clients were either EU students (13%) or international (non-EU) students (20%).

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# POSTGRADUATE EXPANSION

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The new GUSRC structure also provides for significantly enhanced Postgraduate Representation through its democratic structures. GUSRC will seek to build on the findings of the 2009 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey where, 95% of PGRs at Glasgow had heard of GUSRC, but 75% had never used it or engaged with any of its services.

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In addition to a growth in international students the University has stated its intention to expand its postgraduate community with a specific ambition to attract the “best postgraduate research applicants, domestically and internationally”. Whilst GUSRC and the University have had some success in developing engagement and feedback mechanisms for undergraduate students, the situation at Glasgow is similar to that across higher education in Scotland, where many postgraduate students, particularly researchers, typically do not engage with formal student representative structures. In recent years GUSRC has, through its development of PG Forums, sought to establish mechanisms for Postgraduate Researchers and Postgraduate Taught students to feedback to the University.

The aforementioned work, along with a recognition of the ‘representation gap’ and the desirability of increased postgraduate engagement, has led GUSRC to work with the Graduate Schools in developing of a new system of Postgraduate Representation in both GUSRC and the Graduate Schools.

The restructuring of GUSRC Council to mirror the new academic shape has resulted in the creation of

a Postgraduate Convenor position for each college. GUSRC’s governing council now has four dedicated postgraduate positions where previously there was only elected postgraduate representative.

The 2009 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey found that 95% of PGRs at Glasgow had heard of GUSRC, but 75% had never used it or engaged with any of its services. There are obviously new opportunities for GUSRC and the University to identify how to address the specific requirements of postgraduate researchers and teachers in engaging with student representation in any capacity.

A key area of concern raised through the GUSRC Postgraduate Forums has been the lack of Postgraduate Social Space on Campus. The closure of the Hetherington Building brought this issue to the fore. Although the University has long terms plans for the development of “appropriate” postgraduate space, GUSRC continued to raise concerns regarding short/medium term provision, this has resulted in the establishment of the PG Social Space Working Group, jointly chaired by a University Senior Management Members and GUSRC President.

## ESTATES & BUILDINGS

The University's rolling, five-year capital plan identifies the priority order of all capital investment and is intended to ensure all infrastructure is developed in line with the University's strategic aims. There is potential for alteration of the plan in-year. The costs of maintaining the University's estate is second only to staff salaries in terms of University expenditure. Along with the capital investment priorities the University is therefore seeking to increase efficiency in estate use. The University's transfer to the Western Infirmary site appears imminent, with the purchase of the site from the NHS having been completed, and with the University planning to be on the site by 2017. There have been no plans agreed for the use of this site but its acquisition opens up possibilities for investment and growth not available within the boundary and urban planning constraints of the Gilmorehill campus.

A Project Board has been created as a sub-committee of the Estates Committee, and it has been agreed that GUSRC will have representation on this sub-committee. The University acknowledges "Fit-for-purpose infrastructure for our students, research funders and staff is vital if the University is to achieve its ambitions".

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A low-level, background noise of discontent persists amongst some residents of Glasgow's West End, at whose heart the University is based, with regard to the large local student population. The media are often keen to propagate stories which present students in a negative light. In recent years GUSRC has developed links with local community and council leaders in order to establish a more relaxed dialogue and work together on areas of mutual interest, including taking part in local community initiatives such as the 'Save Our Lane!' campaign in regards to the Otago Lane redevelopment plans. GUSRC will continue to develop its work in this area and build on the strong working relationships that now exist.



**GUSRC TAKING PART IN THE SAVE OTAGO LANE CAMPAIGN**

# INTERNAL REVIEW



## FUTURE DIRECTION

GUSRC is a multi-faceted organisation. Three main pillars of this strategy encapsulate the range of activities and services GUSRC provides. The function of this plan is to serve as an enabling framework by defining common aims for the elected officers and senior staff of the organisation.

The plan provides the basis for operational planning and the setting of more specific internal goals and targets against which we can measure our progress.

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There is a clear steer from the consultation exercise that prioritisation of engaging postgraduates, working with international students and developing graduate attributes would be welcomed. There are resource issues which will impact on the organisation's capacity to progress any new activity.

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A theme of the consultation process over the last year is that the focus of the existing strategic plan remained relevant. One interviewee summarised the view: *"The strategic direction of the organisation doesn't need to change, so it shouldn't for the sake of it. Strategic plans are necessarily general in their aspirations-the organisation is on a very positive upward trajectory so the focus should remain"*.

This plan reflects the general view that GUSRC should continue along the same course as in recent years. The key mechanisms for achieving those aims should remain broadly similar. There is potential for some 'tweaks' and a need to recognise and accommodate the extremely limited potential for attracting extra grant funding through our key source of income: the University block grant.

There is a clear steer from the consultation exercise that prioritisation of engaging postgraduates, working with international students and developing graduate attributes would be welcomed. There are resource issues which will impact on GUSRC's capacity to progress any new activity.

## JOHN MCINTYRE BUILDING

Proposals to redevelop GUSRC's home, the John McIntyre Building, were put on hold by the University following a review of priorities due emerging from new financial restraints. The review resulted in John McIntyre Building works being given a low priority in the rolling capital plan. Following a short decant period during 2010 GUSRC returned to the building on completion of roof repairs. Positive discussions between GUSRC and the University concerning the future usage of the space vacated by John Smiths bookshop have taken place. It is anticipated that plans regarding future usage of the building, which bring benefit to GUSRC as well as complement stated University objectives, will be agreed and implemented by academic session 2012/2013.

# RESTRUCTURING REPRESENTATION

The 2010 academic restructuring has afforded GUSRC the opportunity to develop a more comprehensive representative system. Previously, the high number of class representatives who came under a GUSRC Faculty Convenor's remit rendered it impossible for these Convenors to monitor and act on feedback from their class representatives. The new schools structure has facilitated the introduction of an intermediate representative layer in GUSRC's democratic hierarchy; Faculty Convenors have been replaced by College Convenors. School Representatives have been introduced and sit between Class Representatives and College Convenors. School representatives only requires to be familiar with their own school and keep track of a smaller number of class representatives; college representatives in turn can make use of a much smaller advisory group of school representatives to gain an informed overview issues particular to their school.

The withdrawal of sparqs from course representative training places a larger burden on GUSRC to adequately resource such activities, particularly at a time when its own funding could face a considerable cut. GUSRC face a range of challenges when attempting to build the credibility of these extended tiers of representation and ensure that new representatives are effectively trained, supported and recognised by both GUSRC and the University.

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"The challenge for GUSRC will be to build the credibility of these extended tiers of representation and ensure that new representatives are effectively trained, supported and recognised by both GUSRC and the University."

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**CAMPAGNING IN GUSRC ANNUAL ELECTIONS**

# COMMUNICATION & PUBLICITY STRATEGY



The mantra continues: 'not enough people know what the SRC does'. This is a view commonly held and most often expressed amongst GUSRC Council members and candidates in GUSRC elections. A review of election manifestos and Glasgow Guardian articles over many years highlights this as an ongoing theme reflecting an understandable desire for GUSRC to have a more significant presence in the collective student consciousness.

Interestingly, the ELIR team commented on the awareness and approachability of GUSRC, saying "*Students confirmed that they were aware of the role of the SRC in representing their views. Students also indicated that the SRC was accessible and 'easy to get to know', and that they could bring matters of concern to the SRC, including issues raised through the class representative system*"<sup>78</sup>.

During the period of the previous three year plan, significant attempts were made to address the communications issue; a more strategic approach to publicity branding was implemented and 2008/09 saw a significant improvement in online engagement with students. GUSRC now produce annual reports and have developed the first year student diary to complement our student guide. The University also ensures considerable positive publicity for GUSRC is included in Freshers' information it sends out. The grant allocation system for clubs and societies has been reviewed in order to ensure greater dialogue between grant recipients and GUSRC. The greater awareness amongst University staff of our services ensures that this is passed onto students who are signposted or referred to our services as appropriate.

Although many users of GUSRC services may not recognise that such services are actually provided by the organisation, the fact remains that most services are well used and virtually at capacity.

Several consultees were of the opinion that the issue is not how GUSRC markets itself but rather how it engages with students and how its structures permit and effect meaningful student engagement and representation. Whilst there remains a need for GUSRC to publicise its work, there needs to be a stronger focus on 'drilling down' through the layers of its membership in ways that encourage a two-way dialogue which, in turn, informs the representation function and bolsters recognition and legitimacy amongst the membership. The concepts of marketing, engagement and representation are closely linked and GUSRC still requires building on its performance, particularly in the last two of these.



## GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

The University will be increasing its focus on co-curricular activities in the next few years to meet HEAR and Development of Graduate Attributes expectations.

The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy sets out its key 'graduate attributes' agenda as: *"To embed and make transparent within our programmes, and throughout the student experience, the opportunities for the development of attributes that enhance the personal and professional development of our students so preparing them for global employment and citizenship."*

GUSRC is a key contributor to student personal development through its provision of clubs and societies, volunteering opportunities, student media outlets and the student representative system. Its support for over 600 volunteers and more than a hundred clubs and societies annually ensures that the organisation is vital to the development of students' graduate attributes outside of their programme of study. During the consultation process for this strategy, several senior members of University staff have highlighted that it would be desirable for GUSRC to develop its work further in this area.

There are major advantages in both GUSRC and the University working together in partnership to forge a holistic approach to personal development and the student experience. GUSRC can make a significant contribution to the progression of the traditional curricular/extra-curricular paradigm of provision into a co-curricular model which encourages staff, students and employers to view the vast array of developmental opportunities available through GUSRC as a complementary and vital counterpart in the development of students' graduate attributes and employability.

To this end, it would benefit both the students and the University to delineate the GUSRC role as a partner in the provision of co-curricular opportunities for students to develop their graduate attributes. Indeed, there may be some merit in formalising their respective roles in this regard through a service level agreement or similar.

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GUSRC's Student Volunteer Support Service continues to provide a wide range of opportunities for students. During the session 2008/2009, 446 students were supported through volunteering activity across 14 projects within the University and Glasgow community. For the 2010/11 academic session, this had increased to 620 students volunteering across 17 projects with further increases expected for 2011/2012.

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# FUNDING

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“Despite a real term reduction in block grant income we have managed to bridge the gap and maintain services at current levels. Unlike other student led organisations on campus GUSRC has no scope for trading out of any financial difficulties.”

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GUSRC receives around 70% of its annual income through the University’s block grant. Additional income is generated through the University’s Residential Services contribution towards Halls to Campus Shuttle Service. GUSRC also generates some revenue from vending machines as well as Reception Services and a Second Hand Bookshop (the latter two of which operate at break even). Additional income is generated through advertising opportunities such as Glasgow Guardian and Freshers’ Fair. GUSRC has recently agreed, as a pilot project, to take on responsibility for University Tours.

GUSRC’s core functions are based around enhancing the student experience. The organisation has no trading remit, nor is it capable of generating large revenue streams. GUSRC will therefore continue to be reliant on the University as its single source of funding.

In recent years the organisation’s allocation from the block grant has been static. For the financial years 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 GUSRC have been advised to plan for a 5% cut in funding.

During the period of the previous strategic plan, costs were reduced and GUSRC remained within the proximity of breakeven. The largest saving was

in staff costs of over 10%. Virtually all staff savings were backroom, with reductions in administration and support staff. The decision to employ more students rather than recruit core permanent staff has been of considerable financial help and, more importantly, has ensured that a steady stream of bright, informed and enthusiastic individuals flow through the organisation.

Despite a real term reduction in block grant income GUSRC has managed to bridge the financial gap and maintain services at current levels. Unlike other student led organisations on campus, GUSRC has no scope for trading out of any financial difficulties. Whilst additional revenue generating projects such as the aforementioned Campus Tours could contribute in a small way towards filling a financial shortfall, any further reduction in core grant funding is likely to impact directly on the organisation’s contribution to the student experience.

It is essential that GUSRC continue to demonstrate to the University the considerable value for money the organisation provides. The embedding of GUSRC in the University Strategic plan highlights the importance of its contribution. For this work to develop, or even continue in its current form, it is essential that the University provides the financial backing.





# MEETING EXPECTATIONS

The University clearly values the work of GUSRC. The University's most recent strategic plan acknowledges that the work of GUSRC is a significant element in providing an excellent student experience, many GUSRC services and activities are referred to throughout the University's plan.

For example, in reference to the Advice Centre the University states "Our support structure will continue to be enriched by the SRC Student Advice Centre that provides a wide range of invaluable independent support on academic matters such as complaints, appeals, and student conduct and on social issues such as national insurance and taxation, the UK benefit system, employment rights, financial support, health and housing."

Although the consultation process to inform this strategy was intended to focus on the relevance of existing strategic aims, there was an widespread enthusiasm from University Staff regarding the work of GUSRC's work, with this in mind, comments from staff are quoted below. These quotes show the high value that the University place on the contribution GUSRC makes to University life.

The danger is however that any further diminution in revenue funding will render us unable to meet expectations and sustain our work at its current level. Although GUSRC has been and is an organisation bursting with new ideas and initiatives, it is more likely that activities will require to be tempered and we will enter a period of consolidation.

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*"The trajectory of GUSRC in recent years has been fantastic"*

*"The University now have a clear view of the SRC's role as does the SRC itself, the annual report is particularly helpful as it relates to achievements directly back to those aims set out in strategic plan".*

*"The range of professional services to students is valued and the SRC overall is highly valued by senior management"*

*"GUSRC just seems to get better and better"*

*"Real difference in recent years, SRC has far more of a structure, like night and day"*

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# REPORTING & MONITORING

The University receives a comprehensive Annual Report from GUSRC, presented to University Court on publication. During the consultation process for the development of this strategy, senior University staff spoke positively about the quality of recent Annual Reports and how they clearly linked activities to the aims outlined in the previous strategic plan. The Annual Report has been recognised by a variety of stakeholders as a useful reflective mechanism which demonstrates the value provided by GUSRC.

The quality of reporting has been aided by ongoing investment in a bespoke electronic database system to record activities and outcomes across different areas of the organisation's operation. The information garnered is useful management information and helps ensure that GUSRC is in a position to provide its major funder with details of how block grant money is being deployed and directed at enhancing the student experience.

The information available through the database is also a useful tool in helping identify recurrent issues and patterns which are impacting on Glasgow University Students, in turn, this can aid and inform representational activity. GUSRC's credibility with the University is in part due to its evidence-based approach to campaigning and change.



# CONTINUITY

GUSRC Officers are elected annually; inevitably this can impact on the capacity to deliver on long-term aims as new student officers often have differing priorities. As stated previously, a key function of this document is to serve as part of a continuity mechanism which will allow student officers to set their own priorities within a very broad strategic framework.

The induction training for sabbatical officers will continue in its current format with minor tweaks from year-to-year. The training is evaluated annually and feedback from sabbatical officers is generally extremely positive. Adjustments are made based on feedback (i.e. introduction of Consultation Skills session in 2009). This document will be incorporated into induction training for new student officers.

The staff will continue to play an important role supporting and advising student officers, and working in partnership to achieve the organisational and individual aims. The positive working relationships that exist between GUSRC staff and University staff helps ensure a degree of continuity at operational level.

The only area of concern under the continuity banner relates to the role of the VP Media and Communications. Several of the previous sabbatical officers who have held the position have commented on the incongruity of the role sitting within the sabbatical constituency. In light of these comments, as well as the responsibility placed on the role as GUSRC becomes more prominent on campus, it may be that a review of the role and responsibilities of the VP Media and Communications is required in the forthcoming years.

However, it is worth reinforcing that the student media is and will continue to be a crucial part of the responsibility of the organisation. GUSRC is proud of the achievements of the student media in recent years and the opportunities it provides for students. It is essential that the student media is nurtured, supported and developed over the period of this plan. Any review of the VP Media and Communications role should address suitable alternative options for managing the student media in order to enable it to continue to fulfill its potential and play a central role in student and University life.

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“While the role of VP Media and Communications has been performed successfully at times, I struggle to see what the role brings to the Sabbatical Executive – importantly it does not fulfil an ‘executive’ role. When the role has been performed successfully it has been very similar to having a member of staff and provided the right member of staff could be found (a part-time member of staff or student?) GUSRC could save money and bring greater clarity to the role.

Oversight of the student media isn’t and shouldn’t be the main focus of the role. They are services which should be managed as such and not given false stature by the expectation the VP M&C will support them.”<sup>9</sup>

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# STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

In order to lend clarity to GUSRC's direction and set out the parameters of its operation, GUSRC adopted its first ever strategic plan for the period 2008 to 2011. Whilst continuing to deliver on the aims set out in this plan GUSRC has, over the last year, consulted with a range of stakeholders, University Staff, Council members, students and GUSRC Staff in order to review the aims set out in the existing strategy and agree the way forward for the period 2011 to 2015. The statements below represent common themes deduced from consultees' feedback:

- *The 2008-2011 strategy is still appropriate; there was virtual unanimity that it remained relevant.*
- *GUSRC's Annual Reports relating activities and outcomes to strategic objectives are highly valued.*
- *The Graduate Attributes agenda could be significant for GUSRC, as main provider of volunteering opportunities at the University. Scope exists for GUSRC to make a significant contribution.*
- *GUSRC should capitalise on new opportunities offered by University and GUSRC restructuring to broaden and deepen engagement activity.*
- *GUSRC should continue to build on current work with postgraduates and work with the University in enhancing postgraduate engagement activity.*
- *The 2008-2011 strategy's focus on University and student issues rather than the broader, national political scene was universally welcomed.*
- *There was potential to build stronger links between class representatives and GUSRC; although some concerns were expressed about capacity to fund appropriate training.*
- *Further reductions in the block grant allocation will impact on the capacity of GUSRC to maintain the quality of its existing work.*
- *Loss of the Development Fund, previously a source of funding for capital items caused concern. GUSRC should consider the value of developing qualitative analysis tools across our activities.*

GUSRC is an independent and student led organisation which represents all students registered at the University of Glasgow. GUSRC's principal mission is simple; to provide effective representation, support, opportunities and services for and on behalf of the students of the University of Glasgow. With this in mind, as well as consultee feedback from Strategic Plan 2008-11, a number of high level aims which overarch GUSRC's broad area of operation have been identified, with a number of individual aims recognised within each.

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## Representation and Engagement

Ensure the interests and views of our members are represented and addressed throughout the University and overarch externally.

## Student Well Being

Promote the well being of existing students and potential students by providing independent professional support services which reflect the diversity of the student body.

## Volunteering and Graduate Attributes

Contribute to a thriving campus life and individual personal development through provision of opportunities and activities which meet the intellectual, cultural and social needs of our members.

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# REPRESENTATION & ENGAGEMENT

AIM 1

## GOALS

- 1.1 Continue to have a strong partnership with the University, provide added value to their strategy through effective student engagement and retain role as "Critical Friend".
- 1.2 To ensure our role as a representative organisation is legitimate by maximizing membership involvement and acting accountably and transparently.

## OBJECTIVES

- Continue to ensure that student representatives have places on every appropriate University committee/working group.
- Ensure the student officers' capacity to represent is augmented by an effective, GUSRC staff briefing and support structure.
- Support University in carrying out and responding to research relating to students' needs and expectations (e.g. NSS).
- Work with the University to develop mechanisms for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of our feedback and engagement systems.
- Implement revised democratic representative structures (post restructure) and review annually.
- Promote high quality teaching by continuing to develop annual Prizes for Excellent Teachers awards.
- Develop a specific PGR representative and engagement system and amend code of representation to include PGRs.
- Deliver annual class representative training to minimum 500 representatives and review annually.
- Work jointly with the University in developing methods of evaluating quality and impact of course representative system.
- Strengthen linkages and work towards integrating course representatives to GUSRC.
- Achieve a minimum of 3,000 votes cast annually in spring elections.



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**1.3** Represent the interest of our members to the local community, local politicians as well as local and national government.

- To organise campaigns and lobbying activity on issues impacting on our members.
- Continue to respond to governmental consultation on matters relevant to our current and future membership.
- Continue to participate in community council meetings and maintain working relationship with local politicians.
- Identify potential issues track trends and provide reports on emerging legislative/social policy issues through the advice centre.
- Ensure student officers are armed with relevant information and skills in preparation for lobbying and campaigning activity they might engage in.
- Continue to develop our working partnerships with external organisations such as sparqs, CPAG and Govan Law Centre to the benefit of students.

**1.4** To promote opportunities for student voice to be heard independently of GUSRC.

- Continue to provide administration, IT, and financial support to the University of Glasgow's student media (Glasgow University Guardian, Subcity Radio, Glasgow University Student Television, Glasgow University Magazine).
- Consider grant applications from affiliated clubs and societies wishing to engage in lobbying/campaigning activity outwith scope of GUSRC (provided activities do not contravene GUSRC equal opportunities policy).
- Develop social networking activity as a means of encouraging debate and feedback.

# STUDENT WELLBEING

**AIM 2**

## GOALS

- 2.1** Continue the provision of, welcoming and knowledgeable reception and information service and enhance role as welcome point for University as a whole.
- 2.2** Provide access to quality independent advice and representation.
- 2.3** Contribute to students' financial well being through delivery of affordable study support services.
- 2.4** Enhance student safety and perception of safety.

## OBJECTIVES

- Increase access to reception by transferring to ground floor and negotiate resources for enhanced provision as University welcome point.
- Continue with policy of recruiting students as reception staff.
- Maintain triage function of reception and information service and offer clear signposting to routes which extend beyond our own stated provision.
- Continue communication channels between internal teams/ departments and appropriate University staff to ensure sharing of up to date information.
- Continue to provide properly resourced Advice Centre.
- Ensure Advice Centre staff are appropriately qualified and have access to training and support.
- Maintain quality standards through a casework review system and annual client feedback review.
- Maintain links with external agencies as sources of advice (Child Poverty Action Group, Shelter, Govan Law Centre).
- Continue to deliver GUSRC's key value services and seek to expand space available to them; photocopying and printing service, faxing, binding and scanning facilities, GUSRC Second Hand Bookshop.
- Continue to deliver the free Halls to Campus Minibus service and review routes annually.
- Continue to lobby and campaign for safe routes and lighting on student travelled walking routes.
- Continue to supply free personal alarms to vulnerable students.

**2.5** Develop and deliver events which contribute to the orientation, socialisation and retention of students.

- Continue to be the lead student organisation in the delivery of a successful Freshers' week.
- Achieve an average of 3,000 Freshers Pass sales per annum.
- Organise an annual Freshers' Week. cross-cultural event.
- Organise a minimum of six language café events per annum.
- Provide spaces for a minimum of fifty clubs and societies at the Freshers' fair.

**2.6** Develop and deliver events which contribute to the orientation, socialisation and retention of students.

- Produce annual student guide (The Guide) and 1st Year Student Diary.
- Annually review and update GUSRC Advice Centre publications ( e.g. flat hunting guide, employment rights advice).
- Ensure GUSRC Website and Social Networking sites are used as a complementary tool in communicating and clarifying welfare issue to our membership.

**2.7** Work to ensure we are meeting postgraduates and International students needs and promote inclusive activities

- Retain a minimum International Student Barometer rating of 95%.
- Support clubs and societies in retaining an ISB rating of 94% or above.
- Continue, where possible, to monitor the demographic of our service users and take remedial steps if necessary to ensure representation for all.
- Build upon existing foundations in working with Glasgow International College.
- Achieve higher levels of participation and involvement from Postgraduate Students in activities and as service users.
- Seek to incorporate PGRs in University Code of Representation.



# VOLUNTEERING & GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

AIM 3

## GOALS

**3.1** Promote volunteering activity amongst the student body and minimise barriers to participation in volunteering.

**3.2** Develop opportunities to integrate activities with University Graduate Attributes objectives.

## OBJECTIVES

- Continue to resource the Student Volunteer Support Service through which we aim support a minimum of five hundred student volunteers per annum.
- Increase range of volunteering activities by maintaining and extending partnerships with agencies and organisations.
- Continue to work in tandem with student-initiated volunteer projects such as Student Volunteers Abroad and Student Action for Refugees.
- Continue to develop effective promotional material specific to individual volunteer projects.
- Provide developmental and administrative support to the University of Glasgow Settlement.
- Establish links with all relevant University staff and committees in relation to the Graduate Attributes agenda.
- Map existing GUSRC extracurricular activities and work with University to agree potential for complementary linkages.
- Develop partnership agreement with University on development and delivery of co-curricular activity.
- Continue to promote Graduate Attributes and give agenda currency within student body.
- Reinforce Graduate Attribute and skills development to all current and future volunteers working with GUSRC's Student Volunteer Support Service.



**3.3** Ensure volunteers benefit to the full from their experience.

- Continue to provide training and ongoing support to volunteers and potential volunteers.
- Continue to develop the system of certification and awards for those who have participated as volunteers.
- Continue to process checks under the Protection of Vulnerable Adults system and act as an intermediary agency for student led groups.

**3.4** Ensure clubs and societies enjoy a supportive campus environment

- Seek to ensure a minimum of 100 clubs and societies affiliate annually.
- Maximise uptake of financial support and administrative help reviewing procedures annually.
- Review clubs and societies awards event with a view to increasing participation in the event.
- Develop system for periodic review of services to Clubs and Societies.

**3.5** Provide part time employment opportunities for students where such opportunities will contribute to their professional/personal development.

- Recruit and train students to deliver campus tours programme. Recruit and train students to provide class representative training.
- Recruit and train students to provide office and administration support.
- Offer a range of project specific activities to GU students.

# PERSONNEL

AIM 4

## GOALS

- 4.1** Remain a learning organisation by fostering understanding of mutually beneficial role of staff and elected officers.
- 4.2** Ensure staff and student officers have the necessary skills, knowledge and support to fulfil their roles.
- 4.3** Continue to improve internal communications and reporting procedures in order to ensure a culture of inclusiveness, and a shared understanding of achievements and future aims.
- 4.4** To more effectively meet the needs of our membership by increasing access to our services.
- 4.5** Ensure equality of opportunity applies to all areas of our internal and external operations.

## OBJECTIVES

- Ensure clarity of roles and procedures within personnel through appropriate training for both staff members and student officers.
- Facilitate joint staff and student officer events to foster productive working relationships.
- Continue to deliver current performance appraisal system.
- Ensure all staff have access to appropriate training and professional development opportunities.
- Continue annual entrance and exit data collection for sabbatical officers, as well as external evaluations of sabbatical induction and orientation training.
- Develop procedures for staff and sabbatical officers' start-of-year planning and target setting to ensure mutually agreeable goals and positive working relationships.
- Continue weekly sabbatical officers and Permanent Secretary meetings, senior management team meetings and regular staff meetings, with periodic reviews.
- Maximise the effectiveness of using IT in communication.
- Continue discussions with relevant Estates and Buildings Personnel to ensure redeveloped building is fit for purpose.
- Continue to refine and develop online interfaces.
- Ensure SRC Equal Opportunities policy is included in induction for staff and student officers.
- Ensure we comply with all relevant equal opportunities legislation as a minimum standard.
- Provide appropriate training to all staff and student officers.

## FINANCE

## AIM 5

## GOALS

- 5.1** Demonstrate the value of our work by reporting to key stakeholders on progress against stated objectives.
- 5.2** Ensure our annual income enables us to meet our objectives.
- 5.3** To operate a robust financial control regime, ensuring tight budgetary control and efficient financial processes.
- 5.4** Ensure appropriate contingencies are in place and reserves remain at an appropriate level.

## OBJECTIVES

- Ensure our monitoring and data collection process are fit for purpose and reflect our aims and review.
- Report on activities, achievements and areas for improvement annually.
- Ensure user feedback mechanisms feed into future planning and service development activity.
- Continue to make the case for increased block grant allocation.
- Continue to undertake 'low level' income generating activity in order to augment funding gap between University block grant and GUSRC's requirements.
- Continue effective treasury management.
- Provide appropriate training to all student officers and new members of staff.
- Continue to review key budgets and monthly forecasts along with quarterly financial overview and scrutiny sessions at GUSRC Finance Committee.
- Encourage appropriate scrutiny of GUSRC plans and budgets by members of the University.
- Incorporate as part of reviewed risk management policy.

# NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Options Appraisal of Student Bodies at the University of Glasgow (IBP Strategy and Research 29/05/2009)
- <sup>2</sup> Options Appraisal of Student Bodies at the University of Glasgow (IBP Strategy and Research 29/05/2009)
- <sup>3</sup> University of Glasgow ; Glasgow 2020 – A Global Vision p19
- <sup>4</sup> The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2010 Report on the Enhancement-led institutional review University of Glasgow
- <sup>5</sup> Learning and Teaching Strategy 2011 – 2015
- <sup>6</sup> Enhancement-led institutional review handbook: Scotland (Second edition) 2008 (Para 14)
- <sup>7</sup> University of Glasgow ; Glasgow 2020 – A Global Vision
- <sup>8</sup> Enhancement-led institutional review handbook: Scotland (Second edition) 2008
- <sup>9</sup> Former GUSRC Sabbatical Officer

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**“[There is] clear evidence of a strong and effective partnership between the SRC and University, which has developed significant developments in policy and provision, all of which contribute positively to the student experience of Glasgow”**

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- Enhancement Led Institutional Review, University of Glasgow 2010