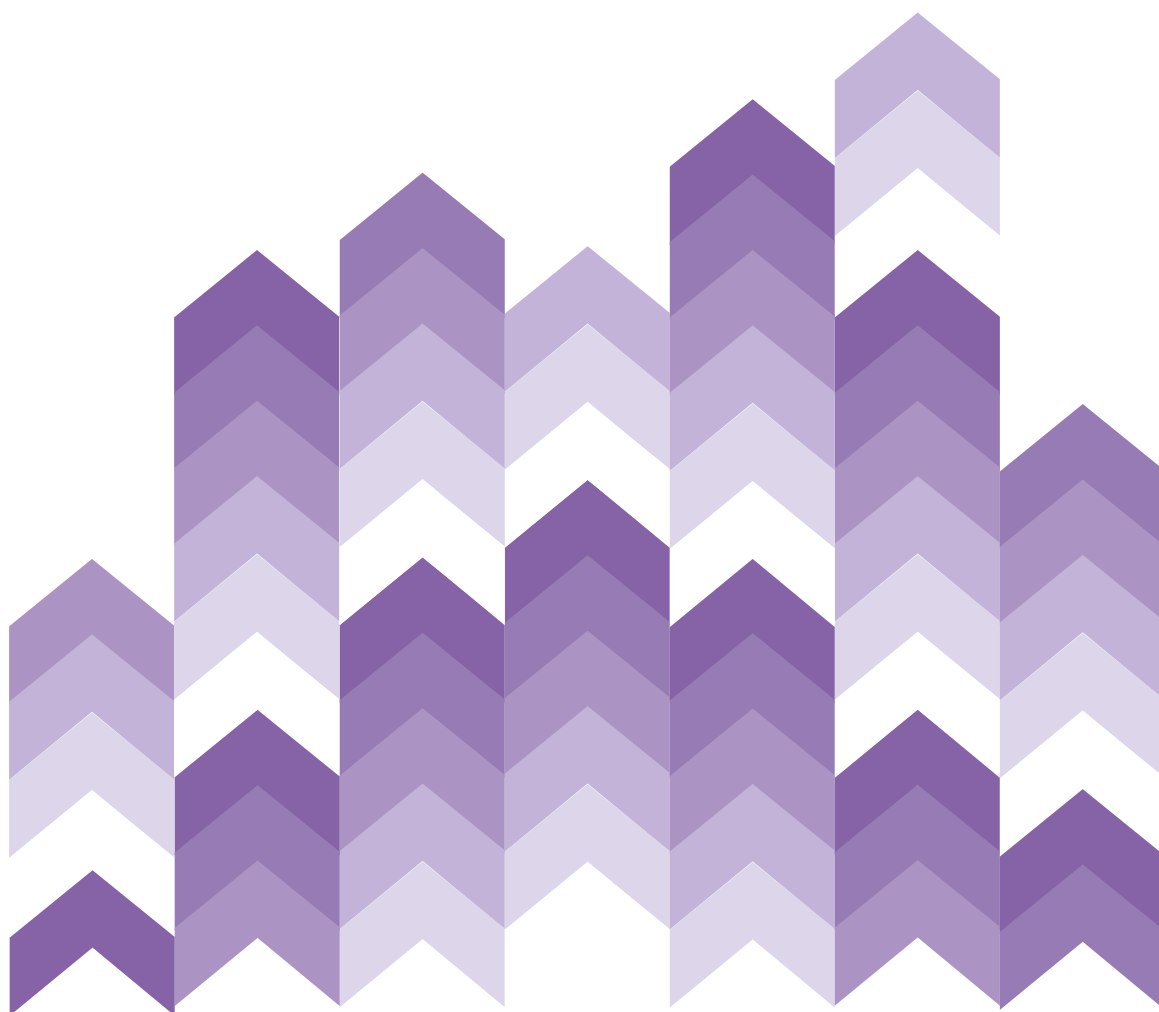




UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2015/16



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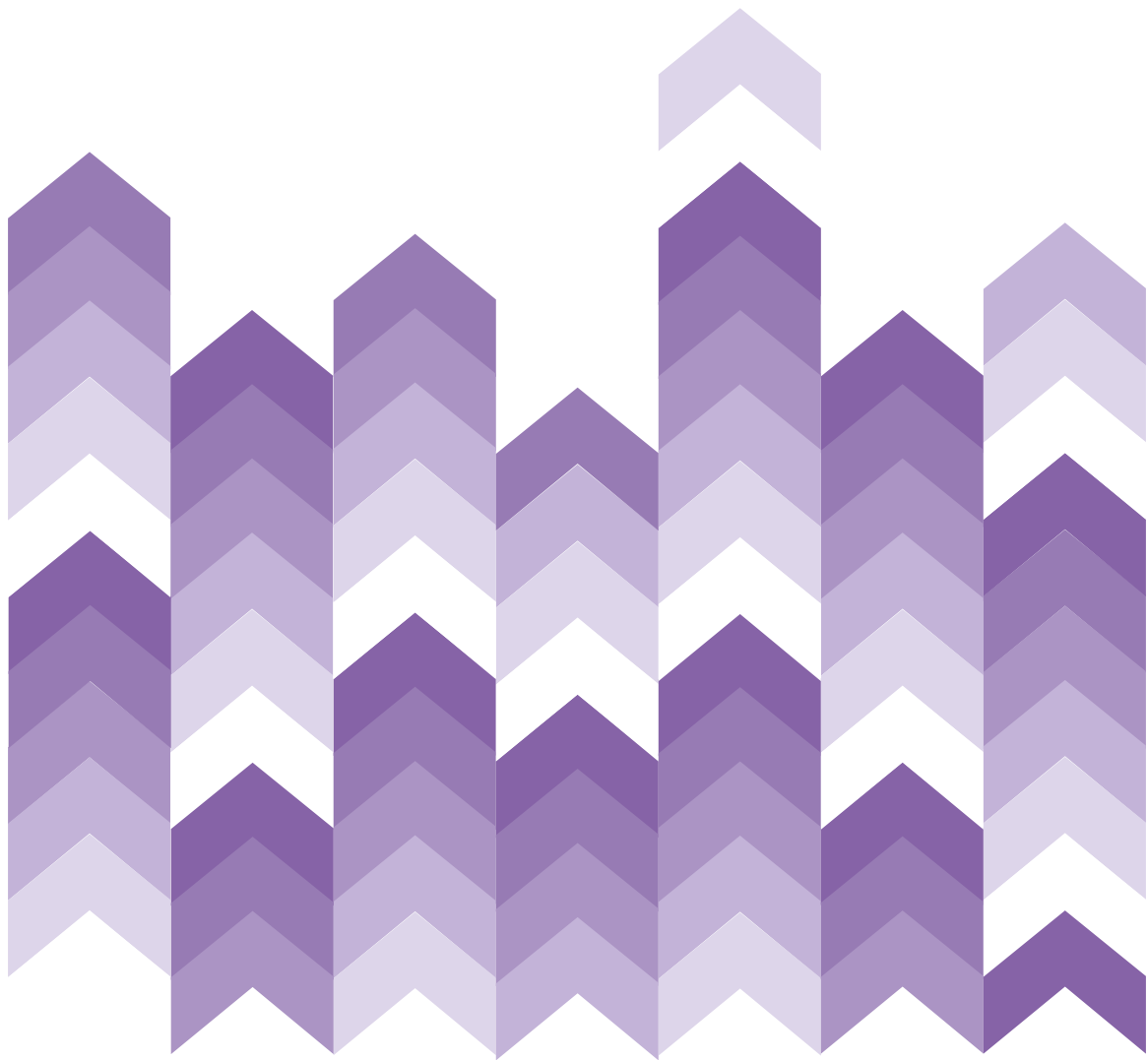
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WELCOME & INTRODUCTION





FOREWORD

Welcome to the ninth Annual Report from the University of Glasgow Students' Representative Council (GUSRC).

In 2015/16, following extensive consultation, we finalised and approved our new Strategic Plan 2015-2020. The excitement and renewed focus in the organisation drives us to build on our successes across the range of services and activities we provide. We are proud to be making a significant positive contribution to student life at the University of Glasgow.

This annual report will set out the work and success we have had across our key strategic aims of representation and engagement; support and wellbeing; volunteering and community engagement. Our aims remain largely unchanged from our previous strategy, with the only major change being a refocusing around community engagement to reflect our values as a socially responsible organisation; promoting social good inside and outside the University community. In seeking to enhance our accountability we have developed more firm success indicators across our key aims, allowing us to better demonstrate our successes and assisting us in reviewing our operations where we deviate from our stated direction.

Highlights this year have included the sixth consecutive year-on-year increase in STA nominations to 1,250; Advice Centre financial wins for students of £62,271 (always an extremely conservative estimate); a record total of 324 affiliated student clubs and societies with a membership of 15,500 and the development of our new online student volunteering portal.

We had another exciting and successful Freshers' Week focused on making all students feel welcome to the University and wider Glasgow. Through a range of events, some targeted to specific groups of 'non-traditional' students, we complemented the more traditional Freshers' Week activities undertaken by the University's student unions.

Whilst we continued to make significant progress in 2015/16 it was not without its challenges: increased demand on services has been stretching our staff team; a diversifying student body needs much more diverse engagement; and the dramatically changing policy environment, such as the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act, the forthcoming TEF, and of course Brexit, has created uncertainty and complexity. All this has added to existing pressures we experience on student and staff officer capacity and from the uncertainty and complexity of the University's Campus Redevelopment plan.

That being said, we are proud to have the continued confidence of our key stakeholder, the University. The University demonstrated its faith in us by accepting our arguments and rationale for a small increase in the block grant in what are straitened times and University Court has endorsed the strength of our Strategic Plan 2015-2020. For a small organisation, we punch well above our weight and we go into 2016/17 ready to have the tough conversations, and win for our students.

Liam King
GUSRC President 2015/16

Bob Hay
Permanent Secretary

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2015/16



ELECTION SUCCESS

Both of GUSRC's annual elections had strong voter turnouts and candidate numbers in 2015/16, with the Autumn 2015 showing consistency with the previous academic year and the Spring 2016 election setting a five-year record for voter turnout.

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RECORD VOLUNTEER YEAR

GUSRC's Student Volunteer Support Service experienced a landmark year, with over a thousand students registering to be part of the service for the first time in history, and the number of active volunteers significantly increased from 2014/15.

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PATRIARCHITECTURE PROJECT

Launched in 2014/15, GUSRC's patriarchitecture project came to fruition in the past academic year, with the first building renamed in late 2015. The project aims to highlight the diversity of the University community and alumni network, with further changes planned for forthcoming academic years.

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STA GROWTH

The GUSRC organised Student Teaching Awards affords students the opportunity to recognise the work of lecturers, tutors and other members of University staff. In its sixth year, 2015/16 saw a record number of nominations submitted by students, the fifth time in six years that the initiative has shown a year-on-year increase in growth.

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SUBCITY: 20 YEARS ON AIR

Subcity Radio, one of the four GUSRC-supported student media outlets, celebrated its twentieth anniversary of broadcasting during the academic year, marking the occasion with a series of special events across Glasgow.

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REFRESHERS' REFRESHED

Launched in 2014/15 as a cross-campus project to encourage students to use their time at the start of second semester to try new things, Refreshers' Week was rebranded in 2016 as simply Refreshers to allow for an extended program of events.

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SAFE TAXI SCHEME

GUSRC launched an initiative, in collaboration with Glasgow Taxis, to help safeguard the wellbeing of students who find themselves financially unable to get home. Launched early in the academic year, the initiative was well received by the student population.

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CLUBS & SOCIETIES

The shift in culture of student life towards socialising through clubs and societies continued, with GUSRC affiliating a record number of clubs for the fifth consecutive year. The academic year ended with another successful Volunteering, Clubs and Societies event hosted by GUSRC.

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GOVERNANCE

University of Glasgow Students' Representative Council (GUSRC) is a non-incorporated organisation and is a registered charity (Scottish Charity No SC006970). It is the main representative body of students of the University of Glasgow.

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.

MISSION

"TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION, SUPPORT, OPPORTUNITIES AND SERVICES FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW."

AIMS

GUSRC operates according to three high level aims which define the three key roles of the organisation on campus.

REPRESENTATION & ENGAGEMENT

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

SUPPORT & WELFARE

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

VOLUNTEERING & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of GUSRC as set out in the constitution are:

OBJECTIVE 1

To represent and promote the general interests of students of the University.

OBJECTIVE 2

To advance civic responsibility by providing a recognised means of communication between students and the Court and Senate of the University.

OBJECTIVE 3

To prevent and relieve poverty and to advance health by providing welfare services for students and potential students.

OBJECTIVE 4

To advance the arts, culture, education, heritage, science and sport by providing amenities and supporting activities for students.

OBJECTIVE 5

To promote equality of opportunity amongst students and challenge all forms of discrimination whether based on sex, age, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, religion, cultural background or other such status.



GUSRC COUNCIL

Council is the governing body of GUSRC. Members of Council are elected through secret ballot of all students. The constitution makes provision for a Council of not more than 49 members, including an Executive of the Permanent Secretary and four sabbatical student officers: President, Vice President-Student Activities, Vice President-Education and Vice President-Student Support. One of the organisation's three Vice Presidents also serves as Depute President. Additionally Council comprises of:

- › Four College Convenors
- › Four Postgraduate Convenors
- › One Postgraduate Taught Convenor
- › Nine Welfare and Equal Opportunities Officers
- › Four General Student Representatives
- › Two First Year Representatives
- › Eighteen School Representatives

The structure of GUSRC Council reflects the University's own structure in that it includes elected College Convenors and School Representatives to match the College and School structure of the University. Ideally these academic representatives link with and support the University's 1,000 class representatives. There is also provision for five ex officio members of Council. Council meet monthly to discuss GUSRC business and items raised by students and all Council members have one vote.

Council elections take place biannually. A candidate can stand for one position at one election. Members can only vote and nominate candidates in academic constituencies (i.e. the School or College) to which they belong. Votes are cast online.

All student officers are elected for a minimum one year term. The officers are supported by a staff team who fulfil a combination of secretariat, advisory, support and developmental functions. Throughout the year the strong, positive working relationship between staff and student officers contributed to the organisation's successes.

GUSRC officers sit on an extensive range of committees and working parties within the University, currently over sixty with a campus-wide remit, plus a significant number of college and school level committees. GUSRC's staff team are allocated specific committees and will meet with the nominated student officers prior to these meetings and prepare briefing materials as and when required. This ensures a degree of continuity as well as assisting informed, empowered student involvement.

GUSRC's structure helps to ensure that its campaigning priorities and policy development process are evidence based and informed by the current issues affecting students. Matters emerging as a result of senior officers' participation in University committees are communicated back to Council in the required council report format for discussion and, where appropriate, agreement on future action.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2020

Following extensive consultation our strategy for the next five years was approved by our Trustees at a full meeting of Council in November 2015. It was presented to University Court in February 2016.

The Strategic Plan sets out our key values, vision, mission as well as key strategic aims and objectives which will underpin our work over the next five years. Where possible we have sought to align our aims with those of the University strategy: Glasgow 2020 – A Global Vision. We also gave consideration as to how our work will complement the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, adopted by Senate in October 2015.

A slight delay in the finalisation of the strategy means some of our processes and systems are still being refined to enable us to report against stated priorities and success indicators. We have however interspersed paragraphs outlining progress against stated success indicators.

The strategy document can be downloaded from the GUSRC website.

PARTNERSHIPS

In recent years the GUSRC and the University have worked closely together in establishing and developing meaningful informed student engagement. The University's reflective analysis for ELIR 3 demonstrates the strength of this relationship:

"A fundamental element of student engagement is the relationship between the University and the SRC and since ELIR 2, this relationship has been further consolidated as a working partnership as articulated by the SRC in its Strategic Plan: 'The strategy of GUSRC [...] is both complementary and supportive of the University's aims, whilst retaining the organisation's independent status and role as critical friend of the University'"

The aforementioned document further elaborates on the University and GUSRC's working relationship and confirms the intention to maintain this strong partnership:

"The University continues its commitment to maintaining and enhancing the quality of the student experience. Central to this has been student engagement and our partnership with the Students' Representative Council (SRC). The SRC is an effective body and its interactions with the University are extremely positive; we will seek to continue this highly effective partnership throughout the next cycle and to ensure that our students retain a key role in discussion, policy development and decision making".

ISB

In the latest wave of the International Student Barometer (Summer 2015), GUSRC scored 97.3%. This was an increase of 3% on the 2014 score and our highest rating ever. We were the most highly rated support service at the University of Glasgow and 2nd highest in the Russell Group.

➤ SUCCESS INDICATOR:

Our Strategy States "We will retain a satisfaction rating of 95% or above in the International Student Barometer" and we're pleased to achieved well beyond this.". With relatively limited resources and limited opportunities to market and promote ourselves directly amongst international students 97.3% response is beyond our expectations and gives us new levels to aspire to.

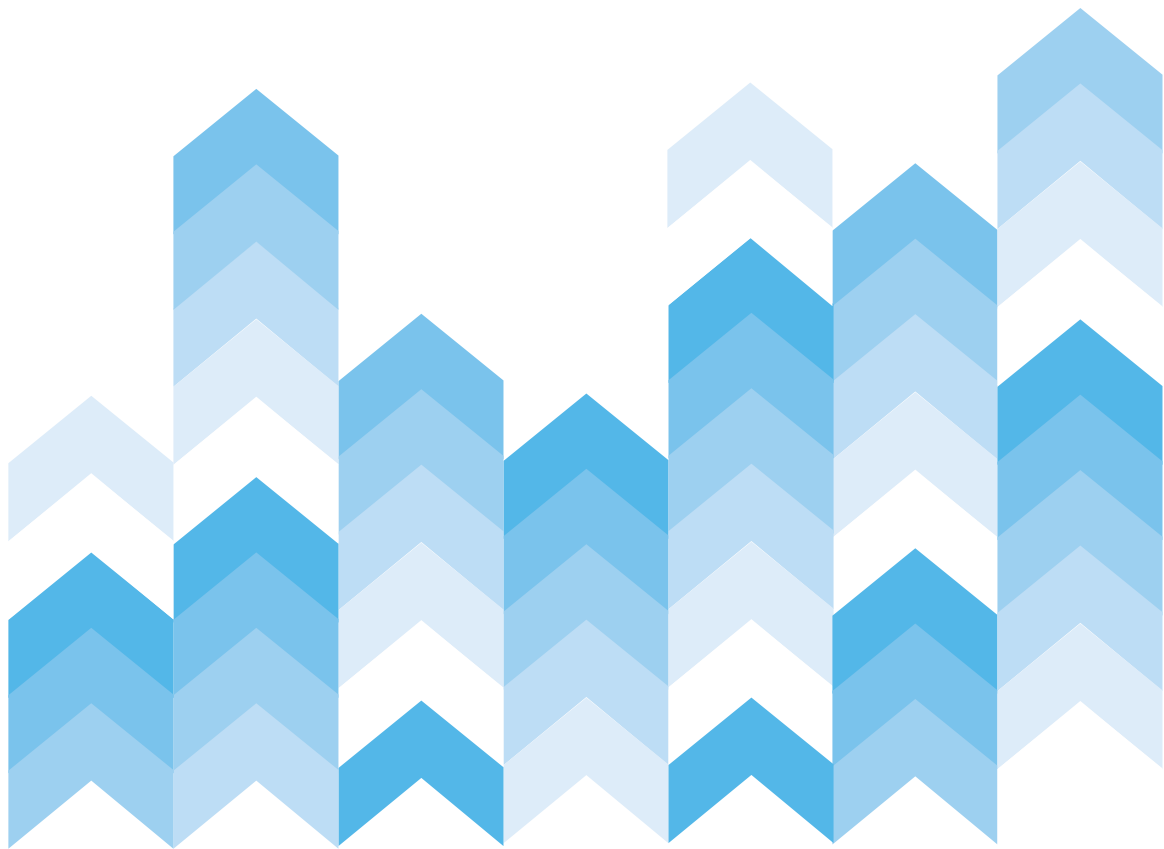
GUSRC ISB SATISFACTION RATING

2012/13	95%
2013/14	93.7%
2014/15	97.3%

2.1

REPRESENTATION & ENGAGEMENT

"We will be the student voice across the University decision making structures and beyond, influencing the design and delivery of learning & teaching, student services, and estates development to collaboratively ensure a positive student experience."





COUNCIL & REPRESENTATION

OFFICER ELECTIONS

Historically, turnout at GUSRC autumn elections has been comparatively low in relation to the spring elections. Unique voter numbers for the 2015 election reached 2,141, consistent with the number of voters in 2014.

GUSRC AUTUMN ELECTION TURNOUT

2012	1732
2013	2586
2014	2162
2015	2141

The spring elections in 2016 saw forty candidates contesting 27 positions. Ten candidates contested the four Sabbatical positions, an increase from eight in 2015. Spring 2016 elections saw 4,033 unique voters, the highest of the past five years. Over one hundred students participated in the heckling meetings each evening, similar to the previous year, with hundreds more tuning in online.

GUSRC SPRING ELECTION TURNOUT

2012	3581
2013	3350
2014	3935
2015	3476
2016	4033

COUNCIL SUPPORT & TRAINING

GUSRC provides a comprehensive training and induction programme for the trustees with a particular focus on the four sabbatical officers. A rolling training programme is delivered for the President and Vice Presidents throughout the summer period. Council members are required to attend a introductory training event plus additional sessions during the year. The training programme incorporates a range of areas relating to effective governance and an inclusive, informed approach to organisational development. It includes the following:

- › Introduction to internal policies and procedures (including financial controls)
- › Governance (roles and responsibilities)
- › Financial management and budgeting skills
- › Managing professional relationships
- › Planning and Objective Setting
- › Managing professional relationships (Roles of Officers/Staff)
- › Creating/Managing Change
- › Equal Opportunities
- › Organisational Planning and Goal Setting

In addition to sabbatical officers, GUSRC works to ensure that all members of its governing body (Council) receive adequate support to fulfil their roles.



CLASS & PGR REP TRAINING

GUSRC and the University have joint responsibility for the organisation and operation of the class and postgraduate research representation system. Glasgow students benefit from the bespoke University of Glasgow focussed training developed by GUSRC.

We recruit and train around eight students per year to deliver the class rep training. As all trainers are students, they are familiar with the structures and systems of the University. As well as training on the main campus, we also provide class representative training for students at the Dumfries Campus, and for students on partnership programmes at the Singapore Institute of Technology and at the UESTC in Chengdu, China via video link (see below).

GUSRC runs one block of training per semester. During this academic session, we trained a total of 732 class representatives, a number comparable to last year's total of 758. Those who complete the training are asked to complete an evaluation, which this year yielded 716 responses.

There was little change in the demographics of participants. As would be expected the majority were undergraduates at 71%, with 26% being postgraduate taught and 3% postgraduate research students. Only 1% of trainees were part-time students. There was almost double the number of females participating to males (67% to 33%) and only 4% of those participating considers themselves to have a disability.

- › Statement: "The training developed my understanding of the rep role." - 95% positive score.
- › Statement: "The training defined the student learning and development experience." - 95% positive score.
- › Statement: "The training explored how I can gather student opinion about learning/research issues." - 96% positive score.
- › Statement "The training introduced skills and methods needed to present information to staff and fellow students." - 95% positive score.
- › Statement: "The training gave me a good overview of the feedback processes here at the University of Glasgow." - 94% gave a positive score.
- › Trainer's "knowledge of subject" and skill at "involving the group." - 98% positive score.
- › Would recommend the training to other class reps. - 96%.

➤ SUCCESS INDICATOR:

Our strategy states "We will train an average of eight hundred class reps per year over the five years of this plan and maintain a satisfaction rating of 95% with the training". Whilst numbers were slightly down, the target satisfaction percentage was attained. We will continue to review and develop training to ensure standards are maintained.

A class representative survey was also piloted towards the end of 2015/16 and the results and recommendations arising from this will be collated and presented to Student Support Development Committee in the next cycle of meetings.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES TRAINED

2011/12	637
2012/13	605
2013/14	830
2014/15	758
2015/16	732

ONLINE TRAINING:

As the number of distance learning courses at the University grows, we are developing new ways to deliver class representative training of the same quality as that offered to campus-based class representatives.

The training for online distance learners was piloted for the first time in early 2016. This involved adapting existing materials to provide 'pre-reading' for the participants, an online quiz, and a one-hour online seminar conducted via Big Blue Button software. Unfortunately, a range of technical issues impacted on the success of the trial. GUSRC expressed concerns about the capacity of Big Blue Button to deliver a quality learning experience and it was agreed that Skype for Business will be piloted as a potential software solution in 2016/17. Alongside this, we are working to provide learning support flexible enough to meet the needs of students across widely differing timezones.

➤ SUCCESS INDICATOR:

Our strategy states: "In partnership with the University we will have established an online class representative training system for distance learning students by year two of this plan." As we go into year two we hope that, through joint working, online class rep training for distance learners will be established and fit for purpose.



ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

PERIODIC SUBJECT REVIEWS

Over the year student panel members participated in seven Periodic Subject Reviews (PSRs):

- › Archaeology
- › Dentistry
- › English Language
- › English Literature
- › School of Mathematics & Statistics
- › School of Interdisciplinary Studies
- › Scottish Literature

Once again the Senate Office, GUSRC and the Academic Development Unit ran a mini-review training event, including pre-course preparation, for student panel members. Following feedback, the session was moved to January, to be closer to PSR dates. The course provided an overview of PSR in relation to the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework, as well as highlighting what is expected from student panel members.

Following feedback received last year, more time was included in the training to look at the documentation in greater detail; copies external examiner reports, Course Annual Monitoring reports, programme specifications, results from PTES and NSS, course material and Staff Student Liaison Committee minutes were provided to participants to ensure the reviewers were familiar with what to look for.

The course evaluation again was extremely positive, particularly in relation to increased confidence in reviewers.

➤ SUCCESS INDICATOR:

Our strategy states: "We will participate in 100% of PSRs and 100% of feedback will agree that the student representative made a constructive contribution to the process". The Senate Office assisted by introducing a PSR Feedback form for clerks. Within this all seven Clerks (100%) agreed / strongly agreed that Student Reps made a constructive contribution to PSR?



STAS

2015/16 saw the sixth annual Student Teaching Awards organised by GUSRC. The awards were created as a way for students to recognise the work of lecturers, tutors and other members of University staff. As in previous years, all students of the University were able to nominate staff members across fifteen categories including best teacher in each University college, best support staff, and best feedback.

A record-breaking 1,250 nominations were received for this year's awards, a 19% increase on last year's total which was in turn a record-breaking number of nominations. We believe the continued growth of the awards demonstrates increasing interest and engagement from students in their learning, and recognising the work of staff.

We marketed the awards widely, for the first time receiving nominations from all University campuses. As part of our aim to increase engagement with postgraduate students we made a concentrated effort to engage with this group. We were pleased that this resulted in 21.6% of nominations from postgraduates.

We are in the process of preparing a report for consideration by the University, highlighting areas of good practice and trends identified through the nominations by students. It is hoped that, by recognising the impact of excellent tutors, lecturers, support staff and individual contributors to the student learning experience, the STAs will assist GUSRC and the University in shaping the learning experience of the future.

STA NOMINATIONS

2011/12	376
2012/13	767
2013/14	750
2014/15	1050
2015/16	1250



PATRIARCHITECTURE

Following successful lobbying from GUSRC, the University agreed to begin naming and renaming buildings on campus to better reflect the diversity of the University community, adopting a more inclusive policy for naming future campus developments and encouraging project boards to consider the wider university community by recognising more woman and other protected characteristics. There was also agreement to rename existing buildings, and rooms where possible and appropriate. The first action under the policy was the renaming of the former Estates and Buildings office building, in late 2015. The building was renamed in honour of Isabella Elder, a benefactor of the University who took a particular interest in promoting opportunities for women in higher education.

DOGS ON CAMPUS

GUSRC was delighted to welcome Canine Concern Scotland Trust to campus several times during the academic year. As part of the charity's 'Paws Against Stress' project, GUSRC invited the charity to host a number of sessions to help students relieve exam-related stress and anxiety by spending time with canine friends. The sessions were once again incredibly popular with students.

POP-UP STUDY SPACES

At certain times of the year students find it difficult to access space, on or off campus, to study. The issue was compounded this year with the temporary closure of Level 2 of the library. We worked with Central Room Bookings (CRB) to identify appropriate rooms on campus and when they would be unoccupied. Once agreed, we ran a cycle of pop-up spaces in in December exam diet in two lecture theatres. Following feedback, we refined and expanded room offerings for the May exam diet, introducing the ability to book rooms specifically for quiet, individual study and rooms for group study. It has been difficult to gather numbers due to the drop-in nature of the individual bookings but feedback suggests the spaces are well used and appreciated.

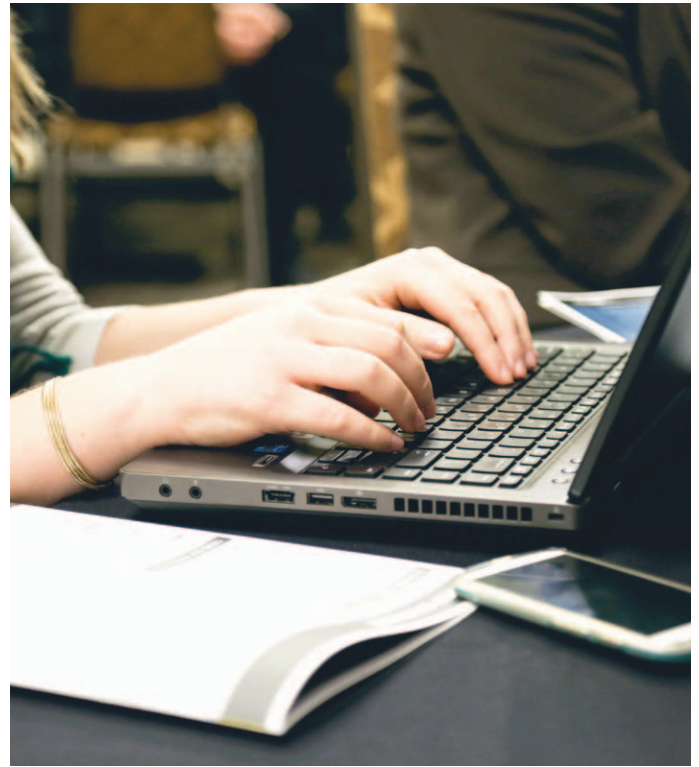
DUMFRIES CAMPUS

GUSRC provides support and training to registered University of Glasgow students based on the Crichton Campus in Dumfries. GUSRC employs an administrator, based at Crichton, who has responsibility for supporting Crichton students in developing extracurricular activities for the local student populace in order to enhance and enrich the cultural and educational experience on the Dumfries Campus.

SUPPORT FOR CARERS

We continue to develop our engagement with carers through small social events in the form of networking lunches. These regular events allow us to consult with carers regarding issues that may be affecting them collectively or as individuals. Following a request from GUSRC, the University has agreed a change to the registration process to allow students to self-identify as carers at registration from the academic year 2016/17 onwards. This information should assist Advisers of Studies to reach out to individual carers to discuss their needs and advise on support available via the Carers' Policy. In addition, this new registration information should enable the University and GUSRC to see for the first time how many student carers are enrolled, and plan support activity and allocate funds for the activity accordingly.

As more information is gathered we hope this will enable GUSRC and the University to work together in addressing and enhancing the experience of this particular group whilst studying at the University.



CAMPUS ESTATES DEVELOPMENT

Pressure and demand for student engagement has increased considerably as the new campus development gathers momentum. The increasing number of boards and ancillary committees relating to estates development continue to represent a significant challenge in terms of supporting and sustaining effective student engagement.

As demand increases, the existing student representatives are spread more thinly. Demands on their time mean they are less able to engage with our internal staff support framework which is, in turn, struggling to meet the demands placed upon it. We are currently reviewing our engagement with the estates strategy with a view to develop new ways to address aforesaid challenges.

WORK & STUDY DIGNITY

GUSRC representatives were involved in contributing suggestions for the content and layout of the publicity materials to help maximise the impact of the Full Stop campaign. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the Dignity at Work and Study Policy, using a high-profile poster campaign throughout campus.

GLASGOW ARM

GUSRC continues to work with Glasgow ARM (Aid for Rwandan Medical professionals). The charity, developed through discussions between medical students and a University Professor currently working in Rwanda, aims to provide support for Rwandan Medical students, many of whom lack the necessary equipment to complete their studies and some of whom are unable to focus because of a lack of food.

We initially worked with ARM to assist with the development of the constitution and registration as a charity. We continue to maintain involvement with the group through organisational membership of its board and ongoing input at this level.

NON-ACADEMIC DEBT

Following Competition & Markets Authority's (CMA) action against University College London in November 2015, GUSRC wrote to them outlining concerns about the University's current debt policy in January 2016. GUSRC forwarded along details of the previous correspondence and negotiations with the University on the issue. In June the CMA confirmed that they had investigated our complaint and were in discussions with the University on their policy.

DYSLEXIA SCREENINGS

We were approached by a UofG student who had been advised that appointments for dyslexia screening with the University's Disability Service were only available from semester 2 onwards. Further investigations highlighted that this was standard policy, a policy which left affected students without dyslexia support for the entirety of their first semester at the University.

After challenging the policy with the Disability Service directly we raised the issue via the University's Disability Equality Group and suggested several alternative options including the implementation of online screening for dyslexia for those without a prior diagnosis.

We were pleased when, in May 2016 the Disability Service confirmed that from September 2016 they would begin offering online screening for dyslexia for all students from semester 1 onwards, with students showing high probability for dyslexia in these tests then being referred on to an educational psychologist.



SENATE CODE REVISIONS

We enjoy a strong positive working relationship with the Senate Office over a considerable range of academic matters. Over the year we were invited to have input into reviews of important areas of academic policy including the following:

FITNESS TO PRACTICE

Our sabbatical officers worked with members of the Advice Centre team in developing recommendations for revisions of the Fitness to Practice procedure, that would enhance fairness and consistency.

We raised concerns around timescales and information given to students during the process, and lack of student representation on the Fitness to Practice Committee, the latter being particularly important given the lessening of the connection between Fitness to Practice and Student Conduct procedures. These matters are to be discussed further with a view to resolution during 2016/17.

CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT

In June 2015 we were invited to comment on the Senate Office's revised version of the Code of Student Conduct. We recommended several amendments the most notable of which related to the University's ability to suspend students from campus pending the outcome of criminal/conduct proceedings.

The code has subsequently been amended for the 2016/17 onward to permit a review of any suspension imposed that the student believes has been made based on an error in fact.

PROPORTIONALITY IN STUDENT CONDUCT CASES

Through Advice Centre casework we became aware of a particular issue in plagiarism cases where the penalty handed down to some students went beyond what we would regard as a proportionate response. We wrote to the Senate Student Conduct Committee to remind them of a need for proportionality to be considered when delivering penalties to students. In a particular case of plagiarism, a standard penalty had been handed down, but it had the effect that the student could no longer obtain their degree. In our correspondence with the senate office we stated:

"If the intention of the punishment for committing severe plagiarism is to effectively bar students from the Masters Programme, then the SRC argue that such a grave penalty should be made transparent at the conclusion of the interview and declared as the punishment. It is hoped that the punishment should be proportionate to the crime committed, and justice is designed to act not only as deterrence, retribution, or incapacitation, but also to offer opportunities to the offender for reparation and rehabilitation. In other words, allowing those to learn from their mistakes and to improve. Awarding an 'H' grade certainly fulfils the functions of retribution and incapacitation (and possibly deterrence) but offers little in the way of rehabilitation or 'making good' on the mistakes if the Master's Degree is subsequently and suddenly impossible to achieve."

In the letter we suggested alternative penalties which might be imposed. We continue to monitor conduct outcomes as far as possible, and to maintain dialogue with the Senate Office in the hope of working towards fair outcomes for all students who are subject to such procedures. This work shall be ongoing in 2016/17.



EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION VIEWING SERVICE (PAVS)

The pilot Private Accommodation Viewing Service (PAVS) was implemented in late Summer 2015, as a partnership project between the Advice Centre and Student Volunteer Support Service, working together to recruit and train volunteers, advertise the service, allocate viewings and feedback information to service users. The aim of the service was to provide students overseas with objective information about a property they are thinking of renting in order to prevent them falling victim to scams and misrepresented properties. An evaluation was conducted and presented to Student Support Development Committee (SSDC) in October 2015. SSDC recorded its thanks to GUSRC "for undertaking this important work". The service will be relaunched in Summer 2016 when students abroad start to look for accommodation in Glasgow for the coming academic year.

SAFE TAXI SCHEME

In partnership with Glasgow Taxis, GUSRC implemented a safe taxi scheme. This initiative ensures that students who find themselves alone and stuck without money far away from their home at night can still make it back safely by using their student card as guarantee of payment in emergency situations. The process is a simple one whereby the student calls the taxi firm quoting 'Get Home Safe' and 'GU1'. Once home they sign the driver's receipt and hand over their student card, GUSRC pays the taxi fare, and is reimbursed by the student 24 hours later, when the student's card is also returned. Students who don't have their card are not disadvantaged as we have made arrangements with University Security who will confirm their identity to the taxi firm.

SUPPORT FOR CARERS ADVISORY GROUP

GUSRC sits on the panel of CPAG's 'Students and Benefits Project'. This project aims to increase the number of low-income students who are able to access further and higher education. It also aims to reduce the impact of poverty on students who access such educational opportunities.

The membership of this group is wide-ranging; the project has a Scotland-wide remit and includes representatives from the Scottish Funding Council. GUSRC's participation provides an opportunity to input into CPAG's national campaigning and information activities as well as keeping up to date with national policy developments which may impact on students.

LETTING AGENCY MYSTERY SHOPPING

Whilst GUSRC can't actually recommend a particular landlord or letting agent (due to potential conflicts of interest) we do seek to enable students to make an informed choice before entering a tenancy agreement. In September 2015, we undertook a mystery shopping exercise of 28 of the most popular letting agencies in Glasgow and gathered information such as whether they continued to charge illegal fees, would let to students, require a guarantor etc. We published the results in an accessible, easy to read format on our website. Although we provide a tenancy agreement checking service we are aware that not all students will come to us. By proactively offering this information, the aim is that more students will be empowered to make an informed decision when choosing which agency to rent from and reduce the likelihood of exploitation.



PRIVATE TENANCIES REFORM

In 2014 the Scottish Government began consulting on the introduction of a new type of private sector tenancy for Scotland. After responding to this initial consultation in 2014 we submitted a detailed response to the second consultation in May 2015. The Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill was passed in the Scottish Parliament in March 2016.

GUSRC's response, along with several other organisations advocating from a tenants' perspective, contained several suggestions including the scrapping of the "no fault" eviction ground and the introduction of no minimum term for private rented tenancy agreements. These amendments were introduced and we believe have created both a more secure yet flexible option for students renting in the private sector.

UNLAWFUL GUARANTOR AGREEMENTS

GUSRC's Advice Centre was approached by several students who had been required by their accommodation provider to sign up for a rental guarantor service with a company called Housing Hand. After signing the agreement, it emerged that the students were required to pay an additional fee on top of their rent and deposit to secure the services of a corporate guarantor.

We consulted with our lawyer (Govan Law Centre) on the legality of offering a tenancy on the condition of signing up to this type of service. The subsequent legal advice confirmed our suspicion that this type of agreement was unlawful in Scotland under the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984. We wrote to Housing Hand who failed to reply so we shifted our attention to the accommodation providers who had been forcing prospective tenants to sign up with Housing Hand, namely CRM Accommodation and Victoria Halls and wrote to them both advising of our concerns.

Because of our intervention, CRM and Victoria Halls agreed to cease working with Housing Hand forthwith, thus ensuring students were afforded the legal rights and protection to which they were entitled under the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984.

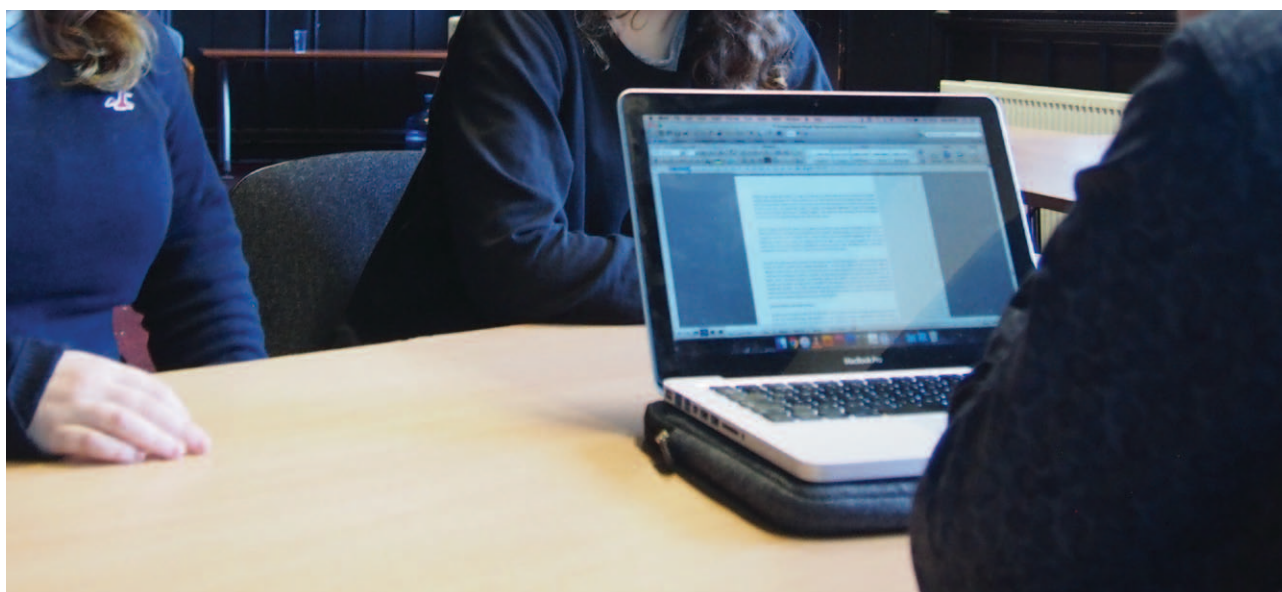
IN THE MEDIA

GUSRC once again enjoyed considerable positive coverage in the national media. The GUSRC President ensured high profile coverage for the organisation around the Scottish Government's approach to higher education governance. The President's public criticisms were used widely to reflect frustration with higher education policy decision-making, including various major Scottish and UK media outlets. Furthermore King was directly quoted in the parliamentary debate on the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill (Scottish Parliament 08/04/16), with an MSP sharing the President's words: "as ramshackle and embarrassing, in producing a Bill which ultimately threatens to undermine a proud Scottish tradition, democracy in Scotland's universities, and good governance."

We successfully highlighted the issue of student exploitation by letting agents through illegal letting fees. The GUSRC President highlighted the fifty cases per annum dealt with by our Advice Centre as only the 'tip of the iceberg' to the BBC. We also campaigned through the media for a national system of rent controls and better protection for the rights of students in private rented accommodation, to be introduced through the Private Housing (Tenancies) Bill.

Traditionally, GUSRC has maintained a positive working relationship with both local and national media outlets. Independence from the National Union of Students ensures GUSRC has freedom to comment on matters independently, thus reflecting the interests of the specific students it represents. Some of the media in which GUSRC featured include:

- › [The Times](#)
- › [The Scotsman](#)
- › [The Herald](#)
- › [BBC Scotland](#)
- › [Evening Times](#)
- › [The Guardian](#)
- › [Daily Record](#)
- › [The Independent](#)
- › [Common Space](#)
- › [STV](#)
- › [The Herald](#)



ONLINE & DIGITAL

The academic year 2014/15 was the second full year for the redeveloped glasgowstudent.net web portal, GUSRC's own website including information about all its functions, personnel and services.

Overall, the website proved successful by a number of metrics. After an 11% decline in unique visitors in 2014/15, the website drew over 131,000 unique users in the past academic year, a 19% increase. Pageviews increased 2% vs 2014/15, taking the total above 900,000 for the first time on record. There were slight negative movements in the number of pages per visit, average duration of visit to the site and bounce rate (those who visit just one page of the website before exiting), which could suggest that users are navigating the website better or that new content was perhaps less engaging or frequency compared to previous years.

In terms of integration with the University's own website, the percentage of students who visited the GUSRC website using a referral a link on the University's site was consistent with the past two years, hovering around 48% of referral traffic, and 11% of the total traffic to the website. GUSRC appreciates the mutually beneficial relationship that the two organisations' online presences share.

Trends of popular content on the website closely mirrored previous years, with the increased number of affiliated GUSRC clubs and societies being mirrored in an increase of users searching for information about this. 46% of all traffic to the website was to content related to clubs. The volunteering section of the website attracted 6% of traffic, while the Advice Centre traffic represented 5% of the total visitors pageviews. GUSRC's services including printing, minibus and Jobshop accounted for less than 25% of visits, a decline on 2014/15, which is to be expected with the cessation of the minibus service.

The amount of traffic driven from GUSRC's Facebook and Twitter accounts to the glasgowstudent.net website continued to decrease as the social media platforms are used in different ways in line with trends. Referral traffic from the platform totalled 5%, down from 8% in 2014/15.

Though referrals to the website declined from Facebook, the page was used consistently to advertise news, events and provide updates on GUSRC activities. Once again, popular posts from the year included photo galleries of GUSRC events and election content and updates. In 2014/15, the number of subscribers (those who have 'liked' the page) to GUSRC's Facebook increased 14% with a total subscriber base over 75000 with content reach of over 500,000 in the academic year.

GUSRC's profile on Twitter allowed further, instantaneous engagement with students, staff, external organisations and other University services. Growth of GUSRC's Twitter account slowed compared to previous years, with follower total rising by under four hundred new followers, down from over six hundred in the previous academic year. This can be partially attributed to the GUSRC operated individual sabbatical officer twitter accounts which diversify messaging from the organisation, but potentially fragment the audience. These accounts continued to show strong growth.

In September 2014, GUSRC also launched its own Instagram profile for photo sharing in event and campaign promotion. The account attracted around 250 in its second year of use, adding to the four hundred followers gathered in its first year.

GUSRC continues to monitor statistics for all digital media presences, to gauge how students interact with the organisation's online content and how effective it is. Where possible, GUSRC continuously seeks to improve its output and use digital media as a way of determining the level of success for its events, services, strategies and content.

PAGEVIEWS OF GUSRC WEBSITE

2013/14	851k
2014/15	888k
2015/16	914k



POSTGRADUATE ENGAGEMENT

WELCOME FORTNIGHT

We continue to develop the Welcome Fortnight concept as a mechanism for introducing an alternative to Freshers' Week for postgraduates beginning their studies at University of Glasgow. The programme of events was chosen once more with the intention of being quite different to what was on offer at the student unions, and to reflect what is generally a slightly older and more international demographic of postgraduate students coming to Glasgow. Events this year included comedy, Celtic music, whisky tasting, and Oktoberfest.

There was some research focused events organised in tandem with university services but these had noticeably lower footfall – perhaps reflecting the fact that the postgraduate cohort was at the beginning of postgraduate research and had little engagement with this side of academic life yet. Nevertheless, the events programme provided in 2015/16 evidenced the fact that the Welcome Fortnight initiative is now well-established, and well attended.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

Through the Gilchrist we continue to offer meeting and social space for postgraduate groups and networks. This year we established a regular programme of small evening events which included film screenings from the Mexican Society, board game nights and music sessions run by University staff to encourage student musicians to get involved. In an attempt to stimulate interest in the bar area in evenings, we entered into partnership with Drygate craft brewers, and updated the drinks range to cater to demand. We have also been working with subject areas to hold small gatherings in the club. We anticipate much more demand here in the future.

As well as simply providing a venue, we offer support to postgraduate students in developing and organising their own academic events. The seminar room now has a very regular programme of small conferences, with the majority being co-ordinated and led by PGR students. We are more than happy to offer support in the organisation of such events as and when students require it, though increasingly the available space is restricted to evenings, such has been the success here.

CHALLENGES

There are still considerable challenges to be addressed in terms of postgraduate representation and we have specifically referenced this as a priority in the organisation's new strategy. These challenges were acknowledged by the University in the Enhancement-led Institutional Review 2014: Year-on Response (December 2015).

"Another aspect where we recognise scope for improvement in relation to our PGR students' experience is in student representation. Analysis of the student representative figures before and after the introduction of Student Voice shows a small increase. While this increase is positive, the issue remains challenging, with further work to be done to engage PGR students more fully in representation structures. A number of activities are under discussion with the SRC."

Postgraduate representation is an issue across the higher education and student representation sector; with no one as yet appearing to have reached an ideal model. We are optimistic though, that, over time, a joint University and GUSRC approach, will yield positive results.



STUDENT MEDIA

Glasgow University's student media plays two key roles for students of the University. The first is to provide with opportunities to learn new skills and share in common experiences; in this respect the media organisations are similar to clubs and societies. The second function of the media is to provide engaging, informative and entertaining content for students and the wider Glasgow community. This dual role played by the student media highlights its importance to GUSRC, the University and the students. GUSRC continues to support media organisations both with funding and with administrative and developmental assistance. Below is a summary of the achievements of each of GUSRC's supported media bodies in the academic year 2015/16. GUSRC continues to support a range of student media, attracting over 1,000 volunteers per annum and providing a host of personal development opportunities whilst promoting student engagement and encouraging discourse and debate.

GUARDIAN

The Glasgow Guardian published five issues over the year, with 4,000 copies of each edition printed. Coverage of student elections was completely online with a focus on delivering high quality digital content instead of the traditional student elections print edition. The Guardian team recorded, edited and published video interviews with all of the candidates in the contested elections at all four of the student bodies. This was demonstrably, a considerably more effective way of engaging students on social media, particularly in comparison to the outdated transcript interviews that the paper has published on polling day in the last four elections.

It was an attempt to modernise coverage of student elections, using social media to engage a greater number of students in the democratic process. The Glasgow Guardian website was viewed approximately 41,000 times in the fortnight leading up to polling day.

While work on a new website continues, social media outlets have further assisted in expanding the newspaper's readership. It currently has 7,280 Twitter followers and 3,322 Facebook likes. Content continues to be a balance of campus-specific and student-related news, along with in-depth feature articles, high-profile interviews, reviews and sports coverage. During the year, the paper led with a number of investigative articles which garnered much attention from the national media, including an investigation into the Glasgow University Charity Fashion Show; overcrowding on the Gilmorehill campus; and the cost of living in the University's halls of residence.

The newspaper continues to train a number of contributors and editors in writing, editing and design. A new session, open to all, focussing on effective news writing, was also added to the training programme.



SUBCITY

Subcity Radio is GUSRC's student-led radio station, broadcasting from Glasgow to the world via the subcity.org website. The station is known for its openness, inviting not only students, but members of the local community, to be part of its infrastructure, from management through to content development. It is managed by a committed team of around fifty individuals and features contributions of nearly two hundred content creators from around the city.

In the last year, the station has received tens of thousands of listens worldwide, giving an unparalleled creative platform to students and local contributors. In addition to this success, the station has held numerous large-scale events in a variety of venues across Glasgow, including:

100% BEEF

Held at the SWG3 event space, a clubnight pitting DJs against one another in three rounds, featuring guest and returning station DJs alongside current contributors.

ROOM 601

A sold out night taking place across three floors of the Brunswick Hotel in late February in Glasgow's Merchant City.

LAST NIGHT A DJ TOOK MY LIFE

The latest of Subcity's annual, themed Hallowe'en parties, taking place at the Buff Club.

Furthermore, the station recorded and broadcast numerous live music sessions with local bands and artists, reinforcing its role as a pivotal part of the Glasgow music scene. The enduring success of the station is manifest in the achievements of its alumni and in its receipt of press during the 2015/16 academic year from *The Skinny* and *Synth*.

In 2015 Subcity celebrated twenty years of broadcasting, marking the occasion in a number of ways. In the time running up to the anniversary, Subcity produced a feature-length documentary about the station's history, featuring interviews with and contributions from members of the current team and hosts and team members from previous years. The documentary premiered at a screening in The Art School, alongside an exhibition of archival content, including publicity materials, artwork and event photography. The culmination of the anniversary festivities The celebrations culminated in an appropriately grand celebration, held once again at The Art School.

In October 2015, on the anniversary of the station's founding, a brand new website was launched, featuring improved usability and easier access to the vast amount of content produced by the station.

With plans for further expansions in outreach for the next academic year already underway, the station's prospects continue to grow.



GUM

Glasgow University Magazine (GUM) is the oldest student publication in Scotland and offers a blend of fashion, art and politics in a high quality publication. Over the year three issues were produced with a circulation of 4,000 distributed at the University and throughout the wider Glasgow area, specifically targeting arts, culture and student-oriented venues for distribution.

In 2015/16, each issue featured content centred on a specific theme. Issue one in first term was the 'nostalgia issue'. Issue two in second term was the 'future issue' and the third magazine of the year, launched during exam season, was the 'sex issue'. Each issue launch was marked with an event featuring live music and DJs, in addition to readings and other spoken word performances. Further contributor events were held in the form of 'GUM socials', giving the chance for writers, photographers and illustrators to meet and discuss outside of magazine production meetings.

GUM continued to host additional content on its website, with traffic growing compared to 2014/15. The website and content were promoted using social media, with GUM's profiles also showing similar levels of growth as website traffic.

With increased pressure on student media to become self-sustaining and to reach out and be more inclusive, GUM ran several events over the course of the academic year.



GUST

Glasgow University Student Television welcomed many new members this year, adding to the productive team creating original video content for the student community and beyond. Content is hosted on the GUST website, in addition to being mirrored on the GUST Youtube channel.

GUST covered campus news such as the GUSRC Elections and the current campus redevelopment plans, developed documentaries about important subjects such as transgender rights and mental health issues, produced viral comedies and offered a platform for student musicians and societies to present their work. In March 2016, GUST collaborated with the Glasgow TEDx organisers in order to provide live broadcasting of the talks as they happened.

The student-run group landed successes with the annual Freshers' Week coverage as well as an original Christmas video with Choral Stimulation, and represented the University of Glasgow at the National Student Television Association Conference & Awards in Leeds.

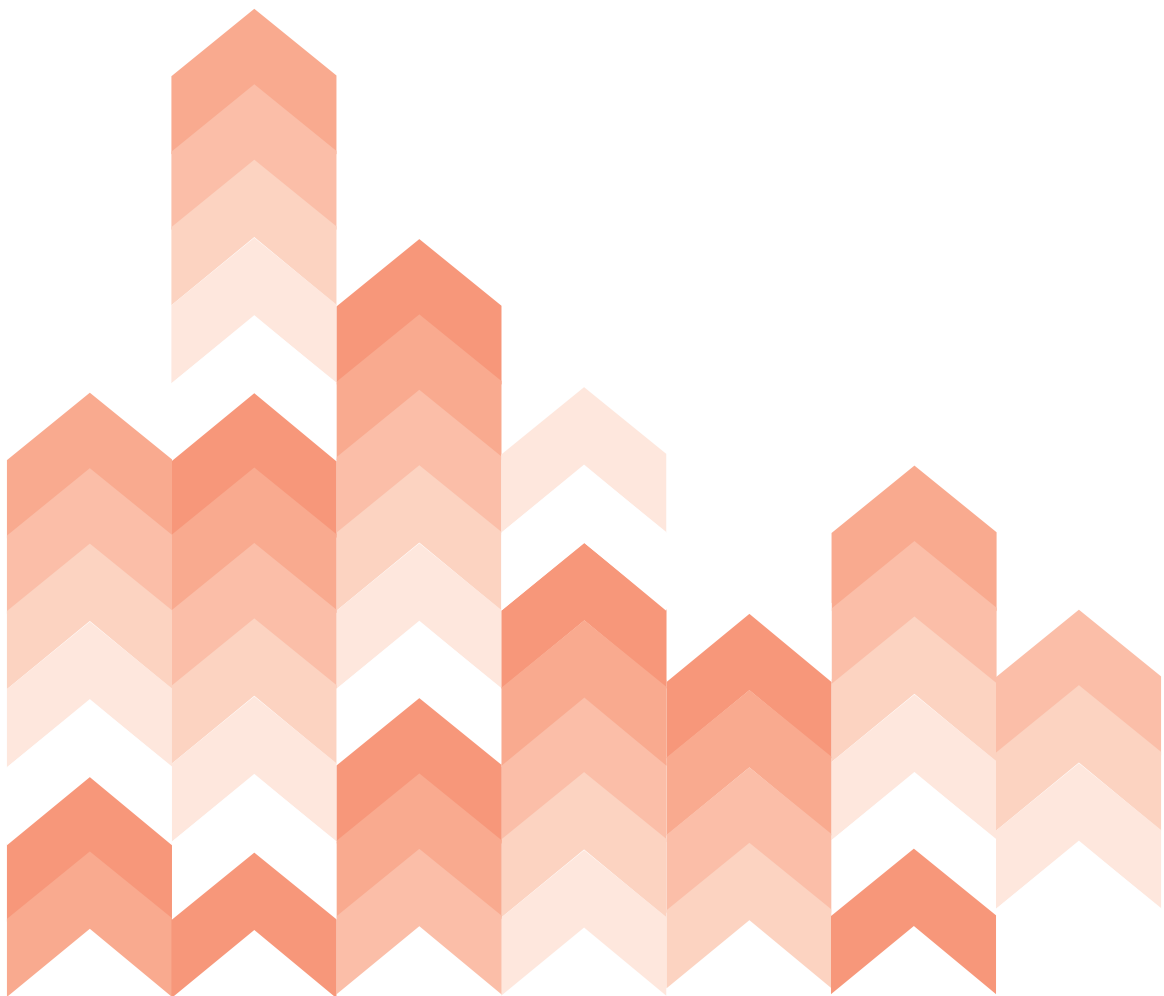
The GUST Alumni Network initiative was launched at the end of the academic year to encourage former contributors to keep in touch and share successes.

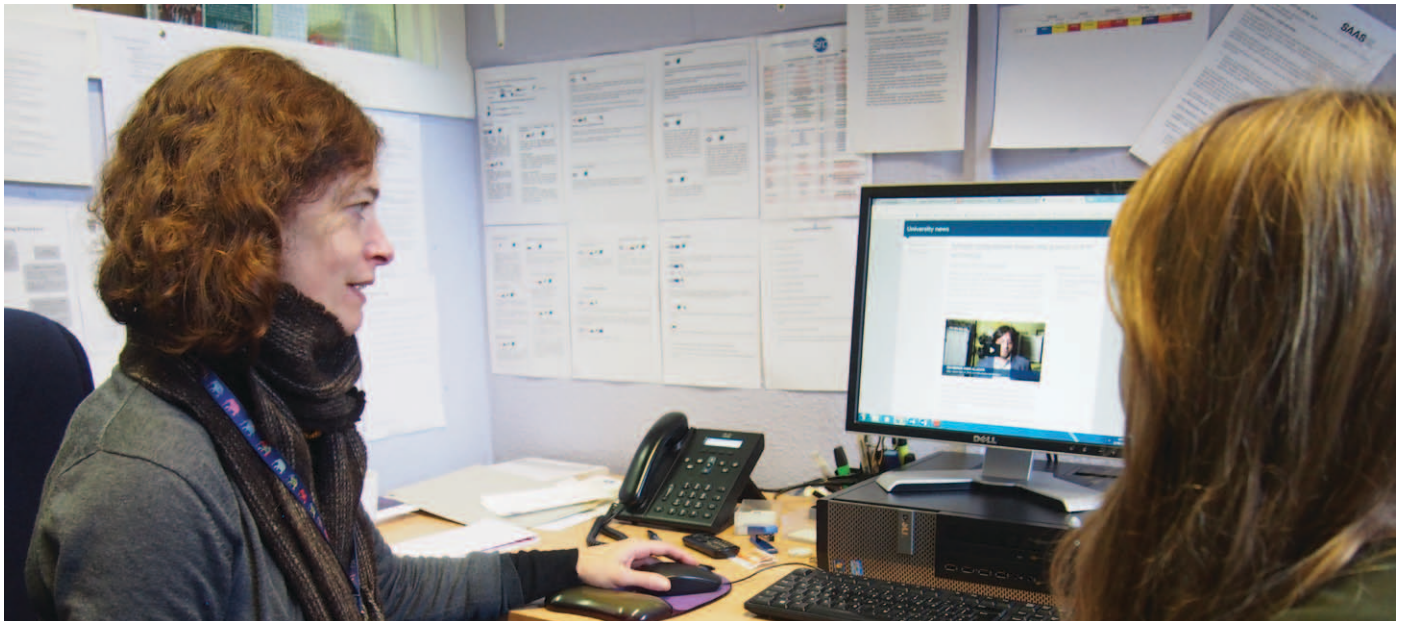
GUST socials took place throughout the year with highlights including a contributors Christmas dinner and end-of-year dinner.

2.2

STUDENT WELLBEING

"We will promote the wellbeing of existing and potential students by offering unique support services which contribute to an inclusive and supportive campus environment."





THE ADVICE CENTRE

GUSRC's Advice Centre employs four full time staff members and provides high quality, impartial advice and advocacy on a range of welfare and academic issues to students and prospective students of the University. The Advice Centre also plays a key role in informing and legitimising the organisation's policy development and campaigns. This section focuses on the casework element of the Advice Centre. The rest of the work is subsumed within other elements of this report.

CASEWORK ACTIVITY

As with previous years, the Advice Centre recorded detailed information about the work it undertook in 2015/16. There were 766 anonymous enquiries, down from 926 the previous year, 1,315 new cases (2014/15 - 1,377) and 12,932 casework entries (2014/15 - 13,326) in the academic year. The number of anonymous enquiries continues to decline, whilst the number of cases and casework represents a slight decline against 2014/15, though both of these figures experienced increases of over 25% in the previous year.

The majority of the Advice Centre's users continues to be undergraduates, making up 56% of the total recorded clients for the year. This proportion is slightly down from last year's figure of 63%, with a slight increase in postgraduates using the Advice Centre, 26% of the total recorded users, up from 22%. The rest of Advice Centre enquiries come from prospective students, students' parents, guardians or family members, University staff members and former students. 5% of clients were not identified as part of any particular group.

The Advice Centre recorded a slightly increased proportion of international students using the service in 2015/16, with 48% of users who gave geographical information identifying as international students (non-UK), up from 44% in 2014/15. This breaks down as 33% of international users from outside the EU, and 15% international students from within the EU. Over the last couple of years, the figures seem to show a trend towards increased use of the service by International (non-EU) students and a decrease in use by Home (Scotland) students.

CASEWORK CATEGORIES

GUSRC tracks and monitors the types of problems that students approach the Advice Centre for assistance with, in order to monitor trends in student issues and ensure team members are suitably equipped to deal with different types of problem.

By far, University or academic issues continue to make up the biggest proportion of the Advice Centre workload, with a total of 7,738 casework entries logged in 2015/16, up from 7,115 the previous year. Historically, this has been the biggest casework area for the past seven years as there are no other alternatives to the Advice Centre for advice when it comes to matters such as academic appeals.

As reported elsewhere within this report, accommodation continues to be a major concern for students, with the high demand for private rental accommodation and students' relative inexperience in finding property making them likely targets for exploitation. It's therefore no surprise that the second biggest category of casework undertaken by the Advice Centre is accommodation problems with 3187 casework entries this year, a slight decline compared to the 3658 in 2014/15.

CASES + ANONYMOUS ENQUIRIES

2011/12	2090
2012/13	2417
2013/14	2137
2014/15	2303
2015/16	2081



ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Where possible, the Advice Centre will record the outcome of any enquiry or case, however in many cases the client is empowered with information to act for themselves and will not revert to the Advice Centre unless further assistance is required.

For academic appeals in 2015/16, there were 58 completed cases, of which 36 were successful. This represents a significant increase in the number of successful cases, up from 25 last year.

The numbers of completed and successful student conduct cases dramatically increased with 85 completed cases of which 49 were successful. These numbers are up from 50 and 26 respectively in 2014/15.

Finally, the number of complaints processed increased to 16, from 11 last year. Of those completed ten were successful, compared to six last year. The percentage of successful complaints increased from 2014/15, with a success rate of 63% up from 55% the previous academic year. This figure has shown fluctuations in recent years, but has remained consistently above 50% for the past six years.

It is worth noting that quantitative data can only express a certain amount about the work undertaken and that the nature of each academic case can be very different.

POSITIVE FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

Where possible to record, financial gains for Advice Centre users for the 2015/16 academic year totalled £62,271, an increase of 13% against last year's figure of £55,110. This total represents the outcomes for 44 individuals.

Recorded financial gains came from a variety of sources across all categories of GUSRC Advice Centre work. These include:

- › Assisting students to obtain fee waivers when withdrawing under exceptional circumstances
- › Challenging unlawful tenancy fees
- › Resolving SAAS funding issues
- › Assisting students to challenge errors in their financial records
- › Challenging tenancy deposit deductions
- › Assisting with having benefits reinstated

Whilst we continue to be proud of the work undertaken to benefit students financially through the Advice Centre, financial gains figure is always a significant underestimate of the true financial gain as GUSRC is only able to record gains which are confirmed. In the majority of cases where there is a potential financial gain, it is most typical for these clients to not return to advise of the outcome.

NON-FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

We recorded 356 non-financial gains over the year, which represents an increase of 106% on last year. This includes 22 students accepted back onto their course, 24 resubmissions/re-sits granted, 15 housing repairs carried out, nine grades reviewed, four apologies received and homelessness prevented in four instances. In over 250 cases the student gained information on their rights and responsibilities which helped them to make an informed decision on what further action to take.

CASE STUDIES

Student A

Withdrawn from study the previous year due to medical circumstances, but was being continually chased by SAAS in respect of an alleged overpayment. He had had conflicting information from different officials at SAAS, and no-one at the University seemed to be able to give SAAS the information they needed in order that the overpayment could be cancelled. The situation was causing the student considerable stress. The Advice Centre contacted members of University staff on the student's behalf, and once the overpayment situation was resolved, we helped him to complain to the University and SAAS about the way his situation had initially been handled. The student eventually received an apology from the University and a promise that the system would be reviewed for future cases. SAAS did not acknowledge any problem with the advice they had given, but the student decided not to pursue matters further.

Student B

A full-time student who had completed the relevant forms and was eligible for Council Tax Exemption. His flat mate, Student Y, was at another University, only lived at the flat intermittently and didn't communicate with Student B. The council had said that Student Y was no longer a student so Student B was now liable for Council Tax as there was joint liability. The Advice Centre advised Student B to get copies of his exemptions for past two years and gave him details of the relevant legislation stating that in Scotland, a student who is jointly and severally liable for the property because they are a joint tenant with someone who is not a student is exempt from liability for Council Tax. The council accepted this and withdrew demand for payment.

Student C

This student was caught with notes in an exam and attended a meeting with the Senate Assessors for Student Conduct where he was given an H grade with no chance to re-sit. This outcome meant the student could not continue with his undergraduate degree course. As the student had been experiencing extreme medical circumstances at the time of his exam, we assisted the student to submit a retrospective application to have the "incomplete assessment as a result of good cause" regulation applied. This application was accepted and he was permitted to sit the exam in the upcoming August exam diet at a first sitting.



SAFETY & WELFARE

MINIBUS SERVICE

Sadly, 2015/16 year saw the cessation of the GUSRC halls-to-campus minibus service after many successful years. Over the years the service had benefited many students, whether taking them on a two-minute journey to Cairncross or the ten minute journey to Wolfson Halls, feedback consistently showed that students appreciated a service that ensured safe, dry transportation between campus and University halls of residence.

However, a review of the service identified that, although minibuses regularly catered to over 60,000 student journeys per year, only an extremely small percentage of students actually benefited. Questions were raised in regards to funding being used to benefit only halls students, when others who lived in private rented accommodation or resided with family members, and often lived further away, did not enjoy similar free transport.

Initially, a reduction in service levels was planned, however the demise of Glasgow Student Village created a £50,000 per annum funding gap which could not be made up from other funding.

Students in the Wolfson Halls are now offered subsidised fares on public transport, in part as recognition of the distance of these particular halls from the central University campus. GUSRC continues to offer free minibus usage to affiliated clubs and societies using the preexisting request and booking system.

STUDENT CONDUCT TRAINING

As part of GUSRC's discussions with the Senate Office around Student Conduct hearings, originating from concern at the role of qualified legal representatives in such hearings, we recommended that the process could be made more robust through the development of training for members and chairs of Student Conduct Committees. This year we have been involved in training for committee chairs, enabling us to highlight the role of the Advice Centre in representing students and giving perspective on the essential elements of a fair hearing. It is anticipated that the training will be repeated in future years.

HARASSMENT ADVISERS NETWORK

As part of the Harassment Volunteer Network, Advice Centre staff have continued to attend scheduled meetings, and have input into the Full Stop Campaign to promote the University's Dignity at Work and Study policy, and raise awareness of the support and help available. The Advice Centre team continue to monitor the number of harassment cases (although this number is still very low) and submit anonymised returns to Equality and Diversity Unit.

ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS FORUM

GUSRC were, once again, invited to participate in the Accommodation Options Forum event which is run annually, in February, by Residential Services. GUSRC staff talked directly to 192 students and many more collected information. This event is clearly a useful vehicle for promotion of the Advice Centre as a source of information and advice on housing as well as serving as a good source of information for students seeking private sector accommodation.



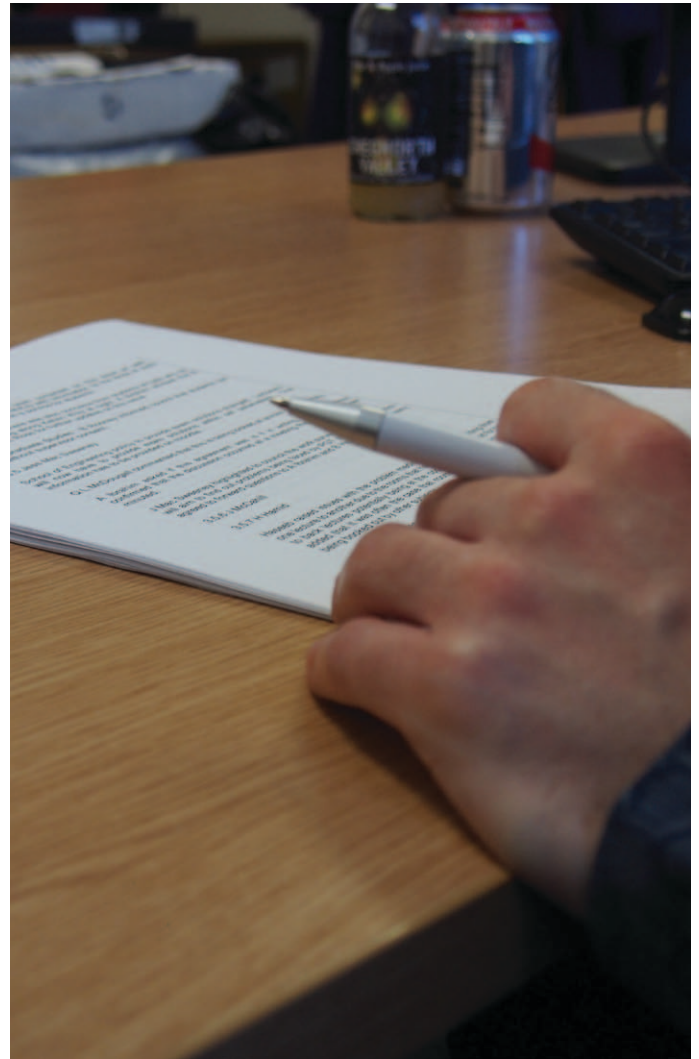
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TENANCY RIGHTS

In early 2016 the Advice Centre team were invited by International Student Support team to give a presentation and question and answer session on the private rented sector to a group of international students. Feedback was positive and it is planned to continue this working partnership next year.

LANDLORD FRAUD

The growth in student numbers from overseas has sadly afforded new opportunities for landlords to exploit students who lack knowledge of the Scottish housing rental sector and associated rules and norms. Our Advice Centre deals with an increasing number of cases where international students have been defrauded, sometimes out of thousands of pounds, by rogue landlords.

New webpages and a leaflet entitled '10 Tips to avoid Housing Scams' went live in August 2015. The Marketing, Recruitment and International Office agreed to send a link to all incoming international students and advise them to contact us if they were at all suspicious.



PROHIBITED MATERIALS IN EXAMS

Students who are caught cheating in exams often say that they did not know something was prohibited or they forgot they had notes with them. Advice Centre staff developed highly visible posters for the exam venues as a last-minute trigger to remind students of the risk in cheating. An electronic version was also distributed to staff who might be doing exam preparation lectures/tutorials. It has proved impossible to evaluate the impact of the posters. Discussions between GUSRC, Senate office and key members of College staff around this issue are likely to be ongoing.

THIRD PARTY REPORTING

GUSRC has an integral role in developing and supporting the University's Equality and Diversity agenda and therefore opted to become a Third Party Reporting Centre (the only such centre on campus). Any student who wishes to report a hate crime but does not want to speak to the police can now report it anonymously and more comfortably than previously. Staff from the GUSRC's Advice Centre, the Permanent Secretary, and the Vice President-Student Support have all undertaken Third Party Reporting training.



FRESHERS' WEEK

GUSRC continues to carry the responsibility of co-coordinating and administering Freshers' Week, working with the University and facilitating linkages with the other student bodies. We have responsibility for the marketing and administration of the Freshers' Pass Programme as well as development, operation and maintenance of online pass sales system and coordination of marketing

Pass sales recorded in 2015 were the lowest recorded since 2007 with only 2837 passes sold. The increase in the pass price (from £40 to £45) and the competition from Glasgow city centre events have impacted on the popularity of the week. GUSRC's work around the marketing, administration, and sale of the passes this year generated £29,277 (£31,127 in 2014) for each of the Unions and £17,195 (£18,281 in 2014) for the SRC and for GUSA. This percentage split is historical and has no objective rationale.

The majority of GUSRC events during Freshers' Week are focused on non-alcohol-related activity and are, in some cases, targeted to specific groups of students and designed to be attractive to 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' students alike.

REFRESHERS'

To welcome new and returning students in January a range of events were organised under the updated Refreshers' brand. This was previously known as Refreshers' Week, but the name was amended due to the burgeoning number of events and activities stretching towards a fortnight. Refreshers' was coordinated by GUSRC in collaboration with the other student bodies. A Refreshers Fair provided a platform for eighty clubs and societies to showcase their activities and recruit new members.

We offered an eclectic range of activities intended to amuse, interest and engage. From yoga sessions to chess tournaments, to meditation to news writing workshops to a magic show (attended by nearly 200 students) The idea was to provide opportunities where the focus was away from alcohol but generate energy and activity for the new academic session.

Some events were intended to encourage particular demographics to engage such as the International Ceilidh at the University Chapel, the Mature Students Mixer at the QMU, or the Postgraduate engagement event at the Gilchrist.



SERVICES, INFO & PUBLICATIONS

2ND HAND BOOKSHOP

GUSRC's student-to-student second-hand book trading facility contributes to assist in the alleviation of student poverty through providing course texts at reduced price, whilst affording an opportunity for students to reaccumulate some financial return on texts which they no longer require. GUSRC facilitates the service on behalf of students, which operates on a strictly break-even basis.

Bookshop sales revenue increased by 10% during the academic year 2015/16 for a total of £55,464. Records kept by GUSRC during the year show that 5304 books were sold over the year, slightly down from the total of 5,671 in 2014/2015.

Total savings to students buying the second hand books has been calculated to be approximately £28,443 compared to purchasing the same texts at full price, whilst those students selling books to fellow students earned a total income of £36,901 from the sales of their old books. Total financial benefit to students using the service over the period is £65,343.

THE WELCOME POINT

The Welcome Point remains the key contact point for events such as Applicants' Visit Day and Open Day. It is an ideal showpiece for new visitors to campus with the student-staff team happy to engage and inform visitors. We open the space at weekends for University events such as Open Days and are happy to consider other events. The Welcome Point handled 32,178 enquiries, a rise of 11% on 28,830 the previous year. The space is also available for small exhibitions and displays, and is currently being used to display banners and models demonstrating the proposals for the new campus development.

We are working with the chairperson of the University's Community & Engagement Group to build the profile of the Welcome Point and increase usage further. In particular, reviewing the fixtures and fittings.

➤ SUCCESS INDICATOR:

Our strategy states: "We will work with the University to increase the number of 'campus visitor' Welcome Point enquiries by 5% per annum over the life of this plan". We managed to go beyond the 5% indicator and hope that refreshing the image of the Welcome Point will increase usage further.

JOB SHOP

Jobshop is a free job and skills matching service, provided to all students and employers. Employers contact GUSRC with employment opportunities which are then advertised to students through GUSRC's website.

GUSRC also produce information for students about their employment rights and joining trade unions in order to prevent/minimise employer exploitation. Our employment rights booklet, Wage Slave or Winner can be found on the GUSRC website.

UNIVERSITY OPEN DAYS

GUSRC continues to assist the University in the planning and activities associated with both University Open Days and Applicants' Visit Days. Both GUSRC and the Advice Centre take active roles in new student visit days, participating in cross-campus events, offering guidance and distributing materials.

GUSRC's role in open days and visit days continues to develop further as the Welcome Point becomes more established as an important focal point on campus.



PRINT SERVICES

GUSRC continues to offer high quality printing and photocopying facilities to all students at a considerably lower rate than commercial high street agencies, however the introduction of the University pull print service at comparable rates has impacted on demand. Photocopying unit sales dropped by 30% to 128,000 against 184,000 units in the previous year. There is a significant downward trend with a 64% drop in sales over the last two years. However, the service is still cost effective to deliver and is essential if we are to meet the burgeoning demand for the binding service which has enjoyed a 44% increase in sales over the last two years.

Inevitably, digital innovations will continue to reduce demand for these services and we will keep the situation under review. Currently however, a significant number of students continue to benefit from GUSRC's photocopying, printing and binding services.

THE GUIDE

The Guide, produced by GUSRC, has long been seen as the key introductory document to life in Glasgow in general, and the University of Glasgow in particular. Produced to high quality print and design standards, normally 5,000 copies of The Guide are distributed directly to new undergraduate and postgraduate students as part of the registration process. Following a request from the University's Business School an additional 2,000 copies of The Guide were produced and distributed directly to Business School students. The additional production costs were funded by the Business School.

The Guide is not produced as a throwaway document. The high standard of presentation, quality of writing and range of information ensures that The Guide is kept and used as a reference book throughout the year. As with last year, all aspects of The Guide were reviewed, including design, content and structure in order to produce a stylish and up to date document which will hopefully serve as a useful introduction to life at the University and in the city, itself.

STUDENT DIARY

GUSRC again produced a diary targeted at first year students, with the aim of enhancing learning and contributing to student retention through:

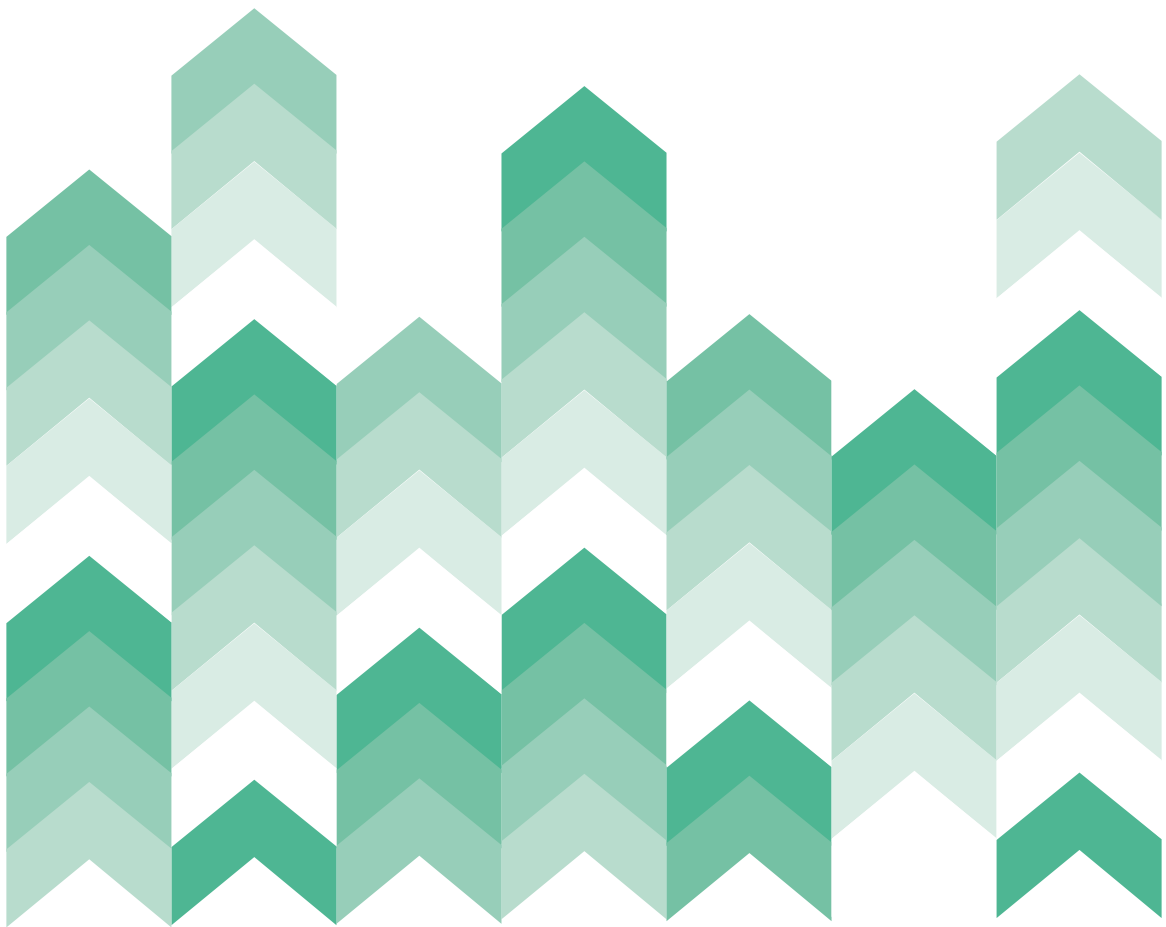
- › Encouraging time management, good learning practices and organisational skills.
- › Assisting integration and participation in a range of activities.
- › Highlighting the range of Support Services offered by the University and GUSRC, to ensure that students know who can help them with any issues.
- › Assisting students settling into the city and settling into the University environment.
- › Encouraging a sense of belonging.

Although the diary undergoes an annual redesign, it retains basically the same format and includes similar (but updated) information.

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VOLUNTEERING & GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

"We will enhance the cultural and community life of our students by promoting personal development and encouraging active citizenship."





STUDENT VOLUNTEER SUPPORT SERVICE

The Student Volunteer Support Service (SVSS) continues to provide students at the University of Glasgow with the opportunity to gain skills and experience through volunteering on campus and in communities throughout Glasgow. Through administrative support and guidance, along with advice on legal compliance, the service makes a significant contribution to the University's graduate attributes agenda by facilitating over 800 volunteer placements annually.

During the year the service invested in the development of a volunteering portal to enable students to browse options and submit applications online. This has streamlined the volunteer registration process and enabled greater flexibility in the range of opportunities offered. Streamlining the process however has to be balanced with the need to ensure quality opportunities, advise students on the most appropriate choice for their interests and aspirations and ensure that the HEAR criteria are met for verification purposes. Whilst the service offers access to increased opportunities, resource limitations render it impossible to provide the necessary induction support which may be reflected in the dropout rate.

During the year 1,264 students registered to volunteer via this portal, a substantial increase on the 722 who registered in 2014/15. While some people subsequently dropped out, 807 students were actively engaged in activities on campus or in the community.

Of the 807 active volunteers, 227 were from the College of Arts; 223 from the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences; 101 from the College of Science and Engineering and nine of unknown origin.

Undergraduates made up 80.5 % at 650 registered users and postgraduates 17.3% (140), the remainder declined to provide the information. 487 volunteers came from the UK and Northern Ireland, and 318 came from the EU/Rest of World. Unknown origin accounted for 66 users.

➤ SUCCESS INDICATOR:

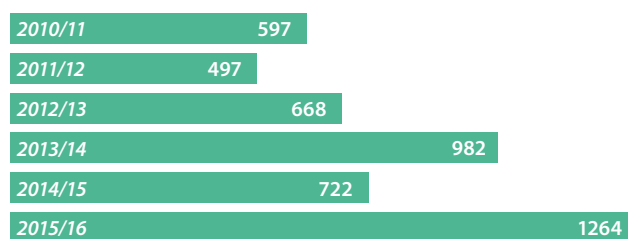
Our strategy states: "We will sustain twenty Volunteer projects per year placing an average of 800 volunteers per year over the life of this plan" For the year we supported 807 recorded volunteers. We're still in the process of developing recording processes and we believe the actual number will be shown to be considerably higher once our information gathering procedures are fully developed.

DEMAND

The success of SVSS belies its limited resources. There continues to be latent demand amongst students for volunteering opportunities but capacity to meet demand is extremely limited.

SVSS's partnership with the library, where students are given an opportunity to speak to organisations directly, is one measure which assists in reducing the pressure on the service. Unfortunately, this year the library redevelopment had an unavoidable impact on the popularity of the café space, with the SVSS stall having to be located in a less obvious location. Nevertheless, there was some use by external charity partners such as Alzheimer Scotland. Affiliated clubs and societies continued to make good use of the space. There are high hopes that the popularity will increase when work is completed.

REGISTERED STUDENT VOLUNTEERS





SERVICE PROMOTION

For the first time GUSRC organised a stand-alone volunteer information session during Fresher's Fair, and attracted a group of approximately eighty first year students to hear the experiences of existing volunteers and receive information about options available.

GUSRC continues to build upon our use of social media to reach the student population, in addition to the Volunteering at Glasgow University Facebook page, an @VolunteerGU Twitter account was created. Deliberate cross-posting between these accounts and general GUSRC accounts, plus other University departments such as Careers and CoSS Employability, has enabled SVSS to give regular updates about new opportunities and reach a wider audience.

VOLUNTEER WEEK

As part of an aim to increase the number of volunteering opportunities and promoting them to students we developed the first ever Volunteering Week. GUSRC organised a range of events where current volunteers talked to students about the benefits of volunteering as well as a discussion session with Dr. Dickon Copsey around the topic 'The personal and professional benefits of volunteering'.

A volunteer fair was organised in the Bute Hall where a steady stream of students visited over the two-hour period. A range of our partner agencies took up the offer of having a stall, including: Food Train, Meal makers, Sense Scotland, Cornerstone, Whizz Kids, Phoenix Futures, Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland, Alzheimer Scotland, Cranhill Community Trust, Action on Hearing Loss, Shelter, Save the Children, Quarriers, SKIP, SVA, GUSH and Conversational English.

Feedback was positive and there was a surge in volunteer applications from students during the following week. This was the first time such a range of events had been attempted; it's hoped that the success of the week will be built upon in forthcoming academic years.

PVG

Volunteers who wish to take part in projects which see them regularly working with children or protected adults, are required to undergo a "disclosure" process through the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme. This system is complex and expensive. SVSS provides such groups with a free PVG service, advising on compliance matters and liaising with Central Registered Body for Scotland (CRBS) to secure free access to the scheme for students involved in each project (otherwise costs are £59 per individual and £18 per update).

The PVG support service plays a significant role in enabling volunteers to find placements in after school projects or care homes, for example. In addition, we assist projects such as Student Volunteers Abroad (SVA) and Students for Kids International Project (SKIP) in processing students to enable them to travel to work with children abroad

Over the year we processed 339 student PVGs as either applications or updates. Savings to students against these costs totalled £13,600 over the year. Over £4,000 more than last year's figure of £9,500.

HEAR

The Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) allows students who engage in certain extracurricular activities to have their participation recorded on their academic record. In the 12 months up to the end of 2015, a total of 765 students received a HEAR verification through their involvement with GUSRC. This figure includes clubs and societies office-bearers but does not include class representatives.

GUSRC recently reviewed and updated reflective log templates to assist students in identifying attributes, skills and knowledge developed through their activities, as well as encouraging them to note how they feel participation in extracurricular activity has contributed to their overall University experience. The intention is for students to gain experience in discussing their skills and achievements outside their studies. Volunteering, in particular, gives students practical experience and encourages them to record and articulate this, something increasingly in demand by employers.



NEW VOLUNTEERING PROJECTS

SVSS continues to develop new and diverse opportunities that will benefit students and community alike. Examples of new partnerships and roles developed this year include:

DRINK WISE, AGE WELL

Phoenix Futures and Addaction's project - Group work with people in recovery from addiction issues, or in promoting healthy lifestyles avoiding excessive alcohol consumption

CHARITY SHOPS

An increased number of charity shop opportunities with three new partner organisations (Shelter, Save the Children and Age Scotland). These opportunities are particularly valued by students who still find English challenging.

PLUSONE

A mentoring programme for vulnerable primary school children who live in the East End of Glasgow. Plusone is part of the A Community in Motion (ACIM) partnership with four schools and the Violence Reduction Unit. Both group work and one-to-one mentoring is available, and student volunteers receive six weeks' youth work training, access to external accredited training, a Community Achievement Award Level 6, and invaluable experience to help employment.

MEAL MAKERS

Matching up students with isolated elderly people so that students can provide cooked meals and human contact.

SHORT TERM & FLEXIBLE OPPORTUNITIES

Some students are not seeking or able to participate in a long term volunteering commitment but still wish to participate in aspects of Glasgow community life. SVSS has therefore started to work with organisations that are only looking for short term commitments. These have included "Gibson Street Gala", "The Big Gay Ball" during summer 2015, and NVA's "Hinterland" event as part of the Festival of Architecture in March 2016.

Other flexible opportunities include the Cranhill Development Trust, a community development organisation which offers a range of options for working with the community in the north east of Glasgow. Options include helping with ESOL classes, basic numeracy and literacy classes, gardening groups, cooking classes and reception duties, and students can volunteer on a one off/short term or regular basis without need to undertake PVG's.

SVSS has also widened our range of learning opportunities by working alongside organisations such as Lingo Flamingo, (which offers tailored foreign language workshops to vulnerable adults to help battle against dementia, brain ageing and other forms of mental illness), Phoenix Futures (which uses volunteers as peer mentors for people in recovery from addiction issues, and offers a range of social activities) and West Glasgow Young Carers Centre (offering a summer programme of residential and social events, and regular peer support meetings).



CONTINUING VOLUNTEERING PROJECTS

CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH

This service continues to be in high demand, and in the year 2015/16 we matched 94 people seeking help to improve their conversational English with another student.

Feedback has shown that volunteers enjoy participating in the project, often learning about their partners own language, culture and country and developing freindships. One volunteer commented of their experience: "I think the conversational English programme is a very interesting programme and something that all students, who want to help others and help themselves in improving their language skills, should definitely have a go. It was a very enjoyable experience and it gave me the chance to make a new friend".

BEFRIENDER PROJECTS

SVSS continues to offer these types of opportunities with people in recovery from health problems (MacMillan Cancer Care/Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland,) people with disabilities (Sense Scotland and Cornerstone) and older people (Alzheimer Scotland). These options involve lengthy processing time via the partner organisations, with interviews, PVG, references and training before any matching takes place.

Barriers include the processing time mentioned above, possible lack of fluency in spoken English, unfamiliarity with Glasgow, and inability to sustain a regular meeting time due to changing schedules. This year SVSS have offered all students applying for these opportunities the opportunity to speak to the SVSS Coordinator to help clarify suitable options.

133 students registered an interest in befriending projects and were passed to the relevant organisation contact person for completion of process.

GLASGOW UNIVERSITY SERVICE TO HOMELESS PEOPLE

SVSS continues to work closely with this service and provide management and administrative support as well as funding the purchase of new equipment. It still proves to be a highly popular opportunity and is a great way for international students who are less fluent in English to be involved in a task based activity where they have other students to help them.

This year two hundred students registered to volunteer with GUSH, and 100% coverage was maintained throughout the year, including during the summer months when many student volunteers either leave Glasgow for holidays or graduate. The GUSH committee have looked to find new ways to use volunteers, and introduced a new "hot meal" shift once a month, where more volunteers can be involved in the preparation of pasta at the local Emmaus project, and then distributon at a local soup kitchen venue.

GU TOURS

The tours provide an opportunity for University of Glasgow students to work as tour guides, develop their communication skills and share their pride in the University with visitors from around the world. GUSRC continues to promote the tours through local guidebooks and websites such as VisitScotland, though feedback suggests a considerable percentage of visits are spontaneous, in response to campus-based promotional materials. Over the year over 1,600 visitors participated in the tours, including repeat customers from visiting French schools and the provision of tours in conjunction with the Development and Alumni Office and other University departments.

The above success has led to trials of extended opening during the summer months, and a new team of guides have been recruited and given professional guide training from a 'blue badge' guide in preparation for six-days-per-week opening from July 2016.



CLUBS & SOCIETIES

Clubs and societies are a key element of the student experience. The clubs affiliating to GUSRC for 2015/2016 numbered 324, around 10% up on the previous year's total of 287. Total student membership of affiliated clubs and societies has increased to 15,500 from 14,000 in the previous year. Affiliates are eligible to receive administrative and developmental support from GUSRC. Affiliated clubs and societies continued to benefit from advice and support on issues as diverse as governance, constitutional frameworks, charity registration, risk assessments, publicity, and event management. GUSRC continues to provide free minibuss bookings to facilitate trips in the UK and travel to conferences and meetings, as well as free room hire, photocopying and IT access.

GUSRC continues to review and improve clubs and societies induction sessions, which help to strengthen the links between clubs and societies and the organisation, encouraging dialogue and mutual support throughout the year.

GUSRC notifies all eligible office bearers about HEAR, collects completed forms and updates student records accordingly. This year 452 office bearers applied to have this activity recorded in their HEAR, almost one hundred more than the previous year.

Clubs and societies remain an integral part of GUSRC's Freshers' Week with 136 stalls allocated to clubs and societies each day of Freshers' Fair. Other clubs and societies' Freshers' Week events included cultural fairs, sword fighting displays and meet and greets with society members.

GUSRC's grant allocation system seeks to balance accountability with ease of access. Clubs and societies are required to advise on potential outcomes that grant funding will enable them to achieve and are invited to make a presentation to the members of the Clubs & Societies Committee. The system is one-tier and straightforward and there has been a year on year upsurge in applications from clubs.

GUSRC AFFILIATED CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

2011/12	175
2012/13	240
2013/14	265
2014/15	287
2015/16	324

VCS AWARDS

Now in its eighth year, the VCS Awards continue to recognise the great work of volunteers, clubs and societies from across campus. Each category was, once again, heavily contested, ensuring that the judges had difficult decisions to make, and also highlighting the extraordinary range of work undertaken by students at the University. The number of nominations this year far surpassed that of previous years, with 202 VCS nominations, a 25% increase on last year's 155, almost four times more than 2013 total of 60 and nearly six times the 2012 total of 35. This steady growth is a positive indicator as we seek to highlight the work of student volunteers and encourage recognition of their activities.

The winners for 2015/16 are listed below, with each winner picking up their trophy at a dedicated event to which members of GUSRC Council, staff and University staff are also invited.

- › Best New Club – FREEDA Freestyle Dance Association
- › Students and Communities Award - Enactus
- › Publicity Award – Student Volunteers Abroad
- › Volunteer of the Year - Irene Tortajada Querol
- › Campaigns Award - GU Amnesty for 'Let's Talk'
- › Exceptional Event –Glasgow University Muslim Students Association
- › Fundraising Award - Charity Fashion Show
- › Innovation Award – GUEV
- › Most Dedicated Member - Sarah Battensby & Fergus Taylor

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POSTWORD & FINANCE

I hope you enjoyed reading about our work over the past year and I look forward to building on the successes of last year's executive, tackling new challenges and progressing new initiatives. At the same time, we'll continue to deliver our broad range of services and represent and support our diverse student population at all levels across the University.

It's exciting times to be at the University of Glasgow, in the next few years over £1billion will be invested through the University's Campus Development project bringing over 2,500 jobs to the city and promising to make significant enhancements to the student experience. I look forward to participating in the discussions and working with the University in developing mechanisms that enable the student voice to be heard.

Whilst the Estates Development is progressing we shouldn't allow ourselves to be distracted from the everyday issues that continue to impact on students. Our recently developed strategy sets out our aims across all areas of our activities and I'll work to ensure we deliver on our stated aims.



Ameer Ibrahim
President 2016/17



FINANCE

	GENERAL FUNDS (£)	DESIGNATED FUNDS (£)	2016 TOTAL (£)	RESTATED 2015 TOTAL (£)
INCOMING RESOURCES				
DONATIONS & LEGACIES	585,054	-	585,054	585,055
OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES	37,954	-	37,954	42,085
INVESTMENT INCOME	5,281	-	5,281	5,193
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	275,528	-	275,528	290,077
TOTAL INCOME & ENDOWMENTS	903,817	-	903,817	922,410
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
EXPENDITURE ON RAISING FUNDS	17,079	-	17,079	16,483
EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	869,885	14,064	883,949	944,018
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDITURE	886,964	14,064	901,028	960,501
BALANCE				
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	16,853	(14,064)	2,789	(38,091)
BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARDS AT 1 JULY 2015	371,329	34,853	406,182	444,273
FUND BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD AT 30 JUNE 2016	388,182	20,789	408,971	406,182

NOTES

GUSRC recorded a surplus this year of £2,789 (2015 - £38,091 deficit).

The block grant from the University was £585,054, the same as was received in 2015. There is an additional £27,000 allocated to this heading as the University's notional building rental charge.

Total reserves at 30th June 2016 stand at £408,971 (2015 - £406,182). It is the policy of the organisation to maintain funds at a level to provide sufficient costs to cover contractual liabilities should the organisation have to close.

The loss of the grant from Glasgow Student Village (£47,880) rendered it necessary to discontinue the Halls to Campus Minibus Service this year rather than phased closure as advised in the Service Review. We received a contribution of £4,250 additional from the University Residential Services department to assist with drivers' exit payments.

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THANKS

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REGISTRATION NUMBER SC006970**