



UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL
STRATEGIC PLAN
2015-2020



CONTENTS



- 4. Welcome*
- 5. Developing the Strategy*
- 6. Vision, Mission & Values*
- 8. Representation & Engagement*
- 10. Support & Wellbeing*
- 12. Volunteering & Community Engagement*
- 14. Our People*
- 16. Communications, Marketing & Information Technology*
- 18. Finance & Funding*

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WELCOME



GUSRC is delighted to present our third strategic plan.

This plan sets out how we will work over the next five years and highlights some shorter term activities that will help us along that road as well as some success measures. In response to feedback we've stripped down the plan removing a lot of additional text and focussing on our key aims. We produce an annual report every year highlighting our progress against our strategy, additional information on our work can be gathered from these reports through our website at www.glasgowstudent.net.

Representing the interests of students is the core of our existence. We have a long, proud history of campaigning, influencing and working in partnership to bring positive change to the lives of students at the

University. The process of developing the plan has encouraged us to reflect, not only on what we do, but what we stand for. We've therefore developed a set of values and included them in our strategy. These values are like horizontal themes which cut across all areas of our activity as well as defining our organisational culture and approach.

Where relevant, this plan aligns with the University of Glasgow's own strategy document: *"Inspiring People - Changing the World 2015-2020"*, whilst also reflecting a natural evolution of GUSRC strategies past.

During the period of this plan the University is likely to undergo some of the most significant changes in its long and proud history. GUSRC welcomes the opportunity to be part of it.

Liam King
President 2015/16

Bob Hay
Permanent Secretary

DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY



As GUSRC is a democratic organisation with new officers elected every year, the plan is intended as a framework which offers the requisite degree of operational flexibility whilst serving as a vehicle for continuity and building on success.

To inform the plan's development we commissioned an external research company, Greenhouse Ltd., to gather feedback from stakeholders including senior University staff, GUSRC staff, and student officers. Specific focus groups were organised for identified 'communities of interest', for example international and postgraduate students. Feedback on work under the last plan was highly positive.

Feedback from the research indicated overwhelming agreement that the existing three student-facing themes were still relevant and appropriate. This plan therefore retains these key aims for its primary structure. We have

incorporated 'communications' as an additional enabler, an area identified as one GUSRC should develop. Also introduced are key success indicators; although previous strategies have incorporated references to targets, the key success indicators will enable us to more transparently review and evaluate performance whilst still accommodating our democratic framework and the aspirations of student officers.

Although our student-facing themes remain similar this does not mean that GUSRC remains static. In fact this is an exciting time for us. As a relatively small but multi-faceted organisation we engage with thousands of students every year in a wide range of environments. What follows incorporates the views of our stakeholders as to how we build on past successes and meet the challenges of a changing higher education landscape, whilst continuing to operate efficiently and effectively within set funding parameters.

"There doesn't appear to be any strong rationale for a dramatic shift in the strategic themes for GUSRC, and therefore a consolidation approach is a more compelling approach. This should not be seen as some sort of consolidation in any sense of standing still, but a dynamic and developmental approach which recognises the new challenges ahead."

- Greenhouse Ltd. April 2015

"The rating of the current Strategic Plan's progress among the university interviewees was relatively high, with a large majority scoring it 8 out of 10, and only one stakeholder scoring below 7. Comments exemplifying the views included: 'I've been impressed with GUSRC over the last cycle of the strategic plan – they've articulated well their purpose'; 'I'm aware of the plan and they stick to it, and there's a high degree of accountability to the set up'; and 'They're delivering pretty well – each year the sabbs have their own focus and the management provides that continuity – and the separation from the two unions keeps them focused'."

- Greenhouse Ltd. April 2015

VISION, MISSION & VALUES

OUR VISION

The Independent Student Voice at the University of Glasgow.

OUR MISSION

To provide effective representation, support, opportunities and services for and on behalf of the students of the University of Glasgow.



OUR VALUES

GUSRC's values permeate all areas of our work. They define us, not only shaping our strategy but underpinning our day to day activities and behaviour. These values state that GUSRC, as an organisation, can be defined in the following terms.

Student Led

We work to ensure that we know and represent all of our students, listening and working with them for positive change. Our student leaders and representatives shape every decision we take.

Effective

Everything we do has a positive impact for our students, we constantly challenge why and how we are doing things and we value our resources, working to ensure that we do not waste them.

Democratic

Our members are at the heart of our decision making. We represent and empower them. We are responsible and accountable.

Independent

Whilst working collaboratively, we will maintain our independence to allow us to fully represent our students at a local, national and global level.

Supportive

We will seek to provide an environment where students can access support and advice, easily and with confidence.

Socially Responsible

Committed to fostering and promoting the broader social good, across all areas of work undertaken by the organisation.

PARTNERSHIP - DISTANCE TRAVELLED

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

- QAA ELIR University of Glasgow, 2004

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

- QAA ELIR University of Glasgow, 2010

"The partnership between the University and the Students' Representative Council continues to be a strong and effective relationship"

- QAA ELIR University of Glasgow, 2014



STRATEGY AIM 1:

REPRESENTATION AND 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.

GUSRC will continue to work in partnership with the University to ensure the interests of our members are at the forefront of decision making. The University is clear on its intention to build on our strong working relationship; the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015 to 2020 states *"We will develop this partnership further by working more closely with the Students' Representative Council (GUSRC) on policy development and engaging students more actively in the co-creation and evaluation of the learning experience"*.

Beyond the learning and teaching experience, we will continue to engage with student support services and shape their growth and development. The new Campus Vision is a thread of change that will weave its way through many areas of University life. Our challenge, and that of the

University, is to develop and sustain meaningful and informed student engagement with the estates development process.

Like the University itself, we face new challenges as the student demographic continues to change. The University's emphasis on widening participation, the drive to towards a postgraduate population of 5,000 students, a burgeoning international student population and an increasing number of transnational education students as well as a projected growth in distance learning will impact on our work across all spheres of activity as we seek to engage with and represent increasingly diverse communities of interest whilst continuing to represent the interests of the traditional majority undergraduate population.



GILCHRIST POSTGRADUATE CLUB

In October 2012 GUSRC and the University jointly opened the Gilchrist Postgraduate Club, marked by an opening ceremony with guests including the University Principal, Rector Charles Kennedy and descendants of Marion Gilchrist, after whom the club is named.

The following year the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) revealed that that 53% of students 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' with the statement *"There is adequate provision made for postgraduate social space at my institution"* up from 34.6% the following year. Satisfaction with postgraduate social and study space continues to improve and the Gilchrist serves as a base for our postgraduate engagement work.

"Glasgow has always been recognised for encouraging and supporting researchers to take the lead on their own innovative career development initiatives. The Gilchrist has given researchers ownership of a space which allows them to do exactly that and it's been really exciting to see how its use has developed. We're now being approached by other universities who are keen to replicate this model for their own researcher community building initiatives."

- Dr. Elizabeth Adams
Researcher Development Manager

OBJECTIVES

- 1: Undertake and support evidence-based campaigning, lobbying and representational activity in the interests of our membership on campus and at local and national government level.
- 2: Sustain our positive working partnership with the University and represent the student population at all levels throughout the University.
- 3: Continue to develop our work with the University in enabling students to engage in policy development and evaluation of the learning experience, in an informed and inclusive way.
- 4: Link with Senate and Graduate Schools to develop representation of postgraduate students, increase engagement and enhance social capital.
- 5: Ensure our democratic, representative structures are valid and accessible for all students.



PRIORITIES



Work with the University in developing the class representation system to ensure it remains fit for purpose and responsive to the growing diversification of University learning and teaching delivery methods.

We will work together to develop and implement a system for evaluating the impact of class representatives on the student experience.

We will enhance our communications processes to deliver a planned and targeted approach to student engagement.

We will seek to address inconsistencies around PG representation, develop and agree a joint postgraduate engagement and representation strategy with relevant University stakeholders.

Develop management information systems in order to, where possible, identify the proportion of postgraduate and international students who engage with GUSRC activities (class representatives, volunteering, clubs and societies).

KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS

We will continue to view feedback in the Enhancement Led Institutional Review as a benchmark of success.

Joint, resource-backed postgraduate engagement plan agreed and 'signed off' by Graduate Schools and Senate Office by year 3 of this plan.

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.

We will participate in 100% of PSRs and 100% of feedback will agree that the student representative made a constructive contribution to the process.

We will train an average of 800 class representatives per year over the 5 years of this plan and maintain a satisfaction rating of 95% with the training.

We will retain a satisfaction rating of 95% or above in the International Student Barometer.

We will promote good teaching through running annual Student Teaching Awards with a minimum of one thousand students participating in the nomination process and report and publicise our findings.

We will monitor the diversity of those students who are involved with our representative and democratic structures and increase engagement with groups under-represented within the context of our student population.



STRATEGY AIM 2: **SUPPORT AND 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 team of staff at GUSRC's Advice Centre advise and represent thousands of students each year in a range of environments, from the Small Claims Court to Senate Appeals Committee. Feedback from Senate Office staff has highlighted the benefits to students and University from correctly prepared and presented appeals, something the Advice Centre is proud to offer support with. The work is augmented by printed and online advice materials dedicated to enabling students to educate themselves on how best to deal with difficulties they may experience whether financial, academic or otherwise.

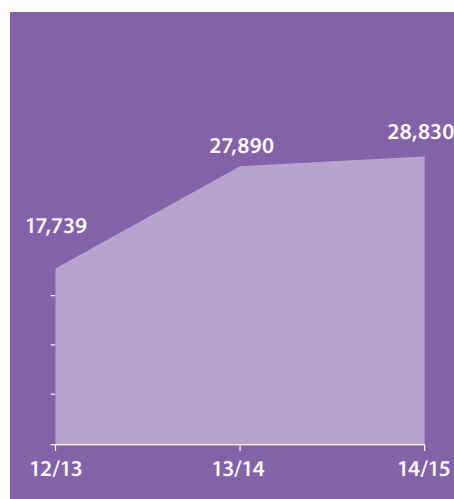
In 2012 GUSRC opened the Welcome Point; a joint project with the University to serve as hub for students and gateway for visitors to the campus. The Welcome Point is staffed by a team of current students, thought to be the best ambassadors for the University. Whilst the new campus developments may shift the focus of the centre of campus it is unlikely that the role of the Welcome Point will be diminished as the Gilbert Scott building will continue to fill an administrative and teaching function as well as being a major draw for campus visitors and an attraction for potential students to University Open Days.



GUSRC & UNIVERSITY WELCOME POINT

The opening of the new Welcome Point in 2012 was the culmination of several years planning by the University and GUSRC. The Welcome Point provides students and visitors with a prestigious reception area where they are welcomed by student staff members. It also serves as a hub for GUSRC and an information point for current students to learn about events on campus, the services and facilities available from GUSRC and pick up official documents including maps, advice leaflets and services publicity.

The graph opposite shows the number of enquiries made at the Welcome Point in each full year of operation since its opening.



OBJECTIVES

- 6: Offer a friendly and informed frontline service which reflects our pride in the University and serves as a welcoming gateway and signposting service to GUSRC and the campus.
- 7: Provide high quality independent information, advice and advocacy services and seek to access resources to enable them to meet the needs of our evolving student demographic.
- 8: Demonstrate effective student leadership in working with the University to provide a welcoming environment for all our members through the delivery of events and initiatives focused on inclusion, equality and wellbeing.
- 9: Ensure, through research and environmental scanning, we monitor and respond to students' changing support needs as the Higher Education landscape changes.
- 10: Investigate partnership opportunities to develop new and existing services in order to enhance GUSRC's offer and better cater for the diverse needs of our members.
- 11: Work with the University to ensure that the value of the role of our student-led support services is acknowledged and the visibility and space needs are fully considered and addressed within the new campus development.



PRIORITIES



We will review the current positioning of the Welcome Point and seek funding for an internal redesign which better meets the needs of students and visitors.

Enhance links with the student enquiries team in order to address how the Welcome Point complements the student facing functions of the student enquiries desk.

Review our enquiry recording systems to gain greater insight into the profile of our clients and understand how they reflect the University demographics.

KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS

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 will establish a baseline measure for the percentage of Advice Centre clients who would recommend the Advice Centre to a friend and report against it annually.

By the end of this plan over 50% of students involved in formal university procedures (e.g. appeals, fitness to practise, conduct hearings, complaints) will have consulted with the Advice Centre.

We will continue to co-ordinate an annual Freshers' week, resources permitting, and work with the University to engender an inclusive and welcoming environment. We will seek a satisfaction rating of 75% or above with key GUSRC events.

We will run a minimum of four campaigns/initiatives per year, in partnership with the University and/or other student-led bodies where appropriate, focused on student wellbeing.

Postgraduate students will feel more welcomed to the University - we will seek to establish baseline figures in the PRES and PTES and measure success against this.



STRATEGY AIM 3:

VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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

Just as the University expresses its commitment to societal engagement, we will work to build on the vast reservoir of energy, talent and diversity that constitutes the student body at Glasgow in order to develop the links between the University and the surrounding communities. Our Student Volunteer Support Service (SVSS) is a key element in the work we undertake assisting students towards and through, suitable volunteering opportunities.

We will continue to maintain and sustain current levels of support, seeking to strengthen our links with the voluntary sector in Glasgow. During the last plan we also commenced campus tours which give student tour guides an opportunity to hone their communication skills and show off

our campus. We are working closely with archives and the alumni office as we diversify and expand the tours offer in exciting ways.

It is through volunteering and involvement with clubs and societies that many students have the opportunity to develop social links and friendships. Membership of societies can assist in overcoming isolation and creating a sense of belonging, all factors which assist retention.

The University has made explicit in Inspiring its strategy 2015 -2020 its commitment to provide 'suitable space for study and social/recreational activity'. Space on campus for clubs and societies is extremely limited and it is vital that Estates Development fully addresses this gap in provision.

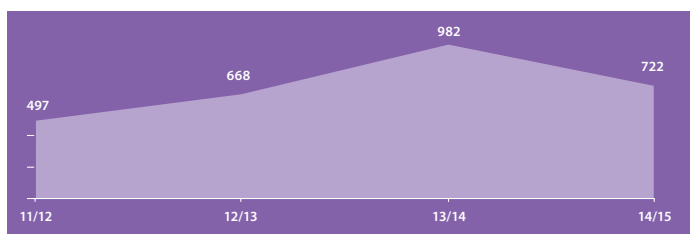


SVSS 2011-2015

GUSRC's Student Volunteer Support Service continues to go from strength to strength. With increased emphasis on the importance of graduate attributes and gaining experience outwith studies from both the University and GUSRC, the service has seen an increase in students subscribing to and participating in the service in the past four years.

Opportunities such as Glasgow University Service to Homeless People, Elderly Befriending and Classroom Support continue to be heavily subscribed, with GUSRC continuing to look for new 'quality' volunteering opportunities for our students that will increase our capacity and assist us in meeting their expectations.

As the graph below shows, GUSRC registered an average of 717 student volunteers via SVSS per year during the period of the last plan, a total of 2869 volunteers.

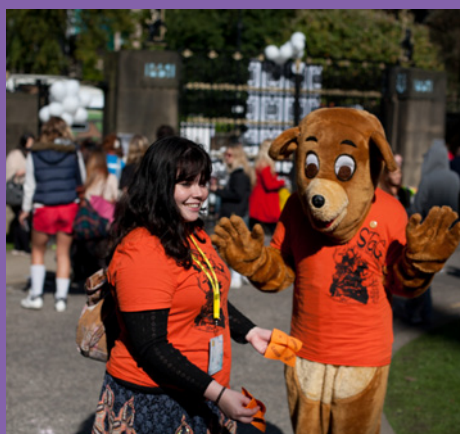


OBJECTIVES

- 12: Complement the formal learning experience at Glasgow by facilitating volunteering opportunities which encourage links with the local community and deliver social benefit.
- 13: Encourage a rich and culturally diverse campus life by promoting the development of clubs and societies and providing financial, administrative and developmental support to enable them to fulfil their objectives.
- 14: Continue to develop our campus tours and through links with archives and the alumni office seek to diversify our offer to reflect the interests of alumni and attract local people onto campus.
- 15: Facilitate opportunities for students to be active citizens, participate fully in campus life, and encourage reflection and engagement in developing graduate attributes.
- 16: Facilitate collaboration between student groups, encouraging them to work together and pool resources to increase the impact of society-led events and initiatives.
- 17: Support and publish a range of student-led media whose values reflect these of GUSRC.



PRIORITIES



Introduce new systems to better track our volunteers' involvement and the time they give.

Work on increasing the profile of our 'celebrating success' events to ensure our volunteers are better recognised for their commitment.

Focus on providing quality opportunities, and strengthen our links to local community and charitable organisations.

Consider areas for complementary working with the University and seek opportunities to tender as a service delivery agent.

Work with the University in ensuring that the needs of clubs and societies are provided for in the new Learning and Teaching Hub both in terms of space and future building management arrangements.

KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS

We will sustain 20 Volunteer projects per year placing an average of 800 volunteers per year over the life of this plan.

Students' satisfaction with clubs and societies shall continue at minimum 94% or above on the International Student Barometer.

We will establish a baseline for the number of volunteers who agree with the following statement: "GUSRC has helped me to develop skills that could assist me in my future career" and set a target for annual improvement.

The current level of eligible clubs and societies' office bearers seeking HEAR accreditation is 40%. We will seek to increase to 60% over the lifetime of this plan.

Total registered membership of GUSRC-affiliated clubs and societies shall continue at over 50% of the registered student population.



ENABLING AIM 1: **OUR PEOPLE**

A student-led organisation where staff and student officers work together in fulfilling organisational aims.

We have 14 full-time staff and 18 part-time staff with strategic, secretariat, developmental and administrative responsibilities. In addition we contract with individuals to deliver areas of our work. Staff are accountable to an elected Council of up to 49 members, four of whom are full time, paid sabbatical student officers in the elected positions of President, Vice President - Student Activities, Vice President - Education and Vice President - Student Support.

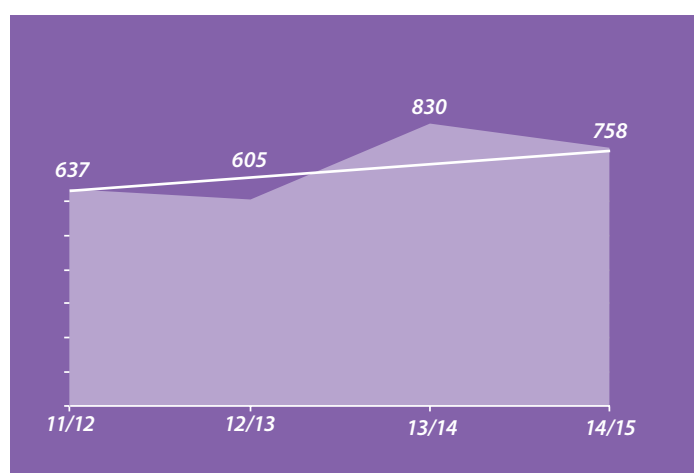
The rapid changeover in student officers requires a robust, effective continuation framework. For non-sabbatical council members there is potential to improve the handover and induction process. Elements of the handover materials can be standardised and there is a need to establish and sustain contact with newly elected members early during their period of office, particularly after the spring elections where there can be a gap of several months between elections and the next meeting of Council.



GUSRC COUNCIL 2011-2015

In 2012 GUSRC restructured the organisation's representative system to reflect the University restructure. We introduced a new tier of representatives in the form of school representatives who have helped us gain an understanding of issues at a more localised level as well as build a closer relationship with class representatives, something we hope to develop further through the period of this strategy.

The number of class representatives we trained increased significantly over the period of the last plan, as reflected in the graph opposite.

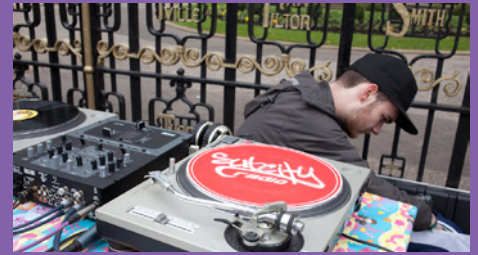


OBJECTIVES

18: Sabbatical Officers and Council Members are supported and empowered to achieve their annual stated objectives.

19: Sabbatical and staff teams share a common vision, understand and value each others' roles and work together to deliver shared objectives.

20: A positive organisational culture which encourages learning and reflection in addition to continued personal development for staff and officers.



PRIORITIES



Conduct review of council members' handover system and general support to council members.

Develop annual 'exit' questionnaire for Council members to identify the effectiveness of support mechanisms and shape the way forward.

Review current planning template to better enable sabbaticals and staff to work together on an annual planning cycle to establish priorities for each year ahead.

Conduct a review of the current Performance & Development Review (PDR) system.

KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS

Sabbatical officers' training evaluation approval rating shall be an average of 90% or above during each year of this plan.

We will establish a baseline for satisfaction with support through Council members' questionnaire and measure future progress against that baseline.

Every staff member shall receive an annual PDR from their line manager and shall remain occupationally competent in their role through the identification of appropriate training and development activity.

Each sabbatical officer will produce a plan incorporating their aims for the year by the first meeting of Council and progress against milestones shall be reported accordingly.



ENABLING AIM 2:

COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

We will ensure success of the plan through an energetic and consistent approach to communications and marketing augmented by effective IT support

Our membership is ever changing and from a diverse array of backgrounds, requiring us to utilise an ever wider variety of engagement and communications tools. Throughout the period of this plan we will work to broaden our understanding of our membership's needs. Fundamental to this is the agreement that communication remains two-way throughout; it's not just about talking to members, it's about listening as well.

Feedback on the period of the previous strategy suggests that internal and external communication are lacking, both in terms of effectiveness and in engaging our key target audiences. Inevitably, failure to communicate effectively will lead to an undervaluing of the impact of our work on the student experience, something GUSRC must seek to rectify during the period of this plan.

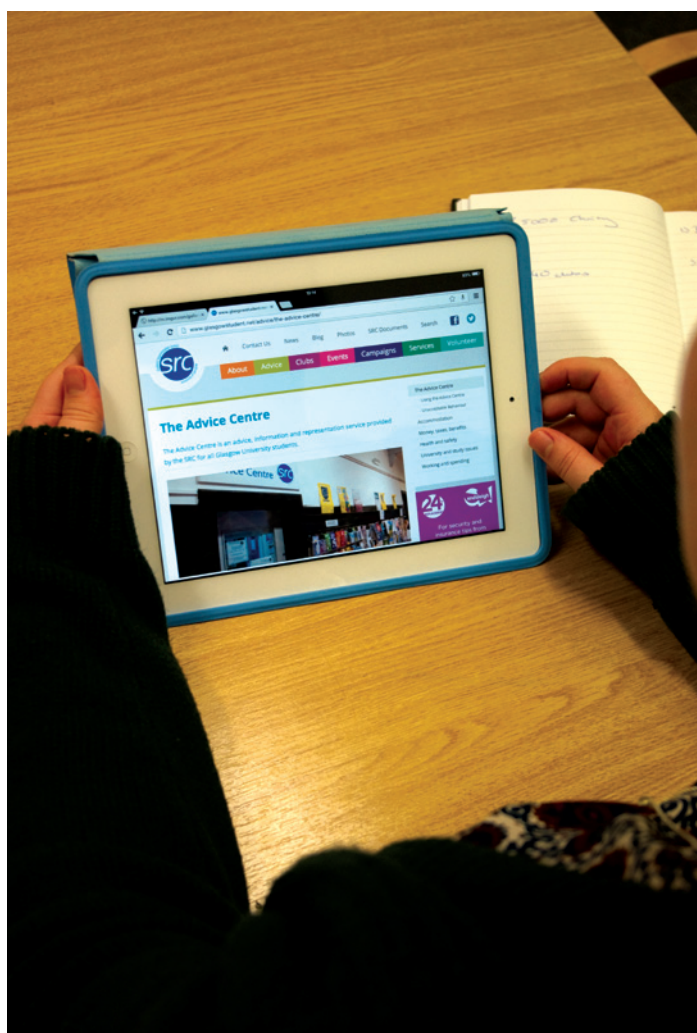
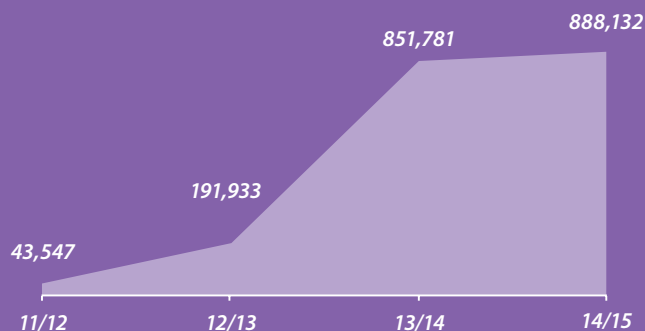
"Across all three themes the need to revisit communications came across really quite strongly. By identifying some of the stronger features of the SRC offer, it would be realistic to expect increased awareness, engagement and perceived value from such an approach".

- Greenhouse Ltd. April 2015

ONLINE DEVELOPMENT 2011-2015

In 2013, GUSRC commissioned the development of a new glasgowstudent.net website based on a research exercise which suggested the existing website was no longer fit for purpose. The new site introduced several new, key technical features, including better mobile performance, social media integration and embedded video support.

Over the period of the plan, usage has increased considerably going from less than 50,000 page views in 2011 to nearly 900,000 in 2014/2015, as shown in the graph below. Other key metrics including unique users, time on site and bounce rate all showed significant improvement during the period.



OBJECTIVES

- 21: Continue with development of IT and related infrastructure, updating and aligning management information systems to strategic and operational objectives.
- 22: Enhance our profile by delivering a coherent and consistent brand/message through development of an organisation-wide communications and marketing strategy.
- 23: Ensure staff and officers are committed to this strategy and understand the roles we play within it by instilling communication as a key priority throughout the organisation.
- 24: Build on our existing work with the University to optimise effective communication with our membership where key messages and priorities coincide.



PRIORITIES



Consult with staff to identify potential for greater integration of communication into workloads.

Seek to identify and agree weekly 'minimum' hours that sabbatical officers shall spend communicating directly with students.

Establish a communications plan and set of visual identity guidelines to augment this strategy.

Undertake 'root and branch' review of all current communications channels.

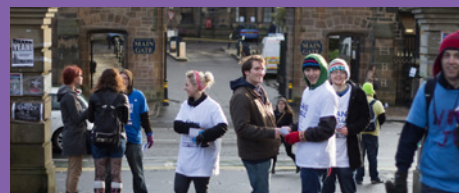
Review the priorities of the IT department to ensure effective and timely reporting of necessary management information.

KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS

Improved engagement with website and key social media platforms as defined by progress against established baseline metrics.

Continue to produce an annual report highlighting our work over the year.

Successful delivery of the strategy.



ENABLING AIM 3: **FINANCE AND FUNDING**

We will ensure our long term sustainability by managing our resources effectively, demonstrating good financial stewardship and the value of our work.

We are a representative and service-driven organisation and depend heavily on the Block Grant allocation from the University. Little opportunity exists for us to generate additional revenue. Our Freshers' Fair and general marketing activity enable us to generate small amounts of additional revenue which plays a vital role in 'plugging the gap' between the block grant allocation and what we actually need to maintain our current levels of activity and service provision.

It is likely that the University's financial position will render any significant block grant increases extremely unlikely over the period of this plan. Our researchers acknowledged this in their report and suggested *"To help mitigate the threat [of limited block grant increases], students' unions in the UK are increasingly agreeing more specific project-based additional grant*

funding from their institutions which have time limitations and clear key performance indicators" (Greenhouse Ltd. April 2015).

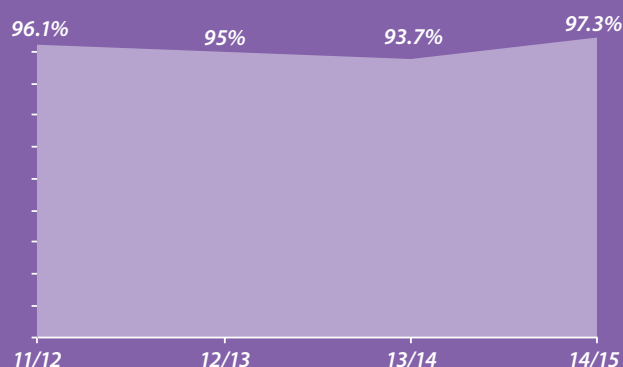
The growth of the campus west of Gilmorehill may present new opportunities. Whilst the John McIntyre Building's current location is ideal, it may be worth considering how the new campus development will impact on how students interact with our services. The number of student clubs and societies has increased significantly in recent years but the University is unable to meet their needs in terms of gathering or activity space. It may be time therefore to explore the development of a new purpose built, student run facility that can meet our needs and reflect the societal demands and expectations of a global student population attending a modern, 'ancient', university.



ISB 2011-2015

Throughout the course of the 2011-2015 strategic plan, engaging with and supporting international students was a key priority of GUSRC, as reflected by the organisation's ratings in the International Student Barometer survey (shown in the graph opposite).

During the period, GUSRC has consistently scored over 90% satisfaction, one of the top three ranked services in the student support category, ahead of the majority of similar organisations throughout Scotland and the Russell Group.



OBJECTIVES

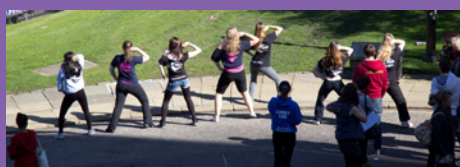
25: Continue to demonstrate the value of our work as a unique campus organisation through effective activity and outcome monitoring and reporting.

26: Strive to bridge the 'gap' between University grant funding and the requirements of the organisation through effective marketing and low level commercial activity.

27: Seek to access additional project funding from the University in furtherance of mutual strategic objectives and where core funding limits potential for additional contribution.



PRIORITIES



Review budget heading allocations with a view to incorporating increased communication costs.

Continue to deliver a comprehensive block grant submission outlining the unique value of GUSRC activities and services

KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS

Sufficient income generated through block grant and low level commercial activity to enable break-even budget.

Sustain a reserves policy which contributes to our sustainability and our capacity to manage unforeseen financial difficulties.





WWW.GLASGOWSTUDENT.NET

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