

# GCU Students' Association Strategic Planning Research

Stage 2

# Student Feedback

## Overview of stage 1 feedback – key themes

Students

- **Strengths of GCU Students' Association were the variety of events on offer, a supportive and welcoming atmosphere and the staff and people**
- **However, less positive aspects of the organisation centred around the lack of awareness and the perception of being inaccessible and intimidating**
- **The main thoughts about the Mission, Vision and Values included the broadness of the content. However, there was some suggestion that the document was something that could be built upon**
- **Student believed the future focus of GCU Students' Association should be tangible goals ensuring increasing engagement, particularly of all student types and ensuring awareness of what is on offer**

# Stage 2 Feedback

# RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

### Research introduction and objectives

In stage 2, an online survey was conducted with GCU students and 9 stakeholder interviews were held with stakeholders identified by GCU Students' Association.

The broad objectives for both parts of stage 2 were to test key findings from stage 1 of the research and to understand perceptions of GCU Students' Association and to gain thoughts, opinions and ideas around the direction of the new GCU Students' Association Strategic Plan.

# Introduction

## Reading the report

The report presents the findings of both the quantitative online survey and the stage 2 stakeholders' research.

The survey achieved 659 responses, and this accounts for 4% of the overall student population at the University, which was estimated to be 14394. This sample is accurate to a 95% confidence level\* and with a 3.73 margin of error\*\*. This allows for a robust analysis of the sample.

\*The confidence level tells you how sure you can be. It is expressed as a percentage and represents how often the true percentage of the population who would pick an answer lies within the confidence interval. The 95% confidence level means you can be 95% certain.

\*\*The confidence interval (also called margin of error) is the plus-or-minus figure that we can be certain of the reliability of responses. With a confidence interval of 3.73 should 50% percent of the sample select an answer you can be "sure" that if you had asked the question of the entire relevant population between 46.27% ( $50 - 3.73$ ) and 53.73% ( $50 + 3.73$ ) would have picked that answer.

# Introduction

## Sample demographic summary

659

respondents

- The majority of the sample are based on the **Glasgow campus**
- Almost a **third of students are aged 16 – 20**, with a **similar proportion aged 21-25**. The remaining **third are aged 25+**
- Almost **three quarters are Scottish citizens**.
- **77%** of the sample are **undergraduates**.
- **39%** of the students are part of the **School of Health and Life sciences**, **34%** belong to the **Glasgow School of Business and Society**, while **24%** belong to the **School of Engineering and the Built Society**
- **86%** of the sample are in **full time education**



# Introduction

## Sample demographic summary

- There is a **female bias** within the sample, with them accounting for almost two-thirds overall (**65%**)
- Almost a **quarter of respondents are international students** (24%)
- **70% identify as white Scottish or British.**
- **A third of the sample identify as atheist.** Of those who do hold a particular faith, the greatest proportion, **over a third, say they're Christian (37%)**
- The **majority** of the sample **do not identify as having a disability.**
- **Almost two fifths (38%) of the sample live in rented accommodation.** 35% live with their parents.

# Getting to know your students: demographics

## Getting to know your students

The sample profile is a good match to the student profile; with over sampling on international students

	Number of GCU population	Number of survey sample	% GCU of population	% of survey sample
Undergraduates	12219	513	82%	78%
Postgraduates Taught	2189	95	15%	14%
Postgraduates Research	526	35	3%	5%
School of Health and Life Sciences	5389	257	36%	39%
Glasgow School for Business and Society	5209	222	35%	34%
School of Engineering and Built Environment	3730	163	25%	25%
GCU London	308	13	2%	2%
International students	1494	154	10%	23%
Part time	1818	94	14%	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14934</b>	<b>659</b>		

# Introduction

## Significant differences

### Significant differences

A number of questions have been broken down and compared with each other, according to key demographics and identified segments.

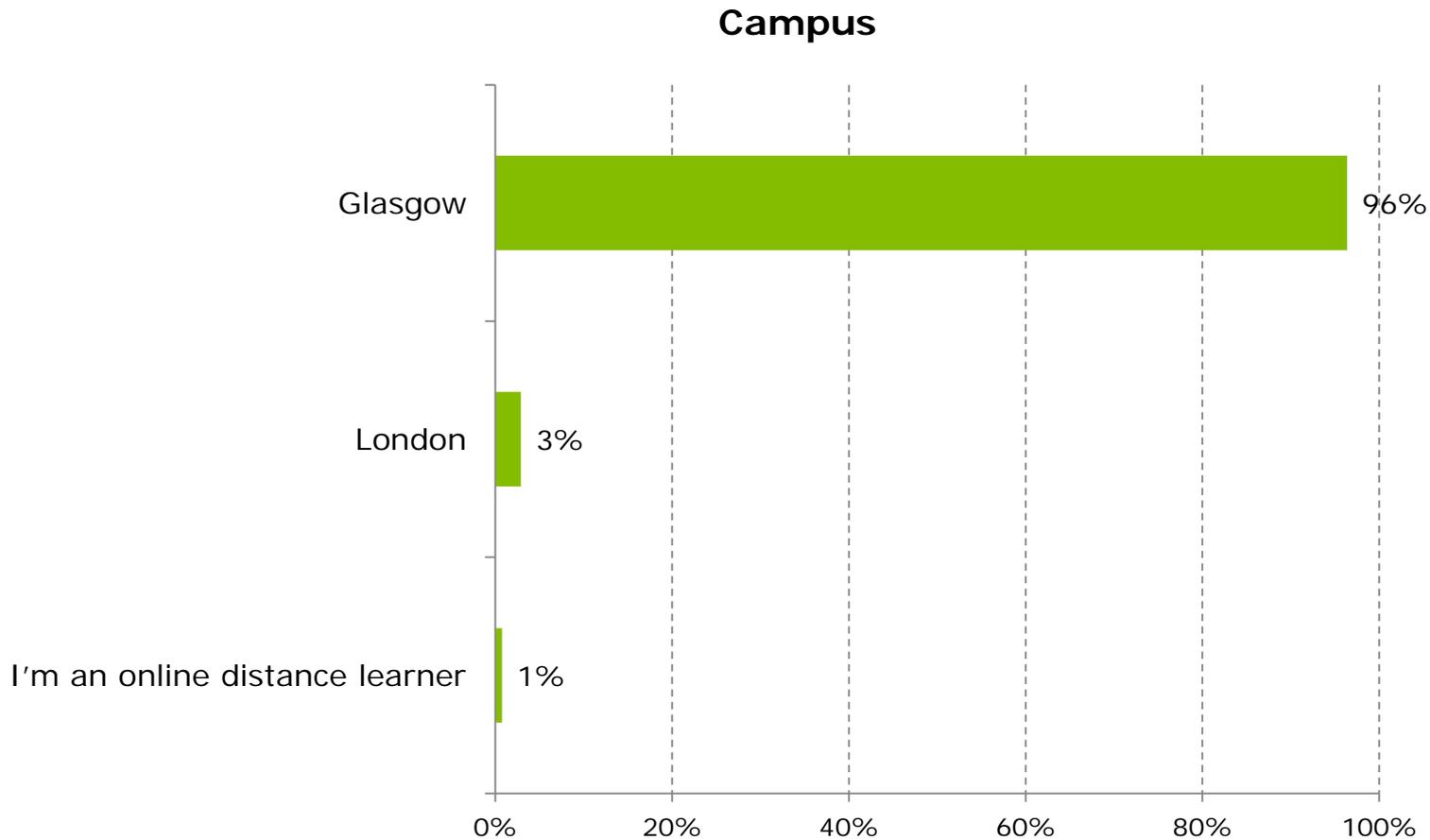
Where there are any statistical significant differences between answers, they are reported where applicable and to a large enough base size ( $n > 30$ ) and are valid at a confidence level of 99%. Where there are significant differences across demographics and segments, they are highlighted clearly.

### The key demographics this report compares with each other are:

- Younger students (16 – 24) and older students (25+)
- UK and International students
- Undergraduates and postgraduates
- Schools of study
- Mode of study (full time and part time)
- Commuter vs Non commuter (explained on a later slide)
- Engaged and not engaged students (explained on a later slide)

The vast majority of the sample are based on the Glasgow Campus

Online  
Survey

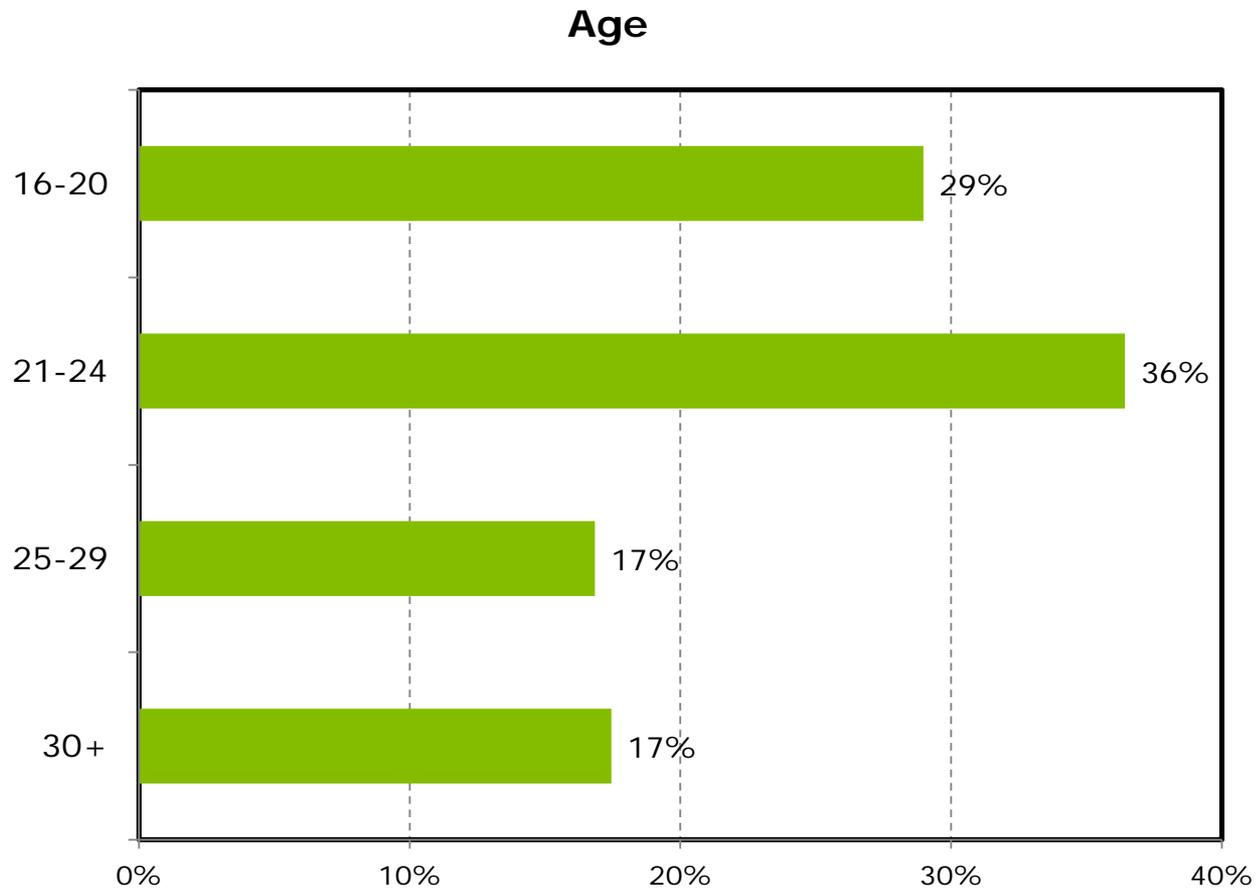


Base: 659 respondents

A1b. Which campus do you study at?

There is a good spread of ages, with those aged 16 to 20 accounting for almost two thirds of the sample

Online  
Survey



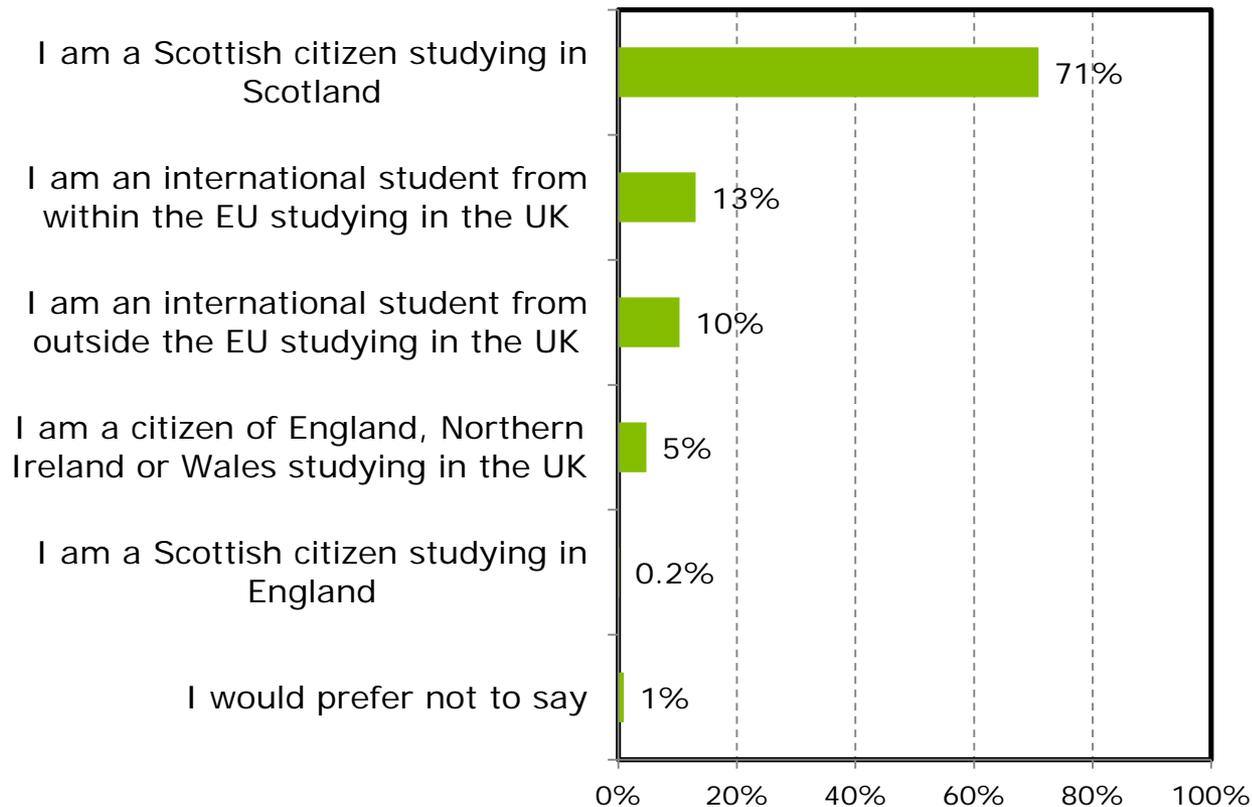
Base: 659 respondents

**A2. How old are you?**

Almost three quarters of the students taking part were Scottish citizens studying in Scotland

Online Survey

### Citizenship

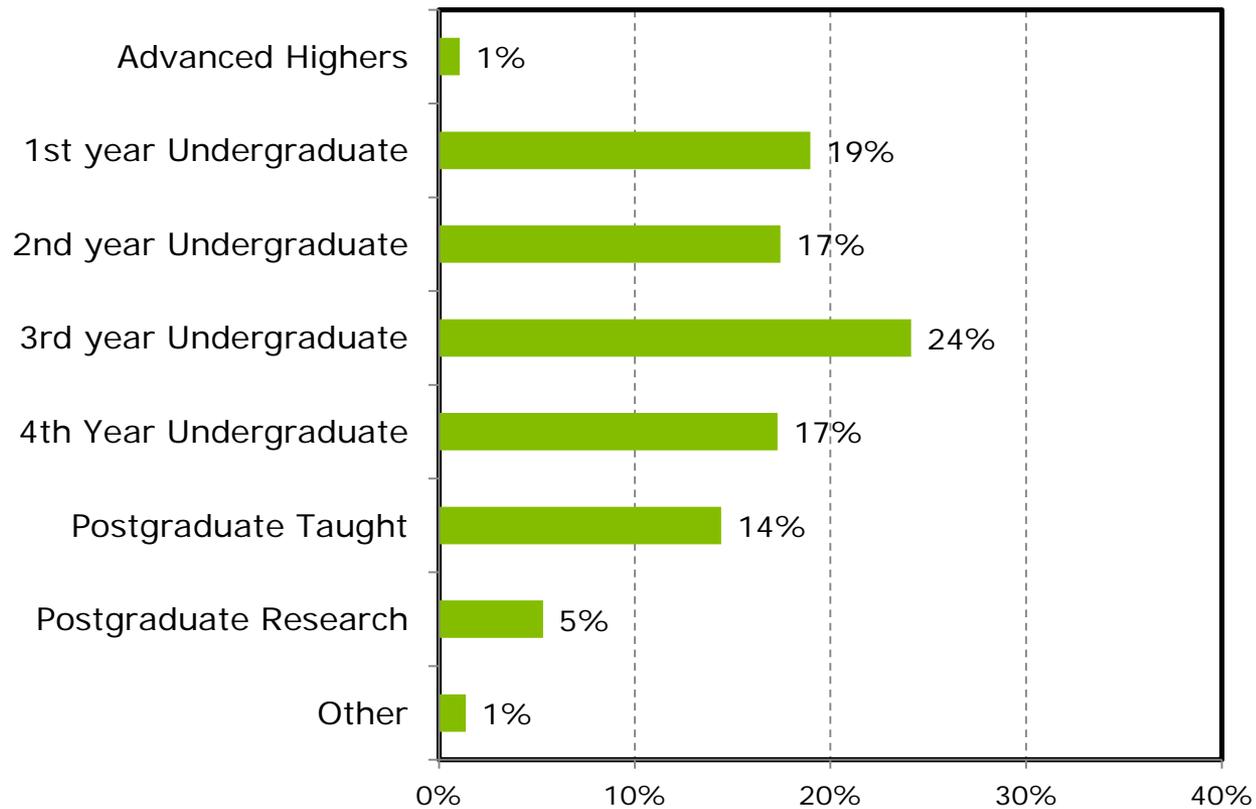


Base: 659 respondents

A spread of year groups took part in the research

Online  
Survey

### Level of study

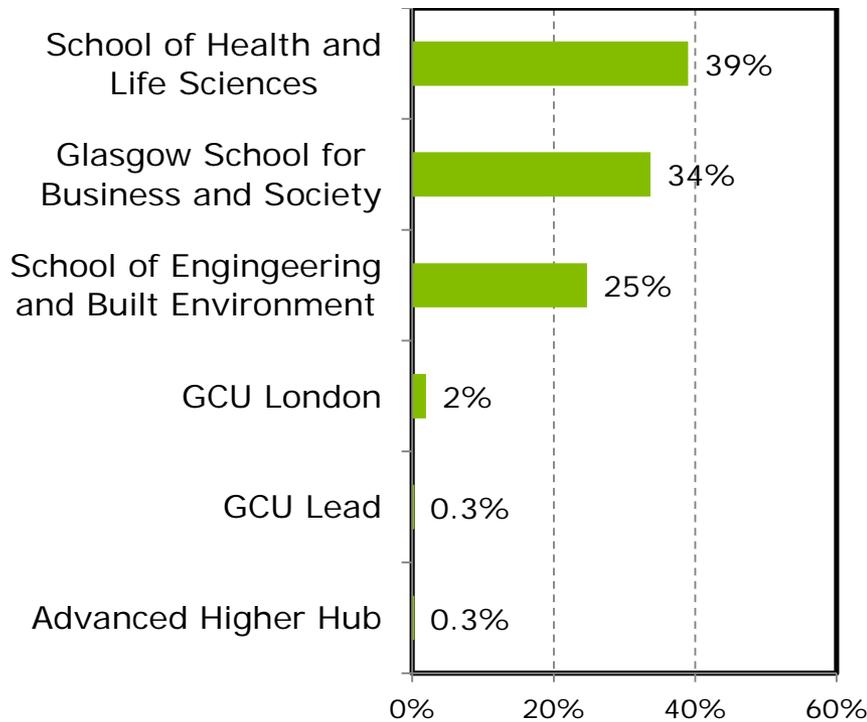


Base: 659 respondents

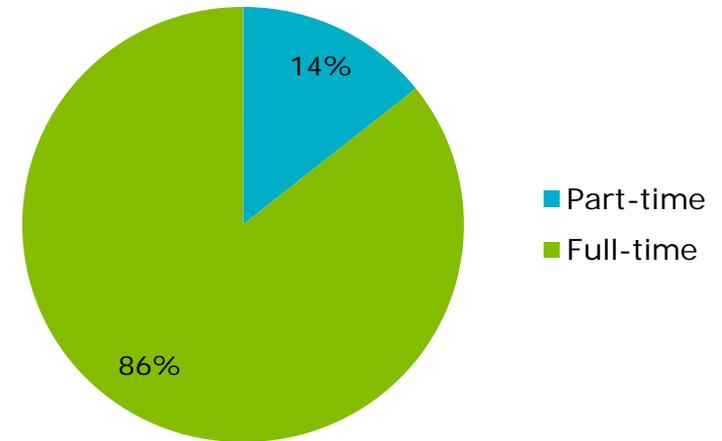
The sample was made up mostly of students from the schools on the Glasgow campus, while the majority were studying full time

Online Survey

### School



### Mode of study



Base: 659 respondents

A5. Which of the following schools are you part of?

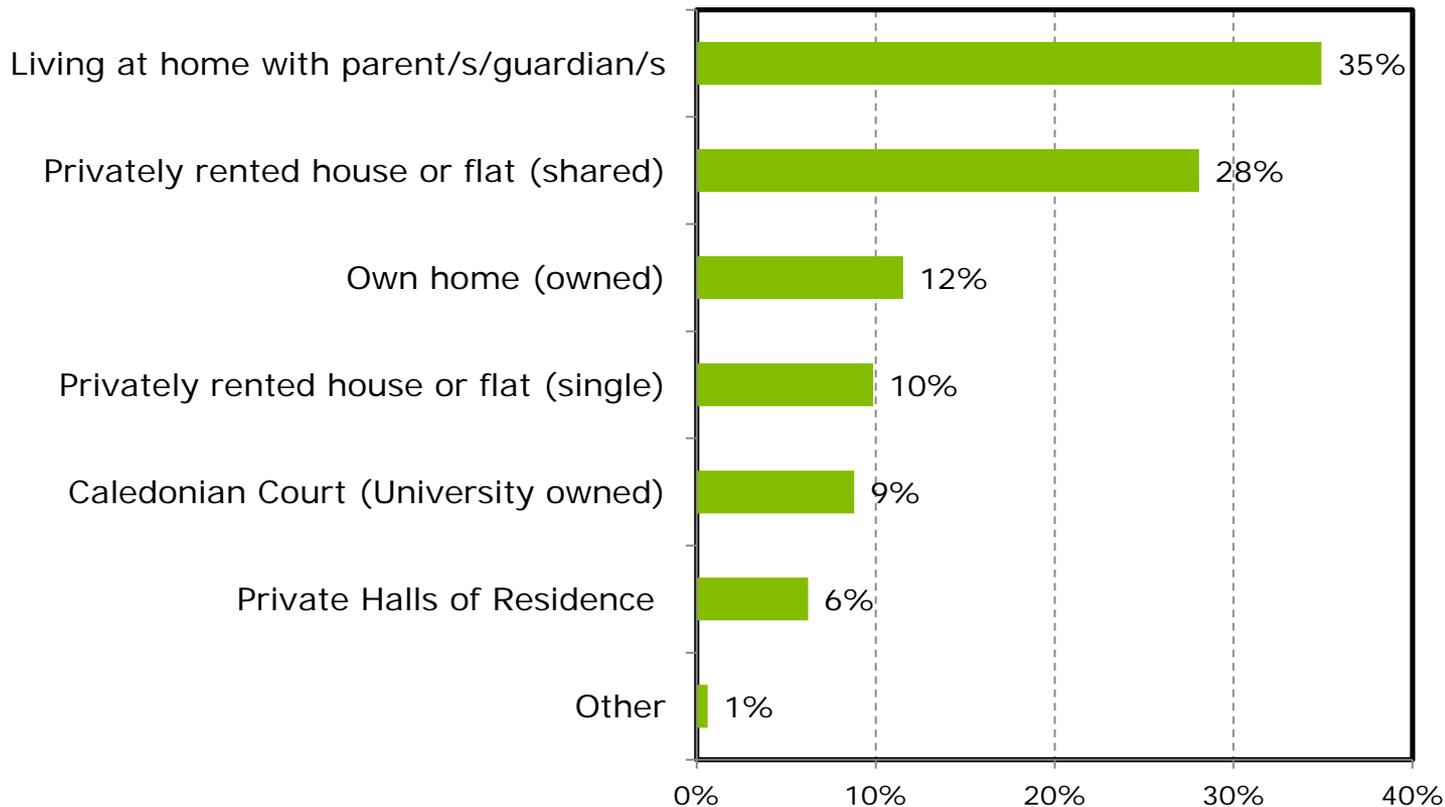
Base: 659 respondents

A6. What is your mode of study?

Over a third of students taking part live at home with their parents or guardians

Online Survey

### Term-time living

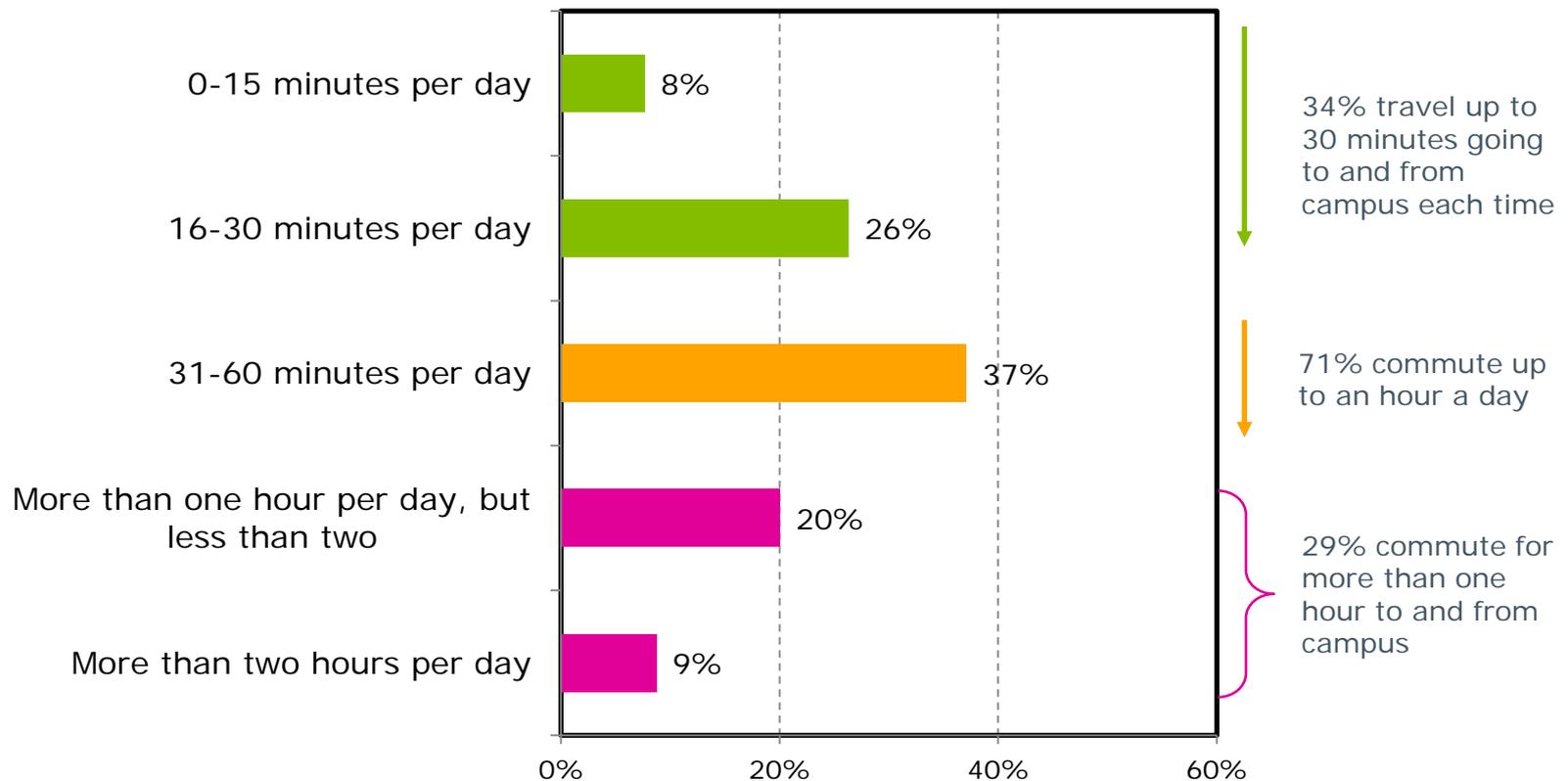


Base: 659 respondents

A third spend up to 30 minutes a day travelling to campus, with another third spending between 31 minutes and one hour travelling. The remaining proportion spend more than one hour commuting into class

Online Survey

### Travel time



Base: 558 respondents

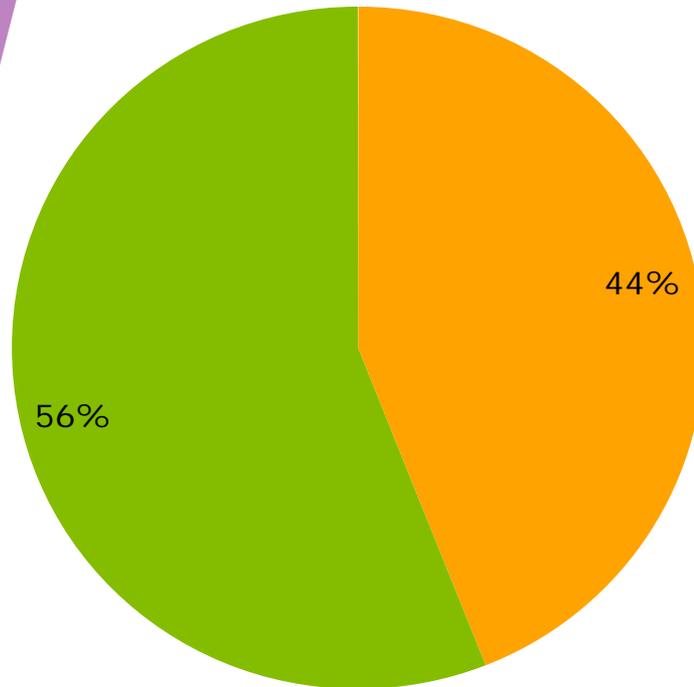
A8. Approximately how long do you spend travelling to and from your accommodation to GCU on the days when you have scheduled course requirements on campus?

Over half of the students surveyed can be classified as commuter students



### Commuting students

For the purposes of analysis, those who don't live in halls of residence and travel for more than 15 minutes per day have been classed as commuters



- Non commuter
- Commuter

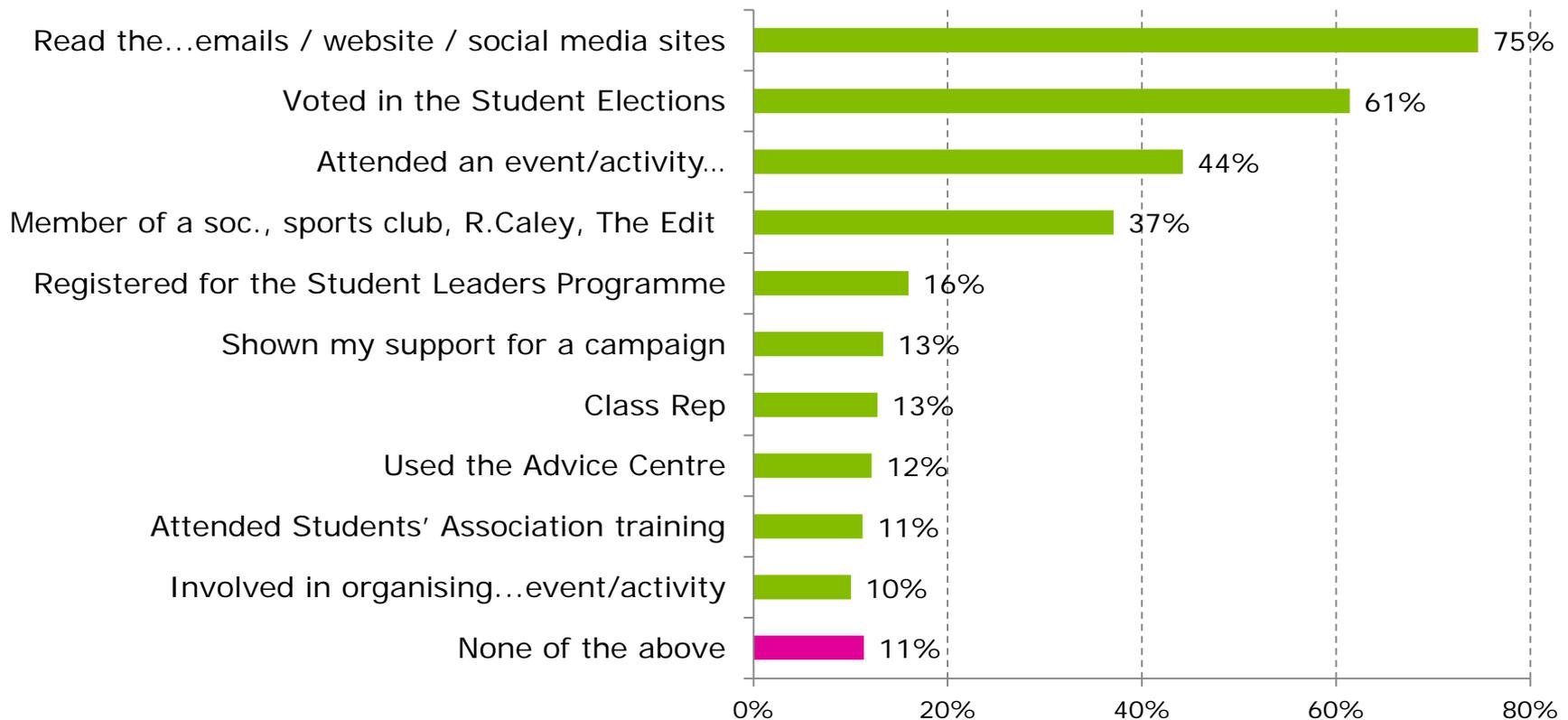
A7. Where do you live during term-time?

A8. Approximately how long do you spend travelling to and from your accommodation to GCU on the days when you have scheduled course requirements on campus?

Around three quarters of students read the Students' Association emails and communications. Just under two thirds claim to have voted in the student elections. Around one in 10 indicate they have no involvement with the Students' Association at all....

Online Survey

### Top 10 Activities



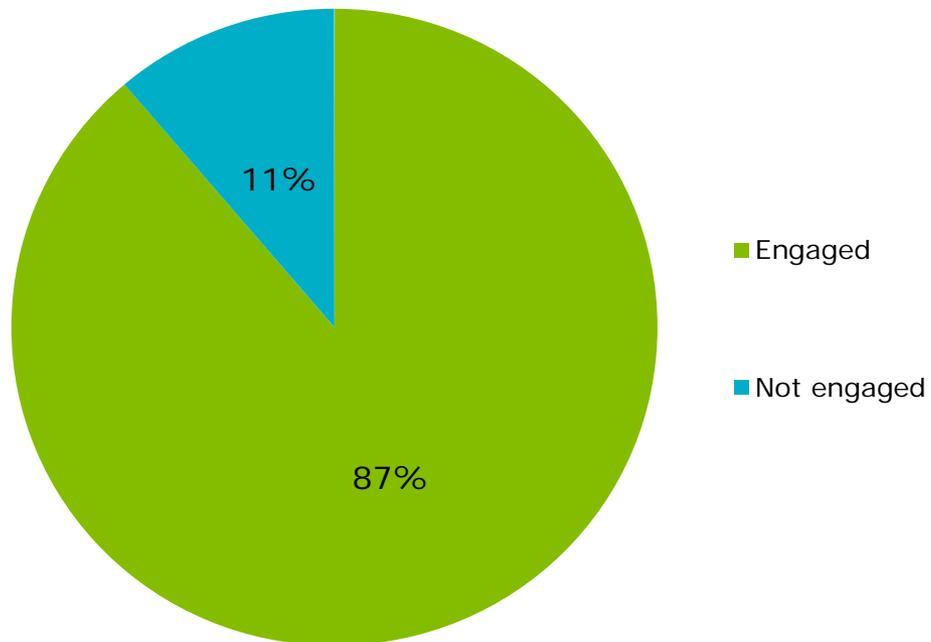
Base: 658 respondents

A9. Which of the following, if any, activities have you ever been involved in at your Students' Association? Some activity descriptions abbreviated.

...and this 11% have been classified as not engaged with the Students' Association

Online Survey

For the purposes of analysis, those who have not taken part in any activity provided by the Students' Association have been classified as Not engaged



Base: 659 respondents

**A9. Which of the following, if any, activities have you ever been involved in at your Students' Association?**

# Getting to know your students: Segmentation and Lifestyle

# Segmentation

Getting to know your students

Success  
in the  
Student  
Market

**Segmentation** is a way of categorising people into sub-groups based on specific factors such as behaviours, attitudes or opinions. It is used in a variety of settings and allows organisations to better understand their audience to enable more targeted communication and engagement strategies.

# Segmentation

## Getting to know your students

Success  
in the  
Student  
Market

The NUS Services report, Success in the Student Market 2014 identified that students can be classified into two groups based primarily on **which social groups they feel closest to** – their friends from home/school or their university/college friends.

### Home town socialisers – 36% of UK student population



*These students feel closest to their friends from their home town or school. Family commitments are likely to feature heavily in their spare time. They are more likely to have considered dropping out of university/college and feel less able to achieve their full potential on their course. They are also less likely to use their Students' Union facilities or even be aware of what's on offer. Home town socialisers are less likely to feel their Students' Union has an important and influential impact on their experience of university/college*

### University socialisers – 64% of UK student population

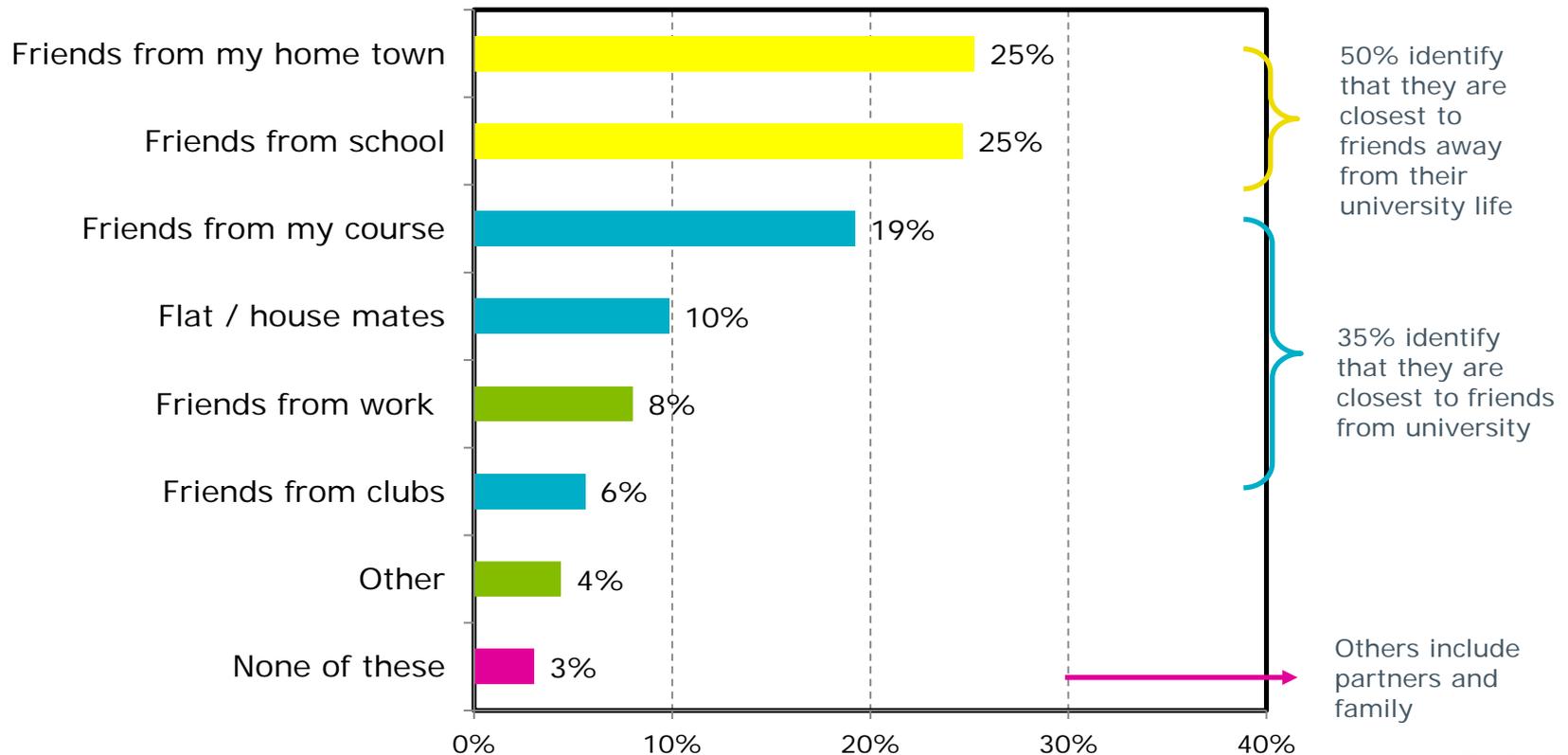


*Students who feel closest to their university/college friends (those they live with, those on their course or attend clubs with). They are less at risk of having considered dropping out of university/college and feel more able to achieve their full potential on their course. They are more likely to be satisfied with various aspects of their university life and with the facilities offered by their Students' Union. University socialisers are more likely to feel their Students' Union has an important and influential impact on their experience of university/college.*

Almost half of the students at GCU feel closest to friends from their home town or from school, i.e. those away from their university life. A third identify their friends from university as their group of confidantes

Online Survey

### Groups feel closest to



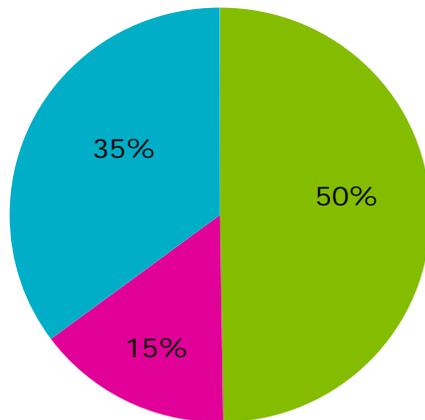
Base: 659 respondents

**B1. Thinking about your friends, which of the following groups of people best describes who you feel the closest to?**

In comparison to the UK student population, GCU students are more likely to fall into the Home Town Socialiser category; they are closer to people from their life away from University

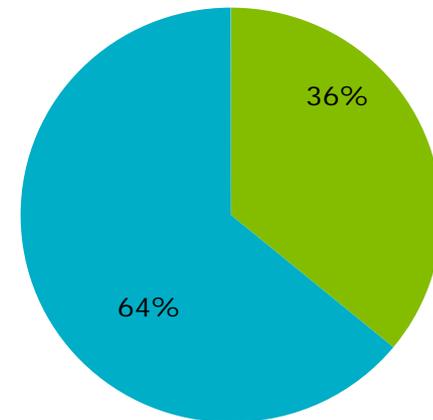
### GCU Students' Association main group segmentation

GCU



■ Home Town Socialisers ■ No segment ■ University Socialisers

UK



■ Home Town Socialisers ■ University Socialisers

Base: 659 respondents.

**B2. Thinking about your friends, which of the following groups of people best describes who you feel the closest to?**

# Segmentation

## Getting to know your students

Success  
in the  
Student  
Market

The Success in the Student Market can be further broken down with regards to involvement in **extra-curricular activities**.

### Home town Socialisers

**Home comforts: 13% of the overall UK population.**

*These students feel closest to their friends from home or school and choose not to participate in any extracurricular activities at university/college.*

**In & outs: 23% of the overall UK population.**

*These students account for the largest proportion of GCU students. While feeling closest to their friends from home/school, they do engage in some extracurricular activities at university/college.*

### University Socialisers

**Resident partiers: 36% of the overall UK population.**

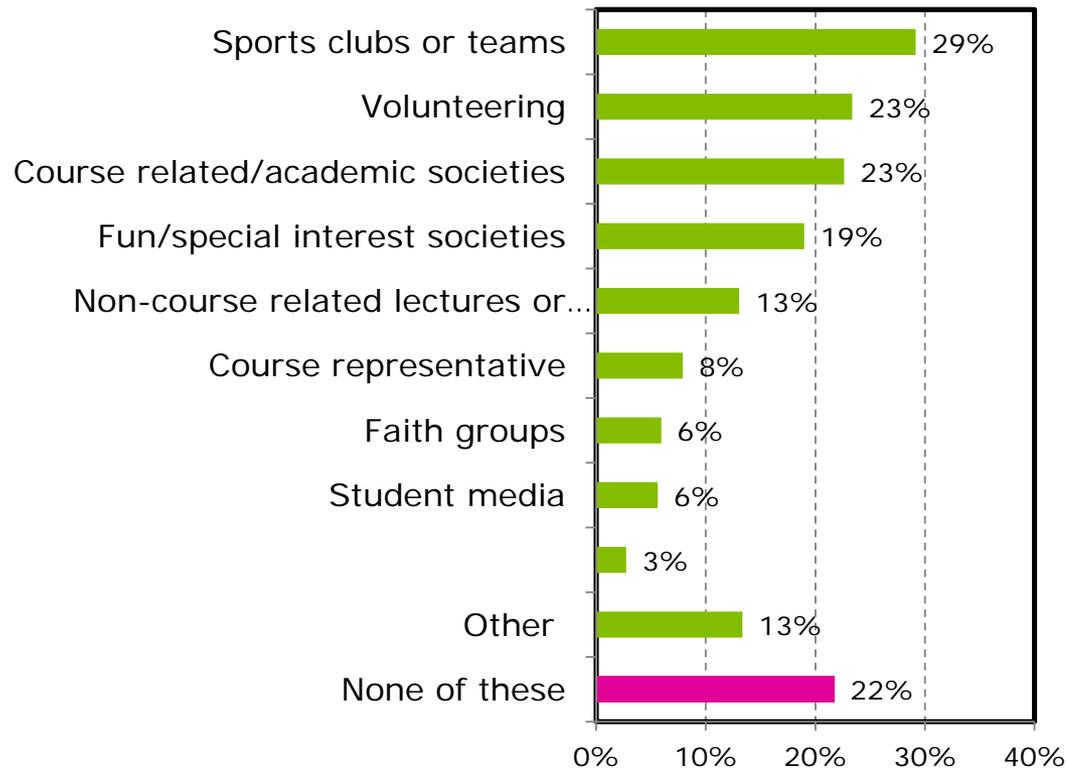
*These students account for the smallest proportion of GCU students. They feel closest to the people they live with at university and are a very sociable group.*

**Study buddies: 28% of the overall UK population.** *These students feel closest to their course friends.*

While the majority of students take part in some form of extracurricular activity, one in five indicate they participate in nothing

Online  
Survey

### Extracurricular activities

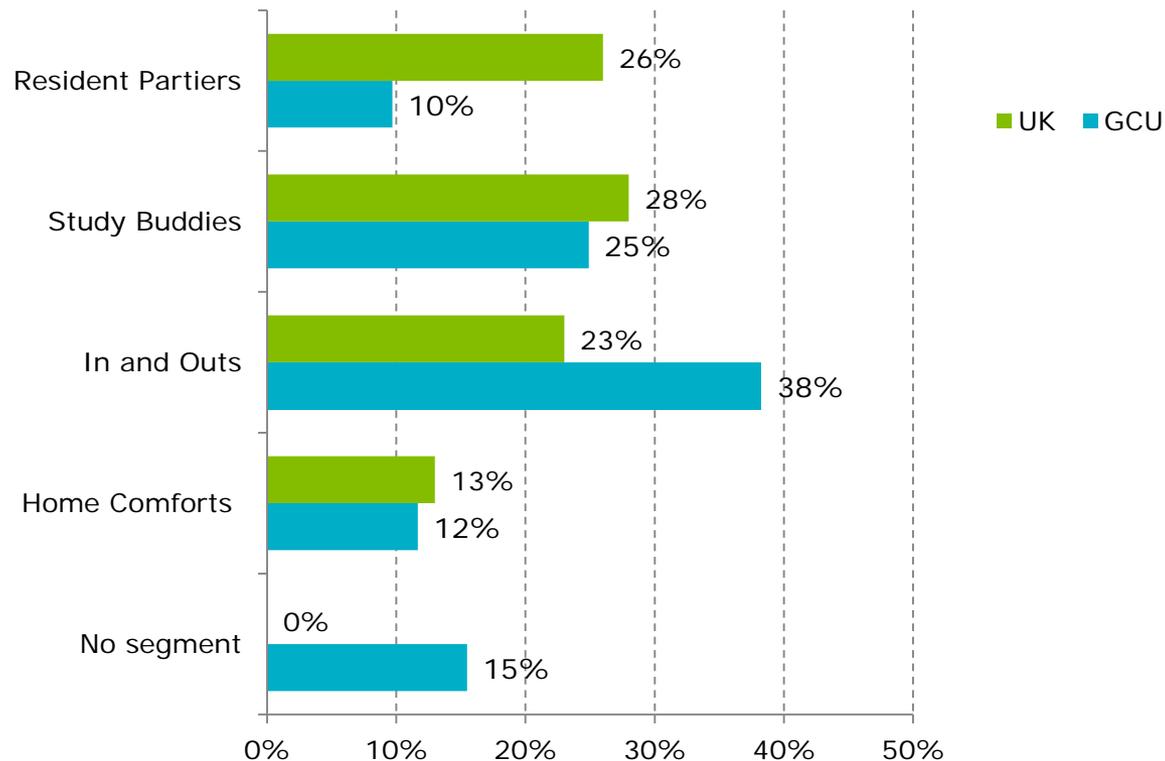


Base: 659 respondents

B2. And finally, which of the following, if any, extracurricular activities do you participate in?

Participation in extracurricular activities allows the further breakdown of GCU students into the following segments. Compared to the UK student population, GCU students can most commonly be allocated to the In and Out segment; while they live at home, they are keen to dip in and out of extra-curricular activities

### GCU Segmentation according to the extra-curricular participation



Base: 659 respondents.

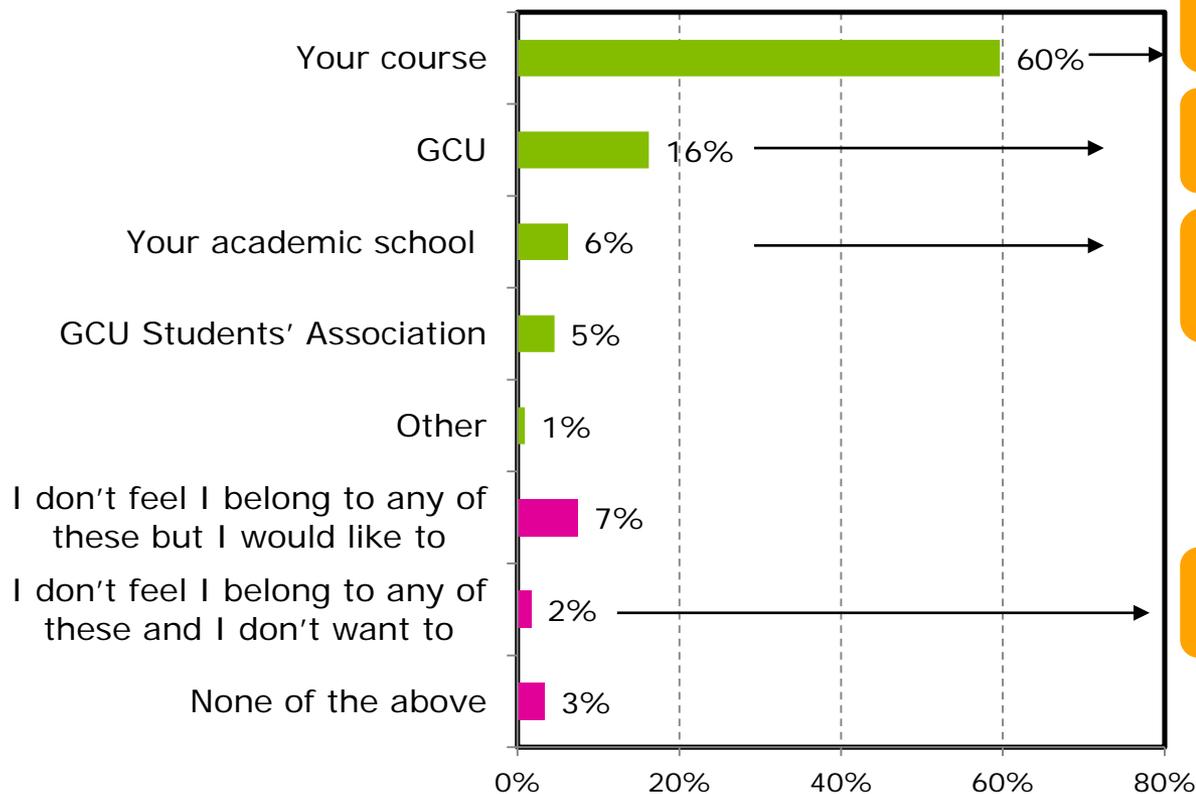
**B2. Thinking about your friends, which of the following groups of people best describes who you feel the closest to?**

**B3. Which of the following, if any, extracurricular activities do you participate in?**

Almost two thirds of respondents feel they 'belong' to their course, particularly those in the School of Health and Life Sciences. Those aged 16 to 24 are more likely to feel they belong to the university as a whole

Online Survey

### Feelings of belonging



More likely amongst School of Health and Life Sciences and those not engaged with the SA

More likely amongst those aged 16-24

More likely amongst international students and Postgraduates

More likely amongst those not engaged with the SA

Base: 659 respondents

**B3. And which one of the following, if any, do you feel you most 'belong' to while you're at university?**

Students identify with their course or academic school because they spend a lot of time with course mates and it's their main purpose for studying at university. There are general feelings of belonging to their institution and they can relate it to the university experience

Online  
Survey

### Course

- Spend a lot of time with people on the course and make friends
- Main purpose of university is to study

*"Because I know the people in my course best and they are who I spend my time at university with." (30+, PG, female)*

### GCU

- Belong to /relate to university experience

*"The university has a good reputation and I am proud to call myself a member of Glasgow Caledonian University." (30+, UG, female)*

### Academic School

- Main purpose is to study / associate more with course than most things
- Friends on course

*"I feel close to people who are studying the same subjects. Even if I share lot of great moments with my sports team, I feel close in interest to my teachers and people who are learning same subjects." (21-24, PG, male)*

Feelings of belonging to the Students' Association stem from having the opportunity to meet people outside of their course and an existing level of involvement

Online  
Survey

### GCU Students' Association

- Opportunities to socialise and get to know people outside of course
- A level of involvement

*"Because I am not all that close with many of the people on my course but I am dipping my toe into various societies." (21-24, UG, female)*

### Don't belong, but would like to

- Shy. Not many friends and struggle to meet people
- Feel the Students' Association is not targeted at certain student 'types'

*"As I entered my course in 3rd year I felt that individuals already on the course had set friends/groups and did not interact with the 'newbies'." (21-24, UG, female)*

## Summary

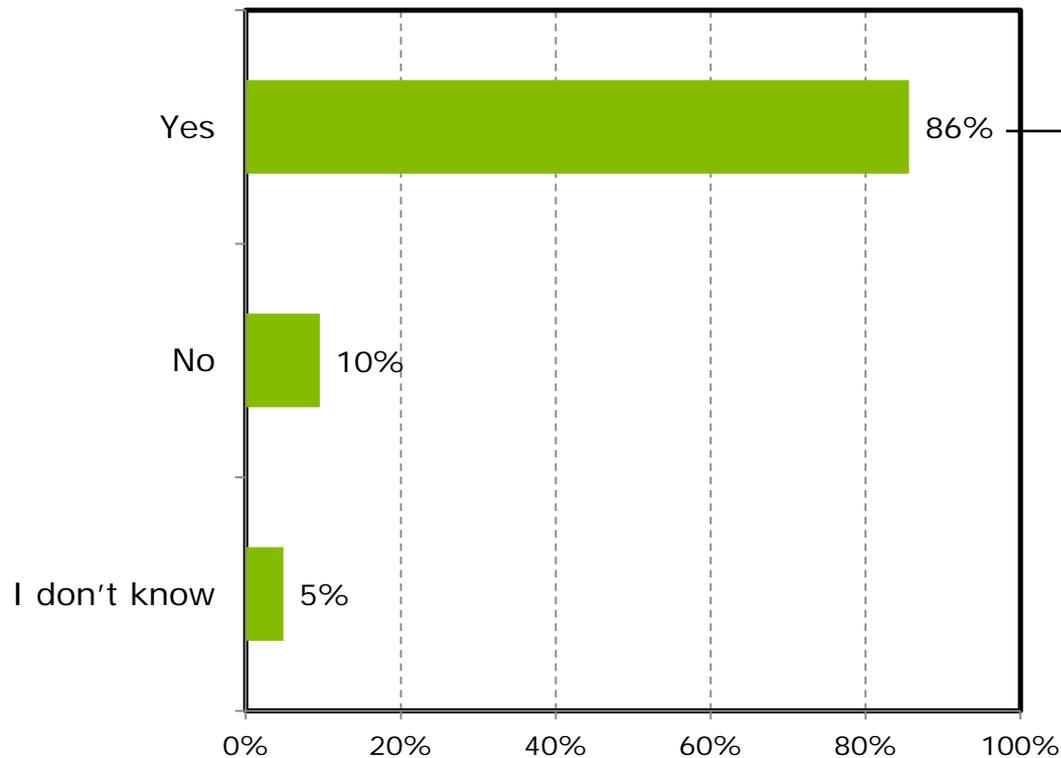
- A majority of GCU students identify as home town socialisers; 50% compared to 36% of the UK student population.
- GCU students are most commonly part of the 'in and out' segment; 36% compared to 23% of the UK student population.
- Reflects a number of characteristics of GCU students: just over half classed as commuter students but like to get involved in a number of activities, whether provided by the institution, the Students' Association itself, or by another organisation.
- Majority feel they 'belong' to their course at GCU.
- Those who do feel they 'belong' to the Students' Association indicate that it allows them to make friends outside of their course.
- Those who don't feel they belong anywhere indicate their shy nature and struggles to meet people.

# GCU Students' Association experience

The majority of respondents claim to have visited the Students' Association building

Online Survey

### Visited Students' Association



More likely amongst:

- Those aged 16 – 24
- Undergraduates
- School of Health and Life Sciences
- Full time students
- Non-Commuters
- Those engaged with the SU
- Females

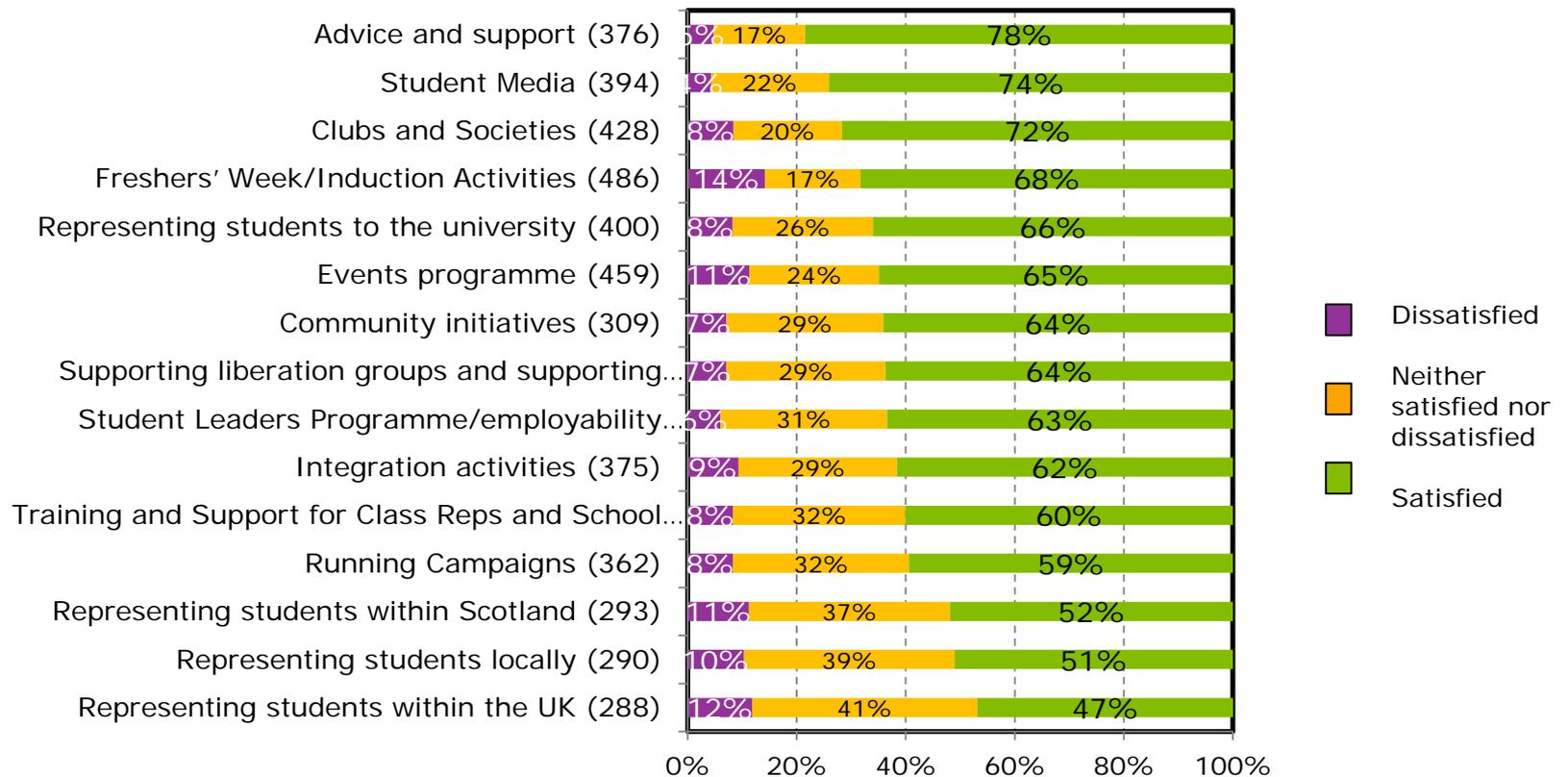
Base: 640 respondents

C1. Have you been in the Students' Association Building?

Advice and support, student media and clubs and societies give most satisfaction to those using them

Online Survey

### Satisfaction with SA services and facilities



Base (in brackets) Balance: Those not using the services

Taking a look at the significant differences allows further insight – Freshers' Week, clubs and societies and events programmes are more likely to be enjoyed by those aged 16-24, those in the School of Health and Life Sciences and full time students

**Those aged 16-24 are more likely to be satisfied than those aged 25+ with:**  
Freshers' Week, Clubs and societies, Student leaders programme, events programme, integration activities

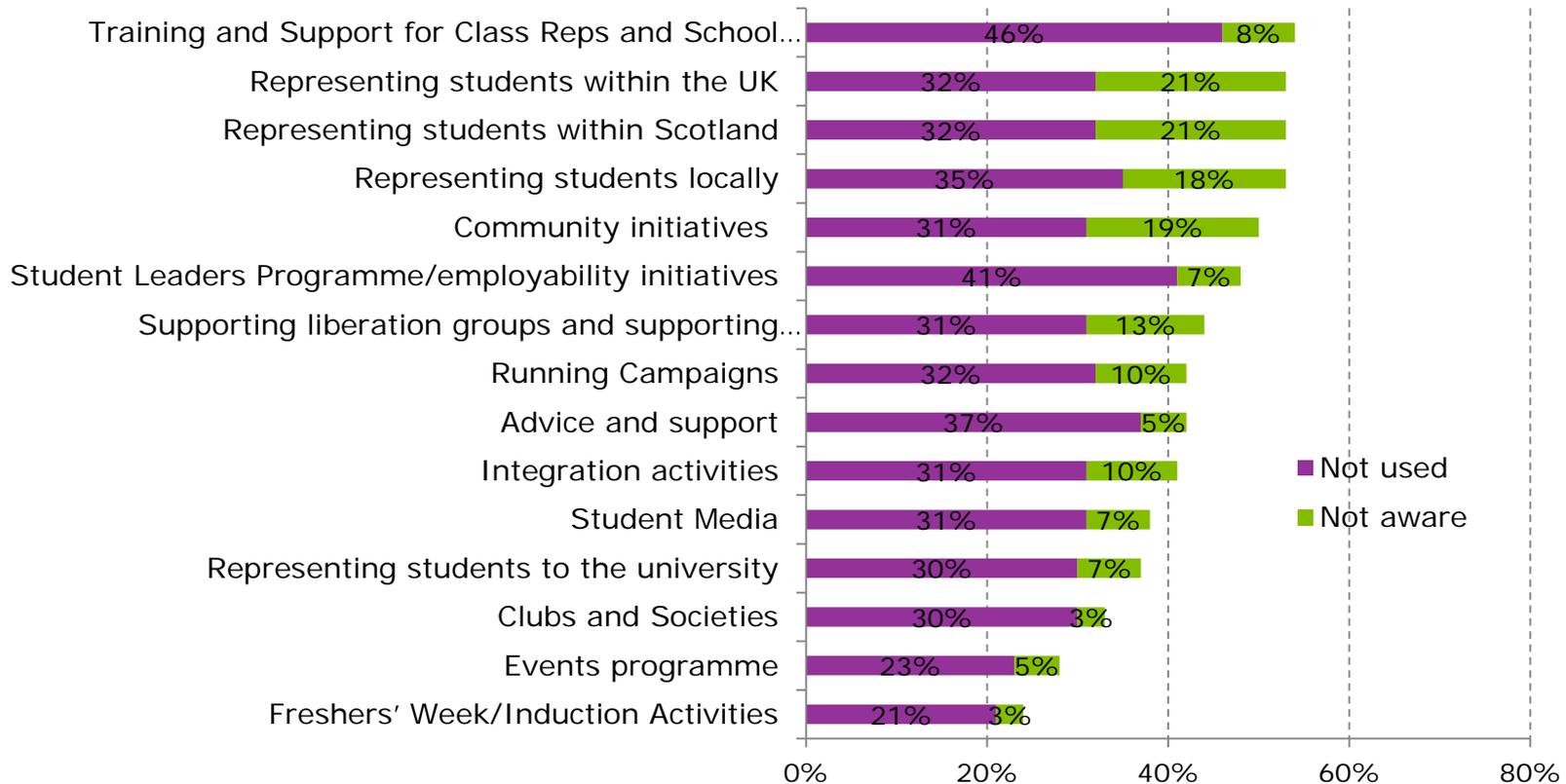
**School of Health and Life Sciences are more likely to be satisfied than other schools with:**  
Freshers' Week, Representing students to the university, events programme

**Full time students are more likely to be satisfied than part time students with:**  
Freshers' Week, Advice and support, clubs and societies, representing students to the university, events programme, integration

The outside Traverse Wall, the basketball court and outside gym are least used

Online Survey

### Proportion of students not using or not aware of the services and facilities



Base: 659

C2. How satisfied are you with the services and facilities offered by the Students' Association?

## Significant differences

**Those aged 25+ are more likely than those aged 16-24 not to have used:**

Integration activities, clubs and societies

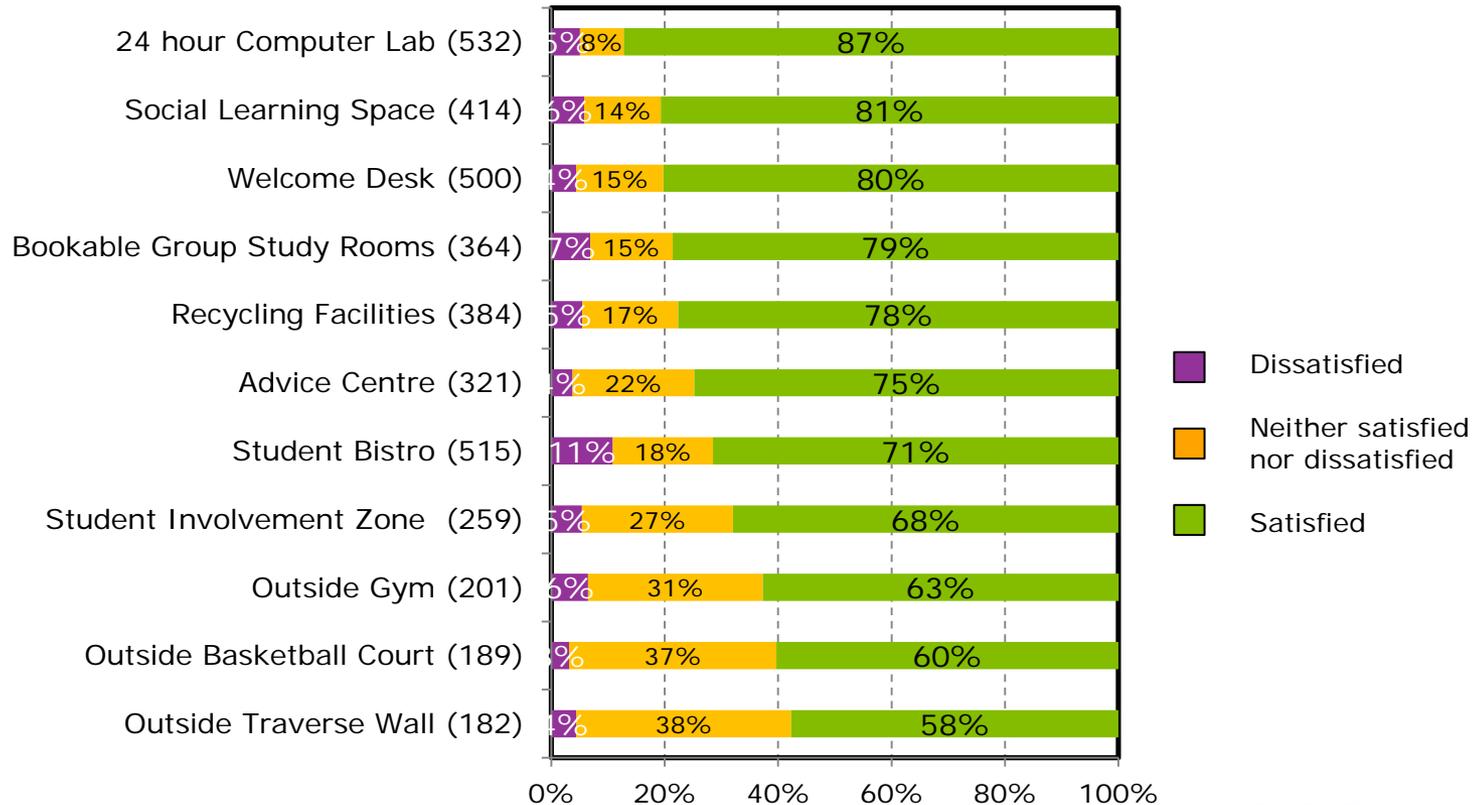
**Part time students are more likely than full time students not to have used:**

Integration activities, events programmes, representation to the university, clubs and societies

The 24 hour computer lab gives the most satisfaction, followed by the Social learning space and the welcome desk

Online Survey

### Satisfaction with services and facilities in Students' Association building



- Dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Satisfied

Base (in brackets). Balance: Those not using the services

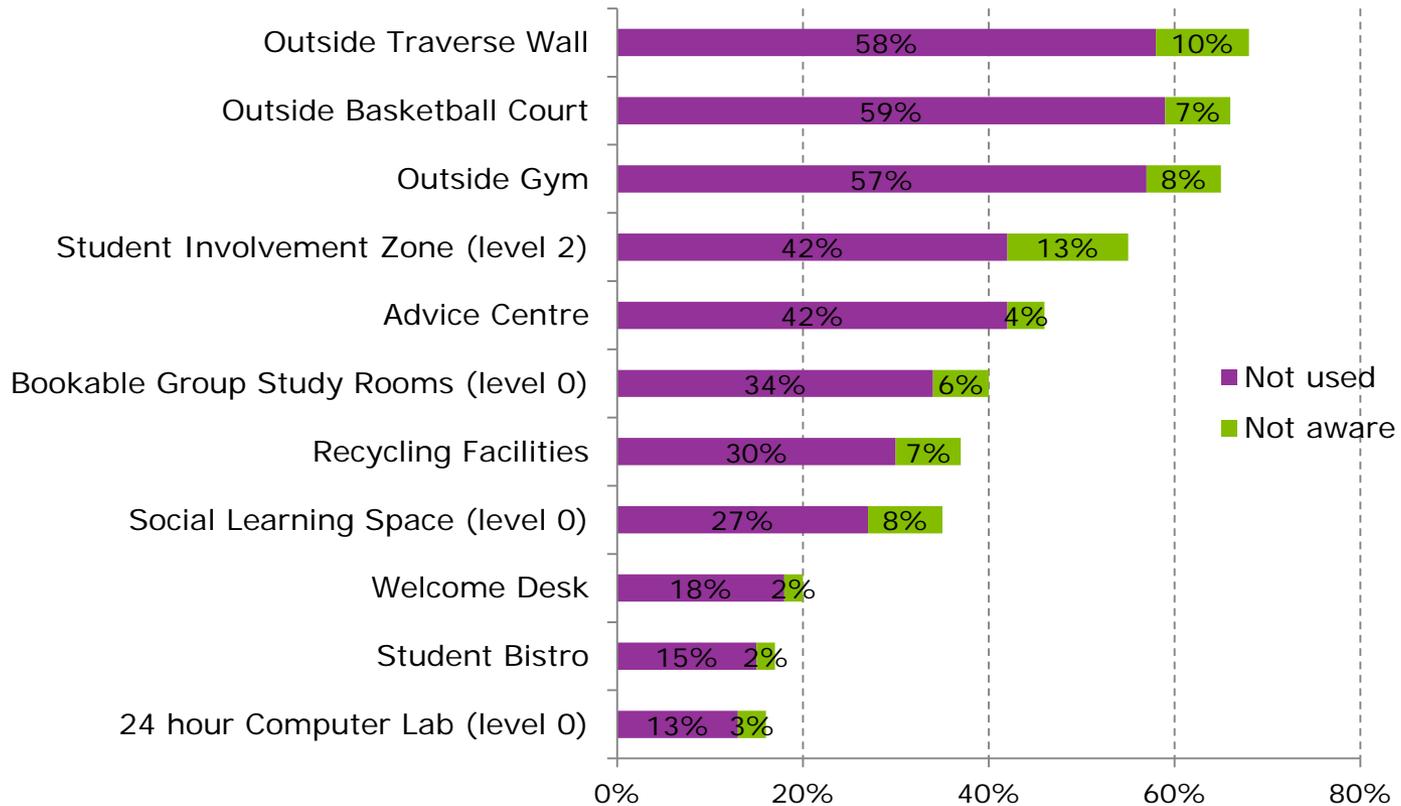


C3. And how satisfied are you with the services and facilities specifically within the Students' Association Building?

The outside Traverse Wall, the basketball court and outside gym are least used

Online Survey

### Proportion of students not using or not aware of the services and facilities



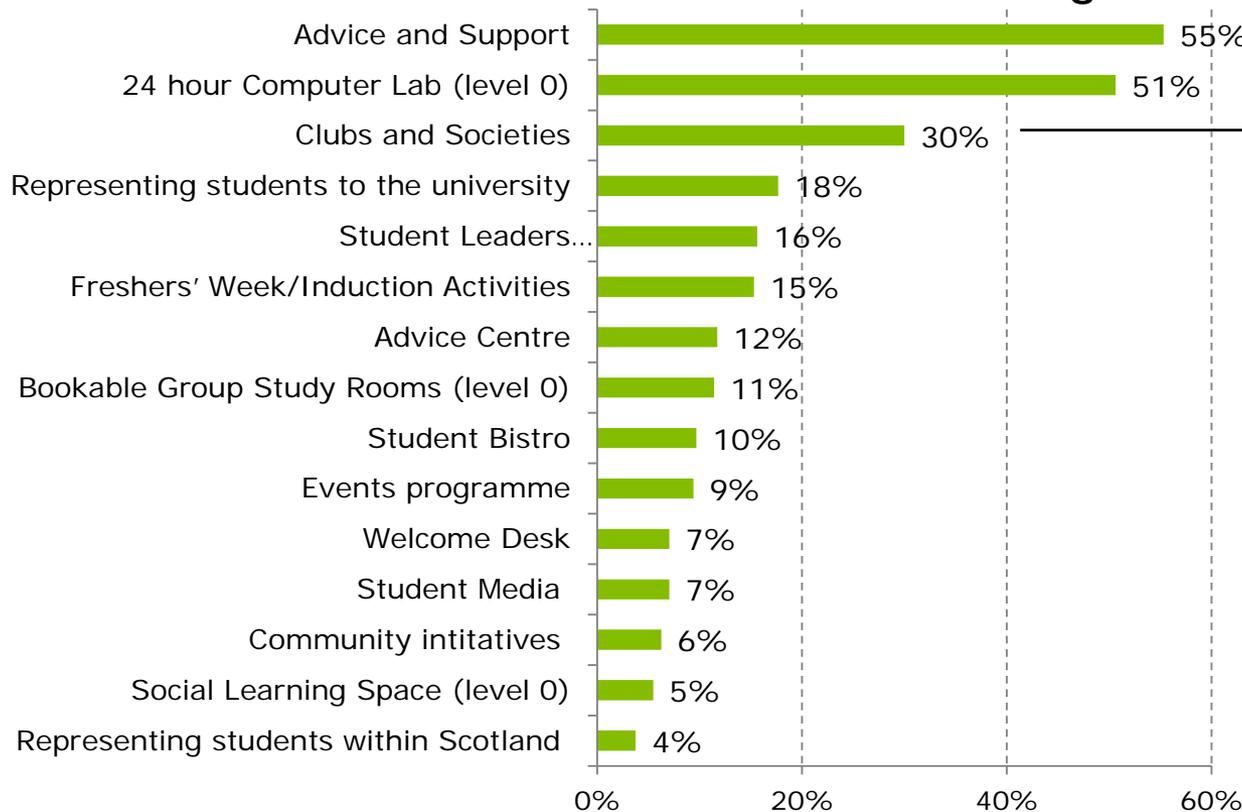
Base: 659

C3. And how satisfied are you with the services and facilities specifically within the Students' Association Building?

The advice and support service are felt by over half to be the most important function of the Students' Association. Of least importance are representing students in Scotland and the Social Learning Space

Online Survey

### Top 15 most important services / functions – students based in Glasgow



More likely amongst:  
Those aged 16-24  
Full time students  
Those engaged with the SA

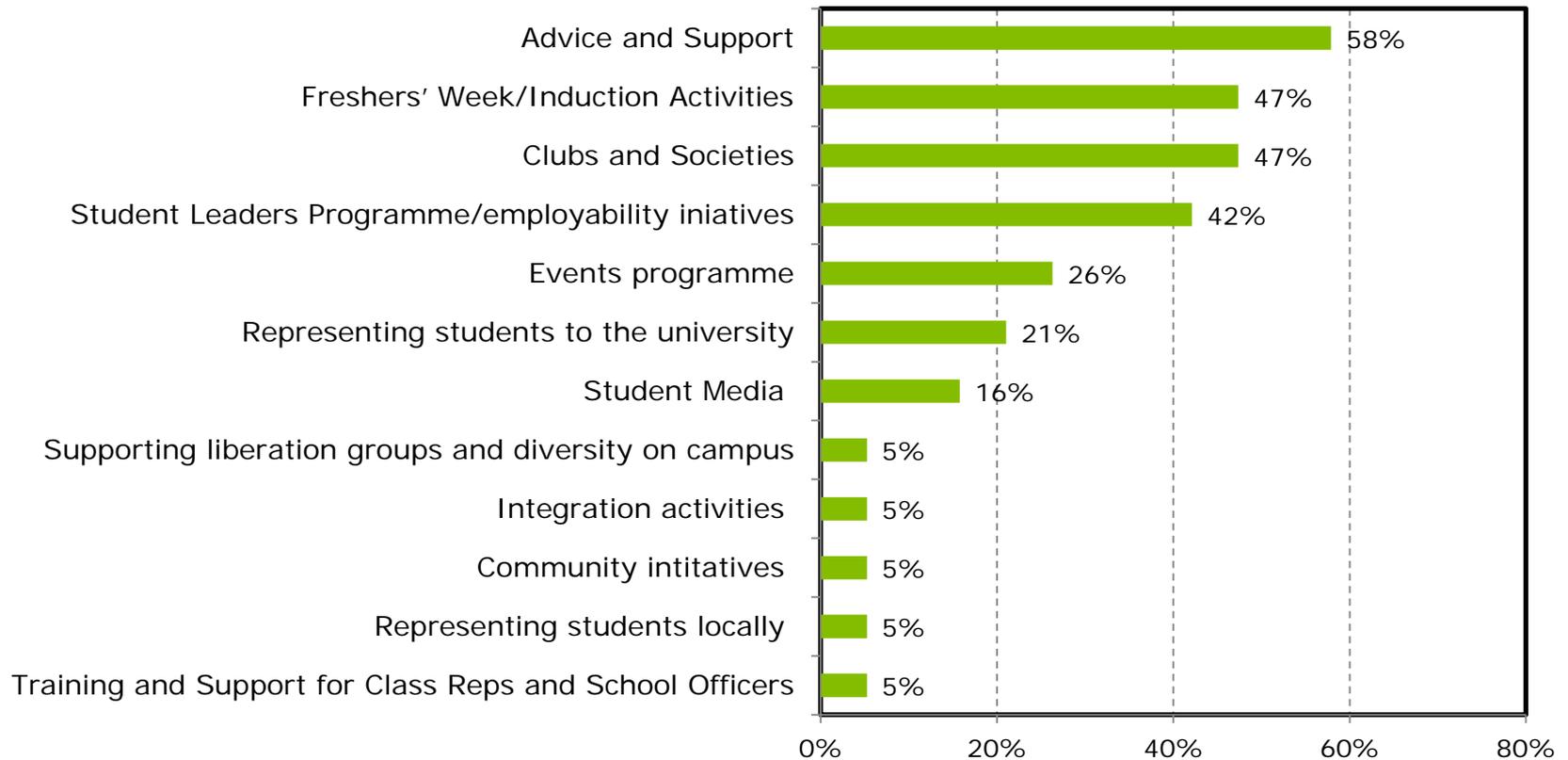
Base: 640 respondents. Balance: Students based in London

C4a. And which of the following services or functions do you believe are the most important for the Students' Association to provide for you and students like you?

For students in London, Advice and Support is also the most important service

Online Survey

### Most important services / functions – students in London



Base: 19 respondents. Balance: Students based in Glasgow

C4b. And which of the following services or functions do you believe are the most important for the Students' Association to provide for you and students like you?

Students would like to see services aimed at the diverse student population, some extra facilities and more events

Online  
Survey

- **Dedicated services for specific groups / integration**
- **Extra facilities**
- **Events / activities**
- **Catering improvements**

*"A bigger prayer space for Muslim students and a place for postgraduate students." (25-29, PG, female)*

*"Greater engagement of part-time students. The services have not been made aware to myself." (21-24, UG, male)*

*"It would be great to get some employers into the bistro to hold some informal chat sessions and give us some advice - maybe from the local community?" (16-20, UG, female)*

*"Bring back the table tennis tables. More variety in menu at student bistro." (21-24, UG, male)*

C5. Is there anything else you would like to see provided by the Students' Association? We are aware many students would like a bar, but are looking for other suggestions for services that you and students like you would like.

## Summary

- Vast majority of students have visited the Students' Association building and three quarters have attended Freshers' Week.
- The 24 hour computer lab is the most widely used service in the Students' Association building and around three quarters of respondents indicate satisfaction with it.
- The student bistro and welcome desk are also widely used, with relatively high satisfaction.
- Advice and support and the 24 hour computer lab are felt to be the most important services provided by the organisation.
- Dedicated or targeted services for particular groups or types of student for increased integration are found to be lacking.

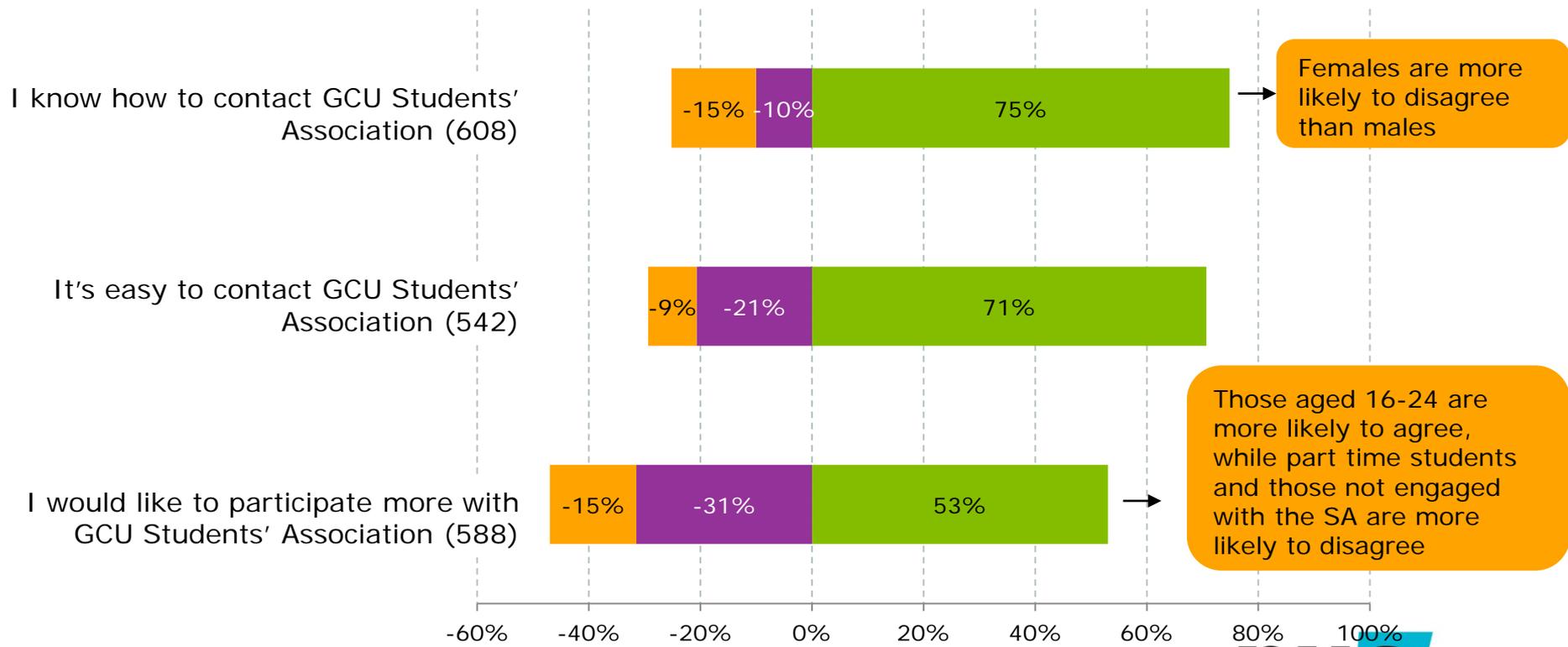
# Interaction with the Students' Association

Three quarters of students agree that they know how to contact GCU Students' Association and that it is easy to do so. Just over half of the respondents would like to participate more with the Students' Association, particularly those aged 16 to 24



### Agreement with statements

Disagree Neither Agree



Base: (In brackets)

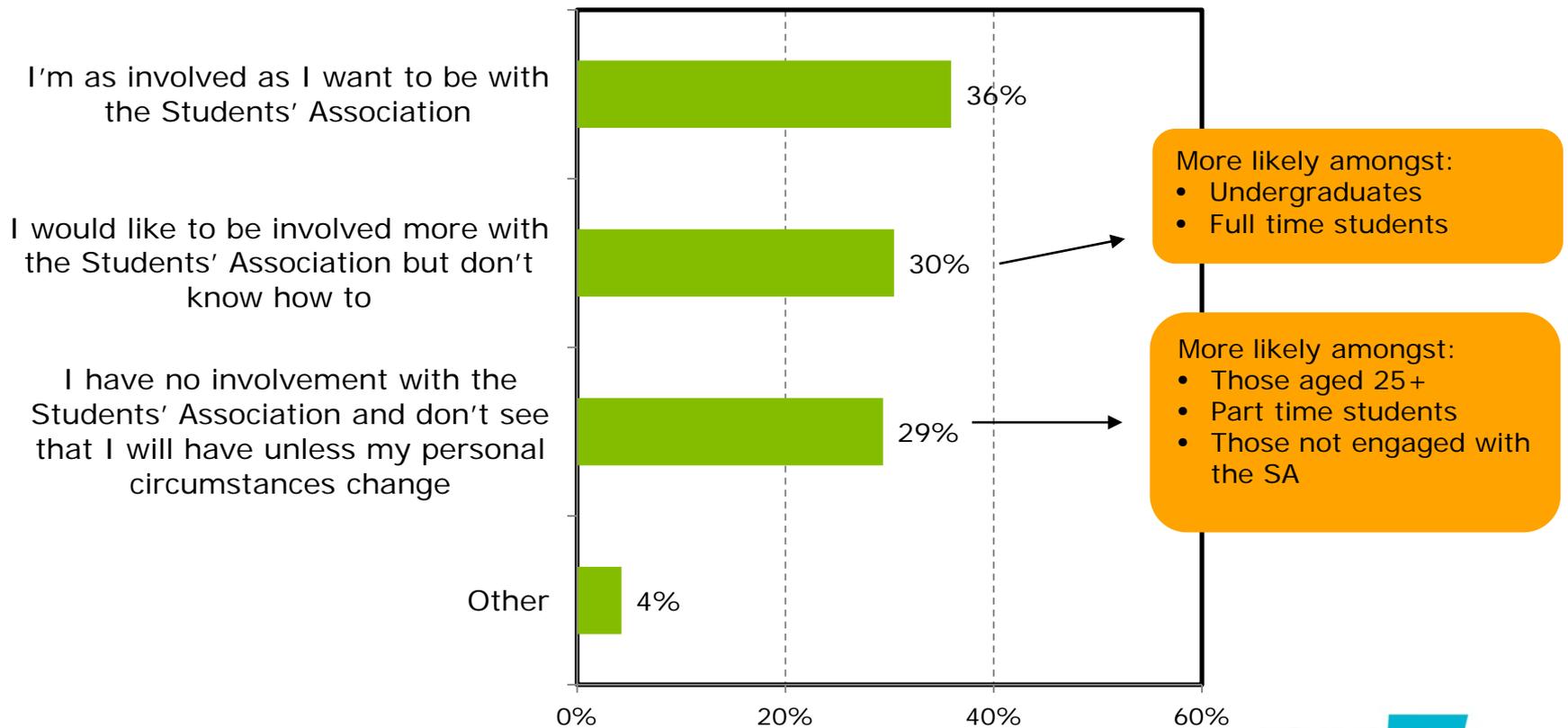


D1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Over a third indicate that they are as involved as they want to be in the Students' Association, while 30% would like to be involved more but are not sure how to do this, particularly undergraduate and full time students

Online Survey

## Involvement with Students' Association



Base: 657 respondents

D2. Which one of the following statements is most relevant to you?

Students feel that raising awareness of what goes on in the Students' Association would enable them to engage more, along with the provision of a wider variety of activities, particular for the diverse student population

Online  
Survey

*"Better advertisements of services or societies available to join - a one off event during Freshers' Week is not enough to catch people's attention."  
(21-24, PG, female)*

*"If GCU Students' Association actually recognised not all students are 21 or want to go on pub crawls. Also there's too little notice of events, some of us need to plan in advance due to placements. Things happening today or tomorrow are no good."  
(30+ PG, female)*

*"Tell the students more about the range of activities and events that happen within the Students' Association. Perhaps hold more events targeted to specific areas within the university to allow more targeted emails to be sent out."  
(16-20, UG, male)*

*"Some people are very cliquey and not particularly accepting of involving new people. Trying to get rid of this attitude and make everyone feel welcome and accepted."  
(21-24, UG, female)*

- **Raising awareness**
- **Wider range of activities and events**

**Representation,  
integration of specific  
students**

D3. What do you think would encourage you or students like you to get involved more with the Students' Association?

## Summary

- Vast majority know who to contact GCU Students' Association; a similar proportion believe it is easy to contact the organisation.
- Over half of the respondents would like to participate more with what the Students' Association has to offer; however, this is more likely amongst younger, undergraduate students.
- Almost a third of respondents would like to be more involved in the Students' Association, but don't know how to; again, this is more likely amongst full time, undergraduate students.
- Older, part time students, are more likely to have no involvement or desire an increase in their involvement with the Students' Association.
- Raising awareness of how to get involved was highlighted as a way to engage with more students.
- Offering more services targeted to the diverse student population, and ensuring the representativeness of these services and of the organisation to a wider variety of students were also strong suggestions

# Representation

Representation means providing a voice that is unbiased and inclusive of all students. For some students it also means listening to and engaging with the audience being represented

Online  
Survey

- **A voice/ communication route /advocate**
- **Inclusive/ Equality / unbiased**
- **Listening to and engaging with**

*"Knowing you have the support of fellow students in regards to various issues, and being able to trust them to take views to University management, or even to a National level." (16-20, UG, female)*

*"Reps that are approachable who listen and feedback to the university students' concerns and views." (25-29, PG, female)*

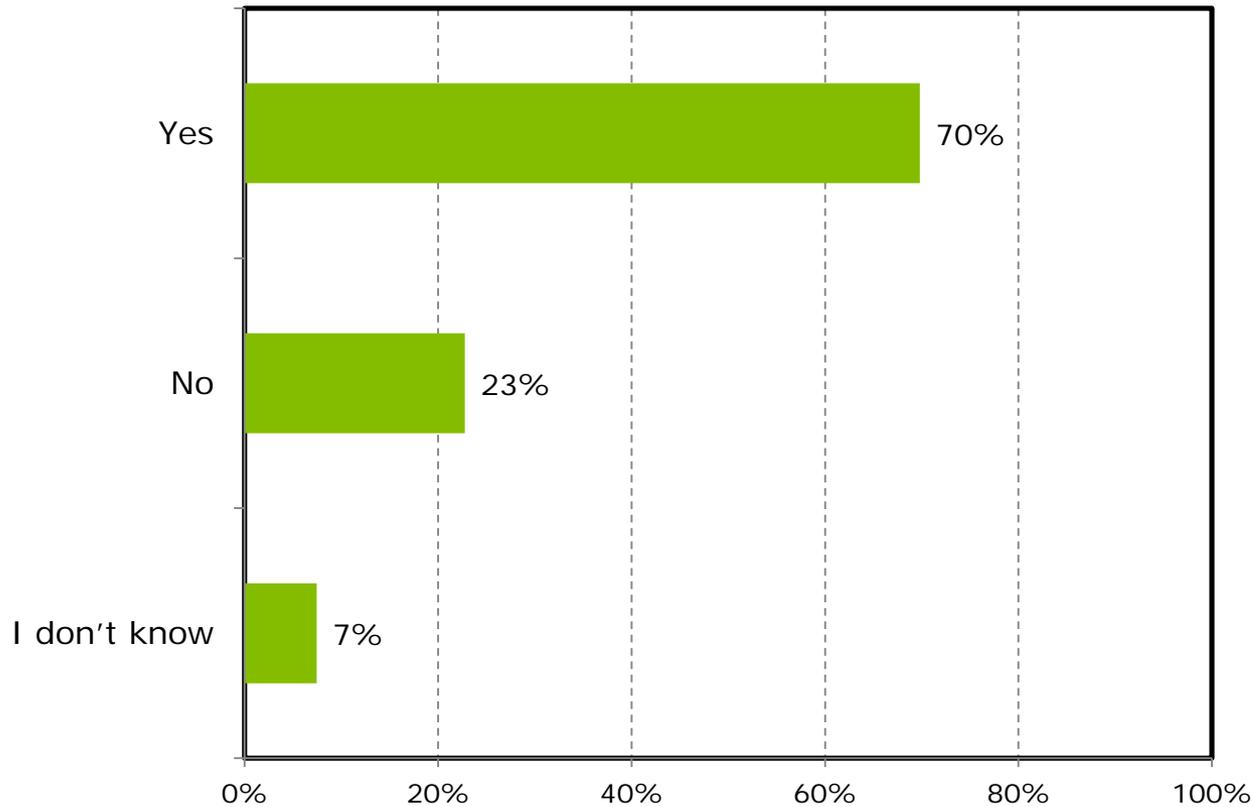
*"To me, representation is having someone available to voice the opinions and worries of others. That someone will be approachable and a good listener, and will be passionate about making sure the voices of other people are heard by those that need to hear it." (21-24, UG, female)*

E1. Firstly for this section, what does representation look like to you?

# A quarter of students do not know that GCU Students' Association have Full Time Officers

Online Survey

## Awareness of representation



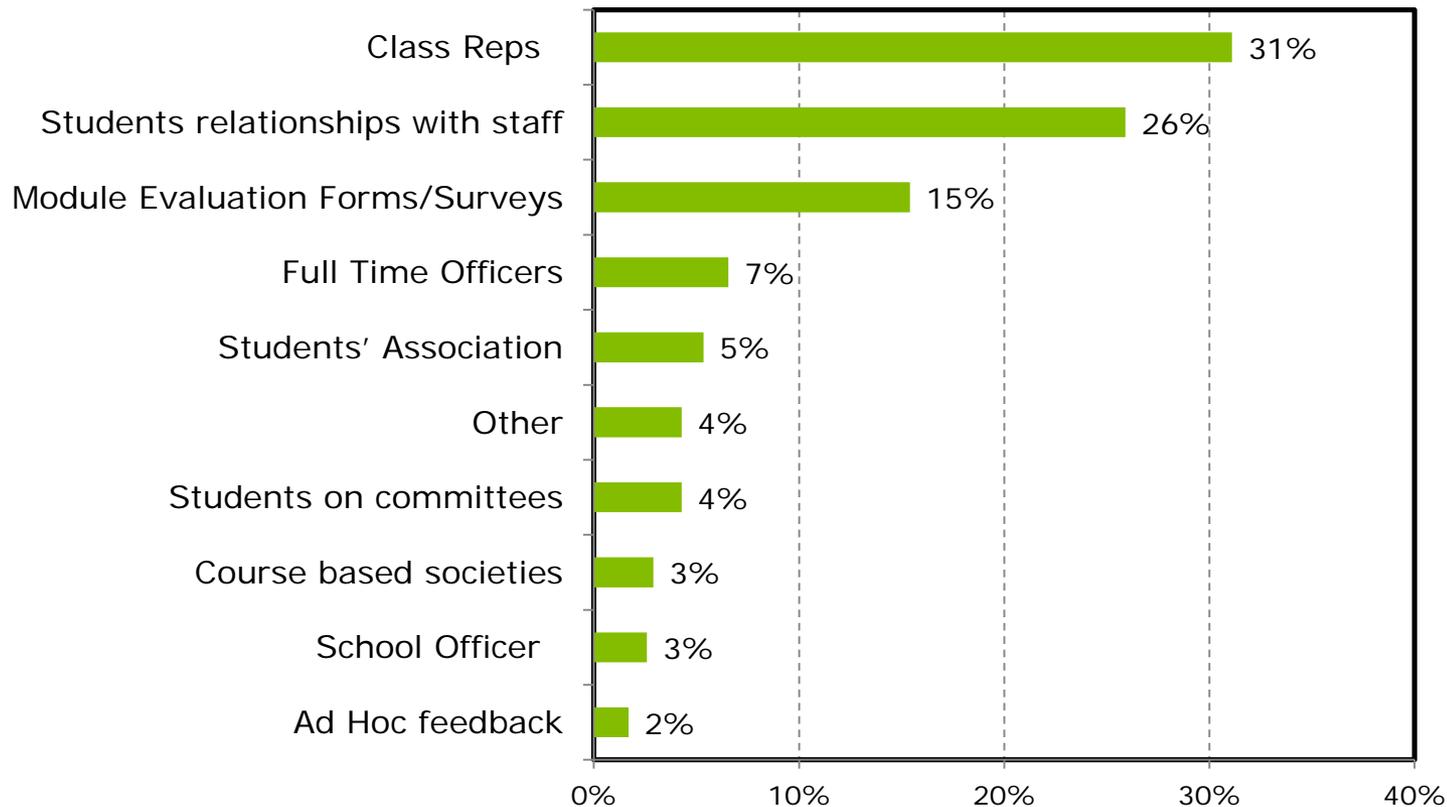
Base: 659 respondents

E2. Did you know the GCU Students' Association have Full Time Officers to represent you?

Class reps and student relationships with staff are felt to be the most effective methods of getting course changes made

Online  
Survey

### Representation - course changes



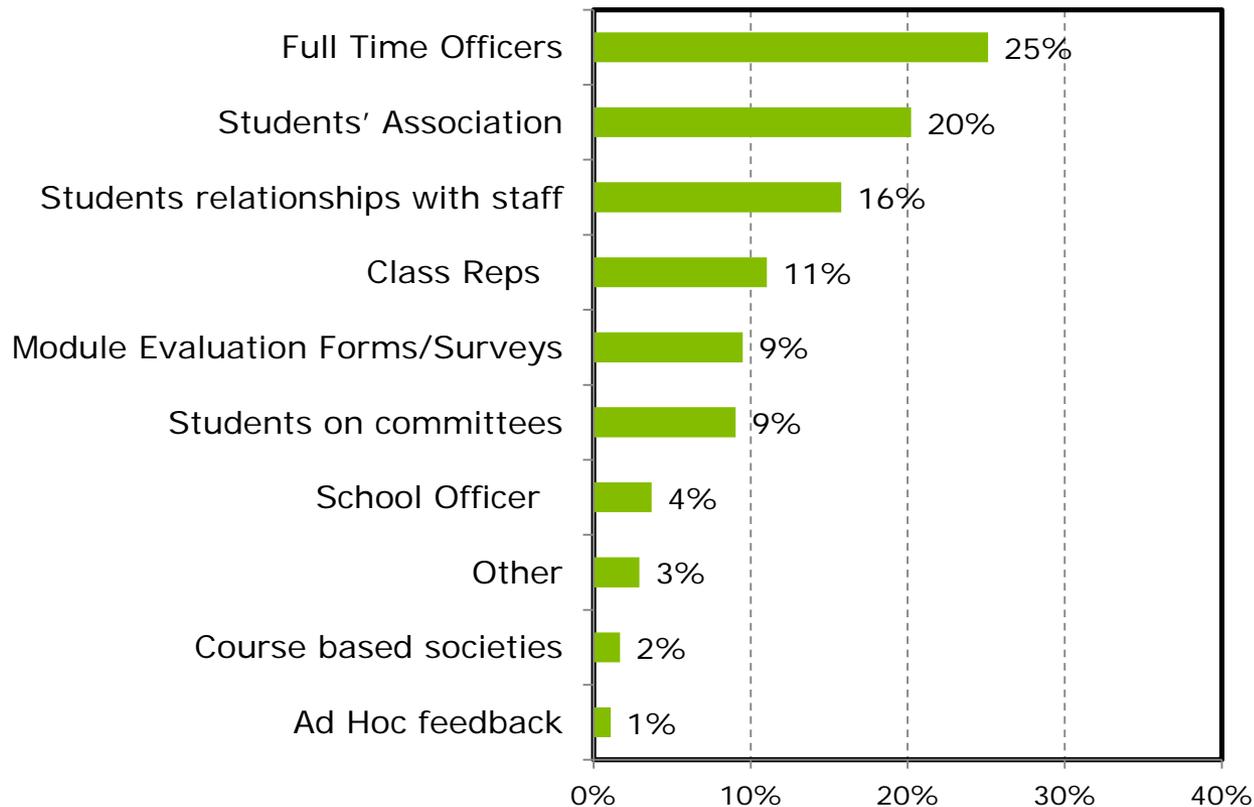
Base: 656 respondents

E3a. When thinking about your course, which of the following do you believe is most effective in getting changes made?

Full time officers are believed by a quarter to be the most effective with regards to university changes

Online Survey

### Representation - university changes



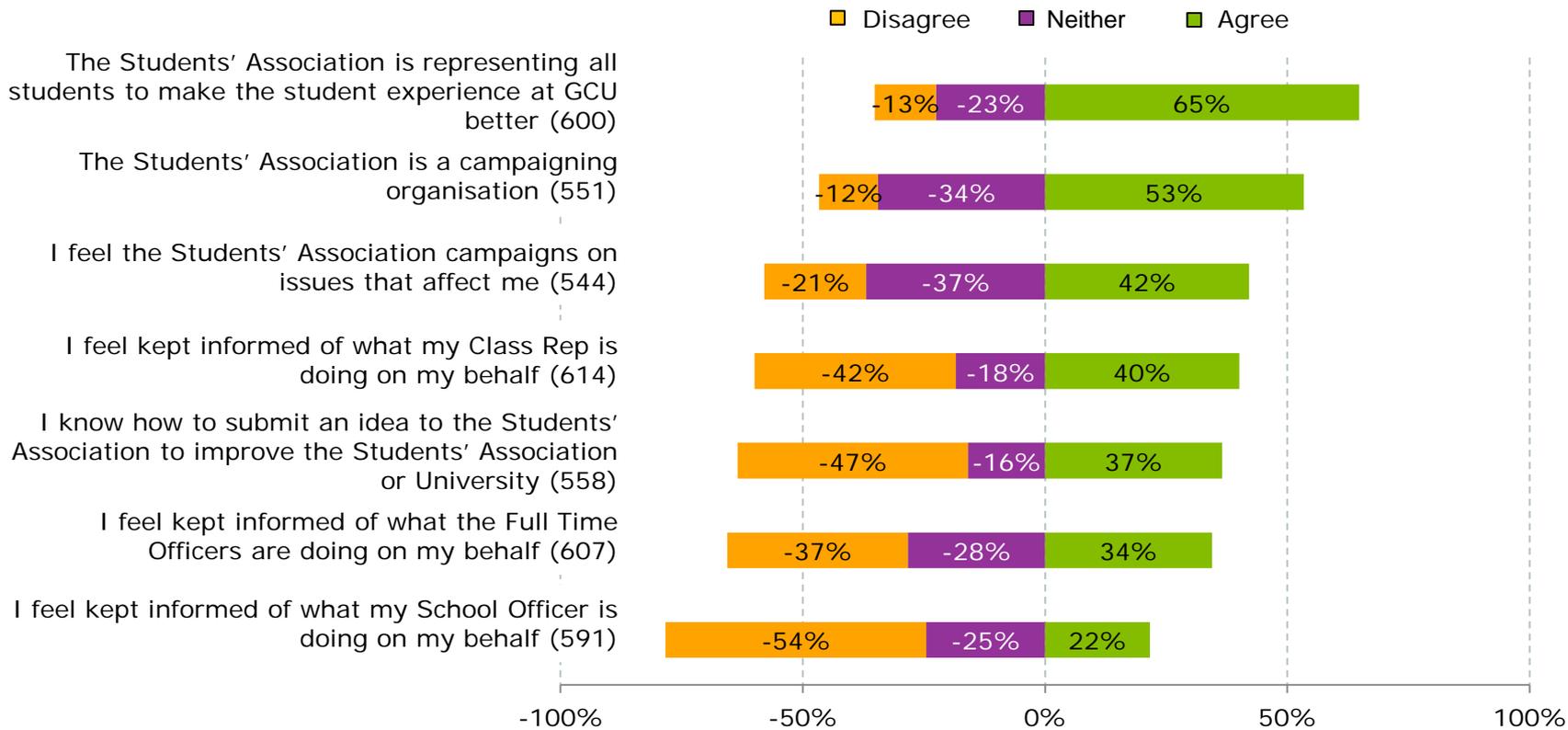
Base: 653 respondents

E3b. And thinking about the university, which of the following do you believe is most effective in getting changes made?

Approximately two thirds agree that the Students' Association represents all students. Being kept informed and getting involved offer least agreement



### Agreement with statements



Base: (In brackets)

E4. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements?

## Significant differences

**Those aged 16-24 are more likely to agree with:**

The Students' Association is a campaigning organisation, I feel the Students' Association campaigns on issues that affect me

**International students are more likely than UK students to agree with:**

The Students' Association is representing all students to make the student experience at GCU better, I feel kept informed of what my School Officer is doing on my behalf

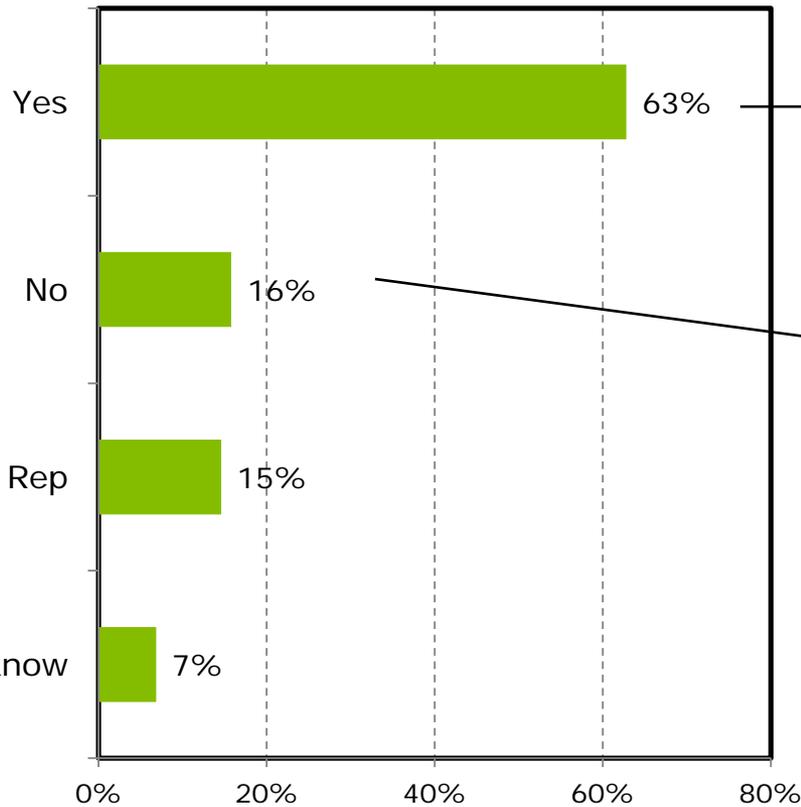
**Glasgow School for Business Society are more likely to agree with:**

I feel kept informed of what my School Officer is doing on my behalf

Around two thirds know how to contact their class rep, particularly students in the School of Health and Life Sciences, full time students and those engaged with the Students' Association. Undergraduates are more likely not to know how to contact their rep

Online Survey

### Contacting Class Rep



More likely amongst:

- School of Health and Life Sciences
- Full time students
- Those engaged with the SA

More likely amongst Undergraduates

Base: 659 respondents

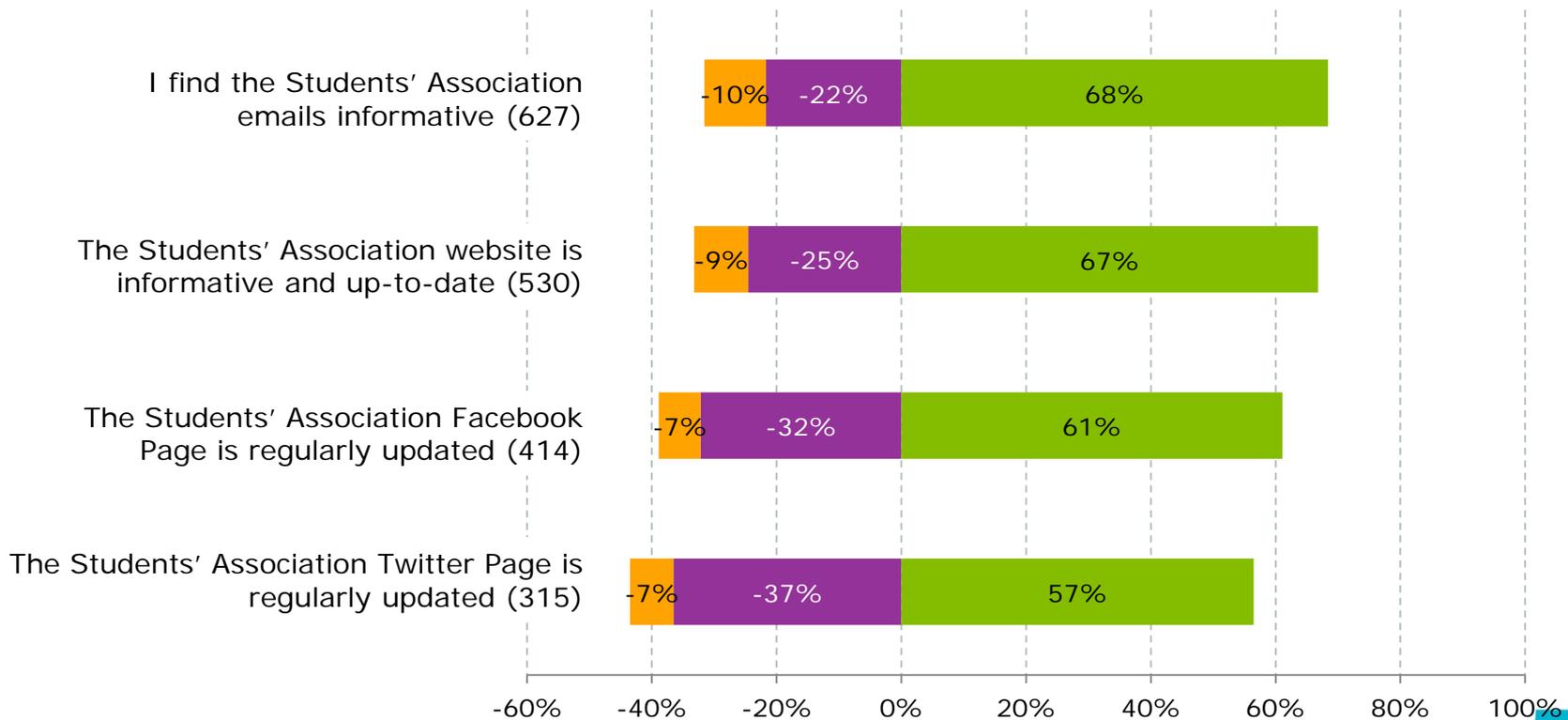
E5. Do you know how to contact your Class Rep?

There is general agreement with all statements regarding communication



### Students' Association communication

Disagree Neither Agree



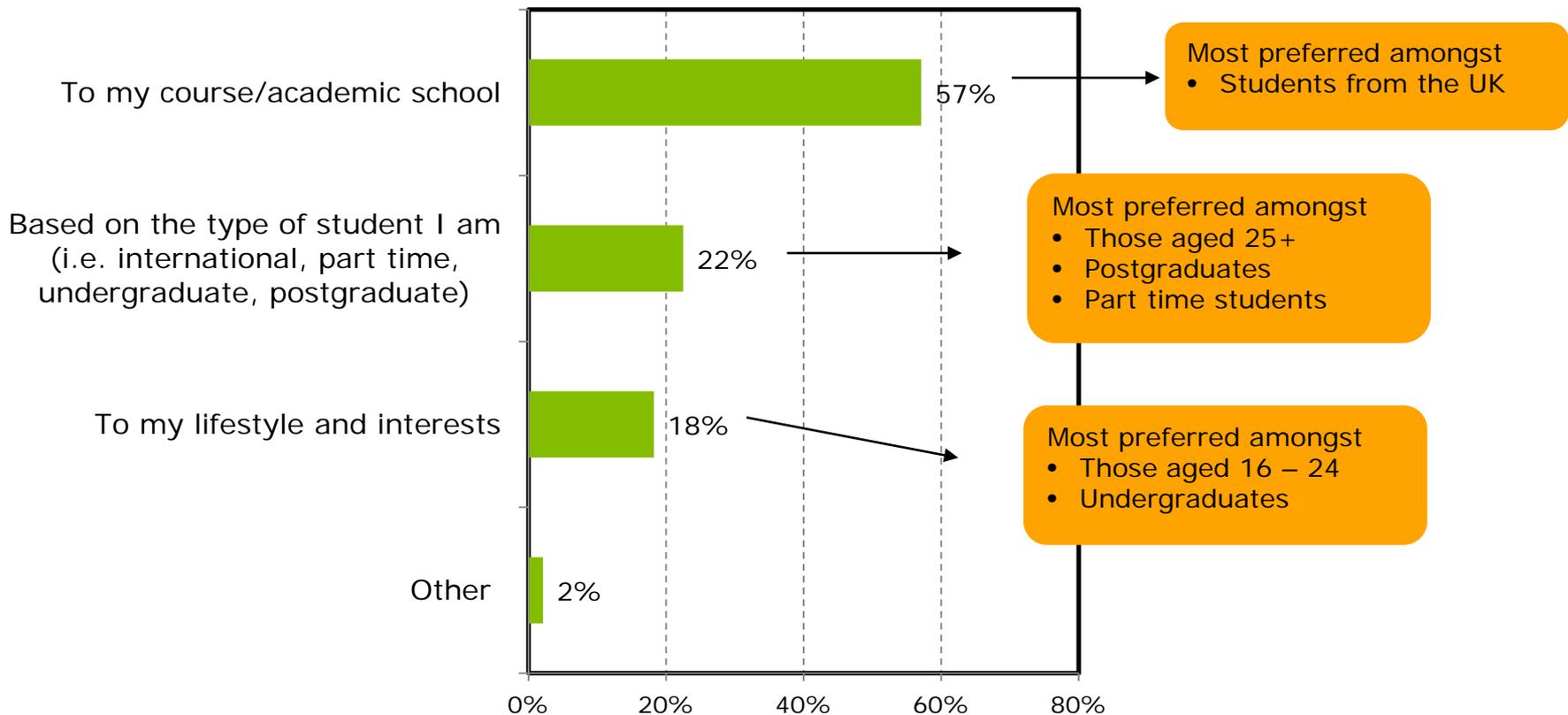
Base: (In brackets)

E6. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements about the Students' Association communication?

Course tailored communications appear to be the most popular, particularly for students from the UK. Those aged 25+, postgraduates and part time students would prefer the information tailored to the type of student they are

Online Survey

### Tailored communications



Base: 658 respondents

E7. And thinking about communications from the Students' Association, how would you prefer them to be tailored?

## Summary

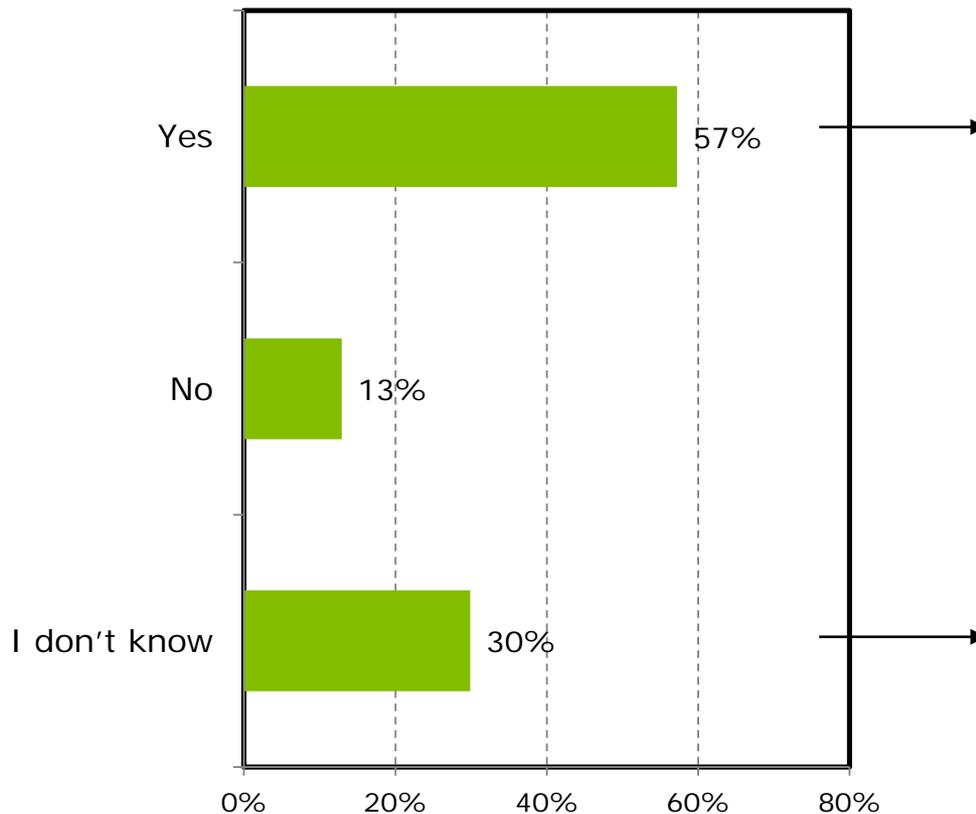
- Students believe representation means having a voice, that speaks for all students equally. It is a two way communication.
- Class reps and student relationships with staff are most commonly felt to be most effective in influencing course changes.
- Full time officers and the Students' Association are believed to be most effective when influencing changes at institution level.
- Two thirds believe the Students' Association is representing all students to make the student experience better. However, this leaves a third who either don't believe this is the case, or are ambivalent towards this.
- Only a quarter of students feel kept informed of what their school officer is doing.
- GCU Students' Association communications are viewed relatively favourably, with each method felt to be informative and updated.
- Preferred tailoring of communications is linked to course / school.

# Impact of Students' Association

While over half of the students believe the Students' Association contributes positively to their experience, almost a third claim they don't know

Online Survey

### Students' Association positive impact



- More likely amongst:
- Those aged 16-24
  - Full time students
  - Those engaged with the SA

- More likely amongst:
- Those aged 25+
  - School of Engineering and Built Environment
  - Part time students
  - Male students

Base: 659 respondents

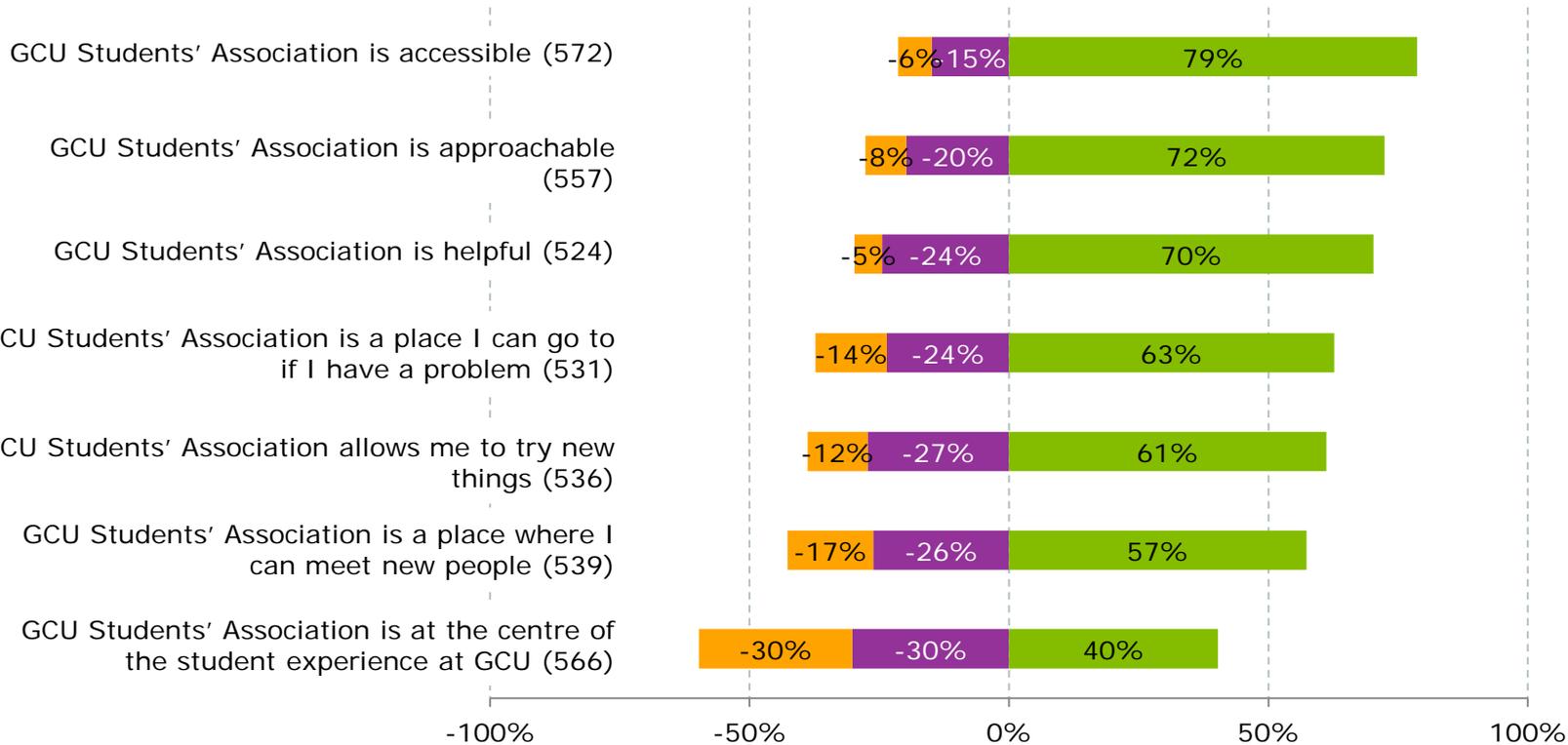
F1. Is the Students' Association contributing positively to your experience at University?

There is general agreement across the board with the following statements. However, students are less likely to agree that the Students' Association is at the centre of the student experience

Online Survey

### Agreement with statements

Disagree Neither Agree



Base: (In brackets)

F2. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements about your Students' Association?

## Significant differences

**Those aged 16-24 are more likely to agree that:**

GCU Students' Association is a place where I can meet new people, GCU Students' Association allows me to try new things, GCU Students' Association is approachable, GCU Students' Association is accessible, GCU Students' Association is helpful

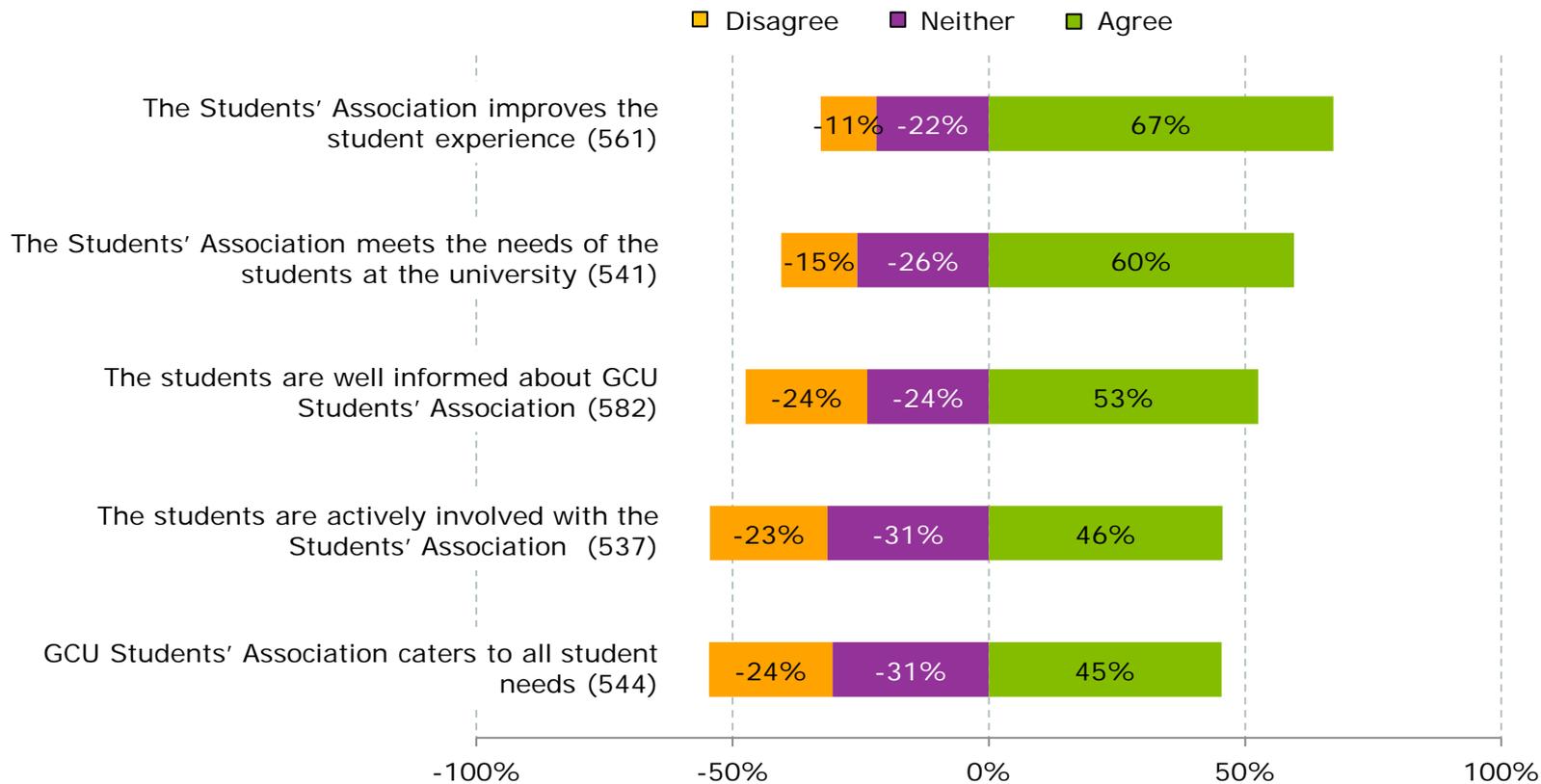
**Full time students are more likely to agree that:**

GCU Students' Association is a place where I can meet new people, GCU Students' Association is approachable, GCU Students' Association is accessible, GCU Students' Association is helpful

While over two thirds believe the Students' Association improves the student experience, a quarter do not believe that students are well informed about the organisation, or that students are actively involved, or that it caters to all students

Online Survey

### Agreement with statements



Base: (In brackets)

## Significant differences

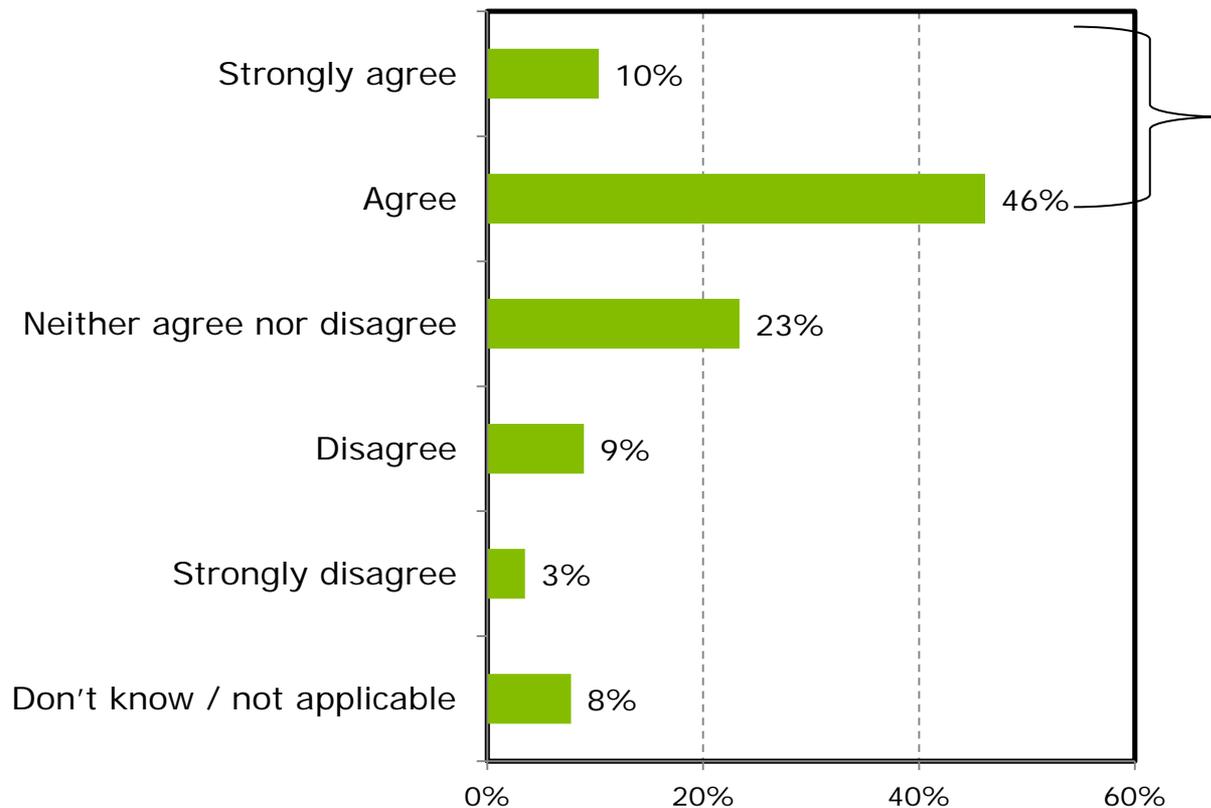
**Those aged 16-24 are more likely to agree that:**

The Students' Association meets the needs of the students at the university, The Students' Association improves the student experience, The students are actively involved with the Students' Association

Just over half are satisfied with the Students' Association, with almost a third not offering an opinion

Online Survey

### Satisfaction with Students' Association



More likely amongst:

- Those aged 16-24
- Undergraduates
- Full time students

Base: 659 respondents

F4. Thinking about all the services, including support, activities and academic representation provided by the Students' Association, to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I am satisfied with the Students' Association"?

## Summary

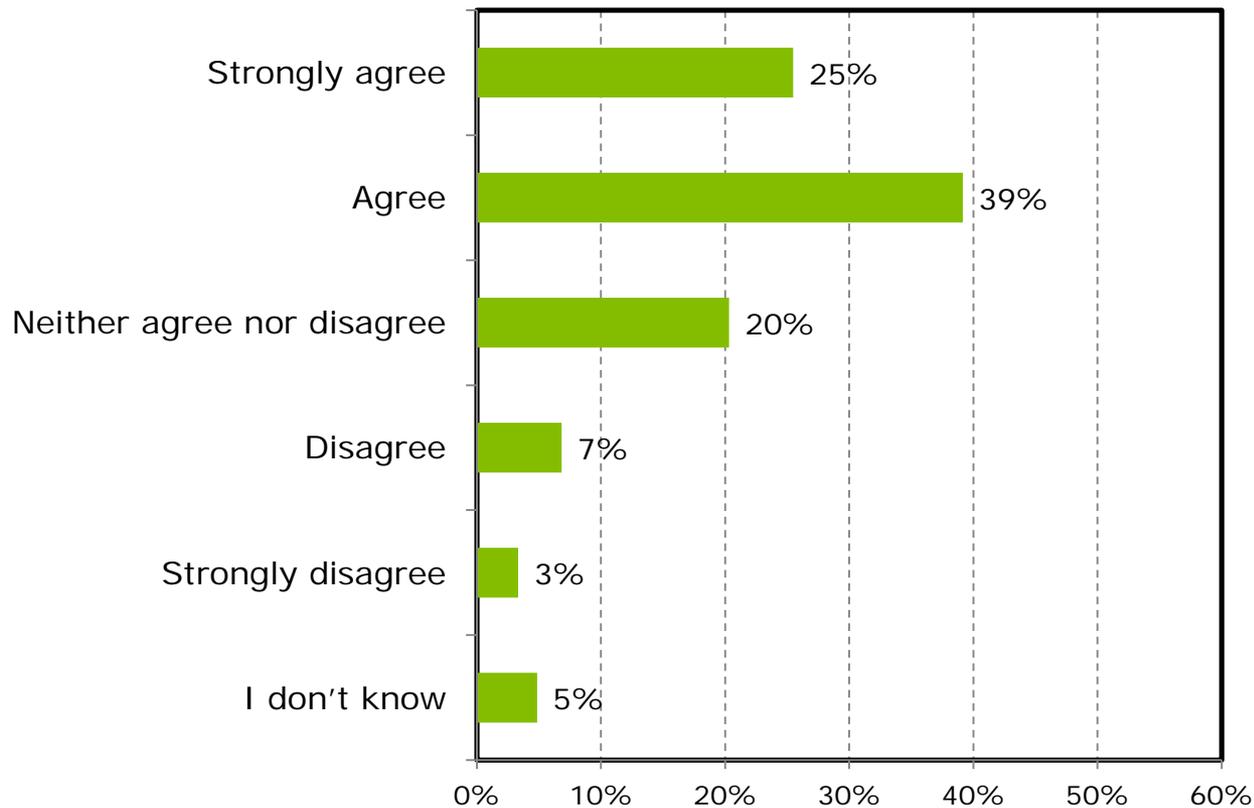
- Over half of the respondents believe that GCU Students' Association is contributing positively to their experience. This leaves 43% who have either stated no, or that they don't know.
- Most respondents appear to know that GCU Students' Association is there for them if they need it; however, they are less likely to believe the organisation is at the centre of the student experience at GCU.
- While students tend to believe that GCU Students' Association improves the student experience and meets the needs of students, they are less likely to agree that students are actively involved in the organisation or that it caters to all students.
- The majority of respondent indicate overall satisfaction with GCU Students' Association.
- A third indicate no opinion.

# The future of the Students' Association

Around two thirds agree that this is an appropriate vision for the Students' Association

Online Survey

**"That GCU students will have an outstanding experience that will live with them forever"**



Base: 659 respondents

**G1. Firstly, we'd like to share the 'Vision' with you. Vision: *That GCU students will have an outstanding experience that will live with them forever.* To what extent do you agree that this is an appropriate 'Vision' for GCU Students' Association?**

Respondents agree that students should have a good university experience; it's a good goal to have. More specifically, being at university is a big part of a student life, that will help them in their future

Online  
Survey

*"I think students should feel like that about their university experience." (21-24, UG, female)*

*"In my opinion it is a vision that has students and their wellbeing in mind. I think that it says everything that needs to be said about what the Students' Association stands for." (21-24, UG, female)*

*"University studies is one of the most important steps in a person's life and I believe everyone should have the best experience during that period." (25-29, PG, male)*

*"I think that as much as academia is important, University should be about more than what you learn, it should be about the overall experience. I feel the SA should be a key part of that, as they are not particularly associated with any school of learning." (16-20, UG, male)*

## Agreement

- **Students should have good university experience**
- **It's a good goal to have**
- **University is a big part of life / expands horizons**
- **Have had a positive experience with the Students' Association**

Those disagreeing with this vision indicate they haven't experienced this feeling or perception of GCU Students' Association

Online  
Survey

## Disagreement

*"Bit far fetched and I having seen anything that has made my experience memorable so far." (25-29, PG, female)*

*"I think it's a good vision but in my experience it's unrealistic. I don't know anything about the Students' Association." (30+, UG, female)*

*"It should be more than fantastic. It should be practical and useful support and enrich the here and now." (21-24, PG, male)*

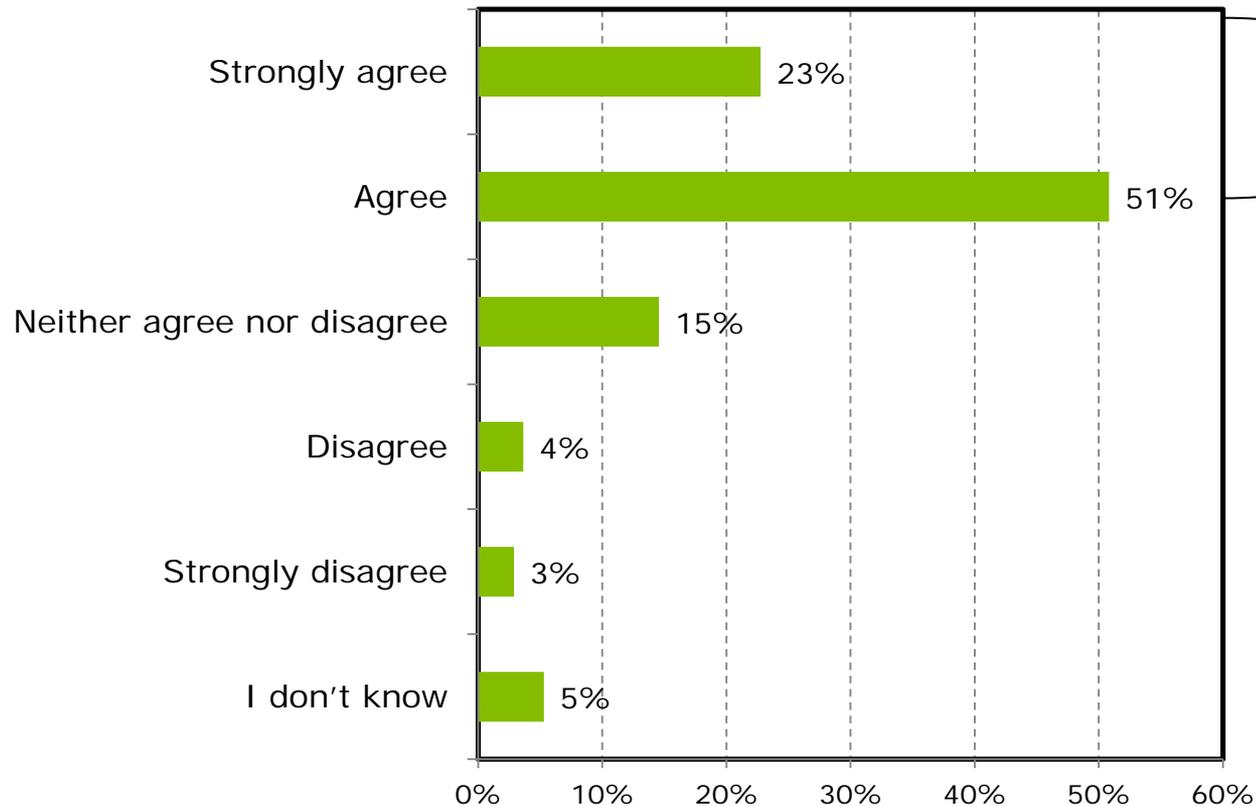
*"The Students' Association doesn't represent post graduate students therefore it does not affect their experiences and does not help improve current circumstances." (25-29, PG, female)*

- **Don't feel GCU Students' Association does this / no experience of this**
- **Unrealistic**
- **Needs some tweaks**

Around three quarters agree that the mission is appropriate

Online  
Survey

**“To represent and enable GCU students to enhance all aspects of their student experience”**



More likely amongst those aged 16-24

Base: 659 respondents

**G3. Now we would like to share the 'Mission' with you. Mission: To represent and enable GCU students to enhance all aspects of their student experience. To what extent do you agree that this is an appropriate 'Mission' for GCU Students' Association?**

Students agreeing with the mission believe it's an appropriate vision for such an organisation and that the Students' Association should be listening to their students

Online  
Survey

## Agreement

- **Appropriate value for a students' association**
- **The organisation should listen and give students a voice**
- **Will provide a better all-round experience for students**

*"I feel this is the right attitude a Students' Association should have when choosing its mission." (21-24, UG, male)*

*"It's important that the students have a voice!" (16-20, UG, female)*

*"As a link between students and GCU, the association is meant to enhance as much as possible students in their student experience." (21-24, PG, male)*

*"It identifies that the Students' Association's goals are representing students and helping them in their studies." (16-20, UG, male)*

Where disagreement is evident, students highlight their lack of experience in this area with regards to the Students' Association. Others believe it to be too broad

Online  
Survey

## Disagreement

- Don't feel GCU Students' Association does this / no experience of this
- Too broad / not representative

*"I've had no experience with the association except from email." (21-24, UG, female)*

*"Post graduate students aren't represented by the Students' Association so it doesn't enhance their experience." (25-29, PG, female)*

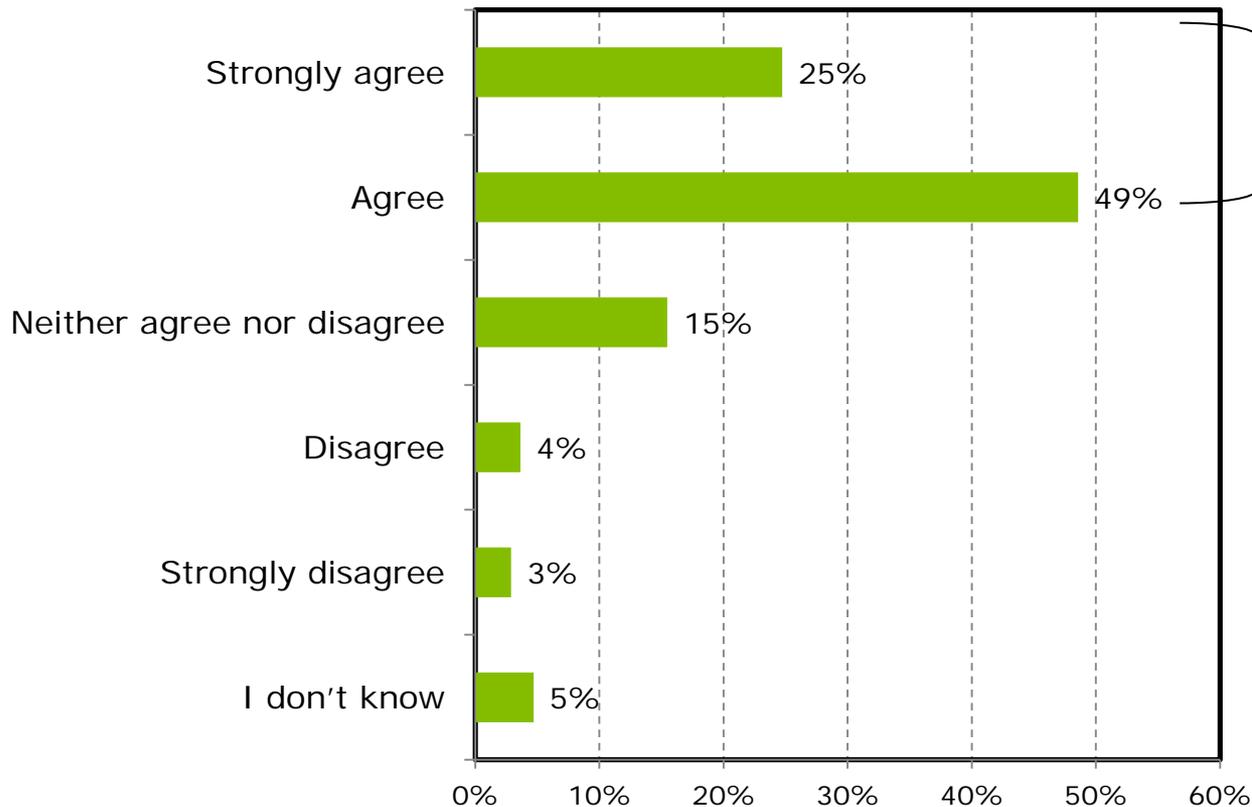
*"It's too complicated and generic." (25-29, UG, male)*

*"I believe the mission should be tailored down a bit. This looks a bit ambiguous. Achieving all aspects of their student experience, how do you intend to do this?" (25-29, PG, male)*

Just over three quarters believe the values are appropriate

Online Survey

### Appropriate 'Values'



More likely amongst:

- Those aged 16-24
- Full time students
- Females

Base: 659 respondents

G5. Now we would like to share the 'Values' with you. Values: *Diversity, Fun, Community, Participation, Support, Leadership*. To what extent do you agree that these are appropriate 'Values' for GCU Students' Association?

Agreement with the values was down to the perception that they covered everything, were appropriate and were important values with regards to the student experience

Online Survey

*"Good set of values that if met should please the majority of students." (16-20, UG, male)*

*"Covers all aspects people look for in an association." (21-24, UG, female)*

*"All of the above are very positive words." (16-20, UG, female)*

*"I think for University to be a positive experience, those values above are important." (21-24, PG, male)*

*"They all represent what the association does." (25-29, PG, female)*

*"These values are great and aim to make the student experience better and more enjoyable, satisfying and fulfilling." (30+, UG, female)*

## Agreement

- **Cover everything**
  - **Appropriate**
  - **Positive**
  - **Generally good**
- **Important values for student life and the student experience**
- **Aligns with actual experience of GCU Students Association**

Disagreement focused on the need for additional aspects, the values being too vague and disagreement with some of the words

Online  
Survey

*"They are meaningless buzz words that literally every workplace and facility must value. Try some values beyond what we now assume are in every institution and venue." (16-20, UG, male)*

*"The values should include Education, Communication (between lecturers and students) etc." (25-29, UG, female)*

*"Overly simplistic - just a list of words rather than stating clear values." (30+, PG, prefer not to say)*

*"Personally, I don't want you to lead the students of this university. We need to learn to lead ourselves. Also leadership contradicts support." (21-24, UG, male)*

## Disagreement

- **Need additional aspects**
- **Too vague, no real meaning**
- **Disagreement with some values**

The main focus suggested in the online survey centered around the involvement of all students; ensuring all student types are given the opportunity to engage with the Students' Association if they want to

Online  
Survey

- **Continuing to improve student involvement:**
  - **being accessible and open to all students**
- **Engagement of the diverse student population**

*"Involving more students, I feel like it is always the same students all the time. Like they have formed their own group." (21-24, UG, female)*

*"Sometimes it seem cliquey, always the same people hanging about which isn't approachable. Try to change that." (21-24, UG, female )*

*"They should focus on getting the international students more involved as well as breaking down boundaries." (30+, PG, female)*

*"To integrate everyone of all ages. Older students may feel that the SA is based on young people when it should enhance all ages' learning." (30+, UG, male)*

*"I have felt during the course of this year at GCU that the Students' Association doesn't really interact with the majority of the student body. The Association seems to be a select group of individuals who interact mostly with just each other." (25-29, UG, male)*

Other key suggestions discussed the representation of students to the university, with the Students' Association providing that link. Raising awareness and publicising what the organisation does was also a prominent theme

Online Survey

*"The representation of students; lecturers often side with their colleagues on issues and will not resolve student issues if they do not agree. We need the Students' Association to scrutinise lecturers to ensure they are dealing with issues in a fair and just manner."*  
(21-24, UG, male)

*"Get one system running over the whole campus, e.g. class reps. I don't have a class rep, and my course is not represented."* (21-24, PG, female)

*"I think promotion is the key. Making sure that you're accessible and "out there" in every way, on campus but also, maybe more importantly, in social media."* (21-24, UG, female)

*"Focus on promotion through classes telling people first hand and the benefits of it."* (25-29, UG, male)

*"Being the ones to approach and involve more students."* (16-20, UG, female)

- **Representation:**
  - **Being the link between university and students**
  - **Focusing on improvements in education**
- **Raising awareness**
  - **A variety of methods suggested**

## Summary

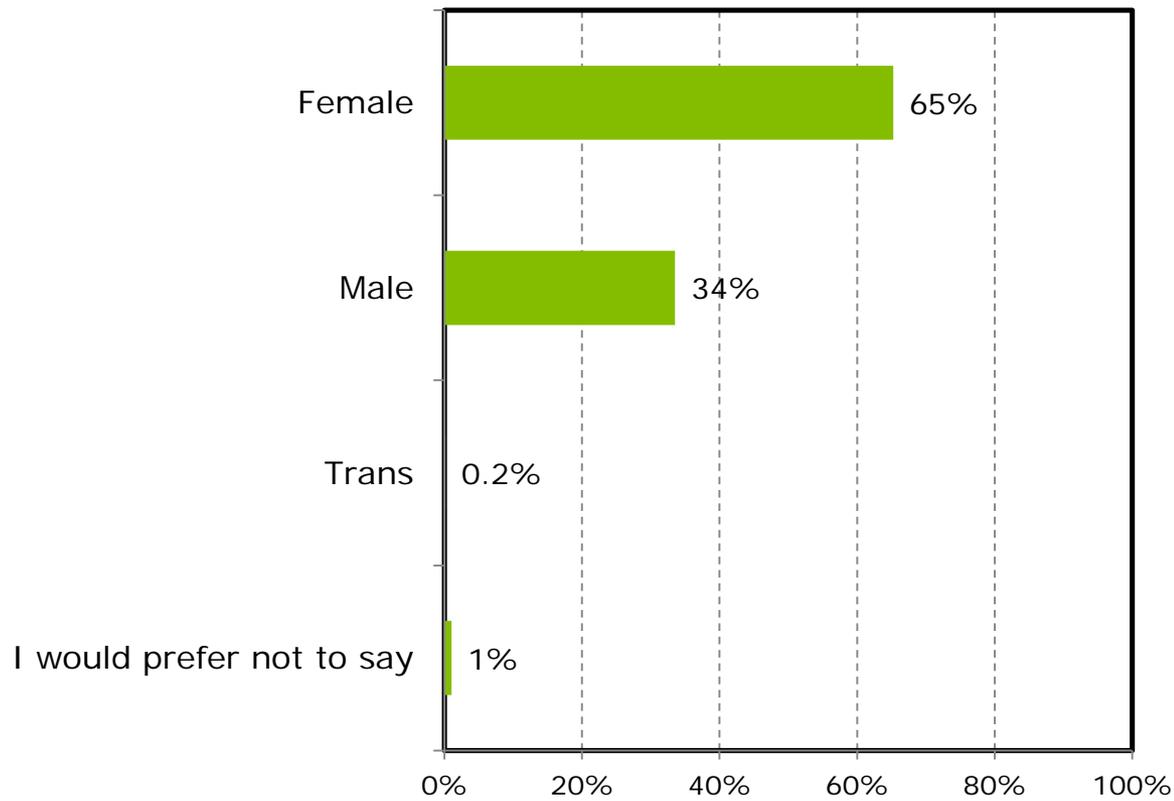
- Two thirds believe the vision to be appropriate to GCU Students' Association. Main reasons for this include that it's a good goal to have because students should have a good experience at university.
- Those actively disagreeing indicate they have no experience of the organisation benefitting them in this way.
- The mission was felt to be appropriate because of its suitability for such an organisation that exists in part to provide the student voice.
- There was some suggestion that it was too broad, or that students had no experience of this aspect of the Students' Association.
- The values were in the main welcomed; they were felt appropriate, encompassing life at university and the student experience.

## Summary

- The future of GCU Students' Association was believed to lie in building upon the involvement and engagement of all student types and being open and accessible to everyone.
- Representation also featured highly in discussing the future of the organisation because that's one of the main purposes of its existence.
- Raising awareness of what's on offer was also a common suggestion.

# Further demographics

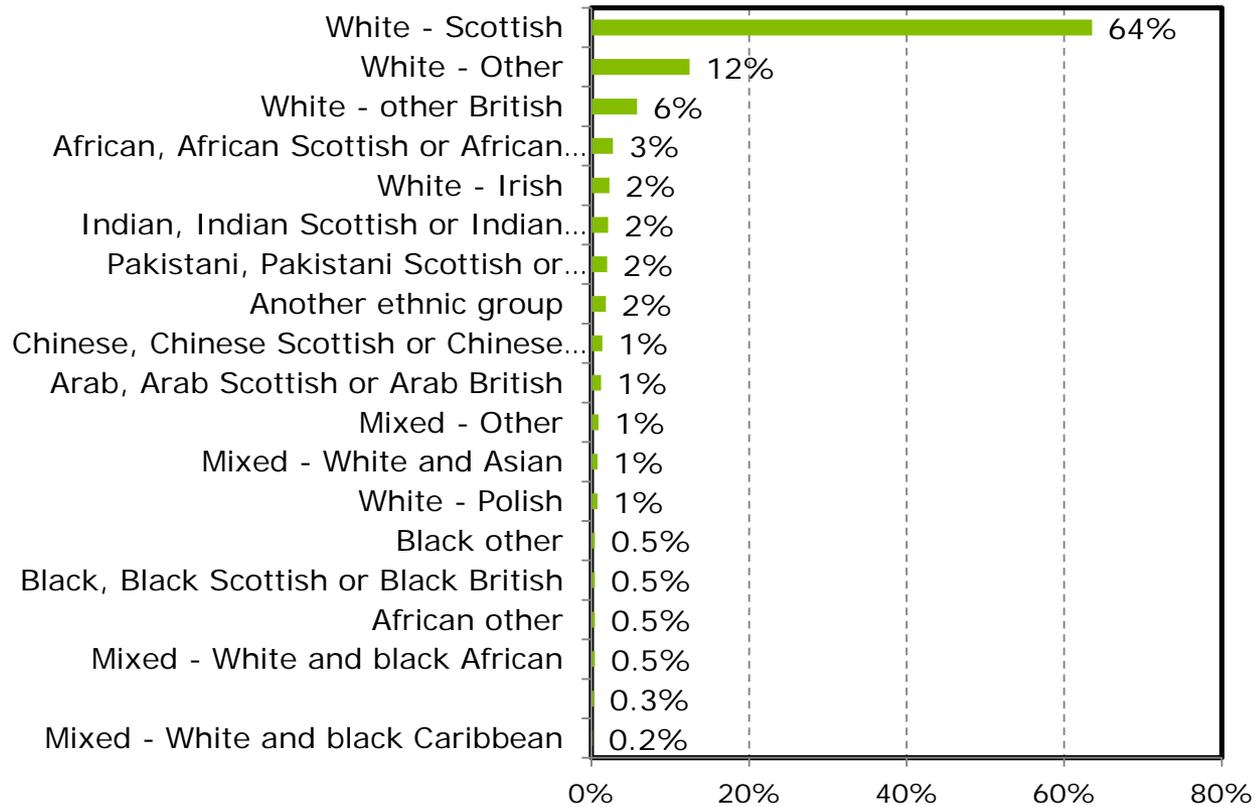
### Gender



Base: 659 respondents

H1. How do you prefer to think of yourself?

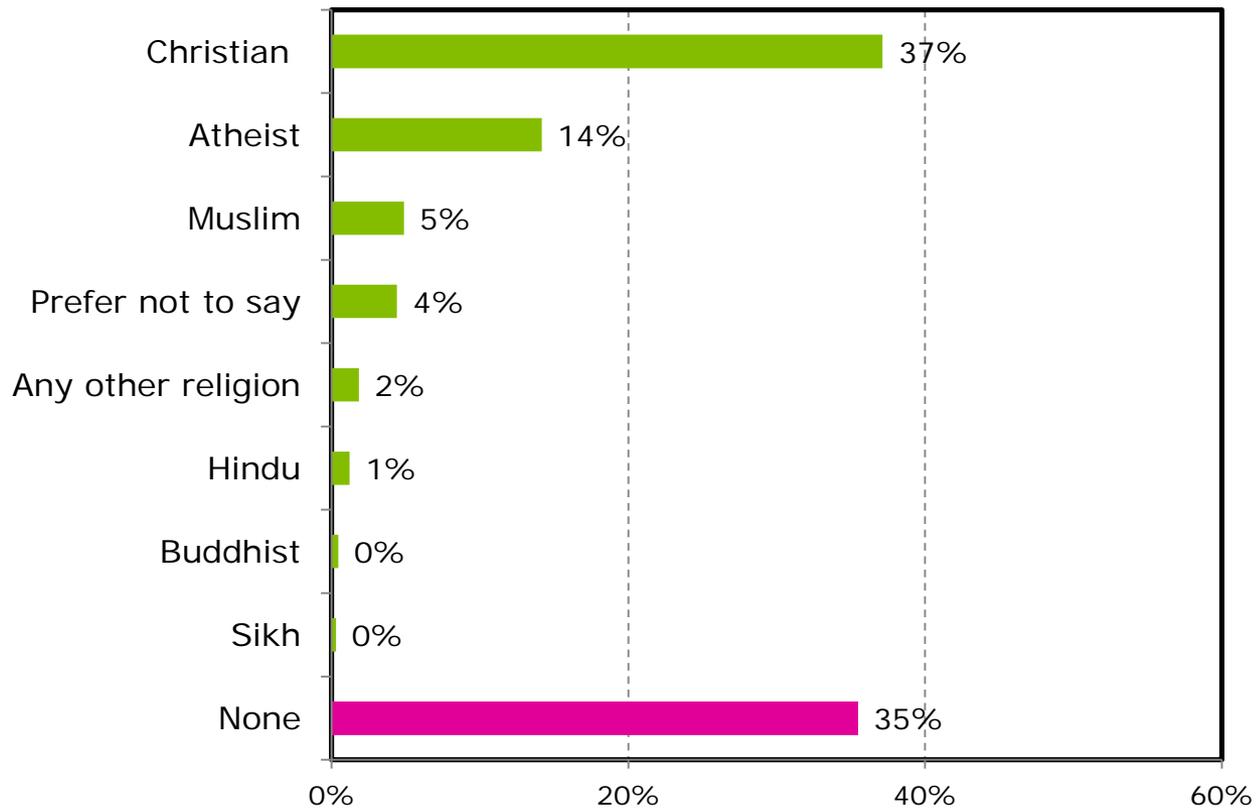
Ethnicity



Base: 658 respondents

H2. To which of the following ethnic groups do you belong?

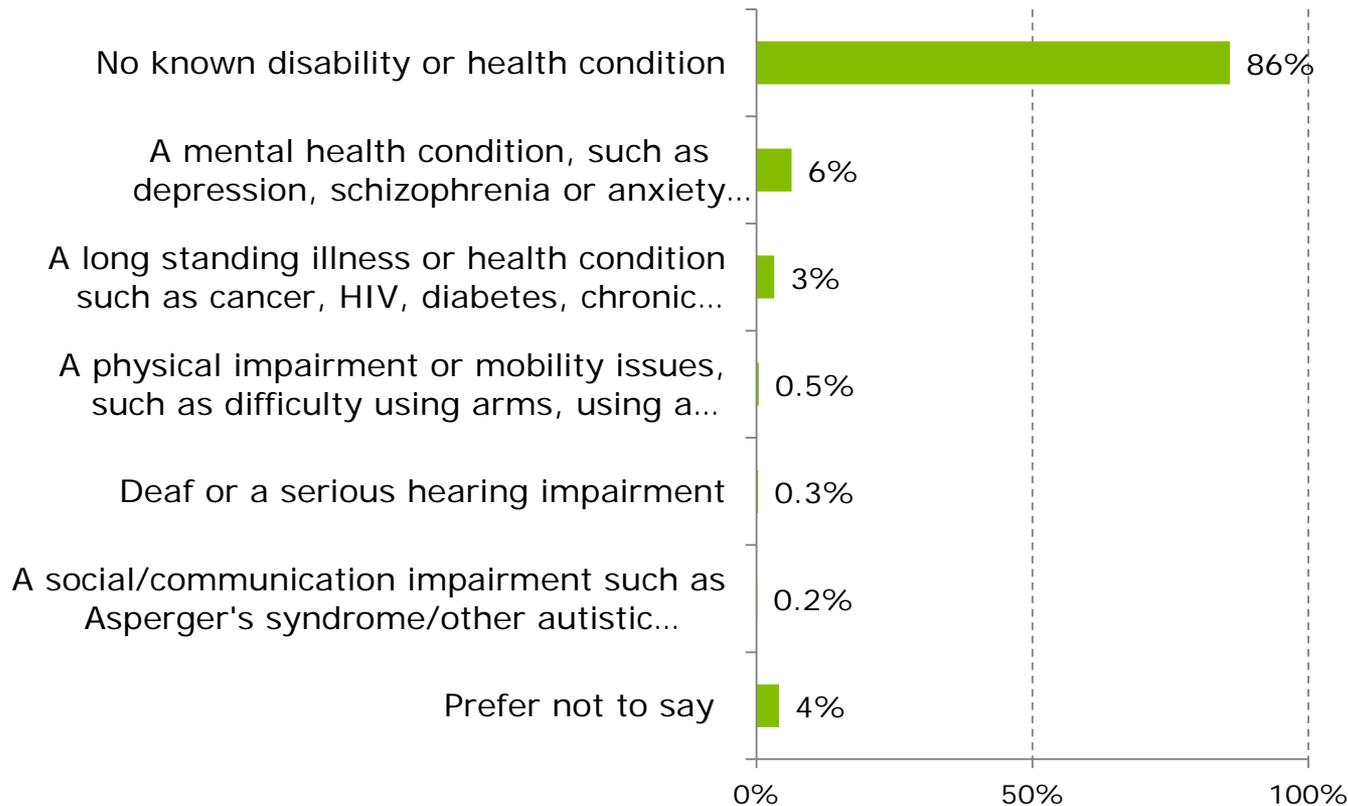
### Religion, faith or belief



Base: 657 respondents

H3. What is your religion, faith or belief?

### Disability, impairment or long-term health condition



Base: 655 respondents

# Conclusions and recommendations for further thoughts

## Conclusions and recommendations: Segments and belonging

- Your high proportion of 'home town' socialisers and commuters could be a problem: however, a large proportion of 'In and outs' indicate a willingness to get involved nevertheless
- The key challenge is with hard to reach students e.g. older, part-time, postgraduate, international students – also the 'shy' group who want to meet others not on their course
- **Our recommendation is to audit all of your current services against each of these key target groups – relevance, awareness, methods of promotion**
- Bear in mind it can take a long time to correct misperceptions (which can be as significant a problem as lack of relevant provision)

## Conclusions and recommendations: The Students' Association experience

- The vast majority have visited the building, with the computer lab and the Welcome Desk used by the majority of students and also offering relatively high satisfaction. **Build upon these welcoming and useful aspects of the building to increase the opportunity to engage students.**
- A large minority of those already participating would like to be more involved, so **target these students to increase engagement.** Provide drop in sessions or a feedback box to allow students to have their say on what matters to them and what they would like to see.
- **Promote what's on offer throughout the year and make sure students can take that initial step to get involved at any point across the academic terms;** this will allow students to get involved when they want to, and not just in Freshers' Week.
- **Give as much advance notice of events as possible,** hard-to-reach students have complicated lives to organise!

## Conclusions and recommendations: Targeting

- We believe that targeting of segments, or student types, is essential to optimise the use of financial and people resources to achieve any new strategy:
  - Unengaged students who are otherwise satisfied with the Students' Association and what it offers, but don't want to get involved, should not be the focus.
  - The Association does need to dispel the myth that it's aimed at undergraduates who live on campus who just want to drink a lot!
  - **The hard to reach segments should be the focus**, whilst maintaining 'business as usual' for the 'traditional' student
  - This focus, if sufficiently visible, may well have an added effect of 'educating' the proportion of students who don't currently feel well-enough informed to say whether or not they are satisfied with the Students' Association

## Conclusions and recommendations : Representation

- Representation is widely understood by students and the findings indicate that they regard GCU Students' Association as performing well in this area; this along with overall satisfaction is very positive
- However, a minority don't believe it contributes to all student needs, this again would be addressed by concentrating on the hard-to-reach segments
- **Promote the results of this research** (perhaps by holding a presentation session, or dropping in after classes) **to raise awareness and allow students to see that their voice does matter**
- **The Association needs a close and continuing dialogue with representatives of the hard to reach segments**

## Conclusions and recommendations : Vision, Mission and Values

- The findings suggest that the Vision, Mission and Values appeared more acceptable to students completing the online survey than to those who discussed them in the focus groups.
- While the focus group participants had a number of suggestions to improve them, the online respondents appeared generally satisfied with them.
- While the Vision, Mission and Values were felt to be appropriate, there was a suggestion that they were too broad and required some tweaks, but were a good basis on which to build upon.
- We think that the comments about needing to be more detailed/focussed are more about misunderstanding that these are 'headlines' rather than measurable goals; and therefore would regard the findings as confirming the Vision, Mission and Values as appropriate.
- **The new strategy will need to develop measurable goals under the Vision, Mission and Values.**

## Conclusions and recommendations : Focus on awareness, accessibility, and diversity

- Findings were similar across both stages of the research, with the future of the Students' Association lying in the increased engagement of the diverse student population and being open and accessible to everyone, should they wish to get involved.
- **Raising awareness** was also a prominent finding throughout stage 2 of the research and as a suggestion regarding focus over the next five years.
- **Consistent, year round communication initiatives are needed**; for example introductory events throughout the year, mentioning the Students' Association before classes, promoting online access

# Stakeholder Feedback

## Overview of stage 1 stakeholder feedback – key themes

Stake-  
holders

- **Lack of clarity surrounding the role of GCU Students' Association**
- **GCU Students' Association should aim to be at the heart and centre of the student experience**
- **GCU Students Association should aim to contribute and increase the sense of community amongst students at GCU**
- **A lack of engagement amongst the diverse student population was highlighted**
- **The current Mission, Vision and Values were something that could be built upon**
- **GCU Students' Association and the institution should work together with regards to their respective strategies**

# Stage 2 Stakeholder Feedback

# Introduction

## Stakeholders

9

participants

- Nine stakeholders were consulted during this stage of the research.
- They were stakeholders selected by the team at GCU Students' Association and were from the Institution, in various roles.

# The role of GCU Students' Association

The Students' Association is seen as a key platform for the student voice and representation. Their role spans the entire spectrum of student experience, from academic performance to social wellbeing

Stake-  
holders

## Role of the Students' Association (1)

### • Representation

- to be the student body's independent voice
- Lobbying on relevant issues
- Supporting **class representatives**

### • Student experience

- **Support, advice and welfare services**
- Create a **good environment/community / safe space**
- Give **social opportunities and get clubs and societies up and running**

## For the students

*"To give a **legitimate voice to students on all matters affecting their academic performance and their social wellbeing**. I'd add to that, to help make university life smooth and enjoyable and be there to meet their **support needs**, should they need that."*

*"It needs to be **separate from the academic side** of things and remain objective. They also offer **advice about things like welfare**."*

*"There needs to be **safe spaces for opportunities for student voices** can be heard in a sensible and mature way."*

The Students' Association are perceived as a partner organisation to the institution

Stakeholders

## Role of the Students' Association (2)

- **Challenge agent**
- To be **separate from the academic side**
- **Political dimension**
- **Strategic development role**
- **Supporting leadership** at a variety of operational levels

*"As well as representing the students on an internal platform they also **represent the institution on an external platform too.** The Students' Association is quite unique at GCU, as they are **incredibly embedded**, and they are a pretty **good model** across the sector."*

## For the institution

*"They bring **fresh ideas, challenge and change to the university.** They have a key strategic role to our institution...They also have a key function in supporting class representatives, leadership at a variety of operational levels, and have a role of making sure the student voice is heard about academic matters."*

*"The Students' Association is one of our **main conduits to the wider student body.** They are a partnership organisation for the university."*

But there is a need for the proposition to be clearer to students. The Students' Association could promote volunteering opportunities more, and engage with those not just in their first year

Stakeholders

What the role of GCU Students' Association *could* be...

- **Clarity of proposition** to students
- **Continuity** of policies
- Appreciation for **legacy**, and what has come before
- Promote **volunteering** opportunities to both promote the common good, and truly harness the human capital apparent at GCU
- The main hub to the university **student experience**
- **Engage with all levels** and student segments

*"Making things **clearer for students** and that the Students' Association is there for them."*

*"...Perhaps **need to make sure they are engaging all student groups** - not just first years."*

*"The role is clear to me and to most staff; students, I don't know how clear it is. I suspect there are large chunks of **students who don't engage and are not so clear.**"*

*"...in reality it is sometimes difficult when there are **new officers coming in each year who want to put their own stamp on things.** It can sometimes feel like they are starting all over again."*

*"How does the university harness all the intellectual, social and emotional capital to deliver real social impact and benefit? For this the staff and students need to volunteer. **The wonderful ethos of volunteering underpins the common good outcome for them.**"*

*"The main hub to any university student experience, and **when resourced, financed and supported in the right way by universities it is an invaluable asset when done correctly.**"*

It is important that the Students' Association is at the heart of the student experience, bolstering the proposition offered by the institution, and instilling a sense of community

Stake-  
holders

Role: Being at the heart of the GCU community

- Joined up, **holistic offering to students** in partnership with the institution
- **But also a conduit** between student and institution:
  - Can create a sense of **community** that the university is unable to do
  - Immediate **feedback** and relay
- **To be addressed:**
  - Needs to work in **partnership** with the institution
  - **Physical location** – how to combat positioning?

*"**Absolutely fundamental** - it allows us to have an immediate, genuine, and relevant response to what might be happening in the learning environment, that enables the institution to be more flexible, responsive and respond faster."*

*"They need to be at the heart, **from outreach through to graduation**. The Students' Association identity is strong, but the holistic experience makes more sense if it's all joined up (with the institution)."*

*"...**the student experience is very important and builds relationships and memories. and most of that comes from beyond the curriculum and teaching**. The Students' Association has to take responsibility for the community for students."*

*"They need to be able to **bridge the expectations of the students with the university**."*

*"**In a physical sense, it's wrongly positioned**. The difference that the location has is quite substantial."*

The Students' Association can ensure that it is at the heart of the student experience by raising profile amongst all student segments, and implementing a diverse and inclusive range of events and activities

Stakeholders

Ensuring the organisation is at heart of the student experience (1)

For the students

- **Raising profile** amongst students
- **Understanding the legacy**, beyond the curriculum
- Complementary **employability skills**
- **Understanding** what students want
- **Diversity** of events and activities
- **Working with** students
- Building should be a **hub for students**

*"It should be **reaching out to students**. It shouldn't just be responding, it shouldn't be reactive. It needs to get out there and find out what students need and want...It's about providing an exciting, memorable, rewarding experience beyond the curriculum, and providing a justification to keep students on campus as well..."*

*"Within my school we sometimes have to remind students that the SA is there for them to access support, but **it would be good if the students knew themselves to go to the SA.**"*

*"...that being involved in the SA, not just as a class rep, is part of the **employability skills** that everyone looks for. Employers are increasingly valuing the fit a person has for an organisation as much as their technical knowledge and that comes to those **soft skills around decision making, negotiating, team work and being culturally aware.**"*

The Students' Association can ensure ongoing communications and involvement with GCU

Stake-  
holders

Ensuring the organisation is at heart of the student experience (2)

For the institution

- **Open and supportive dialogue** with institution
- Taking a **leadership role** and being part of the conversation
- **Engage** with key projects

*"Involved with **listening**, not just to the student voice but also the institution. They sit on the various groups, meetings and so forth. They are present in these conversations. The fact that they have **exec members staying for 2 years means there is a continuity and a positive step - stability.**"*

*"**Engage with key projects** and be kept up to date with the university's strategy and be able to **contribute** when relevant."*

*"Through taking that **leadership role** and working with the university's team. We have an enabling culture."*

The Students' Association's role in contributing to the GCU community is important. It is seen to support the common good agenda, and is crucial to promote the necessary engagement

Stakeholders

## The role GCU Students' Association plays in the GC community

- Supports the 20:20 agenda for the **common good**
- **Volunteering** to deliver real impact
- Crucial role, especially for **international students and articulation students**
- Bridging the **link between university experience and employment**
- **Wider engagement** with local community

*"It engages with a wide range of staff and students and **runs lots of networks and societies** in the wider community."*

*"The 20:20 strategy for the common good means that **the SA needs to embrace with the community engagement agenda.**"*

*"There is no community without the students, and **the SA and students are one and the same thing** to me as the SA represents the students."*

*"**Not just local student community, but where the university sits in the geographic location** - GCU could do a lot more to engage with the local community, in conjunction with the university. On a more local GCU level, it is imperative to engage with other staff members and work together."*

*"Absolutely critical for us to deliver a quality experience for our students...Also important for the **common good initiative where students volunteer to deliver real impact.**"*

*"This is very important role and one that is **especially crucial with international students and those transitioning from FE to HE.**"*

The Students' Association can increase a sense of community and belonging by diversifying their offering, and creating events that are inclusive and responsive to their student segments

Stakeholders

Contribution to creating or increasing a sense of community and belonging amongst students at GCU

*"We would like to **grow our cultural capital**, having cultural events, providing leadership for political dialogue, a dialogue for a just society, on issues that intimately effect our students and the society they live in...Attract more **cultural activities** - reading, art, literature, digital gaming - work in partnership to help promote what they find exciting and interesting.  
**Diversification of offering.**"*

### Raising profile

- **Regular presence** amongst the students
- **Raise profile of reps**
- **Attendance at school events**
- **Student ambassadors**, beyond the exec team

*"They probably need to bring more people on board, as **ambassadors** for them. They are a small team, but they need an additional group who can work on their behalf...this would boost their presence."*

*"They can **arrange activities and events** and help people feel part of the wider community...However, how representative that engagement is of the wider student body is the **challenge** for the SA."*

### Diversification of offering

- **Inclusive and diverse activities** and events
- Understanding the **student types and groups** and what they want to engage with
- **Representative officers** (gender)

*"80% of students are won from a **widening participation background and from the west coast of Scotland**. They're coming just to attend university, dipping in and out."*

*"I just wonder **how approachable they can be**. I personally have an issue that all officers are male and should do a bit more to ensure they have greater diversity."*

# Engagement

Engagement of mature students is recognised to be a big challenge. Understanding this segment will allow for tailoring events and provision to their needs

Stakeholders

## Mature students

- Investigate **who they are** and understand demand:
  - **Tailored events and activities**
  - **Service provision** - focus on particular needs, such as child care
- Make them **feel comfortable** and welcomed
- **Benefits** – promote ways that engaging with the SA will support them in careers and student life.
- **Early engagement and visibility** right at the beginning of their journey; they don't seek out the Students' Association like school leavers
- **However!** Perhaps **accept they may not be interested** - their communities are external to university.

"A big **challenge!**"

"Really difficult. There **needs to be real investigation and analysis as to where these students sit.**"

"A challenging one for our campus, as **they may not stay on campus.**"

"Part of the widening access agenda the SA **need to focus on particular needs** as and when appropriate such as family or financial support"

"In my experience **mature students are just not that interested.** They already have a complex life - they are fitting studying into a busy life. Their communities are external to university. Never seen it work with mature students. If they don't want to engage that's fine."

Social and online methods of communication are suggested as a means for engaging part time and distance learners more effectively

Stake-  
holders

*"Difficult - through **social media and online platforms**. Good communication and reaching out to these students and having activities that these students can engage with. Difficult to come up with a clear strategy, as they are a **diverse group**. They come from different perspectives, and they may not have an appetite to do so. **There is a slight onus on the individuals.**"*

*"Relevance. Really difficult to get to as they're not on campus. Having a lot of online stuff available. **Flexibility** - bringing the SA to them.. **Making sure the reps represent these groups of students** as well."*

*"What are **their motivations** for going to university and their desire for engagement?"*

*"We're far behind the pack, and could perhaps take a steer from the SA to **develop a digital strategy.**"*

## Part time and distance learners

- **Social and online methods** of communication:
  - Work with the institution to develop coherent digital strategy
- **Recognising they are a diverse group:**
  - **Who are they**, their motivations and appetite for engagement?
- **Flexibility** – bringing the activities to them
- Inclusion in wider community if they want to and **signposting that they can have the same access to things** that full time students have.
- **However!** Not always necessary to concentrate equal effort on all student types

The need for a tailored provision for postgraduates is identified; social spaces, events that provide opportunities for socialisation, preparation for future employment

Stakeholders

## Postgraduates

- **Social spaces** specifically for them
- **Fostering postgraduate community**
- Role in **preparing them for future careers**
- **Clarity of proposition** – not all postgraduates will know or have had experience of Students' Associations before
- **Working with the institution:**
  - Lobbying the institution about **pertinent issues**
  - The **institution** acknowledges work needs to be done in consultation with the Students' Association
- **However!** Accept that the Students' Association may not be relevant for postgraduates

*"Not all postgraduates will necessarily have been involved with the SA as an undergraduate so it's still important to try and introduce them to other postgraduates and perhaps providing specific social areas for them."*

*"Challenge for the whole university. A target audience. **Lobbying the institution about issues that affect these students. Social space, space for students to meet, working with the university to create a more PG community. Relevancy for them.**"*

*"Representation of postgraduates has been addressed in the past 18 months e.g. funding and the appropriate support. **They should be offered preparation for future careers and the link with the SA in this needs to be clear.**"*

*"A lot may have engaged at an UG level, and it's **not that relevant for them.**"*

The Students' Association could support the work done by the institution to engage better with articulation students, proactively reaching out to them prior to arrival

Stakeholders

*"A lot come through an articulated pathway, and one of the things that could assist with that is to **bring the students on to campus** and offer pre-entry things too, so they're known and know before they get there."*

*"Perhaps the Students' Association **could engage and reach out to colleges a little more proactively about the type of activities and societies they can sample once they arrive.**"*

*"The SA need to act as a **pre entry liaison** for articulated students and help them with the new venture they are about to embark on. They **act as the bridge**, although much of this is already done."*

## Articulation students

- **Earlier engagement:**
  - **Pre-arrival engagement**
  - **Proactively reach out to colleges** and inform prospective students about the **types of activities available**
  - Involvement in the outreach programme and **go and talk to these students in colleges** too
  - **Work with FE Student Associations** to make this easier
  - Act as **pre entry liaison**
- **Support work done by institution**
- Comprehensive **orientation**

Suggestions for international students pivoted on encouraging integration through inclusive events, and comprehensive pre-arrival information. Connecting the campuses through digital engagement was another aspect raised

Stakeholders

## Other student segments

- **International students**
  - Be careful of creating cliques
  - Encourage diversity and tolerance of difference
  - Inclusive events and activities
  - Pre-arrival information about proposition
- **GCU London and New York**
  - Employ digital strategy to transmit activity

*"GC London. The university has an **overall digital strategy, which is really important to join the three campuses together. The SA therefore needs to engage with this activity.** Activity needs to be transmitted to London and the States."*

*"**International students** - need to ensure events are not just targeted at international students otherwise cliques can start to form."*

*"International students - want them to feel welcomed and supported. **Encourage diversity and tolerance of difference, so anything that the SA can do to work in partnership with the University to promote that they're coming to a safe, welcoming and supportive environment.** Help them to bed in to an alien city, is tremendously important. With messages about 'here's how to enjoy yourself' and 'here's how to stay safe'."*

*"...care needs to be taken to not **isolate international students** - we don't want students from Canada coming across and all sticking together."*

# Strategic Development

Partnership approach between institution and the Students' Association is valued and in evidence

Stakeholders

## GCUSA involvement in the institution's strategy

- Perceived to have a **good relationship**:
  - The Students' Association sits on a number of committees
  - Treated as equals
- The Students' Association is the conduit between students and the institution
- Working together on student employability at the university

*"It's a two way process. There will be commonalities, as they're both striving for the common good. It's very mutual."*

*"Already happening with the SA sat on a number of university committees. **The SA are treated as equals and they are part of discussions.**"*

*"The SA needs to be involved at the grassroots of it, at the idea process, in the decision making conversations. Critical to build relationships with the institution. They need to make sure **ALL students are considered, and represented** - and that not left out certain segments."*

*"...As we do our own investigation of what the 20:20 strategy might look like ... I would also look for the SA to do mirror methods amongst their own members and then **come together and show their findings at the very highest level**, that could be Court, it could EBE it could be Senate."*

*"They **helped to craft the university's overarching strategy**, and this gives you the architecture of how the operational plans sit - and it was a successful undertaking **They are included in key strategic conversations, and this can only improve the outcome.**"*

There may be opportunity for further consultation with the university

Stakeholders

### Institution involvement in GCU Students' Association strategic development

- **Dissemination of the Students' Association strategy** to university staff
- **Two – way communication:**
  - The **Students' Association is more involved in the institution's affairs**, than vice versa; However, not as necessary and they have a need to assert autonomy
- University may have suggestions for Students' Association management
- The **institution could offer more time** to Students' Association events
- Still opportunity for the Students' Association to **work collaboratively** with the institution on similar issues

*"The **SA do send out their strategy to staff at the university for thoughts** but I am not sure how widely they do this and who exactly is asked for comment. Perhaps this could be done as widely as possible?"*

*"Has to be a **two-way communication**. Unfortunately the relationships change all the time."*

*"**Whatever mechanisms the SA puts in place, we could be involved**. There is a tendency for senior academics to expect all students to attend our events but we might not be so good at reciprocating that"*

*"I believe they already work well and closely. **The SA seems to know more about the institution than the institution knows about the SA.**"*

*"I think there should be more **transparency about how trustees are identified**, and how they're managed."*

*"The **SA could perhaps highlight more often the work they do and how they get involved**. The institution run a soup kitchen and the SA could get involved with initiatives like that."*

Maintaining distinct budgets, strategies, events and policies are categorical ways to assure the Students' Association remains distinct

Stakeholders

### Ensuring autonomy....

- **Distinct budgets and strategies**
- **Diversification** – so not so reliant on institution funding
- But...more **links with institution staff**, across all levels
- Consultation and representation of student voice:
  - Being clear that have an **advocacy role**
  - Continue to **lobby** on issues and bring discussions forward
- Having a strong brand identity
- Continue to have **own activities and ideas**

*"Their **budget, strategies** and so forth. They do have **their own identity**, and are supported by the institution. **There is that formality so there is that categorically defined difference.**"*

*"There could be **better links between other executive staff at the university and the SA**, so they can be challenged by them on issues to do with research etc., as well as working on the strategy, but the overarching work."*

*"They have created a strong **brand identity** and they continue to **lobby** on issues and bring forward **discussion** as necessary. They drive forward their **own activities and ideas.**"*

*"The vast majority of their **funding comes from the university** ...**Business development would really help, so that they can really demonstrate their own funding stream.**"*

*"This is where **consultation with the membership comes in.**"*

## GCUSA

Vision, mission and values

### **Vision: what we aspire to**

That GCU students will have an outstanding experience that will live with them forever

### **Mission: what we exist for**

To represent and enable GCU students to enhance all aspects of their student experience

### **Values: how we behave**



Stakeholders were positive about the Vision, Mission and Values. They particularly liked that the vision includes GCU students will have an 'outstanding experience'. The role of participation, diversity and leadership and also key

Stakeholders

## What do they like?

- That students will have an 'outstanding experience'
- The inference of it being 'fun'
- The role of **participation, diversity and leadership**
- The inclusion of 'enhance'
- It's **succinct**

"I like the idea of an **outstanding experience** that will live with them forever. **Participation** and community. We want people to enjoy their university life - **they should have fun.**" ✓

"I like the mention of an **outstanding experience** as this chimes with the values of my own school. **Diversity** is a good thing and a given these days. **Leadership** is also important and if the SA can demonstrate this that is only a good thing for students to see." ✓

"It's a **strong vision**. Like the word '**enhance**'." ✓  
(Stakeholder 10 - new)

"It's **short, sharp** and the students will get it." ✓

"**Participation** - that's what coming to uni is about. If you just want to come and pass your exams, that's a laudable thing, but not that difficult in the scale of events. **It's the whole life experience**, otherwise why not just do an open learning course?" ✓

Some statements are seen to be vague and not bespoke enough to GCU. The values are considered to be more like behaviours

Stakeholders

*"Don't think these are values. Fun, is that a value? Suggest look at Caledonian Code, and have a think about the values they hold there and see about the sort of values they want to generate...the vision is kind of repeated in the mission...it isn't really a vision that has a sense of purpose. It could be crafted to be much more strategic."* x

*"The term 'outstanding experience' is quite vague. How would this be measured?"* x

*"Not sure about the mission - to represent and enhance all aspects - that needs a bit more deconstructing into what it is. The mission needs more clarification - what is an outstanding experience? Not sure what they mean by support and diversity. And does leadership need to be there? Some people are put off by this, may be timid and put off."* x  
(Stakeholder 8 - old)

*"I am also not sure that the values are indeed values. Some feel more like behaviours than values. The institution has done some work on values and I would expect to see some of them in there."* x

*"Fun - could be taken in different ways. Understand why included, but jars. Bit simplistic."* x

*"Not sure they give a real flavour of GCU - There's nothing about them - there's no USP that would help me identify them as GCU. Not unique enough, just generic. I can understand fun, but the word itself..."* x

## What do they *dislike*?

- Need to be **specific and measurable**
- **Clarification** needed
- **Values** are more like behaviours
- The word '**fun**' jars
- A need to be **unique and tailored solely to GCU**

It is suggested that the strategy could be more reflective of the institution's own, including aspects on the common good. Representation, confidence and career enhancing aspects are also felt to be lacking

Stakeholders

## What is missing?

- The **Common Good**
- **Representation**
- **Confidence**
- Their **role in times of difficulty**
- How they can **enhance future prospects** and be a rewarding experience
- **Collaboration** with the institution

"The **Common Good** would be the ideal one - some sort of reference. Perhaps **closer alignment with the university values** - it might be one way of looking at it. **Engagement** is more descriptive than participation. More relevant? A more **active word** - it's a two way thing. **Confidence** - we can give students confidence to succeed."



"The **Common Good** messaging is so powerful, and it's imperative that the SA follow suit. Also, representation."



"A rewarding experience in terms of career enhancing. What are they doing, additionally, that can go on CVs, in addition to qualifications. People need to get something out of it."



"There's **nothing about their role in signposting those students in difficulty**. Doesn't necessarily engage with the **services** within. It has support within the values, but not within the mission. For instance, '**we will be there for student in difficult times and will work to make sure that help is easily accessible**'. Readily available support...without the student having to seek it out."



"**Collaboration** with the institution isn't mentioned and should be."



## Conclusions and recommendations: Stakeholders (1)

- Stakeholders see the Students' Association as a key platform for the student voice covering the entire spectrum of the experience from academic to social. The Association is a partner (challenging, if necessary) to the institution
- Whilst its current level of involvement is appreciated, it could do more of the same...for example, raise its profile, be clear it is not just for first years, promote volunteering and employability skills, enhance sense of student community, identify and offer to all different student segments, extend reach before students arrive, develop digital strategy, widen local community involvement...
- **The strategic development of the Association must be supported by continuing communication and involvement between it and the GCU**, whilst preserving its autonomy (increasing alternative revenue streams will help)
- The **Vision, Mission and Values could be revisited** for example with a view to the 2020 strategy/Common Good; representation; confidence; role in difficulty; future prospects; collaboration with the institution

## Conclusions and recommendations: Stakeholders (2)

- **Add to the audit of activities** recommended in the previous section, **activities currently carried out by the institution (or suggested by it)** which might be appropriate
- **Develop a comprehensive list of 'hard to reach' or non-traditional categories** to audit against e.g. including distance learning, articulating students
- **Nominate a key stakeholder as main liaison for strategy development discussions, and keep them updated**