

1. Approach to evidence-gathering

The Student Union President is in an ideal position to represent the wider student voice at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama for this submission. The evidence collected has come directly from a survey specifically written for this submission, sent to student representatives in each year group of all undergraduate programmes in the Autumn term. There are 40 undergraduate student representatives, of whom 7 responded to the survey, collectively representing the views of approximately 300 students out of a total undergraduate student body of approximately 660. These representatives covered all of our undergraduate courses; Music (years 2, 3 and 4), Drama (years 1 and 2) and Production Arts (year 2). The data and quotes shown have come directly from these responses, and have been collated by the SU President (Guildhall BMus Graduate 2022) and the SU Academic Affairs Officer (currently a second-year master's student at Guildhall), both of whom have been in post since August 2022.

It was decided that it would be more beneficial to ask the undergraduate student representatives to fill out the survey rather than asking the whole student body, to maximise the breadth of opinion. General feedback was also gathered at the most recent termly Student Parliament meeting, as well as from individual conversations with students. We recognise the limitations of both a small response number, and any questionnaire design, however in our opinion, the below results are a fair reflection of the wider undergraduate student body. It is worth noting that many of the responses are from first and second-year students, who may not yet be aware of, or have experienced, the full range of possibilities offered by the School.

We designed the feedback form with 'strongly agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree' answer options, to evaluate the extent to which students feel certain aspects of their teaching and learning at the Guildhall is excellent. In doing this, students were able to answer in an informed manner, which enabled them to simply consider to what degree on a scale they agreed with a statement. There were also options to leave a specific comment after each section so that they could elaborate on their answer in more detail if they wanted to, which many students did.

The student submission writers consulted with the Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning (lead author of the School's TEF submission) in order to ensure that the student voice is fairly represented in both documents. Support was offered in understanding what was involved in writing the student submission, and discussions about how to gather the data. Boundaries were agreed early in the process to ensure the independence of the student submission and that it was not unduly influenced by the provider's submission. This included gathering our own data because, as current and graduate students, we have a more proximate relationship to students. A draft of the provider's submission was shared with us and we were invited to comment, and then shared our own submission with the Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning once we had finished writing the first draft to ensure factual accuracy.

2. Student experience

The survey sent to the undergraduate student representatives comprised of the following statements. Support was given from the Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning to ensure that the statements were clear and not simply a repetition of the Whole School Survey.

“Overall, the students I represent think that the teaching at Guildhall is excellent”



Individual comments include:

“All teachers work with a genuine passion for what they’re doing and show us support every day. They help us to hold ourselves to a high standard and challenge ourselves. The classes and the program are so considered and always cater to our needs as a year group.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 1

“Throughout our self-led week, we were lead through lots of exercises in creating characters. These were incredible and really gave us all a lot of tools. It brought a lot out in each other that we hadn’t seen before.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 2

SU Commentary: Some students raised minor issues with slow academic feedback – one described *“teachers who take a long time to mark work or provide feedback before deadlines”*. However, they then went on to say that *“these staff are definitely the exceptions, and there are many wonderful academic staff who have been extremely supportive and helpful”* (BMus Year 3 Student Representative). It is of unique benefit to Guildhall students that they are given constant incremental, formative feedback due to small class sizes and the frequency of one-to-one teaching.

“The students I represent think that, overall, the student learning experience at Guildhall is excellent.”



Individual comments include:

“We learnt a lot about trusting our work and self-discipline in self-led work. We learnt a lot about managing tricky themes and having a high bar set for ourselves. People also expressed having ownership over their work and really being able to take control with their pieces.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 1.

“My department is never short of wonderful performance opportunities to play and to listen, and the opportunity to organise student-led concerts is a fabulous and really important learning opportunity. In addition, the option to have quite a lot of academic experiences is important to students like myself who are extremely interested in taking a more academic career path, and the elective options really allow for focussing your degree as you wish.” - BMus Year 3 Student Representative.

“We engage in soft skill workshops including diversity and inclusivity workshops which bring us together and allow us to create a safe space.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 2.

SU Commentary: These comments support the student view that the learning experience Guildhall delivers is indeed excellent, and allows for individual growth within it. From those who chose to neither agree nor disagree, there were no further comments explaining their answer. On reflection, this question could have perhaps been clearer, as respondents seem to have interpreted ‘overall’ to mean everything.

“The students I represent feel the course content offers positive, stimulating challenge”

| | |
|--|---|
| ● Agree | 7 |
| ● Neither agree nor disagree | 0 |
| ● Disagree | 0 |



Individual comments include:

“We are always working cumulatively and being encouraged to constantly build from what we have learnt. There is always a challenge to overcome but it feels like the course is structured to introduce each challenge at a time when we have the facilities to take it on.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 1.

“Every single project we have done so far has felt stimulating but also challenging. Whether it’s trying to access a character or time management or the themes of the project. Everyone has had to rise to something and push themselves.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 2.

“The number of end of year and mid-year recitals we do in my department is wonderful in allowing us to discover so much repertoire to gain a much better understanding of the general landscape, and also to see where our strengths and weaknesses lie.” - BMus Year 3 Student Representative.

SU Commentary: As the evidence above shows, *all* student representatives who filled out the feedback form agreed that the course content offers positive and stimulating challenge.

“The students I represent feel the student learning experience overall provides excellent opportunities for personal growth and development”



Individual comments include:

“Mask work has made people really come face to face with what it is that restricts them or comes out under pressure. It’s also brought a lot of openness to people. The lessons create a great space for reflection that’s allowed people to explore things about themselves I think otherwise they never would have.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 1.

“We are consistently relating what we are doing in school to the industry we hope to go into. The focus is on us being independent artists with their own process and work.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 2.

SU Commentary: The majority of students feel that overall, the learning experience they receive provides excellent opportunities for personal growth and development. As seen earlier under the learning experience section, this was reinforced by positive further comments from students who felt that in particular, their improved self-discipline had proved invaluable to their personal development. Music students felt that in particular, chamber music was a shining and vitally important example of where Guildhall provides these opportunities for personal growth and development. Furthermore, the ability to create their own structure with elective options enables them to really focus on what is important to them.

“The students I represent feel the range and variety of performance opportunities at Guildhall is outstanding.”



Individual comments include:

“Seeing as I am only half way through second year, I haven’t yet had the opportunity to be cast in lots of things. And, when I am cast, it is usually for what I need to work on. This is a great opportunity to play roles that I might not necessarily be cast as in the outside world.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 1.

“It’s great to have so many masterclasses.” - BMus Year 3 Student Representative

“My department brings in lots of excellent visiting artists, which creates a lot of opportunities for the students, which is particularly good when working in large ensembles.” - BMus Year 4 Student Representative

“The closed performances this year have been very fruitful to us.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 2.

SU Commentary: Much of the feedback from those who chose to neither agree nor disagree came from years 1 and 2, who have fewer public-facing performance opportunities than students in years 3 and 4. It is clear from the comments given that these students have interpreted “performance opportunities” to mean public-facing performances. However, there are many internal (closed) performance opportunities for all undergraduate students, providing a safe space for students to explore and challenge themselves artistically.

“The students I represent value the opportunities for student choice, through electives, repertoire choices (music), and self-determined performances”



Individual comments included:

“I was able to take on a production management elective which interests me in the future which is separate to my course.” - BA Production Arts Year 2 Student Representative.

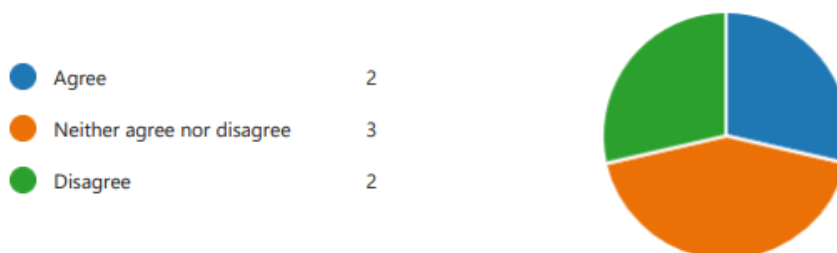
“Each end of year recital allows for students to express their own creative direction.” - BMus Year 3 Student Representative

“The self-lead projects gave us a lot of ownership of our work which allowed us to explore things we were interested in”. - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 1.

“From 2nd year our exams allow us to almost entirely choose our recital, with only one ‘requirement’ we have to meet”. - BMus Year 2 Student Representative

SU Commentary: This particular question was, in hindsight, much more appropriately aimed at music students, since they work on shorter and more independent projects, which allow for more freedom of programming. One student also mentioned Undisciplined (a cross-discipline, self-determined performance opportunity), which is a great way to collaborate with students on other courses, and have complete control over content style and performance.

“The students I represent value the learning support available through Principal Studies teachers, academic and skills teachers, tutorials, and Student Affairs”



Individual comments include:

“Some staff are excellent and go above and beyond to provide feedback and guidance.” - BMus Year 3 Student Representative

“Moodle highlights the neurodiversity group as well as the access to materials on Moodle. For some however, it would be helpful to have reminders of what is available and what is new” - BMus Year 2 Student Representative

“The library staff are particularly great” - BMus Year 4 Student Representative

“Student affairs are great and offer counselling which is really helpful” - BMus Year 4 Student Representative

SU Commentary: Student’s value Student Affairs, however due to the nature of the drama courses timetabling, they sometimes struggle to access the support offered. Those who disagreed with the above statement commented specifically about this area (timetabling proving difficult to access Student Affairs) of student support, and the SU is in ongoing discussions with the School about how to improve this aspect of the student experience.

“The students I represent think the range of feedback offered, including in Principal Study lessons, skills/academic classes, in rehearsal, and tutorials, as well as on coursework, is excellent”



Individual comments included:

“Platforms or performance classes are particularly good for peer feedback.” - BMus Year 2 Student Representative.

“Reflective practice sessions give space to think about your experience so far, and where you are currently at.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 1.

“Notes sessions give good feedback that helps with working out where you’re at. I think during the process, more notes along the way would be helpful”. - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative

SU Commentary: Responses seemed to depend largely on the situation in which feedback was given. This variety is unsurprising given the number of courses offered and the many forms that giving feedback can take, and noting that students may not recognise that a tutor comment is actually feedback, particularly when given verbally in a work situation.

3. Student Outcomes

“The students I represent think the purpose (e.g. intended outcome) of their course is clear, relevant, and career focused.”



Individual comments included:

“It is clear that they are trying to give us basic and technical tools to be able to hold ourselves in the professional world. It is also clear that they are trying to stretch us so that we can do multiple roles not just type cast” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 1.

“The emphasis is on performance and the various aspects of performance, with a wide range of possibilities with electives. For example, performing from memory, chamber music, announcing the piece/programme and discussing with the audience, collaborative skills, composition and conducting electives” - BMus Year 2 Student Representative 2.

SU Commentary: Overall, most people agreed that the intended outcome of their course was clear, and would indeed enable them to pursue their chosen careers. Students felt that they are being trained to be well-rounded performers and practitioners, with a wide skill set which would enable them to work in multiple areas of their profession. Whilst one student commented that they were sometimes unclear on the purpose of their academic modules, this is a minority view.

“The students I represent think they have developed or are developing the necessary professional skills to enter the world of work on graduation.”



Individual comments included:

“Our tutors help with work experience and contacts to help with our transition out of third year into the industry” - BA Production Arts Year 2 Student Representative.

“You learn throughout the process of working with outside directors of how to work with different people in the outside world. Also, we will be having industry weeks at the end of this year that will teach us that in more depth.” - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 1.

“All the 4th years I talk to know exactly where they are applying for postgraduate courses and why”.
- BMus Year 2 Student Representative

SU Commentary: From working with external contacts, students have shown an interest in learning professional skills to enable them to work professionally. There is support for students preparing to leave Guildhall, but perhaps there is room to discuss the transferrable skills of Guildhall’s courses earlier in the programme.

In conclusion

In terms of outcome, the large majority of the students spoken to feel that they are on a steady path to achieving the outcome they want from their time at Guildhall.

“Our members of staff are incredible. They are constantly trying to make us our best and listen to us, and work with us. The staff from outside of school have also really helped us to open up and give an outsider’s perspective of the work we are doing”. - BA Acting Year 2 Student Representative 1.

From my perspective as the recently elected Student Union President, and having been a student on the BMus course from 2018-2022, it’s great to be able to see where student feedback has affected positive change. I can see that the student voice is both heard and valued, which gives me confidence that we do have a voice and can make a difference, both at Guildhall and beyond. My impression is that overall, students find their learning experience at Guildhall excellent, and I personally can testify to this.