Women’s Department Constitutional Changes:

Changes brought up in the first meeting of the Constitutional Working Group:

- Increasing the number of women that have to be elected
- Changing the way in which we vote for Women’s officers and Women’s Committee

Changes proposed by Women’s officer (Adriana Mells):

- Getting rid of the asterisk – changing Wom*n’s to Women’s
- Changing the definition of woman

Changes brought up by Women’s Collective:

- That one Women’s officer should be a Woman of Colour and that half of committee should be women of colour
- Where there is more than one officer in a department, at least one should be a Woman
Increasing the number of Women that have to be elected on Students Council and Committees

Currently:

- Council: ‘Fifteen general representatives of whom at least seven must be women. If at least seven candidates for election are not Women, those places not filled by Women may be filled by any other member’
- Committee: ‘Seven voting representatives, of whom at least three must be Women. If at least three candidates for each committee are not Women, those places not filled by Women may be filled with other candidates’

Why is there a need for change?

- Ensures that Women are better represented on both students council and committees, which we should be aiming for as student representative body
- The current model is 50% minus, these changes would be 50% plus
- Women students make up the majority of students at the University of Melbourne, with the most current available stats showing that women make up 55% of enrolment, thus change is needed to allow for a more accurate representation of student population

Draft of what it should be changed to:

- Council: Fifteen general representatives of whom at least eight must be women. If at least eight candidates for election are not Women, those places not filled by Women may be filled by any other member
- Committee: Seven voting representatives, of whom at least four must be Women. If at least four candidates for each committee are not women, those places not filled by Women may be filled by other candidates
That one of the Women’s officers should be Woman of Colour and that half of Women’s committee should be Women of Colour

There is not anything currently in the constitution about this.

Why is there a need for change?

- Leadership from white women in the department is not representative of the university population
- White women often speak over women of colour, who face multifaceted challenges incomprehensible to white women
- Women of Colour Collective – having two white women’s officers means that students have to run the collective, which is not only impractical but means that students are running collectives that they are not been paid to run
- Historically, women of colour have not been represented in the department despite Women of Colour making up a large part of Women students in the University population

Draft:

Women’s Officers:

At least one of the two Women’s Officers needs to be a Woman of Colour

Membership of Women’s Committee:

Seven voting representatives, of whom at least three must be Women of Colour. If at least three candidates for each committee are not Women of Colour, those places not filled by Women of Colour may be filled by other candidates.

Other considerations:

- Concern that Women of Colour will be pressured to run, or run for positions that they don’t necessarily want
- Tokenism
Changing the definition of Woman

Currently:

Woman: means a person who identifies as a woman as evidenced in the enrolment records of the university

Why is there a need for change?

- The current definition of Woman is exclusionary of Trans Women
- Better representation of Women students that is inclusive of Trans Women
- Under the current definition people whose enrolment records do not state ‘female’ cannot run for Women’s officer, Committee or be a member of collective

What it should be changed to:

Woman: means a person who identifies as a Woman regardless of gender assigned at birth, including but not limited to trans women, cis women and intersex women.

As a result this would change the way that you vote for the women’s ballot

As the definition of Woman would be changed and “...as evidence in the enrolment records of the university” would be removed. The ballot would then be given to all students, the way that the Queer and Disabilities ballot get distributed. This removes barriers that exist for women identifying students to vote and enable trans women to vote without having to out themselves and possibly risking their safety.
Getting rid of the asterisk in Wom*n’s

Currently:

Wom*n’s Department

Why is there a need for change?

- Not indicative of the department as the use of * originated from second wave feminism, a highly politicised and largely exclusionary movement. The current spelling suggests that the UMSU Women’s Department aligns itself with such movement.
- Having a self-explanatory title would make the department more accessible and inclusive
- Consistency we have to alternate between the * and using a Y

What it should be changed to:

Women’s Department
Women’s representation in UMSU departments

There is currently no quota upon how many women should be elected as Office Bearers.

Why is there a need for change?

- Women should be represented across all UMSU departments

What it should be changed to:

When there is more than one officer in a department at least one should be a Woman

Other Considerations:

- The Queer department already has something similar in place: “If more than one person holds the office of Queer officer, one of them must be a Woman or Trans” (Section 55 “Joint Office”)