

INTERACTION PROTOCOLS FOR STAFF AND ELECTED STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES OF UMSU

Effective date January 2025

Review Date January 2028

Policy Owner CEO

1. WORKING TOGETHER

- 1.1. There are four key principles informing this policy:
 - 1.1.1. UMSU believes that students should control student affairs.
 - 1.1.2. UMSU aims to provide UMSU staff with a satisfying and safe workplace.
 - 1.1.3. UMSU staff and Student Representatives must work together co-operatively to ensure that UMSU provides active and effective representation, services and support to students.
 - 1.1.4. UMSU staff will work with Elected Student Representatives in a way which fosters Student Representatives' pride and personal satisfaction in their own work.
- 1.2. The reporting and supervisory relationship between the elected Student Office Bearers and UMSU staff will be in accordance with the following principles per the relevant clause of the applicable enterprise agreement regarding Employment Relationship with Students:
 - 1.2.1. Staff and student representatives are expected to work in a collaborative and cooperative manner, recognising the legitimate role that each play in the operation and governance of UMSU. For the purposes of this clause student representatives will include students who receive payment of honoraria from UMSU for performance of specified duties and who are not employees of UMSU.
 - 1.2.2. Staff and student representatives are expected to form relationships based on trust and mutual respect, with a view to achieving organisational objectives.
 - 1.2.3. Staff working for UMSU are accountable to and take direction from immediate supervisor in the first instance, the Chief Executive Officer, UMSU (CEO).
 - 1.2.4. With the exception of the CEO, Staff are not accountable to, and do not take direction from students either as individuals, office bearers or as committees. Staff are, however, expected to work with student representatives to assist and support in the implementation of decisions made by committees, Councils, Boards or other legitimately constituted student representative decision-making body.
- 1.3. Any decisions of Student Committees which have implications for the work direction of staff must be brought to the attention of the CEO who is responsible for the direction of staff work.

- 1.4. Students or Student Committee members that have any concerns or complaints with regard to the work of staff must take these up with the CEO who is responsible for the direction of staff.
- 1.5. UMSU employees, other than student casuals, who wish to stand for elected student office bearer positions, must resign from employment at the time of formal nomination.
- 1.6. UMSU employees with a grievance or concern of any sort connected with their employment will follow established procedures as set out in UMSU policies and procedures and will not seek the intervention or involvement of students elected or otherwise other than pursuant to established policies and procedures.

2. GENERAL OBLIGATIONS

- 2.1. UMSU acknowledges its general duty under the Victorian *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* to provide and maintain for its employees, so far as practicable, a working environment that is safe and without health risks.
- 2.2. Staff employed by UMSU acknowledge that each staff member must take reasonable care of their own safety and the health and safety of others and must also cooperate with their supervisor and manager in respect of any action taken by UMSU to comply with its obligations outlined above.
- 2.3. UMSU acknowledges that, to provide effective representation, services and support to Students, it has an obligation to facilitate compliance with the responsibilities of UMSU and its staff with regard to the provision of a working environment that is safe and without health risks.

3. CODE OF CONDUCT

- 3.1. The parties to these protocols will maintain a high standard of conduct and performance and observe standards of equity and fairness in dealing with Students (including Student Representatives), members of the public and staff. Staff and Student Representatives will observe the protocols set out in this document at all times.
- 3.2. At no time will any party to these protocols engage in unreasonable behaviour directed toward an individual or group of individuals that creates a risk to health and safety. Unreasonable behaviour is behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would anticipate humiliating, intimidating, undermining or threatening. Behaviour includes actions of individuals or a group and may involve using a system of work as a means of victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening. Risk to health and safety includes risk to the mental or physical health of an individual.

4. REPORTING LINES, DIRECTIONS AND WORKLOADS

- 4.1. General comments:
 - 4.1.1. UMSU staff are given direction only by other UMSU staff (that is, by supervisors and line managers). Student Representatives provide direction to UMSU staff through the CEO.
 - 4.1.2. The CEO is directed by the President, Secretary and Students' Council of UMSU.
- 4.2. However, some UMSU staff work closely with Student Representatives, and Student Representatives may request that certain UMSU staff undertake work for them on a day-to-day basis. For the most part this negotiation process should be very straightforward; however, where it is not working UMSU staff and Student Representatives should refer to sections 6 and 7 of this document on the process for resolving problems.
- 4.3. Sometimes there are too many tasks and not enough staffing hours. In this situation, UMSU staff may need to consult their manager before accepting a job requested by an elected official. UMSU staff and Student Representatives should try and work out a solution together and refer the matter to the relevant UMSU Divisional Manager, the CEO or President if necessary.
- 4.4. Expectations:
- 4.5. UMSU staff and Student Representatives who will be working closely together should meet and discuss how their relationship will work when they commence their respective positions.
- 4.6. This initial meeting might include discussion of:
 - 4.6.1. What times both UMSU staff and Student Representatives are available. This may include any long periods when either may be very busy or on leave.
 - 4.6.2. How often they should meet, whether regularly and/or on an ad hoc basis.
 - 4.6.3. Whether there are any ongoing projects or commitments initiated by the previous elected official.
 - 4.6.4. What kinds of activities or projects the elected official may be interested in pursuing.
 - 4.6.5. The amount and kind of work the UMSU staff member has previously done and is able to complete.
 - 4.6.6. What types of decisions the elected official would prefer to make and those they are happy to devolve to UMSU staff.
- 4.7. Except for the CEO, UMSU staff may only be given formal directions by their direct supervisor or the CEO.
- 4.8. Student Representatives may request relevant UMSU staff to perform specific tasks on a day to day basis. UMSU staff will be as flexible as possible and will try and meet reasonable requests.

- 4.9. Where requests for performing tasks cannot be met by a UMSU staff member, they may either try to negotiate a compromise or, if they judge that unlikely to succeed, discuss the matter with their supervisor.
- 4.10. If Student Representatives are unhappy with the amount of work being provided to their area by UMSU staff they should raise this with the CEO or President.

5. DECISION-MAKING

- 5.1. General comments:
- 5.2. A number of issues can arise in decision-making processes that involve Student Representatives and UMSU staff. For example, there can sometimes be issues about who has 'ownership' of an event, publication, or program. These issues can be particularly important when an elected official changes part-way through a project.
- 5.3. Expectations:
 - 5.3.1. UMSU staff would only make a decision against the stated wish of the relevant Student Representative in rare circumstances, that is:
 - 5.3.2. If UMSU staff are following a decision by an UMSU committee, Council or general meeting that is still in force;
 - 5.3.3. If there are other exceptional circumstances which the UMSU staff member has discussed with their manager.
 - 5.3.4. Where to do otherwise would contravene UMSU Policy.
- 5.4. UMSU staff who have put in a lot of work on a project or program should have their opinions on the project or program taken seriously by the relevant Student Representative.
- 5.5. Student Representatives should be aware that their predecessors may have had very different requirements or expectations of UMSU staff members.
- 5.6. When assuming decision-making responsibilities after a project has commenced, Student Representatives should be aware that their predecessors may have had very different requirements or expectations of UMSU staff members. If Student Representatives wish to significantly change a project they should take the following into account:
 - 5.6.1. that decisions they make about the direction of or UMSU staff time spent on the project may have implications for other existing projects or work;
 - 5.6.2. that they must take some responsibility for UMSU staff morale if work already done is to be discarded;
 - 5.6.3. that they may have to report to Council and /or other bodies before making changes.
- 5.7. Wherever possible, when an UMSU staff member and a Student Representative begin working together significantly on a project, program or event, responsibility for decision-making should be negotiated between the UMSU staff member and Student representative.

- 5.8. Student Representatives or staff who do not meet reasonable deadlines for consultation cannot expect to make final decisions on organising programs or projects.

6. REPRESENTATION & POLITICAL ACTIVITY

- 6.1. Expectations:
 - 6.1.1. UMSU staff are expected to provide professional advice to Student Representatives.
 - 6.1.2. UMSU staff are expected not to lobby Student Representatives or other participants in UMSU student representative processes.
 - 6.1.3. UMSU staff should not participate in or work to influence UMSU election nominations, UMSU electoral campaigns or the elections of bodies of which UMSU is a member (except where the election is for an UMSU staff representative).

7. PERSONAL AFFILIATIONS

- 7.1. General comments:
- 7.2. Affiliations or alignments may develop between Student Representatives and UMSU staff, or between Council members and UMSU staff. These affiliations, alignments or relationships may be:
 - 7.2.1. political;
 - 7.2.2. social;
 - 7.2.3. romantic or sexual;
 - 7.2.4. gender-based;
 - 7.2.5. family;
 - 7.2.6. cultural;
 - 7.2.7. academic; or,
 - 7.2.8. a mixture of the above.
- 7.3. There are issues for the organisation and the individual(s) in these affiliations, alignments and relationships. Key issues are:
 - 7.3.1. power imbalance between the people in the relationship;
 - 7.3.2. favouritism and preferential treatment, whether actual or perceived;
 - 7.3.3. conflicts of interest, whether potential or actual;
 - 7.3.4. confidentiality;
 - 7.3.5. exclusion: work relationships and work practices are problematic if they exclude others; and,
 - 7.3.6. privacy.
- 7.4. Expectations:
 - 7.4.1. UMSU staff and Student Representatives in personal relationships, affiliations or alignments should be aware of the key issues listed above and take those issues into account in their work.

- 7.4.2. UMSU staff and Student Representatives are entitled to privacy in relation to romantic relationships, unless the relationship becomes problematic or there is a need for a declaration of conflict of interest.
- 7.5. UMSU staff are expected to declare any conflict of interest to their Divisional Manager, or to the Student Representative.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY

- 8.1. UMSU staff are accountable for observing this policy through their manager to the CEO.
- 8.2. UMSU Student Representatives are accountable to Student Council for observing these Protocols.

9. PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH PROBLEMS – WHERE INITIATED BY UMSU STAFF

- 9.1. If an UMSU staff member is in doubt about how to deal with a particular elected official or how the relationship between themselves and a Student Representative should operate, they should consult their supervisor in the first instance.
- 9.2. If an UMSU staff member finds that a request from a Student Representative conflicts with requests from other Student Representatives or from their supervisor, and the UMSU staff member can't resolve the problem, then the UMSU staff member should seek advice from their supervisor.
- 9.3. The supervisor will attempt to resolve the issue, consulting the relevant Divisional Manager and/or the CEO, UMSU where necessary. Where necessary the supervisor may refer the matter to the CEO, UMSU for resolution.
- 9.4. Wherever possible the CEO will resolve matters referred under 6.2 in consultation with the President.
- 9.5. It is expected that UMSU staff members will occasionally disagree with Student Representatives or with UMSU policy, for instance on operational, political or ideological matters. However, if an UMSU staff member finds themselves in significant conflict with an elected official then the UMSU staff member should approach their supervisor.

10. PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH PROBLEMS – WHERE INITIATED BY STUDENTS

- 10.1. If an elected official or Council member is having difficulties establishing a satisfactory working relationship with an UMSU staff member, or is concerned about the performance of an UMSU staff member, then:
 - 10.1.1. they should confidentially raise their concern with the relevant Divisional Manager, the Manager, Human Resources, the CEO or the President;
 - 10.1.2. where a matter has been raised in accordance with (a) then that person should seek to resolve the matter, consulting the relevant Divisional Manager, the Manager, Human Resources, the CEO and the President;

- 10.1.3. no elected official should raise a criticism of individual UMSU staff performance in a formally constituted ex camera UMSU meeting, unless the issue has been first discussed with the CEO and the President.
- 10.2. Where an elected official believes that an UMSU staff member with whom they work is not following this protocol, they should raise this with the UMSU staff member's supervisor, the CEO or the President.
- 10.3. Where an elected official wishes to raise a matter in accordance with 7.1(a) in relation to the conduct of the CEO, that should be raised confidentially with the President
 - 10.3.1. in seeking to resolve the matter the President will consult with the UMSU CEO Contract Oversight Committee in relation to an appropriate process that is consistent with the CEO's contract of employment and in compliance with UMSU's industrial obligations, seeking support as required.
- 10.4. Where an elected official is unable to receive sufficient UMSU staff support due to workload allocation then this should be raised with the UMSU staff supervisor in the first instance.

11. DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

- 11.1. Where either a UMSU staff member or an elected official believes that these protocols have been breached, either party may submit a written complaint to the CEO or the President outlining the grounds upon which the UMSU staff member or an elected official believes a breach has occurred.
- 11.2. On receipt of a complaint lodged in accordance with sub-clause 11, the matter must be progressed in accordance with the UMSU [Complaints Policy](#).

Approver	CEO and Students' Council
Responsibility for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager, Human Resources • CEO • Coordinator, Student Representation • Volunteer Manager
Related Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UMSU Child Safety Policy • UMSU Complaints Policy • UMSU Health and Safety Policy • UMSU Interaction Protocols Policy • UMSU Prevention of Prevention of Sexual Misconduct Policy • UMSU Privacy Policy • UMSU Resolution of Complaint Procedures • UMSU Resolution of Complaint Procedures – Investigation • UMSU Volunteer Policy • UMSU Workplace Conduct Policy
Related documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004</i> • UMSU Constitution • UMSU Council Charter • UMSU Discipline Regulation • UMSU Enterprise Bargaining Agreement or equivalent
Definitions	<p>CEO: is the Chief Executive Officer.</p> <p>Elected Student Representative: means a student elected to office at UMSU as an Office Bearer, Student's Councillor or student department committee member.</p> <p>Student Committee: has the same meaning as set out under C10.4 of the UMSU Constitution.</p>
Status	FINAL – in force

Change Table

Version #	Issue Date	Amendment Details	Approval Date	Approved By
1.	April 2018	First iteration	April 2018	CEO & Students' Council
2.	November 2024	Major update to align with new Complaints Framework		
3.	January 2025	-	17 January 2025	CEO & Students' Council