

University of Melbourne Student Union
Meeting of the Constitution, Regulation and Policy Working Group.

Minutes

11:00am, Monday the 8th March 2021

Meeting 2(21)

Location: Zoom

<https://unimelb.zoom.us/j/81981193602?pwd=WC8vYmJpNkU5RXBTcnpmdy9RaWlyQT09>

Password: 086927

Meeting opens at 11:09

1. Procedural Matters

1.1 Election of Chair

Motion 1: To elect Ciara O’Sullivan as chair

Mover: Ciara O’Sullivan Sec: Will Hall

CARRIED WITHOUT DISSENT

1.2 Acknowledgement of Indigenous Custodians

So acknowledged.

1.3 Attendance

Justin Bare, Sophie Nguyen, Ciara O’Sullivan, Andoni Fischer, Will Hall, Putri Shafira

1.4 Membership

Membership is open to all students.

1.5 Adoption of Agenda

MOTION 2: To adopt the agenda as presented

Mover: Ciara O’Sullivan (Chair)

CARRIED WITHOUT DISSENT

2. Confirmation of Previous Minutes

Motion 3: To accept the previous minutes as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

Mover: Ciara O’Sullivan (Chair)

CARRIED

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

none

4. Correspondence

none

5. Business on Notice

5.1. Southbank Recommendation

Will Hall provides background for the Southbank Recommendations and summarises the document. The first recommendation is that campus coordinator be made a joint office. The second That the campaigns event and activities coordinator and the campaigns coordinator be paid honoraria. Next was introducing a Southbank specific induction. And allowing the Southbank committee to meet on the weekend, which we believe is necessary because we have such a demanding course that means we have less time to meet in during the week. And finally, that the student population on Southbank be granted the right to elect a councillor

Ciara: The first recommendation is fine, its clearly the case. The second one, say you had an extra coordinator this year, would your campaigns and event coordinator doing the same amount of work?

Will hall: I think the events campaigner would, but campaigns coordinator wouldn't

Ciara: so, the events and activities coordinator does the same amount of work as a full time OB

Will Hall: yes, the campaigns coordinator has a lot of crossover we have ideas about how to recommend it

Ciara: I recommend that we make events coordinator an officer, or potentially make the two offices a joint office, that way we make it an OB and define its roll. What were the questions you had about it

Will Hall: that its currently not a defined roll

Ciara: what I'm thinking is that you could potentially make it in such a way that it could be like educations OB for Southbank, and make the reporting requirements different so that only campus coordinators report to council, but then this new OB reports to the coordinators and committee

Ciara: i think there is a larger problem with induction, that its not specific and too general, but I think that's a policy issue rather than a constitutional one. I think that if we wanted to investigate establishing policy

Justin: there is already a process underway to look at staffing requirements about staffing

Will: we spoke to the consultant, but it seemed to be that they were mainly concerned with advocacy

Justin: maybe they aren't doing exactly what we were asking, we wanted them to look at staffing more broadly at Southbank. That something that we recently discovered and are working with them to amend that

Ciara: Okay, Southbank committee scheduling meetings on weekends, I personally don't have any problems, but there are a number of issues that need to be discussed. Firstly, as committee meeting times are explicit in the constitution, someone intended it to be there and there must be a reason for it, I'm not sure what that is but I wanted to flag it. In terms of the changes, I would just delete 9.2 B. Justin do you recall why there was specificity about when meetings could be held

Justin: I think its basically to try and ensure that meetings happen in a face to face basis so they happen when people are on campus. I think the general idea is that when you have them at times when classes are likely to be held committee members are likely to be in class. The Southbank positions is obviously quite different as students are likely to be in class in these times. The concern would be that people often have other

commitments on the weekend, so we need to be careful to not allow schedules to be made that would not allow certain students to attend. If this was extended to council, there would be issues with staff attendance. I don't think the clause should just be removed; I think there should be some sort of qualifier.

Ciara: I think we can agree that there 9.2b needs to be altered so that meetings can be scheduled on the weekend without prejudicing any students.

Ciara: The only problem with that is that if we add just one more person to council, we'll have 22 councillors. One way to avoid this is to reduce the number of general reps to 14 so that there are still 21 councillors

Justin: I think there's an issue here in balancing student representation, I think this is something that we should consult students on to see if there's support for this motion in that form. I personally don't necessarily see a problem with having an even number as it would result in a split vote meaning the status quo remains. I think it's a less significant move to just add a Southbank representative rather than removing a gen rep

Motion 4: That the Southbank recommendations be accepted.

Mover: Ciara O'Sullivan (chair)

CARRIED WITHOUT DISSENT

5.2. Satellite Campuses

Ciara: I think I'm going to move on from this as Lindsay raised this but he's not here. All I'll raise is that I think Lindsay wanted to make some sort of overarching policy so that if new campuses are established there is a cohesive approach to engaging them.

Justin: obviously ensuring student representation at new campuses is very important, but the way the university makes decisions is that they take a long amount of time for a new campus to be created, during which UMSU would have time to think about how students should be represented on this council.

5.3. Emergency Voting

Ciara: The election being held via post was a bad system, it led to low engagement and rates of ballots being returned, especially from students overseas. It is likely that the next election will be held at a time where almost ¼ students will be overseas.

I made three proposals, the first is that we simply alter the clauses so that the constitution no longer requires that elections be held in person. This leaves the way that elections are run specifically to the regulations or by the tribunal.

Option two is that you add a clause that allows electronic voting. This is similar to the UMSU INTL regulations, it doesn't specify when it happens, but instead states what happens. It is also quite straightforward.

Option 3 is basically that you online allow online voting when a set of conditions is met, maybe when a state of emergency is called, or a significant number of students are overseas. The benefits and problems is that it would retain in person voting, if the working group believes that the electoral rules are good as they stand this would be a good way to preserve them.

Ciara reads from the recommendation section of the 2020 election report

Ciara says her favourite recommendation was the first one

Justin: I think in considering the option around allowing for, what I think was your third option, providing for an online election in certain circumstances I think in terms of how the returning officers have framed it around the integrity of the election, I think you could have that in the constitution, but you would still need a process in which that decision is made, I think the question remains about who makes the decision about how votes are cast. I suspect then the likely outcome about how that occurs different tenders would be submitted by companies and how they would run the election and then the electoral tribunal would decide which way they are run. The general rules, if they are made in a broad sense would result in the mode of the election being decided by the tribunal through the tender process.

Ciara: because these are all recommendations, they will go to lawyers. Because it's such a big change then, I would like to propose that we move my submission to council so they can read it. One we don't have enough people to make an informed recommendation to students' council.

5.4. Broader Voting Changes

Ciara: This is an exercise not in an immediate change, but I wanted to have a discussion on what the broader problems with UMSU elections. I think we can agree it's a flawed process in need of improvement.

Will: this may be wild, but I wanted to ask why are the elections only open to all students. What does it mean to be a member of UMSU if you get all the advantages of UMSU without being one?

Justin: while we have ssaf, which is derived from all students I think that all students should be able to access

Andoni: I also think that our priority should be lifting engagement with students, particularly focusing on voter turnout. We should be trying to make voting as easy as possible, and limiting the students who can vote fails to do that

Sophie: there's a real disconnect between students and the election, there is no understanding of why the elections are important or what purpose they serve

Ciara: I think there is a big barrier to entry in that there is a big time requirement that means that only hacks are able to

Will: what if it's some sort of campaigning regulations around engaging in debates or forum

Ciara: I think mandating debates or some sort of student interactions which would be good, you could add a section about requiring a debate between all candidates. I had some notes about this as well, in terms of a model of elections moving forward. I wanted to raise the idea of having online elections as a more permanent. I think the situation where we have partly online voting. I think a way where we allow students to engage with it without engaging with campaigning. Even if we had online voting as the entire thing is that it doesn't necessarily mean we get rid of online voting

Putri: I was just thinking that what are the conditions for students, do they get the option to vote in person or online?

Ciara: the constitution mandates that all students be in person

Putri: do we know how we'd do it?

Ciara: while there aren't many examples on mixed mode voting in Australia, it does happen a lot in the UK, for example Cambridge

Justin: the issue doesn't arise at a combination of online and in person, but online and paper ballots. I think the other issue is that many people don't trust online voting, especially in terms of scrutineering. was thinking more about how students get to engage with candidates, rather than who runs. Also I've even seen issues associated with the university curriculum, for example before the Melbourne model

Ciara: there's one thing I wanted to raise, expanding on the idea that a committee gets to elect their representative on campus. Currently a disconnect between the representative on council and the committee, in the past

Andoni: I've read through some previous reports relating to elections and something that repeatedly got brought up was that the complexity of voting, there being so many positions and autonomous departments is in of itself a barrier to voting. Potentially allowing autonomous committees to select the autonomous rep to council could simplify this process and make it easier to vote, though I'm not sure where I stand on this issue

Justin: I kind of am just thinking about a thing that Ciara said about how the role of the queer rep is to represent the roll of the queer committee, the queer department may have different interests to the constituency. I think that there should be some sort of requirement for representatives to be required to go to committee meetings'

Andoni: I think that committees as a whole have a weird position in the union where they're viewed as less important, even as rubber stamp committees, particularly when compared to students council or OBs. Tying committees and the autonomous reps closer together, whether by mandating that reps attend committee meetings or by allowing committees to select reps might be a way to strengthen their positions

6. Other Business

7. Next Meeting

8. Close

9. 12:26pm