



**University of Melbourne Student Union
Advocacy & Legal Student Advisory Group**

AGENDA

2:00 pm, 15.10.2020

Meeting 1 of Semester 2

**~~Advocacy & Legal Divisional Office,
Level 4 Union House~~
Via Zoom**

Chair: Phoebe Churches, Manager, Advocacy & Legal

1 Welcome and Procedural Matters

- 1.1 Apologies
- 1.2 Attendance
- 1.3 Confirmation of previous minutes

2 A & L Service Reports

- 2.1 Advocacy case work

Report back on meeting with AR and AD on Student Fitness to Study Policy

We raised the following concerns:

- The changes address particular aspects of the policy that improve the policy but do not address the concerns we have with the **entire approach**.
- **Rather than a policy where student conduct raises an issue - the policy needs to be thought about as something that the student might also trigger at their own request.**
- **So a safe, non-punitive approach that can be triggered by staff as a wellbeing initiative or a support mechanism that the student can request of their own volition.**
- **For example a student who is not receiving the adjustments they need should be able to use a policy like this to get support.**

They responded by saying the policy is not actually intended to do that – they pointed to special consid as the way that can be done (yeah right)

- The policy needs to be seen in the context of all the other university procedures where students are required to have their behaviour or circumstances assessed by university staff – misconduct, academic progress, academic misconduct – where the policy casts the behaviour as a deficit that needs to be addressed

- Of course the University needs to be able to take actions like suspension and termination where appropriate, but if the policy is one that is completely focused on student wellbeing then these remedies need to be completely excised

The response to this was that in fact the policy is intended to be a diversion from misconduct processes, and they envisage every referral to the policy to be a matter that would currently be dealt with via a misconduct process currently. Again, this is not consonant with the policy's stated objective... which is support.

- **Spec consid, Access and inclusion, this policy all happening at once without coordination or reference to each other. We asked KLK as DVC student life, but she has advised we need to raise this with you.**

There were conflicting responses to this issue – firstly they said that in fact KLK was leading a “signature initiative” student wellbeing strategy which would pull everything together – which is weird because KLK didn't mention it in her meeting with student reps. Later when Hannah raised it again, Jo said she would take it on notice...even though we had provided it on notice before the meeting in our feedback...

Other things which came up:

- The policy would apply to a very very small number – 2 or 3 students a year
- It is solely intended to be a diversion from general misconduct
- They see it as a pastoral care approach, despite potentially adverse outcomes being available
- They committed to a 6 and 12 month review with UMSU of implementation
- The AD Wellbeing is developing a community of practice to support the implementation of the policy in faculties as a result of our feedback – and it will be mandatory for academics to do mental health first aid training etc before they can have any role in policy implementation

ESF – continued to see very slow turnarounds in many cases causing extra hardship and drop outs up until end of August. Has settled now – applications still accepted until 1 Nov.

Issues with Online Assessment - blanket outcomes for Technical consideration (resit), MCQ quizzes and exams deliberately designed so you can't go back to answered questions. AEAs being approved by SEDS and not implemented by faculties. Massive increase in Aca misconduct allegations.

Concerns with Academic judgement being used as a way of ousting grievance resolution – several cases where students were forced to redraft spec consid grievances to appeals – traumatising etc. University wouldn't know a trauma informed response if it hit them on the head. Issue is that outcomes of spec consid are seen as purely academic judgements – but they almost never are usually interplay of procedural and academic matters. Appeals all upheld.

No reasons being provided for Sp Con review outcomes – copy pasta approach – same outcome copy and pasted. SEDS refusing to clarify or tell us who decision maker in faculty was.

Major issues for offshore students – especially in clinical courses and those subject to registration requirements – currently have issues with dentistry students who are stuck offshore, but also the commencing cohort who were offered online places and have now had those offers rescinded. We recommend the University owes these students the maximum possible flexibility and compensation to minimise the detriment of their reliance on this promise.

Also a number of submissions – and we are expecting the special consid policy proposal to pop up in the final Ac Board meeting of the year, as it's not on today's agenda.

Advocacy Service User Survey is well underway. We have had about 180 responses so far with it closing on 30 October.

2.2 Legal case work

2.3 Projects and initiatives

Trying to look at some planning

Papers - Student Union Advocacy Service Report: May – August 2020 (herewith)

- Legal Service Report (to be tabled)

3 Reports from Student Office Bearers

3.1 Items of interests related to Advocacy or Legal Services

4 Other Business

5 Next Meeting

6 Close

Membership:

Executive Officer & Chair: Phoebe Churches, Manager, Advocacy & Legal

2 representatives elected by and from the Education Committee;

2 representatives elected by and from the Welfare Committee;

2 representatives elected by and from the PoC Committee;

2 representatives elected by and from the UMSU International Committee;

2 representatives from GSA;

Education (Academic Affairs) Officer(s);
Indigenous Officer(s);
Welfare Officer(s);
President, UMSU;
Secretary, UMSU;
President, UMSU International;
Vice-President (Education and Welfare), UMSU International; and
Members of the Student Representative Network.