

University of Melbourne Student Union

Meeting of the Education Committee

Agenda

2:30pm Tuesday 8 May

Meeting 718)

Location: OB Space, Union House

1. Procedural Matters

- 1.1 Election of Chair
- 1.2 Acknowledgement of Indigenous Owners
- 1.3 Attendance
- 1.4 Apologies
Annette Jacobsen
- 1.5 Proxies
Annette Jacobsen to Joshua Bruni
- 1.6 Membership
- 1.7 Adoption of Agenda

2. Confirmation of Previous Minutes

Motion 1: To accept the minutes of meeting 6(18) as being a true and accurate recording of the meeting

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

4. Correspondence

- 4.1 FOI response

5. Office Bearer Report

- 5.1 Education Academic Report
- 5.2 Education Public Report

Motion 2: To accept the office bearer reports en bloc.

6. Motions on Notice

- 6.1 Solidarity flyers
- 6.2 VCA trip

7. Motions Without Notice

8. Other Business

9. Next Meeting

10. Close

4.1 FOI response

Circulated with agenda

5.1 Ed Ac report

Stop1 and Academic Services

The Stop1 Survey (this is what Comms branded it as – it's lit) continues apace. Into the hundreds of responses. We need to get some flyers to hand out, but we've started promoting it at Ed Stalls, and through the SRN, and through some other comms we're trying to break into (VCA newsletters, Law internal communications, and so on).

We also had a meeting with Alistair Ingham, who gave us a breakdown of Stop1's progress during the peak 4 weeks between the week before O Week and week 2. Much of the data is in confidence, but the basics are that chats are up, the amount of long wait times is down (possibly as students are being redirected), and more staff are being put on to "triage" students. We'll see how this lines up with the feedback we get through our survey, however, since there may be issues with Stop1's own metrics.

Collective

We held it, although it was a bit muddled by the intervention of the democratic extravaganza that was the AGM.

We're re-starting weekly emails, the job is logged with Comms to design us an email template. Collective will be a key feature of that, so watch this space.

NTEU

The NTEU has voted to go on strike. This is cool. We've been doing some "back-end" work for NTEU solidarity, like checking whether students can be punished for not breaking strikes by refusing to attend classes held in breach of industrial action. We've also been helping flyerng, and working with the NUS VEAN to generate solidarity from other campuses.

Strike action was also a key promotion at our Weekly Stall...

Weekly Stall

One of our two stalls was cancelled due to ANZAC day, the other was an excellent chance to roam, explain the Stop1 Survey, and speak to students about NTEU action.

EdCon Grants

The EdCon grant form will be up soon, and open for submissions. The tentative closing date for grants will be the end of May, but that hasn't been finalised. We want Committee to be able to approve grants in early June.

Punitive Student Fees

We held a meeting with Freddy from Business Intelligence, who's happy to ask around for sponsors for a project collecting data on punitive student fees. The next step will be emailing key decision makers to put this on their agenda.

Stress Less Week

Happy Feet has been requisitioned from the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra. The Feet are in the mail.

VCA

EdAc and Welfare had a meeting with student engagement at the VCA. We're absent a Nicholas Lam to run the joint, and there are also concerns about how student BBQ's were being organised (by paying University staff to run them, instead of staffing them through volunteers). Welfare is committed to more on this – see their report.

Otherwise we've been sent a list of key academic contacts in education for us to speak to.

University Committees

Several committees have met.

TALQAC received the Exams Sub-Committee Report referred to in our last report. Toby spoke to the concerns about special consideration, reiterating that changes to special consideration must *not* prejudice students. Staff are always grumbling about students "gaming" the system without evidence, which we must resist. It also received the BA Course Review, which is an excellent resource for us to continue to raise through faculty as key recommendations are implemented. A critical finding is the approx. 22% dropout rate in the BA Extended; we raised concerns that this was simply unacceptable, and rather than collect data, there needed to be actual engagement with students on this. There are three TALQAC sub-committees that we are securing our representation on (namely a Respect sub-committee, an Intensives sub-committee, and another on the SES).

Gregor Kennedy also presented very interesting data on students' attendance of lectures, and use of lecture capture. The rough figures were only 30% attendance in key lectures, and 50% engagement with lecture recordings. It was reiterated that the data show only an ambivalent relationship between recordings and attendance. We'll scrutinise this data when it's presented more fully.

APC considered both the lecture recordings data and the special consideration issue in similar terms. It also approved the course plan for the new Bachelor of Health, which appears to be unproblematic, although there are still concerns about what exactly the degree is targeted at.

SRN

We held our second meeting of the SRN 2018. We reported particularly ongoing issues with the Melbourne Model, scholarships, and special considerations. We also discussed at reasonable length punitive student fees, and different models for students accessing official transcripts.

We're getting new branding for the SRN to refresh it, and are in the process for designing an application form for the VCA/MCM CSC, which we've still yet to fill! For lack of anyone we can "tap on the shoulder", or even much in the way of "ins" into the campus, which we're still getting a hang of.

Lecture Recordings

We've had quite some correspondence arising from students' reports of unrecorded lectures. Faculty don't even seem aware of the policy, let alone the reasons for it. At least the ones that are not recording openly misunderstand the relationship between attendance and recording, and the pedagogical value of recording. Rest assured we're being very firm this year on it.

We're also in the process of drafting a response to the Law School Dean's justification, published in 2016, on not recording law school lectures. This most likely should be taken to Academic Board. The terms of the justification are poor, so it's disappointing that previous EdAc OB's were not firmer on this issue. Watch this space.

OB Lyf

The expired juice is probably undrinkable now. We haven't yet bought more Chuppa Chups. We've also been doing endless solidarity photos from within our offices, which is fun.

5.2 Ed Pub report

NTEU Updates

Lots has happened regarding this! The Protected Action ballot that I mentioned in my last report to council passed all motions forms of industrial action suggested, with 93% voting yes to taking strike action on a turnout of 68%. This is exactly the kind of result the NTEU were hoping for—it gives them a really strong mandate going into the next few months of action.

On the back of this, the NTEU had a member's meeting on Tuesday the 2nd of May, where they put forth a motion suggesting strike action be taken on May the 9th from 9am-1pm, so as to coincide with the Change the Rules rally organised by the Australian Council of Trade Unions. This will likely be the first of several strike actions taken until the NTEU's bargaining team and University management can come to a compromise on the new EBA.

I've made up a flyer with information specifically directed at students about what the strike action is for, why it's being taken and what involvement can be for students who want to help out. This has been distributed through lecture announcements and our weekly Education stall. We're also organising a contingent to be present at the NTEU's initial speak out (which will be happening from Gate 4, the Monash Rd entrance to the University) before we head to the rally together at Trades Hall. It's really important that students are present to support staff—I highly encourage all councillors to attend.

If you're unsure if your teacher is striking during the action, it's best to check with them—you may be marked as absent for attending the rally if you don't clear it with them first.

Education Action Group meeting

On the same day at the NTEU member's meeting (May 2nd) I held an Education Action Group/Syndicate meeting about how we could get involved with the campaign to support the NTEU. We had pretty decent attendance for so late in the semester, and came to a number of actions around scheduling lecture announcements and leafleting that will help ensure that we can

Syndicate

As I spoke to last council, the FOI lodged by us to the Fair Work Ombudsman regarding records of complaints into businesses operating in Union House returned 6 related documents, including transcripts of phone calls, but they were all withheld on the grounds that it could cause the businesses concerned undue harm as we may use the information to campaign against them (which, unsurprisingly, is exactly what we intended to use the information for). While this is a disappointing outcome, we did get some idea of what the complaints were about—quote from the letter:

“...the enquiries relate to workplace rights and obligations about the guarantee of hours for permanent employees, hourly rates of pay within Modern Awards, failure to keep adequate time and wage records, and two matters not within the jurisdiction of the FWO, including payment of wages in cash resulting in non-payment of taxation or superannuation, and unfair dismissal matters.”

To be clear, this summarises the content of **three** complaints. If nothing else, this confirms that wage theft has become a business model for at least some of the stores operating in Union House. I’ve attached the FOI letter (which contains the original request as well) as an appendix of this report.

Cameron Doig and I met with Phoebe Churches from UMSU Legal to discuss what our options were around getting an internal review to see whether we could obtain the documents concerning complaints about Union House tenants. It seems unlikely that we’d be able to get anything from Fair Work if we did proceed, but our best line of argument would be that the documents are by default in the public interest since they document instances of wrongdoing by some of these businesses, although given the grounds that they were withheld in the first place, it still seems to be a long shot.

One positive is that this may at least serve to convince people who’ve experienced wage theft at the hands of businesses in Union House to go to the Fair Work Ombudsman to lodge an official complaint—surely this shows that there is no chance that any record of their complaint will get back to their employer, which is one of the many barriers stopping people complaining in the first place.

Planned Higher Ed bill amendment phone banking

We’ll be running a phone banking event next Tuesday where we’ll be calling crossbench Senators in anticipation of the bill that will see a HECS cap be introduced and the repayment threshold lowered be taken to a vote in the Senate on Wednesday the 9th of May. It’s unfortunate that this will be coinciding with the NTEU things, but hey, gotta look nationally too. Especially when it’s something this important.

Room and time TBC (at time of writing, obviously it won’t be by the time council is happening).

VEAN meeting

On May 3rd, I attended a Victorian Education Action Network meeting, organised by NUS Education Officer Con Karavias. We discussed the NTEU strike at Melbourne Uni and how other campuses could show their support for it, as well as what kinds of things we could be doing to hone our messages to students; we also discussed the No Arts Cuts campaign that’s been taking shape at Monash University, and the lessons that could be taken from it for our own campaigns. It seems that they’ve had a very positive response from the student base down at Monash, so it was good to hear their story and what kinds of tactics they’d used to mobilise concerned students.

We also discussed a potential pre-budget/Higher Education bill amendments stunt down at Derryn Hinch's office, to be held on Monday the 7th of May. Hopefully more information will be available on that soon.

The meeting was overall pretty productive, and it was good to actually have one, too—we hadn't held one since before semester started.

6.1 Solidarity Flyers

Preamble:

The Education Department are going to play an integral part in interacting with students and making sure they understand why the NTEU's strike action is taking place. As a result, Conor produced a design (with the aid of Comms) for a flyer with general information about the NTEU's intention to strike and why it's taking place.

Motion: to move \$332 from the Campaigns, Special Projects and Events budget line to purchase flyers with information about the NTEU's industrial action to be distributed to students.

6.2 VCA trip

Preamble:

We love small campuses, and we want to go to all (most) of them. Especially since the vacancy in the VCA OB position, the Education Department is planning a trip down to visit students and listen to their concerns. However, it can be difficult to get there with the stuff required to have a stall (as we know from our trip during O-Week).

Motion: to move up to \$150 from the Campaigns, Special Projects and Events Budget line as a safety net if we are to make a visit to VCA and need to hire a car.