

University of Melbourne Student Union  
Constitution, Regulations and Policy Working Group

Agenda

Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022, 11am

Meeting 1(22)

<https://unimelb.zoom.us/j/88361502729?pwd=bHliemVsc2liYkxWd0psRDNTUzUxQT09>

Password: 113728

Meeting was opened at 11:11 am.

**1. Procedural Matters**

**1.1. Election of Chair**

Motion: To elect Amelia Bright as chair.

Moved: Amelia Bright, Seconded: Sophie Nguyen.

**1.2. Election of Minute Taker**

Rook Davis nominated to take minutes.

**1.3. Acknowledgement of Indigenous Custodians**

So acknowledged.

**1.3. Attendance**

Amelia (Amy) Bright, Rook Davis, Moira Negline, Sophie Nguyen, Xiaole Zhan, Marci Di Bartolomeo, Phoebe Churches, Jack Doughty, Kyi Phu Moe.

**1.4. Adoption of Agenda**

Agenda was adopted.

**2. Confirmation of Previous Minutes**

No previous minutes

**3. Business on Notice.**

**3.1. Discussion and explanation of roles according to the Terms of Reference.**

Amy went through the Terms of Reference. First discussion was concerning the legal remuneration of UMSU International Office bearers, with Amy pointing out the issues with allowing for remuneration without creating issues with a student's visa. Amy then asked Phoebe as to whether the working group was privy to the legal advice given to UMSU concerning the matter. Phoebe explained that it was a matter of legal privilege, meaning that those other than the client wouldn't be allowed to access that information and that the group could only work on the implications of that advice. This was credited as the reason for the problems with international students running in the 2021 election, as the Returning Officer wasn't given the exact details of the advice.

Amy inquired into the possibility of hiring legal advice for matters of dealing with working hours and making sure that international students aren't exceeding them and potentially violating their visa.

Phoebe responded that council can instruct Phoebe to seek legal advice on behalf of the working group, but it was important to know that we need to have a specific action plan to present to the lawyers. Amy asked for previous examples on how UMSU has approached lawyers in the past to help formulate this action plan. Phoebe explained that they weren't previously privy to a lot of these past instances but that they would find an example to send to Amy. Moira asked for clarification on who the discussion of remuneration applies to. Amy responded that this could potentially apply to both UMSU International and international students acting as student representatives in UMSU.

**Action:** Phoebe to provide Amy with further information on information lawyers might require.

**Action:** Amy to interpret previous legal advice and report back on the implications that CRPWG will need to consider.

Second discussion concerns the Governance audit. Amy suggested that this will have to be deferred as the audit hasn't been read and accepted by the students' council yet.

Third discussion concerns UMSU International – there were recent constitutional changes in 2019, with Amy's understanding being that this wouldn't be definitive and this would be contingent on greater consultation with UMSU International leadership, but it's anticipated that it would ultimately lead to UMSU International becoming an autonomous organisation like the GSA or gaining more autonomy. The terms of the agreement involved review of honoraria, right to abstain from political involvement, right to speak exclusively on behalf of international students, governance and the interactions between UMSU International and Student's Council, and lack of need to remunerate committee members.

Phoebe suggested making the consequences of this working group more widely known and looking at the perspectives of international students beyond those in UMSU International.

Phoebe expressed the impossibility of having UMSU International be autonomous while still receiving funding from UMSU and still being bound by the associated funding agreements, pointing out the legal quagmire that this could create. They then explained that they could either share the legal advice already received with Amy or seek new advice, to which Amy was appreciative.

Fourth discussion concerned affirmative action requirements – Amy had compiled a list of relevant sections from the Constitution, with the amendments made to say that members couldn't overwhelmingly be cis men. Rook made sure to check that AMAB non-binary students were being included as non-binary students were made to choose which binary gender they identified with for the sake of the current AA requirements in the 2021 election.

Moira suggested that we use the phrase "no majority of one demographic" and expressed concern over certain students abusing the AA requirements by falsely claiming to be non-binary.

Amy expressed confusion over the second half of Moira's statement and Rook explained it in other words, before expressing that it was important to take queer people at their word and that it was a dangerous precedent to make people prove they're non-binary. They then went on to say that they felt that the risk of students abusing this loophole was often perceived to be higher than it actually was. Phoebe also expressed that, given their 15 years in UMSU, they did believe there was a risk for this loophole to be exploited.

There was discussion between Moira and Amy as to the exact wording of the amendment, with Moira resolving to find the original document that they were referring to as the example for the amendment.

Marcie stated that they believe that the current wording risks being exclusionary and also brought up that the Media team believed they needed more OBs to meet the working load. Amy expressed that this would be a good future discussion, especially considering remuneration.

Fifth discussion concerns the electoral regulations – Jack raised that the Southbank students only have 3 days to vote and that this was unfair and worth changing. Amy consulted the electoral regulations. Phoebe stated that the election for this year will be hybrid (both in-person and online). They then asked Jack for their source on the 3-day voting period, with Jack responding that this was a complaint expressed by previous Southbank OBs.

Amy went through the Electoral Regulations and found the relevant information on polling booth location and availability. Xiaole said that they would chase up information regarding the conversation between Jack and the previous OBs and expressed that there may need to be more protections in place to uphold Southbank voting rights. Phoebe stated that some of the issues surrounding on-campus polling booths on Southbank may be due to the fact that UMSU has problems controlling booths, especially when the university is not keen to have them in place for a certain period of time but hoped that having the election being hybrid this year may help remedy the problem. Sophie also said that the experiences between pre- and post-2020 with voting will be very different, especially when we couldn't have it online previously.

In addition to the suggested amendments, Amy has also developed a number of other suggestions – creating a plain language version of the electoral regulations, stopping campaigning in student emails (issues with where tickets are getting emailing lists from), regulations on ticket spending and transparency, clear differentiation between autonomous and non-autonomous polling. These suggestions were brought up and were tabled for future discussion in later meetings. Moira suggested that a landing page or something to that effect may have been a good preventative measure to make sure that students are voting for the relevant autonomous departments.

Amy flagged the idea of creating a secretariat or assistant general secretary role as already exists at DUSA and other student unions to tackle some of the more overhead load of the general secretary's work, improving their ability to work on improving systems at UMSU (such as taking on more working groups).

Marcie raised the idea of having requirements for Creative Arts to ensure Southbank representation. Xiaole also raised the idea of having another Southbank OB to deal with the Southbank workload.

Amy flagged the idea of tying autonomous representatives to their committees, as well as extending AA requirements to the Standing Orders. Amy specifically pointed to a clause regarding the Chair needing to be a woman every second meeting, which could potentially impact the responsibilities of a male general secretary. Sophie raised that anyone is capable of chairing but agreed that this would be discussed further at a later meeting.

Amy also flagged the possibility of a Media committee and the need to consult with Media on that issue.

Marcie raised the issue of OB requirements at council as some students (Southbank or those with large workloads). Phoebe commented in the Zoom chat, "just on media and a committee - historically they don't have a committee because it's not a representative position". Jack seconded the issue of OB requirements.

Sophie expressed that it's part of an OB's job to report to council and that this was why OBs were paid honoraria. They also emphasised that being accountable to council is an important part of the job. Xiaole responded that whilst they agree with Sophie's points, Southbank students don't have the option to choose their classes and thus despite their best efforts, it's possible to still be unable to attend.

Xiaole stopped their discussion to look for notes on the subject. Amy raised that leaves of absence can be used for a day to prevent lack of attendance, although Sophie flagged that there was a limited amount of leave. Xiaole pointed out that even if they quit, UMSU still would have to find another Southbank student with the same issues with scheduling, making this a systematic issue. Jack echoed these sentiments, stating that his case of having a lower study load was rare and something that couldn't be attempted by international students. This means that there were many barriers in place to being represented on council.

Marcie also brought up how there are similar issues with Creative Arts in that meeting one department commitment meant not being able to meet another, especially in regards to student's council.

Phoebe raised that the Governance audit would also highlight similar issues in meeting office responsibilities and suggested that the university may be able to help with this, specifically mentioning the Provost. Amy expressed agreement with the idea of special considerations for UMSU representatives.

### **3.2. Forum in Union Hall.**

The next meeting of CRPWG will be a town hall forum style event in Union Hall, which will be advertised on UMSU platforms. The (many) points considered today will be put to attendees who will have the chance to give feedback and add points of their own.

Phoebe flagged that they would not be available for the next meeting.

## **4. Next Meeting**

Thursday, March 17<sup>th</sup> 2022, 11am. Amy flagged that more time may need to be scheduled for future meetings, and that a more rigorous/specific agenda will improve the efficiency of CRPWG in the future.

## **5. Close**

Meeting closed at 12:47 pm.