

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

Minutes

2:00 pm, 11.05.2017

Meeting 2 of Semester 1

**Training Room 1, 3rd Floor
Union House**

Chair: Nadia Di Battista, Student Services Officer

1 Welcome and Procedural Matters

1.1 Apologies

Phoebe Churches, Eva Birch, Brad Night, Lida Rashidi

1.2 Attendance

Michelle Almiron, Reeanna Maloney, Isabelle Butler, Alanna Smith, Emily De Rango, Yasmin Luu, Alston Chu, Paul Hornsby, Nadia Di Battista, Donna Markwell

1.3 Confirmation of previous minutes: Donna Markwell

2 A & L Service Reports

2.1 Advocacy case work

Academic Misconduct: Paul noted that there are a few faculties that continue to have difficulty implementing the new discipline guidelines. For example, a student was penalised with a suspension of enrolment, which also means a mark of 0 for the subject. Paul indicated that, despite making that determination, the Faculty then - in an apparent attempt to soften the impact of the penalty - the outcome notice suggested the student withdraw so it wouldn't affect their WAM. They also instructed the student they could appeal before the VC was advised. Both of these directives are clearly erroneous. Paul observed that it seems to become confusing for faculty panels when they try to be creative when implementing a penalty.

Emily noted that faculty panels get into trouble when they are trying to be nice. Emily particularly noted the School of Psychological Sciences having difficulty deciding on appropriate penalties. Emily noted that in her experience, generally some faculties were doing well and others are not dealing with misconduct regularly, and so were not used to the new regulations. Emily noted that it was problematic that some faculties continue to source student representatives from their own student groups, when this is expressly against the Regulations.

Paul suggested that we notify the Academic Secretary and requested details of the faculties doing this.

2.2 Legal case work

Reeanna noted that the telephone advice line is going well. Reeanna observed that the last two months demonstrated a good consolidation of the work that had been done before re-opening the service. Reeanna noted that tenancy issues were up. Infringement issues had gone down which could be because of the new legislation passed through the Victorian Parliament. Students were also regularly bringing up employment matters. Reeanna and Isabelle had been in contact with other community legal centres in the area such as the Young Workers Centre. The Young Workers Centre offered to provide training for them so they could provide advice on more complex student employment cases. Reeanna and Isabelle have also started a network with the other legal services at other universities which meant that resources could be shared. It was interesting to note that student problems seem to be the same across all universities. Reeanna also noted that the legal service would like to do some work on the University's IP policies. The legal service could potentially be able to challenge the University's authorship / rules that did not favour the student who created the intellectual property. Students should be able to commercialise some of their research after they have finished.

Emily noted that it was something graduates would want to know about as many were interested in commercialising their work after they had finished their research studies. Therefore, gaining legal clarity on this issue would be helpful.

Reeanna stated that securing the services of a private law firm that specialises in IP issues would help students realise that they were moving into a commercial area. Reeanna also asked the group if they had any ideas on being proactive about legal education on campus. For example, the next campaign would involve procuring a dolls house with issues so students could interact with it and learn about tenancy issues, their rights and responsibilities.

Yasmin suggested that the legal service use the volunteering hub to do this because it was so visible. On another note, Yasmin wanted to know if the legal service was seeing many students with problems with Centrelink?

Reeanna indicated that there had not been a significant number of presentations on social security matters.

Isabelle noted that usually Centrelink issues were not at the legal stage which meant that although the legal team could give students some advice about how to handle it themselves, it did not mean that these were taken on as legal casework.

Reeanna noted that it was important to clear up how the referral process worked within UMSU. Students were coming to the door with particular expectations because they had been referred incorrectly. In house UMSU training was suggested as necessary so UMSU staff and OBs could appropriately refer to the legal and advocacy service.

Donna noted that it seemed more and more that issues such as IP and DHSB were in a grey area between legal and advocacy, requiring cross-service collaboration.

2.3 Projects and initiatives

2.3.1 UMSU Advocacy Service – social media strategy

Michelle has done a lot of hard work putting together a media strategy for the year in the form of an Advocacy blog. Some of the referrals to Advocacy have also come from the misdirection from the Special Consideration website, which referred students to Advocacy prior to initial application, which is the role of SEDS. Paul updated the web content (and a table) for the issue, and this has been shared widely on social media as well.

Michelle has been putting together an Advocacy blog: every week there will be something new. This week is Special Consideration. Starting to write Semester 2 content now, so give to Communications in one go which helps us out immensely when we are busy with casework. We have tried to make this interesting, funny, but still informative. We are open to feedback, so please have a read if you get a chance.

This has all been part of the self-empowerment model of service delivery, helping students as much as possible to resolve their issues in the first instance, but provide referral to us at crucial points for advice and assistance.

Yasmin noted buzz feed or ‘clickbait’ articles are really great, and maybe some quizzes. Lots of great ideas for future creative content were circulated.

2.3.2 Legal Service - policies for consideration. New policies required for compliance in upcoming accreditation progress reporting and NACLC re-accreditation process in November.

Reeanna advised that we need these new policies to be approved if we want to remain an NACLC accredited community legal centre.

3 Reports from Student Office Bearers

3.1 Items of interests related to Advocacy or Legal Services

Yasmin wanted advice on how to deal with a staff member who was providing input to an Academic Misconduct Committee, when they were not themselves a member of the committee. Paul suggested that Yasmin come to the Advocacy offices to discuss the matter as it could be escalated to the Academic Secretary.

Emily noted that new training will be needed as there will be a lot of new GSA counsellors in about two weeks’ time.

4 Other Business

Emily advised the group that the GSA was running a campaign for student spaces for research students which was a perennial issue.

5 Next Meeting

Thursday 17 August 2PM

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 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.