

University of Melbourne Student Union
Advocacy & Legal Student Advisory Group



MINUTES

10:30 am, 03.03.2016

Meeting 1 of Semester 1

Training Room 1, 3rd Floor
Union House

Chair: Phoebe Churches, Manager, Advocacy & Legal

1 Welcome and Procedural Matters

1.1 Apologies

Emily De Rango and Tom Crowley.

1.2 Attendance

Phoebe Churches, Donna Markwell, Michelle Almiron, James Baker, Nadia Di Battista, Aviya Bavati, Sarah Xia, Paul Hornsby.

Welcome: Michelle Almiron – new Senior Advocate.

1.3 Confirmation of previous minutes

Donna confirmed the previous minutes.

2 A & L Service Reports

2.1 Advocacy case work

In general, nothing controversial to report back on. We have been experiencing the usual busy periods around CUPC and special consideration around assessment time.

Phoebe discussed the new special consideration policy and believes this is the best one yet. Though it is something Advocacy will continue to monitor, as we are interested to see how it will be implemented. Applications are assessed by SEADS, but the outcomes are decided by the academics. Aviya queried the services stats with special consideration.

Phoebe discussed the new CUPC process that was implemented in semester one last year. Semester two CUPC process ran more smoothly than semester one. We learnt from some of the issues we experienced in semester one and were able to train our Peer Support Program volunteers better. Still the same issues though with CUPC invitations and outcome letters that we saw in the previous semester.

Paul reported on a few academic misconduct cases he has recently assisted with. A Business and Economics student received an allegation of academic misconduct, it is alleged that all four of his exam papers had been tampered with, marks had been crossed out. The Faculty did not provide student with all of the documents when they contacted him about this. Student attended an informal meeting. In the meeting student said he knew of markers being

paid to tamper with exam papers. Following the informal meeting student then received a formalised allegation notice. Student attended a formal meeting and the Faculty tried to get an admission from the student with no success. He then attended a third formal meeting, where he was terminated from his course. There has been no substantial evidence that the student had paid a marker to alter his paper. The case went to an Academic Board Appeal and was upheld. Second to this, Paul assisted a Law Student who completed a PhD in 2004 and has only now received an allegation notice. He attended a formal meeting where they have deprived the student of credit and revoke his PhD. Student submitted an appeal to the Academic Board and is awaiting a hearing date.

Donna assisted a student with a Grievance in regards to subject delivery, contrary to how it was advertised. The student was not able to resolve this with the University, so she sought assistance from a consumer lawyer. This caught the attention of the Academic Registrar and the issue was resolved.

2.2 Legal case work

Phoebe spoke on behalf of the Legal Service. The service has been closed until recently while Greta has been getting her files up to date. Greta only started seeing students this week. The service has seen an increase in migration enquiries. The migration agent at International Student Services has resigned and leaves at the end of this week. We understand they have advertised for this position, but have not made it a requirement that this person be a registered migration agent. Based on our service statistics, more than twice as many international students have been seen at our service as of 29 January. Most of these are migration matters.

Our service statistics don't reflect the amount of ongoing casework that Greta does – Greta has not entered this data in yet. There have been many complex files that have required a significant amount of follow up work.

Phoebe and Greta met with the Policy and Development Department within the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. They discussed issues facing student in regards to Myki fines. The department said they are looking into a change in the regulations, and the Ombudsman is also looking into this.

2.3 Projects and initiatives

2.3.1 UMSU Advocacy Service –planning day report back

Advocacy Planning Day was held on Tuesday 9 February. This was a whole day out of the office and the service closed for the day. We now have four full time advocates on staff. We introduced the 'Duty Roster' – one staff member is on duty each day. We also discussed at planning Donna's time release position. Donna is currently on a break from case work and is working to support OB's and student reps on Committees. Donna will be in this position until the end of the year. This will be a rotating role – Paul plans to take over this role next year. Donna has an open door policy with OB's.

2.3.2 Legal Service Working Group

Phoebe gave an update on the Legal Service Working Group. The working group is still in progress with establishing a way forward. Currently looking at proposals to go to Students Council.

2.3.3 Training with SEADS

Donna is organising combined training with SEADS. SEADS is now handling special consideration, operating through Stop1. During training we will discuss the key issues from our service perspective. Training proposed for Tuesday 5 April.

Papers - Student Union Advocacy Service Report: October – December 2015 (herewith)
- Legal Service Statistics December 2015 - February 2016 (to be tabled)

3 Reports from Student Office Bearers

3.1 Items of interests related to Advocacy or Legal Services

Sarah raised concerns in regards to students with disabilities accessing SEDS. It has been reported that SEDS is not easily accessible to some students with disabilities - some doors are unable to fit a wheelchair through.

4 Other Business

4.1 Flex AP

Donna produced a briefing paper on the newly proposed Flex AP. Our main priority is students not staff of the University, but staff changes can have a negative impact on students. Donna will provide continuing support to students and reps on Committees. Donna is happy to answer any questions or concerns regarding the paper.

5 Next Meeting

Phoebe to send email of dates and times for next three meetings.

6 Close

Meeting closed at 11.27am.

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.