

A. Heading

STUDENT REPRESENTATION ON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES

B. Purpose

This paper proposes a process to optimise student representation on University committees by introducing an annual cycle of inductions intended to prepare prospective student representatives for their responsibilities and functions.

C. Background

Students are represented on faculty committees, central committees of the University, and on Academic Board and Council committees. Student associations have expressed the desire to improve the quality of student participation in various levels of University decision-making. The aim is to achieve an effective level of communication with and participation by student representatives. To assist in realising this goal, an induction program is proposed to provide student representatives with an appropriate briefing before joining committees, facilitating students' successful participation in decision-making processes from the first meetings of committees each year.

This proposal has been developed in consultation with current student representatives, including Paul Donegan, Chair, Interim Student Representation Council (ISRC); Matthew Belleghem, President, University of Melbourne Postgraduate Association (UMPA); and Ben Barnett, student representative elected to Council.

D. Issues/Intended Outcomes

Timely preparation is a key element in improving student participation: student representatives elected as members of committees should be properly inducted before the commencement of their terms of appointment. The main issue is the timing of induction sessions to coincide with student elections and the commencement of the University's committee schedule in February each year.

Annual elections for student associations take place in second semester (usually September) and elected office-bearers commence their terms in January of the following year. University committee positions, which are not required to be filled by specified office bearers, involve a further selection process. This process is not normally completed until the end of January. Whilst the induction of office-bearers with predetermined responsibilities on University committees will be possible prior to January, the induction of student representatives on other committees will not, however, be feasible until these representatives have been selected in late January.

E. Options

Three *short-term* actions are proposed to facilitate student participation in faculty-based and University-wide decision-making:

- An annual cycle of inductions to be introduced to prepare prospective student representatives for their committee duties. Two induction rounds are proposed. The first will ensure that office-bearers with specified responsibilities on University committees (particularly presidents) are inducted before the commencement of their terms as office bearers in January. The second round of inductions, to be held in early February, will involve student representatives on committees which call for unspecified office bearers.

- Induction packs to be provided to all student representatives on University committees. The University Secretary's Office will be responsible for the production and distribution of these packs, which will contain information on the committee, on student representatives' responsibilities, and background material on University committee structures.
- All committee chairs (including the chairs of faculty committees) to be informed about the availability of induction packs for student representatives and the expectation that student representatives should be inducted before starting their appointments on committees.

Council might also consider the following *long-term options* for the general improvement of student representation on University committees:

- Student associations to review nomination and selection processes for committee positions which do not need to be filled by specified office bearers. These positions, for example, could be decided before the end of each year to enable inductions to take place before the start of the following year. The proposed two-round cycle should eventually be phased out in favour of a single process of inductions for all student representatives in December.
- In consultation with faculty student representatives, faculty general managers and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), student associations to develop guidelines outlining good practice in relation to student representation at faculty level. The guidelines would be disseminated and promoted in all faculties.
- Student associations to continue to liaise with student representatives, faculty committees, University committees and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) in relation to developing adequate structures for promoting effective student representation across the University.

F. Financial Implications

Apart from the costs associated with producing information packs and the in-kind contributions of University staff who will be conducting inductions (chairs of committees and senior academic/administrative staff), this proposal does not have funding consequences.

G. Risk Assessment

The funding consequences of the suggested inductions are not major, and the risks associated with this proposal are considered low. A reporting measure might be introduced to ensure that officers responsible for inductions and the circulation of information are achieving desired outcomes.

H. Implementation

Pending approval of this proposal, the following steps towards implementation are suggested:

- Stage 1 – Recommendations 1-3 (detailed below) to be adopted and implemented in 2005-06.
- Stage 2 – Student associations to continue to work with student representatives, faculty committees, University committees and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to ensure that the University's long-term goals towards fostering first-rate student representation on University committees are achieved.

I. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

An annual induction cycle should be introduced to improve student representation on University committees. This process should consist of two rounds of induction meetings:

- *Round 1 October Inductions* – In October each year, following annual student elections, the Presidents of student associations — office bearers with specified responsibilities on University committees — will be invited to meet with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the President of the Academic Board to discuss their roles and responsibilities on University committees for the following year. These sessions will take place before the formal commencement of the representatives' terms as office bearers to enable them to understand, in a timely manner, committee processes and their responsibilities as committee members.
- *Round 2 February Inductions* – Other student representatives on committees which call for unspecified office bearers will be inducted in early February, allowing enough time for these positions to be filled. Inductions should ensure that representatives are briefed before the University's committee cycle begins in February. Information packs will be provided and the induction session will be conducted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the President of the Academic Board.

Officers responsible: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and President, Academic Board.

Recommendation 2

Induction packs should be provided to all student representatives on University-level committees. The University Secretary will be responsible for the production and distribution of these packs, which will contain information regarding the responsibilities, desirable attributes or skills of the student representative on the relevant committee; information on the committee's responsibilities; and general background material on the University's committee structures.

Officer responsible: University Secretary

Recommendation 3

A communication strategy should be implemented to alert all committee chairs (including the chairs of faculty committees) to the availability of induction packs for student representatives and to the expectation that student representatives are inducted onto the specific committee before commencing their appointments on committees.

Officer responsible: University Secretary

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