

**The University of Melbourne**  
**Arrangements for Student Representation**

**Report to Council**

**March 2005**

**Purpose**

The timeline for the approved interim arrangements and a progress report to Council from the Student Representation Working Group was provided at the December 2004 meeting of Council. This paper reports on progress that has been made since that meeting and makes recommendations for a revised timeline and arrangements for the ratification of a proposed student body constitution and related matters.

**Background**

The Student Representation Working Group (SRWG), elected in May 2004 to replace MUSUI, has worked throughout 2004 to develop a proposed new student representative organisation. A report on processes in place for the development of an alternate representative structure, including proposals for interim student representation arrangements, was considered by Council at its September 2004 meeting. Council resolved that Melbourne University Student Union Inc. cease to be recognised with effect from 1 January 2005 and approved a student proposal to establish an Interim Student Representation Committee (ISRC) to provide a forum for student representation and related services.

Elections were conducted in October 2004 for 12 office bearers who made up the Interim Student Representation Committee; a student representative on University Council; and undergraduate representatives on Melbourne University Student Amenities and Services Committee (MUSASC). The election of student representatives for 2005 ensured the SRWG could continue to focus on the task of developing and incorporating a new representative body, while the newly-elected representatives undertake day-to-day representational responsibilities.

**Issues**

The SRWG has continued its role in developing a new organisation with intensive sessions arranged over the Summer break to resolve outstanding issues. The prospect of voluntary student unionism commencing in 2006 and its implications for UMSU has been given particular consideration. The SRWG is now proposing that -

- an additional three weeks of consultation be undertaken at the commencement of Semester 1. This will ensure that both returning and newly enrolled students are given adequate opportunity to understand the issues involved before they are asked to vote in a ratification referendum, and allow more time for consideration of possibility implications of VSU legislation. A revised time framework for the proposed arrangements is at Attachment A;
- elections for the new student Council, consisting of 14 members elected by and from the entire student body, at least 50% of whom should be women, be held at the same time as the referendum; and
- elections for Departmental Committees and some additional UMSU Office Bearer positions within the ISRC also be held in conjunction with the referendum. Elected from all students would be 7 positions to each of the Activities, Arts, Education, Environment and Welfare

Committees; 7 positions elected from all students identifying as queer onto the Queer Committee, and 7 positions elected from all women students onto the Women's Committee.

Members of the SRWG consulted with the Senior Vice-Principal and University Secretary about the feasibility of these proposals to determine how they might be implemented if approved by Council.

There was agreement on the proposal to extend the period of consultation by three weeks. Agreement could not be reached, however, on the question of holding an election for the student Council, the 49 committee members and additional UMSU office bearers at the same time as the ratification of the constitution. The two key issues to be decided are whether to have elections in combination with the referendum and how many elections it was reasonable to conduct for an interim period of less than a year, noting that further elections are to be conducted in September.

The SRWG would like to have in place elected committees as soon as possible so as to have as many students as possible involved in student representation. University management, however, expressed concern that holding an election for interim arrangements for committee members might increase the complexity of the elections to such a degree as to compromise the integrity of the referendum on the new constitution.

The proposals to extend the preliminary consultation period into March and to proceed with both the referendum and office bearer elections in first semester make it vital that, if at all feasible, for Council to determine at its next meeting on 11 April whether it would be willing to approve the new Constitution, if subsequently ratified in the referendum, for the purpose of recognising the new student entity as a body that represents students. To facilitate Council's consideration of the determination process it is proposed that a Council working group comprising Ms Meredith Doig, Judge Irene Lawson, and Mr Ben Barnett and supported by the University Secretary, review the constitution proposed by the SRWG when it is made available on 31 March, with a view to providing advice to Council at its 11 April meeting.

## **Options**

Council needs to determine how best to schedule the referendum and proposed interim student elections. There are three broad options as follows:

### ***Option 1***

Conduct elections for the new student Council, consisting of 14 members elected by and from the entire student body, at least 50% of whom should be women, could be held at the same time as the referendum on the constitution and elections for 49 Departmental Committees and UMSU Office Bearer positions within the ISRC also be held in conjunction with the referendum. Arguments for and against this option are outlined above.

### ***Option 2***

Conduct elections for the new student Council on a later date to the referendum – possibly two to three weeks later, by which time the results of the referendum would be clear. Interim arrangements would need to be made for the 49 positions on Departmental Committees and additional UMSU Office Bearer positions within the ISRC. For instance, one option would be to have the student Council co-opt members; another would be to have the term of office for those students elected in September 2005 to commence at the declaration of that poll (rather than on 1 January 2006).

This option would address the concerns raised in respect of Option 1. However student representatives have expressed concern about cost, workload and student engagement to run 2 elections in 3 weeks and arrangements would need to be made to ensure these aspects are managed

properly. Conducting the referendum and, possibly, also the elections electronically would assist with these concerns.

### ***Option 3***

Conduct elections for the new student Council and a limited number of additional office bearers in recognition of the transitional nature of this year's arrangements to be held at the same time as the referendum.

This option would entail alternate arrangements for membership of departmental committees. One possibility would be to have the student Council co-opt members; another would be to have the term of office for those students elected in September 2005 to commence at the declaration of that poll (rather than on 1 January 2006).

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Council

1. approve the revised timeline outlined above and at Attachment A,
2. confirm members of the ad hoc Council Working Group to provide advice to Council prior to its April 11 meeting, and
3. in the interests of assuring the integrity of the ratification process for the new constitution, agree that the Student Representation Working Group be advised that student elections need to be conducted separately to the referendum as outlined in Option 2 above.

**Ian Marshman**  
**Senior Vice Principal**  
**3 March 2005**

## **Attachment A**

### **Timeline**

The revised time framework for the proposed arrangements is as follows:

28 Feb – 18 March	Further consultation with students on the proposed UMSU Constitution
31 March	Completion of UMSU Constitution for submission to 11 April meeting of Council
31 March	Council working group to review the proposed constitution and make recommendations to Council.
11 April	Council to consider provisional approval of proposed constitution pending student ratification
2- 6 May	Ratification of constitution and election of inaugural Council
September	First full-term elections in September