

## STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES - 23, APRIL, 2020

Minutes of the Student Advisory Council meeting held at 3pm on Thursday, 23rd, April 2020 via Webex Meetings.

<b>PRESENT:</b>	<p>Bryce Humphries Olivia Poate Jackson Cocks Theo Totsis</p> <p>David Havyatt Laura Bassaikhan Maheshika Nanayakkara Samuel Harrison</p> <p>Emma James Lucas Peers-Catt Helly Pham Sandeep Satapathy Catherine Stephen Mahime Watanabe Minh Nguyen Hannah Dews Safiye Caferoglu Mia Watson Yuxi Ruan Thomeissa Mason Val Sun Chuhao Liu</p> <p>Alexander Hall</p>	<p>Chair, Science, Medicine &amp; Health - Undergraduate Deputy Chair, Academic Senate - Undergraduate Academic Senate - Undergraduate Academic Senate - Undergraduate and Law, Humanities &amp; The Arts - Undergraduate Business - Postgraduate Business - International Clubs &amp; Societies Engineering &amp; Information Sciences - Undergraduate Innovation Campus LGBTIQ+ Law, Humanities &amp; The Arts - International Science, Medicine &amp; Health - International Science, Medicine &amp; Health - Postgraduate Social Sciences - International Social Sciences - Postgraduate Social Sciences - Undergraduate Sydney Business School SBS University Council - Undergraduate University Council - Postgraduate Woolyungah Indigenous Centre Women's Representative Wollongong University Postgraduate Association - President Wollongong Undergraduate Student Association - President</p>
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	<p>Ms Theresa Hoynes Ms Ellenie Petrou Professor Julia Coyle Ms Deborah Porter</p> <p>Ms Christine Mason</p>	<p>Director, Student Services Division (DSSD) Senior Manager, Academic Administration (SMAA) Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) (PVCS) Manager, SSAF &amp; Student Projects, Academic Administration (MSSAF) Student Representation Coordinator, Academic Administration (SRC)</p>
<b>OBSERVER:</b>	None	
<b>APOLOGIES</b>	<p>Damien Beckett Samantha Minney Marg Hansen Natasha Popcevski Emily Nield</p>	<p>Academic Senate - Undergraduate Bateman's Bay Campus Bega Campus Law, Humanities &amp; The Arts - Postgraduate Shoalhaven Campus</p>

## **PART 1: OFFICIAL BUSINESS**

### **\*1.1 Welcome and Introduction**

The Chair acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land and welcomed all representatives and UOW staff in attendance.

The Chair advised that the meeting would be recorded and upon request, the recording could be stopped. The recording is a backup for clarification when drafting minutes, once the SAC have ratified the minutes, the recording will be deleted.

The Chair apologised for the change of meeting date and time during this unprecedented time and noted that the meeting was in quorum.

The Chair welcomed Ms Ellenie Petrou as Senior Manager, Academic Administration who replaces Mr Grant Hughes who has taken up another position at the University.

The Chair noted that UOW Pulse have elected a Student Director, Keval Patel and more details regarding his appointment will be provided at the next meeting of SAC.

### **\*1.2 Arrangement of Agenda**

#### **1.2.1 Conflicts of Interest**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

#### **1.2.2 Confidential Items**

No confidential items on the agenda

#### **1.2.3 Starring of Items**

All items raised under Other Business will be starred for discussion.

#### **1.2.4 Meeting Protocol**

The Chair advised SAC members to treat each other with respect and dignity and to respect each other's opinions. It is also important to speak loudly and clearly for the recording and for the purposes of the remote meeting mode.

Each agenda item will be monitored for time and the Chair will advise when to move on from an agenda item.

### **1.3 Business Arising from the Minutes**

The Chair raised a motion taken from the floor at the previous meeting on 16th March 2020 from the Business - Postgraduate (BUSPG) representative and held over to the 23 April 2020 meeting. The motion under Item 2.5 General Business - UOW's response to the COVID-19 Crisis and was in relation to the Australian Government's Stimulus Package and the decision to not include Higher Education institutions for funding support.

The Chair stated that since the motion was raised there have been further developments regarding funding for the Higher Education sector to help minimise the impact of financial burden that COVID-19 has had on the sector. The BUSPG commented that he would raise this topic again, under Other Business (Item 5) once Items 3 and 4 was discussed.

#### **1.4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 16th March 2020 are outstanding and will be confirmed by Circular Resolution following the meeting of 23rd April 2020.

#### **1.5 Meeting Protocol**

The Student Representation Coordinator (SRC) provided an overview of the etiquette of the Question and Answer discussion in Item 3. Committee members and participants who wished to ask a question or make comment could either signal their intent via the Chat facility on Webex by either asking the question via chat or asking to speak at the next available time.

#### **1.6 Chair's Report**

The Chair had nothing to report at this time.

## **PART 2: GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **2.1 Item 3 - Question and Answer Forum**

The Chair opened the discussion by inviting the DSSD to take questions from the floor regarding the key elements of UOW's response to COVID-19 and the progress of the shift to online learning, student support such as the Financial Assistance Grant Scheme, enrolment and internal and external support services for students at UOW.

The DSSD opened the discussion providing background on regular meetings being held with the Presidents of the student associations; Wollongong Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and Wollongong University Postgraduate Association (WUPA) and the SAC Executive, the Chair and the Deputy Chair and President of the Wollongong University Medical Students' Society (WUMS). The purpose of the meetings is to ensure that there is an open line of communication with the leaders of student representation during the pandemic.

The DSSD asked the SAC to start with providing some information on feedback received and answering questions that were pre submitted for the meeting.

The Bega Campus Representative's (BCR) feedback is that the University's response to COVID-19 is very positive. There has been consistent informative updates and not too much overload or cross over between the University as a whole and Subject Coordinators. The Subject Coordinators of our Nursing Units have done an amazing job moving the delivery to online. The main concern at this time is the provision of Personal Protection Equipment being available when students are on placement and that the placement locations can take on student nurses during this time.

The DSSD moved to the pre submitted questions.

**Q1. What is the University's current plans for online exams? Both for open book and closed book exams. Is there going to be one single approach by the relevant Faculty or based upon the subject?**

**Further, if a decision has not be made, which is my understanding is there any current thoughts on this question?**

**R1.** There are two parts to this question and there is no one single approach for exams with over 300 active sessions. The University had to work quickly to pivot into remote mode so exams are still be worked out. Exams are on a subject by subject basis and the rules and guidance for exam assessments have been communicated to academics and to take into account time zones, internet connectivity, accreditation requirements. The University recognises this is not ideal because there is an inability to standardise exams.

As a result, UOW have amended the marking system around fail grades and making the appropriate provisions, ie satisfactory, unsatisfactory and fail grades, to reduce the impact to a students overall Weighted Average Mark (WAM). The DSSD went on to acknowledge that there is a lot of chat on student forums regarding exams and the University is listening to that and working on problem solving in the background.

The SAC are encouraged to engage in feedback from their student peers and encourage them to provide feedback via social media, feedback channels, surveys (through Student Service) and engaging Peer Success Coaches.

The PVCS stated that the University is listening to advice particularly around accessibility. There is significant discussion across Faculties as there are nuances across different disciplines and areas.

The DSSD went on to add that several universities across Australia have been running online exams for some time and UOW have not traditionally run online exams but that they are currently looking at the possibility for Spring Session 2020. There is a range of due diligence for the University when putting in place vendors in this environment and would have to consider this thoroughly before making decisions.

The PVCS encouraged the SAC to engage with their peers in any type of feedback loop available. A survey will be going out regarding Teaching and Learning, it would be beneficial if SAC could encourage students to engage with survey. The University can then understand the experience students are having and what is working and not working and what some of the ideas might be coming from students.

The DSSD advised that a student experience survey goes out to students via SOLS and the topic depends on where students are in the enrolment and learning environment. The survey is about seeking information regarding a student's experience on subject delivery; and encourages the student representatives and their student peers to complete the survey. The DSSD and PVCS has provided feedback to the DVC(Education) to develop mechanisms where students can anonymously submit agile and dynamic feedback as issues are occurring real time.

**Q2. Some subjects have been increasing their subject load per week, such as lecturers using up more lecture time now that they are not limited to room booking time limits. What has the University done to address academics on not increasing study loads, especially as many students are finding it difficult to cope?**

**R2.** The DSSD advised that this issue was not something they were aware of but that it is not surprising. Students should provide feedback via SOLS for Subject coordinators or the Academic Program Coordinators in Faculties/schools.

The PVCS further commented that this type of feedback can also go back to the Peer coaching team or Pass Group students and fed back to Subject coordinators.

**Q3. *Some subjects have mandatory attendance for classes and lectures. In the past, these were not enforced and students may have just looked at the slides for a lecture or caught up weeks later. Considering other subjects and the current situation, what is the University's stance on Technical Fails for not watching lecture videos not previously tracked or enforced? Watching lectures now can be enforced as ECHO360 offers statistics on who has watched the video.***

**R3.** The DSSD stated that this question feeds into the change in grades and there is a body of work going on in the background. Academic staff have been given guidance on how to make decisions with regards to awarding grades. From an institutional perspective, academic staff were advised to consider the stress and strains that students are experiencing and not to be strict in enforcing black and white rules in this environment. If students feel they are not being treated fairly or experiencing problems in this area they should escalate this to Subject coordinators and Academic Program coordinators.

The PVCS commented that there is also an underlying background to this point of students engaging in lectures. If students don't regularly engage with subject content then they are less likely to succeed. This is driven by a genuine desire for students to engage with material and with the shift to remote trying to get students to access lectures. There is a broader conversation happening with the Academic Educational Business Continuity Committee and what is driving this from a constructive perspective.

The DSSD now opens the floor to the SAC for questions.

**Q4. *As for Autumn Session Census date and other changes such as remote delivery and Subject Outlines, will the same type of decision-making process occur going forward for the Spring Session 2020? Will there be a preference for student consultation when making the changes for Spring Session 2020?***

**R4.** There has been a lot of planning and modelling on different scenarios for Spring Session; and the University have at this stage two scenarios in subject delivery for Spring Session, which are dependent on the decisions made by the Australian Government. The first plan is to have a Hybrid model for subject delivery so if the rules on social distancing are loosened then there is possibility for face-to-face and remote delivery of subjects and the second model is complete remote subject delivery. How subjects are delivered will be a model for changes to census dates etc.

The University has not been in extreme crisis mode before which has led to having to make some quick decisions and changes including updating subject outlines. With over 1200 subjects running there have been some academics making changes and some not, which is less than ideal and due to the quick transition to remote learning, consultation may not have occurred in some instances.

Planning for Spring Session 2020 is underway.

**Q5. *Is there a preference for platforms in remote subject delivery and will there be a uniformity in Spring Session? Some subject delivery has been changed half way through the session from Zoom to Webex.***

**R5.** There are no recommendations for particular platforms to be used due to subjects having particular requirements for delivery and the University is unlikely to mandate a particular platform. There have been teething problems such as security issues for Zoom; and Webex connectivity at particular times as there is such an intense demand.

There has been a training surge on these different platforms however some faculties are better at this delivery than others. There has been a lot of stress experienced by the faculties in having to go fully online in such a small timeframe. IMTS are dynamically shifting and addressing as issues are raised.

The PVCS commented that the different interfaces including Moodle for assessment has added a layer of complexity to the use of technology. The PVCS commented that they are keen for students to feed through the system those champions of online delivery and doing a great job in order to showcase their work and to assist those Faculties who may not be achieving the outcomes of online delivery as desired.

The Learning and Teaching team are reaching out to Academics that may be struggling with the use of the technology platforms and seek support from those that are doing it well. It may be difficult to get consistency due to the different disciplines, which need different platforms.

***Q6. With the complaints made on Social Media around inappropriate behaviour on Webex and Zoom, what measures are being put in place to ensure safe and respectful engagement in these online platforms?***

**R6.** The University has a Safe & Respectful Communities (SARC) team where students can refer any concerns to the team to be investigated. The SARC also ensure that there are educative processes in place before continuing with more extreme conduct measures as per the Student Misconduct rules which allows the University to take action. At this sensitive time students and staff need to demonstrate compassion, kindness and support as we are all in this together.

There is First Responder training made available by the SARC team and the previous SAC representatives mandated that all SAC student representatives undertake First Responder training arranged shortly. The SRC would schedule First Responder training with the Safe and Respectful Communities team for the SAC.

The PVCS in response advised that this is an area that is currently being worked on with academic staff. Our Peer Leaders are key to success and we are currently working with the Peer Coach team from the Learning Co-op on how to facilitate good behaviour from students when using platforms for remote learning.

The University Council Undergraduate representative (UCU) requested to add a further comment to Question 4 regarding amendments to Subject outlines.

The UCU representative commented that with some amendments to subject outlines, these amendments have led to an increase in workload for some subjects. Some lectures are running longer as there is no restriction on room bookings or have replaced tutorials with online forums via Moodle which has not increased the assessment but the time taken to participate in an alternative platform which can increase the time of participation by having to prepare questions and post. Students may not be able to maintain the same level of participation for each of their subjects.

Can the use of programs such as Discord be used which takes less bandwidth but eliminates those issues where students won't need to spend as much time preparing questions and answers instead of using platforms like Moodle?

The PVCS responded that Discord is being used by a range of faculties and disciplines with a range of experiences reported by students. The DSSD agreed with the comments with the UCU representative and thanked them for raising these points, with feedback submitted to the various working parties formed.

***Q7. What is the University's current expectation of the budgetary impact of COVID-19 events, and what strategies are being pursued to address the financial implications this year and the next. Most specifically, what assurance can you give students that their education will not be negatively impacted by a revenue shortfall?***

**R7.** The DSSD confirmed that there will be a financial impact to the University due to the current pandemic. There have been other Universities posting the financial impact to their institutions and in the coming days statements will be released regarding the financial impact on UOW. The University has been working incredibly hard reduce the impact to the student experience. There is an obvious impact due to remote delivery and the University is trying to support students through different means such as the change of grades, what the University can do around sessions so students can catch up on laboratories and practicals.

In addition to the State and Federal funding for those affected by COVID-19 the University has also set up a hardship fund (COVID-19 Grant Assistance Scheme) to provide some financial relief. The University is doing this as fast as they can in releasing cash to students.

The BUSPG representative appreciated the sentiment and that the frustration with funding is levelled at the Federal Government as the Higher Education package falls short of being sufficient.

The DSSD commented that the conversations that the University are having with the student unions (WUSA & WUPA) has been constructive and that they have been taking this back to the National Union of Students (NUS). The University remains engaged with State and Federal government for direction and advising how the current crises is impacting on our students.

The BUSPG further added that whilst there is focus on student issues now due to the pandemic he commented that there will more repercussions for the next year.

***Q8. Some International students are experiencing the need to extend or make changes to their visas in the current situation. Is there any support services for students in regards to their visas?***

**R8.** The University is aware of students needing to change their visas and the challenges with the visa process during this time, so students should contact Student Central if they have a problem.

The LHA Undergraduate representative (LHAU) asked the Chair if he could provide a report on his activities as the LHA Undergraduate representative to share with the SAC feedback received from LHA through students and academic staff.

Overall, the feedback from Heads of Schools in LHA was positive on the move to remote learning due to COVID-19. The Head of School for the School of Arts, English and Media commented that the move to remote has been an overall success. The students in this Unit have an experienced palette of social media and interaction through practical assessments and creative activities and have not experienced difficulties in moving to full remote learning.

The Dean of Law/Head of School for the School of Law also provided an overview of how remote learning was progressing and commented that it is generally going well for the School of Law. There are recorded seminars, forums and review quizzes on line. The School of Law will follow-up attendance with students.

The DSSD commented that there is obvious variances between Faculties in terms of enforcement of engagement in remote learning. It also raises the question and discussions around operations and improvement of communications in Faculty structures.

The BUSPG representative contributed that an issues log report should be compiled on subjects and where students can contribute to ideas to resolve some of the issues currently being experienced.

The Acting Head of School, School of Humanities and Social Inquiry reported that academic staff have been receiving ongoing training in terms of teaching. Subject coordinators and tutors in the school have been asked to be compassionate and exercise discretion around the challenges of remote teaching and learning.

The PVCS commented that training, teaching exists beyond a crisis, and this will then result in cracks becoming bigger. There is a program of work for continuing professional development in teaching and learning.

The DSSD stated that they would take back to Executive that there are areas of improving feedback channels for students.

***Q9. What are the available financial support by the University for international students impacted by the COVID-19 situation besides the Grant scheme. I have heard that we have fee reduction initiatives but not sure whether there is an official decision.***

**R9.** The University has put in place a range of mechanisms including payment plans and changing payment due date with further fee information coming.

***Q10. A question relating to the announcement of the replacement of grade descriptors on students' academic transcripts. If the mark is hidden and a 'satisfactory' grade is recorded at the request of a student, does this mean the mark does not count towards a student's WAM?***

**R10.** If a student opts to have a satisfactory grade rather than a mark declared for a subject, there is no impact on the WAM.

***Q11. If a student is on track to graduate with Distinction and experience a drop in grades this Autumn session, how will this drop impact the grade that the student may have graduated with?***

**R11.** See response to Question 10 above.

The DSSD asked if there were any further questions from the floor as the meeting would proceed to Item 4 of the agenda.

## **2.2 Item 4 - Role and Importance of SAC in the current environment**

The Chair opened this item to the SAC for discussion on the role and importance of the SAC in the current environment and encouraged student representatives to identify key strategies and/or contribute items on the current role and future of SAC.

The Chair commenced the discussion with acknowledging the dramatic changes to the University environment and the difficulties and challenges faced by the student representatives in connecting with student peers and key stakeholders.

There is a need now for the SAC to adopt more online measures to engage with the student cohort. The Deputy Chair raised with the SAC the development of a SAC Facebook page with preliminary discussions taking place prior to the meeting.

The SAC Executive asked the SAC to contribute ideas or make comment on a SAC page and what this might look like for reaching out to the student cohort. The Facebook page would also allow SAC to encourage the student cohort to engage in surveys released by the University.

The BUSPG representative supported the idea of a Facebook page, as it will be a positive page and a tool for students to provide real time feedback and for the SAC to communicate with the student cohort on initiatives and activities currently involved in.

The BUSPG representative also suggested for SAC that a focus/project be designed on 'what were the positive learnings from the ongoing operation of the University'? Acknowledging through students what the University has learnt through the changes imposed in response to the pandemic. That is, what did the University do well and how can the University apply this in other times.

The Chair put forward the idea that an agile feedback loop should be carried forward

The LHAUG representative suggested a SOLS/Moodle chat option where students can chat with their elected representatives in real time. This would reduce the stress of advertising who the elected representatives are as well as enable students to voice their concerns informally and seek advice prior to engaging in any formal process (thereby reducing the burden on the complaints process). This however, may extend beyond the workload of representatives. There might be a need for an anonymous feedback option for students to communicate with SAC representatives.

The Social Science Undergraduate (SSU) representative supported the idea of an online chat forum between SAC representatives as they were personally finding it difficult to reach out to students in this environment and seek support in this area.

The SRC would investigate an online forum/chat for the SAC representatives to use with students however, Facebook may also be an avenue for feedback. The UCU also proposed that the SAC could run a Webex drop in session for student representatives to talk to students about their concerns, the same type of concept as the Peer Remote Study Coach forum held in Week 4.

The DSSD commented that the visibility and awareness of SAC was important and that there would be a need to adopt online measures for SAC representatives to reach out to the student cohort. Would the SAC like to receive support to increase their visibility and engagement with the Faculties, Campuses and key stakeholders for non-Faculty representation?

The SRC would provide support to the SAC to assist in reaching out to student and key stakeholders through individual catch-ups and formal introduction emails to the Faculty Associate Deans (Education), Campus Managers and other University contacts.

The PVCS raised with the SAC the importance of Students as Partners (SaP) model where students play an active role as partners in education at UOW. There will be an opportunity for the student body (faculty and non-faculty representatives) to become part of a formal committee to identify critical problems.

The SPM confirmed that the SAC have a SaP Working group and that there are still some vacancies. The SRC will circulate the membership and vacant positions to the SAC. The DSSD would like to see the SaP working group who have commenced work on developing an agreement and framework, work with this new committee and framework. The PVCS welcomed the SAC representatives on the SaP working group to be part of the committee membership.

The LHAUG representative commented that the Faculty of LHA have not been in contact with the student representatives and that they had reached out to the Faculty staff for feedback. It would be good if there were open channels of communication between faculties and faculty representatives and

by extension those representatives and working parties that focus on education such as Students as Partners.

The PVCS stated that the Peer Remote Study Coach team can help to conduct that if the SAC feel that this would be useful and further commented that this could also apply to the Academic Senate and sub-committee representatives.

The PVCS confirmed that the first task for the SaP committee to resolve is feedback loops and the DSSD agreed and further stated that an induction of faculty staff and the governance mechanisms would be a good start.

The Chair asked if there were any further questions and comments before moving to the next agenda item.

### **PART 3: GENERAL BUSINESS**

#### **3.1 UOWx discussion and invitation to present at SAC meeting**

The Chair welcomed the UCU representative proposed to the SAC that representatives from the UOWx team be invited to the next SAC meeting to provide more information on UOWx and for the SAC to provide feedback regarding the UOWx process.

The UCU representative shared with the SAC that they found the UOWx process confusing and difficult to navigate. The UCU representative's suggestions was that having a one single page to log all hours and the same for the process for all activities. The UOWx won't accept backlogged hours once the Academic year is completed and UOWx is not well known and many students haven't heard of UOWx or know how to participate.

The PVCS whose portfolio is responsible for UOWx asked that the SAC provide feedback or pass on issues to the UCU representative to liaise with the PVCS.

No further general business was raised.

### **PART 4: FINAL BUSINESS**

#### **4.1 Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 19th May 2020.

The meeting closed at 4:50pm

Signed as a true record:

-----  
Chair

/ /

### **ACTIONS ARISING**

<b>RESOLUTION ITEM</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DUE DATE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>
------------------------	---------------	---------------	-----------------	---------------------------

	NE	Schedule First Responder Training	May 2020	Student Representation Coordinator
	NE	Facilitate a real-time online forum for SAC representatives	May 2020	Student Representation Coordinator
	NE	Develop and facilitate Communication Network with Faculty, Campus and key stakeholders.	May 2020	Student Representation Coordinator
	NE	Provide vacant positions of SAC Working Groups (SaP, Activation & SSAF)	May 2020	Student Representation Coordinator
	NE	SAC provide UOWx feedback to the University Council Undergraduate Representative for discussions with PVCS	May 2020	Student Representation Coordinator/Student Advisory Council
	NE	Investigate a platform for a real-time Feedback loop for students	May 2020	Student Representation Coordinator/SAC Executive