

STUDENT SENATE

Subject	Student Senate Meeting 3/2020 (SS3)
Chair	Marlee Bourke
Present	<p>Representatives: Ayush Dahiya, Janelle Moyes, Marlee Bourke, Saleem Malik, Bijay Neupane, Fiona Archer, Gautam Pal, Geeta Naralasetty, Harvinder Singh, Heba Adelrahman, Lizzie Tongway, Lucy Payne, Nadine Wilkinson, Olivia Carey, Senim Genc, Tanvi Mahajan, Chaganti Deepak, Hardeep Singh, Sanjampreet Kaur, Kyle Jackson, Verana Hunter-Raye, Sam McKeegan, Jennifer Davis, Beau Frichot, Melanie Bellingham, Emma Hunt</p> <p>Guests: Prof. Andy Smith, Greg Jakob (Advisor), Dr. Jo van Son (Advisor), Tom Hodgson (Executive Officer)</p>
Apologies	Rasika Singla, Lachlan Francis, Althea Alpitsis.
Venue	Online, Skype for Business
Date	21 st April 2020
Runtime	5:00pm – 7:20pm

Meeting Actions

SS3

Action 3.1: Ayush to work with Tom, Jo and Greg to hone the Professional Year proposal.	
Action 3.2: Tom to find an alternative voting tool for online Senate meetings due to difficulties on Skype for Business.	
Action 3.3: Saleem to work with Tom, Jo and Greg to hone the accommodation policy proposal.	
Action 3.4: Chaganti to work with Tom, Jo and Greg to hone the industrial visits proposal.	
Action 3.5: The Senate to consider the need for additional financial support and fee reduction once the new University financial support schemes have more chance to affect students.	
Action 3.6: Fiona to research parent room best practice guidelines and seek input from the Senate in Teams on a 'wish-list' of features for parenting rooms. Fiona to compile this information into a recommendation to Facilities.	
Action 3.7: Fiona and Heba to further discuss issues regarding on-campus prayer rooms, seeking to identify an existing code of practice to recommend. Fiona to raise these with Facilities.	

SS2

Action 2.1: Chair to compose a letter to Vice-Chancellor on behalf of students seeking answers to student questions regarding COVID-19. Also, requesting more detail in University communications including releasing responses to their questions.	Closed. Marlee has done this.
Action 2.2: Jo will seek advice for international students regarding health insurance coverage for COVID-19. Advice will be circulated to students.	Closed. Jo found international students access Medicare through BUPA.
Action 2.3: Representatives to discuss in Teams which SSAF expenditure ideas are low or high priorities during the outbreak.	Closed. Done.
Action 2.4: Tom to investigate and set-up a live-streaming/online forum model.	Closed. Done.
Action 2.5: Chair will post to Teams calling on members to comment if they wish any proposals to be rated as 'High' priority. Otherwise, all will be rated 'Low'.	Closed. Done.
Action 2.6: Senim asked to submit the recommendations regarding room inspections on residence in her report in the form of a proposal.	Ongoing. Senim to submit in future when able.
Action 2.7: Tom to invite International Admissions to update the Senate on the accommodation scholarships process and messaging for international students.	Ongoing. Tom to follow up.

Meeting Minutes

Marlee Bourke, Chair, opened the meeting.

University update: Professor Andy Smith, Greg Jakob, Dr Jo van Son

Professor Smith, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic, advised while he would not always be able to attend their meetings he was intending to make more regular appearances to help build the link between the Senate and Uni Senior Team.

He explained the recent shuffle in senior staff portfolios, which has brought Student Services (and the Senate) into his Academic portfolio. This means the Academic portfolio now covers all aspects of the student lifecycle from academic administration and teaching to intake and student services.

TAFE has left his portfolio and will receive their own Pro Vice-Chancellor, bringing their importance on par with Higher Education.

Andy gave an overview of the challenges and work undertaken so far to support students during the outbreak, with a particular emphasis on the needs of international students and partner-providers in Melbourne who are very impacted.

He listed some of the changes offered by the University to support students during this time including changes to academic progression rules, fail grades won't appear on transcripts, students can re-enrol without paying a fee, and a flexible attitude to assessment.

Much work continues in this area and Senate input is critical to ensure the University best supports students.

Question: Arts Academy

Lizzie Tongway asked about the decision to continue Arts Academy course online. Andy noted they faced a set of difficult decisions with Arts Academy, where so much content is physical and contact-based. The University, he advised, must obey State and Federal contact restrictions and staff have worked hard to move content online as best as possible.

For students who are struggling or have issues with the changes, the first port of call is Program Coordinators, and Discipline Leaders.

Andy noted Universities have a role to play in society, showing leadership in how we make a just and fair society. We have a role to play in showing leadership to support the Government's social distancing restrictions and best practices.

Question: financial support for International students

Senim Genc asked about the possibility of fee relief for international students. Greg Jakob, Director of Student Experience, advised communications to advise students of an expanded suite of financial support options was being organised right now. He detailed some of these packages, which will offer targeted support to specific cohorts.

Question: timeline to communicate academic changes to students

Sam McKeegan asked if there was a deadline/timeframe to communicate changes.

Andy advised they had not set one, but they were aware it must be done quickly. He explained the various options that were being considered on a unit by unit basis by academics to replace exams and that changes would shortly be communicated to all groups.

Question: timeline to access financial services

Greg advised that partner provider students would be able to apply once they received the email, which he anticipated would come out within 48 hours. They could then anticipate a response to their application within – roughly – 48 hours and another 48 hours to process payment. He asked representatives to advise Tom if they heard about bottlenecks, which would then enable the University to follow up.

He gave the following update: 1,031 students have applied for COVID-19 related financial support, of these 800 have already been processed. Nearly \$1 million has been given to support students. Additionally, 750 payments have gone out to help cover students' living costs, 240 grants to help students' access technology, and 270 grants to assist students getting online.

In total, a nearly \$3 mil support package for students that has come from University cash reserves. The University is lucky to be in a financial position to be able to do that at this time.

Question: Nursing placements and student safety

Andy advised hospitals have well-articulated and managed COVID-19 plans in place and it's unlikely students on placement will be placed in the frontline. OH&S provisions are the best available in healthcare right now, and the University would not let students go into a workplace that was unsafe.

Question: Nursing's block mode teaching

A representative expressed frustration with the block mode model offered for Nursing. Andy advised the University's priority was to keep curriculums on track and course content moving, or students would not be ready for placement. While finding placements at this time is hard, FedUni is working the existing strong relationships with local healthcare providers to try and ensure students are not disadvantaged. He noted how important it was for students to graduate on schedule.

Question: deferrals and retention support

A representative asked if the University is experiencing a spike in deferrals, and if extra retention support would be offered.

Andy advised all statistics indicated retention would be lower in an online environment, though the University had not yet experienced this. They would have a greater sense of the impact come Census Date on April 30.

There is more outbound calling and targeted support for student services being offered at this time. Andy advised, the University wants to make sure we do everything we can to help you through this, and we're doing everything we can to give you the skills you need.

Question: sports placements

Sam McKeegan asked about support for sports students to find placements.

Andy noted that gyms were one of the first sectors hit by the shut down and this was a traditional place for these placements to occur. The situation is very hard, but the University is working with employers. He said students would not be left to find their own placements and they were working to accredit groups to take on these students.

Question: student motivation

Andy agreed maintaining student motivation at this time was difficult, and this is why they've made so many adjustments to academic rules. The University knows performance will suffer in an online environment and with so much change. We've made the rules as generous as possible, removed penalties, and are supporting staff to be as flexible as possible.

The reality is, regardless, that performance will drop. We will accommodate that as best we can.

Greg thanked the Senate for assisting the University to turn a sharper eye on particularly affected cohorts, such as Horsham and Arts Academy.

He noted while it's easy to be pessimistic, life will still go on and employers will be seeking staff with good skills.

Andy suggested a parallel with the 2003 SARS epidemic, noting the recession bounced back the following year. He advised students to be in a position to take advantage of the bounce back, don't assume we're going to enter a prolonged economic depression.

Marlee suggested the University and the Senate communicate to student with this advice about the bounce-back.

Andy noted staff are trying really hard, and sometimes they get things wrong. Senate feedback matters and we're committed to making things work during this period. I think we're heading in the right direction, and pay respects to staff like Jo and Tom for the work they are doing in this space.

Greg's update

Greg Jakob gave an overview of his experience with the University. Noted the silver lining that the University had the most equitable distribution of services ever, with all students receiving the same online support. He agreed with Marlee that the University would like to explore ways of continuing this level of online support post-COVID.

Greg: "We're learning new ways to deliver and students are learning new ways to connect. We don't want to lose the personal interface that's ready at the right time. The challenge is to be able to provide responses in a timely way without overwhelming staff. And to keep this new level of services and build on it.

We won't move back to what it was, we will move forward to a post-coronavirus state where we learn a whole lot about what's possible when you really have to change. There's a whole new space for the student voice and how students are heard, new ways of working partly online and partly face-to-face, equitability of provision cross campus."

Jo's update

Jo noted the explosion in requests for career support, with 700 students contacting that office. The team is responding to each student and there will be a raft of support available for students coming out soon to support them to find part-time work. We already know which industries are still taking on staff, or growing, during this time.

Many students are concerned about how they will get a job once they graduate. At that time, all students will be in the same boat so the playing field is level. Employers will be conscious of this and will want to grow quickly in the post-COVID boom. There will be work.

The team are also creating an Alumni Mentoring program for all students through EDGE. As you approach the end of your course, this will enable you to link up with alumni who work in your area of interest and get some guidance.

It's an exciting place to work and students should feel confident we're thinking about the same things you are.

Proposal: Professional Year

Ayush moved the proposal, Saleem seconded. See SS3.R2.

Greg proposed a process for proposals where he, Tom and Jo could support the development of submissions to the Senate by workshopping them with the students into proposals ready to go to the University, without hindering students freedom to provide rough input.

Jo and Greg noted a professional year model was not relevant for all courses. Nursing, for example, already has ample industry engagement inbuilt. They suggested the proposal should be workshopped with the Senate to clarify if they were asking for every course to provide sufficient engagement with profession and industry to assist transition to employment, or opportunities for international students to build points towards residence by offering an additional year (professional year) on top of existing courses.

Jo suggested that by gaining clarity about exactly what students wanted and what Senate was asking for, they would increase their chance of success.

Marlee suggested representatives vote on whether they wished this proposal to go into a refining process. The representative forerunners can talk to Jo, Greg and Tom to refine the idea before it goes to the University for consideration. The representatives agreed with this process.

Representatives voted unanimously for the proposal to be workshopped further and submitted.

Resolution SS3/2/20: That the Senate support a workshopping process for the professional year proposal, prior to submission to the University.

Action 3.1: Ayush to work with Tom, Jo and Greg to hone the Professional Year proposal.

Action 3.2: Tom to find an alternative voting tool for online Senate meetings due to difficulties on Skype for Business.

Proposal: Student Residence Accommodation Policy

Saleem Malik moved the proposal, Lucy Payne seconded.

Saleem explained the proposal, see SS3.R3.

Senim Genc agreed that the offering of accommodation must be clarified to students up-front so they can make informed choices, and noted the additional issue that the University do not offer room inspections prior to lease signings.

Senim disagreed with asking the University to provide couples-specific housing, as she said argued it was important for students to acknowledge and respect the different cultural settings in Australia.

Marlee suggested if the proposal were voted through, three aspects could be considered in workshopping: (1) Wording of accommodation contracts. (2) Inspection of rooms prior to lease signing. (3) The provision of a couples' residence.

The Senate voted unanimously for workshopping the motion.

Resolution SS3/2/20: That the Senate support a workshopping process for the accommodation policy proposal, prior to submission to the University.

Action 3.3: Saleem to work with Tom, Jo and Greg to hone the accommodation policy proposal.

Proposal: Industrial Visits

Chaganti Deepak moved the motion, Emma Hunt seconded.

Chaganti explained the proposal, see SS3.R4.

Greg and Jo suggested that industrial visits are not relevant for all areas (eg. teaching and nursing who already do extensive mandatory placements), perhaps the impetus behind the proposal would be better address by a review of existing industry exposure by course seeking to identify gaps and expand opportunities. Greg suggested they could also review how International Student Services might offer additional industry-experience specific services.

The Senate voted unanimously for workshopping the motion.

Resolution SS3/3/20: That the Senate support a workshopping process for the industrial visits proposal, prior to submission to the University.

Action 3.4: Chaganti to work with Tom, Jo and Greg to hone the industrial visits proposal.

Proposal: Fee Reduction

Senim Genc moved the motion, Heba Adelrahman seconded.

Senim explained the proposal, see SS3.R5.

Jo suggested that should the Senate should consider if they were asking for a reduction in fees because: courses have moved online, students are not receiving the experience they expected, or students are not in a position to pay the fees. Jo outlined how the different ways the University might respond to each of these.

Greg note the complexities associated with fee setting and University financial policy, and that a lot of novel financial support was just beginning to reach students. He noted the Victorian government might yet introduce further financial support, as South Australia had, which would also need to be considered. He asked the Senate to consider holding this item on the table to give time for the impact of the new measures to be felt.

Heba argued the focus should be on arguing for a fee reduction for international students as they had paid more to have an on-campus University and cultural experience when they could have paid less and studied online at home. Several students agreed. Sam McKeegan suggested a second round of the Coronavirus Support Scheme.

The Senate unanimously agreed to continue monitoring the situation and review the proposal again once the new support schemes had had more chance to assist students.

Action 3.5: The Senate to consider the need for additional financial support and fee reduction once the new University financial support schemes have more chance to affect students.

Jo advised that she, on behalf of the University, was taking on board that international students are not having the experience they expected to have – and that this was a really reasonable statement.

Marlee suggested acknowledging this could be valuable in University communications.

Member Reports

Fiona Archer raised that she had been contacted by facilities staff seeking student input on improvements to parenting rooms. Jo suggested the Senate source some best practice guidelines and recommend Facilities adopt these. Greg suggested the Berwick parents room was the best around, as it was the newest campus, and that this could set the template for the others.

Janelle suggested the [Australian Breastfeeding Association's Guidelines](#).

Jo provided a link listing the resources available at [RMIT's Parenting Rooms](#).

Action 3.6: Fiona to research parent room best practice guidelines and seek input from the Senate in Teams on a 'wish-list' of features for parenting rooms.
Fiona to compile this information into a recommendation to Facilities.

Heba and Fiona discussed the need for upgrades and improved cleaning in the on-campus prayer rooms. Fiona agreed to also raise this matter with Facilities.

Action 3.7: Fiona and Heba to further discuss issues regarding on-campus prayer rooms, seeking to identify an existing code of practice to recommend.
Fiona to raise these with Facilities.

Greg suggested the Senate should be feeding this sort of information into the new Master Planning and Infrastructure area, so as renovations occur the University can be working to the right standards.

Other Business

Tom Hodgson, Executive Officer, updated the representatives on a new structure designed to improve support for individual members and ensure issues are fed up the Senate's leadership chain effectively. See SS3.R6.

The Chair, Marlee Bourke, declared the meeting closed at 7:20pm.

1. APPENDIX I: SENATE MEMBERSHIP

As of April 23rd.

Name	Representative for
Althea Alpitsis	TAFE Board
Ayush Dahiya	Mt Helen Campus (HE)
Beau Frichot	Gippsland Campus
Bijay Neupane	Brisbane Campus
Lizzie Tongway	SMB Campus
Emma Hunt	Equity, Diversity and Social Inclusion
Fiona Archer	School of Health and Life Sciences (UG)
Gautam Pal	International Students
Geeta Neralaselly	Academic Board
Hardeep Singh	Berwick Campus
Harvinder Singh	School of Nursing & Healthcare Professions Board
Heba Adelrahman	Distance & Online
Janelle Moyes	Distance & Online
Jennifer Davis	Learning & Teaching Committee
Kyle Jackson	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
Lachlan Francis	School of Education Board
Lucy Payne	Camp St Performing Arts
Marlee Bourke	School of Arts Board
Chaganti Deepak	School of SEIT Board
Melanie Bellingham	School of Business Board
Saleem Malik	Research Committee (HDR)
Nadine Wilkinson	Gippsland Campus
Olivia Carey	Sustainability
Rasika Singla	Mt Helen Campus (HE)
Sam McKeegan	Sports
Sanjampreet Kaur	Clubs and Societies
Senim Genc	Postgraduate
Tanvi Mahajan	Berwick Campus
Verana Hunter-Raye	Western Campuses (HE)

Student Representative Vacancies

- Western Campuses (TAFE/VET/VCAL)
- SMB Campus
- Camp St (Visual Arts)
- Mt Helen Campus (TAFE)