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Academic Representative
2nd Quarter Report 2020
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**Part One: Executive Officer Position Description Duties**

**9.1 Assume all the powers and duties of the President in the absence of the President, the Administrative Vice-President and the Finance and Strategy Officer.**

I have not been required to assume the powers or duties of the President within this quarter

**9.2 Be a member of appropriate internal committees of the Association, including, but not limited to:**

**9.2.1 Standing Committee of the Executive; and;**

**9.2.2 Academic Committee.**

This quarter I have been a member of the Standing Committee of the Executive and the Academic Committee (as Chair).

**9.3 Chair monthly meetings of the Academic Committee, ensuring that all committee members are advised of meeting times, that the agenda is prepared and circulated beforehand and that the standing orders of the committee are adhered to.**

The Academic Committee has met monthly this quarter (with final meeting of semester slightly later due to exams being underway) – all meetings were held over Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions. The meeting time was not set but always established using a When2Meet in order to accommodate the busy and ever-changing timetables of the members of the Committee. An appropriate length of time was always given to advise of the meeting time and the agenda items were called for and circulated using the Facebook group chat.

**9.4 Take direction from the Academic Committee on all educational matters relevant to the Association and its members.**

The Academic Committee has shared valuable insight and input for both me as Academic Representative which has helped direct and focus on relevant matters. This has been especially the case in regard to impacts students have faced during COVID-19 challenges which have varied across papers, departments and divisions. Having the Academic Committee have an ear to the ground and feedback on whatever issue arose was invaluable.

However, overall the Academic Committee purpose has felt more advisory than directive and there has been discussion within the Academic Committee meetings this quarter regarding changing the name to encapsulate this – to the Academic Advisory Committee. There is agreement that this best describes the true nature of the Committee.

**9.5 Where reasonable, ensure that as many different representatives of student educational issues are present on the Academic Committee as possible.**

The Academic Committee’s membership is reflective of each of the academic divisions of the University studying a variety of things and are of both undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study. A specific representative from the Otago Postgraduate Association, as well as individual representatives from University of Otago Pacific Island Students’ Association and Te Roopū Māori and the OUSA International representative have been appointed to membership in order to most appropriately represent Otago students.

**9.6 Be one of the Association’s representatives on:**

**9.6.1 University of Otago Senate;**

**9.6.2     University of Otago Board of Undergraduate Studies; and;**

**9.6.3     Other University committees, boards, advisory groups and working parties as appointed by the Executive.**

I have been an OUSA representative for both the Senate and the Board of Undergraduate Studies. Senate has not held a meeting this quarter but have released an agenda each month which I have read each time to ensure I am informed and up-to-date on any information shared. I have appropriately attended meetings of BUGS this quarter (over Zoom). I also sit on a number of committees/boards/advisory groups across the University space and have actively engaged with these, having been appointed by the Executive to do so.

**9.7 Where appropriate briefing the President on national and local tertiary sector educational issues and representing the educational interests of students on local body committees and boards.**

This quarter, the impacts of COVID-19 completely altered normality and consequently the issues facing tertiary students – including in their education. I met quite frequently with the President to discussion issues students were facing regarding COVID-19 and where necessary these briefings were expanded to the wider Executive. I also met with my equivalent at Auckland University to discuss their approach to COVID-19 and their calls for a universal grade bump. The most relevant ‘local’ board I have been on this Semester has been the ExamSoft Working Group which facilitated the online invigilated exams for competitive entry and accreditation requirements. My involvement and representation of students allowed for positive changes to be made which I believe were in the best interest of students. Regarding any Dunedin local body committees and boards this is not applicable.

**9.8 Actively inform the student body of issues relating to their education, via publications, promotions and campaigns.**

Again, this has predominantly related to COVID-19 related issues for students. I curated a document of FAQ regarding issues students were commonly facing with online teaching/learning which was shared on the OUSA website. I informed/updated students through Critic requests for comments on things such as library opening hours, online exams and software use and grade increases and through a Rad1 interview also regarding the grade bump. In my allocated time on the OUSA Instagram account I used it to share ways in which students can access help if they were experiencing difficulty with their studies and/or their wellbeing as a result of COVID-19 impacts. I also responded to individual students who emailed me as Academic Representative directly, updating them on who to contact/where to go/how to get support with their specific concerns/issues. I have also helped inform members of the Academic Committee of educational issues and concerns by providing detailed updates in our meetings.

**9.9 Maintain a good working relationship with relevant OUSA staff, including the Student Support Centre Manager, and liaising with them on relevant educational issues as they arise.**

I feel confident that I have a good working relationship with all OUSA staff. This includes the Student Support Manager who I have been in contact with throughout this quarter regarding student educational issues relating to COVID-19.

**9.10 Act as the Executive’s representative to the Class Representative system and assist in their promotion.**

The Class Representative Coordinator and I have utilised the Class Representative system on multiple occasions to help with student input and feedback regarding impacts of COVID-19 – this included sending a email to each of the class reps (from Student Support and myself as Academic Representative) that thanked them for their work, provided suggestions on how to be effective in an online capacity, who/where to go for help/support etc.

**9.11 Facilitate a variety of student representation on education related University Committees and Divisional Boards.**

I continue to feel satisfied that students are competently represented across the University Committees and Divisional Boards and thank those who have taken up this role.

**9.12 Maintain a good working relationship with the University, particularly with:**

**9.12.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic); and;**

**9.12.2 The Director of Summer School.**

I have now attended many regular meetings with both the DVC (Academic) and Director of Summer School and feel confident that I have a strong working relationship with both. The DVC Academic has always responded to my emails promptly and in detail (which is much appreciated) and there has been frequent contact across the Semester especially in regard to COVID-19 issues and concerns. The Director of Summer School and I have been engaged in working group discussions regarding Pre-Christmas Summer School and a review of the Summer School Class Rep system – both of which are constructive. I find both of these relationships valuable and incredibly important in helping me best represent students and their interests.

**9.13 Liaise with the Clubs and Societies Representative to assist those affiliated clubs that have a focus on student education.**

I contacted each of the affiliated clubs with focus on student education during the lockdown period to check in and let them know I was available to help/support in any capacity necessary. This was well received and taken up in a few instances. I did not liaise with the Clubs and Societies Representative to do so however; I just contacted the Clubs directly and had informed the Executive I would do so at a Zoom meeting prior to actually making contact.

**9.14 Facilitate and provide feedback and consultation for academic proforma.**

This has continued to be a significant aspect of my role for this quarter and quite time consuming. Again, a fair number of my hours for this quarter have been doing this of which I have tried to be detailed and considered in my responses. This quarter was quite demanding for a considerable period of time with COVID-19 and this limited my time/ability to provide feedback in every instance. However, I encouraged these departments to engage with the Class Reps or the relevant student association.

**9.15 Be available via cell phone at all practical times.**

I feel confident that I have been contactable at all practical times.

**9.16 Perform the general duties of all Executive Officers.**

I believe I have adequately performed all general duties required of me as a member of the OUSA Executive as of the first quarter.

**9.17 Where practical, work not less than twenty hours per week, from January 1 until December 31.**

I feel confident in saying that I have worked at least twenty hours in my role each week from when I commenced my role as Academic Representative (with exceptions to the pre-arranged and agreed upon reduced hours weeks due to assessment workload and Public Holiday dates)

**Part Two: General Duties of all Executive members**

**3.1 Where reasonable, all Executive Officers are expected to assist as volunteers for OUSA events and functions, including, but not limited to:**

**3.1.1Assisting at the OUSA Tent City marquee and other activities during Summer School, Orientation and Re-Orientation; and;**

**3.1.2Assisting with elections and referenda where appropriate, including but not limited to advertising the election and collecting votes.**

OUSA events and functions were not held in the same capacity this quarter and so I was not able to assist as a volunteer! However, I did assist with developing and reviewing the referenda process and questions.

**3.2 Where reasonable, all Executive Officers are to be available for Executive meetings, national conferences, national and local campaigns, Executive training sessions and Executive planning sessions.**

I believe I have been available for all of the above as required this quarter (held online over Zoom).

**3.3 All Executive Officer's will keep up to date with the Finance and Strategy Officer's Executive budget, bringing to the Finance and Strategy Officer any spending proposals, keeping track of their spending and ensuring they do not exceed budgeted expenditure.**

I have read and reviewed each of the Finance and Strategy Officer's Executive budget that has been sent through and therefore have kept up to date. I have not proposed any spending etc. so latter part therefore not applicable.

**3.4 All Executive Officers are to educate themselves on needs and experiences relevant to historically marginalised demographic groups including intersectionality and promote and encourage all demographics to participate, where relevant, in clubs, societies, committees and OUSA events.**

The ongoing protests and educational campaigns/calls to action regarding the Black Lives Matter movement has meant that I have engaged in a significant amount of self-education regarding racism (both globally and here in New Zealand). Unfortunately I was not able to attend the protest for BLM as I was travelling outside of Dunedin however I have engaged in reading educational material, watching videos and overall working to better understand the effects of both racism and privilege. In this vein there have also been preliminary discussions in the Academic Committee regarding supporting TRM and UOPISA with the development/running of Cultural Competency workshops for staff at the University of Otago next Semester.

**3.5 All Executive Officers shall every quarter undertake five hours of voluntary service which contributes to the local community.**

I spent five hours this quarter working with the Student Volunteer Army (in an administrative capacity and regarding Local Outreach Officers) although I did volunteer for physical work too although this was ultimately not required.

**3.6 All Executive Officers are expected to regularly check and respond to all correspondence received.**

I have been very attentive to my emails this quarter (having received a very high number) and believe that I check them regularly and respond appropriately. I also believe I do the same for Executive correspondence over Facebook messenger.

**Part Three: Attendance and involvement in OUSA and University Committees**The following is a list of University/OUSA committees that I sit on and have met this quarter:

* Senate\*1
* OUSA Executive
* OUSA Executive Standing Committee
* OUSA Academic Committee
* OUSA Financial and Expenditure Committee
* Board of Undergraduate Studies
* Humanities Divisional Board
* Health Sciences Divisional Board
* Health Sciences First Year Strategic Management Committee\*
* First Year Transition Network
* Summer School and Continuing Education
* PXSS Working Group
* Division of Humanities Leadership Group
* Humanities Academic Committee
* Quality Advancement Committee
* Committee for Advancement of Learning and Teaching
* Academic Integrity Working Group
* Health Sciences Divisional Board
* ExamSoft Working Group
* IT Governance Board

\*1 not held

\*2 unable to attend due to clash but read agenda and minutes of meeting

**Part Four: Goals**

Regretfully COVID-19 meant that for the most part the goals I have outlined were put on pause while I worked with students on the adaptation to online teaching and learning and any pressing issues that arose. In terms of **Sustainability** I noted reducing paper waste as a goal – something that inadvertently happened this Semester due to the change to completely online. Looking how this can be carried across into ‘normal’ University life is something I look forward to working on/reporting on next quarter. I also continued to work on the planning of Sustainability week and also researching how to reduce energy as an OUSA Executive as part of the Green Your Scene initiative.

**Class Representatives and Student Associations –** both of these played an important role this Semester and proved their inherent value to students and as part of the University structure. My main goal here is to continue to strengthen this. I have started preliminary work on the review of Summer School Class reps with the Summer School Director and have (at the time of writing this report) a scheduled meeting with the Class Rep Coordinator to discuss the strengths/weaknesses of Class Reps identified across this Semester and changes we’d like to see going forward. Working with members of the Academic Committee work has begun on the development of two new Student Associations – something I think will only strengthen and enhance the student experience in these departments.

**Lecture Recordings**

Are something that all students have now experienced as a consequence of the switch to online teaching/learning – working to ensure these become a permanent option for students remains on my goals for this year. This work was put on pause across this Semester for obvious reasons but will be continued in the post-COVID landscape of next semester – will update next quarter.

Overall, my main goal shifted for this Semester and it really became all about ensuring that I was supporting and advocating for students in any and every capacity I could as we went through lockdown but also across the entire switch to online-only University. Overall, I do feel confident that I achieved this goal and was competent and capable in my role as Academic Representative throughout the different context I worked through. So many things arose in this that required my attention and time that my larger goals did take somewhat of a back seat, however I feel as though this was entirely reasonable given the circumstances and I am committed to continuing to work towards them in the next half of the year.

**Part Five: General**

This quarter has been massive, and it has felt at times like work in this role has been never-ending. Obviously, this semester has been like nothing else before and therefore so have been the challenges/difficulties/issues students have faced – therefore our responsibilities as student representatives also took a different shape. One of the best achievements in terms of general business as a student representative was helping to secure the 5% grade bump for students at the University of Otago and being able to break that news to students. Also ensuring that COVID-19 was an eligible category for Special Consideration (in the very early days). Forming and launching with the F&S Officer the OUSA Survey on ‘Impacts of COVID for Students’ while taking work to get underway, was also incredibly valuable in helping to gain insight and understanding as to how students were being impacted by COVID-19. I have also been required to respond to many individuals emails sent to me with students detailing how they have been impacted or affected by COVID-19 in a variety of ways – this has ranged from issues with online teaching/learning, feeling overwhelmed by changes to their course, inadequate communication from the University, uncertainty regarding meeting graduation requirements, issues with online exams, use of ExamSoft… the list goes on. In every instance I have tried to work with these students – where needed providing explanation, pointing them in the right direction with help and support and ideally finding a solution. The Welfare Representative and I have worked on progressing a local branch of the Student Volunteer Army in Dunedin throughout this Semester recognising the value and importance of having a localised structure. I also worked with the Disability Support Centre in order to facilitate the supply of notes for Otago students who were forced to return from an exchange early and consequently missed out on weeks of learning. In general work I have been involved in the planning and preparation for Sustainability Week, providing input on the submissions brought forward by the Political Representative, engaging with the NZUSA Education Committee (as Chair), supporting student representatives and nominating for student representative vacancies across the University. I have also considered it important helping support my fellow Exec members where needed throughout a pretty difficult semester. There were regular meetings held over Zoom during the lockdown period which were an invaluable support but also as a method to stay engaged and constantly working on how to best represent students as OUSA.

To conclude, I want to emphasise that I really do value my position as the Academic Representative and I am proud of the work OUSA achieved for students across this unprecedented quarter. I look forward to a return to more hopefully more normality next quarter and continuing to support and advocate for students in any way that I can.