



MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Student Representative Committee (SRC) meeting held on Monday August 5 2021 via Zoom video/teleconference.

PRESENT:	Udai Kamath (Assistant Chairperson – appointed Interim Chairperson)
<i>All SRC representatives attended virtually</i>	Amy Lamont (present for first 10 minutes)
	Peshala Denagamage
	Claire Wescombe
	Fatima Khan
	Kaitlin York
	Sadra Yousefi
	Curtis Micallef
	Harry Stone
	Aakansha Jadhav
	Sheel Bhansali
	Ziyan Tejani
	Saliha Rehanaz
	Allastassia Carter
	Amanda O'Neill
	Eryna Tasha
	Jeremiah Dixon
	Jarrold Currey
	Pavel Pfitzner
	Jayden Whaites-Fruitrich
APOLOGIES:	Zarah Sully
ABSENT:	None
IN ATTENDANCE:	Professor Bruce Dowton - Vice-Chancellor
	Professor Mariella Herberstein – Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
	Lilia Draganov – Senior Manager, Student Life and SRC Secretary
	Madison Scott – Grapeshot Deputy Editor
SECRETARIAT:	Kimberly La – SRC Secretariat Officer, Student Life

1. PROCEDURAL ITEMS

1.1. Acknowledgement of Country

The Chairperson (Chair) opened the meeting at 6:05 pm. Eryna Tasha provided the Acknowledgment of Country as per the text provided by the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy):

“I respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Macquarie University land, the Wallumattagal clan of the Dharug Nation. May we pay respects to the Elders, and knowledge holders who have, and continue to, pass on their knowledge and wisdom for the sustainability of our environments, our cultures, our education and our communities. May the ancestors spirits watch over us today to ensure that we have a successful and productive meeting and may we remember to tread lightly on our countries and to thoughtfully carry on the legacy of those that walked before us on this land.”

ACTION: Ziyan Tejani to provide the Acknowledgement of Country at the next meeting of the SRC, to be held on 9 September 2021.

1.2. Chair's Welcome, Quorum, and Apologies

The Chair declared the meeting quorate and welcomed all attendees.

The Chair noted that apologies were received from Zarah Sully and acknowledged the University staff in attendance.

1.3. Disclosure of conflicts of interest

No conflict of interests were declared.

2. PRESENTATIONS BY INVITED GUESTS

Professor Bruce Dowton addressed the matter of staff redundancies, as a matter arising from the previous July 8 SRC meeting. He clarified that MQ transformation journey began in 2019 before COVID. In 2020, COVID intensified the situation and the need for change has become evident. Furthermore in 2020 the university's income decreased by 53.2 million dollars whilst the university's expenditure remained the same.

Amy Lamont interjected, asking the Alternate Chair why students have been rejected from attending the meeting. The Chair did not provide a response, stating that there is a separate section of the meeting dedicated towards addressing that matter. As Amy continued to talk, the Chair issues his first warning. After the first warning Amy was given another two warnings as she continued interrupting the presentation. Amy continued speaking, to which her third warning was given. As a result, Chair has asked for Amy to be removed from the meeting in accordance with Section 8 (i) of the SRC constitution. After Amy's removal, Professor Bruce Dowton resumed speaking about staff cuts.

Jayden Whaites-Fruitrich asked if there were any impact on student to teaching ratio with the staff cuts and whether class sizes will change compared with Zoom and when learning is back in person. In regard to a difference in class sizes between online and in-person, the Vice-Chancellor said that he was unaware of any distinction. In regard to the staff to student ratio provided in Amy Lamont's motion in the July 8th SRC Meeting, the Vice-Chancellor claimed that those numbers were gathered from an international agency. In contrast, Macquarie University follows the Australian Higher Education standards provided by the Australian Department of Education, that states that the ratio is in the high 20s to 1. The Vice-Chancellor further clarified that units were not cut simply based on numerical values. He elaborated that there was a consistent consultation process applied and that each Dean/Department Head was given an opportunity to defend their units and this helped in deciding which programs would continue. VC acknowledged that difficult decisions were made, but those decisions were based on data and staff consultation.

Eryna Tasha asked whether the costs associated with physical facilities have decreased because of COVID and also if University should stop investing in building new facilities. The Vice-Chancellor said the utility spending had been reduced since COVID in 2020. Further, in 2020, the university decided to purchase energy in a new way which led to significant savings. The Vice-Chancellor justified spending on new buildings, clarifying that there is separate funding dedicated to building works and those funds cannot be used on staffing expenses.

Claire Wescombe asked whether students are going to be impacted by the cuts and what steps the university will take to ensure our learning quality remains a priority. The Vice-Chancellor said that there will be a greater focus on enhancing employability and these changes are reflected in curriculum. There is a need to align current and future course with the industry requirements and demands and to ensure that students are successful post-graduation. Jarrod Currey asked why the decision to cancel in person lectures was made so early in the semester when COVID first began in 2020. Further, he asked whether the learning needs of students with disabilities, such as ADHD, were taken into account. The Vice-Chancellor responded that

the decision to pause large classes was because it is well-known that attendance for tutorials is better than lecture attendance. Therefore, they closed early, whilst gradually bringing back small classes. Further, with the Delta variant this semester, they couldn't take any chances, and explained that it would be very hard to socially distance in lectures with large number of students. He also presented the hypothetical; what if there are groups of students who refuse to wear mask, stating there are compliance issues and it would be unfair to expect staff to manage such situations. Further, this would give rise to work, health and safety issues, thus there must be a balancing of priorities. Hence, the COVID-19 task force was created to debate such issues to balance judgment calls.

Further, Professor Mariella Herberstein spoke of the high health risks associated with COVID. Moreover, she admitted that they have not thought through all groups of students and extended an invitation to Jarrod for further discussions. In particular, she noted that she is happy to have further conversations with Jarrod to see how the needs of students with disability can be met.

Finally, Sadra Yousefi asked the Vice-Chancellor when he thinks the university will return to its pre-COVID financial status. The Vice-Chancellor responded that the university had been focusing on working towards what will be the "new business as usual" rather than returning to pre-covid. He outlined that this means finding new income streams such as more industry engagement and educational planning which will shift towards flexibility.

The Vice-Chancellor concluded by apologising for if he did anything to inflame Amy Lamont. He said he has interacted with her on a number of occasions and has previously offered to have a discussion with her, however, she has refused. Further the VC thanked the committee for inviting him to have a conversation and he is happy to engage with the group in the future.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

3.1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 17 May 2021

The Chair called for any comments or amendments to the minutes of the SRC meeting held on 8 July 2021.

Resolution SRC 21/09

The Student Representative Committee RESOLVED to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2021 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3.2. Summary of outstanding action items

The Chair noted that an outstanding action from the previous meeting was the open letter regarding staff cuts that Amy Lamont was supposed to draft and present at the current meeting. Given that she was not present, the Chair deferred this to the next meeting.

3.3 Business arising from the minutes (not dealt with elsewhere in the Agenda)

Sadra provided an update in regards to his Arcade Games Motion presented at the previous July 8 Meeting. He informed the SRC that he has narrowed down the purchase to five arcade games.

Pavel Pftizner suggested that Sadra check the games are 240V to ensure we do not need to purchase adapters. Sadra noted this and said he will re-submit this motion in the future now that he has updated the SRC.

4. REPORT FROM SRC TREASURER

4.1. SRC July 2021 and Postgraduate Fund (MUPRA) July 2021 Expenditure Report

Sadra noted that the SRC budget has been increased from \$80,000 to \$120,000. Further, he notified the SRC that he used his Treasurer powers to pass a grant for the Macquarie Symphony Orchestra.

The Treasurer confirmed that there is \$59,196.66 remaining in the SRC budget and \$244,759.64 remaining in the MUPRA fund (not including the money set aside for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Extra-Curricular Award Program 2021).

The Committee noted the report.

5. REPORT FROM SRC SPOKESPERSON/S

One of the SRC Spokespersons (Eryna Tasha) provided a verbal report, noting correspondence from students reaching out for mental health support. Further, there have been general complaints and queries which have been addressed or referred to other university services.

The Committee noted the report.

6. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

The student elected member of the University Council (Jayden Whaites-Fruitrich) confirmed that there had been no meeting since the last SRC meeting.

The Committee noted the report.

7. REPORT FROM STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

The Treasurer (Sadra Yousefi) noted that there had been no meeting since the last SRC meeting, however, it is occurring in August 5th. He confirmed that he will provide reports from this meeting at the September SRC meeting.

The Committee noted the report.

8. AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

8.1. Macquarie University App

Eryna Tasha spoke on her motion to develop an app that collates the existing Macquarie University apps. She suggested that it would make the virtual university experience easier and explained her consultation process. She proposed that emails are inefficient and there is a disconnect in communication which can be fixed through the app. For example, students will check their phone notifications more often than their emails. Moreover, she provided the example of other university apps, which have been downloaded more than the separate Macquarie University apps.

Peshala Denagamage questioned the cost and profits associated with such an app. Eryna clarified that the SRC would not be responsible for the cost, rather the SRC is simply advocating for the university to create an app such as this. As for profit, she was unsure.

Jayden Whaites-Fruitrich clarified that the app can be funded by SSAF fees, since it is to support student life.

As there were no further questions and comment, the Chair commenced voting for this motion.

Resolution SRC 21/10

The Student Representative Committee PASSED the motion.

8.2. Increased Communication to Students Via Texting

Claire Wescombe spoke on her motion to increase communication to students via texting. She stated that these COVID-19 times bring about a need for higher levels of communication from the university. Since times are uncertain and ever-changing due to the current health situation, there is a high need for more transparency and higher levels of communication.

There were no further questions and the Chair commenced voting.

Resolution SRC 21/11

The Student Representative Committee PASSED the motion.

8.3. Online Study Buddy Program

Amanda O'Neill spoke on her motion to renew the online study buddy program. Given that a large percentage of students are studying online such as international students and distance students, she suggested this program would be helpful. Further, her consultation with the Orientation Manager, Cassie Khamis, confirmed that the costs of the 2020 program was \$5,000

There were no further questions and the Chair commenced voting.

Resolution SRC 21/12

The Student Representative Committee PASSED the motion to commit \$5,000 towards an Online Study Buddy Program.

8.4 Stand up for LGBTI+ Rights: Stop the Religious Freedoms Bill

The Chair noted that Amy was not present and that this motion cannot proceed as it is out of SRC scope and not in line with SRC terms of reference. The Chair reiterated that it is not the role of SRC to take a position on politics and that motions should be confined to matters relating to student experience at Macquarie University.

8.5 Save our Staff: Join the Campaign to Fight Forced Redundancies

As Amy was not present, the Chair called upon the co-writers to present this motion.

Curtis Micallef clarified that Amy did not seek permission from himself or Peshala Denagamage to have their names put on the motion.

9. REPORTS FROM SUBCOMMITTEES

9.1. Formation of Subcommittees update

The Secretariat Officer confirmed that since the last SRC meeting, three subcommittees had been formed. She noted that Claire Wescombe has been voted the Chair of the Marketing & Communications Subcommittee and Ziyen Tejani has been voted as the Chair of the SSAF Subcommittee. She noted that the Chair of the Mental Health Subcommittee has not been voted in yet.

The Committee noted the report.

9.2 Marketing and Communications Subcommittee

Claire updated the Committee on her recent posts to the SRC social media channels. Further, she invited SRC members to contact her if they wish to join the subcommittee.

The Committee noted the report.

9.3 Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) Subcommittee

Ziyan Tejani confirmed that the committee met on July 23. He outlined that he was voted as Chair at that meeting and they discussed an MQMS society grant that was received. He noted that there was inconsistency in their grant application, hence the grant has been deferred so SSAF can seek clarity on this matter.

Further, he confirmed that more grants have been received. However, they were submitted after the deadline for agenda items. Therefore, they will meet prior to the next SRC meeting to provide recommendations on those grants.

The Committee noted the report.

9.4 Mental Health Subcommittee

Peshala Denagamage confirmed there has been no meeting yet, however, invited SRC members to join the committee if they are interested.

The Committee noted the report.

10. Other Business

Saliha Rehanaz asked why the meeting minutes from 2020 have not been posted.

Lilia Draganov clarified that during that time, there were staff changes and changes to the website. Lilia reported that a request to IT has been sent to have the minutes uploaded to the website.

11. QUESTION TIME

No questions asked. Lilia Draganov welcomed any questions from SRC members via email to srcsecretariat@mq.edu.au.

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SRC will be held on 9 September 2021. Agenda items are due by 30 August 2021 via e-mail to srcsecretariat@mq.edu.au.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed by the Chair at 7:38 pm.

CONFIRMED as a true and accurate record of the meeting and its proceedings:

Draft approved by SRC Alternate Chair via email on 29 August 2021.

Udai Kamath

SRC Assistant Chairperson

Date: 29 August 2021