

University of New England  
Student Council

# **UNE Student Council**

# **CONSTITUTION**

## 1. Preliminary

This document is the UNE Student Council (SC) Constitution and sets out the purpose, powers, activities, and responsibilities of the UNE Student Council.

This Constitution should be read in conjunction with any SC Manual.

## 2. Interpretation

In this Constitution, the following definitions apply:

“Academic Year” is the period from the commencement of Trimester 1, through to the end of the exam period of Trimester 3.

“Election” means a Student Council election.

“Council” means the UNE Student Council. “SC” has the same meaning.

“Days” refers to calendar days, including the weekend and any public holidays. If a period of time is specified in days, it will be calculated by excluding the day the act or intention initiated, and the day upon which the purpose is to be fulfilled.

“Student Member” refers to all Students (as defined below), except that Students have opted out of membership.

“Representatives” refers to Student Representatives of the SC.

“SC Administration Officer” refers to the employed position of an Administration Officer for the SC, who is tasked with assisting with governance and administration tasks, and (e.g. UNE Council reports).

“SC Returning Officer” refers to the UNE Staff member, so delegated by UNE Governance, who is responsible for conducting elections and announcing results of the elections.

“Staff” means an employee or contractor of UNE.

“Advisory Group” refers to Staff and Alumni who form part of the Advisory Group.

“Student” means an admitted Student or an enrolled Student of UNE, at the relevant time:

- a) An admitted Student is a Student who has been admitted to a UNE course of study and who is entitled to enrol in a unit of study or who has completed all of the units in the UNE course of study;
- b) An enrolled Student is a Student who is enrolled in a unit of study at UNE.

“Student priorities” means areas or services that Students at UNE advise are a priority via the Student voice survey.

“University” and “UNE” refer to the University of New England, established under the University of New England Act, 1993.

### 3. Purpose

The SC aims to represent Student opinions and needs impartially, candidly and with integrity, maintaining Student's best interests and promoting partnership between Students and Staff.

The SC is dedicated to building resilient and authentic Student representation and promoting valued Student voice at UNE.

The purpose of the SC is to:

- a) Provide a formal avenue for Student consultation, collaboration and voice on UNE matters;
- b) Enhance and promote the welfare of UNE Students, and better the UNE learning experience;
- c) Represent UNE Students within, and external to the University;
- d) Promote communication and interaction between UNE Students and staff to inform, facilitate and engage in a partnership approach at UNE;
- e) Provide an opportunity and create a safe space for Student representatives to collaborate with, and provide input to the University on matters of interest, including but not limited to the engagement of current and future Students;
- f) Provide and coordinate Partnership Forums for the discussion and co-creation of solutions for UNE problems, where Representatives and Staff both meaningfully participate in decision making processes together;
- g) Aid in the development of co-created solutions, and the provision of new and innovative ideas and practices where these are of benefit to UNE and UNE Students;
- h) Enable UNE to benefit from the diversity of skill, backgrounds and experience of the Student population and their engagement; and
- i) Act as a conduit or meeting point for Student representative liaison and voice on behalf of UNE Students; and
- h) Make recommendations to the SSAF Committee about the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) allocation in accordance with the Higher Education Support Act and the Higher Education Support (Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy) Guidelines 2022 (as amended from time to time) and Student priorities.

The Council may conduct any such activities which fulfil the purpose and are in accordance with UNE policies.

### 4. The Student Council

#### 4.1 SC Representatives

The SC is comprised of:

- a) UNE Council Student Member (ex officio) and Chair of the SC
- b) Five Online Students Representatives (elected)
- c) Two General Student Representatives – Undergraduate (elected)
- d) Two General Student Representatives – Postgraduate or Research (elected)
- e) Two International Students Representatives (elected)
- f) One Residential College Representative (elected)

- g) One On-Campus Student Representative (elected)
- h) One Indigenous Student Representative (elected)
- i) One Accessibility Representative (elected)

Elected Representatives hold their position for 2 years. Elected Representatives are expected to provide handovers at the conclusion of their term and ensure the continuity of the SC.

Elected Representatives may request to take a leave of absence on grounds such as natural disaster, personal injury, or caring duties. Leave requests, including length of time requested, must be made in writing, to the SC Chairperson.

SC Representatives, upon acceptance of their elected position, agree to work in partnership with UNE and Staff to meet the purpose of the SC. This includes making efforts to collaborate, liaise and communicate with other representatives, staff, attend meetings and Forums and participate with Student's best interest in mind.

**SC Representatives must comply with UNE policies at all times.**

#### **4.2 Retirement**

An elected Representative's term will end if:

- a) They cease to be a Student;
- b) They fail to attend at least three general meetings consecutively without approved leave and the SC resolves they are retired;
- c) The SC resolves that the Representatives term should end early because:
  - They have breached this Constitution in a manner that is detrimental to the Council or University; or
  - They have been expelled or excluded from the University; or
  - They have acted in a way that is detrimental to the Council or University.

The following acts are detrimental to the Council or University:

- a) Breaches of University Policy or the law;
- b) Breaches of the Behavioural Misconduct Rule.

#### **4.3 Casual Vacancies**

Vacancies of elected Representatives will be filled by considering the next voted individual. Where this is exhausted and those individuals do not wish to fill the vacancy, the vacancy may be filled by seeking expressions of interest from Students. The eligibility criteria below will apply except for b. The vacancy will be considered filled until the next election.

#### **4.4 Vote of no confidence**

The SC may determine that it is no longer able to operate effectively by passing a special resolution to pass a vote of no confidence.

If the special resolution is passed all elected Representative roles will be declared vacant and an election will be held.

## 4.5 Elections

### General

- a) An election will be held every 2 years or if a vote of no confidence is passed.
- b) Elections are overseen by the SC Returning Officer. The SC Returning Officer may delegate tasks to the SC Administration Officer.

### Calling an Election

- a) An election may be called by the SC Returning Officer.
- b) Notice of elections will be made on the SC website.

### Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in the elections (i.e. nominating as a SC Representative), a Student must:

- a) Have an active enrolment at UNE in a course;
- b) Have at least 3 trimesters left in their course;
- c) Not be full-time permanent (or fixed term) staff member of UNE; and
- d) Have no recorded breaches of the UNE Student Behavioural Misconduct Rule.

### Nomination

A Student may nominate themselves for the role of an SC Representative via submission of the online form. This form will request information on the Student's eligibility, which representative position/s they wish to nominate for, their portfolio interest and contact details. Students will also be asked to provide a candidate statement, outlining why they would like to be an SC Representative, and what they hope to bring to the SC. Your candidate statement will form part of the ballot paper sent to all Students who are eligible to vote in the election. Forms submitted without this information will not be considered.

### Nominee Verification

The SC Returning Officer, supported by the SC Administration Officer, will verify that nominees are current Students, are eligible, and have provided all relevant details correctly before nominees are loaded into the election platform.

### Voting

All eligible UNE Students will be emailed a secure link to vote for representatives based on the candidate statements provided. Preferential voting will take place, and Students who receive preferred votes will be notified that they are now elected SC Representatives.

## 4.6 SC Chairperson

- a) The Elected UNE Council Student Member (ex officio) will be the SC Chairperson.
- b) The SC Chairperson is empowered to:
  - Direct the SC, and its Representatives in relation to the business of the SC, call SC meetings and adjudicate on discussions.
  - Create sub-committees for activities, on an on-going, recurrent, or single project basis, and establish working groups for functions.
  - Instruct Representatives to carry out specific tasks, request reports, and or request other tasks from Representative.

- c) The SC Chairperson must report to the UNE Council about SC activities and impact.

#### **4.7 Sub- committees**

- a) Sub-committees may be created by approval of the SC Chairperson;
- b) Any person may propose the creation of a sub-committee and must provide draft terms of reference to guide their specific intent, purpose, duration, and membership. Draft terms of reference may be provided to the SC for discussion and feedback will be taken under advisement by the SC Chairperson;
- c) A sub-committee should be predominantly comprised of SC Representatives, however, where needed, Staff and/or other Students may be co-opted for specific needs to be addressed;
- d) A sub-committee chairperson is to be appointed. The sub-committee chairperson will report to the SC;
- e) The sub-committee must operate within the terms of reference;
- f) Terms of reference must have a clause providing for a delegated sub-committee chairperson, usually being an elected SC Representative who volunteers to undertake the role, and who will report back to the SC and SC Chairperson;
- g) A sub-committee should have a fixed term, and the sub-committee chairperson, in conjunction with the SC Chairperson may review this based on expected outcomes as needed. Sub-committees may be dissolved or have their terms of reference amended by ordinary resolution of the SC;

### **5. Advisory Group**

Staff and Alumni can apply to join the Advisory Group. The purpose of the Advisory Group is to provide mentoring, support, and advice to the SC.

Staff and Alumni do not have a right to vote. They may, however, speak at meetings, and may be asked to provide insight or advice on matters.

### **6. Activities of the SC**

The SC functions to actively consult on, and voice Student issues and concerns, facilitating institution-wide discussion on these relevant issues to encourage Student engagement. The SC prioritises Student wellbeing and education, and operates under a partnership framework of Student and staff collaboration to meet these mutual objectives.

#### **6.1 Student Consultation**

The SC will conduct regular consultation with Students on matters arising at UNE. This consultation may be a mix of formal and informal methods, including surveys, opinion polls, social media posts and comments, focus groups, feedback/suggestion boxes, and outreach activities. Quantitative methods will be used to capture Student voice where there is an issue that the SC is advocating to ensure that the advocacy is representative. Feedback can be made in person or virtually, via writing or verbal correspondence.

#### **6.2 Student Voice**

SC Representatives are tasked with collating Student opinions, concerns and suggestions from their consultation and recording this. Records of Student opinion or issues then will be prioritised into categories,

and specific issues or trends, to be voiced at Student Staff Partnership Forums, with UNE Executive or via relevant academic governance forums. At these Forums, Student issues will be considered, and solutions to these issues will be co-created by representatives and staff. SC Representatives are tasked with reporting agreed upon solutions back to the Student body or providing updates on work being conducted towards finding an appropriate solution. Updates should occur once per trimester using the SC blog, and an annual report should be released at the end of the SC term.

### **6.3 Support**

The SC is tasked with forging links with existing UNE Student member/representative bodies and functions of the University, and at least once a Trimester, should make efforts to discuss current issues in consultation with these representatives. This liaison function should be used to assist in prioritised issues for the SC, and to ensure lines of communication remain open. Further informal meetings may be held at the discretion of the SC.

### **6.4 Liaison**

The SC is tasked with forging links with existing UNE Student member/representative bodies and functions of the University, and at least once a Trimester, should make efforts to discuss current issues in consultation with these representatives. This liaison function should be used to assist in prioritised issues for the SC, and to ensure lines of communication remain open. Further informal meetings may be held at the discretion of the SC.

## **7. SC Student and Staff Partnership Forums**

Student voice at UNE will be aired in a scheduled Forum each Trimester, chaired by the SC Chairperson. This Forum will invite SC Representatives and UNE staff to discuss issues raised by UNE Students during consultation and provide a space for Students and staff to work collaboratively to co-create solutions for these issues.

A Forum preparation meeting with Representatives and Advisory Group members to discuss items to be tabled at the Forum. This should be 6 weeks prior to the Forum.

### **7.1 Intent**

The Forums intent is to provide a virtual space where Students and staff can work together to solve issues. Partnership is crucial to this Forum, as solutions should be co-created. Co-creation involves looking at the cause of the issue, and investigating solutions that are fit for purpose and considering the needs of all parties involved, improving the Student experience, engagement, and retention.

### **7.2 Process**

7.2.1 SC Representatives, in consultation with Students, staff and other representatives as appropriate, will call for matters to be raised at the Forum at least 6 weeks in advance of the Forum.

7.2.2 Items raised will be prioritised based on category, impact, and pervasiveness. SC Representatives and or relevant staff/ staff advisory board members will be assigned to provide information at the Forum on said topic.

7.2.3 Items will then be added to the Forum agenda and sent out to all who will be in attendance at least 14 days in advance of the Forum, with a Zoom meeting invitation, and any relevant papers.

- 7.2.4 The SC Chairperson will open the meeting and direct the Forum attendees through agenda items.
- 7.2.5 Issues should be addressed from an effective point of view and have a focus on practical solutions and their co-creation.
- 7.2.6 Where issues cannot be solved in the first instance, a relevant staff member will take the responsibility for heading up a Working Group with Students to investigate options, and this will be communicated by the SC to Students via the SC Blog.
- 7.2.7 Forum outcomes and actions will be reported via minutes by the SC Administration Officer and made public to staff and Students via appropriate channels such as myLearn.

### **7.3 Forum Attendees**

- 7.3.1 SC Representatives, and associated staff will host the Forums, and may extend invitations to members of the Advisory Board, and other Students in active participating capacities as needed for advice, knowledge or expertise.
- 7.3.2 Forums will be open to the general UNE community, including all Students, on a viewing and Q&A capacity.
- 7.3.3 Staff with standing active invitations to the Forums in the role of partners include:
  - 7.3.3.1 Members of the Executive Team (or their nominee);
  - 7.3.3.2 One academic staff representative from each Faculty;
  - 7.3.3.3 Student Experience Manager;
  - 7.3.3.4 Director, Student Services;
  - 7.3.3.5 Chief Information Officer;
  - 7.3.3.6 University Librarian and Director Library Services;
  - 7.3.3.7 Director, UNE Residential System;
  - 7.3.3.8 Director, International Office;
  - 7.3.3.9 UNE Life CEO (or Nominee).
- 7.3.4 Forums are intended to have equal numbers of Students and staff in participation.

### **7.4 SC Endorsement**

The SC should note and publicise decisions and outcomes from Forums, and iterate whether decisions are still pending, in addition to providing details on whether the SC has endorsed decisions as results of Student feedback.

### **7.5 SC Reporting**

- 7.5.1 Forums must be minuted, and records of these minutes and actions should be posted online via appropriate channels;
- 7.5.2 The SC should also produce an annual report on the years Forums, analysing:
  - 7.5.2.1 Trends and themes in Forum topics;
  - 7.5.2.2 Results and actions taken;



7.5.2.3 A review of what worked well and what needs to work;

7.5.2.4 Any outstanding items of work.

## **8. Governance and Representation**

SC governance and representation practices are outlined in the SC Manual. In compliance with the SC Manual the SC should ensure the following:

### **8.1 Minimum Meetings**

- a) An SC Meeting must be held at least once per Trimester and may be held more often if the need arises, with 10 days' notice provided.
- b) All meetings must be conducted via digital meeting software, in addition to any in-person accessibility.

### **8.2 Meeting Papers**

8.2.1 Agendas should be sent out with meeting notifications.

8.2.2 Unless the SC Chairperson otherwise approves, business papers and reports relating to a scheduled meeting will be distributed at least 7 days prior to that meeting. Additional documents may be tabled with shorter notice, as long as it is deemed as soon as practicable in the circumstances.

### **8.3 Attendance**

8.3.1 SC Representative attendance at meetings is mandatory unless a Representative has:

8.3.1.1 Sent in a formal apology via writing;

8.3.1.2 Received an approved leave of absence;

8.3.2 Quorum at any meeting is 51% of SC Representatives. Resolutions cannot be passed if a meeting is not quorate.

### **8.4 Voting**

8.4.1 Decisions of the SC are made by resolution.

8.4.2 Each representative has a single vote.

8.4.3 An ordinary resolution is passed where 51% of Representatives in attendance vote in favour.

8.4.4 A special resolution is passed where 60% of Representatives in attendance vote in favour.

### **8.5 Representation, Consultation and Liaison**

The minimum accepted standards for SC representation is as follows:

8.5.1 SC Representatives will conduct at least one Student outreach initiative each Trimester;

8.5.2 The SC will maintain an open feedback mechanism at all times;

8.5.3 The SC will conduct a Student experience survey or focus group once per trimester;

8.5.4 The SC will regularly update the Blog with outcomes and current issues;

- 8.5.5 The SC will hold a representative liaison meeting with other Student members/representatives each Trimester;
- 8.5.6 The SC will engage with the Staff Advisory Board routinely on matters, to seek advice and liaison on Student issues as needed;
- 8.5.7 The SC will release an annual report at the end of the academic year.

### **11.5 SC Feedback, Reporting and Review**

- a) The SC will ensure that there is a continuous feedback loop on Student issues, with outcomes from Forums and or progress being updated in a timely manner via myLearn, social media and the SC Website.
- b) The SC must update the progress blog after each Forum with outcomes, and periodically provide updates on on-going matters through the year. Additionally, formal reports should be made regarding SSAF priorities, emerging Student issues, and an annual report reviewing the SC for the past year.
- c) The SC will make available meeting minutes in a timely manner for UNE Students.

### **11.6 Document and Record Management**

- a) The SC will adhere to UNE policy on records management and other relevant UNE policies.
- b) All documentation produced or received by the SC should be stored in the allocated SC TRIM container. Document copies may also be stored in the SC email account and in collaborative software for the purposes of sharing.
- c) SC correspondence will only be noted and approved as being official where the SC letterhead is used, and the SC email account is used to distribute the correspondence. In certain instances, correspondence may also be sent using physical mail, where the letterhead is used.
- d) Documents containing confidential or private information must be kept secure with access controls in place.
- e) Student feedback should have all personal identifying information redacted prior to being recorded in reports which will be circulated or released to maintain privacy and confidentiality. The exception to this is where specific permission is given by the Student to release their identity in direct relation to a matter.

### **11.7 Financial Management**

- a) The SC must comply with all UNE finance policies.
- b) The SC must annually place a SSAF bid for the next years planned initiatives. This information should be handed over to the next Committee as needed.
- c) The SC Chairperson is responsible for oversight of the SC funds. The SC Chairperson will be supported in this responsibility by the SC Administration Officer.
- d) The SC Chairperson may, where necessary, delegate financial officer duties to another representative. All SC funds must be accounted for, with receipts appropriately stored.
- e) All SC funds must be managed online. Only in exceptional circumstances will cash transactions be approved.

- f) All SC funds must be spent in accordance with their approval and allocation from SSAF. Unspent funds should be acquitted and returned.
- g) The SC may create revenue from initiatives and sales, and this can be spent via online transactions for SC purposes such as events, merchandise, or equipment.
- h) The SC Administration Officer is responsible for ensuring that SC Representatives receive their Honorarium payments.
- i) Account reporting should occur quarterly for all incoming and outgoing monies.

## **12. Acknowledgement of Student Contributions**

- a) SC Chairperson is eligible for an honorarium in acknowledgement for the additional duties required of the position. The honorarium will be calculated at a per annum figure and paid per fortnight and may be paused while the SC Chairperson is on leave. The SC Chairperson has the authority to delegate the honorarium to representatives.
- b) Representatives will receive a formal letter acknowledging their specific contributions to the University when requested.

## **19. Constitutional Amendments**

- a) No amendment may be made to this Constitution except by Special Resolution in a SC Meeting.
- b) Notice of motions to amend the Constitution should include the proposal, and any additional papers so relevant to the motion.

## **20. Student Council Review**

The SC should, at the end of each term of office, seek Student and Staff opinion on SC Representation process, requesting advice or comment to be passed onto the next Council. This should act as a method of reviewing the SC function and identifying areas of improvement to be made for the benefit of Students. Comment on specific individuals is to be disregarded.

## **21. Dissolution of the Student Council**

The SC will be dissolved if:

- a) at least 20% of all Students vote.
- b) 51% of those Students vote in favour of dissolution.