

Class Representative Handbook

Te Puka Tautoko i te Māngai Karaehe

2023



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Welcome

NAU MAI HAERE MAI

Haere mai!

Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro, nōna te ngahere. Ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga, nōna te ao.

The bird that consumes the miro berries, navigates the forest. The bird that consumes knowledge, navigates the world.

Kia ora, thank you for putting your hand up to be a Class Representative this year!

Your role has the immense privilege of effecting change in the quality of learning and teaching for you and your class. As a vital link between your class lecturer, VUWSA, and the University, you can contribute to immediate improvements in learning opportunities. As well as this, you will personally benefit from the training and experience of being an advocate and a spokesperson on behalf of your peers.

Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) and Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) both share a strong commitment to improving the quality of education at Victoria. Class Representatives are at the heart of making that commitment a reality. We value students like you who have the opportunity to work collaboratively with staff improving learning experiences by expressing the concerns and ideas of your peers. When you listen to the members of your class, pass on their feedback, and connect students with each other, you're not only impacting the quality of education at Victoria, but also the student-experience. Your effort is always valued.

How to use this Handbook

This Handbook seeks to help you learn about your role as a Class Representative. It explains how to be an effective representative and where to receive support as a Class Representative. We've also made a copy available online at vuwsa.org.nz.

All Class Representatives are required to complete an online training session. You also have access to Joseph Habgood, the VUWSA Student Representation Coordinator (SRC) to help you throughout the semester. To contact the SRC, send an email to studentvoice@vuwsa.org.nz or phone (04) 463 6987.

Our student members on the Education Team can also be contacted at academic@vuwsa.org.nz (Willa Aitken, Academic Vice President) or education@vuwsa.org.nz (Kayla Allen, Education Officer).

On behalf of the Academic Team, we are excited to help you make the University experience even better!

Ngā mihi nui,
VUWSA Academic Team

Importance of Class Reps

TE KAUPAPA NUI O TE MĀNGAI KARAEHE

One of the University's primary strategies is to 'provide a holistic learning, teaching and student experience that is second to none.' As a Class Representative, your role is important in a number of ways, including:

Support – Class Representatives provide the first point of contact for other students in their class. They help resolve basic problems, offer guidance and provide support.

Consultation – Class Representatives help provide feedback about teaching quality and assessments, course content and facilities to academic staff and student representatives.

Voice – Class Representatives are, most importantly, the voice of Victoria students. They provide an important link between students, academic staff and the University Academic Office.

What happens now?

ME AHA ?

1. Register

Fill out the online registration form with your correct contact details. It's also a good idea to arrange for your email address to be put up on myTools so that you can easily be contacted by your class. Your lecturer can help with this.

2. Meet with your Course Coordinator

Discuss the ways in which you can work together, including how to best communicate class feedback; and deal with any issues that might arise during the course. This is an important relationship as they are the first point of referral for the majority of issues.

3. Complete Class Representative training

There are two levels of training: Basic (for first time Class Representatives) and Advanced (for returning Class Representatives). The online training modules are designed to inform and empower you in your role. They show you how you can best serve your class.

4. Attend Mixer events

Throughout trimesters there may be events where you can catch up with other class reps and the VUWSA team. These will be advertised by email.

Your Role

TŌ TŪNGA

How to be an effective Class Representative

Be visible - Me kitea

Make sure the students you represent know you and how to contact you. Through the duration of the course, stay in contact and consult with your class. A class Facebook group is a great and easy way to do this.

Communicate - Me Kōrero

Keep in touch with your Course Coordinator. Keep them informed about positive aspects of course delivery and assessment; and any arising issues.

Listen - Me Whakarongo

Be available to listen and support students with their concerns.

Engage – Me Whakawarea

Attend Staff/Student Liaison meetings and any Class Representative meetings called by your school or the Student Representative Coordinator, as well as ones you organise.

Promote - Me tokona

Promote your classmates' participation in University-wide reviews and consultations.

Avoid – Me karo

- Overloading yourself with Class Representative work.
- Dealing with large-scale or intensive advocacy cases - refer these ASAP to the VUWSA advocate or the Student Representation Coordinator.
- Counselling students with serious personal problems (refer any students who need additional support to VUWSA's Advocacy Service).

Contact VUWSA Advocacy Service:

Erica Schouten &
Brie Keatley
advocate@vuwsa.org.nz

Being approachable

Your role matters and it's important that you're proactive. You should be known by both students and staff in your course or programme. Class Representatives rely on making themselves known – usually by addressing the class in lectures, both at the beginning of the course and at regular intervals during the course. We recommend that you make yourself known to support staff, such as course administrators, in addition to academic staff.

Tips for working with Facebook

- Confirm with your Course Coordinator that you're setting up a class page on Facebook.
- When setting up a Facebook group, make sure your class group is 'private' to maintain class confidentiality.
- Ask your Course Coordinator to post the link on Blackboard so your class can easily access it.
- Make sure it's understood that the Facebook group has been established by you and not the Course Coordinator. Use the page for general course discussion and support. For example, supporting one other through assignments, providing clarity on aspects within the course outline, encouraging one another through various aspects of the programme. The page can also be used to organise study groups and social events.
- Take care to ensure a positive and constructive environment.
 - This means telling students, from the outset, what is appropriate to post and, if needed, moderating content.
 - This is especially important when potentially sensitive course issues arise.
- In such cases you might find that a simple question could end up leading to personality attacks or destroying the morale of your class.
- If this happens, ask students to email you so that the discussion remains one-on-one.
- Be careful with content. Content may not always be 100% accurate. When mediating posts, check peoples' sources of information.
- Remember all discussions on these pages should remain respectful and constructive.

Any questions about Facebook, contact the Student Representation Coordinator: studentvoice@vuwsa.org.nz

Top tip no.1
Be visible to students and staff in your course or programme.

Your focus



As a class rep, your key role is to provide feedback to your lecturers, course coordinators and the University about your fellow classmates' experiences.

From time to time, students may come to you with a variety of issues. Don't take on an issue alone, the University and VUWSA are available to help you create a great student experience in the classroom.

Questions to focus on:

- Does the course follow the stated course aims and objectives?
- Are the course aims and objectives easily understood?
- Have students been consulted when major changes have been made to the course?

Course workload



Questions to focus on:

- How manageable is the course workload?

Think about the number of words required in an assessment, number of assignments and amount of class preparation. Does this match what's in the course outline and is it realistic? Each point in a course should correspond to 10 hours of work.

- Are assessments placed well throughout the course to help students balance their workload?

Workloads have an impact upon your wellbeing and your ability to study. If

individual students have issues around balancing the course load with their personal lives, don't take their issues upon yourself to resolve. Instead, refer them to the range of resources, programmes and workshops offered by Victoria Student Services and Support, and VUWSA's Advocacy Service.

Victoria also has a Student Workload Policy regarding the clustering of assessments, and requires that workload distribution is clear for students to understand. Refer to the Student Workload Policy and talk to the VUWSA Academic Team about queries that you may have!

Top tip no.2

Don't take any serious issues on by yourself. You can refer students to VUWSA's Advocacy Service, and the Student Representation Coordinator.

Teaching methods

Issues about any staff should be taken directly to the Course Coordinator. Don't bring any staff-type issues to Staff/Student Liaison Meetings; and please do not discuss staff-type issues on social media.

Questions to focus on:

- Is lecture content clearly communicated?
- How effectively are support materials and other media employed during teaching time?
- Does the course provide students with the necessary discipline skills to continue their study and work aspirations?

Teaching methods can be personal. Make sure your feedback acknowledges the strengths of individual lecturers and includes encouraging aspects.

If an issue with teaching methods; or frequent clashes with tutors arises, it should be talked about with the Course Coordinator quickly. If you don't feel confident doing so, contact studentvoice@vuwsa.org.nz for extra support. As a Class Representative, it's also helpful to include a number of suggestions, such as: providing PowerPoint handouts, including multimedia in the lecture, recording the lecture or repeating key points.

Assessment and feedback

Questions to focus on:

- Are specific assessment items appropriate to the course content?
- Are the assessment criteria and guidelines clearly communicated to students?
- Have students received sufficient feedback?
- In the case of exams, all students are expected to attend and sit these unless they are seriously ill or experience a bereavement of an immediate member of the family.
- If this is the case, advise the student to talk to Student Health or Counselling, 24 hours either side of the exam, as they may be able to apply for an aegrotat pass.

All course assessments should relate to specific learning objectives in the course outline. Assessment should be weighted fairly and spread evenly (this gets reviewed regularly so if there are issues, raise them with the VUWSA Academic Team). Deadlines for items of assessment should not fall within the exam period or trimester break; and all assessment criteria needs to be clear and accessible to students.

Returned work must have sufficient feedback from the marker. It should be returned in time for students to use the feedback for their next piece of assessable work.

Student ID numbers should be used in any publication of assessment or exam results. You may find students approach you with a variety of personal issues.

For most individual matters:

- Encourage students to talk with their lecturer ASAP; and offer to sit in as a support person.

If a student is having issues related to plagiarism, refer them to VUWSA's Student Advocacy Service. The Course Coordinator will determine whether the work in question is plagiarized; and follow the correct procedures assisting the student through the process.

If students are unclear about deadlines, criteria or feedback look at all documentation provided about the assessment, including the course outline. Then talk to the Course Coordinator and ask them to clarify any confusion with the class.

If it appears that students are disadvantaged in any way, talk to the Student Representation Coordinator about your options.

Teaching facilities & academic support

Questions to focus on:

- Do students have access to Victoria Library and information communication technology (ICT) facilities and resources?
- Is there adequate support in place for students on placement or work experience?
- Are Victoria staff responding to email or phone messages in a timely manner from students?

Top tip no. 3
All New Zealand Universities are bound by the New Zealand Privacy Act.

Student privacy

All NZ Universities are bound by the New Zealand Privacy Act.

What this means is:

- Any disclosure of personal information must be by informed consent
- Students cannot be pressured to provide consent
- A student can withdraw their consent to any disclosure of personal information at any time, even if they signed the agreement on the enrolment form that allows disclosure. Any issues involving student privacy and informed consent should be taken to the lecturer involved and/or the head of school.



Problem solving



If you need help contact the VUWSA Student Representation Coordinator or the VUWSA Student Advocate.

Three steps to resolving issues

1. Clarification

Discuss and clarify specific details with students who raise them, and determine precisely how their learning has been affected. Consider whether the issue is personal or affects the class as a whole. If the issue is personal, refer them to VUWSA's Student Advocacy Service.

If the issue affects other students in the class, ask the whole class for feedback. You can approach your classmates directly or ask them to email you through Blackboard or Facebook.

2. Resolution

Request a meeting with your Course Coordinator and work together with them in tackling the issue. Briefly state the information you have, advise them of the students' views on the matter, and any proposed solution you may have. In such meetings, be sure to use diplomacy in finding a solution, and take notes so you have a written record. Once a mutually-agreeable solution is reached, report the outcome together to the class.

3. Referral

If no solution is found, contact the Student Representation Coordinator who can make sure the issue is raised to a higher level.

Events, Meeting, Opportunities

NGĀ HUIHUINGA ME
NGĀ ĀHUATANGA ANGITU

Staff and student liaison meetings

Staff/student liaison meetings are an important opportunity for sharing communication between Schools and Class Representatives. They're typically called and facilitated by the Head of School, Programme Director or School Manager. When these meetings occur, Class Representatives are required to attend.

How to approach the meeting

What to do before a meeting:

- Read the agenda that is emailed to you.
- Consult with your class about any relevant information on the agenda.

What usually happens during staff/student meetings?

- Schools might inform Class Representatives about what's happening in the School and Faculty.
- Discussions should focus on the School and its students as a whole, not individual staff.

Formal reviews and consultations

- As a Class Representative you might ask the lecturer at the beginning of your course to briefly comment on the last evaluation, and any subsequent changes – you can also do this online. Every lecturer is required to publish changes to their courses online.
- Course evaluations are facilitated by the Academic Office.
- The University takes evaluations seriously. All Schools and Programmes are required to address areas of concern highlighted by students.
- All Programmes in the University must undergo a Programme Review once every seven years.
- The VUWSA Academic Team facilitates participation in Programme Reviews through online surveys.

Top tip no. 4

Take notes of any actions you need to take; and any information you need to report back to your class.

Being a Class Rep has its benefits

Wellington Plus Award Points

The Wellington Plus award, administered by Vic Careers, recognises students' volunteer contributions and support work. Attending training and representing your class is a major component to completing this Award.

Class Representative Certificates

If you attend a training session, you can request a Class Representative Certificate at the end of the trimester.

Class Representative Service Awards and Student Representation Celebration

At the end of each trimester, your classmates have the chance to nominate you for a Class Representative Service Award. These awards recognise Class Representative who have actively contributed to their fellow students' learning experiences.

At the end of Trimester Two, VUWSA and Te Herenga Waka host a Student Representation Celebration to recognise Class Representative– all Class Representative are invited to attend!

Professional development and personal growth

The skills you will gain as a Class Representative include decision-making, communication, negotiation, organisation, delegation and advocacy.

Personal growth

Class Representative grow in their confidence, networking skills and ability to empathise with others. You'll have the opportunity to make a positive difference; and these opportunities will help you learn more about yourself, how you operate and your leadership strengths.

Other opportunities for representation

Faculty Delegates

Faculty Delegates provide an essential student voice within the University decision making process. Being a Faculty Delegate is the next step in University representation. Delegates are formal members of Faculty Boards and Committees. They can also sit and vote on the Student Academic Committee. If you're interested in becoming a Faculty Delegate, talk to the Student Representation Coordinator.

VUWSA forums and elections

A democratic body, VUWSA is led and controlled by its members. As a member you'll have the opportunity to participate in our forums, which focuses on student issues like education, welfare, housing and public transport; and in our elections later in the year.

VUWSA

VUWSA Academic Team

The class representation system is organised and administered by the VUWSA Education Team in partnership with the University. The Education Team is headed by the Academic Vice-President, who is supported by the Education Officer, and the Student Representation Coordinator.

Academic Vice President (AVP) Willa Aitken

The AVP oversees all student representation at the University and ensures that issues raised are taken to the appropriate VUWSA contact, Victoria staff member and Victoria services.

E: academic@vuwsa.org.nz

Education Officer Kayla Allen

The Education Officer supports the AVP with all academic activities led by VUWSA at the University.

E: education@vuwsa.org.nz

Student Representation Coordinator Joseph Habgood

The Student Representation Coordinator, a staff member of VUWSA, provides policy advice to representatives, ensures that representation is adequately resourced; and is your first point of call for any enquires or questions.

E: studentvoice@vuwsa.org.nz

Ngāi Tauira, Pasifika Students' Council & Post Graduate Students' Association

VUWSA is the primary representative student body at Victoria University. However, VUWSA works in close association with other very important students representative organisations on campus, including Ngāi Tauira, Pasifika Students' Council and Post Graduate Students' Association. Alongside the VUWSA President and Academic Vice President, the Apiha Matauranga from Ngāi Tauira; Academic Officer from Pasifika Students' Council, The President of the Victoria International Students' Association and the President of the Post Graduate Students' Association are also members of Academic Board.



VUWSA Advocacy Service

VUWSA's Advocacy Service is available to help Victoria students deal with any of the issues they might be facing. Independent from the University and confidential, the Service provides free support, advice and information to all Victoria students.

The Service:

- Provides students with information and advice
- Explains University regulations and processes
- Suggests options
- Helps prepare and/or attend meetings as a support person
- Advocates on students' behalf
- Supports students' during disputes

- Directs and refers students' to other services that might be able to help
- Just listens.

The Service provides information and advice, so students can make a decision about their best course of action.

Contact VUWSA's Advocacy Service

E: advocate@vuwsa.org.nz

Appointments are available at other Campuses by arrangement.

Top tip no. 5
VUWSA's Advocacy Service is free, independent from Victoria and confidential.



What does VUWSA do for you?

Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) is here to help you have an awesome student experience while at Victoria. VUWSA is independent from the University **and free for all Victoria students to join.**

Here's just five of the things we do:

1. Make sure your voice is heard

Our student executive consists of 10 elected students who are responsible for the strategic direction and governance of VUWSA.

We have student representative's at all decision-making levels of the University. There are students representing your interests in every class and Faculty at Victoria.

2. Support your welfare and well-being

We have welfare services available to help you – when and if you need it.

Monday to Friday – pick up a free Community Pantry food parcel or free inter-Campus bus pass from 9am to 5pm (bus passes require that you show your timetable)

Free Menstrual Products

If you need pads or tampons to get you through the day at uni, you can collect a free pack of menstrual products from the VUWSA Kelburn or Pipitea office, or from the Te Aro Library.

Stress Free Study Week - come get free breakfast, lunch and coffee all week during Study Week.

3. Provide advocacy

We offer free, independent, confidential advocacy services to students. Our advocacy can help with academic issues; accommodation problems; employment and other disputes.

4. Keep you social

We put on great events throughout the year, such as OWEEK, Re-Set Week, ArtsWeek and other market days, including food trucks on Kelburn Campus.

5. Communicate your voice

We produce *Salient*, the weekly student magazine of Victoria University. *Salient* is free, and available on Campus each Monday during term.

Contact us:

P: (04) 463 6716

E: kelburn@vuwsa.org.nz

A: Level 4, Student Union Building

Relevant Victoria services

Relevant Victoria services:

- Accommodation service
- Counselling service
- Creche service
- Financial support and advice
- Maori Student Support
- Pacific Student Support
- Student Health
- Student Learning Support (SLSS)
- Vic Careers
- Disabilities' Support Services

Student Charter

The Student Charter was developed by Victoria's Academic Office and the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA). It was adopted by the University Council on 18 February 2013.

A commitment between staff and students, the Student Charter outlines what's expected from you and the University to ensure a great student experience. A particular focus for class reps from the Student Charter is: **Being an active member of a scholarly community, committed to enquiry and integrity.**

The Student Charter includes these goals:

- A system of student representation that emphasises partnership in making decisions that affect the student academic experience and broader university experience.
- Respecting individual differences, privacy and wellbeing.
- Enabling access to staff to support the quality of learning and the University experience.
- Valid and fair assessment against clearly-stated learning goals.
- Integrity in the academic community.
- Providing services that support student success and wellbeing in their study; and engagement outside the University.
- Seeking and responding to student feedback on the experience of courses, programmes and student life.
- Fair and transparent procedures for dealing with complaints.
- An environment that fosters overall physical and emotional wellbeing.

Communicating concepts, ideas and arguments effectively

- Read extensively, purposefully and critically.
- Develop writing and speaking skills through guidance, practice and feedback.
- Explore issues and solutions to problems through interaction with others.

Top tip no. 6
Be an active member of the Victoria scholarly community,

Student Charter continued

Broadening social and cultural engagement

- Develop an international perspective through disciplinary study.
- Understand and apply the Treaty of Waitangi.
- Build awareness of the nature of cultural difference and intercultural communication.
- Apply for study abroad or other experience beyond the University.

Developing autonomy in pursuing knowledge and understanding

- Clear information for understanding expected standards of academic performance.

- Constructive feedback that contributes to further learning.
- Opportunities to reflect on strategies to achieve high standards of performance.
- Academic support for setting and achieving personal goals.
- Resources, services and spaces that encourage self-directed learning.

Engaging intellectually with others

- Interact during a programme of study with leading scholars at the University.
- Develop a strong sense of disciplinary relevance in undertaking any enquiry.
- Work collaboratively with staff and other students to build skills of enquiry.



**For more info head to:
www.vuwsa.org.nz/class-representatives**



Kelburn, Level 4, Student Union Building



04 463 6716



kelburn@vuwsa.org.nz



www.vuwsa.org.nz