



## EXECUTIVE HALF YEAR REPORT

NAME	Ellen Humphries
POSITION	Education Officer
REPORT PERIOD	1 January – 30th June 2015
HOURS WORKED	284 hours (235.7 required)

### Reporting on Priority Goals:

#### 1. Goal 1

**Education Quality: To ensure that the University provides the best teaching and learning, research opportunities, assessment and training to students.**

This is the most important goal of the Education Officer role. I work closely with the Education Team (the Academic Vice President and the VUWSA Student Representation Coordinator) to know what is happening in the University, consult with students about what they think of proposed changes, and speak up on behalf of the student body. I do this by helping compose and send out surveys, co-facilitating Class Representative Trainings and consulting Class Reps, attending a range of meetings and workshops at different levels of the University including Faculty Board meetings, Academic Committee Meetings, and Staff-Student Liaison meetings.

#### 2. Goal 3

**Equity and Access: To promote equity for disadvantaged students in access to and within the University.**

A large focus of the Education Team this year has been to encourage students to grow confident in their voice and become more engaged in their academic lives within the formal University structure. The main way this is achieved is by training and providing support for Class Reps to be pro-active with in-class issues and learn to communicate and solve these issues with their lecturers and Heads of Schools. Another way this was achieved was in the creation and distribution of the "Know Your Rights" pamphlet which contains a lot of easy-to-read policy bits which protect and strengthen the student voice in terms of academic issues such as plagiarism or how to get an aegrotat.

## **Reporting on Other Goals:**

### **1. Goal 5**

**Activities: To support sporting, social and cultural activities for and by members and students, particularly through Clubs.**

As a member of a team, and a member of the Executive, this goal covers the work I have done in helping out at engagement events such as O-Week and welfare events such as Stress Free Study Week. By supporting other Exec members with events related to their portfolios I have helped create a team feeling among the Exec and strengthened friendships with other individual members.

### **2. Goal 8**

**Accountability: To ensure accountability to, and representation of members.**

This is achieved by trying our best to discuss upcoming proposals with students and attend as a member or an observer as many Faculty, School and University Committee and Board meetings as possible in order to know what is going on around the University and to ensure that the student voice is present and heard at every level. As often as possible, the Education Team tries to survey or meet face-to-face with students to gauge a variety of opinions regarding various proposals that arise. This strengthens our mandate as representatives when voicing opinions to the University and ensures that we are providing a fair and accurate account of where students' interests lie.

## **General Tasks and Initiatives**

### **1. Class Representative Training**

Class Reps are a hugely important part of the representation system here at VUW. This year 97% of classes have a Class Rep! At the beginning of the year I edited and re-vamped the Handbook given to each Class Rep with the support of the Academic Vice President. We also spruced up trainings and attempted a more interactive approach with the new VUWSA Advocate and the Student Representative Co-ordinator. Class Reps provide an important link to the wider student body for consultation and play an integral role in managing issues within courses quickly and efficiently.

### **2. Continued communication with Class Representatives**

I am in charge of compiling content, creating and sending out an email newsletter to Class Reps every two weeks and maintaining Facebook groups of Class Reps as another medium for updates, feedback and discussion. As part of this, I support Class Representatives through any issues they may bring up and can direct them to useful VUWSA or VUW services. It is an important way of ensuring that Class Reps feel connected to and able to approach VUWSA and the Education Team with any issues that may arise during the year.

### **3. Creation of "Know Your Rights" pamphlet**

This was an Education Team initiative intended to encourage students to become more familiar with their rights within the University and to value their





## Representation

### 1. Academic Committee

I have attended this various times as an observer and in place of the Academic Vice President in order to voice the opinion of students on a variety of University wide issues such as policy changes and new qualifications.

### 2. Epigeum Skills for Learning Working Committee

I have provided the student view on a VUW working committee discussing the creation of a new series of online tutorial type courses aimed at improving student study skills.

### 3. Executive Reporting Committee

This includes checking over Executive members work reports.

### 4. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Board

As the VUWSA Representative on this board, I support other students who sit on the board as Faculty Delegates and ensure that the student voice is heard.

### 5. School of Design Student-Staff Liaison meeting

I attend these meetings as a VUWSA observer in order to gain a better understanding of the needs of students at the Te Aro campus and to strengthen the VUWSA link with students there.

## **6. Student Academic Committee**

A meeting of various Faculty Delegates and leaders of Faculty Societies to talk about any upcoming issues, to notice patterns of systemic issues and to find out how the Education Team can better support students across all schools.

## **7. VUWSA Executive**

I have attended the majority of Executive meetings where I have contributed to discussions and passed motions on matters important to both VUWSA and students. I have not been able to attend all as a conflict of timing with another commitment as an RA at a first year halls of residence.

## **Strengths and Weaknesses**

### **Strengths**

#### **1. Teamwork**

To be flexible and enthusiastic with taking on new projects within the Education Team or helping other Exec members with events or projects related to other portfolios. An important part of my portfolio is supporting the AVP and I have endeavoured to do this by being willing and proactive in accepting delegated tasks as well as my own work. I have tried to dedicate time to helping other Exec members with events relating to their portfolios. I think this has helped strengthen my relationship with other members and help build the team feeling amongst the Exec. By being present and involved in a range of events has allowed me as an Education Team member to get my face out there more often and start conversations with students about their academic experience. The work of the Education Team is often not visible to students so it has been good to have the opportunity for our work be better recognised.

#### **2. Confidence**

To confidently express the view and feedback of students in formal University situations. This confidence has taken time to build but has been extended to being able to speak up on behalf of students at every level of my interactions with University staff. This includes Student-Staff Liaison meetings, Faculty Board meetings and also the Academic Committee meetings I have attended in Jonathan's (AVP) place. I feel confident in the mandate I enjoy being able to represent my fellow students and bring their issues to the forefront of generally staff dominated meetings. I think this is an essential aspect of my role as too often, students assume that staff must know what is in their best interests.

### **Weaknesses**

#### **1. Workload balance**

I have struggled with balancing my role as Education Officer with my role as an RA at a first year hall of residence. There are many important issues that impact students that I would have liked to taken a stronger stance on, but time restraints due to other work commitments as an RA have meant I have not been able to fully take on projects that are not directly related to my role. At times, there are some projects which I could have taken the lead on but have passed on to the SRC and adopted a more supportive role instead for fear of not being able to complete the project to a high standard. I am aware of my capacity and I have needed to learn how to manage my time between my roles and when to prioritise each.

## 2. Institutional knowledge

As I am new to the Executive and student politics with a limited knowledge of both, I have taken a while to feel confident in my role as an Exec member. As the year has progressed my confidence has grown as has my understanding of my role and what it encompasses. I think that when running for and accepting the role of an Exec member, I did not fully understand what it would mean and the seriousness of being on the Executive of an organisation such as VUWSA. I have had to learn to be confident in my opinions surrounding student issues and that although some members of the Exec have much more institutional knowledge than I, my opinion is still valid and important.

### **Overall Rating**

I am really enjoying the opportunity to meet with, train and support students from around the University to positively contribute to students' overall learning experience here at VUW. This is the first time that I have had the opportunity to hold such a position of influence and despite my initial low professional confidence, I feel that I am a valuable member to the VUWSA Exec and the Education Team. In the majority of cases, staff of the University respect and desire to know the opinion of students and I feel I am doing a fair and effective job of making sure that students are considered and heard at every level of representation. I have learnt so much and grown in my personal confidence and my professional confidence in my role of Education Officer. I am looking forward to more confidently applying myself and sharing my opinion as an Exec member and continuing to be a strong voice for students in the academic realm in the coming 6 months.