



EXECUTIVE HALF YEAR REPORT

NAME	Jonathan Gee
POSITION	Academic Vice President
REPORT PERIOD	1st January – 30th June 2015
HOURS WORKED	599.75 hours (471.4 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.

(a) Academic Board and Academic Committee

Academic Board and its subcommittee, Academic Committee, consider a range of academic matters such as proposals for new qualifications, amendments to existing qualifications, and changes to academic-related policies.

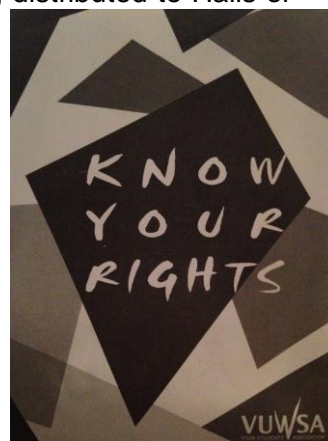
I am a student member of both Academic Board and Academic Committee. I have devoted many, many hours engaged thoroughly in the material considered at these meetings, including consulting with key students and student groups on significant proposals such as the proposal to move the Education Faculty to Kelburn. Highlights of my participation in these meetings include:

- Forging strong relationships with key academic staff (especially Associate Deans)
- Raising concerns about the academic quality of the proposed Master of Engineering Practice and Master of Software Development
- Speaking in favour of the retention of two student seats on University Council
- Consulting on a raft of proposals for new qualifications as well as amendments to existing qualifications
- Review of the Academic Progress Statute for low-achieving and non-engaged students
- Consulting with Karori-based students on the Education Faculty move to Kelburn
- Engaging in the implementation plans of a range of Programme Reviews
- Consulting with Faculty Delegates and other students on the proposed significant changes to the Public Policy major

It is often very daunting to speak out on issues at Academic Board and Committee, given the formal nature of these meetings. However, I have been driven by my belief that as a student representative, I have been given the mandate to speak on these issues by my fellow students. When I speak, the University must listen. If they don't, they are ignoring the voices of the 20, 000 students I strive to represent.

(b) 'Know Your Rights' Pamphlet

A key project that the VUWSA Education Team worked on during our first six months is the 'Know Your Rights' pamphlet. The pamphlet is a response to the range of queries we received around academic issues such as how to request an extension due to workload, or what to do if a lecturer has significantly changed an item of assessment without consulting the class. The pamphlet underwent a thorough process of cross-checking to ensure that the content was accurate, before being distributed to Halls of Residence, Student Learning, the Library and VUWSA Reception. The pamphlet has been very well-received from both University and students alike, and is a strong foundation for future academic resources to be produced by VUWSA. The pamphlet will be used for Trimester 2 class representative trainings. I hope that the pamphlet help to instil greater confidence in the students to stand up for the education that they pay for, and that they deserve.



(c) Student Representation of Faculty Boards

I have led our team of Faculty Delegates who are student representatives on various Faculty Boards and their associated committees. This year I overhauled the Faculty Delegate Handbook to ensure it better reflected the role. I also worked with our Student Representation Coordinator to produce training for our Delegates at the beginning of the Trimester, and have provided them with ongoing support. I have actively engaged in pre-meetings with Faculty Delegates prior to their Board meetings to ensure that they are well-informed and prepared to speak on behalf of students at these meetings. I have attended Faculty Board meetings as a VUWSA observer from nearly all Faculties at least once. A cohesive student voice on academic issues has been a strong commitment of mine, and I believe my good rapport with all Faculty Delegates has helped to strengthen that student voice. Student Representatives have often been praised by University staff for their insightful contributions, which adds further value to the quality of teaching and learning at Victoria.

(d) Class Representatives

Due the absence of a full-time staff member (Student Representation Coordinator) during the first two months of my term, Ellen Humphries (Education Officer) and I played a significant role in overhauling the Class Representative Handbook. While Victoria is known having a strong record of class representation (this year 97% of classes have class representatives), they can very easily be seen as tokenistic. Ellen and I sought to maximise the potential of class representatives, including personal profiles of outstanding representatives in the Handbook, as well as articulating their potential at class rep trainings.

Ellen and I played an active part in all class representative trainings, and I have provided



support to individual class reps on a range of issues throughout Trimester 1.

(e) Faculty of Education Student Representatives

A big focus of mine has been engaging closely with student representatives in the Faculty of Education. I have heard many stories about the intensity of many of the postgraduate courses in Education, as well as the lack of access to student services on Karori campus. These stories have had a big impact on me, as I believe know student should have to experience severe financial hardship or emotional distress for the sake of their education. The University and VUWSA have an obligation to support these students.

At the beginning of the year, I hosted an issues meeting with student representatives and key Education Faculty staff to discuss access to services and academic issues. I also consulted extensively with students during the proposal to move the Faculty to Kelburn. While the Faculty move to Kelburn is a positive move for these students, there is still more work to be done to enhance their wellbeing and student experience.

(f) Relationships with student leaders and student groups

One of my first goals for the year was to set up initial meetings with student leaders of faculty societies and other student groups. In particular, I have built positive working relationships with the Academic Vice President of Ngāi Tauria, Vice President of the Post-Graduate Students' Association (PGSA) and President and Vice President of VUW Commerce Society (VicCom). I supported VicCom in securing a student seat on the Faculty of Commerce Board. I also engage with many other student representative groups and faculty societies such as Pasifika Students' Council, VUW Law Students' Society, Science Society and STUDiO (Te Aro Student Rep Group). It is always great to engage with my fellow student leaders.

(g) Programme Reviews

I supported our Student Representation Coordinator on gauging student feedback on various programme reviews.

(h) Ad hoc academic issues raised by individual students

Many students and class representatives have contacted me via email, phone or by coming into the office with a range of academic issues. I have referred the more serious issues to our Student Advocate. It is this part of my role that I love the most. Often my successes in meetings with the University have intangible or longer-term benefits. Meeting with students and supporting them through their academic issues is a tangible benefit that I derive great satisfaction from.



2. Goal 3

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

(a) Academic Grievance Committee

This committee decides on outcomes as a result of a complaint made by a student against the University. As student member, I have advocated for fair, just and reasonable outcomes for students. I hope that my work on this committee has helped to make University a better, fairer place for all students.

(b) Review of the Academic Progress Statute

I have spoken up for greater coordination of learning support between academic services and individual faculties for students who are at risk of failing courses.

(c) Course Signals Pilot Project

This pilot project aims to track a student's academic progress and point them towards greater support if needed. I have pushed for greater coordination of support services to students in this project.

(d) Education Student Representatives

Some post-graduate Education students have raised issues around financial support and accessibility during their very intense programme of study. I have done my best to point them in the right direction when needed. I have devoted a lot of energy to supporting these students.

(e) Ako Pai Marae and the Faculty of Education move

An unfortunate implication of the Faculty of Education move from Karori is the potential closure of Ako Pai Marae. I have liaised with a Māori Education staff member about the move (for which her community is grieving), and put her in touch with the Ngāi Tauira Academic Vice President to ensure that the Te Herenga Waka Marae community at Kelburn welcome those from Karori.

Reporting on Other Goals:

1. Goal 6

Public Issues: To be the critic and conscience of the University and society, by promoting discussion and action on issues concerning students

(a) Student Representation on University Councils

I have been a core part of the first consultation period with students on the University Council changes, sparked as a result of the Education Amendment Act (No. 2) 2015. This included drafting the initial press release, survey questions, support at our consultation forum, and helping to draft VUWSA's submission to the University Council.

General Tasks and Initiatives

1. O-Week support and Stress Free Study Week

I have always tried to support other areas of VUWSA as best I can, including providing general support during O-Week events and Stress Free Study Week.

2. VUWSA and NZUSA relationship

I have worked with my fellow Vice Presidents in facilitating a discussion among the Executive about the VUWSA-NZUSA relationship in light of our notification of withdrawal in September 2014.

Representation

- 1. VUW Academic Board**
- 2. VUW Academic Committee**
- 3. VUW Grievance Committee**
- 4. Academic Committee Working Group on the Academic Progress Statute**
- 5. Faculty Boards**

I regularly attend Faculty Boards to support our Faculty Delegates as well as to be aware of hot topics facing individual faculties.

6. University Council

I have sat in the Public Gallery of University Council meetings on a number of occasions to gain a greater understanding of the Council's work, and to support our student representatives.

7. Regular meetings with Academic Office

Regular pre-meetings with Leanne Ivil (Director), Martin Boswell (Senior Academic Quality Adviser) and Jay Chhana (Academic Programmes Coordinator) prior to Academic Board.

8. Regular meetings with student representatives on Academic Board

9. Regular pre-meetings with the PGSA, Ngāi Taura and Pasifika Students' Council reps on Academic Board to ensure a cohesive and strong student voice.

10. VUWSA Executive

11. VUWSA Finance and Audit Committee

12. VUWSA Policy Committee

13. VUWSA General Manager Performance Review Committee

14. Regular meetings with VUWSA Education Team

15. Interview Panel for Student Representation Coordinators

16. Regular meetings with Student Representation Coordinator

17. Fortnightly meetings with General Manager

18. Student Academic Committee

Convened the Student Academic Committee, made up of all student representatives in the academic sphere, as well as student leaders in faculty societies.

19. Fortnightly meetings with Jules Forde, Academic Vice President of Ngāi Taura

20. Fortnightly meetings with Kieran Meredith, Academic Officer of Pasifika Students' Council

21. Meetings with VicCom

22. Meetings with faculty societies

Strengths

1. **Hardworking:** Being Academic Vice President means that I have to read many documents in preparation for countless meetings from week to week. I always attend meetings prepared, reading often 100+ pages of documents, engaging with relevant student reps on key agenda items and undertaking further consultation if needed. I am deeply passionate about ensuring the University values the voices of students when it comes to their education, which drives my work-ethic.

2. **Diplomatic:** I always strive to be constructive when it comes to issues and relationships. I have developed a good rapport with all members of the Executive, and have often voiced my opinion in an inquisitive yet constructive way in meetings. I have found this style to be the most effective when at Academic Board and Committee and when meeting with academic staff/management. I pride myself in being a pragmatist when it comes to identifying solutions and outcomes in my work.



3. **Team-building:** I have placed a lot of effort on leading a high-performing Education Team. This has included ensuring that all members of my team have ownership over certain projects and that we are aware of what each other is doing. I am incredibly proud of the performance of the Education Team despite not having a full-time staff member (Student Representation Coordinator) to support us for three of the last six months of our term. Our workload is high, but our positive team dynamic drives our success.

Weaknesses

1. **Work-life balance:** The downfall of my hard work ethic is that it is very hard to step away from VUWSA and focus on my personal life and studies. While I have managed to maintain relatively good grades, this has not been achieved without late nights and lost weekends. It is very difficult to 'switch off' from VUWSA work when in a lecture or writing an essay.

2. **Reviewer:** My working style is such that I like to have all the facts available to me before I feel prepared to speak or act on a certain issue. While this may appear to allow myself to come to a well-informed decision, it means many hours of investigating which is not the most efficient use of my time.

Overall Rating



This has been an incredibly fulfilling year so far. The last six months have been a very steep learning curve for me, but a journey that I am very grateful for. I know that my work is directly benefiting students – whether it is scrutinising the academic quality of a proposed qualification, or meeting with University staff to pass on concerns that students have raised with me.

I have been very fortunate in that I have been able to apply my previous leadership and organisational experience to what I consider a very hefty role as Academic Vice President. The work that I have accomplished in

the last six months can in no small part be credited to the Education Team as a whole.

Ellen Humphries (Education Officer) and Jacinta Cording (Former Student Representation Coordinator) have proven to be the most reliable and effective team I have worked with so far.

In every decision I have made in my role, I have always asked myself the question, 'what is best for students?' I am confident that all I have achieved thus far has been in the best interests of students, and I look forward to continuing that vision in my next six months as Academic Vice President.