

2 October 2019



RE: UCSA submission to the Tertiary Student Voice paper

To Whom It May Concern

The UCSA has reviewed the Tertiary Student Voice paper and has the following input on how the student voice, both academic and non-academic, currently works at UC, and how it could be enhanced. We have outlined the current situation for UCSA, and then grouped our feedback under the four focus areas identified.

Current Situation

1. Collaborative Relationship

The UCSA currently has a mutually respectful and collaborative relationship with UC, where the UCSA is an independent organisation yet where student input is included and on the whole valued and incorporated into the University's decision-making, both at a governance and management level.

2. Representative Platforms

UCSA has a wide range of student voice platforms within UC through mandated student representation on committees and boards from College up to UC Senior Management Team/Council level as illustrated by the diagram in Appendix A.

3. University Boards and Committees

The President sits on the University Council, the Finance, Planning and Resources Committee (FPRC), Audit and Risk Committee and the Joint Operations Advisory Board. There is representation on the Academic Board through the President and Vice-President, who have a standing agenda item. The Vice-President, who has oversight of academic representation, also sits on the Academic Administration, Learning and Teaching, Library, Discipline, Academic Appeals and Scholarships Advisory Committees. The UCSA Postgraduate Representative sits on the Postgraduate, Research and Library Committees while the Finance and Engagement Officer and Equity and Wellbeing Representative both sit on the Central Equity and Diversity Advisory Board. At a College level, there is representation across College, School, Learning and Teaching, Board of Studies, Postgraduate, International, Equity and Diversity, and Health and Safety committees.

4. Wide Reach

On the whole, this engages students to input from both the top down and bottom up. The UCSA's aim is that by the time papers reach Academic Board, they have been seen by student representatives at every level of College and UC administration, with ample opportunities for the student voice to provide input and effect change. This consultation, facilitated by an Academic Coordinator, is tracked using a schedule, so we are able to see which Colleges/Programmes are actually engaging the student voice in their course/programme development and reviews.

5. Vice-Chancellor catch-up

At a less formal level, the President and Chief Executive have a monthly catch-up with the Vice-Chancellor, where student issues can be raised and actions agreed upon. In terms of communications, the President will often be asked to review all-student communications and co-sign with UC where applicable. The University also grants the President the ability to email all students when required.

6. Joint Operations Advisory Board

The UCSA make up half of the voting membership of the Joint Operations Advisory Board (JOAB), a formal board for UCSA representatives to present the view of the student body to UC about activities wholly or partially funded by the Student Services Levy. This Advisory Board makes recommendations to the Vice Chancellor for setting the Levy, and on allocations of funds from the Levy based on student input. As an example of seeking student input to guide JOAB, extensive consultation on changes to the Student Services Levy has just occurred with months of in-depth student consultation with both the President, Finance & Engagement Officer.

7. UCount Survey

A survey is held annually to give students the opportunity to prioritise student services and this information contributes to decisions on how the money is allocated the following year.

This is administered by the University. The Terms of Reference for JOAB are attached (Appendix 2), and highlight that students help decide where the money should be spent.

8. Policy Reviews

The UCSA assesses the UC policies up for review on a monthly basis and where appropriate will submit input via the relevant policy's Contact Officer. Responses to this UCSA input vary with some being acknowledged by the Contact Officer, other input leading to change being implemented, while occasionally there is no response to the UCSA feedback. A formal process that requires the feedback loop being closed would ensure that students know whether they are being listened to or not in the policy review process and the UCSA would suggest this is an area for growth/further work.

9. New Course and Degree proposals

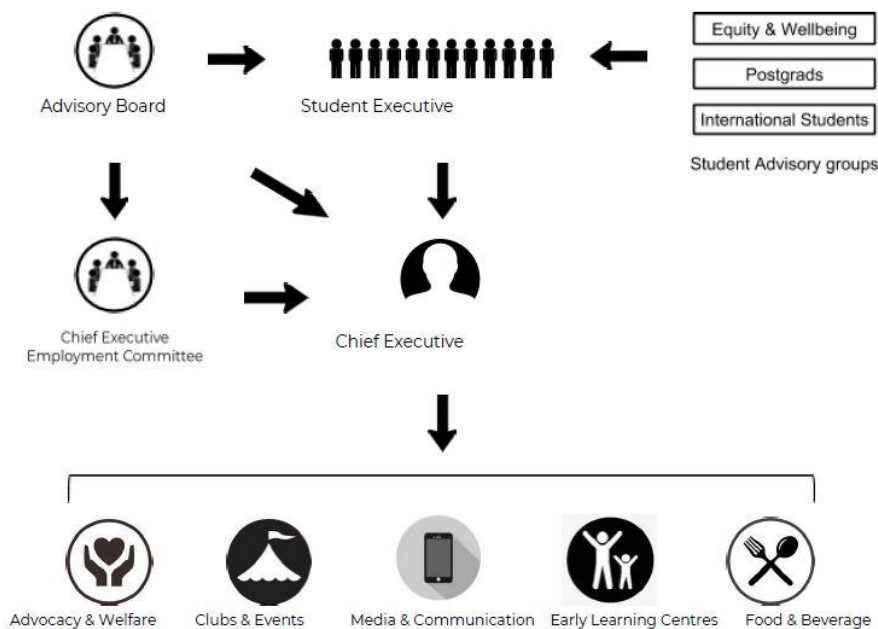
Student input, through the UCSA, is also targeted as an integral part of new course and programme proposals although this is a work in progress and is inconsistent across UC, with some Colleges seeking to include student input early in the process, others at a more tokenistic-level as a last-minute tick box exercise and some not seeking UCSA input at all. With the move to an electronic version the UCSA hopes to see increased, consistent and earlier engagement of the student voice in the new course and programme consultation process so that students can influence the quality of individual courses and programmes.

10. UC Strategic Framework (2020-2030)

The development over 2019 of the UC Strategic Framework has been an interesting exercise in the student voice. Students were given the opportunity to input through a workshop, Advisory Board meetings, class rep workshops and an open forum with the VC. However, the first draft was not considered an adequate reflection of the student voice and this was highlighted immediately to the VC by the President and Vice-President. UC reacted to this through utilising its Survey and Data Services to work alongside the UCSA to produce an online survey which, over the course of 9 days had nearly 1800 respondents. The results of this survey then helped shape the final strategic framework. However, in another example of the feedback loop not being closed, UC students are yet to see the results in any form. This does not engender trust from the wider student body in the consultation process or encourage students to give their time to completing a survey if they then don't see the results or outcomes. Moreover, once the Draft Strategy was

released, implementation working groups were quickly established, first meetings held, and objectives defined. On seeing this, the UCSA had to approach UC for inclusion in these implementation working groups. Once approached, the relevant SMT members chairing the groups were all happy for a UCSA representative to be included. However, this was not an integral part of the process, highlighting that for one-off projects, student representation is not automatic and that the UCSA has to be vigilant to ensure the student voice is included.

Organisational Structure



11. UCSA Organisational Structure

As an organisation, the UCSA has input from an Advisory Board comprising six external professionals whose roles are to provide advice to the Executive as well as make recommendations. This gives the Student Executive both validation of, and confidence in, decision-making, and potentially assists with credibility in inputting at higher UC levels.

12. Student Advisory Groups

The Executive also has three Student Advisory Groups – Postgraduate, International and Equity and Wellbeing – that help to ensure the Executive have access to input and feedback from a broad range of students.

These groups provide needs and viewpoints, and are used when UC seeks feedback on specific issues. Students apply to be part of these groups, and are selected through a method by which the group comprises a diverse range of student views. For example, with the International Advisory Group, best efforts are made to select students from a range of different countries and cultural backgrounds.

13. Class Rep System

A further mechanism for engagement and the student voice is the Class Rep system. Class Reps are student representatives who act as liaison between classes and lecturers. Each class should have its own elected or volunteer Class Rep, whose task is to be the first point of contact for students to help resolve class issues at a low level, and thereby help to avoid bigger problems further down the track.

Class Reps are trained by the UCSA Student Advocate to offer guidance and support for classmates on general course issues and communicate issues to the lecturer. Class Reps also provide feedback to the relevant Schools/Departments and to the UCSA. The UCSA hold Class Rep workshops on a semester basis, and these are used to get student input on UC-wide issues and proposals. Examples of recent items that Class Reps have provided input on through the workshops are the UC Graduate Profile, class lengths, the draft of the UC Strategic Framework (2020-2030) and the review of UC assessment policy.

14. UCSA Student Advocate

The Student Advocate provides confidential advice and helps students navigate the university system, including assistance with Academic Appeals, Grievances, Complaints, Concerns, Special Consideration Applications or Late Withdrawals, Dispute Resolution and Disciplinary Issues. The Student Advocate can also attend university meetings with students to ensure they have the confidence to represent themselves as best they can.

15. Academic Coordinator (AC)

The UCSA has also, in 2019, introduced a new Academic Coordinator (AC) role. The primary purpose of this position is to create and maintain a strong link between Colleges and the UCSA representatives sitting on College boards and committees. The AC ensures that through better understanding the background to specific issues, there is a strong student voice, consistent across the university and from year to year. The AC provides oversight across all Colleges so that weaknesses and common issues can be identified and progressed, continuity is provided to a changing Executive from year to year, and there is a defined point of contact in the first instance. This well-understood overview also aids the Vice President in their duties on the University Boards such as Academic Board and Learning and Teaching Committee. In addition, the AC coordinates and tracks consultation and policy reviews.

16. Communication and Collaboration

The tragedy of the mosque attacks in Christchurch on March 15th highlighted the collaborative relationship of UC with its student body. Within an hour, there were joint communications established between UC and the UCSA, and this continued over the next 48 hours to ensure that the UC response reflected students' needs. The vigil held on the Monday after was organised by the UCSA but supported by the university, with over 5000 staff and students attending. Campus-based student clubs, which are affiliated to UCSA, rallied to support those affected and offer services. The UCSA were also involved in reviewing the UC response to these tragic events.

17. Induction

In order to provide the incoming UCSA Executive with an introduction to representation and governance in general, the UCSA runs an internal three-day induction for its Executive at the start of the academic year. However, given the range of content to be covered in this time, it does not allow for much of a focus on the student voice, academic representation, or any training specific to the needs of different positions/student cohorts. This Induction is reviewed annually by the President, Vice-President and members of the UCSA management team so that it is continually evolving in an attempt to ensure it is fit for purpose.

On the whole, as illustrated above, the regular structures and consultation mechanisms in place at UC allow for the student voice to be heard and incorporated into decision-making. However, there are also clearly identifiable areas for improvement.

Initial focus areas have been developed for enhancing the student voice, and UCSA have commented below on how this could happen at both UC and national level.

Focus Area 1: Enhancing the student voice status quo by.....

(a) Increasing accountability

The UCSA sees three areas for improvement at UC to work towards more effective accountability mechanisms and a true provider-student partnership, being:

1. **Co-creation in curriculum** ensuring the student voice is not just included as a tick box exercise but is embedded from the outset. This would truly reflect the principle of students as partners.

This would look like students being engaged and inputting to course creation and degree planning alongside academics. The UCSA is hoping that the newly introduced online approval process will support this. Consideration could be given to making UCSA consultation essential to progress with the submitting of the electronic online approval process as although this is given as a minimum, there is no actual imperative and applications can progress without this consultation.

Academics would also benefit from guidance on how to authentically engage students for a more genuine partnership so resources and professional development on this would assist. An understanding of how the student voice can influence the quality of courses both for present and future students would contribute to academics valuing the student voice.

2. **Transparency and closing the feedback loop** so that not only is it clear where to go if wanting to give feedback and that the student voice can effect change but also there is an accountability mechanism for this to then be communicated back to the student body. This would raise awareness of the opportunities for students to input and give them clear direction on the channels to do so, but also give them confidence that in doing so their voices will be heard, that they are an integral part of the process, and that they will influence decision making.

As an example of how this looks in practice, the Tertiary Student Voice has committed to publishing a summary of what feedback will be gathered on the Ministry of Education's Kōrero Mātauranga website, so that everyone can see how the student voice has been captured and included.

Currently at UC this happens well with the regular/monthly student voice platforms, but not so well with those one-off working groups/project control groups. There is definite room for improvement in how UC could be more accountable in feedback mechanisms, as illustrated below:

A recent example of this is the Student Survey carried out for the UC Strategic Framework (2020-2030). Nearly 1800 students responded to this. However, to date, there has been no formal communication to the wider student body on the results of this survey.

Another example is the UCount survey which asks students to prioritise student services. This can't easily be found online and hasn't been communicated back to students.

Student feedback indicates that multiple channels need to be used to communicate changes arising out of their student voice. This would then cover all student cohorts who have different preferences for communication. E.g. International students prefer email and don't generally use Facebook regularly.

The UCSA has also identified that alongside UC increasing its publicising of the effectiveness of the student voice, there are further ways UCSA itself can improve in communicating back to the wider student body on the results of their input so that students feel confident that their voice is making a difference.

3. Increasing inclusivity in student representation.

UCSA can see the need to increase inclusivity across its student representation. This is likely to require a “shoulder-tapping” approach to ensure groups currently under-represented - Māori and Pasifika, International, Disabled and the Rainbow community – are proactively given opportunities for their voices to be heard and thereby give UC direction in ensuring they are delivering an education that meets the needs of these groups.

A recent example of how this has been successful is the UCSA identifying that there was no student representation on the Senior Management Team International (SMTi). Many of the decisions regarding international strategies/students are made at this level, yet there was no student voice. Although the UCSA International rep is a member of the individual College International Committees, the UCSA viewed it as imperative to get the student voice included at this higher, UC level so that change could be advocated for from both top down and bottom up. This was raised with the Chair of the SMTi, and received widespread support. The Terms of Reference are currently being amended to include ‘UCSA Representative’ on the membership, and in the interim, the International Rep has been co-opted onto the Committee.

The UCSA intends to continue identifying gaps in inclusive representation and advocating to rectify this.

In summary, to improve accountability mechanisms, the UCSA suggests:

- 1) Making UCSA consultation mandatory for the progression of a New Course approval.
- 2) The provision of training for academics on the value of the student voice and how to best incorporate this into course creation.
- 3) Further emphasis on closing the feedback loop/improvements in how the results of the student voice are communicated back to students
- 4) A targeted approach to increasing inclusivity in student representation

(b) Greater support

As student representatives are often the sole representative on boards and committees, training and development opportunities are required to ensure they feel supported and confident in speaking up.

The UCSA have identified certain student cohorts who are not engaged with UC and with the UCSA e.g. distance students. Better and more centralised guidance on how to enhance engagement would be beneficial

The Class Rep system would also benefit from training opportunities in developing training materials and providing ongoing development support to course reps throughout the year. There is also opportunity for greater support in technological software. National funding for the development of software that would support a university’s Class Rep system would facilitate the student voice. For example, being able to easily track class rep issues and outcomes would be advantageous in identifying patterns/systemic issues. This would also assist in reporting back to class reps, and give evidence of successful outcomes so that students would be encouraged to use their class reps for feedback/input.

Another area for enhancement would be greater clarity around funding for the student voice. Currently the ministerial direction for the component of the SSL that can go towards funding the student voice sits under a) Advocacy and Legal Advice. However, this does not clearly set out the inclusion of the student voice. This could be achieved through specific definition in the Education Act e.g. a category in the SSL for student feedback.

UC funds one student (VP) to attend the NZUSA Student Voice Summit, but as this is the primary support at a national level, and given the identification of Māori, Pasifika and disabled students as being disadvantaged with regard to student voice, UCSA would like to see advocating for financial support to widen attendance at this. More student representatives attending would give more student networking opportunities and encourage sharing of ideas and best practice across student bodies.

Most student bodies have either representatives on their student associations from these disadvantaged groups or they have their own dedicated student associations such as UC's Māori Students Association, Te Akatoki. We would like to see these groups being funded too. This would allow for more targeted training and development for these representatives.

In summary, to enable a stronger student voice, the UCSA suggests support and resourcing for:

- 1) Provider-led training opportunities around understanding processes and systems.
- 2) The provision of further national training opportunities
- 3) A separate category in the SSL specifying the Student Voice.
- 4) Widening attendance at the Student Voice Summit to include representatives from under-represented groups
- 5) Funding for specific associations for disadvantaged student cohorts

Focus Area 2. Making Structural changes to enhance student voice

Given the extensive opportunities the UCSA currently has to input, the UCSA favours a structure that is provider-designed and provider-led. For the UCSA, this enables UC as the provider to set up/continue with its own tailored processes subject to Ministry approval. UCSA believes most of these are already in place, but that continual advocating for wider and more meaningful representation is essential, as is ensuring that at the College level, the student voice is heard.

Focus Area 3. Establishing a National Centre for Student Voice

In line with Focus Area 2, the UCSA is supportive of tailoring funding to a provider and their particular student body rather than a one-size fits all approach.

The UCSA can see the value of a National Centre for Student Voice as a non-political, non-partisan body to assist students, staff and education organisations through the provision of upskilling, training and development, events organisation and networking opportunities, and particularly the facilitation of sharing best practice. There is also more opportunity to disseminate national policy developments and relevant research activity with supporting documentation so that students can use these to advocate within their own institutions. Above all, ensuring mandatory protocols are in place at every institution around student voice would be key.

However, the challenge would be to ensure that the support and services provided by such a Centre would be tailored to the wide range of individual student associations and providers. Any National Centre must ensure that its work does not detract from the work the NZUSA does in supporting the student voice leadership, advocacy and representation, research, monitoring and coordination. The UCSA would also want to ensure that the setting up and resourcing of a National Centre for Student Voice would not detract from resourcing other effective and more direct ways of enhancing the student voice particularly at the provider level. Further funding for the student voice at a student association level would enable the introduction of a support role such as the UCSA's Academic Coordinator, for example. This would recognise the need for more tailored support for a particular student body while still benefiting individual organisations and enhancing the student voice.

Conclusion

For the student voice to be truly valued and respected, for it to be proactively sought and then impact on decision-making, there needs to be a culture where the principle of students as partners is embedded across teaching and learning. This requires effort and commitment both across the university, and nationally. Although the UCSA benefits from good student voice platforms, there are clear areas for improvement both at a provider-level and for national support.

The UCSA appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the development of fuller focus areas for enhancing student voice and look forward to hearing how this will be progressed.

Thank you.

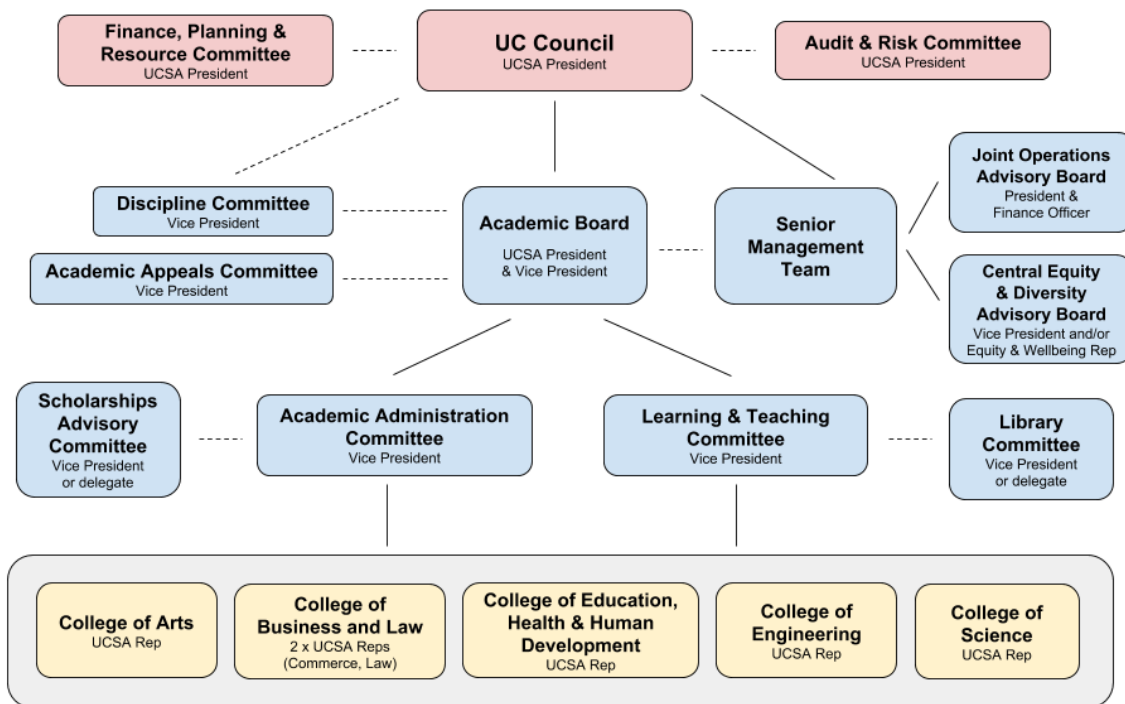
Ngā mihi nui,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Brosnahan', followed by a period.

Sam Brosnahan
UCSA President

APPENDIX A

UCSA Student Executive - Representation at UC



Boards and Committees differ across Colleges but include: College, School, Learning and Teaching, Board of Studies, Postgraduate, International, Equity and Diversity and Health and Safety.

Note: The above diagram is not an exhaustive list of UCSA student representation at UC, however it captures the primary academic forums that UCSA is represented on.

APPENDIX 2



Joint Operations and Advisory Board

Terms of Reference, Functions and Membership

Terms of Reference

Recognising that the University of Canterbury (UC) recognises the University of Canterbury Students' Association (UCSA) as the overarching representative of UC students, and as a key partner in the provision of services and facilities to these students, the purpose of this board shall be:

1. To be the primary body that manages the partnership between UC and the UCSA;
2. To provide a formal forum for UCSA representatives to present the view of the student body to the management of UC related to activities wholly or partially funded by the “*Student Services Levy*” or any other matters of a non-academic nature where the UC and the UCSA work or could work in partnership;
3. To provide a formal forum for UCSA representatives to present views from the student body on all other appropriate UC activities, as a means of providing constructive feedback, rather than recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor;
4. To provide a formal forum for UC representatives to present the view of the UC to the UCSA and to consult on issues and opportunities that impact on students;
5. To develop and enhance this UC-UCSA partnership to help ensure that the UC promotes a world class learning environment to students;
6. Specifically, to inform, advise and make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor regarding optimal physical, financial and service delivery relationships of the UC and the UCSA, including but not necessarily limited to:
 - a. Space planning and administration for the management and delivery of specified and agreed student services related to the student experience which are jointly delivered by UC and the UCSA;
 - b. Disbursement of the “*Student Services Levy*”, including the “*Student Capital Fund*”;
 - c. The operations and outcomes of other UC-UCSA shared initiatives and those initiatives delivered by the UCSA according to Service Level Agreements with the UC.

Functions

1. Make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor on:
 - a. Space allocations, usage, license to occupy, and any related charges in relation to UCSA- managed space used to deliver services to students;
 - b. The annual disbursement of funds raised by the “*Student Services Levy*”, including disbursement of the “*Student Capital Fund*” monies, to relevant student-related services, infrastructure and building capital projects;
 - c. The level of the “*Student Services Levy*” to be set from time to time;
 - d. Communications needed from the UCSA President and the Vice-Chancellor about the “*Student Services Levy*”, its applications or other issues and outcomes associated with joint operations of the UC and the UCSA;
2. Report, as necessary, to the Vice-Chancellor on the “*Student Capital Fund*” and capital assets obtained from it;
3. Provide advice and recommendations on the priority investments under the “Enhance campus” capital allocation agreed by CAM and work with Learning Resources on implementation.
4. Receive reports and analyses useful for monitoring the disbursement of funds raised by the “*Student Services Levy*”;
5. Act as an advisory body for University policies directly affecting students (see indicative list at Appendix One) and any issues, major changes proposed that impact on students or task forces set up to assist with related projects;
6. Contribute to the development and review of policies relevant to the “*Student Services Levy*” and related student space;
7. Recommend protocols for the functioning of the Joint Operations Advisory Board.

UCSA Independence

Although this Joint Operations Advisory Board allows for an effective partnership between the UC and the UCSA, the operation of this board in no way affects the status of the UC or UCSA as organisations independent of each other, nor does it have any effect on the ability of the UCSA representatives and staff to carry out their roles as representatives and advocates for students.

UC Independence

Similarly, the Joint Operations Advisory Board does not necessarily have any effect on the ability of UC representatives and staff to carry out their roles in the normal functioning of the institution.

Membership

This board, at all times, shall endeavour to have an even balance of UC staff and UCSA representatives, and recognises the UCSA and UC representatives as full members. These members shall be:

1. Executive Director, Student Services and Communications (SSAC) UC (Co-Chair)
2. President, UCSA (Co-Chair)
3. Executive Director, Learning Resources, UC or delegate(s)
4. Chief Financial Officer, UC or delegate
5. Chief Executive, UCSA
6. Finance Officer, UCSA
7. Student Success Manager, SSAC, UC
8. Services Manager, UCSA
9. Accommodations Manager, UC
10. Director Wellness Services, UCWhere delegates attend, they should report regularly to their delegator. Executive assistance is provided by the Business and Administration Manager, Student Services and Communications and administrative assistance by the EA to the Director of SSAC. Transition of UCSA representatives will be managed during the latter part of the year and will include briefing and induction jointly by UC and UCSA.

Other nominees of the UC or UCSA that might be necessary to effectively carry out the work of the board may be co-opted from time to time, but maintaining balance between UC and the UCSA representation is important. The Vice-Chancellor or nominee has the right to attend meetings of the Board.

Quorum shall be achieved with a meeting of five members, as long as at least two representatives each from the UC and the UCSA are present. There are three voting members from each organisation, being the top six roles listed above. In the event of a tie, the options will be presented to the Vice-Chancellor for a decision.

These terms of reference will be reviewed at least annually. JOAB minutes will be provided regularly to the University's Senior Management Team.

Terms of reference as at February 2019