

## REPRESENTATION

### Introduction

This report focuses on the Auckland University Class Representative system and AUSA's role in coordinating it during Summer School 2015

Summer School is traditionally a quiet semester for class reps. Departments usually don't have enough time to organise SSCC meetings, however, they are encouraged to let class reps know they can contact their course coordinator if there are any problems.

### Semester Objectives

- Proactively engage with class reps by sending out regular Class Rep newsletters. These newsletters will focus on AUSA events, news and any other tertiary education updates (e.g. changes to StudyLink).

### Key Activities

- CR newsletter (sent in February)
- On-going support for CRs seeking assistance including advice on how to resolve problems within a department (see enquiries table).
- Support for new department contacts seeking assistance
- One-off training session for Graduate of Management Masters students.

### Key Outcomes

- Increased the number of class reps in AUSA database

### Difficulties (Class Rep Advocate)

- Getting all papers represented.
- The changes to University Admin staff have meant many of the old contacts are no longer current.
- No access to University intranet makes it difficult to collect information on new Department contacts (Group Services Administrators)

### Difficulties (Class Reps)

- No trending difficulties listed for Class Reps during this semester.

### Key Statistics

Faculty	Summer School
Business School	20
Faculty of Arts	39
Faculty of Education	3
Faculty of Engineering	0
Faculty of Law	0
Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences	0
Faculty of Science	2
National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>

### Training

Faculty	Number
Business School – Graduate School of Management (one off training)	10

### Class Rep and CR Coordinator Enquiries

Class Rep Enquiries	Number
Summer School CR certificates	10
Class rep coordinator enquiries	15
Advocacy related enquiries - Problem with Lecturer	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

### Objectives Semester 1 2015

- Update class rep coordinator guide to better reflect the new admin structure in departments.

## ADVOCACY

### Introduction

The Auckland University Students' Association runs the Student Advice Hub which aims to provide a confidential service for students to seek advice and advocacy assistance across the range of issue that students might encounter during their time at Auckland University. We do handle disputes within a broad spectrum of topics, but the key role Student Advice Hub is in particular to provide advice and guidance to students who have a dispute within the University.

## Objectives

- The underpinning philosophy of the Student Advice Hub is to support and advocate fair practice for all students enrolled at this university.
- Operate under a set of principles and code of ethics consistent with the rights, needs and interests of all students.
- To be operated primarily by students as we are the only students association in New Zealand that provides students with practical experience in advocacy.
- Operate a full time service at the city campus for all students.
- Expand the awareness and reach of the Student Advice Hub across the University.
- Aim to respond to email/text/phone advocacy requests within 24 hours.

## Key Activities during the Summer Semester

- In partnership with the School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work, the Student Advice Hub will provide a placement for a Social Work Masters student who requires external supervision as part of their degree. One core activity over the course of this semester has involved defining the terms of this placement role, and setting up the required support structures around it.
- We have run our Senior Advocate hiring process for 2015.
- We have handled a record amount of cases for this period.
- To promote our services we attended many Orientation and Fresher's week events for both undergrad and post-graduate students including International Students Orientation, MAPAS, and Postgraduate and Tertiary Foundation events.

## Key Outcomes

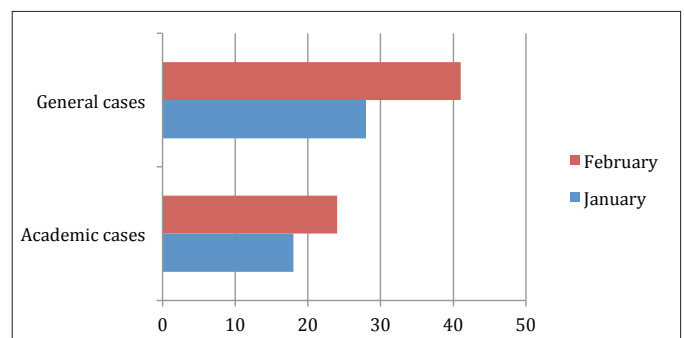
- The practicum placement opportunity has been explored with the School of Social Work, and successfully implemented.
- We successfully recruited and trained a Social Work Masters student who is placed here for the practicum component of their studies.
- 26 volunteer student advocates for 2015 have been recruited after a very competitive process, and this invaluable experience allows these students to enhance their legal education through practical advocacy work.
- We provided a comprehensive training day for this year's Student Advocates on the 27<sup>th</sup> February.
- The Proctor and Head Counsellor gave a presentation about their services and clarified their roles within the University at

the training.

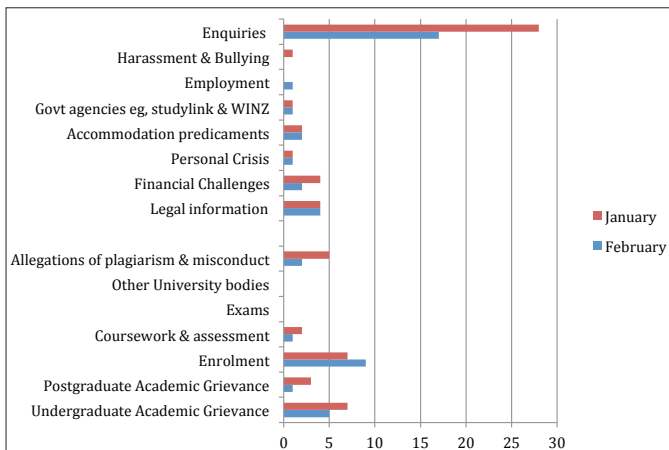
- We have worked hard to ensure all our promotional materials are accessible and easy to understand for all students regardless of their diverse backgrounds.
- Our most common case types were issues relating with enrolment, undergraduate complaints, academic misconduct and legal information.

## Key Statistics

- The marketing strategy that was initiated in 2014 has continued to deliver robust growth in the amount of students requesting assistance.
- There was an overall increase of **46%** in the number of students contacting SAH during Summer School.
- There was an exponential increase in student contacts during February. During this month we had an 91% increase, which is a record for this service.
- There was an 11% increase in student seeking help with undergraduate academic grievances.
- We assisted several students to appeal grades and support students who were accused of academic dishonesty.
- In particular, there has been an increase in demand for Advocacy support preparing submissions, appealing decisions and supporting students at Discipline Committee hearings this year.
- There is continuing demand for pastoral services.
- There has been an increase in requests for legal information.



GRAPH 1: ACADEMIC VERSES GENERAL ISSUES



GRAPH 2: TYPES OF ENQUIRES

### Difficulties

- Several students' enrolment has been delayed due to delays in communication between the University and Studylink. This has unsurprisingly proven to be a particularly stressful experience for these students.
- Students have complained that there have been delays in processing credit transfers causing difficulties with enrolment for Semester one.
- Several students have reported that they weren't advised by staff they contacted about the options for late deletion and withdrawal processes, resulting in them failing their papers. Once the semester is finished there are few options left other than have a failed grade.

### Key Trends

- **Robust growth in demand has placed pressure on existing resources:** The AUSA Advocacy services continue to grow in popularity with students as awareness of the availability and scope of services increases. The promotional strategy we have employed, coupled with an effective re-brand, has driven this robust growth. Though we are very proud of the efficacy of this strategy, the growth in demand has placed increasing pressure on the staffing resources available. We expect to see continued growth in demand for our services across 2015, and this trend is unfortunately simply unsustainable. This particular area is need of further investment so that we can continue to meet demand in a timely fashion.
- **Low uptake of our services by Maori and Pasifika students:** The Student Advice Hub has had a disproportionately low rate of contact from Maori and Pasifika students over the summer semester. Reaching out to and building awareness with these students is a key strategy for SAH this year. We will be looking to work with Tuakana; MAPAS and the Pacific & Maori equity advisors in order to increase our outreach efforts with these students and build awareness of what we offer. Extending our services is imperative to improve the poor statistics

which daunt Pacific/Maori achievement. As part of the strategic plan of the Service, we will continue to promote SAH to all Equity groups and to monitor any increase in access of SAH by these students. We plan to ask these students if they would like to speak to a Pasifika or Maori student advocate in Semester One.

- **Continuing issues around Studylink applications and enrolment deadlines:** Students have reported problems with delays to Studylink applications. Students have complained about contacting Studylink on multiple occasions and not receiving any resolution of the issues they contact them about. Subsequently there are reports of delays in enrolling into courses that are already full, causing further stress and anxiety for them. This area needs to be closely monitored as it appears to occur each year, and may be an area where we need to examine current University policy to ensure that it best caters for students in these particular situations.

## WELFARE

### Introduction

AUSA provides Welfare services ranging from food support to monetary grants for emergencies, optometry, childcare, and textbooks. The welfare provided by AUSA is one of our key services and it provides a much-needed safety net for many students in need. This is particularly important following continual, widespread cuts to student support by the government, and the failure of many forms of student support to increase as the cost of living for students increases over time. We are continuing to see an increasing demand for our services: students often need urgent help, and often to a far greater extent than AUSA is able to provide.

The core welfare services provided by AUSA offer both financial and food support to ensure that students have a safety net during their time at university. It is only in the last two years that AUSA has offered both these welfare services in the summer semester. Naturally, the uptake of these services in this time is less than during the other two semesters. This is likely to be a combination of reduced advertising of our services in this time, and the fewer students on campus to engage with our services.

The numbers of those accessing welfare services is likely to increase in 2015. The establishment of the Welfare Vice-President position in mid-2014 will address this increase. This also means that a greater focus on increasing our funding will be key to ensure that we can meet the needs of our expanding programme.

**Hardship Grants:** Approved: 1 Not Approved: 2  
**Foodbank:** 6 parcels

### Preparation for 2015

As the number of those accessing AUSA welfare services is

growing year to year, the Welfare Vice-President has used this time over the summer semester to ensure that AUSA's welfare services are of a high standard in 2015.

## **Foodbank**

The foodbank is the most widely accessed feature of AUSA's welfare services. In order to meet the demand of the coming year, the Welfare Vice-President has been working to ensure it is well stocked and operates to a high standard. This has included ensuring that the foodbank is well organised and all unlabelled cans are correctly labelled within the foodbank. Furthermore, a fridge/freezer has been moved into the foodbank room to allow the storage of fresh food and frozen meals in addition to the usual parcels. As AUSA has also struggled to find appropriately strong bags to hold parcels, custom bags have been ordered to ensure that AUSA can meet the increasing demand in food parcels.

## **Childcare Scholarship**

AUSA has noted that student parents disproportionality access welfare services. Through AUSA's welfare and advocacy services, it has become manifestly clear that many student parents find it difficult to financially care for dependants and simultaneously focus on study. In order to tailor a service to this specific group and to mitigate this problem, AUSA has teamed up with a group of generous University of Auckland staff who operate a giving circle to create a scholarship which assists student parents with the cost of childcare while studying. Applications for this scholarship close on the 8th of March, and we have already received far more than we can grant.

## **Textbook Grants**

Textbook grants are once again being offered to Auckland University students on all campuses and is on track to having a healthy number of applications. If the number of applicants continues to grow as it does, AUSA and UBS may have to consider increasing the sum that goes towards this service.

## **Parentspace**

AUSA is excited to be working alongside Campus Life and Early Childhood Education in opening the new parentspace in Old Choral Hall. AUSA has helped with the setting up of administration for this space as well as the physical moving of much of the equipment into the space. The space is a positive step forward in ensuring that student parents have a safe space for their children to accompany them within the university and alleviates some of the difficulty for parents who balance study and the supervision of their children.

## **Queerspace**

As Queerspace is still a relatively new support space provided by AUSA, time has been put in over the summer to ensuring this space is ready for the year ahead. The space has been redecorated and furnished to ensure that it can continue as a safe environment and central location for the University's LGBTIQ community.

## **Conclusion**

AUSA's welfare services are in a strong position going forward for the year 2015. This is largely due to the creation of the Welfare Vice-President role which has allowed a greater focus on AUSA's welfare services. As the cost of living continues to increase in Auckland, with very little change from government entitlements, the number of those accessing welfare services is likely to increase. The creation of the Welfare Vice-president is therefore key to ensuring systems are in place to support students who face financial hardship.

## **Going Forward**

The focus for the year ahead is to ensure that all students at the University of Auckland are aware of the welfare services that AUSA offers. In addition, there will also be a focus on ensuring that AUSA welfare is well resourced to provide these services. As our donation streams are neither fixed nor easily predictable, it is a priority that funding options are explored in order to meet the inevitable demand that will come alongside an increased awareness amongst the student body of AUSA's welfare services. The need for greater and more reliable funding in this area will only increase, and we are committed to exploring all options in this area.