

# **STUDENT COUNCIL**

## **CONSTITUTION**

### **2023-2024**

#### **Preamble**

The purpose of this constitution is to clarify the relationship between Student Council and Unitec – Te Pūkenga (Unitec) and establish rules and procedures governing the operation of Student Council and the conduct of its elected members.

This constitution is principles-based and is not intended to address the operational issue of who is responsible for providing the resources to support the Student Council.

Irrespective of any changes in the organisation tasked with providing support to the Student Council, this constitution shall remain in force in perpetuity, and this commitment is irrevocable.

#### **Part 1: Purpose of the Student Council**

The primary purpose of the Student Council is to ensure that Unitec students are positively represented and supported widely across Unitec. They will support and engage with local student representatives to gain feedback from the student body and then deliver student body feedback at a strategic level. They will advocate for and contribute to positive change, continuously improving the student experience at Unitec.

#### **1.1 Operating Objectives**

- 1) Increase student engagement at Unitec through learner leaders' voices by working alongside the learner services.
- 2) Encourage and advocate for world-class learning and teaching practices that are tailored to the needs of our students and communities.
- 3) Promote equitable access and support for achievement for all students, with a focus on Unitec priority groups; Māori, Pacific and Disabled.
- 4) Encourage, support and recognise students as a key stakeholder of Unitec. Representing students by providing Unitec with valuable insights and customer feedback received from students.
- 5) Provide student feedback to Unitec through all levels of Unitec's decision-making structure, including:
  - a) Te Pūkenga – Learner and Employer Experience and Attraction (LEEA);
  - b) The Regional Directors;
  - c) The Leadership Team;
  - d) Academic and other committees;

- e) Heads of Schools and Directors
  - f) Academic Programme Leaders, Managers and other staff; and
  - g) At the classroom level.
- 6) Student Council aims to assist Unitec in:
- a) Achieving its strategic goals;
  - b) Functioning as an excellent business;
  - c) Maintaining an understanding of its students' needs;
  - d) Ensuring that students have a meaningful voice at Unitec;
  - e) Providing an opportunity for students to develop leadership skills;
  - f) Ensuring that students are active stakeholders;
  - g) Helping Unitec meet its obligations under Te Noho Kotahitanga and the Code of Practice for Pastoral Care;
- 7) Student Council will not confine its representation of Unitec students to within Unitec. Student Council will represent students and their needs in the broader community, at local and national government level, in and across multiple and mainstream media formats.
- 8) Student Council shall ensure all advice issued and decisions made are:
- a. Well informed;
  - b. Reflective of the opinions of the broad student community
  - c. Based on available current data and research; and
  - d. Made with reference to, and consideration of, Unitec's strategic goals, direction and values.
- 9) Before any decision is made by Student Council, Student Council shall engage in an appropriate consultation process that considers the significance of the decision. Major decisions may require consultation with the entire student body, through surveys or a referendum. Less significant routine decisions may be made by the Student Council themselves, utilising the collective knowledge of its members in regards to student needs.

## **1.2 Student Groups / Clubs**

- 1) Student Council supports and encourages the formation of student clubs, societies and associations at Unitec.

- 2) Student Council recognises that these groups are entitled to manage their own affairs, but in order to ensure student voice is coordinated and recognised, Student Council will hold the role as the primary student representative body at Unitec.
- 3) Any involvement by students in Unitec's decision-making structure must be coordinated through and endorsed by the Student Council.

### **1.3 Reporting**

- 1) Student Council shall produce a report with a written summary informing key stakeholders (Te Pūkenga leadership or its equivalent, students) of Student Council's planning, outcomes, outputs and any recommendations three times a year (April, August and November).
- 2) The Student President shall meet regularly with Unitec's Regional Director (or delegate) and other key Unitec staff and keep them informed of current issues.
- 3) Student council members serving on committees will be responsible for providing meeting reports at upcoming Student Council meetings.

### **1.4 Changes to the Student Council Constitution**

- 1) The Student Council may make changes to this constitution, providing such changes are approved unanimously by all Student Council members present at a Student Council meeting.
- 2) To ensure the Student Council Constitution complies with New Zealand legislation and Unitec's policies the following people should be consulted before the approval of amendments.
  - 2.1. Head of Department (Student Events and Communications Manager or equivalent)
  - 2.2. Legal Contracts Manager
  - 2.3. Student Advocate
- 3) If Unitec considers the changes may have an adverse effect on students as a whole or for groups of students, a meeting of the Student Council and delegated senior staff members of Unitec shall be convened to discuss the proposed changes and determine a process to resolve any concerns held by Unitec.

## **Part 2: Composition of Student Council**

### **2.1 Membership**

- 1) The Student Council will consist of one of each of the following positions:
  - a. Student President;
  - b. Vice President;

- c. Māori Representative;
- d. Pacific Representative;
- e. Waitākere Campus Representative;
- f. International Representative; and
- g. General Representative.

## **2.2 Terms**

- 1) All positions except the Student President will serve during the main academic semesters for one calendar year following the year in which they were elected.
- 2) Candidates must be Unitec students at the time of their election and throughout their period of office
- 3) The Student President may be re-elected but is limited to a maximum of two terms (two years).

## **2.3 Elections**

- 1) All positions will be elected by Unitec-wide elections in which every Unitec student can vote, as per the Election Rules set out in the Unitec student elections policy.
- 2) In the event that a position is unfilled after an annual election, or a student resigns before taking office, that position will remain unfilled until the next annual election; unless the Student Council chooses to either :
  - a. Hold a by-election under 2.6.(2), or
  - b. Fill the vacancy by co-opting the applying candidate considered by Student Council to best meet the requirements of the role.

## **2.4 Resignations**

- 1) Student council members wishing to resign must do so by email or letter to the Student President and head of department and give a minimum of 2 weeks' notice.

## **2.5 Vacancies**

- 1) Vacancies arise on Student Council if the incumbent member:
  - a. Resigns;
  - b. Ceases to be a Unitec student
  - c. Has a vote of No Confidence passed against them at a Student Meeting;
  - d. Fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Student Council without apologies being accepted; or

- e. In accordance with the Code of Conduct, is removed from office for breaching the Code of Conduct.

2) A vote of No Confidence occurs when:

- a. The majority of the Student Council votes to hold a Student Meeting for students to vote on the No Confidence motion;
- b. A Student Meeting is held in which 10 working days' public notice is given of the time, date and location of the meeting and the proposed motion of No Confidence;
- c. At least 100 students vote in the Student meeting; and
- d. Of the total number of students who vote (including abstentions), half vote in favour of the motion of No Confidence.

## **2.6 Filling Vacancies**

1) If there are any vacancies on the Student Council and that vacancy is not the position of Student President, such position(s) will remain unfilled until the Student Council chooses to either:

- a. Hold a by-election, or
- b. Fill the vacancy by co-opting the applying candidate considered by Student Council to best meet the requirements of the role.

2) If the office of Student President is vacant, the following priorities apply to fill the vacant position:

- a. If a President Elect has been voted in the next calendar year and agrees to take office, such President Elect will take office immediately.
- b. If there is no President Elect, a by-election must be held.
- c. For by-elections at a Student-Meeting, The Election Rules will apply, with the exception that the nominations phase may be reduced to a period of not less than five working days and the voting period may be reduced to a period of not less than 48 hours.

## **2.7 Student Meetings**

1) The following applies to all Student Meetings held under 2.5 or 2.6:

- a. A Student Meeting can be an online or physical meeting.
- b. Participants in Student Meetings must be able to prove they are currently enrolled students.

- c. Online meetings require a secure voting system to be open for a minimum of 48 hours and no more than 72 hours and for all Unitec students to be emailed instructions on how to vote.

## **2.8 Accountability and Responsibility**

- 1) The student council reports to the Student voice coordinator and the Head of Department or equivalent.

## **2.9 Role descriptions**

- 1) The following descriptions are not intended to be exhaustive. In addition to what is listed here, members of Student Council are encouraged to make the role their own and find innovative ways of representing students.

- 2) All Student Council members are required to:

- a. Attend Student Council meetings;
- b. Decide on applications to use the Student Initiated Events Fund;
- c. Appoint student members of committees;
- d. Maintain a public profile and adhere to any agreed communication plans;
- e. Provide advice to Unitec leadership on strategic matters pertaining to students at Unitec.
- f. Always act in the best interest of Unitec students and not in their own personal interests; and
- g. Receive the Student President's written or oral reports and assist in producing a report for the student body and Unitec leadership in the month of November.

- 3) The **Student President** will:

- a. Plan and prepare meetings alongside the student vice president and student voice coordinator.
- b. Lead the student council to enable it to fulfill its purpose.
- c. Meet regularly with Unitec's Regional Directors (or delegated proxy) and other key Unitec staff;
- d. Be a member of Te Komiti Mātauranga Academic Board and other relevant academic committees;
- e. Maintain an effective working relationship with Unitec staff, including the Leadership Team, Directors, Heads of Schools, Service Centre Managers, and other staff;
- f. Have overall responsibility, and be responsible for signing off, all formal student submissions (e.g., to Parliamentary Select Committees); and
- g. Be a student contact for Te Pūkenga and other Governmental agencies, local government, and community groups.

4) The **Student Vice President** will:

- a. Provide secretary duties for student council meetings;
- b. Provide support for the Student President (This may include proxy support);
- c. Attend academic committee meetings;
- d. Maintain an effective working relationship with Unitec staff, including the Executive Leadership Team, Directors, Heads of Schools, Service Centre Managers, and other staff;
- e. Lead and Facilitate effective communication with Students and Unitec Staff; 5) The **Māori Representative** will:

- a. Represent the interests of Māori students
- b. Attend Runanga and other relevant committees;
- c. Maintain an effective working relationship with the key senior leaders and Maia – The Māori Development Centre and the Pae Arahi;
- d. Lead the development of and facilitate the connection between Māori student groups at Unitec;
- e. Liaise between these groups and Student Council and ensure they have a good working relationship;
- f. Foster a network of Māori students, including student representatives who are Māori

6) The **Pacific Representative** will:

- a. Attend Fono and any other relevant committees;
- b. Maintain an effective working relationship with the key senior leaders and the Centre for Pacific Teaching, Learning and Research;
- c. Represent the interests of Pacific students,
- d. Lead the development of and facilitate the connection between Pacific student groups at Unitec; and
- e. Liaise between these groups and Student Council.

7) The **Waitakere Campus Representative** will:

- a. Represent the interests of students at the Waitākere Campus;
- b. Maintain an effective working relationship with the key senior leaders and staff members at the Waitākere Campus
- c. Attend relevant meetings, such as academic or sector alignment meetings, where the needs of Waitākere Campus students are a focus to ensure the interests of Waitākere Campus students are considered e.g. in the provision of appropriate support, events and activities for them;

- d. Lead the development and facilitate the connection between Waitākere Campus student groups; and
- e. Liaise between these groups and the Student Council.

8) The **International Representative** will:

- a. Attend relevant meetings where the needs of International Students are a focus to ensure the interests of international students are considered e.g. in the provision of appropriate support, events and activities for International students;
- b. Lead the development and facilitate the connection between International student groups at Unitec;
- c. Liaise between these groups and the Student Council;
- d. Maintain an effective working relationship with the key senior leaders and Unitec International staff.

9) The **General Representative** will:

- a. Represent the interests of Unitec students;
- b. Liaise between Student Representatives and Student Council.
- c. Attend academic committee and meetings as delegated;
- d. Maintain a working relationship with Students and Staff.

## 2.10 **Student Council Meeting Procedure**

- 1) Meetings may be convened from time to time by the Student President and shall also be convened by the Student President within seven days upon receipt of a request in writing for a meeting signed by at least three members of Student Council.
- 2) The meeting quorum is 5.
- 3) The Student President will chair meetings, although the Student President may delegate this role to another member of Student Council.
- 4) If the Student President is absent, Student Council shall elect a chair for the meeting.
- 5) All issues will if possible be decided by consensus. If a consensus cannot be reached, a second vote will take place.
- 6) If the voting is tied under after a second vote, the president/chair may exercise a casting vote.
- 7) Student Council members must disclose all potentially relevant conflicts of interest on any issue before Student Council.
- 8) Where a conflict of interest is identified and/or registered, the member concerned shall not vote on that issue. Only with the unanimous agreement of all other members present may the member concerned participate in any board discussion on that topic. Failing such agreement being reached, the individual shall refrain from participation.

- 9) Individual Student Council members, aware of a real or potential conflict of interest that may apply to themselves or another Student Council member, have a responsibility to bring this to the notice of Student Council.

## **2.11 Benefits and Remuneration**

- 1) Elected student council members will be remunerated for their time and will be engaged as casual employees as per Unitec's employment contracts.
- 2) Professional development opportunities and training.
- 3) Opportunity to attend at least one conference relevant to their portfolio

## **Part 4: Conduct of Members**

### **4.1 General**

Members of Student Council hold positions of power and responsibility. This can place their actions and behaviours more into the public eye than if the individual was not a member of Student Council. With this in mind, it is imperative that members of Student Council know what is and is not acceptable behaviour when dealing with staff, students, media and others.

- 1) Student Council members shall not:
  - a. Use their position on Student Council to disadvantage or make any threat or demand upon Unitec students or staff;
  - b. Use their position on Student Council for private gain or the gain of a third party;
  - c. Represent themselves as spokespersons of Student Council unless authorised to do so subject to Section 4.4 below.
  - d. Lobby or endorse candidates (other than themselves) at Student Council elections.
- 2) Student Council members shall at all times:
  - a. act in the best interests of Student Council and Unitec students;
  - b. consider what is in the best interests of Student Council and students.
  - c. treat Unitec staff and students, members of the public and other Student council members, with dignity and respect.
  - d. respect individuals' rights to privacy and undertake to keep personal information (for which they do not have the permission from the individual to disclose) in confidence.

- 3) Student Council members shall not speak on behalf of any student until an appropriate level of consultation has been undertaken and considered.
- 4) Student Council members must be honest and open with the results of any consultation with students.

#### **4.2 Student Council**

- 1) Student Council Members are expected to adopt a co-operative attitude towards each other.
- 2) Student Council members are not to behave in a manner in which pressures other Student Council members into agreeing to their point of view, inside or outside of meetings.
- 3) Student Council members are not to discuss commercially sensitive or confidential topics during open sessions and must wait until the topics are discussed in closed sessions.
- 4) Student Council members must adhere to the Student Charter Ākonga Angitū.

#### **4.3 Training**

- 1) Student Council members shall participate in training events or courses that develop their ability to perform the role effectively. This includes, but is not limited to, training and development opportunities regarding:
  - a) Media and public communications;
  - b) Meeting processes and procedures;
  - c) Governance and management;
  - d) Networking and relationship building;
  - e) Speaking with confidence;
  - f) Unitec Strategies and Government policy; and
  - g) Briefings on current issues in the Tertiary Education sector.

#### **4.4 Media Liaison**

- 1) The Student President shall have a media profile inside Unitec and in the external media.
- 2) The Student President shall be the only student representative to speak in the external media on behalf of Unitec students. All other student representatives and members of Student Council must consult with and seek permission from the Student President before having any involvement with the external media.
- 3) The Student President shall give Unitec's Regional Director/s (or delegated proxy) notice of any interview provided by the Student President to the external media. Where the interview has been scheduled or the Student President will be initiating a media statement, this notice should be at least 4 working hours prior to the interview. Unscheduled interviews shall be advised to the Regional Director/s (or delegated proxy) as soon as possible after the interview has been completed.

- 4) Any member of Student Council who speaks to the media shall consider the best interests of Unitec students when commenting.
- 5) Student Council shall agree on a communications plan and a social media strategy annually.

#### **4.5 Complaints Process**

- 1) The complaints process will be dealt with through the Unitec Student policies. Complaints laid against Student Council members will be forwarded to the Student President.
- 2) Unitec student support will be made aware of any complaints laid against the student council.
- 3) If the complaint is deemed serious and plausible by the Student Voice Coordinator the member in question will be stood down until the completion of the investigation.
- 4) Once the formal complaints process has completed the Student Voice Coordinator shall provide a report to the Council with recommendations to be addressed at the following meeting.

#### **4.6 Misconduct**

- 1) If a student council member is found to be under investigation or convicted of misconduct of an academic or criminal nature, they are to make the Student President and Student Voice coordinator aware as soon as possible.
- 2) If the Student Voice Coordinator deems it to be serious, the student council member may be stood down for the duration of the investigation
- 3) If a student council member is guilty of misconduct during their term, they cease to be eligible to hold their role as a member of the student council.

### **Part 5: Meeting Procedures**

#### **5.1 Meetings**

- 1) Student Council will meet every 6 weeks, from the first week of semester 1 to the last week of semester 2.
- 2) All scheduled meetings are mandatory for all members of the Student Council.
- 3) Student Council will be made aware of meetings at least 7 days prior to the meeting date.
- 4) If members of the student council are unable to attend a meeting they must send their apologies to the meeting Chair or Secretary prior to the meeting. They must propose a proxy as per section 5.5
- 5) If a member misses 2 consecutive meetings without apologies the student council will issue them a formal warning.
- 6) Failure to attend the following meeting may result in membership being terminated.

#### **5.2 Agenda Setting**

- 1) The Student President is responsible for setting the agenda alongside the Student Voice Coordinator
- 2) The secretary is responsible for maintaining and distributing the agenda.

- 3) The agenda will be made available 7 days prior to the meeting date.
- 4) All members are expected to read the agenda and all accompanying material prior to the meeting.

### **5.3 Minutes**

- 1) A full copy of the minutes must be recorded during the meeting and disseminated to all members no later than 2 weeks prior to the next meeting date.
- 2) Once confirmed the minutes will be made available to all Unitec students via the Unitec website.
- 3) Items and or information minuted may be redacted from the publicly available minutes due to any of the following reasons:
  - a) Student privacy
  - b) Student safety
  - c) majority of student council agree

### **5.4 Motions**

- 1) Student Council members are entitled to a single vote on a motion.
- 2) For any decisions to be passed, there must be a majority vote
- 3) In the case of a tied vote on the Student Council, a second vote will be cast, should the second vote result in a tie the President may cast a casting vote.
- 4) Those not in favor of the motion will have their comments recorded and noted in the minutes.

### **5.5 Proxy Voting**

- 1) A student council member may give authority for a proxy vote to be cast in the member's absence.
- 2) The delegated proxy must be confirmed in writing to the Student President or Secretary, or addressed in the minutes of the previous meeting, no less than 1 week prior to the next meeting and this shall be recorded in the minutes.
- 3) A member who is given authority for a proxy vote may revoke or amend the proxy at any time before the vote is cast by direct communication to the Student President.
- 4) Proxy voting is to be kept to a minimum to ensure clarity with a maximum of three proxy votes per member per year unless authorised by the Student President.

## **Part 6: Relevant Documents**

- [Unitec Student Election policy](#)
- [Unitec Student Charter](#)
- [Akonga concerns and complaints policy](#)
- [Unitec Social Media Policy](#)