



To: University of Melbourne Graduate Student Community

From: GSA General Secretary (Lilian Day)

Date: January 2022

Subject: Proposed Structure of Representative Council and Faculty Council Offices

2021 has shown us a successful implementation of the constitutional changes adopted to ensure an increased capacity for more comprehensive representation of GSA's members – our graduate student community. I would like to thank all who have been involved, whether through participating, running in elections, or voting. Your voices are crucial to ensuring GSA is doing the best possible job to work for all of you.

We began this term with ten Representative Councillor positions, and the possibility for twenty Faculty Councillor positions, and it is now time for the GSA Board to consider the positions for the next term. It is vital that the decisions for determining these positions are grounded in graduate student input, so I am asking for your feedback and ideas on a proposal to be considered by the GSA Board.

Current Representative Council positions (10 positions)

Currently there are 10 office bearer positions on the GSA Representative Council. Based on GSA staff input, all these positions play an important role in helping the organisation achieve its strategic objectives.

1. Activities Officer
2. Women's Officer
3. International Officer
4. Health and Welfare Officer
5. Education Coursework Officer
6. Education Research Officer
7. LGBTIQ Officer
8. Families Officer
9. Indigenous Officer
10. Environment and Sustainability Officer

Current Faculty Council positions (up to 20 positions)

Currently we have five Faculty Council members, out of twenty possible members. While GSA has continued to engage with members and advertise Faculty Council positions, there has generally been less interest in these positions than we were ideally hoping for. Having Faculty representation has been expressed over the years as a crucial area of representation, and a useful opportunity to get graduate students to be engaged in GSA's work. Considering this importance, it is now crucial for us to consider how to achieve this engagement in a way that is appealing for people to get involved, and will work under GSA's structure. The following idea has been proposed as a way to accommodate necessary changes, while ensuring the best possible level of representation:

1. Increasing the scope and capacity of the FC by increasing the responsibility of Faculty Councillors and reducing the number of individuals on this Council. This would include paying Faculty Councillors an honorarium (where they have previously been paid a sitting fee) and increasing their involvement with the Representative Council. While their workload would be increased, it would likely be approximately half of that expected by the Representative Councillors. We would have one representative from each faculty, leading to a maximum of ten positions.

Proposed representative positions (10 positions)

The current proposal will maintain the current number of representative positions at 10.

1. The first proposed change to note is to adapt the education-specific roles as we prepare for a different Faculty Council structure and involvement. The increase in faculty-specific advocacy and work to be done through the proposed adaptations to the faculty council will allow GSA representatives to expand the scope of education-related advocacy issues. It also diversifies the issues that we are able to get information about and tackle through advocacy. As the majority of graduate students are undertaking degrees by coursework, there is expected to be strong representation of coursework students across faculties, which is why the Education Coursework Officer role has been proposed to be removed as it's portfolio will be substituted by the expansion of scope of the Faculty Council. Retaining the research officer position on the Representative Council ensures that regardless of the faculty council's composition, research-specific issues will be represented within GSA's advocacy work.
2. Additionally, there has been a suggestion to introduce a dedicated Disability (or Disability and Equity/Access) Officer, as need has been highlighted by our current and previous Health and Welfare Officers, who have suggested the need for more dedicated Disability representation and advocacy. The Health and Welfare Officer role could continue, with a focus on issues such as the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and food insecurity.
3. Other suggestions have included an employability/ transition to work Officer, and a disability/accessibility/equity Officer.
4. Renaming some roles has also been raised including the LGBTIQ Officer (potentially Queer Officer or another name entirely).

Below is a suggestion of the roles for the term beginning in 2022.

Proposed officer bear position	Notes	Restricted Constituency?*
Activities Officer	Retained from 2021 Representative Council	No
Women's Officer	Retained from 2021 Representative Council	Yes
International Officer	Retained from 2021 Representative Council	Yes
Health and Welfare Officer	Retained from 2021 Representative Council	No
Families Officer	Retained from 2021 Representative Council	Yes

LGBTIQ Officer (name may be revised, overall role to be retained)	Retained from 2021 Representative Council	Yes
Research Officer	Retained from 2021 Representative Council. Focus will be on representation for research students, who experience different issues than coursework students.	Yes
Indigenous Officer	Retained from 2021 Representative Council	Yes
Environment and Sustainability Officer	Retained from 2021 Representative Council	No
<u>Potential:</u> Disability Officer / Disability and Equity Officer/ Disability and Accessibility Officer	This position would be developed with the current Health and Welfare Officer, graduate students with disabilities, and GSA staff. The focus would be on representing students with disabilities, who need significantly different advocacy and support than is able to be offered through any of our current Representative Councillor positions. Their position would likely be focused on the needs of students with disabilities, and those who face equity issues at the university such as carers for people with a disability and students with needs relating to special consideration, academic adjustments, etc.	Yes
<u>Potential:</u> Employability / Transition to Work Officer	This position would be developed to help GSA deliver programs, advocacy and outcomes relating to employability for Graduate students at the university.	No

*Restricted constituencies refer to a limitation on voting so that those who identify as being part of that constituency are able to vote for that officer at elections, for example the women's officer only being elected by graduates who identify as women. This is provided for under 9.8(b) of the GSA Constitution which states that "the GSA Board may determine annually the restrictions (if any) on voting in elections for Representative Councillors representing particular constituencies".

Have your voice heard

We appreciate the input we have received to date from graduate students since the beginning of our constitutional reform process. To have your say on these proposals, please contact GSA General Secretary, Lily Day at gensec@gsa.unimelb.edu.au by the 22nd February 2022 for consideration by the GSA Board.

Note: Changes to Faculty Council will need constitutional change which will need to be approved by the membership at the AGM.