

## **Postgraduate Student Senate Convenor-Student Representative Council Position Description**

### **ABOUT UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION LTD**

The University of Newcastle Students' Association Limited (UNSA) is a student run, not-for-profit organisation that represents and supports University of Newcastle (UON) students across all onshore campuses, as well as those studying online (the Cloud Campus).

Students are represented through the Student Representative Council (SRC) led by the President, and governance of the organisation is overseen by the Board of Directors.

The SRC is a sub-committee of the Board established pursuant to clause 44 of the UNSA constitution.

The Postgraduate Student Senate Convenor occupies the role of student representative as elected to the SRC from time to time.

In addition to having a paid role as a student representative on the SRC, the elected student also holds the position of volunteer Board member of the UNSA Board. The volunteer Board role is separate to and distinct from the SRC student representative role and has its own position description and responsibilities.

The SRC and Board achieve their goals through the support of dedicated staff who deliver key services and the day-to-day operation of the organisation. These services include but are not limited to: support for clubs and societies, an academic support, welfare and hardship support as well as a range of events and activities across the academic calendar.

UNSA acknowledges that the needs of students are diverse and ever-changing, but the organisation aims to ensure that anyone studying at UON can learn and develop in an environment that is welcoming, supportive, and inclusive, and that UNSA gives them a genuine representative voice.

### **POSITION SUMMARY**

The Convenor, as the student representative, leads the Postgraduate Students' Senate, an assembly that represents the views, interests and needs of all postgraduate students at UON.

The Convenor role drives the identification of issues that affect the education, educational and extra-curricular experiences of postgraduate students. The Convenor also ensures the Senate genuinely captures and represents the student voice of all postgraduate students at UON.

The Convenor will lead campaigns on all relevant issues and support the advocacy of postgraduate students and their issues. In addition to the overarching functions of the Senate, it is the Convenor's responsibility to monitor and support the representatives to the Senate.

The Convenor works closely with the President, UNSA staff, and the other members of the SRC to achieve all these responsibilities.

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

In addition to the responsibilities common to SRC members, the Convenor is accountable for a range of additional duties:

- Chair of the Postgraduate Students' Senate: setting agendas, presiding over committee meetings, and ensuring actions are undertaken in a timely manner;
- Reporting to the SRC on the activity and recommendations of that committee;
- Leading and supporting the members of the Postgraduate Students' Senate in fulfilling their obligations to their respective cohorts and the wider student body;
- Leading the development of postgraduate student specific events and activities;
- Encouraging student participation in activities and events driven by the Senate, as well as those of the broader Association;
- Supporting research to identify issues affecting the educational experiences of postgraduate students at UON, and staying informed of feedback from students from all locations to understand the issues important to them;
- Encouraging student participation in relevant UON and national education sector surveys;
- Liaising and collaborating with relevant persons or bodies on issues that affect the UON experience of postgraduate students;
- Representing the UNSA on UON committees or other decision-making bodies as directed by the President;
- Ex officio membership on the Board of Directors (undertaken on a voluntary basis);
- Participating in professional development opportunities for the benefit of the role; and,
- Any other duties and responsibilities as agreed with the SRC.

***Further, and specifically, the Convenor must adhere to the following requirements:***

- ***Attend all scheduled meetings and apologise with 24 hours' written notice if unable to attend;***
- ***Inform UNSA of any conflicts of interest or issues that will affect participation in UNSA events and activities;***
- ***Respond to all UNSA related emails within 3 business days;***
- ***Respond to all UNSA related emails marked 'high importance' within 1 business day; and***
- ***Copy the UNSA office into all relevant communications relating to UNSA business.***

***Throughout the performance of these duties, it is a requirement that at all times the Convenor must act in good faith, adhere to the UNSA constitution, and comply with all UON policies and codes of conduct.***

***This is a critical role for both UNSA and the UON and it is expected that it be treated as such.***

### **PREFERRED ATTRIBUTES**

- Community-mindedness and passion and enthusiasm for improving the educational experience and wellbeing of postgraduate students studying at UON;
- Punctuality and professionalism;
- High level organisational and time management skills;
- Personal responsibility and ownership;
- An ability to listen to, to lead and to collaborate with diverse groups;
- An understanding of UNSA's mission and goals; and

The drive to improve your leadership and employability skills.

### **TERM OF OFFICE**

In a normal business cycle the term of office for all SRC representatives is from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December of the calendar year immediately following their election. In 2021 the Term of Office will be from 1 July to 31 December 2021.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of November the incumbent representative is required to negotiate a substantial period of hand-over to the incoming Postgraduate Convenor, as well as to contribute to annual planning for the following year based on their experience as the outgoing elected representative. The incoming Postgraduate Convenor is encouraged to contribute to the planning for the year of their term of office.

The term of office for SRC representatives who are elected or appointed to fill a casual vacancy will also expire on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

In order to nominate and hold office, the nominee must be a Voting Member of UNSA and an onshore UON student enrolled in a postgraduate program of study. Please refer to the UNSA constitution for the definition of a Voting Member and details on eligibility to nominate.

As the role of Convenor is an ex officio position to the Board, nominees must meet the criteria for Directors.

Refer to the UNSA constitution for eligibility criteria.

### **LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

As well as the key responsibilities, there are a range of additional experiences the Postgraduate Convenor can gain during their term to enrich their UON experience and significantly contribute to their employability.

These leadership development activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Communication skills - giving presentations, public speaking and advising the SRC President relating to media releases;
- Formal Written skills – drafting position papers and correspondence, providing feedback on policy;
- Research skills – assisting UNSA staff in conducting surveys and focus groups;
- Event skills – collaborating with UNSA staff on event planning, activation and risk assessment;
- Project Management - collaborating with UNSA staff on designing and managing projects;
- Recruitment skills - shortlisting candidates and sitting on staff panels; and
- Networking and building professional relationships

As elected student leaders all SRC representatives are offered development opportunities by UNSA's staff and UON, as well as being given direct support to lead their own Board and SRC-approved initiatives.

### **ACQUIRED SKILLS**

There are a number of professional, transferrable skills a student can expect to hone as they develop in the Postgraduate Convenor role across their term of office:

- High level written and verbal communication skills;
- Strong and culturally diverse interpersonal skills;
- Negotiation and influencing, conflict resolution, debating ideas and producing a consensus;
- Problem solving and innovation, critical and analytical thinking;
- Policy interpretation and application;
- The ability to seek out and respond to feedback;
- Experience managing volunteers; and,
- Resilience.

This list is by no means exhaustive. It aims to demonstrate how this role can increase your employability and develop core transferrable skills. The role of Postgraduate Convenor is an opportunity for a year long journey of professional development and personal growth, providing a range of experiences that can be applied in any industry.