

Position Title:	Senior Advocate
Staff Division:	UMSU Advocacy & Legal Division
Employment Status:	Full-time, Fixed Term (12 months)
Classification Level:	Professional Level 8.1, <i>University of Melbourne Student Union Agreement 2023-2025</i>
Reports to:	Team Leader, Advocacy Service
Reported to by:	None
Incumbent:	Vacant
Date Effective:	October 2026

The University of Melbourne Student Union Inc (UMSU)

The University of Melbourne Student Union Inc (UMSU) is a dynamic, for-purpose incorporated association, serving as the representative body for all students at the University of Melbourne. Structured around student control of student affairs, UMSU is governed by an elected Students' Council and twelve student departments, chosen by and from the student body.

Located in the heart of the University of Melbourne's award-winning student precinct, UMSU is a vibrant, creative, and diverse social justice organisation committed to representing and supporting University of Melbourne students. Our vast arts and culture programs for emerging student artists are run in a state-of-the-art theatre, a professional art gallery, the iconic Rowden White Library and the Ida Bar, the only student bar on campus.

Our commitment extends beyond engagement to essential support services, including a free legal and advocacy service for students. We host events co-designed by students supported by professional staff, and publish multiple student-led publications, including *Farrago*. Beyond that, UMSU runs a food relief program, oversees over 1000 student volunteers, and has more than 200 affiliated student clubs.

UMSU's overarching goal is to enhance student life at the University of Melbourne. We achieve this by elevating and representing student voices through purposeful engagement and advocacy, offering exceptional programs, services, and opportunities that promote inclusivity and accessibility. Each of our dedicated student departments, committees, and collectives play a pivotal role in shaping the university experience.

Staff at UMSU are organised within four divisions with multiple teams:

- Advocacy & Legal
- Arts & Culture
- Student Representation
- Operations & Communication

Each division is supported by a Student Advisory Group made up of elected student representatives and designed to support ongoing collaboration between UMSU staff and elected student representatives. Student Advisory Groups provide feedback and advice from a student perspective to enhance participation in UMSU operated programs and services.

The UMSU Constitution establishes that we will:

- Advance the welfare and interests of students.
- Represent students of the University within the University and to the community.
- Provide amenities and services, principally for students and other members of the University community, and incidentally to the public.
- Provide an independent framework for student social and political activity.
- Develop, maintain and support student clubs, societies and associational life generally.
- Promote and defend the rights of students to education on the basis of equality without regard to race, colour, sex, sexuality, gender identity, age, physical disability, mental illness, economic circumstances, political religious or ideological conviction, or national or social origin.
- Oppose violence and/or hatred through militarism, nationalism, or discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, sexuality, gender identity, age, physical disability, mental illness, economic circumstances, religion, or national or social origin.
- Provide a democratic and transparent forum in which students' affairs and interests can be governed in an effective and accountable manner.
- Promote free and accessible government-funded education.

To support these objectives UMSU staff observe the following values:

- Student Led and Focused
- Inclusive and Connected
- Effective and Engaged
- Accountable, Transparent and Responsive

Divisional Overview

The Advocacy & Legal Division encompasses a co-located Community Legal Centre, Sexual Harm Response Team and Student Advocacy Service available to all students at the University of Melbourne. The UMSU Legal Service provides free legal advice to all students at the University of Melbourne, as well as running volunteer programs and providing community legal education. The Advocacy Service provides an advisory and advocacy service to students at the University of Melbourne in relation to formal and informal University procedures.

Additionally, the Advocacy & Legal Division contains a specialist unit dedicated to providing confidential, trauma-informed support for anyone affected by gender-based violence including sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and family violence. Staff additionally provide tailored peer-led primary prevention training to UMSU's elected representatives and UMSU affiliated club and society leaders, which is a requirement of affiliation with UMSU.

Staff in the Advocacy & Legal Division are also responsible for providing information and other forms of support to the elected student representatives of UMSU, including UMSU International.

Position Summary

This position is responsible for providing a comprehensive student advocacy and information service to students at the University of Melbourne. It has a significant role in providing advice, advocacy and liaison services to reduce factors that may negatively affect students' personal, social or educational achievements.

UMSU provides student-facing services and events on University of Melbourne campuses, and an inherent requirement of this role is the ability to work in person and on site. UMSU staff employment conditions are

governed by the *University of Melbourne Student Union Agreement 2023-2025* and associated policies, such as the Flexible Work Policy.

Key Accountabilities

Student Advocacy and Information

Under the broad direction of the Team Leader:

- Support students with individual concerns and grievances, including liaising with academic and administrative staff, assistance with submissions, letters of appeal and complaint, and preparation for meetings with Committees in relation to discipline, appeals and exclusion. Coordinate and manage each case to its most appropriate outcome.
- Advocate on behalf of students facing formal University processes to ensure that students have access to effective and appropriate means of resolution and redress (daily during peak periods for CAPC hearings and appeals).
- Provide accurate and timely information to students, offering guidance and advice on education and welfare issues to ensure that presenting students are fully informed of their rights and responsibilities under relevant legislation, regulations, and University policies and procedures.
- Contribute to the monitoring, review and development of University policy in areas that directly affect the educational and personal wellbeing of students, including academic progress, student grievances and student discipline.
- Apply professional judgement to assess the needs of students and, when required, liaise and negotiate on their behalf with individual lecturers and departments to protect their rights and conditions, or refer students on to the relevant University or external organisation for further assistance where appropriate.
- Actively engage in the planning, coordination and assessment of programs and activities related to the student advocacy function.

Research and Advice

Under the broad direction of the Project & Research Lead:

- Research and prepare submissions to relevant University or external agencies on educational issues in relation to the identified needs of students of the University.
- Maintain detailed knowledge of relevant legislation and policies to ensure that the advice provided to students is accurate and timely.
- Analyse policies and trends in the University and higher education sectors and provide information to the Team Leader, Advocacy Service and the Manager, Advocacy & Legal on the impact they may have on the student body.

Advocacy Liaison and Publicity

- Participate in induction programs for new student representatives so that they are fully informed of their responsibilities as UMSU representatives and as members of committees, both within and outside of the University.
- Develop and disseminate appropriate publicity materials, including online self-help resources, brochures and leaflets, so that students are fully informed of the services available to them through the Advocacy Service.
- Liaise with the University's faculty and departmental staff in delivering appropriate and timely information regarding academic issues, Academic Progress Committee processes, and Advocacy Service program initiatives.
- Participate and, where appropriate, act as a representative in University and UMSU forums, promoting the needs and interests of students.

Level of Supervision and Typical Activities

This position operates with a high degree of autonomy, using both judgement and interpretation in determining the day-to-day priorities of the position.

This position receives broad direction from the Team Leader, Advocacy Service and the Project & Research lead.

Task Level

The incumbent is responsible for ensuring the provision of accurate, current and relevant advice to students on a range of academic and administrative issues which impact on both their educational and general welfare, and for the provision of an advocacy function that ensures the rights of students are protected and maintained. The incumbent coordinates and manages a significant caseload of advocacy related cases and ensures that the most appropriate outcome is achieved. The most complex cases are managed in consultation with the Team Leader, Advocacy Service.

Organisational Knowledge

The incumbent will review and monitor existing University policies and procedures which impact on students and, where necessary, provide advice and recommendations on policy shortcomings. Referrals to relevant University departments such as the Safer Community Program and Counselling, or to external organisations, are made where appropriate.

Judgement, Independence and Problem Solving

In providing support, guidance, advice, advocacy and liaison services to students, the incumbent requires a highly skilled problem-solving ability in the assessment of students' needs. In providing support and advocacy the incumbent is required to demonstrate highly developed negotiation skills when liaising with University departments and staff on behalf of students.

Health & Safety and Environmental Responsibilities of Staff

All staff are required to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of other personnel who may be affected by their conduct. UMSU staff are required to understand and comply with the organisation's policies and procedures, including, but not limited to:

- *Workplace Conduct Policy*
- *Interaction Protocols Policy*
- *Child Safety Policy*
- *Health and Safety Policy*
- *Privacy Policy*
- *Constitution and regulations, such as the Financial Regulations*
- *Prevention of Sexual Misconduct Policy*
- *Fraud Risk Management Policy and Corporate Governance Policy.*

Flexibility to work remotely is subject to UMSU's *Flexible Work Policy* and relevant legislation, which applies upon commencement.

Key Selection Criteria

Essential Skills and Qualifications:

- A degree with at least four years' subsequent relevant experience; or an equivalent combination of relevant experience and/or education/training.
- Demonstrated effective verbal, interpersonal and written communication skills.
- Demonstrated skills in advocacy and negotiation.
- Demonstrated research skills with particular reference to the evaluation, development and implementation of policy.
- Knowledge of current education issues, including government policy.
- Demonstrated ability to work in a team environment.
- An appreciation and understanding of the issues of concern to, and needs of, students.
- A valid employee Working with Children Check.

Desirable Skills and Qualifications:

- Experience working in a higher education environment.
- Experience working with student organisations.
- Formal training and experience in risk assessment and Gender-based Violence issues.

UMSU is a child safe organisation, based on Wurundjeri country. We value diversity, embrace difference, and nurture a connected, safe, and respectful community. UMSU is a member of the Australian Network for Disability. We are committed to creating and maintaining a diverse, inclusive, and safe work environment.

First Nations people, people of all ages, across all gender spectrums, people with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse people are strongly encouraged to apply.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work, and that sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

I have read, understood and agree to comply with the position description.

Signed: _____
(Incumbent)

Date: _____

Signed: _____
(Supervisor)

Date: _____

The information contained in this position description is intended to describe the nature and level of work to be performed. This is not considered an exhaustive list of all the responsibilities, duties or skills required in the role. This position description may be subject to change from time to time. Any such reorganisation of duties shall be the subject of discussion with the position incumbent.