

# *In Unison* CHARTER

Policy Name: USU In unison Charter  
Date last approved/updated: 16 February 2009  
Commencement date: 17 February 2009  
Policy Owner: USU Executive  
Responsible Manager: USU General Manager  
Approved by: USU Executive  
Date of next review: 1 December 2009

## MISSION

*In Unison* is a print & online publication produced by the USU students' Association at Unitec that aims to report on the life and times of students. The magazine is to address their needs and concerns in a mixture of serious, investigative, and even light-hearted reporting. *In Unison's* stories should cover the width and breadth of the campus and beyond, recognising that the student community is a microcosm of the world around us (albeit an important one).

The purpose of this charter is to outline the relationship between the USU Publications Editor and USU in addition to their employment agreement. The goal is protect journalistic principles in relations to news articles/stories whilst ensuring reasonable expectations between the employer and employee.

## 1.0 EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

- 1.1 The Editor will have oversight of the Publications staff and will report to the Communications & Marketing Manager.
- 1.2 The USU standard terms and conditions for employment and position descriptions remain, but will be overridden by this charter where applicable.

## 2.0 OBLIGATIONS

*In Unison* and the USU share a common goal of informing and empowering students. The following section codifies *In Unison's* role in furthering the aims of the Association.

- 2.1 The Editor of *In Unison* has a responsibility to include in the print and online publication material as provided by the USU and ensure that all publications include clear branding that highlights the USU's ownership of said publications.
  - 2.1.1 USU material must be submitted in full within the timeframe given by the Editor. The Editor may reserve the right to decline specific USU content if it has not been received by the agreed deadline.
- 2.2 The Editor of *In Unison* must ensure that all online and print material adheres to reasonable standards of 'good taste' or otherwise serves the public interest. (see 4.2)
- 2.3 The Editor must notify the President and Communications & Marketing Manager in advance, of any content which is likely to reflect poorly on the USU or Student Executive (see 4.1.1, 'Disputes of Coverage'), and must notify the Returning Officer of any content which is likely to reflect poorly on a candidate standing in an upcoming election (see 4.2, 'Disputes of Coverage').
- 2.4 *In Unison* may not disclose any document that is marked confidential to any third party due to the information being commercially sensitive.

### **3.0 ENTITLEMENTS**

*In Unison* serves a valuable role in holding accountable the elected representatives of the Association and communicating their decisions to the public. *In Unison* also has a responsibility to report on the use of member funds and any matter that that may involve safety of USU Members. *In Unison* requires a certain level of autonomy in order to do so, and a free press is the hallmark of a responsible and democratic institution.

- 3.1 Both the Editor and *In Unison* shall have the right to criticize and comment on the performance of the USU and its officers within the context of the *In Unison* print publication or website, providing:
  - i) the comments occur within a framework of objective journalism such as a news story, Executive report or investigative feature, with the sole exemption of the editorial,
  - ii) the comments adhere to the Defamation Policy as outlined elsewhere in this document (5.0, 'Defamation & Verification of Sources'), and
  - iii) the right of reply has been adequately extended (see 4.1.1, 'Disputes of Coverage').
- 3.2 The Editor of *In Unison* or a nominee of their choice shall be notified at least two (2) days in advance of all USU events (including meetings of the Student Executive) and invited to attend and report on proceedings. If said meetings move into strict, the Editor or their representative may not report on the content of any discussion in strict, but may report the Executive's justification for a movement into strict and criticize the decision if necessary.
- 3.3 The USU Publications Editor acknowledges that no USU staff member is permitted to comment in *In unison* without express permission of the president.
- 3.4 The USU Communications & Marketing Manager shall have the right to proof-read the final draft of the *In Unison* print publication to ensure correct details and placement.

### **4.0 DISPUTES**

In the event of an editorial dispute, the dispute shall be settled using the agreed Disputes Resolution Process as outlined below. All other disputes will be settled using the relevant, current New Zealand employment legislation.

The Editor of *In Unison* has editorial license to publish or decline content at their discretion (providing said content adheres to reasonable standards of good taste) and must operate free from political influence as exerted by the Student Executive or the USU. That said, the Editor has a responsibility to act in the best interests of both the USU and its members, and editorial decisions should acknowledge the 'good faith' agreement that exists between *In Unison* and the USU.

#### **4.1 Disputes of Coverage**

- 4.1.1 Where the President or USU staff feels that an article or submission reflects poorly on themselves or the USU, the President is entitled to a right of reply on their behalf. The President and/or parties involved must be notified of the intended time and date of publication and given access to view the disputed material no later than:
  - i) two (2) working days before going to print<sup>1</sup>, or

---

<sup>1</sup> A print deadline in this case shall be defined as 5pm on the date as notified, while a working day shall consist of the hours between 9am-5pm.

ii) one (1) working day in the case of online content.

4.1.2 The President's right of reply shall be deemed waived if a reply has not been received three (3) hours prior to a print deadline, or one (1) hour prior to the agreed deadline for uploading the material to the *In Unison* website.

4.1.3 The President's reply must respond exclusively to the assertions of the disputed material and should be no longer than one-third of the disputed material.

4.1.4 The President's reply will be published *talis qualis* on the same page as the disputed material unless an alternative agreement is reached between the Editor and President.

4.2 If a candidate in an upcoming election<sup>2</sup> is mentioned by name or position in an article or submission and feels that said article or submission reflects poorly on themselves, they too are entitled to the right of reply as outlined above (in addition to the President, if applicable).

## **4.2 Disputes of 'Good Taste'**

'Good taste' shall be defined here as 'language, imagery or subject matter that would be appreciated in context by the majority of readers',

4.2.1 The Resolution Process for disputes of 'Good Taste' is outlined in the attached Dispute Resolution Process document.

4.2.2 Where 'good taste' is disputed or challenged, the onus is on the Editor to demonstrate that the offending material serves the public interest.

4.2.3 In the event that the Editor wishes to challenge the Communication's and Marketing Managers evaluation, both the Editor and the USU must defer to the judgement of the General Manager.

## **5.0 DEFAMATION & VERIFICATION OF SOURCES**

5.1 The Editor must ensure that no comments, articles or correspondence that could be construed as defamatory are published in the *In Unison* print publication or on the website.

5.1.1 In the event that material could be construed as defamatory, the Editor must err on the side of caution and either remove the offending material or confer with the Communications & Marketing Manager as per the Disputes Resolution Process (see 4.1, 'Disputes of Coverage' & 4.2, 'Disputes of Good Taste').

5.1.2 All submissions for the *In Unison* print publication must be accompanied by:

- i) the author's full name, home address and contact phone number, or
- ii) a Unitec personal email address.

5.1.3 The Editor may reserve the right to print submissions anonymously, providing the submission in question meets the above requirements. The Editor may withhold the author's identity from members of the public, USU members, the Student Executive, Unitec and USU staff with the sole exception of the USU's General Manager, who:

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Candidate' shall refer to any USU member standing for a position on the Student Executive after the close of nominations.

- i) may use this information only to verify the author's identity, and
- ii) is bound to maintain the confidentiality of the source.

5.1.4 *In Unison's* Publications staff may also maintain strict confidentiality regarding their own sources and reserve the right to withhold this information from their Editor.

5.1.5 Should the above scenario occur, the Editor may reserve the right to withhold from publication any material citing an unverified source.

5.1.6 Should a member of the Publications staff yield this information to the Editor, the Editor is thereby bound to maintain the strict confidentiality of the source and may not approach the source in a journalistic or managerial capacity without the staff member's consent.

