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Melbourne University Law Students' Society



External Grants Policy

As at 3 February 2020

I Introduction

A Purpose

This policy document is intended to establish the formal procedure available to Melbourne Law School (MLS) student organisations to apply for a funding grant from the Melbourne University Law Students' Society (MULSS). Student life at MLS is enriched by the existence of a diverse array of student groups. These groups allow students to engage in different areas of law, represent different student communities, and provide opportunities for academic enrichment. As the peak body representing MLS students, a guiding principle of the MULSS is to ensure the best student experience. The MULSS believes that the availability of a variety of student organisations improves the MLS student experience. As such, the MULSS has previously provided funding to a number of new organisations.

However, students wishing to introduce new student groups into this environment are often met with significant financial hurdles to establishment. Access to funding can be limited and involve significant regulatory oversight. MLS thankfully provides considerable financial support to student organisations, including the MULSS. Additionally, the Graduate Student Association is another source of funding for the MULSS and other MLS student organisations. However, the MULSS believes that we can provide another avenue for MLS student organisations to provide the best outcomes for MLS students.

Given the increasing prevalence of fledgling student groups at MLS, it has become clear that a formalised process is required for the MULSS to properly consider and oversee funding requests. The purpose of this policy document is to outline the process by which external organisations can seek funding from the MULSS, and the requirements expected of them in doing so. While this policy is geared towards relatively new organisations, it also applies to any more established organisations pursuing funding. Student organisations who have previously received a grant from the MULSS are welcome to submit a proposal but must note that our grants focus on fledgling organisations. This policy does not apply to organisations with historically established links to the MULSS, such as the Law Revue.

B MULSS Constitution

The payment of funds to other student groups in MLS is consistent with the purposes of the MULSS as outlined in its Constitution. Section 2 of the Constitution states that the primary object of the MULSS is 'to pursue initiatives for the benefit and welfare of its members through ... (a) facilitating, encouraging and improving the education of its members; ... (c) offering support with regards to the career opportunities available to its members; ... [and] (e) promoting a commitment to social justice and equality, as well as a critical interest in the law and the operation of the law in society.' This section does not limit the formulation of policies such as this one to most accurately represent the diverse needs and concerns of all members. Establishing student groups enriches the educational experience of MULSS members, while the existence of student groups in various areas of law improve students' career opportunities. Additionally, student groups representing different student communities are in line with a commitment to social justice and equality. Additionally, the diverse needs and concerns of all members are furthered through the diversity of student organisations available.

II Appropriations and Committee Meetings

The MULSS is the grateful recipient of a substantial amount of money on the understanding that this money provides significant benefit to MLS students and is prudently managed. In order to ensure this money is spent in the most efficient and transparent way, all funds spent by the MULSS require approval via an appropriation at a monthly Committee Meeting.

A Appropriations

Appropriations include details of the portfolio that is requesting the funds, an explanation and breakdown of proposed spending and quotes for any goods or services involved. Appropriations must be submitted one week before the relevant Meeting. The Committee then undertakes a rigorous analysis of the appropriation details, before voting to approve or reject the appropriation. This process ensures transparency and oversight of the MULSS and its portfolios and the proper use of funds earmarked for student benefit.

Given the rigorous process required of MULSS Committee members seeking funds, the same is expected of external organisations seeking grants.

III Process for Grant Proposals

Grant applications must be brought to MULSS Committee in the form of an appropriation described above, along with a proposal document to be distributed to Committee and a presentation at a Committee Meeting.

A Appropriation Submission

Appropriations must be submitted at least seven days (168 hours) before the relevant Committee Meeting. Committee Meeting dates can be found on the MULSS website or by contacting the Secretary at secretary@mulss.com. Submissions made after the cut-off date will be taken to be submissions for the purposes of the following Committee Meeting. The appropriation Google Form link can be obtained by contacting the Secretary at secretary@mulss.com. Applicants must be student members of the MULSS, and therefore able to put forward an appropriation without requiring a proposer or seconder from Committee.

B Content of Proposal

Following submission of the appropriation, a formal proposal should be emailed to secretary@mulss.com for distribution to Committee members in an agenda one week before the meeting.

The proposal should include details of:

- Current financial situation of the organisation
- Proven attempts to gain funding from alternative sources
- Proposed spending, with demonstrated need for requested funds
- Process to ensure proper use of funds

C Provision of Funds

Money will only be provided to external organisations on a grant basis (i.e. as a lump sum). Funds will not be held by the MULSS contingent on the realisation of some event or initiative. Under no circumstances should an external organisation purport to place the MULSS under liability for any debt incurred, including via invoice.

This grant will be deposited into the nominated bank account of the organisation. Grant money will not be deposited into a personal bank account.

D Acknowledgement

Subject to negotiation, the MULSS would appreciate organisations who have been supported by the MULSS to include a statement to this effect on the advertising for relevant initiatives.

E Acquittal

An acquittal on the use of funds is to be provided to the Secretary one year after the grant, including an outline of the transparency process undertaken by the organisation.

IV Miscellaneous

A Funding Cap

While the MULSS is happy to provide the support that it can to other MLS student organisations, we have a limited capacity to do so and have considered a fair way to ensure that the MULSS does what it can to support the student community while maintaining balance and sustainability in the external grants program. As such, grant proposals above \$2,000 cannot be accepted. Additionally, organisations must remain aware that approval of funds is contingent on a discussion with the entire Committee and a vote. Proposals will not always be accepted at face value, and organisations are encouraged to be open to negotiation at the Committee Meeting.

B MULSS Contacts

Grants will be overseen by the MULSS Secretary. Please contact secretary@mulss.com for any questions relating to this policy. It is advised that applicants contact the Secretary with some brief details of their proposal at least one week before submission.