Amendments to awarding of a Sporting Blue and sporting awards

Discussion paper for interested stakeholders

1 Introduction

This discussion paper has been prepared to seek feedback from interested stakeholders to the proposed amendments to the process of awarding of a Sporting Blue and sporting awards.

The suggested amendments have been presented to the MU Sport Board, who have provided their in-principle support, pending further stakeholder feedback.

Feedback from interested stakeholders, including from the University’s affiliated sporting clubs, will be presented to the Blues Advisory Group for their consideration and recommendation to the MU Sport Board. It is intended that these amendments will come into play for the awarding of Blues for 2019.

2 Key Information

2.1 Summary

Sporting Blues (Full and Half Blues) are awarded each year in accordance with the Blues Advisory Group (BAG) Terms of Reference approved by the Melbourne University Sport (MU Sport) Board in September 2015.

The Blues are currently awarded for performances by student-athletes at UniSport Australia events only. It has become apparent that this has become too restrictive over time as the range of intervarsity opportunities for students has increased, many of which are outside of the UniSport program.

It is also recommended that the BAG recommend other intervarsity and student-athlete sporting awards presented by the University each year that are currently determined by MU Sport staff.

In consultation with the Blues Advisory Group (BAG) and the MU Sport Board, it is proposed that the criteria are extended to include performances in intervarsity (student only) competitions, including UniSport Australia events that the BAG considers meeting the required standard.

It is proposed that the amendments will come into effect for the awarding of 2019 Blues and sporting awards.

2.2 Consultation

In 2018 the BAG, made up of eight past Blues’ awardees and/or Distinguished Service Award recipients, were presented with the suggested amendments for the awarding of Sporting Blues for consideration. The BAG supported these amendments.

The proposed amendments were then presented to the MU Sport Board in June 2019 where they too provided their in-principle support for the changes, pending feedback from a stakeholder consultation period.

MU Sport is now seeking feedback from interested stakeholders, including affiliated sporting clubs and individuals, to provide feedback to the proposed amendments, as per the process outlined in Section 4.
All feedback received will subsequently be provided to the BAG for consideration and a final recommendation made to the MU Sport Board in September.

3 Background

3.1 History
Blues were first awarded in 1904 (backdated) by the University from the first Intervarsity in cricket and rowing against the University of Sydney in 1870. The practice was adopted along the lines of those awarded by Oxford and Cambridge universities where students were selected for annual sporting competitions with Full Blues awarded for major sports and Half Blues awarded for minor sports.

Full Blues are awarded for outstanding sporting achievement whilst representing the University, and Half Blues awarded where sporting performance is excellent, but not of a Full Blue standard. Since inception of the system in 1904 there have been over 11,000 Full or Half Blues awarded in 149 years of intervarsity competition.

Intervarsity is any sporting competition solely involving students (teams and/or individuals) representing their university against other universities. Intervarsity was initially often an annual to head to head contest against a traditional rival such as the University of Adelaide or the University of Sydney. These contests evolved to include other universities in tournament style competitions over several days as stand-alone events.

The stand-alone intervarsity model was replaced by the emergence of the Australian University Games in 1993 (now known as Uni Nationals). Today, intervarsity opportunities are available to students at Uni Nationals events, with the addition of a broader spectrum of local, national and international sporting opportunities where a student-athletes can represent their University in ‘student versus student’ competition.

3.2 Rational for change
The proposed key amendment provides the opportunity for student-athletes who represent the University in other intervarsity events outside of UniSport programs to be nominated for a Sporting Blue. Several of these events are head to head competitions, as was the case with the initial Intervarsity in 1870 through until the mid-20th century.

The Blues will continue to be determined by the BAG for all intervarsity competitions that meet the required standard, so that the historical measure of a Blue will not be compromised.

It is also recommended in line with best practice, that the BAG determine other intervarsity and student-athlete sporting awards presented by the University that are currently determined by MU Sport staff.

3.3 Summary of proposed changes to Terms of Reference
The key amendment to awarding a Sporting Blue proposes to add additional eligible events for which nominations could be received for Blues. Eligible events would fall under one of the following student versus student competitions:

- National University Championship competitions
- Other recognised domestic intervarsity competitions
- Recognised international university competitions

To engender good governance with regards to other intervarsity sporting awards and student-
athlete awards, it is also proposed for the Blues Advisory Group to:

- Consider annual nominations for other intervarsity sport awards, as nominated by University team managers and/or coaches and/or the Sport Performance Coordinator
- Consider annual nominations, as nominated by the Elite Athlete Coordinator, for other student-athlete awards
- Consider annual nominations for intervarsity sport-related Distinguished Service Award nominations by University team managers and/or coaches and/or the Sport Performance Coordinator and/or affiliated sporting clubs
- Recommend intervarsity sport awards, other student-athletes awards and Distinguished Service Awards for services to intervarsity sport to the Director of Sport, who can accept or amend such recommendations when approving them on behalf of the Board
- Distinguished Service Awards relating to affiliated sporting club service are proposed to be considered/recommended by the soon-to-be established Club Advisory Group and not the Blues Advisory Group.

Previously, intervarsity sport and the Outstanding Sporting Performance awards were determined by MU Sport staff.

Other minor language such as references to UniSport Australia (formally Australian University Sport) and the use of the term intervarsity, rather than inter-university have also been amended or added.

4 Feedback

Stakeholders and other interested parties are invited to provide feedback on the proposed amendments by emailing Sport Performance Coordinator Tom Lutwyche at tlut@unimelb.edu.au.

Feedback is due by COB Tue 6 August 2019.