

Student Union Advocacy Service Report January - March 2015

Introduction

This quarter typically sees a high volume of appeals to the Academic Board from both CUPC decisions and Special Consideration determinations. Usually assistance for students wishing to lodge Academic Board appeals is quite intensive and this is reflected in the volume of contacts this quarter.

Trends and Issues this Quarter

Where Processes Collide

Occasionally separate academic and administrative processes overlap. This quarter we saw a number of cases involving unresolved special consideration appeals and CUPC meetings scheduled prior to the appeal. In all but one, quick intervention with the faculty resulted in the CUPC meeting being stayed until the special consideration appeal was determined. However in one case, the faculty insisted on proceeding with the CUPC meeting and the student's enrolment was terminated. Ultimately the special consideration appeal was upheld and the student offered a supplementary examination, which they subsequently passed. The CUPC termination of enrolment was appealed and the faculty withdrew the termination at the hearing.

Recommendation

The time lines associated with CUPC notifications are indicative only. Students should not be identified as making Unsatisfactory Progress until ALL results are finalised – with the rare exception of cases where the outcome could not have any impact on the progress of the student (limited to medical /professional practice degrees).

Statistics

January-March 2015

273 students were provided a service resulting in 730 contacts with the service.

January-March 2014

164 students were provided a service resulting in 440 contacts with the service.

Additionally, the Advocacy website received 3408 page views this quarter. There were over 400 page views on the Academic Progress page and other popular pages included information on misconduct, grievances and complaints, special consideration, assessment disputes and volunteering opportunities.

Distribution by primary issue:

The primary issue is generally identified as the university process to which the student's main concern or problem relates. Data is classified in this way because it provides a standardised and more meaningful breakdown which may be useful for tracking policy trends amongst other things. Additionally this classification system aligns with the general methodology employed by the service in providing advice and problem solving support to students. Specifically while students may express their issues in a multitude of ways, the primary issue is identified according to the policy or procedure by which the University provides possible resolutions.

January-March 2015

All Students			Graduate Coursework students			RHD students		
Course Unsatisfactory Progress	190	66.20%	Course Unsatisfactory Progress	34	47.89%	Progress - HDR	10	43.48%
Special Consideration	19	6.62%	Special Consideration	10	14.08%	Supervision Problems	8	34.78%
Admission - Selection Appeal	13	4.53%	Assessment Dispute	6	8.45%	Student complaint about uni staff	1	4.35%
Progress - HDR	10	3.48%	Admission - Selection Appeal	5	7.04%	Research Ethics	1	4.35%
Supervision Problems	9	3.14%	General Misconduct	2	2.82%	Course Unsatisfactory Progress	1	4.35%
Assessment Dispute	8	2.79%	Student complaint about uni staff	2	2.82%	Admission - Selection Appeal	1	4.35%
Student complaint about uni staff	7	2.44%	Other	2	2.82%	Not Specified	1	4.35%
Not Specified	6	2.09%	Intellectual Property Dispute	2	2.82%			
Student Admin - Enrolment problems	5	1.74%	Academic Misconduct - Plagiarism	1	1.41%			
General Misconduct	3	1.05%	Advance Standing Credit/RPL	1	1.41%			
Equitable Accommodation (SEAP)	3	1.05%	Not Specified	1	1.41%			
Advance Standing Credit/RPL	2	0.70%	Incorrect Advice	1	1.41%			
Intellectual Property Dispute	2	0.70%	Supervision Problems	1	1.41%			
Other	2	0.70%	Scholarship Issues	1	1.41%			
Incorrect Advice	2	0.70%	Student Admin - Enrolment problems	1	1.41%			
Cross-institutional enrolment denied	1	0.35%	Equitable Accommodation (SEAP)	1	1.41%			
Research Ethics	1	0.35%						
Scholarship Issues	1	0.35%						
Student Admin - Remission of Fees	1	0.35%						
Academic Misconduct - Plagiarism	1	0.35%						
Academic Misconduct - Exam	1	0.35%						

January-March 2014

All Students			Graduate Coursework students			RHD students		
Course Unsatisfactory Progress	73	43.98%	General Misconduct	4	20.00%	Supervision Problems	11	44.00%
Special Consideration	12	7.23%	Academic Misconduct - Plagiarism	4	20.00%	Progress - HDR	8	32.00%
Admission - Selection Appeal	12	7.23%	Course Unsatisfactory Progress	3	15.00%	Scholarship Issues	2	8.00%
Supervision Problems	11	6.63%	Assessment Dispute	3	15.00%	Admission - Selection Appeal	2	8.00%
Assessment Dispute	9	5.42%	Student Admin - Enrolment problems	2	10.00%	Course Unsatisfactory Progress	1	4.00%
Student Admin - Enrolment problems	8	4.82%	Vocational Placement Problems	1	5.00%	Assessment Dispute	1	4.00%
Progress - HDR	8	4.82%	Student complaint about uni staff	1	5.00%			
Other	8	4.82%	Advance Standing Credit/RPL	1	5.00%			
Academic Misconduct - Plagiarism	5	3.01%	Admission - Selection Appeal	1	5.00%			
Not Specified	4	2.41%						
General Misconduct	4	2.41%						
Course structure/changes	2	1.20%						
Advance Standing Credit/RPL	2	1.20%						
Scholarship Issues	2	1.20%						
Student complaint about uni staff	2	1.20%						
Academic Misconduct - Falsified docs	2	1.20%						

Distribution by graduate/undergraduate status

January-March 2015

Graduate	92	33.70%
Undergraduate	181	66.30%

January-March 2014

Graduate	48	29.27%
Undergraduate	116	70.73%

Distribution by International/Domestic Status

January-March 2015

Domestic	195	71.43%
International	78	28.57%

January-March 2014

Domestic	137	83.54%
International	27	16.46%

Distribution of cases over all by Faculty/School – January-March 2015

In order to make the following data more meaningful the relative weighting of faculties by enrolment has been included. While this is useful in partially normalising the data - it is not possible to draw conclusions as to *why certain* faculties may be over or under represented in presentations to this service. For example, high representation may reflect an active referral policy within that faculty or it may disclose certain procedural issues in that area.

	Number of cases and as a proportion of all cases.		Enrolments in the faculty as a proportion of students enrolled at university	Indication of relative representation in Advocacy casework
Science (UG) & (HDCW & HDR)	72	27.17%	12.62%	>>>
Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning (UG)	29	10.94%	2.23%	>>>
Faculty of Arts (UG)	36	13.58%	10.97%	>>
Graduate School of Engineering (HDCW & HDR)	31	11.70%	6.31%	>>
School of Land and Environment (UG)	6	2.26%	0.32%	>>
Faculty of Business and Economics (UG)	30	11.32%	10.12%	>
VCA & MCM (UG) & (HDCW & HDR)	4	1.51%	6.28%	<<<
Grad School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HDCW & HDR)	6	2.26%	4.65%	<<
Faculty of MDHS (HDCW & HDR)	16	6.04%	13.33%	<<
Law School (HDCW & HDR)	5	1.89%	3.93%	<
Graduate School of Education (HDCW & HDR)	9	3.40%	5.85%	<
Melbourne School of design (HDCW & HDR)	8	3.02%	2.52%	=
Faculty of Agriculture & Veterinary Science (UG) & (HDCW & HDR)	8	3.02%	3.91%	=
Melbourne Business School (MBS)	4	1.51%	-	-

Commentary

The proportion of graduate students presenting to the service has remained steady although it remains lower than the current student load data which shows graduate enrolments at around 47% of all students.

There were 195 domestic students and 78 international students seen in this period (compared with 137 to 27 in the same period last year). This reverses a recent trend where we were seeing lower numbers of international students presenting to this service.

Course unsatisfactory progress was the primary issue across all students. Among graduate coursework students, special consideration and assessment disputes constituted over 20% of the presenting issues. The next most common matter concerned selection appeals. For research higher degree students the majority of matters concerned research progress, with supervision issues a close second.

Selection appeals once again featured in significant numbers this quarter. Only one of these was from someone not yet admitted to the university. This suggests that selection into graduate degrees continues to be a major concern for existing students, including upgrading from Master by Research to PhD. Assessment disputes and special consideration related matters also continued to feature this quarter. The report concentrates on the top four issues for the period; however, further breakdowns against other primary issues and against various demographics are available on request.

Presenting students came from 14 schools and faculties. Science students - undergraduates as well as higher degree coursework and research students were overwhelmingly the most frequently represented. This is largely due to a high volume of students involved in Course Unsatisfactory Progress related matters, including appeals to the Academic Board. Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences, and undergraduate programmes in Arts, and Business and Economics saw the next most frequent users of the Service.

The majority of special consideration matters came from the faculty of Arts followed closely by Architecture, Building and Planning. The majority of Selection Appeals came from the Faculties of Arts and Business and Economics. There were roughly equal numbers of Selection Appeals from graduates and undergraduates. This reverses a recent trend where selection appeals were dominated by undergraduates seeking selection into graduate courses.

Course Unsatisfactory progress - By Faculty/School

Science	63	33.16%
Business & Economics	27	14.21%
Melbourne School of Engineering	25	13.16%
Architecture Building & Planning	25	13.16%
Arts	16	8.42%
Melbourne School of Design	8	4.21%
Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences	7	3.68%
Unknown – email contact only	6	3.16%
Melbourne Graduate School of Education (HDCW & HDR)	4	2.11%
Faculty of Veterinary Science (pre-MM)	3	1.58%
Melbourne School of Land and Environment (pre-MM)	2	1.05%
Melbourne Law School (pre-MM)	2	1.05%
Melbourne Business School (MBS)	1	0.53%

Course Unsatisfactory progress – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Undergraduate	151	79.47%
Graduate	39	20.53%

Course Unsatisfactory progress – by International/Domestic

Domestic	132	69.47%
International	58	30.53%

Special Consideration - By Faculty/School

Arts (UG)	8	42.11%
Faculty of Architecture Building & Planning (UG)	3	15.79%
Melbourne Graduate School of Education (HDCW & HDR)	2	10.53%
Melbourne School of Engineering (HDCW & HDR)	1	5.26%
Melbourne Law School (HDCW & HDR)	1	5.26%
Faculty of Veterinary Science (HDCW & HDR)	1	5.26%
Faculty of Science (UG)	1	5.26%
Unknown	1	5.26%

Special Consideration – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Graduate	10	52.63%
Undergraduate	9	47.37%

Special Consideration – by International/Domestic

Domestic	13	68.42%
International	6	31.58%

Selection Appeals - By Faculty/School

Faculty of Business and Economics (UG)	3	23.08%
Arts (UG)	3	23.08%
VCA (UG) & (HDCW & HDR)	1	7.69%
Science (UG)	1	7.69%
Melbourne School of Engineering (HDCW & HDR)	1	7.69%
Melbourne Graduate School of Education (HDCW & HDR)	1	7.69%
Melbourne Business School (MBS)	1	7.69%
Faculty of Veterinary Science (HDCW & HDR)	1	7.69%
Not yet admitted	1	7.69%

Selection Appeals – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Graduate	7	53.85%
Undergraduate	6	46.15%

Selection Appeals – by International/Domestic

Domestic	12	92.31%
International	1	7.69%

HDR Progress - By Faculty/School

Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HDCW & HDR)	4	40.00%
Science (HDCW & HDR)	1	10.00%
Melbourne School of Land and Environment (HDCW & HDR)	1	10.00%
Melbourne Graduate School of Education (HDCW & HDR)	1	10.00%
Melbourne Business School (MBS)	1	10.00%
Faculty of Veterinary Science (HDCW & HDR)	1	10.00%
Faculty of MDHS (HDCW & HDR)	1	10.00%

HDR Progress – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Graduate	10	100.00%
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HDR Progress – by International/Domestic

Domestic	7	70.00%
International	3	30.00%

Liaisons and involvement with the University Community

The service is always keen for opportunities to speak to staff at the University to demystify our role and explain the services we provide and how we can work together to further student interests.

Staff in the Advocacy Service liaised with the University Community in the following ways over the period:

10-Mar-15	Part of a plagiarism panel for graduate students organised by the GSA.	Gryphon Gallery, 1888 Building
13-Mar-15	Advocacy & Legal presentations for UMSU Women's Mentoring Network training.	B114, 207 Bouverie St Carlton
20-Mar-15	Student Governance Training for Student Representatives on University Governance bodies.	Training Rm 1 & 2 Union House.
23-Mar-15	Graduate Research Advisors network meeting.	MultiFunction Room, 1888

If you would like to arrange a time for Advocacy staff to speak at your staff meeting or other liaison opportunity, please get in touch.

The next Advocacy Service report will cover the quarter April to June 2015 and will be available in early July 2015.