



# **ADVOCACY**

Service Report October - December 2017

## Introduction

The Advocacy Service reports quarterly to the University's Advocacy Service Reference Group (ASRG). The Terms of Reference of the ASRG are as follows –

The Advocacy Service Reference Group:

- Monitors and oversees the contract awarded to the current Advocacy Service Contract Holder;
- Facilitates communication between the Contract Holder and the University;
- Provides feedback to the Contract Holder;
- Ensures that feedback provided to the University via quarterly reports is considered and contributes to decision-making and policy development.

This Quarterly Service Report forms part of that reporting, and this report originally came into being as it was commissioned by the ASRG as both an accountability measure, and to ventilate student experiences of University processes within the relevant parts of the University. While the Service's Quarterly Report has always been freely available to any member of the University community on request, and is archived on the Advocacy Service Website, the circulation of the Report appears to have grown well beyond the audience for whom it was originally drafted. While the extended interest at the University is unequivocally welcomed, it does indicate a need for some introductory material in the reports, to provide appropriate context to a new audience.

Accordingly, I make the following observations:

1. The data presented in this report is drawn from the statistics recorded in the Advocacy Service Case management database. It is not drawn from, nor is it correlated with University collected service data, to which we have no access. For this reason, it is important to interpret the data and analysis as pertaining solely to activities of the Advocacy Service. The Report statistics cannot be extrapolated to provide commentary on the performance of Faculties or Schools, unless specifically indicated in the commentary.
2. The 'Trends and Issues' identified in the report are based on both service statistics, and anecdotal observations and case studies. They are provided as insights into the student experience of University processes, or as potential indicators of systemic problems with administrative decision making and procedural fairness. These issues are not intended to reflect the totality of student experience, but rather those areas where the University needs to address potentially serious issues and risks.

The Service can generate drill down or other statistics on its activities, where these may be of interest to the University community, however due to relatively few resources, such requests need to be made with plenty of notice.

## Trends and Issues

Issues of note this quarter centred on our procedural concerns with several examination misconduct matters, and increasing evidence that – in the face of a steady increase in applications – the University's Special Consideration regime remains inadequately resourced to deal sensitively with complex cases; presenting poor outcomes for students, as well as legal and reputational risk for the University.

### Hit and Misconduct Proceedings

One of the dominant issues during assessment and final examination periods is the volume of students presenting who are facing allegations of academic misconduct. There is no doubt that over the past few years, there has been a continuing proliferation of allegations, including a major spike in allegations related to examination misconduct which are, at least partly, a result of significant tightening of invigilation practices. There does not however, seem to be much evidence of a commensurate increase in resources available to manage the upsurge in allegations.

In this context, it is unsurprising that some academic areas have begun to look for ways to manage what must seem an overwhelming number of potential formal processes. That notwithstanding, expediency must never displace fair process, and it is trite to note that the University cannot credibly demand students' strict compliance with University rules when it fails itself to comply with the its own regulations.

### Gone Fishin'

The first issue concerns an approach which the faculty referred to as 'non-standard' process. We think the better term is non-compliant. The process was employed by one faculty for a cohort where around 80 final assignments had been identified as 'problematic'. The faculty was also expecting at least a further 50 exam related allegations, so due to the scale of formal processes required, the faculty took the approach of asking 35 of these students to 'fess up' to wrongdoing in what lawyers typically refer to as a fishing expedition.

The email sent to the students advised that "*it has been detected that aspects of your submission appear identical to that*

*of another group either currently or previously enrolled*". The email went on to say that, if the students emailed the faculty an early admission of misconduct, including details of how the breach occurred, then they would not be required to attend a hearing, and a summary penalty of zero for the assignment (worth 6%) would be issued without a hearing. The email reminded the students that the "normal penalty" for *this type of breach of policy* is zero for the subject, although it was not made clear exactly how the faculty knew what type of breach had been committed.

Unsurprisingly we believe there are a range of problems with this approach. Although there is a legitimate opportunity under Regulation 8 for students to waive their right to a hearing, the Regulations nevertheless require that the student is first notified of a specific allegation, and provided any evidence relied upon in making that allegation. This faculty's approach on the other hand, both required the students to "confess" to an unspecified allegation, and to do the work of an investigator in identifying and setting out the alleged misconduct for the faculty. Denying those students knowledge of the case to be met, asking them to make their own allegation (against themselves), while requiring them to make an unqualified confession - is a clear breach of both substantive and procedural fairness. Moreover, the paragraph reminding students of the "normal penalty" if they failed to come forward had the predictable effect of enticing students who wished to avoid a more severe penalty to enter a kind of "plea bargain" based on their own characterisation of the misconduct. In some cases, this had the effect of rewarding serious misconduct with a less onerous penalty than a formal hearing might determine.

Predictably, when you cast a net this wide, you will catch more than you bargained for.

Students who had potentially committed serious breaches of the regulations, emailed the faculty admitting to relatively minor indiscretions, and consequently received a penalty of zero for the assignment (worth 6 percent of the overall grade) without further investigation.

Other students found themselves in hot water when they disclosed more complex facts in their "confessions" which alerted the faculty to wrong-doing potentially worthy of a more serious penalty than the penalty agreed in the email. This resulted in some students facing more onerous penalties, despite the fact they had in fact complied with the terms of the faculty's email. This had the particularly undesirable effect of shifting the focus from the important issue of academic integrity, to an emphasis on the way the students felt aggrieved and betrayed that the faculty had reneged on the offer set out in the email. It was difficult for this Service to explain to the students what had happened.

We were additionally concerned that a number of students who had potentially committed aggravated misconduct, received very light penalties, while others who in accepting the offer to "confess" were subsequently still referred to a formal Misconduct Committee, having been effectively coerced into providing information in a sort of entrapment exercise.

Finally, the same irregular processes involved a breach of Academic Board Regulation 8, which at s51(2) provides:

*A member of staff who reports misconduct, provides evidence of misconduct or refers an allegation of misconduct for investigation, may not be a member of any committee formed to investigate or decide an allegation of misconduct.*

As the Assistant Dean had initiated, and overseen the original process, we were alarmed to see they were also chairing the Faculty Misconduct Committees which met to consider the fates of the students who had been caught up in the forgoing process.

It is likely that the faculty's approach was motivated by inadequate resources to deal properly with an unmanageable volume of allegations and a lack of familiarity with the principles of procedural fairness that underpin the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

### **Unsee this**

Another significant issue arose when, during the routine review of Student Record Cards undertaken as part of its advice to students facing University hearings, we saw a number of student records which contained comments related to misconduct outcomes.

However, sections 5.14(d) of the *Student Conduct Policy* and 5.47(d) of the *Student Academic Integrity Policy* both provide that "*in determining an allegation of misconduct under this section, the committee may not take into account prior findings of misconduct when deciding whether or not to uphold an allegation of misconduct*". Accordingly, any misconduct findings should be recorded in such a way that they can only be accessed once a misconduct allegation is made out. This is fundamental to the 'no bias' rule of procedural fairness.

### **Frontier Justice**

In a further example of poor compliance with policy, a number of students from a particular faculty contacted the service indicating they had received a mark of zero for their assignment. The Service's usual advice on questions about grades is to contact the examiner and request feedback, including a marking rubric, or other indication of how the mark was derived

against assessment criteria. The relevant academic staff in this faculty responded to the students advising them they had failed their assignment due to plagiarism, that the assessment criteria were therefore irrelevant, and that professional staff would be in touch to set up an educative meeting with the student.

In accordance with the *Student Academic Integrity Policy*, a penalty can only issue from a formal Academic Misconduct Committee after the student has had an opportunity to respond to the allegation and any evidence relied upon in making the allegation.

### **When Mitigation becomes an Aggravation**

Finally, one of our student misconduct committee members reported a troubling incident in a faculty academic committee where, in the committee's papers documents relating to a previous general misconduct matter were included. The documents were incorporated into the hearing papers without context or explanation. Subsequently the staff members on the committee resolved that the documentation was evidence of aggravating factors when considering the academic misconduct matter before it. The student member who – due to training and previous committee experience – understood that previous findings must not be taken into account when determining whether misconduct has occurred on a subsequent allegation was concerned, and argued the procedure was in error.

Upon debriefing with the Service about this experience, we encouraged the student committee member to contact the administrative officer for the committee to ascertain the source and purpose of the included general misconduct documents. The administrative officer indicated that the student themselves had provided the documents in support of a contention that they had been under a great deal of stress at the time of the second allegation, as they were already facing a general misconduct matter. In other words, the committee had used the supplied documentation in a way which prejudiced their deliberations, when the student had (albeit misconceivedly) provided the documents in mitigation. As the student member had unsuccessfully argued, the appropriate course of action would have been to exclude the documents from the papers on the basis of the relevant policy provision to avoid bias.

### **Recommendation**

The Advocacy Service, drawing on both feedback provided by student members of misconduct committees, and the casework presenting at the service, is currently compiling a discussion paper featuring case studies which disclose problematic processes, significant non-compliance with University Regulations, and overall breaches of procedural fairness in the conduct of faculty misconduct processes. We envisage that one of the key recommendations in this paper will be a proposal that staff members who perform roles in investigations, and/or form part of faculty Misconduct Committees must be appropriately trained and resourced for the role.

We have found that training which familiarises student committee members with the relevant regulatory framework, and the principles of good administrative decision making has provided a stable grounding in their roles. The Service has received consistently positive feedback, both unsolicited and during our regular evaluations, regarding the performance and contributions of student members on both faculty and Academic Board Appeal committees. Student members also report that on occasions staff on committees have requested copies of the *Handy Guide to Good Administrative Decision Making* which we produce for our students to support their approach.

### **Bouquets**

We were gladdened to note that several faculties this semester managed the high number of invigilator incident reports by evaluating the relative gravity of conduct noted in each report and diverting the more trivial first-time breaches to an educative process by way of a written warning.

This is the approach the Service endorses for these sorts of matters, for which a formal allegation is unwarranted – but where there has nonetheless been a clear breach of examination rules. A warning letter for educative purposes provides a reminder to students to be careful to be familiar with and obey all exam rules, as well as creates a record which would mean that further breaches would potentially be viewed as aggravated misconduct.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend that faculties follow this example to manage high volumes of invigilator incident reports by ensuring only serious or serial matters proceed to formal allegations.

### **Special Consideration – increasing applications and complex cases**

Once again, this quarter there was a small decline in the presentation of matters relating to Special Consideration: this time last year almost 16% of presenting issues (97 presentations) related to Special Consideration, whereas this quarter it was closer to 12%, with 85 cases. Of these 85 presentations, more than 40 involved advice and assistance regarding formal grievances and Academic Board Appeals.

Despite the decrease in our casework presentations, we understand that the number of Special Consideration applications continues to increase. The Service acknowledges the logistical feat involved in meeting this growth in demand, and we appreciate the University has been processing a high volume of applications very efficiently. Consequently, our observations may appear obdurately critical, however although managing demand efficiently is important, we think that the University would agree that even a limited number of poor experiences are too many. This Service is certainly sympathetic to the challenges presented by ever increasing demand, and we have ourselves needed to remain vigilant regarding the quality of our casework, constantly reviewing feedback to ensure our offerings meet the needs of service users.

Of primary concern is that, while the overall demand for processing these applications is being met, the *quality* of responses to some applicants has been less than adequate. This is especially evident in the processing of serious disadvantage and complex cases. This quarter there were a dozen matters which exposed disturbing responses to very unwell, disabled, and generally vulnerable students; responses which undoubtedly compound the affected students' conditions. Each of these cases were ultimately resolved in the students' favour via the formal grievance process, however the preceding experience left many of these students feeling bitter about and disappointed in the University.

These cases variously involved students suffering serious mental health problems, including several students experiencing major depressive disorders, a student who had been hospitalised subsequent to a suicide attempt, two students with terminal conditions, a number of students who had deaths in the family, and several complex carer arrangements involving disabled parents or children. In all of these cases, their problem arose only because they had been unable to navigate the particular requirements of the University's Special Consideration process. Some were unaware of the exact nature of the documentary evidence required to support their application, and others had missed the deadline for applications. It is worth noting, that although there are detailed guidelines for staff who assess applications, the student-facing information on these requirements is sparse, and significantly lacking in detail. Similarly, feedback from healthcare professionals attempting to provide appropriately framed documentation for their patients, indicates that the information available on HPR forms or in the student facing information on the University website is inadequate to properly inform them of the evidence required by the University to support applications. The Service receives calls from confused and frustrated health care providers, wanting to understand why their patients return multiple times in order to obtain the documentation in the form required by the University. A physician recently noted that they have many patients who are tertiary students, however it is only Melbourne University which "appears to shift the goal posts for unwell students all the time". Indeed, when information regarding the documentary evidence required is drip fed to applicants, many experience it this way.

Ultimately, the combination of these circumstances – the students' own health problems combined with insufficient detail on the documentation required – meant that these students were left for an extended period without support from the University. Of the greatest concern however, is the lack of empathy in the University's written responses. Sometimes the responses justified the ineligibility of the application with reference to missing information which in fact had been provided previously. All featured formulaic explanations, and generic outcomes. A student asked, "is my application assessed by a robot?". This is not a strange question in the context- many of these students had well documented histories, were registered with SEDS, and had academic adjustment plans which set out the impacts of their respective conditions very clearly, including the impact on their capacity to meet the relevant timelines for withdrawal or administration of their studies generally. However, the burden remains with the student to "re-evidence" their disability, even when the existing documentation already attests to the relevant circumstances. Use of generic form responses in the face of these students' disclosures is indicative of inadequate resources to resolve with sensitivity and compassion those applications which do not fit neatly into the usual guidelines. Such students tend to experience the process as "an ordeal", and the outcomes as punitive. As one distressed parent noted "if people in the community knew about this sort of treatment, it would be a scandal".

Moreover, it is clear to us that the University's approach continues to have serious material and health consequences on already vulnerable students. A suitable resolution was available to each of these students only via the formal grievance process, meaning that students who were already suffering were left in a prolonged state of anxiety and distress about the resolution of their case. It is also conceivable that there were a number of other students in the same situation who lacked the resilience to pursue the matter through the grievance process, and simply gave up. For these reasons we believe that the University needs to address this deficit in its approach to students with serious disabilities by adopting a proper case management approach to these applicants.

### **Strict application of policy should not fetter discretion**

It is a well-established tenet of administrative law that policy exists to provide guidance but must not fetter the discretion of decision maker to such an extent that they fail to take into account merits of an individual case.

Another apparent casualty of the increased pressure on Special Consideration resources, is an approach which misrepresents the policy on late applications for Special Consideration. A number of students presented at the Service having been referred directly to the formal grievance procedures to resolve late applications for Special Consideration.

The students were advised that SEDS cannot accept late applications and that they would not assess those applications for an eligible late reason. The email from SEDS stated *“Unfortunately the University is unable to accept Special Consideration applications for subjects after finalisation of results. All students are required to make timely applications for SC within 4 (four) working days of the assessment due date as per the Assessment and Results Policy.”*

We appreciate that deadlines are necessary for the smooth functioning of administrative and academic processes, however the Service is of the view that, especially for new students, the system should provide some latitude regarding deadlines, before summarily barring a person with a disability from receiving relief. We saw half a dozen students denied accommodation in the first instance for purely administrative reasons despite verified conditions which would have inarguably affected their exam performance. Again, while these were resolved successfully in formal grievances, the original decision making remains problematic and potentially discriminatory.

### **Recommendations**

1. We recommend that the reasons for the increase in Special Consideration applications is thoroughly researched and understood. Only then can the University take an evidence-based approach to addressing the adequacy of resources at the application coalface.

For example, the University’s access and equity initiatives almost certainly result in increased numbers of students with complex needs at this University. It is plausible that this is translating to an increase in applications for Special Consideration. In this context it is worth exploring how the University can address these students’ needs via pedagogy. For example, incorporation of more inclusive teaching strategies and assessment items into the core structure of courses such as those envisaged in the *Curriculum Structure and Approach Green Paper* arising from FlexAP last year might improve outcomes at the academic interface, rather than leaving students to rely on last resort methods to level the playing field.

2. In the meantime, we recommend a revision of the current methodology of assessing and responding to Special Consideration applications. We recommend the introduction of a triage function such that, where the information presented in an application suggests serious, chronic and/or complex presenting issues, the application can be diverted to an appropriate and sensitive case management approach.

## **Programmes and Events this Quarter**

### **Exam Support Stall at Royal Exhibition Building**

The stall sells water, assorted stationary, tissues and lollies for a nominal fee. Additionally, students may borrow approved calculators and clear plastic bags for their pens etc. Signs are displayed reminding students not to inadvertently take their study notes or any unauthorised materials into the venue with them. The stall also has information about the Advocacy Service; an exam tips information card and information on other University services. Volunteers do two-hour shifts, answering a range of questions, providing directions on the location of facilities, and referral to the Advocacy Service to discuss issues such as Special Consideration and academic misconduct.

This quarter 3826 students accessed the services provided at the stall.

The Advocacy Service is ever grateful for the support of examination administration and the staff at the Royal Exhibition Building who make this initiative possible.

### **Peer Support Programme at Course Unsatisfactory Progress Meetings**

This quarter 197 students were assisted by 16 peer support volunteers.

The PSP attracts volunteers via an advertising campaign using the Student Portal, posters, the Student Union website and word of mouth. We train a cohort of between 15 and 20 volunteer students every semester. Only students in their second year or beyond are eligible. Training is compulsory and is conducted over a full day. The training provides the volunteers with a solid overview and context for the academic progress review procedures conducted across the University, including the requirements of procedural fairness and the statutory role of the support person in this process. Additionally, the training informs the volunteers about the university’s support services and provides practical experience and development of skills required to approach, support and interact with students who are very stressed or even distressed.

The PSP is coordinated by the Student Services Officer who manages the day-to-day rostering and support of volunteers.

## Advocacy Service Statistics

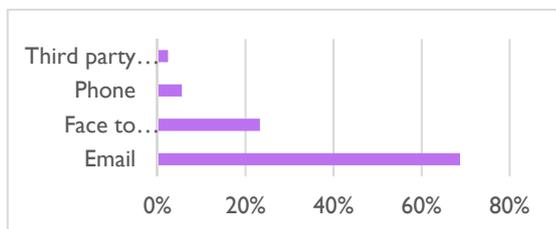
### Comparative data – 2016 and 2017

2016

Total students assisted: 1434

Total contacts with students: 3885

By type of contact



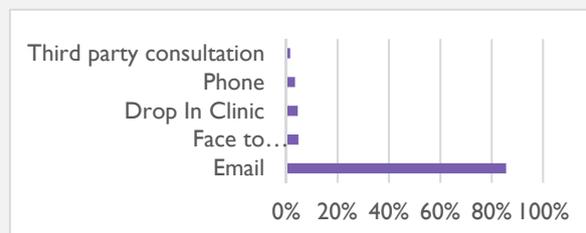
In 2016, just under 70% of assistance was provided electronically over email, with 23% conducted face to face in appointments or at hearings, and the balance via phone calls.

2017

Total students assisted: 1635

Total contacts with students: 4002

By type of contact



In 2017, electronic contact accounted for over 85% of assistance, with 10% provided in person, and 3% by phone. The shift in service model accounts for the increase in capacity which enabled the service to assist an additional 200 hundred students last year without increasing human resources.

### Month by month increase 2016-2017

January	61%
February	6%
March	3%
April	8%
May	20%
June	64%
July	0%
August	36%
September	45%
October	21%
November	7%
December	10%

This data continues an upward trend in service delivery; there was a 10% increase on previous year in student presentations between 2013-2014, a 13% increase between 2014-2015, a 14% increase in 2015-2016, and a further 14% increase in the year 2016-2017. Overall, the increase in presentations to the service since 2013 is 51%. In 2015 the service increased its staff by 1.2EFT, however since that time, there has been an additional 28% increase in service delivery which has been largely achieved through changes to the service model.

### Comparative data – October - December 2017

This quarter 680 students were provided a service resulting in 1413 contacts. In the same quarter last year, the service saw 613 students which resulted in 1140 contacts with the service. The primary focus of casework at this time of year is coursework assessment and course unsatisfactory progress. This included assistance by peer support volunteers to 232 students attending Course Unsatisfactory Progress Committee meetings in December.

Additionally, the Advocacy website received almost 10 000 page views this quarter – over 2000 more than the same time last year. This reflects the move to promoting our web contact page as the first point of contact, and continuous development and expansion of our digital self-help resources. There were over 1500 unique views on pages covering CUPC, more than 1000 on misconduct, and almost 900 unique page views on Special Consideration among other issues.

## 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.

### October-December 2017

All Students			Graduate Coursework students			RHD students		
Course Unsatisfactory Progress Committee	365	53.60%	Course Unsatisfactory Progress Committee	93	46.27%	Progress- HDR	12	48.00%
Special Consideration	85	12.48%	Special Consideration	26	12.94%	Supervision Problems	3	12.00%
Academic Misconduct- Exam	52	7.64%	Assessment Dispute	22	10.95%	Student complaint about uni staff	3	12.00%
Assessment Dispute	51	7.49%	Academic Misconduct- Exam	20	9.95%	Course Unsatisfactory Progress Committee	3	12.00%
Academic Misconduct- Plagiarism	39	5.73%	Academic Misconduct- Plagiarism	19	9.45%	Special Consideration	2	8.00%
Student complaint about uni staff	16	2.35%	Student complaint about uni staff	7	3.48%	Scholarship Issues	1	4.00%
Progress- HDR	15	2.20%	Academic Misconduct- Collusion	3	1.49%	Not Specified	1	4.00%
Academic Misconduct- Collusion	13	1.91%	Scholarship Issues	2	1.00%			
Not Specified	6	0.88%	Not Specified	2	1.00%			
Admission- Selection Appeal	6	0.88%	Academic Misconduct- Falsified docs	1	0.50%			
General Misconduct	5	0.73%	General Misconduct	1	0.50%			
Academic Misconduct- Falsified docs	5	0.73%	Vocational Placement Problems	1	0.50%			
Student Admin- Enrolment problems	5	0.73%	Incorrect Advice	1	0.50%			
Scholarship Issues	3	0.44%	Quality Teaching	1	0.50%			
Student Admin- Graduation	3	0.44%	Student Admin- Enrolment problems	1	0.50%			
Supervision Problems	3	0.44%	Course structure/changes	1	0.50%			
Special Consideration Registration	2	0.29%						
Course structure/changes	2	0.29%						
Vocational Placement Problems	1	0.15%						
Quality Teaching	1	0.15%						
Student Admin- Exchange	1	0.15%						
Student Admin- Remission of Fees	1	0.15%						
Incorrect Advice	1	0.15%						

## October-December 2016

All Students			Graduate Coursework students			RHD students		
Course Unsatisfactory Progress Committee	302	47.78%	Course Unsatisfactory Progress Committee	52	38.24%	Progress- HDR	11	42.31%
Special Consideration	97	15.35%	Special Consideration	24	17.65%	Supervision Problems	7	26.92%
Academic Misconduct-Exam	63	9.97%	Academic Misconduct-Plagiarism	13	9.56%	Student Admin-Enrolment problems	2	7.69%
Assessment Dispute	40	6.33%	Academic Misconduct-Exam	12	8.82%	Course structure/changes	2	7.69%
Academic Misconduct-Plagiarism	35	5.54%	Assessment Dispute	9	6.62%	Special Consideration	1	3.85%
Progress- HDR	12	1.90%	Vocational Placement Problems	6	4.41%	Other	1	3.85%
Supervision Problems	10	1.58%	Academic Misconduct-Falsified docs	4	2.94%	Assessment Dispute	1	3.85%
Academic Misconduct-Collusion	9	1.42%	Student Admin-Remission of Fees	3	2.21%	Academic Misconduct- Falsified docs	1	3.85%
Academic Misconduct-Falsified docs	9	1.42%	Student complaint about uni staff	2	1.47%			
Student Admin- Enrolment problems	8	1.27%	Student Admin-Enrolment problems	2	1.47%			
Admission- Selection Appeal	7	1.11%	General Misconduct	1	0.74%			
Vocational Placement Problems	6	0.95%	Admission- Selection Appeal	1	0.74%			
Student Admin- Remission of Fees	5	0.79%	Advance Standing Credit/RPL	1	0.74%			
General Misconduct	4	0.63%	Academic Misconduct-Collusion Equitable	1	0.74%			
Student complaint about uni staff	4	0.63%	Accommodation (SC Rego)	1	0.74%			
Other	4	0.63%	Incorrect Advice	1	0.74%			
Advance Standing Credit/RPL	3	0.47%	Quality Teaching	1	0.74%			
Course structure/changes	3	0.47%	Supervision Problems	1	0.74%			
Discrimination	3	0.47%	Discrimination	1	0.74%			
Quality Teaching	2	0.32%						
Student Admin- Exchange	2	0.32%						
Equitable Accommodation (SC Rego)	2	0.32%						
Not Specified	1	0.16%						
Incorrect Advice	1	0.16%						

## Distribution by graduate/undergraduate status

### October-December 2017

Graduate	245	36.03%
Undergraduate	435	63.97%

### October-December 2016

Graduate	186	30.34%
Undergraduate	427	69.66%

## Distribution by International/Domestic Status

October-December 2017

Domestic	399	58.68%
International	281	41.32%

October-December 2016

Domestic	435	70.96%
International	178	29.04%

## Commentary

The proportion of graduate to undergraduate students was 36.03% to 63.97% (compared with 35.11% to 64.89% for the same period last year). This figure has remained static within a couple of percent from quarter to quarter since 2015.

During this period 58.68% domestic and 41.32% international students presented to the service, this represents a shift from previous quarters, where the breakdown has remained consistent at around 70% domestic students to 30% international students. Whether this is a one-off change, or represents a trend, remains to be seen over subsequent periods.

The primary presenting issue this quarter was, as usual for this period, course unsatisfactory progress (CUPC). Our data includes all processes related to CUPC, from briefing students at risk to Academic Board Appeals. After CUPC matters, Special Consideration, Exam related Academic Misconduct, and Assessment disputes were the next most common issues, which was the same as the equivalent quarter last year. Special Consideration issues were centred on assistance with applications, internal reviews, grievances and Academic Board appeals, for reasons including both physical and mental health problems, and where the applications had been denied due to lateness, insufficient evidence or where no appropriate action was deemed. Exam Misconduct matters spanned from educative responses to Academic Board Appeals and related to breaches of exam rule, and specifically the possession of unauthorised materials. Assessment Disputes spanned informal reviews with the examiner to formal grievances, and centred on issues with conduct of assessment, allegations of bias, and administrative error. As usual, the report concentrates on the top four issues for the quarter; however, further breakdowns against other primary issues and against various demographics are available on request.

## Course Unsatisfactory Progress Assistance - By Stage of process

STAGE	REASON	Total
At Risk	Failed same subject >=2	1
		<b>1</b>
First Attendance	Physical Health	14
	Failed same subject >=2	22
	Practical/Rounds/Placement	8
	Mental Health	3
	Family Responsibilities	5
	Language Difficulties	1
	Employment commitments	4
		<b>60</b>
Second Attendance	Failed same subject >=2	18
	Health	12
	Financial Hardship	8
	Language Difficulties	8
	Transition to Uni	1
	<b>47</b>	
Third Attendance	Failed same subject >=2	2
Appeal	Termination of enrolment	59
	Restriction on enrolment	39

Course Unsatisfactory Progress – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Undergraduate	254	69.59%
Graduate	111	30.41%

Course Unsatisfactory Progress – by International/Domestic

Domestic	213	58.36%
International	152	41.64%

**Special Consideration - By Stage of Process**

STAGE	REASON	Total
Application	Mental Health	7
	Physical Health	1
	Late Application	18
		<b>26</b>
Internal Review	Insufficient grounds	10
	Late Application	5
		<b>15</b>
Formal Grievance	Deemed Insufficient Grounds	20
	Late Application	17
	Deemed No Appropriate Action	2
		<b>39</b>
Appeal	Late application	2
Total Special Consideration Matters		<b>84</b>

Special Consideration – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Undergraduate	55	65.48%
Graduate	29	34.52%

Special Consideration – by International/Domestic

Domestic	55	65.48%
International	29	34.52%*

\*The split of international/domestic students is coincidentally the same as the split of graduate/undergraduate this quarter. I am going to buy a lotto ticket.

### Academic Misconduct – Exam - By Stage of Process

STAGE	REASON	Total
Informal/Educative Meeting	Unauthorised Materials	1
		<b>1</b>
Committee Meeting	Breach of Exam Rules	20
	Unauthorised Materials	19
		<b>39</b>
Appeal	Breach of Exam Rules	5
	Unauthorised Materials	5
	Excessive Penalty	2
		<b>12</b>
Total Exam Misconduct Matters		<b>52</b>

### Academic Misconduct- Exam – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Graduate	17	32.69%
Undergraduate	35	67.31%

### Academic Misconduct- Exam – by International/Domestic

Domestic	21	40.38%
International	31	59.62%

### Assessment Disputes - By Stage of Process

STAGE	REASON	Total
Informal/assessment review with examiner	Administrative Error	1
	Allegation of Examiner Bias	12
	Conduct of Assessment	22
		<b>35</b>
Formal request for remark	Conduct of Assessment	7
		<b>7</b>
Formal Grievance	Practical/Rounds/Placement	1
	Administrative Error	3
	Conduct of Assessment	5
		<b>9</b>
Total Assessment Dispute related Matters		<b>51</b>

### Assessment Disputes – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Graduate	24	48.98%
Undergraduate	25	51.02%

Assessment Disputes – by International/Domestic

Domestic	35	71.43%
International	14	28.57%

The next Advocacy Service report will cover the quarter January to March 2018 and will be available in early April 2018.

Phoebe Churches

**Manager, Advocacy & Legal**

**February 2018**