



ADVOCACY

Service Report January - April 2025

Introduction

The Advocacy Service Report was originally commissioned by the University's *Advocacy Service Reference Group* – a group set up to oversee the service contract via which the Service was funded between 2012 and 2017. The Service Report was originally an accountability measure under the funding contract, but it also served to ventilate student experiences of various processes within the relevant parts of the University. Over time, the circulation of the Report grew to include a cross section of the University Community, establishing strong communication channels for feedback and issues management between relevant stakeholders. We hope to continue to expand and consolidate these channels and invite interested University staff to contact the Service directly to collaborate on responses to the issues identified in the Report.

Data and 'Anecdotal'

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.

The 'Trends and Issues' identified in the report are based on primarily 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.

A quick note on what the various process categories include.

Misconduct	Covers breaches of university rules, regulations and policies, including academic Integrity breaches (e.g., plagiarism, collusion, Gen AI misuse) and general misconduct (e.g., harassment and sexual misconduct, disruptive behaviour, and protest activities).
Special Consideration	a request made by a student for adjustments to assessment or academic requirements due to short-term, serious, and unforeseen circumstances that impact their ability to complete or perform in assessments. Additionally, we currently include ongoing adjustments under this category as the casework frequently overlaps.
"Show Cause / Course Academic Progress (CAPC)	Involves students who are not meeting academic progress requirements and must "Show cause" why they should not be excluded by submitting a formal explanation and supporting evidence.
Assessment and Grades	Concerns related to marking errors, problems with the conduct of assessment, feedback on assessment, and requests for re-marking or review of grades.
Remission of Fees	Requests to have course fees refunded or waived primarily due to withdrawal after census date due to illness or hardship. Increasingly this area overlaps with special consideration as the Student Equity and Disability Services (SEDS) seek to remove assessment of late withdrawal (after final date to withdraw) requests from their responsibility and pass it to the Fees Team.
Student Support Services	Includes issues or feedback about Counselling and Psychological Support Services, the University health Service, SEDS, Fees, Academic Skills Unit, and Stop 1.
The standard of services by the university	Covers general service quality, such as administrative support from IT services, LMS, Library access, and other campus facilities.
The Quality of Teaching	Concerns about effectiveness of teaching and learning, engagement and accessibility of academic staff, subject delivery methods, and the use of learning technologies.
RHD Supervision	Relates to Research Higher Degree (RHD) students and includes supervisor availability and support, access to resources or labs, supervisor feedback frequency and quality, and research guidance.
Advanced Standing or credit	Involves recognition of prior learning, transfer credits from other institutions, and disputes over credit allocation.
Selection Appeal	Used when a student believes they were unfairly denied admission or selection into a course or program.
RHD Progress	RHD students facing university concerns about milestone reviews, delays in research or thesis progress.
Vocational Placement problems	Issues with internship or placement arrangements.
Course structure or changes	Concerns about changes to course content or delivery, prerequisite changes, and course availability.
Scholarship issues	Includes delays in payment, eligibility disputes, and revocations of scholarships.
Student Complaint about another student	Covers primarily interpersonal issues such as bullying or harassment, or other breaches of university policy by students

Trends and Issues

Starting with a bang not a whimper*

Former President of the Student Union, Professor Emma Johnston, commenced as University of Melbourne VC in February, and in terms of student impact, it took just a matter of weeks for her to make a mark.

On 3rd March our university community was hit with the following new Vice-Chancellor Rules:

Vice-Chancellor Regulation (sections 5, 15)

The University of Melbourne (University) is committed to being a place where the thoughtful exchange of divergent views may occur in a civil and peaceful manner, and which respects the right to freedom of speech and expression and the right to assembly to engage in peaceful protest.

However, protest can interfere with the rights of others to freedom of expression and can be intimidatory or harassing to others. University premises must not be used for protest that is not peaceful, for protest in a manner that jeopardises the safety and security of persons using University premises, or for protest that unreasonably interferes with core University activities. This Rule is intended to balance the rights of all members of the University community.

Direction relating to protests

1. Protests may only be held outdoors.
2. Protests must not be held inside, or obstruct entry into, or exit from, any building used for University activities.
3. The University will act in the interests of all persons engaging in University activities or using University premises. Protests or other protest activity must not:
 - a. unreasonably undermine the capacity of individuals to participate fully in the University;
 - b. prejudice the fulfilment by the University of its duty to foster the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and visitors; or
 - c. unreasonably disrupt activities or operations of the University or result in damage to University property.

For the purposes of this direction:

- 'protest' includes a demonstration, rally, sit-in, occupation and other like forms of public assembly but does not include protected industrial action; and
- 'other protest activity' also includes individual forms of action.

To University students:

A failure to comply with this direction:

- may result in participants being asked to leave the University premises or any part of the University premises or cease participation in a University activity.
- may result in an Immediate Order being issued to minimise a range of serious risks including to the health and safety of others and risk of material disruption of University activities.

This may result in (amongst other things):

 - an inability to attend classes or examinations
 - restrictions on access to University property and facilities
- may constitute student general misconduct under the Student Conduct Policy and may result in (amongst other things):
 - Sanctions on enrolment
 - Suspension or termination of enrolment

To University staff:

A failure to comply with this direction may be a failure to follow a lawful direction given by the employer which may constitute misconduct and possibly serious misconduct.

Given there are already provisions in place to deal with both student and staff misconduct – we regard these rules as a specific strategy to curb the legitimate right to peaceful protest on campus. We have serious concerns about the rules for a range of reasons.

Procedurally cooked

- The VC rules made under the Regulation bypass the *University's Policy Framework* which requires that policy:
 - **aligns with university objects in the Act** (e.g. promoting critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate within the University and in the wider society).
 - **be consistent with legal and regulatory requirements**, other policies, and community expectations (e.g. must comply with the *Vic Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*).
 - be **developed, established, amended and reviewed in consultation with key stakeholders** (e.g. consult with students).

Substantively baked

The rules go significantly further than just banning indoor protest:

- Not only are protests forbidden if they are held inside, protests held outside *must not obstruct entry into, or exit from, any building* (this could easily be used to penalise protest action that is **anywhere near a building** – i.e. most places on campus) used for university activities.
- Additionally, if the University deems that any protest anywhere under its jurisdiction is not allowed if it unreasonably undermines the capacity of individuals to participate fully in the University, and that any protest that is deemed to prejudice the fulfilment by the University of its duty to foster the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and visitors is also not allowed, *this creates an environment where **one** complaint from anyone who says the protest action is making them feel unsafe will give license to the university to act against a protester.*
- Another poorly defined and subjective term bans protest that unreasonably disrupts activities or operations – this is deliberately vague and will allow for the broadest possible interpretation, based on a single subjective view.

Bad Optics and Hypocrisy

- The rule says:
The University of Melbourne (University) is committed to being a place where the thoughtful exchange of divergent views may occur in a civil and peaceful manner, and which respects the right to freedom of speech and expression and the right to assembly to engage in peaceful protest.
- This statement of principle is inconsistent with these rules which amount to an executive order (not consulted or subject to any checks and balances) effectively outlawing any protest action on campus while pretending that some will be allowed.
- It is wholly disingenuous to pretend that this rule allows for **any protest** at the University. There will always be someone with an opposing view who comes into contact with a protest action and who, with knowledge of these rules, will make a complaint saying it makes them feel unsafe or insecure.
- Protest is inherently *about disruption!* It might make some people feel uncomfortable, but feeling uncomfortable must not be conflated with feeling unsafe or intimidated.

Recommendations:

We believe the rules need to be comprehensively scrapped. The existing conduct framework that covers both staff and students is more than sufficient to deal with any problematic behaviour on campus. Rules designed to have a chilling effect on legitimate protest must be opposed in a liberal democracy.

*Apologies to T.S. Eliot's poem *The Hollow Men*

Unappealing appeals – your current place in queue – 10000006; waiting time: 6 to 8 Months

Let us take you back to August 2024, when a student received an outcome from an Academic Misconduct hearing, where a suspension was imposed for the Second Half Year 2024.

The student, aggrieved with this penalty, lodged an appeal within the 20 working day timeframe, and as the suspension was not to be actioned until the appeal process had concluded, the student continued their semester two 2024 subjects, in the hope their appeal would be successful.

They went on to complete all of their outstanding coursework during the status quo ante period and received final grades in December. Yet their appeal remained ... pending. Finally, on 29th January 2025, five months after the appeal was lodged, the student was notified that their appeal had in fact been *disallowed*.

By this point, the time taken for the appeal to be assessed had exceeded the duration of the original suspension, and caused great uncertainty and anxiety for the student, as they were unsure of how this would impact their results from the previous semester.

They contacted the Academic Secretary and Head of Department, requesting that the suspension be applied to FHY 2025 to account for the delay and ensure they receive credit for the subjects completed during the appeal period.

Throughout the appeal process, the student acted in accordance with the advice provided by the Vice-Chancellor, who informed them that the suspension **would not be imposed until the conclusion of the appeal process** (as required under the Academic Board Regulation). Unfortunately, however, the long delay with the appeal kept the student in limbo for an entire semester.

At the time of writing, we are unaware of the final resolution for this student, but this was just one of many examples we have observed of students enduring unacceptable delays with their appeals, where the delays have effectively caused further penalties, hardship and psycho-social stress over and above those imposed by the original decision.

Recommendation:

Appeals to the Academic Board are the final stage of review for students looking to dispute decisions which have a significant impact on their interests; as such, it is vital that appeals are handled fairly and efficiently. The Student Appeals team needs to be adequately resourced to ensure it can meet demand and deliver timely outcomes.

Policy gymnastics – the exceptionally exceptional threshold for further special consideration

The *Assessment & Results Policy* helpfully sets out the purpose of special consideration as follows:

4.123. Special consideration is an equity measure to ensure that the assessment of students takes into account circumstances that adversely impact a student's ability to undertake, prepare for, and/or complete an assessment task.

a) Granting special consideration enables students who have been impacted an alternative/additional opportunity to demonstrate their level of attainment of intended learning outcomes.

Later at 4.144 the policy states that special consideration for a second time on an already granted special assessment can only be given in "exceptional circumstances and, in those cases, only once". At the first meeting of Academic Board for 2025, a question was raised regarding the definition and application of 'exceptional circumstances' in section 4.144, as it appeared it was being interpreted in a way that was prejudicial to unwell students.

The question was taken on notice, and on 20 March UMSU received a response from the Academic Secretary which sought to clarify the queries around 'exceptional circumstances' and 'special on special' assessments. Regarding the definitions and application of 'exceptional circumstances' under section 4.144, the Academic Secretary responded as follows:

Exceptional circumstances are not presently defined in the Assessment and Results policy, but broadly speaking are considered to be unforeseen events or situations beyond a student's control, that are severe in impact and significantly impair their ability to complete assessment tasks.

In the interim, SASS have provided some general examples of what may constitute exceptional circumstances, including but not limited to:

- The death or serious injury of a close family member or friend.*
- Traumatic events, such as sexual assault or family violence, due to their severe psychological and emotional impact.*
- Medical conditions or severe illness, such as conditions that result in hospitalisation or other medical situations or illnesses that render a student incapacitated due to severe impact.*

SASS have kindly advised that work is underway to improve support for students' understanding of their eligibility. By mid-May, student-facing web content will be updated with clearer and more comprehensive guidelines on exceptional circumstances.

Unfortunately, from our perspective of policy interpretation, this answer simply raised more questions.

Section 4.144 of the Policy relates to "further special consideration", where a student needs to apply for special consideration for an assessment task where special consideration has been previously granted. This is often referred to as "special on special". The Advocacy Service takes a fairly uncontroversial approach to policy interpretation – using a purposive and plain language approach to understanding the provisions. Given the term "exceptional circumstances" is not defined in the policy, we would expect the ordinary dictionary meaning to apply to the circumstances – i.e. situations and incidents which are unusual and only likely to happen very infrequently and are generally unforeseen and out of the individual's control. Moreover, as the term is used in several places, it is normal custom and practice to assume that any interpretation of these words remains consistent throughout the policy.

4.104. A student may request a review of a result in an assessment task within 10 business days after the publication of the results for the assessed item unless, in exceptional circumstances, the dean allows a longer period. The request must include a rationale.

and

4.117. The University recognises that the ability of a student to complete assessments or meet assessment deadlines may be genuinely and significantly affected by:

a) exceptional and extenuating circumstances outside the student's control; for example, acute illness, loss or bereavement, hardship or trauma, temporary or permanent disability

and

5.77. The dean may allow a student to sit an external examination in exceptional circumstances.

In only one instance (at 4.117) there is an example to suggest the intended interpretation of the term. There is nothing to suggest that this interpretation is intended to differ across the policy.

That notwithstanding, by singling out the provision regarding further special consideration, the Academic Secretary's response to the question put to the Academic Board appears to contemplate an interpretation of "exceptional circumstances" which differs from that already set out at 4.117.

That is that a student's circumstances need to be *even more exceptional* than circumstances which are eligible for special consideration the first time. We do not believe this is a sound or logical assumption.

It is the Advocacy Service's contention that, given the policy uses the same term in multiple places, it should be assumed that the intention is that the same term has the same meaning throughout the policy. We also regard the term "exceptional circumstances" as a *term of art* with a standard meaning derived from its common use that is widely understood. Generally, in Australian administrative contexts including High Court interpretations of Migration law, the term "exceptional circumstances" is held to mean circumstances which are unusual or out of the ordinary, and not something that could be expected to occur regularly and justifying of a deviation from the usual rules or procedures.

Accordingly, we regard the main intention of 4.144 is to set out a limit on the number of times a student can get special assessments for a single assessment task. The use of the term "only once" is key here:

*4.144. Special consideration applications relating to a particular assessment task for which special consideration has already been granted are only considered in exceptional circumstances and, in those cases, **only once**.*

That is, students can be eligible for further special consideration if a special assessment task is again impacted by exceptional circumstances, but this policy simply stipulates that if approved, the outcome (ie: "adjustment") will be a withdrawal from the subject (see 4.145(a)). There is no basis for an interpretation that the term exceptional circumstances should have a different interpretation to the use of the term in 4.117- it is not sound to assert that those circumstances must be **more serious** in order to be exceptional.

The criteria and evidentiary thresholds are the same for an application for further special consideration as they are for a first application, as set out under section 4.124 of the Policy:

4.124. Circumstances that are recognised by the University as acceptable grounds for applying for special consideration include, but are not limited to:

- a) acute illness or serious injury on the day of an examination or during the period immediately leading up to an examination or assessment due date*
- b) bereavement or other serious emotional disturbance, e.g. witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime, sudden loss of accommodation or family violence*
- c) hardship or trauma such as a car accident, sudden loss of income, or severe disruption to domestic arrangements, and/or*
- d) significant religious or cultural reasons which impact a student's ability to undertake or complete assessment on a particular day(s) or at a particular time(s).*

This interpretation is consistent with what we see in practice when the Special Consideration team assesses applications for further special consideration. Indeed, the UMSU Advocacy Service assists many students who have been approved for further special consideration and offered a late withdrawal in accordance with section 4.145(a), but who wish to pursue a further special assessment in order to pass the subject and progress with their studies. In those cases, we help the student to seek a discretionary decision via an appeal to the Academic Board.

Additionally, the general examples of 'exceptional circumstances' that were provided in the Academic Secretary's response are alarming to us, as they require only the most extreme circumstances will qualify a student for further special consideration – anything short of death, [girlfriend in a coma](#), severe trauma or hospitalisation seemingly does not meet the threshold for further special consideration.

How this has looked in practice is that a student who was approved for special consideration for an initial exam due to having the flu, was subsequently deemed ineligible for further special consideration for their special exam even though they suffered debilitating (and contagious!) gastroenteritis on the day – a condition thoroughly covered in their Health Practitioner Report submitted with the application. Apparently severe gastro is not *more exceptional* enough than the flu...or ... what ... we really don't know. Go figure.

In our view, this interpretation is both objectively unreasonable and risks the university failing to meet its equity obligations, it also fails to comply with its own definition of special consideration, as set out in section 4.123. Further, the integrity of assessment across the university is undermined, as students do not get the chance to demonstrate their level of attainment of intended learning outcomes, and many students would inevitably receive grades which are not an accurate reflection of their capabilities.

Recommendation 1:

The Academic Board needs to urgently reconsider this interpretation of the policy governing further special consideration and abandon any plans to update student-facing web content with guidelines that would imply that there is a higher threshold applied to eligibility assessments of further special consideration applications. Additionally, the Academic Board needs to clearly communicate the correct interpretation of these policy provisions to all academic units, to ensure there is a consistent understanding and application of current policy.

In response to a separate question regarding reports that some students have received 'special-on-special' assessments in some cases, seemingly out of line with the provisions of section 4.145, the Academic Secretary responded as follows:

Under the Assessment and Results policy, students may attempt an assessment as follows, subject to being deemed eligible for special consideration and granted a special assessment/'special on special':

- 1. First assessment attempt - the original assessment task as provided for in the relevant subject handbook entry.*
- 2. Second assessment attempt - a special assessment granted as an outcome of an eligible special consideration application.*
- 3. Third assessment attempt - a 'special on special' granted an outcome of an eligible special consideration application.*
- 4.145 describes the outcome where a student cannot sit their special assessments (note the plural emphasis in 4.145). This may include the special or the special on special if granted.*

Again, this response did not exactly clear things up for us.

Despite section 4.144 clearly stating that an application for special consideration relating to a particular assessment task for which special consideration has already been granted can only be made once, this response implies that the plural emphasis in section 4.145 (ie: 'special assessments') effectively overrides that limitation set out in section 4.144.

This is a misinterpretation of this policy provision, and the use of the plural 'special assessments' in 4.145 refers to applications which relate to more than one assessment task.

Setting aside the statutory interpretation element, it is important to again emphasise what we see occur in practice, which is that students approved for further special consideration once are offered a late withdrawal under section 4.145(a).

All of this notwithstanding, it is important to note that UMSU is supportive of a policy which would provide for students to be offered a third assessment attempt, ie: a 'special on special', and we opposed the removal of this option when the *Assessment & Results Policy* was reviewed in 2019.

In that context, we welcome this interpretation as it provides students with more opportunities to complete their assessment requirements and progress in their course. However, for this to become custom and practice, the interpretation needs to be promulgated within the relevant parts of the University, and the policy wording should be clarified to make this interpretation express.

Recommendation 2:

The published advice and information about further special consideration, specifically 'special on special' consideration, needs to accurately reflect this policy interpretation.

Additionally, this interpretation, as well as guidance on how to apply it, needs to be communicated to the Special Consideration team and the academic units.

Finally, when the upcoming Policy review is completed, the policy provisions around further special consideration will need to be more clearly worded to ensure clarity around how many assessment attempts are possible under special consideration.

Bouquets and brickbats

Our Service reports generally contain a fair bit of critique around university interactions with students, although we do try to make a note of positives and successful collaborations that bring fairer outcomes when they occur. In this context, it seems only reasonable to include feedback the Advocacy Service receives from our service users. Students are sent a link to our exit survey at the completion of our casework service, and many take the opportunity to provide feedback. The results from this reporting period are below.

Overall, how satisfied were you with the service you received?

Very Satisfied	90%
Neutral	6%
Satisfied	3%

Would you use our service in the future?

Definitely	87%
Not Sure	6%
Probably	6%

How satisfied were you with how quickly we responded?

Very Satisfied	77%
Satisfied	19%
Neutral	3%

How satisfied were you with our knowledge and expertise

Very Satisfied	94%
Neutral	3%
Satisfied	3%

How satisfied were you with accessibility and inclusiveness

Very Satisfied	97%
Neutral	3%

How satisfied were you with how well we explained things

Very Satisfied	94%
Satisfied	6%

How satisfied were you with our sensitivity and understanding

Very Satisfied	97%
Satisfied	3%

Would you recommend our service to other students?

Definitely	97%
Probably	3%

Any specific ideas on how we could improve our service?

- "I was incredibly happy with the service I received! Eloise was so understanding and showed no judgement towards my situation which is exactly what I needed. She explained things clearly and answered every question I had.
- The only idea I have would be to promote the services better. I'm not sure if it's just me or my faculty but I wasn't aware on most things UMSU can help with.
- It was very helpful, the staff were very welcoming and patient, probably a little slow to respond as there were too many people trying to get help, but overall very good.
- Hard to say, as I experienced a lot of annoying issues caused by the school and the issues have not been solved appropriately although not the fault of this service.
- All good, just want to have some more chances to meet in person more frequently.
- Keep assigning Alanna she is the best!
- Interactive assistance with appeals in a format similar to the University's Academic Skills meetings would enable students to feel more confident and empowered, I think the Service needs to be better funded to enable the great service to be extended further.
- At least two meetings (face to face or via zoom) with an advocate rather than one initial consult and follow up emails would increase efficiency and clarity; the staff are stretched too thinly.
- Employing an UMSU advocate or recruiting a volunteer to assist students during the University shut-down periods would disperse the load of work for staff and allow students to gain assistance from the union during this holiday time.
- The Advocacy team need more staff to reduce time-constraints and provide the best service possible to students.
- It would also be good for the team to have clarity over success/failure rates of appeals from the University, and provide checklists to simplify the process, rather than providing the template and online instructions.
- I think Alanna did wonderfully, if I were to nitpick it would just be quicker replies, but on everything else, I don't think I could have imagined a better service than what she has already performed.

On the basis of some of these suggestions, the Advocacy Service has commissioned a complete overhaul of our website and self help resources by a very capable Student@Work intern and we hope to increase capacity to offer more appointments to students over time, although that will require more staff ultimately as we are already at the limit of our current casework.

Advocacy Service Statistics

January - April 2025

"Show Cause / Course Academic Progress (CAPC)	80	26.40%
Assessment and Grades	78	25.74%
Special Consideration	66	21.78%
Misconduct	49	16.17%
Student Support Services	11	3.63%
The Nature of Teaching or Assessment	5	1.65%
The standard of services by the university	5	1.65%
RHD Supervision	4	1.32%
Computer and IT Infrastructure	3	0.99%
The Quality of Teaching	2	0.66%

January - April 2024

Primary Issue

Misconduct	141	26.81%
Special Consideration	108	20.53%
"Show Cause / Course Academic Progress (CAPC)	82	15.59%
Assessment and Grades	63	11.98%
Remission of Fees	47	8.94%
Student Support Services	21	3.99%
The standard of services by the university	20	3.80%
The Quality of Teaching	11	2.09%
RHD Supervision	10	1.90%
Advanced Standing or credit	5	0.95%
Selection Appeal	5	0.95%
RHD Progress	4	0.76%
Vocational Placement problems	3	0.57%
The Nature of Teaching or Assessment	3	0.57%
Course structure or changes	2	0.38%
Scholarship issues	1	0.19%
Student Complaint about another student	1	0.19%

January - April 2025

Distribution by graduate/undergraduate status

Undergraduate	147	48.51%
Graduate Coursework	139	45.87%
RHD	17	5.61%

January - April 2024

Distribution by graduate/undergraduate status

Undergraduate	299	48.54%
Graduate Coursework	206	43.20%
RHD	21	5.34%

January - April 2025

Process	Graduate Coursework	RHD	Undergraduate
"Show Cause / Course Academic Progress (CAPC)	43.75%		56.25%
Assessment and Grades	47.44%	7.69%	44.87%
Misconduct	45.45%	4.55%	50.00%
Special Consideration	36.73%	6.12%	57.14%
Student Support Services	63.64%	9.09%	27.27%
The standard of services by the university	60.00%		40.00%
The Nature of Teaching or Assessment	40.00%		60.00%
RHD Supervision		100.00%	
Computer and IT Infrastructure	66.67%		33.33%
The Quality of Teaching	100.00%		

January - April 2024

Primary issue by study type

Process	Graduate Coursework	RHD	Undergraduate
Assessment and Grades	57.14%	0.95%	65.71%
Misconduct	43.81%	3.81%	52.38%
"Show Cause / Course Academic Progress (CAPC)	31.43%		43.81%
The standard of services while accessing administrative support received by the university	28.57%	0.95%	49.52%
Special Consideration	15.24%		20.95%
Course structure changes	6.67%	3.81%	10.48%
Student Support Services	4.76%	0.95%	11.43%
The Quality of Teaching	2.86%		2.86%
Selection Appeal	0.95%	0.95%	4.76%
The Nature of Teaching or Assessment	0.95%		5.71%
Vocational Placement Problems	0.95%		3.81%
Scholarship issues	0.95%		2.86%
Student complaint about another student	0.95%	0.95%	1.90%
RHD Supervision	0.95%		0.95%
Remission of fees	0.00%	7.62%	7.62%

January - April 2025

Domestic	159	52.48%
International	144	47.52%

January - April 2024

Distribution by International/Domestic Status

Domestic	255	48.48%
International	246	46.77%
Not Specified	25	4.75%

January - April 2025

Primary issue by international or domestic status

Process	Domestic	International
Assessment and Grades	59.22%	40.78%
"Show Cause / Course Academic Progress (CAPC)	44.87%	55.13%
Special Consideration	51.52%	48.48%
Misconduct	48.98%	51.02%
Student Support Services	63.64%	36.36%
The Nature of Teaching or Assessment	100.00%	0.00%
The standard of services by the university	100.00%	0.00%
RHD Supervision	50.00%	50.00%
Computer and IT Infrastructure	66.67%	33.33%
The Quality of Teaching	50.00%	50.00%

January - April 2024

Primary issue by international or domestic status

Process	Domestic	International
Show Cause / Course Academic Progress (CAPC)	33.33%	66.67%
Misconduct	37.10%	62.90%
Special Consideration	41.18%	58.82%
RHD Supervision	50.00%	50.00%
Student Support Services	50.00%	50.00%
The Nature of Teaching or Assessment	50.00%	50.00%
The Quality of Teaching	50.00%	50.00%
Assessment and Grades	69.44%	30.56%
The standard of services at the university	100.00%	

January - April 2025

Cases By Faculty

Science	29.37%
Arts	17.82%
FBE	15.18%
MDHS	13.53%
FEIT	8.25%
ABP	4.29%
MGSE	4.29%
MLS	3.96%
MBS	1.65%
VCA	1.65%

January - April 2024

Cases By Faculty

Arts	24.76%
Science	21.36%
MDHS	14.56%
FBE	13.11%
Engineering and IT	7.77%
MSGE	6.31%
ABP	4.37%
MLS	4.37%
VCA Music	2.43%
MBS	0.49%
The Florey Institute	0.49%

January - April 2025

Process by Faculty

	"Show Cause / Course Academic Progress (CAPC)	Assessment and Grades	Special Consideration	Misconduct
Science	40.00%	21.79%	42.42%	34.69%
FBE	20.00%	28.21%	6.06%	8.16%
MDHS	13.75%	3.85%	9.09%	12.24%
Arts	10.00%	33.33%	22.73%	18.37%
FEIT	3.75%	1.28%	7.58%	10.20%
MGSE	3.75%	2.56%	4.55%	4.08%
VCA	3.75%	0.00%	1.52%	2.04%
ABP	2.50%	3.85%	1.52%	4.08%
MBS	1.25%	1.28%	1.52%	2.04%
MLS	1.25%	3.85%	3.03%	4.08%

January - April 2024

Process by Faculty

	Misconduct	Special Consideration	CAPC	Assessment and Grades
Arts	38.10%	23.53%	26.32%	18.92%
Science	15.87%	32.35%	31.58%	21.62%
MDHS	11.11%	-	-	18.92%
Business and Economics	9.52%	11.76%	15.79%	21.62%
Engineering and IT	7.94%	5.88%	15.79%	8.11%
MSGE	4.76%	5.88%	10.53%	2.70%
APB	6.35%	14.71%	-	-
MLS	4.76%	5.88%	-	8.11%
VCA Music	1.59%	-	-	-
MBS	-	-	-	-
The Florey Institute	-	-	-	-

January - April 2025

Preferred method of contact with Service

Email	46.53%
In Person	25.69%
Phone	16.32%
Zoom	11.46%

January - April 2024

Preferred method of contact with Service

Email	45.63%
In Person	24.27%
Phone	19.42%
Zoom	10.68%

Commentary

This period 303 students were provided a service, 526 presented for the same period in 2024, representing a reduction in individual case presentations for the start of this year. Changes to academic misconduct processes may partly account for this, but we will need to monitor it over time. The proportion of graduate to undergraduate students was 45.87% to 48.51% with just under 6% being higher degree by research students, and the same period last year we saw 48.54% undergraduates to 43.20% graduate course work students and about 5% RHD candidates. During this period, 52.48% domestic and 47.52% international students presented to the service, compared to the same time last year, with 48.48% domestic and 46.77% international students presenting. During this time, 42 students (14%) identified as living with a disability, compared to 28 students (5%) at the same time last year.

The primary presenting issues overall this period – each representing just over a quarter of all presentations respectively – were ‘Show Cause’ (Course Academic Progress) matters, and assessment and grade related concerns. About a fifth of processes involved special consideration applications or disputes, followed by misconduct related issues. While it was not unusual for “Show Cause” matters to be highly represented at this time of year, in 2024 misconduct related issues were overwhelmingly the most highly represented in each service reporting period. With changes to the academic integrity policy meaning fewer students are attending student discipline hearing, we have seen misconduct matters reduce significantly in presentation for this period in 2025.

Most students requiring assistance for ‘Show Cause’ related matters came from the faculties of Science, FBE, MDHS and Arts, 56% of these students were undergraduates and 55% were international students, indicating a relatively even distribution across cohorts.

In respect of assessment and grade related matters, students from the faculties of Arts, FBE and Science made up the majority of presentations, with roughly equal proportions of undergraduate to graduate coursework students seeking help, and a significant majority of domestic students.

About 14% of service users during this period identified as having a disability, compared with only 5% in the same period in 2024. There is insufficient longitudinal data to understand this significant change in self-identified disability. ADHD remains the most commonly identified disability, followed by anxiety, autism and mental health. Other identified disabilities included depression, fibromyalgia, hearing impairment, muscular dystrophy, anorexia, cancer, chronic pain, maculopathy, and PTSD.

As in previous reporting periods, the overwhelming majority of students accessing the Service requested assistance via email. Around a quarter asked for in person appointments and the remainder were conducted via zoom or over the phone.

The next Advocacy Service report will cover the period May to August 2025 and will be available in mid-September 2025.

Paul Lewis-Hornsby

Team Leader, Advocacy Service

June 2025