

Legal Service Charter

Policy Context	
External Standards	CLCA Risk Management Guide 3 rd Edition (RMG) CLCA National Accreditation Standards National Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual
Legislation	<i>Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 (Vic)</i> <i>Legal Profession Uniform General Rules 2015</i> <i>Legal Profession Uniform Law Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules 2015</i> <i>Legal Profession Uniform Legal Practice (Solicitors) Rules 2015</i> <i>Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006</i>
Related Documents	
Related Legal Service Policies	Legal and Financial Counselling Services Policy Access and Equity Policy Client Complaint Policy
Related UMSU Policies	N/A
Related UoM Policies	N/A
Related Organisational Forms	Legal Service online enquiry form

1 Who We Are

The University of Melbourne Student Union Incorporated (UMSU) Legal Service is a community legal centre staffed by qualified lawyers and financial counsellors that provides free and confidential legal help and financial counselling to all currently-enrolled students of the University of Melbourne.

The Legal Service acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which we work, and we pay our respects to Indigenous Elders past and present. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

2 What We Help With

The Legal Service can help with various legal issues, including:

- Renting
- Employment
- Infringements / fines
- Consumer law
- Minor criminal law
- Family violence and personal safety
- Discrimination
- Sexual harassment

- Car and bike accidents
- Debts and financial counselling

3 How We Operate

We work on a self-empowerment model of service delivery. This means that for most enquiries we will provide legal advice, information and referrals to help you take action to resolve your legal problems yourself.

4 Discrete and Ongoing Assistance Guidelines

We are guided by the following Discrete and Ongoing Assistance Guidelines in determining whether we can provide you with legal assistance.

4.1 Level of Service

The level of service we can provide will depend on a range of factors as assessed by us, including:

- whether the legal matter is within our scope and expertise;
- the complexity of the legal matter;
- whether the other party in any legal dispute has legal representation;
- any matters which may affect your ability to self-advocate;
- the availability of other specialised services relevant to the legal matter;
- whether the legal matter is systemic in nature;
- our current resources and capacity constraints; and
- whether there is any conflict of interest or other ethical issue.

The appropriate level of service will be assessed by us at the beginning of the legal matter and on an ongoing basis. We generally have three levels of service:

- Once-off legal advice/information and referrals by email or phone/video call (this is the default level of service which we provide in most legal matters).
- If your legal matter is more complex, we may be able to provide a maximum of two follow up emails or phone/video calls.
- If your legal matter requires further assistance, we will re-assess according to the factors outlined above and will let you know whether the Legal Service is able to provide ongoing assistance. This could include ongoing advice, drafting documents, negotiating on your behalf, or representing you at a court or tribunal.

The Legal Service is only able to provide this level of service in a very small number of cases. If we have assessed that your matter requires this level of service and we are unable to provide this, we will refer you to an appropriate external service.

Our service limits are in place to ensure that the Legal Service can allocate resources fairly across a large volume of enquiries. Requests from us for further documents/information will not be counted towards the service limits.

4.2 Method of Contact

We provide legal help mainly by email, phone and video calls. We will determine the appropriate method of contact after reviewing your enquiry. In-person appointments are only available where we have determined this is appropriate with regard to special circumstances applicable to you, and where we have the capacity to accommodate these.

If there is a reason why you require a particular method of contact, please let us know and we will try our best to accommodate you. If we are unable to accommodate your preferred method of contact, we will provide a referral to an appropriate external service for assistance.

4.3 What We Cannot Do

While the Legal Service tries to help all University of Melbourne students as much as possible, there are some situations in which we cannot help. These include:

- Where there is a conflict of interest. We need to comply with legal ethical rules such as maintaining confidentiality and avoiding potential conflicts of interest, which sometimes prevents us providing advice. This includes:
 - disputes between students of the University of Melbourne; and
 - disputes between students and UMSU or UMSU Staff.

We will assess whether there are any conflicts of interest in your matter on an ongoing basis. A conflict may arise throughout a matter, particularly in situations where the Legal Service is acting for joint clients. In these situations, we may be required to cease acting.

- Legal services requiring the holding of monies on trust, as we do not operate a trust account.
- Where we have assessed that the matter is outside our scope or we do not have the capacity to assist.

4.4 Areas of Law We Do Not Cover

There are also some areas of law we do not cover. These include:

- Commercial/business law
- Property law, including conveyancing
- Tax law
- Migration law
- Complex family law, including property disputes
- Interstate and foreign laws
- Wills & estates

We do not provide any Designated Services as defined by the *Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006*.

Where we are unable to help, we will try and refer you to an appropriate external service to obtain legal help.

4.5 University Disputes

The Legal Service does not provide advice or representation in matters relating to university policy, such as discipline and misconduct allegations, or academic grievances and complaints. These services are provided by the [UMSU Advocacy Service](#).

Where we assess that all or part of your matter relates to university policy, we will refer you to the UMSU Advocacy Service.

There may be some matters which cross the scope of both the Legal Service and the Advocacy Service (for example, discrimination and consumer complaints against the University). Where appropriate, the staff of the Legal Service will assess the matter and make a referral to the Advocacy Service, in accordance with the Legal Service Information Barrier Policy.

5 Expectations

5.1 What We Expect from You

We expect that you:

- behave in a courteous manner towards lawyers, volunteers and other staff whilst interacting with the Legal Service; and
- let us know prior to any appointment if you are unable to attend.

5.2 What You Can Expect from Us

You can expect:

- to be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect;
- that all information will be treated as confidential in keeping with our professional obligations. No information will be divulged without your prior consent, except in exceptional circumstances as provided for under the law, such as where we determine there is an immediate risk of harm to you or another person;
- for advice and assistance to be given in a timely fashion, and to be provided with regular updates about work undertaken by us on your behalf; and
- to receive clear and accurate information.

6 Complaints

If you are unhappy with our service:

- Let the lawyer handling your case know and try to work the problem out with them.
- If you are unable to do this, you should request a copy of our Complaints Policy and speak to either the Responsible Person or the Manager, Advocacy and Legal.
- If you are still unhappy, you are entitled to put a complaint in writing to the CEO, UMSU.

You can also make an external complaint about the conduct of a lawyer to the [Victorian Legal Services Board & Commissioner](#).

7 Further information

For further information about how the Legal Service operates, you may request copies of the Legal Service’s policies.

Policy Review			
Review Responsibility	Responsible Person and the Manager, Advocacy and Legal		
Review Process	<p>The process for reviewing this Charter includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment of Charter implementation to date; • all feedback and suggestions will be considered by the reviewer of the Charter; • consideration of any other matters deemed relevant by the reviewers; and • proposed changes will be presented to Legal Service staff for comment. <p>The approved Charter will be available on the Legal Service web page.</p>		
Review Frequency:	Every two years	Date Approved:	February 2026
Change History			
February 2026	Reformat and update language to reflect DSM.		