

# ADVOCACY SERVICE CHARTER

## We Can Provide

- Free and confidential advice and assistance with negotiating the following academic and administrative issues with the University:
  - Discipline and misconduct allegations.
  - Disputes about assessment.
  - Grievances and complaints grounded in policy.
  - Intellectual property disputes.
  - Refund or remission of fees.
  - Supervision.
  - Unsatisfactory progress.
  - Special consideration or equitable adjustments.
- Referral to other appropriate services.

## We Do Not Provide

- We cannot assist you in the following matters:
  - anything **unrelated** to your study (or prospective study) at Melbourne University;
  - attendance at informal negotiations and meetings with lecturers or supervisors - although we can advise and support you with recommendations on how best to approach the matter;
  - our resources are limited and if we cannot meet the level of service you expect then we may cease to assist you;
  - in the event that a relationship of trust and confidence cannot be established between the service and you, the service has the discretion to cease to assist you;
  - where the University's internal decision making process has been exhausted;
  - where there may be a conflict of interest.
- Additionally we cannot assist you with the following issues which are governed by specific procedures:
  - Complaints about discrimination, sexual harassment or bullying.
  - Counselling or psychological help.
  - Visa advice and information for international students.
  - Legal Advice.
- We can refer you to the specialist services which can assist with these matters.

## Information and Confidentiality

- When you contact the Advocacy Service, we need to ask you information about yourself and the issue you wish to discuss.
  - All information received is strictly private and confidential.
  - We adhere to Victorian privacy principles which are embodied in the *University of Melbourne Privacy Policy* (MPF1104) and privacy legislation.
  - We will not divulge any information provided by you without your consent (unless we are legally obliged to do so).

## Your Rights

- To be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.
- To be dealt with in a prompt and appropriate manner.
- To receive information in a clear and accurate format.
- To ask questions, make your own decisions and make informed choices.
- The right to privacy and confidentiality related to your issue.

## How You Can Help Us.

- Work with us in good faith:
  - Give us accurate, honest and complete information so that we are fully aware of your circumstances.
  - You do not have to take our advice on a matter, however if you choose not to, we may be unable to assist you further.
- Bring all relevant documents to your appointment; including notices, letters and relevant correspondence with the University.
- Let us know if you can't keep an appointment.
- Treat our staff and volunteers with courtesy, respect and consideration.
- Be patient and please understand that we can be very busy at times.
- Understand that:
  - we will always endeavour to provide the best advice possible to assist you to resolve your problem favourably; however we cannot act in your place.
  - we have no coercive powers and cannot compel the University to act in a particular way.

## How Can We Help You

- We offer independent information, advocacy and referral across a range of academic and administrative issues.
- Both undergraduate and graduate students are welcome to use this service.
- Individual support from an advocate is available by appointment.
- The Advocacy Service operates on an empowerment model - to this end we aim to provide you with:
  - expert advice on how to approach your problem in the context of the University's policies, procedures and statutory framework;
  - information and resources to help you to make informed decisions;
  - skills and resources to self-advocate and negotiate more positive outcomes.

## Legal Advice, Information and Advocacy

The provision of advocacy and casework should not be confused with the provision of legal advice.

- Only a legal practitioner is entitled to provide legal advice.
- If we assess that you require legal advice we will refer you to the UMSU Legal Service or another legal service as appropriate.

## Our Commitment to You

In order to provide you with a professional and accountable service, we aim to:

- Respond to your phone messages/emails within 24 hours
- Be honest and realistic with regard to the assistance we are able to provide.
- Let you know if we are unable to further assist you for any reason.

## Making a Complaint

If you are unhappy with the service you are receiving:

- Let the advocate handling your case know and try to work the problem out with them;
- If you are unable to do this, you should speak to the Manager, Advocacy & Legal.
- If you are still unhappy, you are entitled to put a complaint in writing to the General Manager, UMSU.
- If you require assistance with a complaint, please speak with the Student Services Officer