

1. Purpose of policy

This policy provides guidance on the role of the Student Ombudsman at USC.

2. Policy scope and application

The policy applies to all students and staff of the University.

3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures.

4. Principles

4.1 The University endorses the principles of natural justice in relation to investigations of any complaints and/or grievances made by any party. Natural justice requires that in any matter of adjudication, those parties directly involved have a right to a hearing, and that the adjudicator shall not be biased.

4.2 The position of Student Ombudsman has been established by the University to ensure its students receive fair and equitable treatment across all aspects of the student experience, and in particular with regard to the resolution of complaints and grievances.

4.3 The University recognises that the Student Ombudsman must maintain neutrality, impartiality and confidentiality in performing the role.

4.4 The Student Ombudsman has direct access to all levels of the University, including senior officers such as the Vice-Chancellor and President, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and heads of school, academic and administrative staff as and when required for the fulfilment of the performance of their duties.

4.5 The Student Ombudsman shall be given access to all University records and documents relating to any investigations.

5. Role of the Student Ombudsman

5.1 Serving as an independent resource, the Student Ombudsman is neither advocate for any individual nor for the University, but rather is an advocate for fairness, applying the principles of natural justice.

5.2 The Student Ombudsman can:

- assist students to clarify the outcome sought and to navigate the student grievance resolution process
- refer students to additional support services such as counselling, academic skills development or advocacy services
- provide procedural advice to staff members involved in handling complaints, ensuring compliance with policies and procedures.

5.3 The Student Ombudsman cannot:

- provide advice to students as to the merits of their case
- advocate on behalf of students to decision makers
- investigate matters in which the complainant is not a student or a former student of the University
- investigate any matter in which there is a real or perceived conflict of interest (an Assistant Student Ombudsman may be appointed to investigate the matter), and
- review any decision of the Student Academic Appeals Committee or Student Misconduct Appeals Committee.

5.4 The Student Ombudsman also provides advice to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) on the development of good practice in student grievance resolution, and has an educative role to ensure complaint-handling by staff is undertaken to the highest standard.

6. Investigations

6.1 The Vice-Chancellor and President, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) may appoint the Student Ombudsman to investigate a student grievance, or to provide oversight of investigations by academic or administrative staff.

6.2 The report of an investigation would usually include recommendation/s on any measures to be taken to resolve the matter and any other findings or recommendations required by any University policy or procedure or that the Student Ombudsman considers appropriate.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Vice-Chancellor and President

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Student Ombudsman

FIRST APPROVED

30 June 2011

LAST AMENDED

29 August 2018

EFFECTIVE START DATE

31 October 2016

REVIEW DATE

26 October 2021

STATUS

Active

7. Annual Report

7.1 The Student Ombudsman will facilitate collection of data on formal complaints, reviews and appeals, to prepare an annual report of student grievances, presenting de-identified aggregate data, and identifying trends or areas for improvement.

7.2 By 31 March each year, the Student Ombudsman shall present an annual report for the previous year to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Each report shall summarise issues raised and recommendations for changes to policies and procedures in the light of supported cases. The report will be shared with the University's Academic Board.

END

RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Student Grievance Resolution - Governing Policy](#)

[Student Grievance Resolution - Procedures](#)

[Student Review and Appeals - Procedures](#)