



# University of South Australia Students Association

## Advocacy Service Charter

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Our primary role is to provide to the University of South Australia students with independent, free and confidential support regarding the University's policies and procedures matters. We as advocates can help to ensure that your views and needs are heard, respected and acted on.

The purpose of this Charter is to explain what we do and how we provide our services. In it we set out our service commitments.

### What we do

The Student Advocacy service is an independent service that works solely for the best interests of **the student**. Advocacy Officers will ensure that students are fairly represented by providing relevant information, referral and advice as well as acting as an advocate, liaison or support person on matters of:

- Requests for remarking and resubmissions
- Appeals against allegations of academic misconduct (including plagiarism)
- Advice regarding University Academic and Assessment Policies
- Appeals against final grades
- Appeals against intention to preclude
- Appeals against allegations of examination misconduct
- Issues with Academic and Professional Staff
- Referral to other services inside and outside of the University

***The Student Advocacy service is a free and confidential service available to all enrolled students.***

### Guiding Principles

#### 1. Clarity of purpose

All stakeholders have information on the scope and limitations of the service.

## **2. Students first**

Advocates will be non-judgemental and respectful of student's needs, views and experiences. The service will be transparent and as free from conflict of interest as possible. The service will be structurally separate from the University.

## **3. Empowerment**

The advocacy service will ensure that students direct the work of the advocates. Students will have a say in the level of involvement and style of advocacy support they want. All students of UniSA will have the opportunity to influence and be involved in reviewing the direction of the case to ensure it meets their needs.

## **4. Equal opportunity**

The service recognises the need to be proactive in addressing all forms of inequality, discrimination and marginalisation. Advocates will ensure fair and equitable allocation of their time between clients.

## **5. Accessibility**

The service will be free of charge. The service will ensure that premises, policies, procedures and information materials are accessible to the University community.

## **6. Accountability**

The service will have in place systems for monitoring performance and continuous improvement.

## **7. Confidentiality**

The service will maintain the highest levels of confidentiality.

## **8. Complaints**

USASA is welcoming of feedback, including complaints. There is a transparent process for receiving and addressing complaints.

## **Our Clients**

Our clients are the students of the University of South Australia.

Our primary role is to deliver an agreed advocacy service to students of the University. We provide services that impact directly on our students specifically the following:

1. Acting as the primary contact for student enquiries; supporting; actioning relevant enquiries; and providing information and advice about University policies and procedures.
2. Supporting student academic appeal processes by assisting students with preparation and presentation of documentation within the relevant school and division.
3. Supporting students with matters concerning assessment, academic misconduct, academic review, preclusion, resources, amendment of enrolment, and any other academic issue by attending relevant meetings with the student.
4. Ensuring students are supported appropriately by consulting and meeting with relevant academic and administrative staff and other student service providers on behalf of students, as appropriate.

**USASA Advocates are committed to providing the best possible standard of service to all its clients.**

We will:

- Be honest, ethical and professional
- Treat you politely and fairly
- Act with care and diligence in the execution of our duties
- Listen to what you tell us
- Endeavour to use plain language in our communication
- Respond in a timely fashion when answering reasonable requests for information
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality

USASA recognises the diverse needs of its clients and will:

- Ensure all Advocacy service public data clearly identifies contact details for further information;
- Provide opportunities for you to give feedback with our performance; and,
- Commit to continuously improve our level of service.

If we are unable to provide the service you need, we will refer you to an alternative contact point.

## **Our Service Standards**

When providing advice, we will:

- Consult widely to make sure that we include information from a range of views to determine the most appropriate way forward
- Ensure timeliness and quality in our interactions with students

When we are carrying out our responsibilities and tasks for our students we will:

- Strive for the highest ethical standards
- Be respectful of peoples' views, needs and experiences
- Be non-judgemental
- Maintain confidentiality
- Operate within a framework of equal opportunity

If you contact us, we will:

- Answer phone calls promptly during normal office hours (8:30am – 5.00pm ACST) and identify the name or position of the person speaking
- If we are unable to answer your phone query immediately please leave a voice message with your contact details and we will ensure that you receive a response within 1 working day
- Meet with you within 5 working days of receipt of a formal request from you for assistance
- Reply to correspondence (letter, fax or email) within 2 working days of receipt or, if we can't answer within that time, send you an acknowledgment and let you know when you can expect a reply
- Refer you to the appropriate organisation if the matter is outside the USASA's area of expertise

In providing you with information we will:

- Give you the most accurate, up to date information available to us, within the limits imposed by confidentiality and privacy
- Answer you as fully and precisely as your request makes it practicable for us to do so

## **Performance against our service standards**

We welcome your comments to how successful we are in achieving the service standards set out in this Charter. Please send us comments by letter or e-mail on any matter of concern to you. We will:

- Monitor and evaluate our services against the standards we have set in this Charter
- Formally review the standards set out in this Charter once a year and adjust them where appropriate considering your comments and in response to ongoing changes
- Report annually in USASA's Annual Report on how well we have met the standards.

The Charter will be independently reviewed at least every three years. USASA invites comments from clients, stakeholders and staff as part of its monitoring and review procedures.

## **How you can help us**

You can help us meet our standards by:

- Providing your queries to us in writing.
- Giving us sufficient and accurate information for us to understand your request and be able to respond appropriately.
- Treating our staff courteously.
- Providing feedback and comments on the service we provide.

## **How to give us feedback**

We welcome feedback on our performance, so we can know to what extent we are meeting your needs. If you have any comments or suggestions about improving our service, please let us know by contacting the Advocacy Team Leader, Luis Gardezabal.

If you are dissatisfied or have concerns about our day-to-day services, please discuss this with the person you dealt with as soon as you are able, or alternatively contact the Advocacy Team leader and we will try to resolve your concerns immediately.

If you are still not satisfied, please contact the CEO [Daniel.randell@unisa.edu.au](mailto:Daniel.randell@unisa.edu.au) who will respond within five working days of hearing from you.

If you are still dissatisfied with our service, we will refer you to the most appropriate complaints body.

## **Help us to improve this Charter**

We will use your comments to ensure that the service we provide is of the highest standard and that our charter accurately reflects this. We appreciate your efforts to help us to serve you better.

### **How you can contact us**

Manager – Student Support & Retention.

Luis Gardezabal

(08) 8302 2889

[Luis.Gardeazabal@unisa.edu.au](mailto:Luis.Gardeazabal@unisa.edu.au)

Advocacy Officer

Prashant Joshi

(08) 8302 2888

[Prashant.Joshi@unisa.edu.au](mailto:Prashant.Joshi@unisa.edu.au)

WHYALLA + MT GAMBIER (Mon-Fri)

[USASA.Advocate@unisa.edu.au](mailto:USASA.Advocate@unisa.edu.au)

## **Annexure 1**

### **Standards and examples of evidence**

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Example of evidence</i>
The advocacy service has an explicit statement of aims and objectives reviewed regularly.	Annual report, publicity materials.
<p>The service is able to unambiguously describe both verbally and in writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its students</li> <li>• Nature of matters within its remit</li> <li>• Limitations (what it doesn't do)</li> <li>• Means of contacting the service</li> </ul>	Publicity materials, student satisfaction surveys, advocate performance reviews.

### **Students First**

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Example of evidence</i>
Students are able to express a preference for advocates with particular skills, knowledge or attributes.	Referral procedure is documented and made available on the website.
The service clearly outlines the case management, process and have procedures for obtaining students' views on the impact of the advocacy process.	Flowchart/procedure for case management; student feedback forms.

### **Empowerment**

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Example of evidence</i>
The University community is regularly informed about the service.	Information sessions; newsletters; annual report; publicity materials
All students contribute to the design and implementation of the service to ensure it meets their needs.	Student feedback is collected at case closures; student surveys

## Equal Opportunity

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Example of evidence</i>
Advocate recruitment procedures promote diversity.	Job advertisements; position descriptions
All advocates have undertaken equal opportunity training.	Person specifications; training plans.

## Accessibility

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Example of evidence</i>
The service premises have wheelchair access.	Inspection of premises.
The service premises are welcoming and friendly.	Feedback from clients and advocates.
The service is well known within the University.	Publicity materials; annual report; information sessions; surveys

## Accountability

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Example of evidence</i>
<p>Data is recorded and analysed at regular intervals (eg quarterly or half yearly). This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of students supported, age, gender, ethnic origin, disability, postcode.</li> <li>• Nature of advocacy issues, duration of relationship and amount of time spent on each case.</li> <li>• Outcome.</li> </ul>	Client database
Annual summary of work undertaken.	Annual report

## Confidentiality

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Example of evidence</i>
The service has a written confidentiality policy with is freely available and reviewed annually.	Copy of policy with date last reviewed.
Issues of confidentiality are addressed in training and supervision.	Employee induction; performance reviews; training plans.
All student records either written or electronic are stored securely.	Lockable cabinets, password protected computers.
Students are supported to have access to their own records.	Student feedback.

## Complaints

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Example of evidence</i>
The service has a clearly articulated complaints procedure which is freely available and reviewed annually.	Copy of procedure with date last reviewed.
The Board receive regular reports of complaints and action taken.	Reports.
There is evidence of organisational learning from complaints.	Notes of meetings where complaints are discussed and remediation plans implemented.