



Advocacy Policy

Category:	Governance
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Approved By:	Executive Committee
Contact Person:	Advocacy and Welfare Manager

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction for the University of Canterbury Students' Association (**UCSA**) in the provision of advocacy services to University of Canterbury students.

Policy Statement

The mission of the UCSA is to help students succeed and belong. The advocacy service aims to support students through University of Canterbury processes. The UCSA specifically:

1. Provides advocacy services to University of Canterbury students who are in conflict with the University or with a University staff member, or where they are going through a formal academic process. This includes, but is not limited to, assisting with appeals, complaints, grievances, and discipline processes;
2. Assists students with navigating University of Canterbury policies and regulations;
3. Assists students with writing letters and applications, and with compiling relevant evidence in matters relating to University of Canterbury processes; and
4. Provides advice and support to students in meetings with the University of Canterbury.

Responsibility

The UCSA advocacy service is the responsibility of and provided by the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team.

Policy

1. Access

- A.** In order to access the advocacy service, the student must meet with a member of the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team.
- B.** A student that turns up unannounced will be accommodated where possible but may be sent away with a later appointment time at the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team's discretion.
- C.** When meeting with an Advocacy and Welfare team member, the student may be asked for additional information and documentation so this team member can better understand the student's situation in order to best advise and support the student.

2. Eligibility

- A.** The UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team will only provide advocacy assistance to fully enrolled UC students, other than the exceptions listed in 2(B). Being "fully enrolled" for the purposes of this policy means that the student is enrolled in at least one course at the University of Canterbury, and the final grade for that course has not yet been released.
- B.** To access the UCSA advocacy service, the student must be fully enrolled at the University of Canterbury, except in the cases where the assistance required is related to:
 - i. Enrolling at UC; or
 - ii. A situation that occurred while the person was enrolled at the University of Canterbury.
- C.** The UCSA advocacy service is accessible to all fully enrolled UC students, including undergraduate and postgraduate students, domestic and international students, part-time and full-time students, and campus-based and distance students.

3. Provision

- A.** The UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team can only provide advocacy assistance, advice, and support where the student is pursuing a matter, appeal, or complaint/concern against the University of Canterbury or a University staff member, and within the processes of the University of Canterbury.
- B.** The advocacy assistance, advice, and support provided by the Advocacy and Welfare team includes, but is not limited to:
 - i. Assisting with appeals, complaints, grievances, and discipline processes;
 - ii. Assisting students with navigating University of Canterbury policies and regulations;
 - iii. Assisting students with writing letters and applications, and with compiling relevant evidence in matters relating to University of Canterbury processes; and
 - iv. Providing advice and support to students in meetings with the University of Canterbury.
- C.** The Advocacy and Welfare team cannot provide advocacy assistance, advice, or support to students who wish to pursue a matter, appeal, or complaint/concern against any organisation/parties other than the University of Canterbury, a person who is not a staff member of the University of Canterbury, or through a process that is external to the University of Canterbury.
- D.** The Advocacy and Welfare team cannot provide advocacy assistance, advice, or support to students who have disputes/disagreements with, or wish to file complaints/concerns against the UCSA, a UCSA staff member or volunteer, or the UCSA Executive or its members.
- E.** The Advocacy and Welfare team cannot provide advocacy assistance, advice, or support to students who have disputes/disagreements with, or wish to file complaints/concerns against, another University of Canterbury student.

4. Support People and External Advocates

- A.** Students are welcome to bring support people with them when meeting with the Advocacy and Welfare team to discuss their advocacy issues. Notwithstanding this, the Advocacy and Welfare team reserve the right to request to speak with the student on their own if deemed necessary.

- B.** If a student engages an external advocate or advisor (e.g. a lawyer), then the Advocacy and Welfare team will no longer be able to provide advocacy assistance, advice, or support to the student with that advocacy issue. This is to ensure that students are not provided with conflicting advice or representation. Students who engage such an external advocate or advisor must advise the Advocacy and Welfare team of this engagement as soon as practicable.

5. Holistic Care and Referrals

- A.** The UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team is dedicated to the holistic care of students who contact them seeking support. As a result, there may be situations where the Advocacy and Welfare team is unable to provide assistance, advice, or support to the student through the Advocacy service as described in this policy, but may be able to provide support through its Welfare mandate. This may be through the provision of one or more specific Welfare services, through providing general and common sense advice or support, or through referral to another support service.
- B.** In situations where the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team is not able to provide assistance, advice, or support to students as specified in 3(C), (D) and (E), the Advocacy and Welfare team member meeting with the student will:
 - i. Explain why the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team is unable to provide assistance to them; and
 - ii. Where appropriate, refer the student to alternative University of Canterbury support services and/or external organisations that can provide the assistance, advice, or support the student requires.
- C.** Referrals will only be made with the consent of the students involved.
- D.** Referrals can be made either by:
 - i. Providing students with the information for the relevant University of Canterbury support services and/or external organisations; or
 - ii. Making direct referrals with the relevant University of Canterbury support services and/or external organisations.

6. Exceptional Circumstances

- A.** In exceptional circumstances, the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team may provide assistance, advice, or support to students outside the rules of this policy with

respect to the student's engagement with StudyLink or University Accommodation Providers (e.g. a Hall of Residence).

- B.** For advocacy assistance involving Studylink, such assistance may include helping the student with their applications to StudyLink (including applications for Limited Full-Time Study status), assistance with writing letters to StudyLink, or with compiling evidence for StudyLink applications. Please note that the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team may be unable to speak with StudyLink on students' behalf due to StudyLink's own privacy policies.
- C.** There can be no other exceptional circumstances where the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team will provide assistance, advice, or support outside the rules of this policy.

7. Information, Privacy & Confidentiality

- A.** All information gathered will be used for assessing eligibility and for statistical purposes to allow the UCSA to continually improve their services. No identifying information will be published.
- B.** The personal information provided to the UCSA for the provision of advocacy services is protected by the Privacy Act 2020. As such, any information a student provides will be treated as confidential and not be shared with any non-relevant UCSA staff, except with the consent of the student. The information will be stored in a secure manner for a period of at least seven years. Students are able to obtain this information and request changes as required by law.