

CLIENT SERVICE POLICY STATEMENT

UTSSA STUDENT ADVOCACY SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

The UTS Students' Association (UTSSA) provides a free, confidential service to all students enrolled at UTS who are seeking academic advice, assistance and support. The Student Advocacy Service is independent of the University and employs qualified and experienced professional caseworkers to deliver this Service. This Service is funded by a share of the Student Services and Amenities Fee.

The aim of the Student Advocacy Service is to provide information, advice and support to strengthen students' understanding of the University processes and procedures as they relate to their individual circumstances, and to build their capacity to navigate these processes in the future.

The Student Advocacy Service acknowledges and promotes student autonomy. Whilst qualified and prepared to provide information and advice, and committed to supporting students through the process of assessing and addressing their academic matters and concerns, the Student Advocacy Service upholds the principles of self-determination and encourages students to make informed decisions for themselves.

Our student advocacy and support includes:-

- communications and casework appointments with students;
 - liaising with academic and professional staff with, or on behalf of, students;
 - providing support to students attending formal meetings with Faculty;
 - assisting students with representations, and attending formal hearings with students for matters relating to Misconduct (USCC) and Appeals (SMAC); and
- extends to identifying and addressing systemic issues that arise across the University.

The Student Advocacy Service does not discriminate and is available to all students enrolled at UTS. We are experienced in matters that concern undergraduate, postgraduate and higher degree research students. The Student Advocacy Service seeks to act in the best interests of students, and the student body, at all times. Where issues arise outside the remit of the Student Advocacy Service we may provide referrals to alternative support services that are available within the University, or to relevant external agencies and departments.

THE SERVICE

The UTSSA Student Advocacy Service (“the Service”) is committed to providing a professional academic advice and advocacy service to all students enrolled at UTS.

The UTSSA employs qualified and experienced staff to deliver a professional service to:-

- a) advise, assist and support students as they learn to navigate processes within the University;
- b) advocate with, and on behalf of, individual students and groups of students; and
- c) advocate with, and on behalf of, the student cohort at UTS in order to raise issues of concern to improve the student experience.

The UTSSA encourages and supports all members of staff employed by the Service to engage in professional development and continuous learning that supports and strengthens their capacity to provide a professional service to the students at UTS.

OUR ROLE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

Our role is to provide independent academic advice and support to students within a holistic framework that acknowledges the student’s experiences and particular circumstances as they present upon engagement with the Service.

As an independent service provider our caseworkers are NOT employees of the University and do NOT have access to student academic records or files. Caseworkers provide advice to students on the basis of the information provided to us by the student, and information subsequently accessed with the consent of the student, in tandem with the policies and procedures of the University.

Students seeking resolution for issues that they have raised within the University may take unresolved complaints and concerns to the [UTS Student Ombud](#). However, students are required to first exhaust all of the options available to them as set out within the University regulations and procedures. As such, the Student Advocacy Service is well-placed to provide guidance to students in relation to these matters.

1. ACCESS TO SERVICE

All students enrolled at UTS may request the advice, assistance and support of the Service for academic concerns and misconduct and appeal matters.

1.1 Intending and past students of UTS are not eligible to access the Service with the exception being a limited service provision for students returning from a leave of absence, suspension or exclusion.

1.2 Information about the Service, and how to contact the Service, is made freely available to all students via print and digital media. All enrolled students are welcome to access the Service in person, via telephone or email in order to request assistance.

1.3 The Service provides advice, assistance and support via individual face-to-face appointments, or group appointments upon request where appropriate. Service provision via telephone or email may be provided at the discretion of the caseworker for simple matters, or to students who are overseas at the time of their request.

1.4 The level and type of service provided is negotiated with the student in the first instance, with the final determination made by the caseworker assigned to the student matter as is deemed suitable and appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

The UTSSA Student Advocacy Service is an independent service and offers advice, assistance and support to students on a strictly confidential basis. The Service does not discuss or share student details or information about a matter with anyone outside of the Service, including academic or professional staff of the University, without the express consent of the individual student.

2.1 Students who provide their consent to share or discuss details or information with particular others, including academic or professional staff of the University, may withdraw their consent to share information, or to discuss their matter with others, at any time.

2.2 The information provided by students will be accessed only by the professional staff employed by the UTS Students' Association and cannot be accessed by, and will not be disclosed to, any student member of the UTS Students' Association or any member of the Student Representative Council without the express consent of the student.

2.3 Client information may be accessed by, and discussed confidentially within, the UTS Student Advocacy Service team in order to provide continuity of service, and to support service delivery.

2.4 Client information will not be shared or disclosed outside the UTS Student Advocacy Service unless:

- a student specifically provides consent for their information to be shared or discussed with particular others in order to support and assist them with their matter; or
- there is a threat to the safety or wellbeing of the student or other people, including university staff or students.

2.5 The Student Advocacy Service creates and maintains client files. Guided by the principles and standards of the NSW State Records Act (1998) client records are securely stored. Client records are retained for a period of three (3) years. Paper records are then disposed of securely, and electronic records are permanently deleted.

2.6 Students have the right to access their client file and records and may request access to their information by contacting the UTSSA Student Advocacy Service on (02) 9514 1155 or students.association@uts.edu.au

3. FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

Student feedback – compliments, suggestions and complaints - assists us to review our processes, our performance and our provision of service whilst contributing to the continual improvement of the Student Advocacy Service.

3.1 Students have the right to be heard and are welcome to forward expressions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction to the Student Advocacy Service at any time. Students may make representations as, or on behalf of, individuals or groups.

3.2 The Service is committed to acknowledging and responding to any concerns that may be raised where a resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. Anonymous feedback and complaints, whilst recorded by the Service, cannot be expected to receive a response.

3.3 Feedback and complaints will be managed in a fair and transparent manner whilst maintaining the confidentiality of the parties concerned. Where a formal response is required the Service will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five (5) working days, and seek to respond to feedback and complaints within twenty (20) working days.

Student feedback and complaints can be forwarded to the Service via

- the Student Advocacy Service feedback form on our [website](#);
- email to students.association@uts.edu.au ;
- telephone on (02) 9514 1155; or
- in person at the Students' Association office at
Level 3, UTS Tower Building - Room 22

3.4 Complaints about the professional conduct of a member of staff must be made in writing. Where a complaint is submitted in relation to the conduct or service delivery by a particular member of staff, that member of staff has the right to know, and will be informed of, the identity of the complainant as part of the investigation into the complaint.

3.5 Staff members have a right to a safe working environment. Where student feedback or complaints are expressed in an intimidating or offensive manner, the students' access to the Service will be immediately reviewed and/or communications with the complainant will be immediately terminated.

3.6 Feedback and complaints received by the Service will be managed, maintained and stored in accordance with our Confidentiality and Privacy Policy.

4. SERVICE DELIVERY

The Student Advocacy Service provides accessible spaces for students to access advice and support. Appointments are conducted in ways that protect the privacy and confidentiality of students. Students accessing the Service are afforded the following rights with the expectation also that they also understand their responsibilities as clients of the Service.

Student rights as clients of the Student Advocacy Service

1. Students have the right to be treated with dignity, respect and without judgement regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, cultural and linguistic background and religious or spiritual beliefs.
2. Students who provide their consent for the Service to share information with particular others, or to liaise with other faculties and units within UTS on their behalf as deemed necessary to assist with their case, have the right to revoke this consent. This can be done at any time.

3. Students have the right to bring a support person along to meetings with the UTS Student Advocacy Service if so desired.
4. Students have the right to terminate their involvement with the UTS Student Advocacy Service at any time during the provision of service.
5. Students have the right to be informed about the handling of any information they provide to the Student Advocacy Service (see Confidentiality & Privacy statement).

Student responsibilities as clients of the Student Advocacy Service

1. Students are expected to provide the necessary information and/or documentation in relation to their matter to ensure that caseworkers / student advocates can provide advice, assistance and support in a timely manner.
2. Students are expected to attend appointments on time or if delayed, or unable to attend, inform the Students' Association office as soon as possible so that alternate arrangements can be made if required.
3. The University rules require students to maintain a standard of conduct whilst on University premises. Unacceptable behaviours exhibited by students, or by an accompanying support person, which compromise the ability of the Service to provide students with assistance or advice - particularly abusive or aggressive behaviours - will result in a student's access to the UTS Student Advocacy Service being reviewed.
4. There is an end limit to the provision of service offered by the Student Advocacy Service. Students requiring advice or support that extends beyond the capacity of the Service will be provided with appropriate referrals.
