



Ombud's News

AUTUMN SESSION 2017

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDSMAN?

The UOW Student Ombudsman has four main responsibilities:-

- To investigate student **academic complaints** and either decide on an outcome, or facilitate a resolution;
- To review appeals against a decision of the Faculty Investigation Committee in **academic misconduct matters**;
- To coordinate the **course progress exclusion appeals** process; and
- To evaluate the overall academic complaints process, by monitoring trends and issues, by identifying issues in relation to UOW policy and practice and working to resolve those issues.

Student Conduct Matters

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Other Complaint Matters

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W www.uow.edu.au/governance/complaints-management/

POLICY MATTERS

Policies with particular relevance to student academic matters are constantly under review. A recent review of the Academic Integrity Policy resulted in revised Academic Misconduct Procedures. Information on these procedures and the related policy is available:

W www.uow.edu.au/academic-integrity

INTRODUCING THE STUDENT OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MARGARET WALLACE



A/Prof Wallace took up the role of the Student Ombudsman in December 2016.

Margaret has worked at UOW for over 20 years as a Sub Dean, a Course Coordinator and also as an Academic Developer. She has led a number of projects including those on Assessment Moderation and the Development of a Course Coordinator (APD) Role Statement and been involved in educational research, including a national project on academic integrity.

FORUMS AND CONFERENCES 2017

17th February **University Complaint Handling Forum – NSW Ombudsman**

The forum provided a good opportunity to network with those from other NSW universities involved in complaints management. Presentations dealt with diverse topics including complaints about controversial topics, practical issues in complaint management, barriers to communication and information on the Complaint Handling Improvement Project. Information on professional development workshops and events conducted by the NSW Ombudsman is available:

W www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/training-workshops-and-events/our-workshops

2 May Complaint Handling Practitioner Forum- NSW Ombudsman

The forum provided information on barriers to communication, updates on the NSW Ombudsman's Effective Complaint Management Guidelines, Updates on the NSW Ombudsman's UCC guidance and a Q&A Panel.

28-29 Sep National Deans of Students, Complaints Managers & Student Advocates Conference

University of Newcastle

Papers to be presented will include the topics of academic misconduct, issue pathways in universities, dispute resolution, natural justice and procedural fairness.

STUDENT OMBUDSMAN REPORT 2016

The Report was presented to the Vice Chancellor's Advisory Group (VCAG) before going to Senate and Council. It includes a summary of coursework and HDR student academic complaints and outcomes of the coursework exclusion appeals process. Trends and issues identified include:

- Coursework assessment concerns, sometimes related to a lack of clarity in the assessment brief and a lack of transparency in marking criteria. The implementation of the new Teaching & Assessment Policy suite should see changes in these issues.
- Various complaints relating to the effects of poor communication for students, often raised by students as part of the evidence of their complaint.
- The timeframes that are provided for staff to respond to student academic complaints; delayed decisions can disadvantage students.

The full 2016 report is available:

W <https://www.uow.edu.au/student/services/so/index.html>

STUDENT COMPLAINTS & APPEALS REVIEW REPORT 2016

This Report was prepared by the Academic Quality & Standards Unit (AQS) to evaluate the effectiveness of the University's student grievance and complaint processes. The report covers both academic and general student complaints, and includes data for the past two-three years to assess trends.

The University is moving to adopt an online, automated workflow system for handling **all** student complaints and improvement suggestions received via the *Feedback at UOW* mechanism. This will allow for more sophisticated and formative analysis of complaints in future annual reports, including around issues relating to timeliness and consistency.

The Report affirms the prioritisation of a single Feedback and Complaint workflow system and includes the following four recommendations, endorsed by Senate on 17th May 2017:-

- That a review of the process for resolving academic complaints at the Stage 1b level be undertaken by faculties as a collective, shared and peer-evaluated exercise;
- That future reporting look more deeply at the causes of academic complaints to assess the impact of recent policy changes;
- That future reporting include an analysis of the timeliness of resolution of academic complaints
- That future reporting includes an analysis of complaints by delivery location.

RECENT ACADEMIC COMPLAINTS

Between February and June 2017, the Student Ombudsman reviewed twelve coursework student academic complaints and two HDR student academic complaints; issues involved:

- Termination of Candidature
- Decisions not to grant supplementary / deferred assessment; and
- Late withdrawal without penalty for coursework subjects.

EXCLUSION APPEALS

From January to July 2017, the Student Ombudsman assessed eleven Stage 2 Coursework Exclusion Appeals; these appeals involved students from all UOW campuses, with the exception of Dubai. At Stage 1 of the process, a Faculty Exclusion Appeals Committee reviews written appeals from students who have not met course progress requirements. Students who wish to appeal the faculty decision proceed to Stage 2, an interview with the Coursework Exclusion Appeals Committee; this cross-faculty panel is chaired by the Student Ombudsman.

WHERE TO FIND THE SO

Complaints & Appeals Administrator (CAA):
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