

## TERMS OF REFERENCE - STUDENT OMBUDSMAN

At the University of Wollongong the Student Ombudsman operates as an independent and impartial position responsible for the internal review of student concerns and complaints about student academic matters. The Student Ombudsman provides advice and assistance to students and staff in respect of these matters.

The following provisions will regulate the operation of the Student Ombudsman.

### 1. Principles for operation of the Student Ombudsman

1.1. The Student Ombudsman is a senior academic member of staff of the University.

1.2. The Student Ombudsman is not subject to direction from any officer of the University with respect to the assessment or determination of a student academic complaint.

1.3. The Student Ombudsman is not to consider any academic complaint in respect of which the Student Ombudsman has a conflict of interest.

1.4. In the event that the Student Ombudsman has a conflict of interest in respect of any academic complaint or is otherwise unable to consider a complaint, the Vice-Chancellor will appoint an acting Student Ombudsman to undertake the role of the Student Ombudsman in respect of that complaint.

1.5. The Student Ombudsman is to respect the confidentiality of information provided in the performance of the role.

1.6. The Student Ombudsman is to strive to operate as informally as possible in performing the role.

### 2. Powers and Rights

2.1. The Student Ombudsman has the following powers:

- a. To conduct enquiries with and to request information that is relevant to an academic complaint from any member of staff of the University.
- b. To determine student academic complaints based on the Student Ombudsman's findings in accordance with relevant University policy documents.
- c. To act within the confines of the powers of the University and not beyond these confines.
- d. To interpret and, as appropriate, apply University policy, but not to make or amend University policy.

2.2. Staff and students at the University will at all times cooperate with the Student Ombudsman in order that the Student Ombudsman may effectively discharge the functions of the office.

2.3. The Student Ombudsman must ensure that staff whose conduct is the subject of an academic complaint are given reasonable opportunity to respond to any potentially adverse outcome before the finalisation of the matter.

2.4. The Student Ombudsman must provide reasons for any outcome reached by the Student Ombudsman on an academic complaint.

2.5. Students and staff shall not suffer any detriment as a result of bringing an academic complaint to the Student Ombudsman or as a result of cooperating or participating in an investigation of a complaint by the Student Ombudsman.

### **3. Annual Report**

3.1. The Student Ombudsman will by 31 March each year present to the Vice-Chancellor an annual report on the work of the Student Ombudsman in the preceding year. The Vice-Chancellor may make the annual report available to the University Council and to members of Academic Senate.

3.2. The report will include information on:

a. The matters dealt with by the Student Ombudsman in the year but taking care to protect the identities of any individuals affected;

b. An analysis of these matters by reference to:

i. Type of complaint,

ii. The outcome of complaints,

iii. Faculty and school concerned; and

c. Any systemic issues of concern identified by the Student Ombudsman.

### **4. Referral of Complaints**

4.1. In addition to the mandated role of the Student Ombudsman in respect of student academic complaints under University of Wollongong policy documents, any member of the University Senior Executive may refer any complaint in writing to the Student Ombudsman for investigation or for review provided that:

a. The complaint is a matter concerning a student or that impacts on student matters; and

b. The complaint is one in respect of which there is no established internal process under a University policy document for investigation or review of the complaint.