



ADVOCACY

Service Report October - December 2019

UMSU
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
STUDENT UNION

Introduction

Between 2012 and 2017 the Advocacy Service was funded by the University subject to a service contract. As part of the contractual reporting requirements, the Service produced a quarterly report to the University's Advocacy Service Reference Group (ASRG). Subsequent to the discontinuation of the separate Advocacy service contract with the University, after funding for the service was subsumed into the UMSU whole of organisation funding under the 2017 SSAF funding model, the ASRG was formally disbanded on 17 April 2018 at its final meeting.

Nevertheless, although the Quarterly Service Report was originally commissioned by the ASRG as an accountability measure, it has also served to ventilate student experiences of processes within the relevant parts of the University. Over time, the circulation of the Report grew to encompass a good cross section of the University Community, establishing strong communication channels for feedback and issues management between relevant stakeholders. We hope to continue to expand and consolidate these channels and invite interested University staff to contact the Service directly to collaborate on responses to the issues identified in the Report.

Data and 'Anecdota'

The data presented in this report is drawn from the statistics recorded in the Advocacy Service Case management database. It is not drawn from, nor is it correlated with University collected service data, to which we have no access. For this reason, it is important to interpret the data and analysis as pertaining solely to activities of the Advocacy Service. The Report statistics cannot be extrapolated to provide commentary on the performance of Faculties or Schools, unless specifically indicated in the commentary.

The 'Trends and Issues' identified in the report are based on both service statistics, and anecdotal observations and case studies. They are provided as insights into the student experience of University processes, or as potential indicators of systemic problems with administrative decision making and procedural fairness. These issues are not intended to reflect the totality of student experience, but rather those areas where the University needs to address potentially serious issues and risks.

The Service can generate drill down or other statistics on its activities, where these may be of interest to the University community, however due to relatively few resources, such requests need to be made with due notice.

Trends and Issues

The Fickle Finger of Fees - Change of Process for Late Withdrawals Needed Rethinking (and has now been Rethunk)

In the October – December 2018 Quarterly Report, we reported on a change of process for special consideration applications made after the release of results which purported to have the effect of combining the two processes. We noted at the time that, while it was desirable to streamline the process of late withdrawal and fee remission, the two processes were sufficiently distinct for there to be a need for careful implementation of the scheme.

The disjunction between the two processes is clearly exemplified by the following case example.

We saw several situations where students who had been granted late withdrawal via Special Consideration were denied fee remission because the HPR form used to evidence Special Consideration was not deemed sufficient for the purpose of remission of fees. Remission of fees is authorised under sections 36-21 and 36-22 of the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA) which requires evidence of:

1. The date the students' medical condition began or changed (evidenced on their HPR forms);
2. How their condition affected their ability to study (stated on HPR forms) and
3. When it became apparent that they could not continue with their studies (evidenced by the date of withdrawal via Special Consideration).

However, despite the fact the HPR forms of these students established the first two criteria, and the fact of late withdrawal established the last one; we were advised that this was insufficient to satisfy the Fees Team that the application evidences all of the three criteria specified by the HESA.

In this context, we were not overly optimistic that a decision to create a single process to decide both late withdrawal and fee remission requests would prevent students from falling between the two processes.

Our comments included the following observation:

We hope that shifting responsibility for the assessment of special circumstances out of SEDS, to the Fees Team will not mean that staff who lack expertise with equity and disability matters are responsible for making decisions regarding students' equity and disability related special circumstances.

We included this recommendation - “that the Fees Team is appropriately resourced with the requisite expertise to determine late withdrawal requests in accordance with equity and disability best practice and the relevant anti-discrimination legislation”.

Specifically, the Service was concerned that decisions would be made without adequate regard to the equity considerations which underpin the Special Considerations process, and that the Fees Team lacked experience and qualifications in the area of student equity and disability.

Unfortunately, it appears that, despite all best intentions to streamline the experience for students, the Fees Team was not appropriately resourced to take on this task, and the decisions made about late withdrawal were not made in accordance with the *Assessment and Results Policy*. Accordingly, our concerns about the process being less than helpful for students were unfortunately borne out. A number of students had their late special consideration applications referred (without their consent) directly to the Fees Team, who assessed them for Fee Remission and found the application ineligible. Once this determination was made, the Special Consideration application was simply declined without ever being considered. This left a number of seriously ill students extremely anxious and distressed, further exacerbating their existing conditions.

These regrettable outcomes were as a result of a range of issues with the “streamlined” arrangements which were in operation for the duration of 2019. Firstly, rather than apply the criteria under the *Assessment and Results Policy* for special consideration for the late withdrawal part of the request, the Fees Team was only able to apply the criteria prescribed under the HESA Act to decide not only the fee remission but also the special consideration application. This was out of authority, as late withdrawal due to special consideration is authorised under the *Assessment and Results Policy*, not the HESA, but it also served to deny access to a process for which the student was ostensibly entitled.

Eventually, after raising our concerns with SEDS (on more than one occasion) and the Academic Secretary, we assisted a student to submit an appeal to the Academic Board, which was ultimately upheld.

We are always disappointed when our public advocacy on operational matters such as this fail to gain traction. Although we repeatedly requested that university management address the problem to prevent further impacts on vulnerable students, the resolution required a student to go through a lengthy and onerous appeal process (while they were still unwell). The Service remains unclear why university management appears to have no appetite to address these sorts of matters proactively.

The appeal was framed in respect of the authority to act, and argued that the student was

*seeking an **academic adjustment** in recognition of [their] extenuating circumstances. The policy that provides the procedure and authority for academic adjustments is the Assessment and Results Policy, specifically the provisions that relate to Special Consideration.*

These provisions empower the Dean of my Faculty to authorise a late withdrawal from the subjects in question in response to an eligible application for special consideration (s 4.130(h)).

It is the responsibility of the Academic Registrar or delegate to assess applications for timeliness and eligibility. Eligible applications are then referred to the appropriate Dean or delegate for an academic outcome. The Fees Team does not have any authority in this situation to make an academic determination about the outcome of my special consideration application.

We argued that while the Academic Registrar or delegate may nevertheless determine an application is ineligible for special consideration due to being out of time, applications which are late are not automatically excluded from consideration, and there is a discretion to consider them out of time. The Fees Team’s practice of excluding late applications rather than exercising the discretion available under s 4.120 was an administrative error, and consequently refusing to assess the student’s application under the *Assessment and Results Policy* was not in conformity with university policy and consequently constituted a procedural error, and possibly an error at law.

Further we submitted that the proposed process the student to which the student had been referred- to apply for Remission of Fees under the *HESA Act*- lacked the appropriate authority to determine the award of late withdrawals by delegation from the appropriate dean. It also failed to sufficiently consider the criteria for special consideration required under the *Assessment and Results Policy*, instead substituting the criteria for Fee Remission.

As this appeal was ultimately upheld on the basis upon which it was argued, we assume the University eventually came to see the problem with the previous approach.

At the time of writing this report (February 2020) the decision had been made to return responsibility to SEDS, which we believe is the appropriate place for these processes under the policy. We hope that SEDS will receive further and better resourcing to undertake this important responsibility.

Policy palaver

Two major student facing policies, one existing, one new, came up for consultation this quarter. We were anxious to ensure we provided robust feedback informed by students' voices to these consultations, as both policies have the potential to impact students' academic lives and wellbeing significantly.

Proposed Changes to Special Consideration under the Assessment and Results Policy

A draft set of changes proposed to the *Assessment and Results Policy* was circulated for feedback during a policy consultation in September and October 2019. The key proposals were excessively harsh and severe and would have seen (among other things) the removal of special consideration for students with exceptional circumstances during special or supplementary examinations, and the introduction of a "fit to sit" approach – where students electing to sit an examination would have been deemed fit, and therefore unable to apply for special consideration.

UMSU sought and received feedback from over 2000 students in a two-week period, compiling a comprehensive submission in relation to the proposed changes. The submission featured a number of case studies and other evidence collected from student experience which illustrated the negative impacts the changes would have on students.

UMSU's submission noted that

its feedback in relation to Special Consideration has been provided to the University via multiple processes of review and through its Advocacy Service's Quarterly Reports since 2012. Significantly, these reports and submissions are grounded in the data generated by the Advocacy Service which establishes a longitudinal picture of students' experience of the Special Consideration process.

Ultimately, we noted that there needs to be a profound and comprehensive transformation in University culture and the way it views its students. The submission concludes that

The proposed changes to Special Consideration rest significantly on a narrative that says that students are not to be trusted; that students who are asking for help should be viewed with suspicion. Whether students are engaging in "strategic behaviours" or "gaming the system" this narrative persists in the absence of any supporting evidence because it has become an ingrained component of University culture. Moreover, Umsu believes that wellbeing strategies must be embedded in teaching and learning practices and argue that implementing the framework recommended by the University's own Centre for the Study of Higher Education would be a great place to start.

The entire submission is available here: <https://umsu.unimelb.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Special-Consideration-Report-2019-.pdf>

Fitness to Practice Policy

A new *Fitness to Practice Policy* was also circulated for feedback in November 2019. The timing of this consultation, in a two-week window after semester's end made it very difficult for Umsu to effectively engage with students during the consultation. In its policy consultation submission, Umsu stated general support for the creation of policy to address fitness to practice (FTP) in professionally accredited courses and subjects. We also noted from Advocacy casework that historically this issue was often addressed by faculties in a largely unregulated and uncoordinated way. Accordingly, Umsu acknowledged that codifying the procedure and centralising the process might increase transparency, consistency, and fairness. In this context we endorsed the requirement for Faculties to notify students of and seek consent to the application of FTP guidelines prior to students' enrolment in relevant subjects or courses, as well as the promulgation of clear and accessible guidelines throughout the course of study in relevant areas.

However, we expressed grave concerns with a number of aspects of the new policy with respect to its reactive and punitive approach and the opportunities it misses to improve the current custom and practice of FTP assessment.

The entire submission is available here: <https://umsu.unimelb.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/UMSU-submission-fitness-to-practise-policy-consultation-1.11.2019.pdf>

Post-consultation, both of these policies were presented to the Academic Board in December 2019 for approval.

December Academic Board Meeting

We were pleased to see that the proposed changes to special consideration were largely scrapped. However, some changes were approved which involve tightening the provisions covering further special consideration. That is it is now explicit that further special consideration – that is special consideration applications relating to a particular assessment task for which special consideration has already been granted – "are only considered in exceptional circumstances and, in those cases, only once". The only outcome for a second "special on special" application is for the affected student to be withdrawn from the subject without academic penalty. Generally this has been custom and practice in most faculties under the current policy, so the changes may not have much impact, and there is an upside to the changed policy, in that it means that the current approach of some faculties to deny outcomes to a student deemed eligible for a special on special will no longer be possible – they must offer a late withdrawal.

Unfortunately, not one bit of UMSU's feedback on the new FTP policy was taken into account in the final draft approved by the Academic Board. Tellingly perhaps, the President of the Academic Board's Report to the October meeting of the Board framed the FTP policy as a response "to the needs of **those faculties** who deliver professionally accredited programs...", perhaps forgetting that students are also members of faculties. Disappointingly it appears that policy makers have come to consider "the needs of the faculties" as somehow independent of the needs of students.

Copies of UMSU's submissions (along with our other reports and submissions) can be found here: <https://umsu.unimelb.edu.au/support/advocacy/research-publications/>

Programmes and Events this Quarter

Exam Support Stall at Royal Exhibition Building

The stall sells water, assorted stationary, tissues and lollies for a nominal fee. Additionally, students are provided a number of items at no cost, such as clear plastic bags for their pens etc. Signs are displayed reminding students not to inadvertently take their study notes or any unauthorised materials into the venue with them. The stall also has information about the Advocacy Service; an exam tips information card and information on other University services. Volunteers do two-hour shifts, answering a range of questions, providing directions on the location of facilities, and referral to the Advocacy Service to discuss issues such as Special Consideration and academic misconduct.

This quarter 3802 students accessed the services provided at the stall.

The Advocacy Service is ever grateful for the support of examination administration and the staff at the Royal Exhibition Building who make this initiative possible.

Peer Support Programme at Course Academic Progress Meetings

This quarter 90 students were assisted by 10 peer support volunteers.

The PSP attracts volunteers via an advertising campaign using the Student Portal, posters, the Student Union website and word of mouth. We train a cohort of between 10 and 20 volunteer students every semester. Only students in their second year or beyond are eligible. Training is compulsory and is conducted over a full day. The training provides the volunteers with a solid overview and context for the academic progress review procedures conducted across the University, including the requirements of procedural fairness and the statutory role of the support person in this process. Additionally, the training informs the volunteers about the university's support services and provides practical experience and development of skills required to approach, support and interact with students who are very stressed or even distressed.

The PSP is coordinated by the Student Services Officer who manages the day-to-day rostering and support of volunteers.

Volunteering value adding to the Student Experience

We always enjoy receiving feedback about Advocacy volunteering opportunities, below are the comments we received from this quarter's participants.

"Thank you so much for the opportunity to volunteer! I found it to be a really valuable experience".

"Thank you very much. This has been an awesome experience for me".

"I do not have any bad feedback about this program, in fact, I found that the program was very meaningful to me because it allowed me to support other fellow students 😊. Thank you very much and I hope to work with you again in the next Peer Support Program!"

"It's really happy for me to participate in this volunteer program and work with all of you. I learnt a lot during the training and the volunteering process. I am considering to volunteer again in the next semester. Thank you a lot".

"Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the program!"

"In regards to the feedback, I thought the training was very well done as I felt very prepared going into the program knowing what was expected of me and how the CAPC meetings worked. The sample of notes were helpful, perhaps an example of notes could be shown for the live presentation during training".

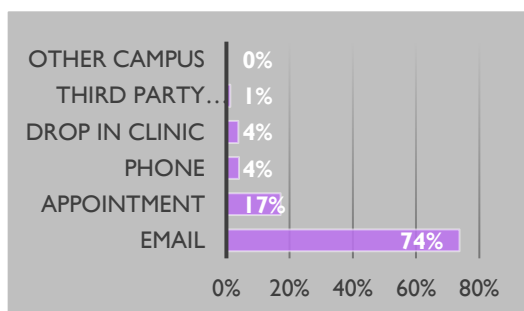
Advocacy Service Statistics

Comparative data – 2018 and 2019

2018

Total students assisted: 2403
 Total contacts with students: 5351
 Graduates to undergraduates: 44% | 56%
 Domestic to international: 55% | 45%

By type of contact (may be more than one type)

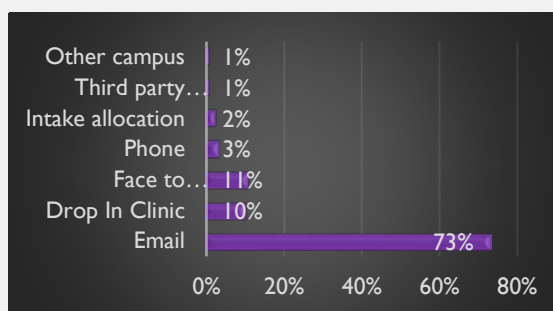


In 2018, just under three quarters of assistance was provided electronically over email, with under 20% conducted face to face in appointments or at hearings, and the balance via phone calls.

2019

Total students assisted: 2222
 Total contacts with students: 6307
 Graduates to undergraduates: 47% | 53%
 Domestic to international: 53% | 47%

By type of contact



In 2019, electronic contact and appointments accounted for slightly less than the previous year, with a corresponding increase in students presenting to our drop-in service.

Month by month increase in number of contacts 2017-2019

2017	2018	% increase	2019	% increase
January	323	36%	996	127%
February	256	11%	356	25%
March	185	87%	368	6%
April	117	117%	259	2%
May	199	79%	375	5%
June	228	50%	349	2%
July	697	30%	1062	17%
August	397	46%	620	7%
September	189	48%	346	24%
October	216	74%	381	1%
November	387	61%	626	0%
December	810	-31%	569	1%
Totals	4004	5351	6307	
	Increase 2017-2018	25%	Increase 2018-2019	15%

For the first time since data of this kind has been collected (2012), the overall number of individual students presenting to the Service in 2019 decreased, although there was still a 7% increase in individual student presentations over the 2017 numbers.

Originally, we speculated that the net decrease in students presenting to the Service predominantly relates to lower numbers of students being required to attend CAPC meetings. Fewer students are now invited to meet the CAPC in person since a change to the *Academic Progress Review Policy* which no longer invites undergraduate students to meet with the CAPC in situations where termination or suspension of their enrolment is not being considered as an outcome.

However, upon drilling down, this is not strictly borne out by the data. In the July CAPC period 2018 237 students were assisted and 263 in 2019 (which was an increase of 11%). Conversely, in the second semester period, the number of students assisted via the Peer Support Program decreased by 38%.

The raw numbers provide a clearer picture – there were 26 fewer students assisted in the Peer Support Program in 2019 over 2018, however service wide there was a net decrease of 181 students – meaning the Service assisted 155 fewer students over the course of 2019. Given it is unprecedented to see fewer students overall, we have analysed the situation carefully to determine possible reasons for this.

So while a moderate decrease in students presenting to CAPC meeting is a partial explanation, another reason for a decrease in Service presentations might be the increasing numbers of students finding our self-help resources on our webpages (see [web site statistics](#)).

We will watch with interest to see how the data compares over the course of this year.

A minor decrease in student presentations aside, the Service has remained near capacity responding to the matters which did come to us throughout 2019.

Critically, there has been a notable increase in complexity and/or the time taken with individual casework. This is reflected in the monthly increase in contacts over the period. A contact is recorded where some significant assistance or transaction has been completed. Any involvement with the student will be noted in the casework database for the purpose of continuity of care and sound case management. Accordingly, these statistics are good indicators of casework which is more time consuming and resource intensive.

Some examples of the characteristics of complex and resource intensive case work:

- Students with significant mental health issues who may have reduced executive function and difficulty both understanding advice and in following through on required actions – this may require substantial time to be spent trying to find effective ways of explaining the concepts and actions which follow. In some cases, this will involve substantial drafting of submissions and direct representation with the University.
- A range of complex disability discrimination and progress matters involving PhD candidates.
- Students who have damaged trust and find it hard to take required action to resolve issues.
- Students who face communication barriers, including unfamiliarity with technology and online communication (common in older students), poor capacity to complete written submissions due to language issues, and difficulty providing information which we require in order to provide accurate advice.

This year advocates report increased numbers of students facing these issues requiring assistance, and in some cases an individual advocate's caseload may include a number of students with these characteristics at any one time.

Month to Month

There was a significant increase month by month over the previous year's contacts with students, particularly evident in January where contacts tripled over the previous January and also in February with a 25% increase in services provided to students, July with a 17% increase and September with a 24% upswing.

Overall, this data continues an upward trend in services provided to students; with a 25% increase from 2017 to 2018 and a further 15 % in 2019 over 2018.

A review of the data since 2013 reveals that the top four issues each year have hardly deviated – in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018 and again in 2019 – the top four most represented issues were CAPC, special consideration, assessment disputes, and plagiarism allegations. In 2017, examination misconduct displaced assessment disputes as the third most represented issue. This was directly related to a major tightening of invigilation practices that year, resulting in a larger than usual number of formalised allegations. Generally, the increases in students accessing the Service over these years has been relatively evenly distributed, with roughly similar proportions of matters from year to year.

Comparative data – October - December 2019

This quarter 563 students were provided a service resulting in 1887 contacts. In the same quarter last year, the service saw 680 students which resulted in 1562 contacts with the service. The primary focus of casework at this time of year is coursework assessment and course unsatisfactory progress. This included assistance by peer support volunteers to 85 students attending Course Academic Progress Committee meetings in December. This was a clear reduction over the 137 students assisted in the same quarter the previous year. The overall number of CAPC attendances has continued to decrease as the changes to policy discussed above have rolled out.

Additionally, the Advocacy website received over 13,200 page views this quarter – over 2000 more than the same time last year. This continues to suggest that our efforts to increase and improve our digital self-help materials is benefiting greater than ever numbers of students. Of note, for the first time since web statistics have been recorded, our page on Special Consideration outstripped the information on CAPC by over 500 pageviews.

Distribution by primary issue

The primary issue is generally identified as the university process to which the student's main concern or problem relates. Data is classified in this way because it provides a standardised and more meaningful breakdown which may be useful for tracking policy trends amongst other things.

October-December 2019

All Students			Graduate Coursework students			RHD students		
Course Academic Progress Committee	184	32.68%	Course Academic Progress Committee	64	34.59%	Progress- HDR	10	38.46%
Special Consideration	76	13.50%	Assessment Dispute	24	12.97%	Not Specified	4	15.38%
Assessment Dispute	71	12.61%	Special Consideration	23	12.43%	Supervision Problems	3	11.54%
Academic Misconduct-Plagiarism	52	9.24%	Academic Misconduct-Plagiarism	22	11.89%	Intellectual Property Dispute	3	11.54%
Not Specified	24	4.26%	Not Specified	9	4.86%	Special Consideration	1	3.85%
Academic Misconduct- Exam	16	2.84%	Selection Appeal	6	3.24%	Selection Appeal	1	3.85%
Student Admin- Remission of Fees	13	2.31%	Other	5	2.70%	General Misconduct	1	3.85%
Other	13	2.31%	Academic Misconduct- Collusion	5	2.70%	Discrimination	1	3.85%
Student complaint about uni staff	13	2.31%	Student complaint about uni staff	4	2.16%	Bullying	1	3.85%
Academic Misconduct- Collusion	13	2.31%	Student Admin- Remission of Fees	4	2.16%	Assessment Dispute	1	3.85%
Selection Appeal	12	2.13%	Academic Misconduct- Exam	3	1.62%			
Progress- HDR	10	1.78%	Academic Misconduct- Falsified docs	2	1.08%			
Advance Standing Credit/RPL	8	1.42%	Incorrect Advice	2	1.08%			
Student Admin- Enrolment problems	8	1.42%	Student Admin- Enrolment problems	2	1.08%			
Incorrect Advice	7	1.24%	Student Admin- Graduation	2	1.08%			
Student Admin- Graduation	6	1.07%	Student complaint about another student	2	1.08%			
Academic Misconduct- Falsified docs	5	0.89%	Course structure/changes	1	0.54%			
General Misconduct	5	0.89%	Vocational Placement Problems	1	0.54%			
Academic Misconduct- Other	4	0.71%	Quality Teaching	1	0.54%			
Student complaint about another student	4	0.71%	Sexual Harassment	1	0.54%			
Quality Teaching	3	0.53%	Academic Misconduct- Other	1	0.54%			
Supervision Problems	3	0.53%	General Misconduct	1	0.54%			
Intellectual Property Dispute	3	0.53%						
Course structure/changes	2	0.36%						
Student Admin- Exchange	2	0.36%						
Equitable Accommodation (SC Rego)	1	0.18%						
Discrimination	1	0.18%						
Bullying	1	0.18%						
Vocational Placement Problems	1	0.18%						
Academic Misconduct- Research	1	0.18%						
Sexual Harassment	1	0.18%						

October-December 2018

All Students			Graduate Coursework students			RHD students		
Course Academic Progress Committee	225	37.31%	Course Academic Progress Committee	77	34.53%	Progress - HDR	12	63.16%
Special Consideration	110	18.24%	Special Consideration	36	16.14%	Other	2	10.53%
Assessment Dispute	58	9.62%	Academic Misconduct-Plagiarism	29	13.00%	Supervision Problems	1	5.26%
Academic Misconduct-Plagiarism	52	8.62%	Assessment Dispute	21	9.42%	Student complaint about uni staff	1	5.26%
Academic Misconduct- Exam	28	4.64%	Academic Misconduct-Collusion	8	3.59%	Scholarship Issues	1	5.26%
Academic Misconduct-Collusion	16	2.65%	Academic Misconduct-Exam	8	3.59%	Assessment Dispute	1	5.26%
Not Specified	13	2.16%	Student complaint about uni staff	6	2.69%	Not Specified	1	5.26%
Progress- HDR	12	1.99%	Student Admin- Remission of Fees	5	2.24%			
Student complaint about uni staff	11	1.82%	Not Specified	5	2.24%			
Student Admin- Enrolment problems	11	1.82%	Student Admin- Enrolment problems	4	1.79%			
Academic Misconduct-Falsified docs	8	1.33%	General Misconduct	3	1.35%			
Selection Appeal	8	1.33%	Selection Appeal	3	1.35%			
Incorrect Advice	7	1.16%	Vocational Placement Problems	3	1.35%			
General Misconduct	7	1.16%	Academic Misconduct-Falsified docs	2	0.90%			
Other	7	1.16%	Bullying	2	0.90%			
Student Admin- Remission of Fees	6	1.00%	Course structure/changes	2	0.90%			
Vocational Placement Problems	3	0.50%	Incorrect Advice	2	0.90%			
Advance Standing Credit/RPL	3	0.50%	Supervision Problems	2	0.90%			
Student Admin- Graduation	3	0.50%	Equitable Accommodation (SC Rego)	1	0.45%			
Supervision Problems	3	0.50%	Scholarship Issues	1	0.45%			
Course structure/changes	2	0.33%	Sexual Harassment	1	0.45%			
Bullying	2	0.33%	Student Admin- Graduation	1	0.45%			
Scholarship Issues	2	0.33%	Other	1	0.45%			
Equitable Accommodation (SC Rego)	2	0.33%						
Intellectual Property Dispute	1	0.17%						
Discrimination	1	0.17%						
Academic Misconduct-Research	1	0.17%						
Sexual Harassment	1	0.17%						

Distribution by graduate/undergraduate status

October-December 2019

Graduate	239	42.53%
Undergraduate	323	57.47%

October-December 2018

Graduate	257	42.69%
Undergraduate	345	57.31%

Distribution by International/Domestic Status

October-December 2019

Domestic	316	56.23%
International	246	43.77%

October-December 2018

Domestic	336	55.81%
International	266	44.19%

Commentary

The proportion of graduate to undergraduate students this quarter was 42.53% to 57.47% (compared with 42.69% to 57.31% for the same period last year) which remains stable to a single percentage point.

During this period 43.77% of students presenting to the service were international students. This is a very slight decrease from the same quarter last year.

The data remains broadly consistent with enrolment loads for the respective cohorts.

The primary presenting issue was, as always for this period, course academic progress (CAPC). Our data includes all processes related to CAPC, from briefing students identified as "At risk", to preparing and representing Academic Board Appeals. After CAPC matters, Special Consideration, Assessment disputes, and Plagiarism related Academic Misconduct, and were the next most common issues, which remains the same as the equivalent quarter last year, and the year before that.

Special Consideration issues ranged from assistance with applications, internal reviews, grievances and Academic Board appeals, for reasons including both physical and mental health problems, and where the applications had been denied due to lateness, insufficient evidence or where no appropriate action was deemed. Appeals on this issue continue to be dominated by students unhappy with a late withdrawal because the student wanted to sit further assessment in order to try to pass the subject.

Assessment Disputes spanned informal reviews with the examiner to formal grievances, and centred on issues with conduct of assessment, allegations of bias, and administrative error.

Plagiarism related matters spanned from educative responses to Academic Board Appeals and spanned allegations regarding the wilful use of contract cheating services, to a large volume of inadvertent/ignorant infractions.

As usual, the report concentrates on the top four issues for the quarter; however, further breakdowns against other primary issues and against various demographics are available on request.

Course Academic Progress Assistance - By Stage of process

STAGE	REASON	Total
At Risk	Language proficiency	1
	Mental health	10
		11
First Attendance	Physical Health	24
	Mental Health	19
	Choice of Course	14
	Employment commitments	14
	Language proficiency	12
	Cultural adjustment/homesickness	9
	Financial Hardship	8
	Practical/Rounds/Placement	6
	Family Responsibilities	6
	Course duration	2
		124
Second Attendance	Financial difficulties	7
	Cultural adjustment/homesickness	6
	Practical/Rounds/Placement	4
	Employment commitments	2
	Mental Health	1
	Physical Health	1
	Study skills	12
	33	
Third Attendance	Study skills	1
Appeal	Restriction on enrolment	15
Total CAPC related Matters		184

Course Academic Progress – by Faculty

Faculty of Science	76	41.53%
Faculty of Business and Economics	29	15.85%
Melbourne School of Engineering	17	9.29%
Faculty of MDHS	17	9.29%
Melbourne Graduate School of Education	15	8.20%
Faculty of Arts	15	8.20%
Melbourne School of Design (AB&P)	10	5.46%
VCA & Music	1	0.55%
Melbourne Law School	1	0.55%
Melbourne Business School (MBS)	1	0.55%
Not specified	1	0.55%

Course Academic Progress – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Undergraduate	109	59.56%
Graduate	74	40.44%

Course Academic Progress – by International/Domestic

Domestic	91	49.73%
International	92	50.27%

Special Consideration - By Stage of Process

STAGE	REASON	Total
Application	Late Application	24
	Unhappy with outcome offered	4
	Deemed Insufficient grounds	1
	Deemed No Appropriate Action	1
		30
Internal Review	Deemed Insufficient grounds	8
	Late Application	5
	Unhappy with outcome offered	2
	15	
Formal Grievance	Late Application	12
	Deemed Insufficient Grounds	6
	Unhappy with outcome offered	6
	Deemed No Appropriate Action	1
	25	
Appeal	Unhappy with outcome offered	4
	Late application	1
	5	
Total Special Consideration Matters		76

Special Consideration – by Faculty

Faculty of Science	20	26.32%
Faculty of Arts	13	17.11%
Faculty of Business and Economics	11	14.47%
Melbourne School of Design (AB&P)	7	9.21%
Faculty of MDHS	7	9.21%
Melbourne School of Engineering	6	7.89%
Melbourne Law School	5	6.58%
Melbourne Graduate School of Education	3	3.95%
VCA & Music	2	2.63%
Melbourne Business School (MBS)	1	1.32%
Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences	1	1.32%

Special Consideration – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Undergraduate	45	59.21%
Graduate	31	40.79%

Special Consideration – by International/Domestic

Domestic	52	68.42%
International	24	31.58%

Assessment Disputes - By Stage of Process

STAGE	REASON	Total
Advice	Conduct of Assessment	9
Informal/assessment review with examiner	Administrative Error	5
	Conduct of Assessment	26
	Administrative Error	3
	Allegation of Examiner Bias	2
	Practical/Rounds/Placement	1
		32
Formal request for remark	Conduct of Assessment	24
	Allegation of Examiner Bias	2
	Practical/Rounds/Placement	1
	27	
Formal Grievance	Conduct of Assessment	2
	Administrative Error	1
	3	
Total Assessment Dispute Related Matters		71

Assessment Disputes – by Faculty

Melbourne School of Design (AB&P)	16	22.54%
Faculty of Business and Economics	14	19.72%
Faculty of Arts	13	18.31%
Faculty of MDHS	9	12.68%
Faculty of Science	8	11.27%
Melbourne School of Engineering	3	4.23%
Melbourne Law School	2	2.82%
Melbourne Graduate School of Education	2	2.82%
Unspecified	2	2.82%
VCA & Music	1	1.41%
Melbourne Business School (MBS)	1	1.41%

Assessment Disputes – by Graduate/Undergraduate

Graduate	26	36.62%
Undergraduate	45	63.38%

Assessment Disputes – by International/Domestic

Domestic	52	73.24%
International	19	26.76%

Academic Misconduct – Plagiarism - By Stage of Process

STAGE	REASON	Total
Informal/Educative Meeting	Inadvertent	23
Formal Committee Meeting	Inadvertent	22
	Deliberate/contract cheating	3
	Excessive Penalty	1
		26
Appeal	Inadvertent	2
	Excessive Penalty	1
		3
Total Plagiarism Related Matters		52

Academic Misconduct – Plagiarism- by Faculty

Faculty of Arts	17	32.69%
Faculty of Business and Economics	10	19.23%
Melbourne School of Design (AB&P)	8	15.38%
Melbourne Law School	4	7.69%
Faculty of Science	4	7.69%
Unspecified	4	7.69%
Melbourne School of Engineering	3	5.77%
Faculty of MDHS	2	3.85%

Academic Misconduct – Plagiarism- by Graduate/Undergraduate

Graduate	23	44.23%
Undergraduate	29	55.77%

Academic Misconduct – Plagiarism- by International/Domestic

Domestic	21	40.38%
International	31	59.62%

The next Advocacy Service report will cover the quarter January to March 2020 and will be available in mid-April 2020.

Phoebe Churches

Manager, Advocacy & Legal

February 2020