
Type:	Service	Created:	February 2013
Adopted by:	Board of Directors	Last Amended:	
Responsibility:	Executive Director	Procedure:	

PREAMBLE:

To date Vancouver Island University does not have an ombudsperson service to assist students with appeals, disputes and conflict resolution on matters relating to student rights and fairness. The Students' Union will support a student advocacy service to assist members, while also working with VIU to launch a proper ombuds office for the institution.

STATEMENT:

1. Purpose Statement

The Student Advocate shall assist members in addressing fairness issues, resolving disputes and filing appeals within the structures of Vancouver Island University, and shall work to ensure that in dealing with student appeals and complaints, Vancouver Island University is applying the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness to its processes and structures.

2. Services Provided

The Student Advocate will:

- Listen to student concerns and assess the situation presented;
- Provide information on university policies and procedures, as well as related student rights and responsibilities;
- Assist students in gathering information about their case;
- Discuss possible courses of action;
- Offer coaching and help students prepare for conversations with supervisors, instructors or administrators, or to prepare for formal hearings;
- Participate in meetings between students and university officials as a witness; and,
- Refer students to service departments, or external agencies, for assistance and/or advice.

The Student Advocate will not:

- Offer counseling; or
- Representing students to the university.

3. Service Usage and Access

This service shall be open to all current Students' Union members. When resources allow, both former members and prospective students may also access the Student Advocate.

4. Operating Principles

The following operating principles shall be applied by the Student Advocate service:

- **Confidentiality** – the Students' Union will maintain the confidentiality of information provided to the Student Advocate unless directed otherwise by the student providing the information. This confidentiality is enables students to discuss matters with the Student Advocate and receive advice without taking action. Confidentiality will be deemed void if a student makes comments about doing harm to themselves or others, or if a student speaks to the Student Advocate about a criminal act. The Student Advocate is neither a lawyer nor medical professional, and there is no legal privilege attached to communications between students and the Student Advocate
- **Independence** – The Students' Union operates independently from Vancouver Island University and is responsible to VIU students who are Students' Union members.

5. Reporting

The Student Advocate will maintain records on assistance provided and annually produce a report on the service.

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