

The James Cook University Student Association (JCUSA) Advocacy Service Charter states our commitment to provide:

- ➔ Quality services and provides standards by which to measure our performance;
- ➔ State our clear standards; and
- ➔ Strive for excellence service.

## JCUSA Vision

A well-respected, influential and sustainable organisation, integral to student success and university success.

## JCUSA Mission Statement

To enhance student life and development through high quality representation, support services and quality extra-curricular activities for all members.

## Aim of the JCUSA Advocates

JCUSA Advocates are independent of the James Cook University (JCU) and were established to provide information, advocacy and referral services for all students enrolled through the Australian based James Cook University campus, a range of academic, procedural, and administrative issues.

Student Advocacy is funded by the SSAF (Student Services and Amenities fee). The Higher Education Support (Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy) Guidelines 2022, published by the Federal Government say that Education providers need to make sure students have access to services *“including advocacy and referral services for all students enrolled at the HEP across a range of academic, procedural and administrative issues in respect of issues relating to equity, discrimination, harassment, grievances, complaints, disputes, exclusion, discipline and misconduct, supervision, and unsatisfactory progress.”* (8c) Advocates must *“act in the best interest of students and must be independent from the HEP’s decision-makers and other staff who administer the HEP’s academic and procedural rules and regulations”* (10:2).

## Our Commitment

JCUSA Advocates are committed to delivering a high-quality advocacy service that is independent, accessible, fair, and timely.

## List of services Advocates provide

- Provide information on general university related questions and issues;
- Assist in clarifying JCU student-related policies and procedures, or official correspondence from the University;
- Accompany you to meetings, hearings, or discussions with JCU staff, in person or by phone/video;
- Proofread your communications to the University, for example: informal complaints, formal complaints, misconduct or appeal statements and other correspondence;
- Promote self-advocacy to empower students to understand and act on their rights and responsibilities;
- Act on your behalf where appropriate and as explained further in this document; and
- Make recommendations to JCU for improving policies and outcomes for enrolled students.

## Service Standards

### What we will do:

#### General

- respect our students;
- provide prompt, courteous, and efficient customer service and always remain professional;
- be realistic about what we can do and in what timeframes we can do something;
- provide you with accurate and consistent information;
- refer to other internal and external services where the matter falls outside of advocacy;
- sometimes raise complaints or issues on behalf of a cohort of students without identifying the students;
- work collaboratively as a team and seek advice from each other where necessary;
- show respect for your privacy in your dealings with us and the confidentiality of information discussed; and

- strive to excel in providing excellent customer service through continuous improvement, customer surveys and identification of innovative technologies to assist in the customer experience.

## Face-to-Face

- provide the location for appointments in email signatures;
- wear a name badge for ease of communication;
- provide you with relevant options and available services to you; and
- listen to you and discuss your requirements fully.

## Telephone

- endeavour to answer your call promptly.
- where voice messages that include your contact details are left on voicemail, you will be contacted within three to five working days of your Advocate receiving the message;
- advise you of any Advocacy services delays and offer suitable options; and
- introduce ourselves using first name and provide a direct contact number for further communications where necessary.

## Email

- endeavour to respond to your letter or e-mail within three to five working days of receipt; and
- if your enquiry requires in-depth research or follow-up that will take longer than five working days, we will acknowledge your correspondence, and where possible, provide an expected response timeframe.

## Helping us to help you:

You can help us to meet our commitments to you by:

- making initial contact via the online Access Advocacy Services Form that is located on the JCUSA website (Student Support tab) <https://www.jcusa.edu.au/student-support/request-an-advocacy-appointment/>;
- being open and honest with us by providing accurate and complete details and any information relevant to your matter when contacting us;
- Being courteous, polite and respectful even if you receive advice that you may not agree with;
- communicating with us clearly;
- requesting ZOOM or telephone appointments if unwell;
- attending appointments and meetings on time and in accordance with our appointment policy below;
- respecting the rights of, and provide courtesy towards, other students and JCU staff;
- promptly letting us know if your situation changes;
- taking a collaborative approach to working with us to resolve matters;

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- being proactive in your own matter;
- communicating any progress in relation to your matter to your Advocate in a timely manner - especially any outcome received;
- notifying your Advocate in writing promptly if you no longer require, or want to refuse, advocacy support; and
- completing the Advocacy Service Survey.

## What we will not do:

We cannot:

- assist you if you wait until the last minute to request our assistance, provide information too late, and/or cancel meetings without warning;
- write statements or letters to the University for you. We are happy to suggest how to structure your statements, advise you about content, and proof-read your writing;
- contact a JCU staff member on your behalf unless your efforts have not been successful, or it would be inappropriate for you to communicate with JCU staff member yourself. The Advocate will discuss with you the various options available to meet your requirements before we take any action on your behalf;
- use or disclose personal and sensitive information about you without your consent, unless required to by law, or, where we reasonably believe that to do so is necessary to lessen or prevent:
  - a serious and imminent threat to an individual's life, health or safety;
  - or a serious threat to public health or public safety.
- provide legal advice; counselling, financial or visa-related advice as it is outside the scope of the role of an Advocate. In these instances, we will refer you where possible to relevant services;
- engage in any act that we feel is unsafe, discriminatory, or unlawful, or that contradicts JCUSA or JCU policy;
- assist you with matters that are outside the scope of your JCU experience and/or if the last relevant university interaction is greater than 12 months ago;
- assist student debtors where tuition fees cannot be paid, payment is required by JCU, and no payment plans or extensions can be arranged;
- investigate any form of complaint;
- change a decision JCU has made;
- change your marks/results;
- get a student excluded or staff employment terminated – we have no influence over JCU decisions;
- access JCU Student Management System – we rely on the information you provide us; and
- if we are waiting to hear from you, it is not an obligation for the Advocates to follow up and do not accept any accountability for delay unless due to advocacy capacity reasons.

## **Advocates will withdraw assistance in the following circumstances:**

- if you engage in frivolous or vexatious claims against a JCU student or staff member or JCUSA staff;
- if you become verbally or physically aggressive towards an Advocate, another JCUSA employee, another student or JCU staff member;
- if you are acting contrary to policies of JCUSA or JCU policy;
- if it is in your best interests to do so;
- if your request or situation is outside of the scope of the Advocates' role;
- where there is a serious breakdown of confidence and trust between you and your Advocate;
- where a conflict of interest arises, which prevents the Advocates from continuing to act;
- where your instructions require the Advocate to act against the advice given to you;
- where your instructions may involve the Advocate taking unethical, improper, or illegal action;
- where you fail to cooperate with the Advocate;
- where you fail to give adequate instructions or fail to reply within a reasonable timeframe;
- if your Advocate believes you have lost confidence in their ability to give advice or Advocate for you;
- if you lie, misrepresent the facts, or in any way mislead your Advocate;
- if you request to seek advice from more than two advocates on the same matter;
- if you engage in unacceptable behaviour. Unacceptable Behaviour includes (but is not limited to) the following:
  - Unacceptable physical behaviour, such as threatening gestures, physical violence, or assault;
  - Unacceptable verbal behaviour, such as yelling, screaming, or abusive and/or threatening language;
  - Abusive, threatening, or harassing communications including notes, emails, text messages, social media posts or phone calls;
  - Being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs;
  - Bullying, harassment, or intimidation of any form;
  - Stalking or unwantedly approaching the Advocates outside of the office and/or outside of a scheduled appointment;
  - Unwelcome physical contact including that of a sexual, intimate, or threatening nature;
  - Undermining performance, reputation or professionalism of the Advocates by deliberately withholding information, resources or authorisation, or by supplying incorrect information;
  - Vexatious, frivolous or otherwise unreasonable complaint, request, social media post or other communication;
  - Malicious or mischievous gossip;
  - Belittling opinions or unreasonable/unconstructive criticism.

## JCUSA Appointment and Cancellation Policy

Due to the volume and complexity of our work, we are an appointment-only service. This ensures that we are well-prepared to advise you, can ensure your confidentiality and adequate time is allocated to discuss your matter. If you visit our office without an appointment, please don't be offended that we cannot speak in-depth to you straight away. For this reason, please do not travel to campus just to speak to us without an appointment. The quickest way to receive an appointment is to complete our booking form <https://www.jcusa.edu.au/student-support/request-an-advocacy-appointment/>. To help us provide the best services to all our students, please keep track of your appointments and make sure you are aware of the information below.

### Appointment Confirmation

Once your case is assigned to an Advocate, you will be contacted via email to the email address provided on your booking form to arrange an appointment time. Please ensure your contact details are accurate. Appointment times are offered based on the allocated Advocate's availability within business hours taking into consideration your preference and availability. You will receive an email when an appointment is booked confirming the date, time and location of the appointment (phone, Zoom or face to face). Standard appointment times are allocated 30 minutes.

When you have received an email from your Advocate proposing a date, time, and location for the consultation meeting - you must respond and confirm your availability before your appointment can be finalised. Appointments must be confirmed at least 12 hours before the appointment time. Failure to respond and confirm your availability will invalidate your appointment and you will have to reschedule your appointment depending on the Advocate's availability. If at any point you realise you are no longer able to attend your appointment, please contact the Advocate to cancel or reschedule.

### Notice of Cancellation

If you fail to attend an appointment, it is likely that you will have denied another student the opportunity to see an Advocate. Let us know as soon as possible if you need to cancel or reschedule. If you do not provide 12 hours' notice of cancellation, you will be considered to have missed your appointment. Please note that repeated absenteeism from booked appointments (two or more) may impact on our capacity to reschedule further appointments with you.



## Measuring and improving the quality of our service

If you arrive later than 10 minutes after the start of your appointment, we will consider you to have missed your appointment. Your appointment may be given to another student. For phone or Zoom appointments, the Advocate will attempt to contact you twice. If you are likely to be late for your appointment, please contact the Advocate to discuss.

## COVID-19 Impacts

In order to protect the health of staff and students, Face to Face appointments will not be accepted where you appear to be unwell including any signs/symptoms of cold, flu, COVID-19 or other illness. The Advocates reserve the right to refuse an in-person appointment should you enter the JCUSA office displaying symptoms. They will endeavour to reschedule to either a phone or video appointment, or to a suitable time once you are no longer displaying symptoms.

## Confidentiality

We will treat your personal and confidential information with sensitivity. We will collect, store and use your personal and confidential information responsibly. Please note that in some circumstances, we may be required to release your information without your consent. This would occur when required to by law, or, where we reasonably believe that to do so is necessary to lessen or prevent:

- A serious and imminent threat to an individual's life, health or safety; or
- A serious threat to public health or public safety.

## Access and Inclusion

JCUSA is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive community for all students.

## Concerns and Complaints

Email the JCUSA General Manager at [jcusa.generalmanager@jcu.edu.au](mailto:jcusa.generalmanager@jcu.edu.au)

We will measure and improve the quality of our service by:

- Emailing each student who accessed the services of an Advocate a link to the Advocacy Service Survey;
- Implementing quality training and professional development coaching activities for Advocates;
- Using key performance indicators in performance appraisals; and
- Collection and analysis of statistical data to form business decisions.

## Contact Us

Telephone: 1800 330 021

E-Mail: [studentassociation@jcu.edu.au](mailto:studentassociation@jcu.edu.au)

Internet: <https://www.jcusa.edu.au/>

Mail: JCU Student Association, James Cook University

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