



Australian
National
University

2017 Annual Report

Dean of Students

The Australian National University
Acton ACT 2601 Australia
T 61 2 6125 4184
E dean.students@anu.edu.au

Purpose

The annual report for 2017 includes a summary of the issues brought to the Dean of Students Office during the year, noting emerging trends and areas of increasing demand. Recommendations and the associated proposed actions are included. The Registrar (Student Administration), Registrar (Student Life) and Dean, HDR were consulted in May 2018 regarding the report and the recommendations and proposed actions; they are currently considering them.

Recommendations and proposed actions:

1. **Recommendation:** *We recommend that the Division of Student Administration and the Division of Student Life consider a new vision for addressing the specific needs of the international student cohort, as well as integration opportunities between international and domestic students*
Proposed Action: The Dean of Students meets with both Registrars, College Associate Deans (Student Experience), Head of Counselling, Head of Access and Inclusion, ANUSA and PARSA International Student Officers, to discuss possible improvements in support for international students.
2. **Recommendation:** *We recommend that the Division of Student Administration review late withdrawal assessment validation for students when the basis of the application is mental illness, particularly depression and anxiety. We suggest this review consider different approaches to validation taken by some universities to see whether these alternative models may be applicable at ANU.*
Proposed Action: DSA staff review late withdrawal assessment validation practices in a selection of universities for those applications made on the basis of mental illness. The Dean of Students Office to provide input.
3. **Recommendation:** *We recommend that academic Colleges note academic advisor meetings on student transcripts. Recording this information would assist at an institutional level to help target future initiatives aimed at students who struggle to make academic progress.*
Proposed Action: College Student Administration Managers develop processes to ensure all meetings between academic advisors and students are noted on unofficial student transcripts.
4. **Recommendation:** *We recommend that the Dean HDR and the members of the HDR Committee consult with Research Schools about instituting processes to put in place individualised expectation statements between students and their supervisors. We suggest a requirement for supervisors to discuss expectations with their students and provide a written summary to their students with a copy to the School HDR convenor.*
Proposed Action: That the Dean HDR and members of the HDR Committee consider the recommendation with a view to implementation from January 2019.

2017 Report of the Dean of Students – Australian National University

Executive Summary

This report covers the period 1 January - 31 December 2017.

The Dean of Students Office confidentially receives complaints, concerns or enquiries from students about alleged acts, omissions, unreasonable or unfair conduct and broader systemic problems at ANU. The Office operates as an independent entity within the institution providing impartial consideration of the issue. Where possible and appropriate, the Office provides guidance, assistance, referral and support to students who have a grievance or who are challenged by a major problem that is interfering with their academic progress. The Office has a key role assisting the resolution of issues quicker, cheaper and with the likelihood of a win-win outcome compared with formal grievance procedures.

The Office is rarely a first port of call for students. Students are normally referred to the Office by other students, staff (academic, administrative or residential college), support services, student representatives and occasionally by family members. The role of the Office is to listen, offer options, encourage and facilitate informal grievance resolution, provide guidance in the case of formal grievance pathways, and facilitate access to the range of support services within the University including academic, administrative and wellbeing services. The Office provides independent review of decisions or actions undertaken by University officers in cases of student grievance.

During the reporting period the Dean of Students Office assisted 934 individuals seeking help with grievances, complaints or requests for assistance. 333 individuals (36%) required multiple visits – an increase from 2016 (220 – 27%). The total number of student contacts for the period was 1624 (excluding incidental emails etc.) as compared with 1547 contacts in 2016. Chart 1 shows the trend in the annual number of contacts over the 10 year period 2008 to 2017. The rate of increase appears to be slowing however the number of complex situations (indicated by the need for multiple visits) is growing. A large component of the increase in repeat visits was due to students presenting with multiple, linked, concerns.

Substantial increases in the frequencies of several grievance/issue categories were evident in 2017. Striking increases were observed in the incidence of academic issues (appeals, grade appeals, special consideration, late withdrawals), health (mental and physical), administrative grievances (admission, enrolment, fees, graduation requirements), personal stresses (particularly financial and accommodation issues) and behavioural conduct (including behavioural misconduct). In addition, the impact of mental health issues on academic progress continued to be a major basis for students seeking assistance. 158 students (17%) presented with complex scenarios involving mental health issues in 2017, up from 133 students (16%) in 2016.

The total number of individuals who contacted the office represented 36.6 students per 1000 students and was similar to 2016 (39.7). This represented 4% of the total student population. No comparable data are currently available for the Australian university sector.

The Dean of Students Office is available 5 days per week for appointments with the Dean of Students (3 days per week) or Deputy Dean of Students (5 days per week).

The Dean and Deputy Dean of Students would welcome the opportunity to present detailed information relevant to individual Colleges to help inform actions to improve student outcomes and student experiences.

Previous recommendations:

The following comments and recommendations were made in the 2016 Dean of Students Annual Report:

- International students continue to disproportionately present with severe academic progress issues. Many of the students we see are clearly struggling with language issues, with both general competence with English and lack of competence in academic writing and referencing being evident. ANU has some local exemplar support services, usually directed to postgraduate or higher degree research students but little focussed on undergraduate students. There is a need to significantly improve our support in this area, perhaps through a combination of formal and informal means involving both staff resourced initiatives and activities run and initiated by student leaders in residences and in other student organisations.

[2017: Some initiatives were undertaken within student residences and student organisations. Initiatives undertaken by the Academic Skills and Learning Centre were highly valued. Further action at a whole of campus level is recommended.]

- HDR students who seek assistance from the Dean of Students office are often working in comparative isolation and exhibit significant self-doubt and anxiety. Some Schools or smaller groups have implemented mentoring arrangements between first year students and experienced later year students, or between HDR students and post-doctoral staff members. Such mentoring and the fostering of supportive student networks have shown very positive results and could form the basis of clusters across the University, to the benefit of all.

[2017: Progress was made through the Office of the Dean, HDR and the Higher Degree Research Committee. Further development is recommended.]

- It is recommended that College Associate Deans and student advisors review their capacity to provide academic advice, particularly in the period up to the Monday of week 2 of semester while students can still change their enrolment.

[2017: Progress was made within College offices. Ongoing monitoring and review of capacity on a yearly basis is recommended.]

Opportunities for improvements:

- Following the disestablishment of the International Student Office in 2013 the DoS Office recorded a significant increase in the numbers of international students seeking assistance for issues previously dealt with by the International Students Office. The DoS Office, support services (Counselling Centre, Health Service,

Access and Inclusion), along with academic advisors in Colleges have felt the loss of this office and its specialist, experienced advisors. We acknowledge that the Student Central one-stop-shop model provides efficiencies to both students and the institution. However, we still have a stream of international students finding difficulties with the one-stop-shop model as it currently exists. We believe the lack of a dedicated contact point for advice to international students is a handicap to our international student cohort and that such a contact point could greatly assist international students with their particular needs. We also see such provision as an opportunity to develop closer engagement between international and domestic students, to the benefit of both, through network building facilitated by such staff, possibly in collaboration with student representative bodies.

Recommendation: *We recommend that the Division of Student Administration and the Division of Student Life consider a new vision for addressing the specific needs of the international student cohort, as well as integration opportunities between international and domestic students.*

- Numbers of students suffering debilitating mental illness, in particular depression and anxiety, apply for Late Withdrawal from courses they have failed or not completed. Many such students are unsuccessful in their applications due to the lack of supporting documentation obtained during the months immediately following the semester census date and prior to the end of the semester. Understandably, medical certificates obtained in following months are not currently accepted. However in this complex area it can take some time before students recognise the severity of their illness and seek clinical advice and treatment.

Recommendation: *We recommend that the Division of Student Administration review late withdrawal assessment validation for students when the basis of the application is mental illness, particularly depression and anxiety. We suggest this review consider different approaches to validation taken by some universities to see whether these alternative models may be applicable at ANU.*

- In 2016 academic College advisors, staff from the Division of Student Life and the Division of Student Administration, undertook significant work to refine the early intervention process for students deemed to be at academic risk. This excellent initiative is now established and continued through 2017. We applaud this work and the continuing efforts to make contact with such students to help ensure they receive timely and appropriate advice and avoid subsequent grievance issues. We are unable to comment whether this process has significantly impacted on the problem. Certainly many of the students attending the DoS Office have comments on their transcripts noting that they have been sent an early intervention email. Few transcripts note whether the students took up the advice to meet with an academic advisor. We are unaware whether this is because they did not attend a meeting, or that the meeting was not noted on the transcript.

Recommendation: *We recommend that academic Colleges note academic advisor meetings on student transcripts. Recording this information would assist at an institutional level to help target future initiatives aimed at students who struggle to make academic progress.*

- We again raise the concern that HDR students and supervisors have no requirement to establish explicitly agreed expectations between them. We continue to meet with students who hold grievances toward their supervisors that may have been avoided if clear expectations had been established at the outset.

Recommendation: We recommend that the Dean HDR and the members of the HDR Committee consult with Research Schools about instituting processes to put in place individualised expectation statements between students and their supervisors. We suggest a requirement for supervisors to discuss expectations with their students and provide a written summary to their students, with a copy to the School HDR convenor.

Overview

Understanding the Dean of Students Role

The Dean of Students (DoS) Office confidentially receives complaints, concerns or enquires about alleged acts, omissions, unreasonable or unfair conduct and broader systemic problems within the scope of student experience at ANU. The Office operates as an independent entity within the institution, providing impartial consideration of the issue. The Office provides guidance, assistance and support to students who have a grievance or who are challenged by a major problem that is interfering with their academic progress.

We aim to provide high quality, client-focused services for preventing, managing, and resolving issues that are impeding students' progress and, through active participation in informal grievance resolution, assisting students to develop the ability to prevent, manage, and resolve future issues.

The role of the Office is to listen, offer options, encourage and facilitate informal grievance resolution, provide guidance in the case of formal grievance pathways, and provide advice or facilitate access to the range of support services within the University including academic, administrative and wellbeing services.

Conflict is inevitable and can be extremely expensive to the University. The processes of formal grievance through the multiple steps within the University, further steps external to the University and potentially legal challenge can involve many staff and many hours of staff time. The range of such issues include behaviour of staff or students; academic assessment; policies and procedures; conflict arising through poor communication; mismatched cultural expectations; perceived discriminatory practices or insensitivities; and bullying.

The areas for conflict raised with the DoS Office have a common thread of perceptions of unfairness. Frequently the student believes they have been treated unfairly by the institution or by one or more individuals within the University. The issue becomes a fight in the mind of the student and sometimes in the minds of affected staff. Bringing the issue to the DoS Office gives us an opportunity to listen, guide and if appropriate to act to help the student address the issue informally or to assist by liaising directly with the area of concern.

We check whether correct process was followed, whether the process was transparent, the decision was fair, the outcome reasonable and the principles of natural justice observed. We provide policy and procedural advice to staff members involved in handling complaints, thereby helping to ensure compliance with the Student Complaint Resolution Policy and Procedure as well as other relevant Rules, policies and procedures.

The ANU established the DoS Office at ANU in 1965, the first Australian university to establish such a position. The Office acts to maintain successful, widespread informal grievance resolution processes within the University, leading to low numbers of complaints going through formal grievance pathways. The Office has a key role in assisting the resolution of issues quicker, cheaper and with the likelihood of a win-win outcome compared with formal grievance procedures.

The Office is rarely a first port of call for students. Students are normally referred to the Office by other students, staff (academic, administrative or residential college), support services, student representatives and occasionally by family members.

Not all students attending the DoS Office have a grievance with staff or processes of the University. Beyond the student ombudsperson role of considering grievances, the Office also has a role in assisting students who experience a major life event or situation that profoundly impacts their ability to progress with their studies. These situations include sexual harassment or assault, domestic violence, clinical depression and anxiety, self-harm, serious financial difficulty, family stress, disability, cultural difference and mental illness.

The Office is not the first stop for these students just as it is not the first stop for those with grievances. The Office works closely with staff in the Counselling Centre, Access and Inclusion, residential colleges, and academic Colleges to help support and assist such students in the most efficient and streamlined way possible. Referrals are made from these areas to the Office so that we can facilitate academic interventions or other arrangements. These arrangements include assisting with applications for Special Consideration or Late Withdrawal, or negotiating alternative class arrangements (in the case of sexual harassment, sexual assault or domestic violence). Similarly, the DoS Office in turn refers students to ANU support services for their professional assistance as well as to ANUSA and PARSA services as appropriate.

In recent years the DoS Office has raised the Office profile with staff, acting as a resource and source of advice to staff who encounter difficult student situations. This builds on the role of chairing meetings of the Case Management Group, the team tasked with evaluating and determining action in some cases of disruptive or dangerous behaviours by students or in some critical incidents situations. Core members of the Case Management Group include the Dean of Students, Registrar (Student Administration), Registrar (Student Life), Head of Counselling, Senior Counsel from the ANU Legal Office, Head of Security, Manager (Access and Inclusion) and other relevant senior staff depending upon the specific circumstances of the case.

The DoS Office also holds informal meetings with College Associate Deans (Education), Associate Deans (Student Experience) and Associate Deans (HDR) several times a year to help share and disseminate best practice in implementing University policies and procedures, particularly as they relate to improving the student experience and in managing difficult student situations.

Looking forward

Shirley Nakata, Ombudsperson for Students at the University of British Columbia wrote the following in her 2014 Annual Report:

*McKenna Lang in her dissertation entitled **International Ombudsing: Navigating Discursive Channels** states: "It is here in the power relations at the nexus of governing and being governed that we find the ombudsperson."*

That is our place. The load on the Dean of Students Office has significantly increased over the last 10 years following a reasonably stable load for the period 2005 – 2008. Accelerated

growth is evident from 2014, with a slowing of that rate in 2017 [Chart 1]. Overall, there has been an increase of 800% in student contacts in the period 2005 – 2017. Staff full time equivalent (FTE) grew very modestly from 0.8 to 1.6 FTE over this period.

As the University moves to a high proportion of students living on campus there is an observable greater load on this office and other services, particularly the Counselling Centre, Access and Inclusion and the Health Centre. Clearly off-campus as well as on-campus students access the Office. However residential students, by definition, live on campus 24/7. The issues, challenges and any trauma that these students experience or encounter on any day become the institution's issues, challenges and trauma as well over the full week, including outside business hours. Students naturally look for support and response by the University and in turn the University contracts to provide an enriching and supported student experience for all students. This does lead to the need for provision of significant support resources, allocated and applied strategically and efficiently.

Both Sides of the Ledger

Much progress has been made in the past four years in the provision of advice to students through online portals as well as through various student-facing offices of the University. We greatly appreciate the excellent work undertaken in the Examinations, Graduations and Prizes office in their review of deferred exam applications. Similarly the team within the Division of Student Administration who review late withdrawal applications have our utmost respect. Both teams approach these draining tasks with rigour and fairness. We appreciate their preparedness to contact students in cases of insufficient information and to advise students of what they need to do to improve their applications. Other staff in Colleges, particularly student administrators, academic advisors and College Associate Deans are extremely helpful to our Office, responding quickly to address student grievances that we bring to their attention.

The DoS Office has witnessed a change in the detail of enquiry and grievance brought to the Office. On the positive side, there is a marked improvement in the information and processes concerning standard student administrative and degree requirements (enrolment, program leave, graduation, degree requirements) provided to students. These are communicated clearly and are easily accessible online. Processes such as eForms on ISIS appear to run well. We no longer field general enquiries in these areas to any significant extent although grievances about decisions made in these areas grew significantly in 2017.

The increase in numbers of contacts with the Office, while still growing, is certainly slowing. This slackening in rate of increase in demand can be attributed, at least in part, to improvements in administrative and communication initiatives. On the negative side, one thorn is the lack of a dedicated office for advice to international students. We believe the loss of this office several years ago is a handicap to international students and has brought inefficiencies in responding to international student queries. Students, this Office, support services and academic advisors in Colleges have felt the loss of this office and its specialist, experienced advisors.

Similarly, the stretched resources in the Counselling Centre, Health Centre and the Access and Inclusion Office have led to students in need of this support seeking assistance from the DoS Office in addition to these support services. Typically, this occurred at advanced stages

of their distress and after significant damage to their academic progress had already occurred. We do not provide counselling, medical support or specialised assistance to accommodate disability. Typically, such students sought our assistance following academic failure. This failure was consequent to their inability to cope with their studies due to mental illness, health issues or other associated factors. In many cases they sought help in responding to an invitation to show cause why they should not be excluded. Amongst other advice and action, we often assisted with applications for Late Withdrawal - the latter frequently turned to as a last resort to save students from exclusion from the University. It was often too late.

Late Withdrawals

2017 data show a major increase in the number of students seeking assistance with Late Withdrawal applications. 134 students in 2017 requested assistance with applications for Late Withdrawal compared with 80 students in 2016. The information provided online to guide students with their applications is extremely clear and concise – an exemplar in student advice. Nonetheless, students who were unwell or were facing exclusion often sought assistance with this process. We assisted by providing guidance on their application requirements and by providing feedback on their draft application statements prior to submission. The guidance we provided was no different to the information provided online. However, it is clear these vulnerable students actually need a person to walk them through these steps in what was frequently a very high stakes process for them. Many of these students presented with debilitating depression or anxiety, either as a pre-existing condition prior to enrolment or developed while a student at the University.

We do not underestimate the challenge faced by staff in the Division of Student Administration who are tasked with assessing these applications and sympathise with the difficulties these staff face in making decisions on applications for Late Withdrawal. We were aware of numbers of student applications made on the basis of significant depression and anxiety. Often, the students' conditions were so severe that they were completely incapable of engagement with their studies or anything else. In some cases their applications were unsuccessful due to the lack of supporting medical certificates obtained during the key period of the relevant semester. Medical certificates obtained after the conclusion of the semester were not sufficient to support a successful application for Late Withdrawal – understandable given the current procedural requirements. However it is very common that individuals can take quite some time to appreciate that they need help for depression and anxiety – well after the damage has been done with respect to their academic progress. There is a tendency for people suffering in this way is to isolate themselves, again leading to a lack of options for verification of their mental health status. This issue has been noted nationally and internationally and some universities are considering other ways to manage withdrawal processes, substantiation and decisions for this category of ill health. We recommend that the Division of Student Administration review late withdrawal assessment validation for students applying on the basis of mental illness with reference to the literature in this area and alternative models being applied in some other universities.

Behavioural Conduct/Misconduct

A major concern that consumed significant resources within the DoS Office was the dramatic increase in difficult, complex and time-consuming cases. These cases included allegations of bullying of HDR students by their supervisors or other research group members, major behavioural issues by individual students, and allegations of sexual harassment or sexual assault. Many complex cases involved behavioural issues associated with mental illness (sometimes tied up with disability) or behavioural misconduct. We expect the number of such cases to grow, particularly in formal grievances of sexual harassment or assault and in grievances regarding student behaviour and welfare.

Moving Forward

The Dean of Students anticipates a more structured role in 2018/2019 in contributing to the University response to students disclosing incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault although the details of this structured role are not yet determined. This will follow the development of specific policy and procedure as part of the actions initiated and developed through the Respectful Relationships Working Group and Steering Group. At present the DoS staff assist students who disclose an incident of sexual harassment or sexual assault by first ensuring safety of the student. Next steps involve a trauma-informed approach to listen to the student and provide advice about options that they might consider when ready. This advice includes referral to specialist or professional agencies such as the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the ANU Counselling Centre.

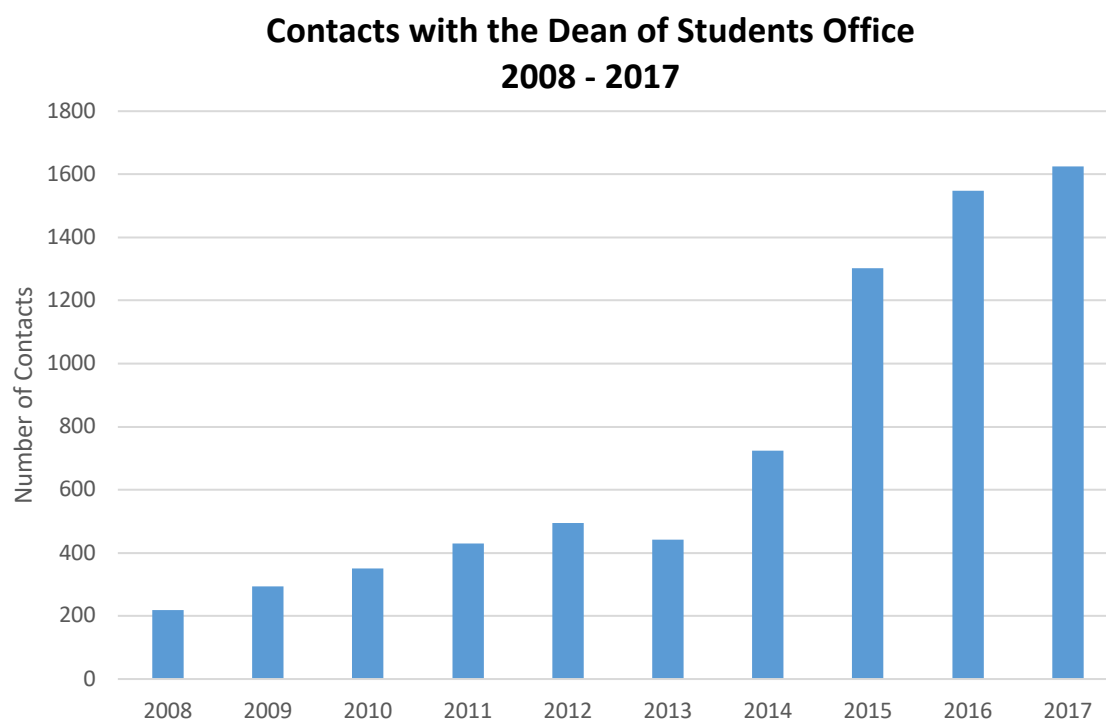
If the student wishes, the DoS Office acts directly on behalf of the student to contact their lecturers and advise that the student is eligible for Special Consideration on the basis of a traumatic event which we attest to. No details of the incident or incident type are disclosed to the lecturer. The Office also acts to liaise with lecturers to address safety considerations when both parties to the incident are in the same course/s. The DoS Office provides advice about grievance processes (informal and formal) and possible application of the Discipline Rule when the student is ready or wishes to have this discussion. We anticipate that the DoS Office will and should continue to have a role in assisting students who disclose an incident of sexual harassment or sexual assault as well as a role in assisting students who are accused of such actions. This is because of the key role of the DoS Office to advise students on grievance procedures and, if the disclosing student wishes, take an active role in grievance resolution.

The Numbers – an overview

The Dean of Students Office was established in 1965, commencing operation from 1 January 1966. The Office provides independent, impartial, confidential advice and informal dispute resolution to students of the ANU. In addition, the Office acts as a resource and source of advice to staff who encounter difficult student situations. The Dean of Students is a member of and normally chairs the Case Management Team, tasked with evaluating and determining action for critical incidents and cases of disruptive or dangerous behaviours involving students. The Office participated in 15 case management processes in 2017. The DoS Office provided input to a range of senior governance committees of the University, making recommendations for amendments to policies and procedures as informed by issues raised by students and staff. The Dean of Students holds Fellow status at the residential colleges, Bruce Hall and Toad Hall. The Deputy Dean of Students also holds Fellow status at Toad Hall.

The chart below records the number of visits (contacts) to the DoS Office from 2008 to 2017. Data in this table include repeat visits rather than simply head count of individual students. All subsequent charts in this report relate to individuals (head count).

Chart 1



Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. Visits	219	293	351	430	495	441	724	1303	1547	1624

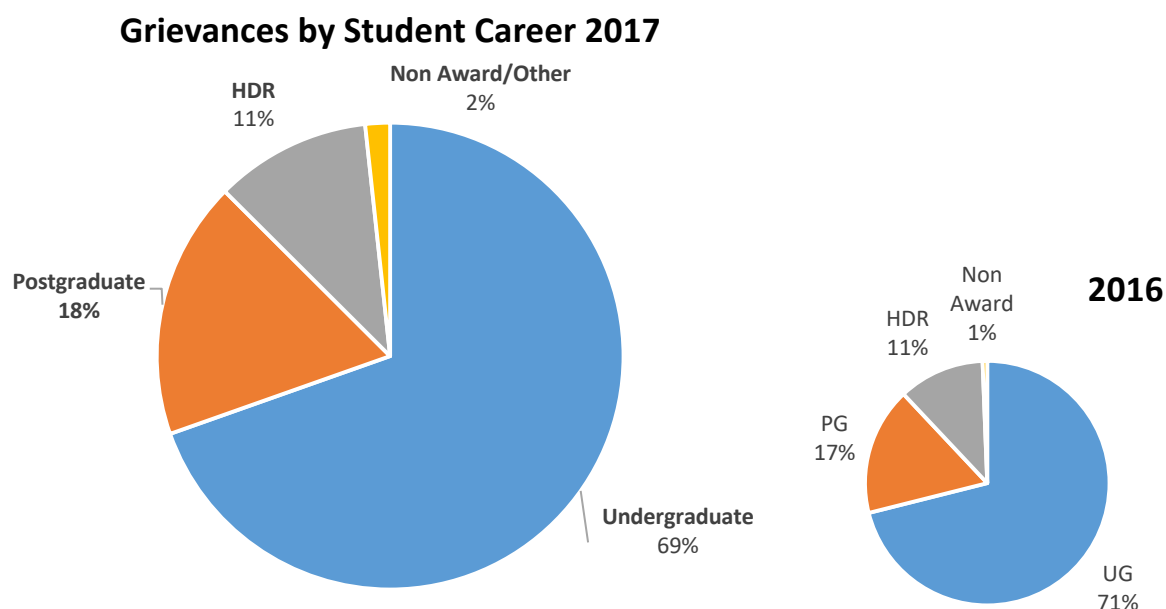
In 2017, 934 students made 1624 visits to the DoS Office. This cohort represents 4% of the total ANU student population (36.6 students per 1000 students). 333 students (36%) required multiple visits – an increase over 2016 (27%).

The closest international comparison to the work of the ANU Dean of Students office is the work undertaken by Student Ombudspersons in Canadian Universities. The Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) reports an annual caseload of approximately 1% of the total student population in Canadian Universities. There are no comparable data currently available for the Australian university sector.

In addition to student visits, about 110 staff sought advice or assistance relating to difficult situations involving students.

Summary of Contacts with the Dean of Students Office 2017

Chart 2



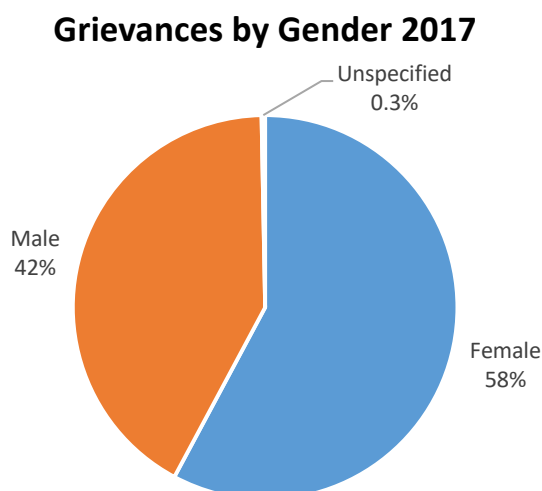
Student Career	No. Students 2017	No. Students 2016	% in grievance cohort 2017	% in ANU cohort 2017
Undergraduate	650	580	69	50
Postgraduate	167	138	18	38
HDR	101	93	11	11
Non Award/Other	16	5	2	0.7
Total	934	816		

Not unexpectedly, undergraduate students continue to be over-represented in contacts with the DoS Office. This again correlates with students presenting with issues across the grievance categories of: appeal, results, special consideration, late withdrawal, academic advice and progress. 2016 data showed a greater prevalence of students seeking advice regarding changing a course outcome (grade appeal, special consideration or late withdrawal) than we had seen in previous years. 2017 data show a dramatic increase in this category over 2016 figures, reflecting an increase in the numbers of numbers undergraduate students seeking advice in these areas as well as a greater proportion of students overall presenting with these issues.

We previously reported that lack of timely access to or awareness of academic advice support during the first two weeks of semester when students are finalising their enrolment was an emerging issue that could lead to ongoing academic progress concerns. In 2016 significant work was undertaken by College academic advisors and staff from the Division of Student Life and the Division of Student Administration to refine the early intervention process for students deemed to be at academic risk. This initiative is now established and has continued through 2017. We applaud this work and the continuing efforts to make contact with such students to help ensure they receive timely and appropriate advice and support. However we are unable to comment whether this process has significantly impacted on the problem. Certainly many of the students attending the DoS Office have comments on their transcripts noting that they have been sent this early intervention email. Few transcripts note whether the students took up the offer to meet with an academic advisor. We are unaware whether this is because they did not attend a meeting, or that the meeting was not noted on the transcript. We recommend that Colleges note such meetings so that better information can be gathered at an institutional level to help target future initiatives aimed at students who struggle to make academic progress.

Postgraduate coursework students continue to be significantly underrepresented in contacts with the DoS Office. However, the actual number of postgraduate students presenting with a difficulty continues to increase and we believe this is linked to a greater awareness of the Office and how we are able to assist them.

Chart 3

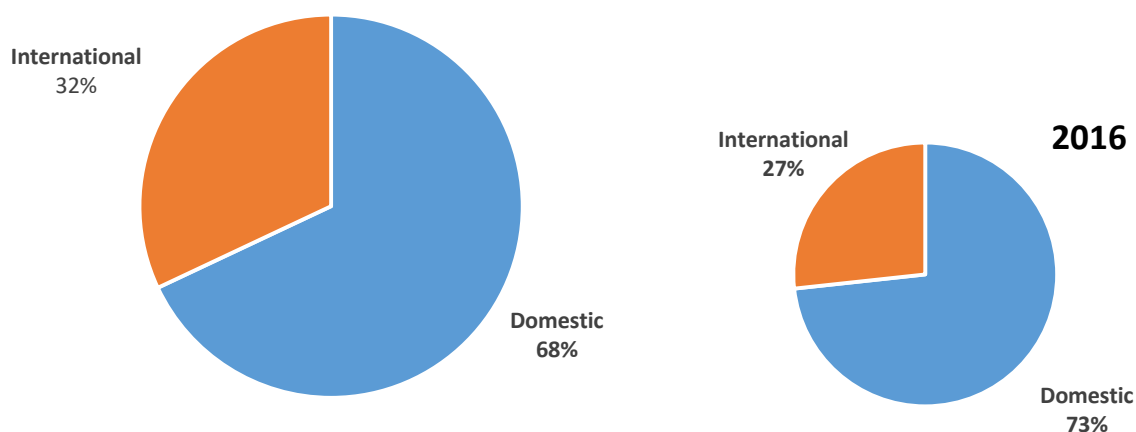


Gender	No. Students 2017	No. Students 2016	% in grievance cohort 2017	% in ANU cohort 2017
Female	538	458	58	53
Male	393	357	42	47
Unspecified	3	1	0.3	0.04
Total	934	816		

In previous years, gender has not appeared to be a factor influencing the overall reporting of issues to the DoS Office. 2016 data showed a small over-representation of female students but this is more marked in 2017. Differences continue to be apparent in some grievance categories and gender bias is particularly prominent in higher degree research (HDR) students with supervision issues. In 2017 33 female HDR students presented with supervision grievances as compared with 10 male HDR students. By contrast the gender breakdown for male and female HDR students in the whole ANU cohort is 50:50. Other grievance categories with a strong gender bias are: reports of sexual harassment or sexual assault (strong over-representation of female students); interpersonal conduct issues with other students and staff for undergraduate students (over-representation of male students); mental health issues (strong under-representation of male international students); academic advice (under-representation of male students).

Chart 4

Grievances by Residency Status 2017



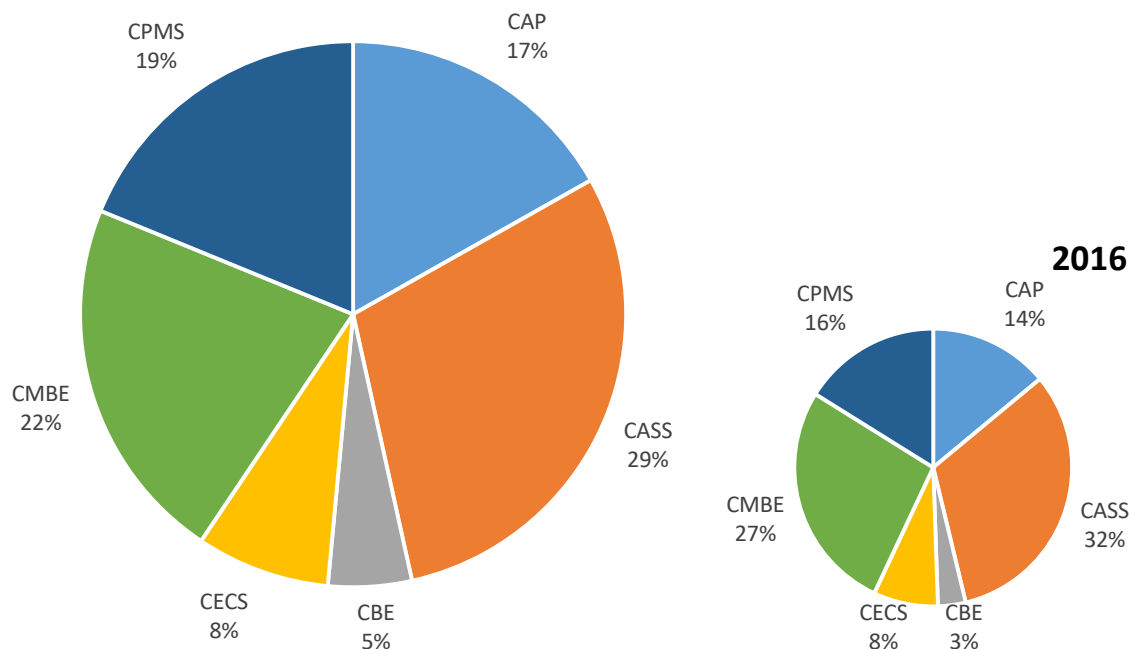
Residency Status	No. Students 2017	No. Students 2016	% in grievance cohort 2017	% in ANU cohort 2017
Domestic	635	598	68	64
International	299	218	32	36
Total	934	816		

There was a significant increase in the number of international students seeking assistance in 2017 compared with previous years. If the increase continues for 2018 then we would expect to see students accessing the DoS Office in accordance with the cohort representation. We view this as a success following strategies undertaken over the last two years to raise the profile of the Office with student leaders to help address this imbalance.

Nonetheless, international students continue to disproportionately present with severe academic progress issues rather than accessing assistance, at least from this Office, at an earlier stage. The most common presentation for international undergraduate students is as a result of exclusion following the invitation to show cause to the Academic Progress Committee. These students attend our Office after receiving written advice of their exclusion and that they should seek assistance from the DoS Office if they are considering a procedural appeal of the exclusion. It is highly unlikely that we will find a basis for a procedural appeal and we can offer little assistance other than to investigate if there are grounds for a late withdrawal application. We have noted this disappointing and starkly evident issue since the first annual report (2014). Given the continuing observation that international students appear less likely to seek or take up offers or opportunities for early intervention support, we recommend the Division of Student Life and Colleges review the effectiveness of early intervention email advice for this cohort. There is a need to determine whether other intervention strategies may be more effective for international students.

Chart 5

Higher Degree Research Grievances by College 2017



College	No. Students 2017	No. Students 2016	% in grievance cohort 2017	% in ANU cohort 2017
CAP	17	13	17	18
CASS	30	30	30	22
CBE	5	3	5	5
CECS	8	7	5	11
CoL	0	0	0	2
CMBE	22	25	22	12
CPMS	19	15	19	29
Total	101	93		

Note: Percentages have been rounded up. CASS: College of Arts & Social Sciences; CAP: College of Asia & the Pacific; CBE: College of Business & Economics; CECS: College of Engineering & Computer Science; CoL: ANU College of Law; CMBE: College of Medicine, Biology & Environment; CPMS: College of Physical & Mathematical Sciences.

Grievances presented by higher degree research (HDR) students continue to primarily involve supervision issues and/or lack of academic progress. The trend for students to

present earlier in their candidature continued in 2017. This is a pleasing trend as it allows time for remedial intervention and the possible salvaging of students' candidature.

As noted in the 2016 Annual Report, significant work undertaken by College Associate Deans (HDR) and initiatives such as the Thesis Boot Camp were again noted by a number of students as having a very positive impact on the HDR student experience and their progress. Concerningly, very high levels of stress continue to be evident in the cohort. The DoS Office is increasingly involved with complex case management of HDR student issues, primarily reflecting the breakdown of the relationship between a student and their supervisor. We often support and guide students over a period of weeks and sometimes months in cases where the student has lost all confidence and is not making adequate academic progress. Our support and advice is focussed on academic progress facilitation, frequently aided by the development of project management and time management skills in the context of the student's project. Referral to support services such as Counselling and the Academic Skills Centre can often combine to help restore the student to productivity and a better working relationship with their supervisor, thereby addressing the original grievance. Such scenarios often involve students suffering significant mental illness that either predates enrolment into their degree, or has developed during their candidature. We note that both students and staff can be extremely stressed in such cases.

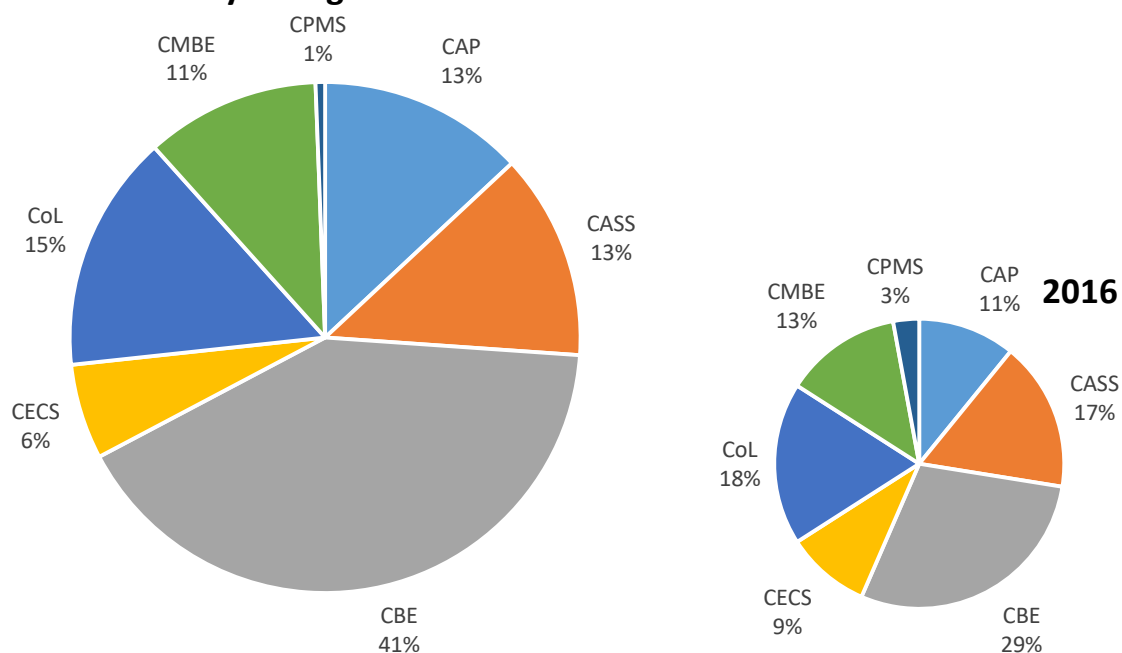
Three HDR students claimed their supervisors bully them – a drop from the 9 cases reported in 2016. However 9 HDR students complained of supervisor behaviour that significantly impacted on their wellbeing and academic progress. The conduct was generally described as either harassment or neglect. There is no evidence of progress in the previously raised concern that HDR students have explicitly agreed expectations between themselves and their supervisor. We recommend that Schools institute processes and set requirements that supervisors discuss expectations with their students and provide a written summary to their students with a copy to the School HDR convenor.

The prevalence of HDR student complaints is aligned with the numbers of HDR students in each College although clusters of grievances are apparent. We welcome opportunities to provide more detail specific to individual Colleges to help inform their action to improve the experience of students.

We invite staff to consider the DoS Office as a resource and, as noted earlier in this report, increasing numbers of staff are contacting the Office to seek advice on managing difficult supervision situations. The Office works closely with Associate Deans (HDR) in Colleges to provide assistance for students encountering difficulties for those cases where the students agree to be identified. However the majority of HDR students are not prepared to be identified due to concerns they may suffer as a result of making a complaint. In such cases our focus is on listening, providing an independent and impartial perspective on their situation, offering recommendations and advice regarding options open to the student, and referring students to other support services as appropriate.

Chart 6

Postgraduate Coursework Grievances by College 2017



College	No. Students 2017	No. Students 2016	% in grievance cohort 2017	% in ANU cohort 2017
CAP	22	15	13	13
CASS	22	23	13	7
CBE	69	40	41	36
CECS	10	13	6	6
CoL	25	25	15	28
CMBE	18	18	11	6
CPMS	1	4	0.6	3
Total	167	138		

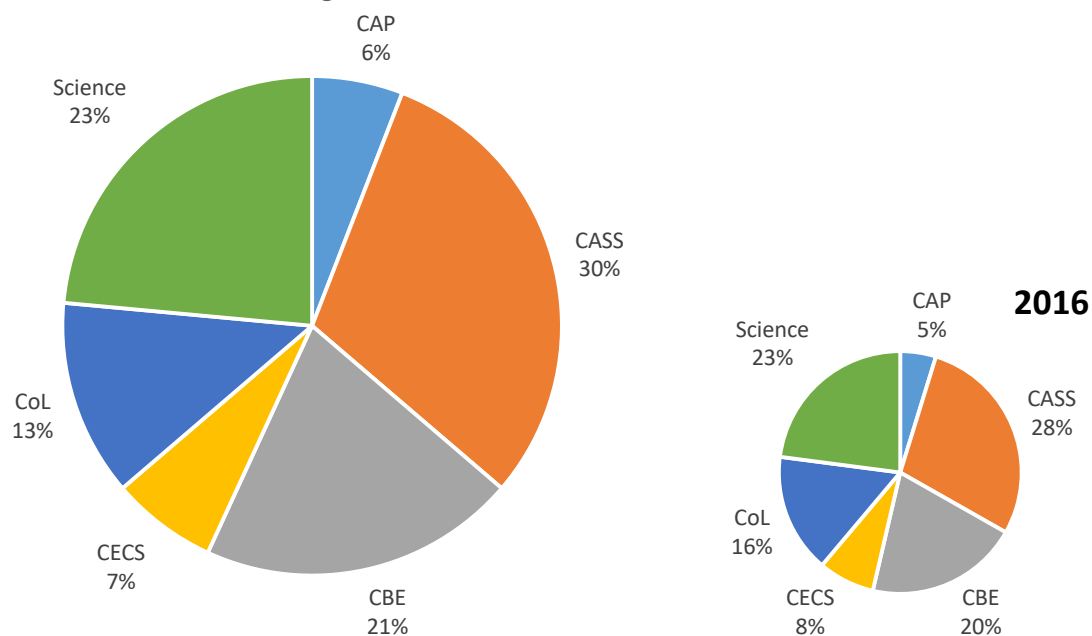
Note: Percentages have been rounded up. CASS: College of Arts & Social Sciences; CAP: College of Asia & the Pacific; CBE: College of Business & Economics; CECS: College of Engineering & Computer Science; CoL: ANU College of Law; CMBE: College of Medicine, Biology & Environment; CPMS: College of Physical & Mathematical Sciences.

Postgraduate coursework students are under-represented in contacts with the DoS Office. The data indicate that a disproportionate number of students in some Colleges (CASS, CBE and CMBE) are encountering difficulties compared to students in other Colleges. A marked increase is evident in complaints from students studying CBE programs as compared with previous years. Colleges can request more detailed de-identified information to assist in identifying key issues for action.

Chart 7

Undergraduate Grievances by College 2017*

*double degree students counted toward both
Colleges



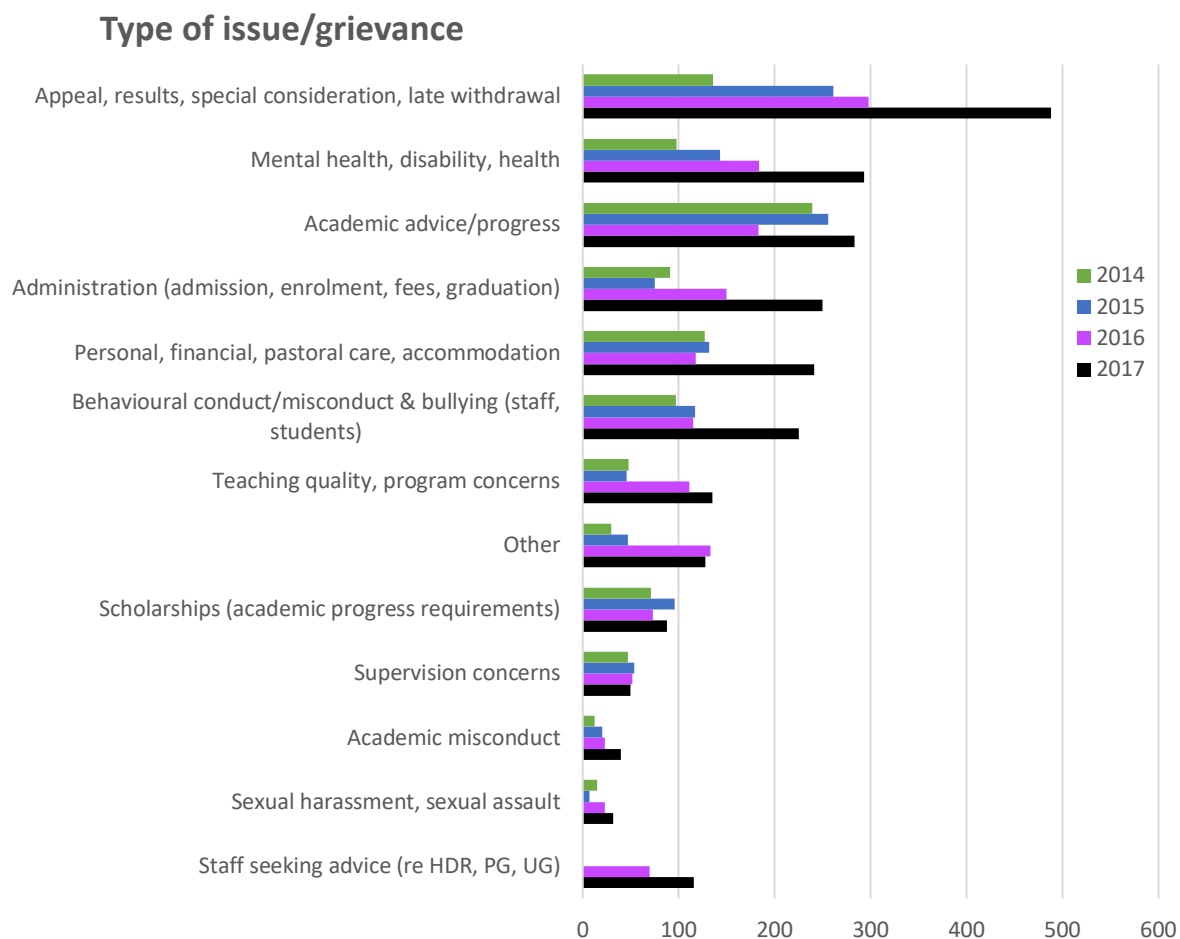
College	No. Students*	% in grievance cohort	% in ANU cohort
CAP	50	6	5
CASS	271	31	32
CBE	183	21	21
CECS	60	7	12
CoL	112	13	12
Science	210	24	19

*Note: Double degree students are counted against both Colleges leading to double counting of some individuals. CASS: College of Arts & Social Sciences; CAP: College of Asia & the Pacific; CBE: College of Business & Economics; CECS: College of Engineering & Computer Science; CoL: ANU College of Law; Science (College of Medicine, Biology & Environment + College of Physical & Mathematical Sciences).

Contacts show a representative spread across the Colleges. 650 undergraduate students sought out academic advice from the Dean of Students office and these are roughly representative of all Colleges. The Colleges are differentiated once the category of issue is taken into account and detail can be provided to individual Colleges.

Distribution of Grievances

Chart 8



Type of Issue/Grievance	2017	2016
Appeal, results, special consideration, late withdrawal	488	298
Mental health, disability, health	293	184
Academic advice and progress	283	183
Administration (administration, admission, enrolment, fees, program transfer, graduation)	250	150
Personal, financial, pastoral care, accommodation	241	118
Behavioural Conduct/Misconduct & Bullying (staff, students)	225	115

Teaching quality, program concerns, assessment requirements	135	111
Other	128	133
Scholarships (academic progress requirements)	88	73
Supervision concerns	50	52
Academic misconduct	40	23
Sexual harassment, sexual assault	32	23
Staff seeking advice (HDR, PG, UG)	116	70

The majority of grievances or issues brought to the DoS Office revolve around academic advice, academic progress, contesting of grades or removal of fail grades (through late withdrawal). The categories of mental health/disability/health and personal/financial are frequently associated with issues of academic progress and grievances concerning grades. Mental illness in particular is a major factor in a range of grievances and situations.

There is a marked increase across five major categories in 2017 as compared with 2014 – 2016. These categories include the appeal/special consideration/late withdrawal category just mentioned, but also health (mental and physical), administration, personal (including finance, accommodation and pastoral care) and behavioural conduct (including misconduct). The increases in these categories reflect both the increase in numbers of students seeking assistance as well as association of issues for individual students. For example, we encountered more students who were stressed, had a diagnosed mental illness (commonly depression and/or anxiety), were experiencing financial or accommodation concerns, and were making poor academic progress. They typically accessed support from Counselling, Access and Inclusion, and sometimes academic advisors. A portion of this cohort exhibited very demanding behaviour, impacting on other students as well as staff across the University and in a variety of roles beyond the mentioned support services. Staff affected included residential college staff and senior residents, College student administrators and academic advisors, security staff, lecturers, the DoS Office, along with ANUSA and PARSA staff and student representatives.

17% of students (158 students) who contacted the Dean of Students office in 2017 were knowingly experiencing a mental illness to the point that their academic progress was significantly affected. This was an increase from 133 students in 2016, 93 students in 2015 and 81 students in 2014. The DoS Office worked closely with ANU Counselling Centre staff to support these students. As noted in previous annual reports, the nature of these conditions mean that many students do not have supporting documentation to cover the possibly extended period when they were clearly affected but had not yet recognised their condition or sought treatment.

The contacts listed under grievance category 12 (Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault) represent alleged perpetrators as well as students disclosing an incident; the overall

frequency of reported incident is approximately 85% of the number shown in the chart. The category includes 32 incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault, a significant increase over the 23 reports received in 2016. This follows substantial efforts by student associations and the University through the year to bring attention to reporting and preventing sexual harassment and sexual assault. It also aligns with commitments made by the University following the Human Rights Commission report *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities*, released on 1 August 2017.¹

Category Groups:

1. Academic Grievances

Appeal; Grade appeal; Results/Marks; Late withdrawal; Special Consideration/Supplementary Exams; Exams – academic; Exams – administrative.

2. Mental health, disability, health

3. Academic advice and progress

Academic Advice; Academic Progress; Academic Progress – Probation; Academic Progress – Suspension; Academic Progress – Exclusion; Graduate Studies advice; Overseas Exchange.

4. Administration (admission, enrolment, fees, graduation)

Administration issue; Admission; Enrolment; Fees; Graduation; Timetabling; Program transfer.

5. Personal, financial, pastoral care, accommodation

Accommodation; Financial; Pastoral Care; Personal; Time Management.

6. Behavioural conduct/misconduct & bullying (staff, students)

Bullying - staff of student; Bullying - student of staff; Bullying - student of student; Conduct – Staff; Conduct – Student; Stalking; Harassment; Social Media

7. Teaching quality, program concerns

Program concerns; Teaching quality; Online course sites; Fieldwork; Feedback re assessment; Assessment requirements.

8. Other

9. Scholarships (academic progress requirements)

Scholarship; Scholarship – Encouragement; Scholarship – Probation; Scholarship – Suspension; Scholarship – Show Cause.

¹ Data consolidated from the Dean of Students Office, the Counselling Centre, ANU Security and critical incident notification indicate 74 incidents of unwanted sexual attention, sexual harassment or sexual assault reported in 2017.

10. Supervisory concerns

Supervision – HDR; Supervision – Hons

11. Academic misconduct**12. Sexual Harassment; Sexual Assault****13. Staff seeking advice**

Undergraduate, postgraduate and higher degree research students

General Comments

Grievances or issues commonly fall into four types:

1. Grievances that relate to academic progress, grades, special consideration and late withdrawal that could be helped by greater access to College-based academic advisors as well as student administrators. Issues of perceived lack of fairness, often associated with rigid application of rules without consideration of context, are frequently reported.
2. Students struggling to make good academic progress and life choices as a result of significant mental illness or previously unrecognised disability.
3. Personal issues that consequently impact on academic progress. Parental expectations and requirements for some international students in particular can determine the focus of study rather than a student's aptitude and discipline interest. Financial difficulties experienced by both domestic and international students can lead to students undertaking substantial hours of paid employment which in turn can impact on academic progress. Academic advice, options for financial support, consideration of program leave and pastoral care are key components of advice and encouragement to this group of students.
4. HDR students commonly are extremely stressed and need someone just to listen to them in the first instance. Discussions about time management, project management and thesis structure and expectations frequently follow. These students commonly work in comparative isolation and are frequently in need of substantial encouragement, positive feedback and practical approaches to enabling progress with their studies and enabling productive communication with their supervisor.
5. Critical incidents and follow-up evaluation and action. These situations can involve the Case Management Group.

Dean of Students
Associate Professor Paula Newitt

Deputy Dean of Students
Dr Peter Hendriks