



Quality Assurance Unit

CLIENT SERVICE AND COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Date approved:	12 September 1994	Date Policy will take effect:	On approval	Date of Next Review:	May 2011
Approved by:	Administrative Committee				
Custodian title & e-mail address:	Quality Assurance Manager quality_assurance@uow.edu.au				
Author:					
Responsible Faculty/ Division & Unit:	Quality Assurance Unit				
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:	Client Service & Complaints Handling Procedure				
References & Legislation:	Ombudsman Act, 1974 (NSW)				
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone				
Expiry date of Policy:	Not applicable				

Contents

1 Purpose of Policy	2
2 Definitions	2
3 Application & Scope	2
4 Client Service Processes	3
5 Client Service Behaviours	4
6 Implementation	4
7 Roles & Responsibilities	4
8 Version Control and Change History	4

1 Purpose of Policy

1. The University of Wollongong is committed to the provision of quality services to all its clients.
2. The University should deliver a consistent level of client service which is subject to continual assessment, review and on-going improvement.
3. A consistent approach to the handling of complaints is integral to effective client service.
4. The University is committed to the development of innovative methods and practices which enhance quality of service.
5. This document outlines the University's commitment and expectations relating to the provision of client service.
6. Objectives of this policy include to:
 - a. increase the level of satisfaction among clients through the delivery of effective and consistent client services;
 - b. enhance the University's image and reputation, particularly its reputation for client service;
 - c. develop and maintain good relations with all clients and thus facilitate future collaboration and the joint solution of problems.
 - d. reduce the volume of complaints and consequently reduce any associated element of job dissatisfaction - assessing complaints and rectifying errors are time consuming and frustrating activities that create an expectation of dissatisfaction in the client which may increase with each client interaction.

2 Definitions

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
Client service	The activity of assessing, anticipating, and fully meeting client needs and expectations.
Clients	Stakeholders in any activity in which the University is engaged. This may include students, staff, members of the community, and government agencies. Each staff member has many different categories of clients. Clients are not simply those external to the Unit, but include colleagues and supervisors within the Unit. The priority and importance of individual client needs must be carefully assessed and balanced.
Delivery of a quality service	Applies not only at the personal interface. It is also the provision of quality processes which in effect increase the level and efficiency of the full range of services which the relevant Unit(s) provide. A quality service is more than the prompt supply of information or assistance. It must focus on information which is timely, relevant and accurate. Quality client service adds value to the provision of all basic services.

3 Application & Scope

1. Units required to prepare a Client Service Statement & Complaints Handling Procedure are:
 - Academic Registrar's Division
 - Buildings and Grounds Division
 - Financial Services Division
 - Information Technology Services Division
 - Library

- Research and Innovation Division
- Personnel Services Division
- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Commerce
- Faculty of Creative Arts
- Faculty of Education
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Health & Behavioural Sciences
- Faculty of Informatics
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Science

4 Client Service Processes

1. Consistent with this policy, each unit (scheduled in Attachment B) will develop and maintain a Unit specific client service policy statement. The statement will be tailored to the Unit's specific objectives and will embody the unit's critical values, goals and expectations regarding the provision of client service. Each statement should include:
 - a. a summary of client service aims and expectations;
 - b. a process for identifying client needs;
 - c. a process for devising improvements in client service practices;
 - d. a localised complaints procedure;
 - e. a method for ensuring all staff are trained in client service and knowledgeable of relevant work practices;
 - f. advice given to all staff on client service requirements.
2. All client service objectives, goals and expectations prepared by Units should be realistic and achievable. Details of the requirements for components of the statements are set out below.
3. Each Unit is responsible for developing methods for assessing client needs. Units may use a variety of techniques to assess client needs, expectations, and experiences to date. These techniques could include:
 - a. surveys
 - b. focus groups
 - c. electronic measurement
 - d. one to one client feedback interviews
4. Each statement should include the targeted level of service, and the skills and competencies which clients can expect from staff delivering the service. The statement should include:
 - a. target time spans for the critical work processes eg. student enrolment, or application to acknowledgement to interview/no interview in the recruitment process, or payment of suppliers etc.;
 - b. common nomenclature for telephone responses, title of department, etc.;
 - c. standard formats for all correspondence;
 - d. contingency plans for meeting critical client needs at times of crisis; staff shortage or computer break down for example;
 - e. 'service hours' that put the needs of the client ahead of staff convenience consistent with those of other related Units and Divisions;
 - f. defined procedure for titling all new files and destroying old ones

5. Units will establish mechanisms which provide staff with opportunities to suggest and develop improved methods or systems of client service.
6. The University will provide client service and awareness training so as to provide staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide the highest level of service possible.
7. Each unit should also encourage and support training of staff in all relevant work activities.
8. Each unit should provide staff with clear and concise guidelines on service goals particularly those most relevant to the needs of their primary groupings of clients.

5 Client Service Behaviours

1. All clients are important and will be treated as such. The level and type of client service must be consistent.
2. Staff will listen to and respect the complaints of clients. They will attempt to allay concerns by acknowledging a problem rather than disputing its existence.
3. If an error is made, this fact will be openly acknowledged and the mistake rectified as soon as possible.

6 Implementation

1. The University will provide training courses on client service which will be attended by all staff covered by this policy.
2. Each Unit will develop methods to ensure their client service statement, objectives and expectations will be implemented, assessed and adhered to.
3. Each Unit will develop methods to implement and review the selected complaint handling procedures.
4. Each Unit will develop methods for assessing client needs and expectations. These may include surveys, focus groups, a client comments or suggestions scheme or individual questionnaires.
5. Clear and concise instructions on client service, outlining standardised and specific guidelines for interacting with clients will be developed by the Continuous Improvement Unit
6. These directives will also be supported by supervisors, in terms of human and physical resources.
7. The University will provide resources and support all activities related to these issues.
8. ITS will provide telephone training to all staff in the UOW Administration.

7 Roles & Responsibilities

1. Management and supervisors should be committed to the provision of quality client services and support their staffs client service efforts. Where possible staff should be authorised and trained to make decisions there and then in a manner which enhances the level and quality of service and staff fulfilment.
2. Employees should seek to provide the highest level of service to their clients as is possible within the resources and knowledge available to them. The University understands that striving to improve client service is a continual process.
3. Quality service is expected from all levels of staff, the requirement does not apply only to front-line enquiry staff. All staff, regardless of level or role, should provide a high quality service to clients.
4. Monitoring the implementation of this policy and its subsequent operation will be the responsibility of the Vice-Principal (Administration) or his/her nominee.

8 Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment
1	12 September 1994	Administrative Committee	New Policy

2	6 May 2009	Vice-Principal (Administration)	Migrated to UOW Policy Template as per Policy Directory Refresh
3	9 March 2010	Vice-Principal (Administration)	Future review date identified in accordance with Standard on UOW Policy