

In 2002 the Office of the Ombuds opened at RMIT. The Ombuds position aims to ensure that all complaints, from both staff and students, are dealt with in a fair, equitable and appropriate manner.

Why an Ombuds?

RMIT has a range of operating procedures, policies, regulations and support services that aim to ensure your complaints are heard fairly and in a confidential and timely manner. The RMIT Ombuds provides an avenue of confidential and independent review for staff and students who have unresolved complaints, or when there has been a breakdown in communication or process. The Ombuds is not an advocate but aims to mediate and conciliate disputes with a focus on systemic improvement. The Ombuds Office aims to bring an independent, impartial and confidential perspective to each and every issue. If you have lodged a complaint through other informal and formal channels within RMIT but you are unhappy about the way your complaint has been handled or concerned about the process, the Ombuds may be able to assist you as a last resort.

Resolving complaints

You first need to try to resolve the issue through existing university channels.

These include complaints made informally and formally. The complaint channels that exist within RMIT are explained through numerous policies, procedures and regulations. You can look at www.rmit.edu.au/students/complaints for more information.

The following people can assist you when making a complaint and can best advise

you which policy, procedure or regulation is relevant to your case:

- Lecturers and Teachers
- Program Coordinator or Director
- Head of Department or School or nominated Senior Officers
- Student Complaints Liaison Officers
- Branch Managers of Student Services
- Academic Registrar
- Student Liaison and Student Rights Officers.

Student Liaison Officers are employed by the Student Union to provide basic advice and support to students. They can make appointments with Student Rights Officers who can also provide you with information regarding complaints processes and identify the policies, procedures or regulations relevant to your case. Most complaints about assessment, fees, bullying or general complaints should be dealt with at a Program, School or Department level. Discuss the issue of concern with your Lecturer, Teacher or Program Director or make an appointment to see your Head of Department or School.

If you are concerned about confidentiality or unsatisfied with the resolution offered by any of these channels, discuss the next step with a Student Rights Officer who can help you with unravelling some of RMIT's more complex policies and procedures.

When should I see the Ombuds?

If you feel you have done your best to resolve the matters through formal channels, you can contact the Ombuds as a last resort. Also, if you are facing an issue which you do not feel comfortable taking through existing official

Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is a general guide only. RMIT is a very complex environment, and there are often a number of different rules which apply.

For more student rights information visit our website: www.su.rmit.edu.au/student-rights

For additional assistance drop into a Student Union Front Office to speak with a Student Liaison Officer.

City Higher Ed: Building 8, Level 3

Tivoli (Business): Building 108, Level 3

Carlton Campus: Building 57, Level 4

Brunswick: Building 514, Level 2

Bundoora: Building 204, Level 1

Or, send detailed information regarding your case to student.
rights@rmit.edu.au

For enquiries call 9925 5004

If required, an appointment will be made for you with a Student Rights Officer.

Has this leaflet been helpful? Join the Student Union and join the fight to improve your rights!

channels, the Ombuds can provide you with advice and support. The RMIT Ombuds can help you if you believe RMIT policies and procedures relating to academic or administrative decisions have been incorrectly applied or have been misused.

What happens when you contact the Ombuds?

The Ombuds Office will return your call or email within 24 hours. Within one week the Ombuds will hold a preliminary interview to discuss your problem and to determine the full extent of the issue, what you have done to resolve it so far and whether they should handle your complaint. The Ombuds will not automatically take your case, but will use this preliminary interview to assess whether you have been dealt with unfairly or unjustly and whether procedures have been followed properly.

If the Ombuds accepts your case, you may be asked to fill out a form with the relevant information. The Ombuds will then work with you to develop a strategy for handling your issue and will provide support, such as mediation and conciliation, where appropriate. They will usually start by interviewing other staff and students relevant to the complaint, in an attempt to resolve matters constructively and cooperatively with all parties involved.

Whilst the Ombuds must attempt to resolve the complaint in a timely manner, the duration of this process will depend on the complexity of your case.

In most cases the Ombuds will seek to help you solve your problems at the root cause. However, if an issue develops into a formal investigation, the Ombuds may make recommendations for resolution directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

What sort of complaints does the Ombuds manage?

The Ombuds can help you with any complaint, administrative or academic, that you have first taken through the existing university channels. It might be a complaint

about the process by which a decision was reached, or an action that was taken by a student or staff member, committee, board or any unit within the university or acting under the auspices of the university. The Ombuds can't change a decision that has been made, but can make recommendations for redress, such as ensuring the university has:

- proper policies and processes in place
- its members (staff or students) have acted with procedural and substantive fairness
- its members have observed principles of natural justice.

The Ombuds has the authority to investigate such complaints and to seek to resolve them. The Ombuds reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor or, in some cases, the Chancellor. Problems that are typically dealt with by the Ombuds relate to assessment, fees and the actions of students, staff or university units

Attending an Ombuds meeting

Put your issues in writing and bring along whatever evidence you have. Explain what your problem is, what you have done about it and what outcome you want. Attach any supporting documents you may have, for example copies of your correspondence with RMIT. You may bring a support person to this meeting.

Your meeting with the Ombuds will be confidential. Your enquiry to the Ombuds and any actions which you jointly decide to take will be based on these values. If you agree to a formal investigation there will come a point at which it is not possible to pursue your case without your identity being known to the other party. This will only happen with your agreement and you will be protected from any form of pressure or victimisation.

What powers does the Ombuds have?

The RMIT Ombuds will always seek to resolve any matter informally and as close as possible to the source of the problem.

However, if an issue develops into a formal investigation, the Ombuds will make recommendations for resolution directly to the Vice-Chancellor. That is, the Ombuds can make recommendations for systemic improvements at all levels of the University.

The Ombuds will also make confidential recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor on ways of improving the integrity and efficiency of university procedures to prevent repetition of particular problems.

Contacting the Ombuds

T/ 9925 2930

E/ ombuds@rmit.edu.au

The Ombuds Office is located at RMIT's City campus, but the Ombuds can arrange to meet you at other campuses. You can either call or e-mail the RMIT Ombuds Office. The Ombuds message bank and e-mail will be checked regularly and your enquiry will be responded to as soon as possible. Simply leave your name and return telephone number.

Useful contacts

Student Complaints Liaison Officers (SCLO's) - located in all Academic Portfolios, Departments, Schools and Groups

www.rmit.edu.au/students/complaints

Academic Registrars Office

T/ 9925 8863

E/ complaints@rmit.edu.au

RMIT Counselling Service

T/ 9925 4365 (BH) 9925 3999 (AH)

www.rmit.edu.au/counselling

RMIT Health Service

T/ 9925 2297

www.rmit.edu.au/students/health

RMIT Housing Advisory Unit

T/ 9925 2963

www.rmit.edu.au/housing

RMIT Disability Liaison Unit

T/ 9925 1089

www.rmit.edu.au/disability

RMIT Study and Learning Centre

T/ 9925 3600

www.rmit.edu.au/studyandlearningcentre

RMIT International Student Information and Support (ISIS)

T/ 9925 2708

E/ student.wellbeing@rmit.edu.au

www.rmit.edu.au/internationalsupport

Also, check out the HUB on your campus for additional drop in times or

www.rmit.edu.au/students/services.

Relevant policy and advice

The Ombuds policy and procedure can be found at www.rmit.edu.au/policies under 'Ombuds Policy'

Student Complaints information

www.rmit.edu.au/students/complaints

Ombuds Website

www.rmit.edu.au/ombuds

Other useful student rights leaflets

Additional RUSU students rights information can be found at www.su.rmit.edu.au/student-rights.

- How to make a Complaint
- Complaint letter template
- RMIT Policies & Procedures
- Appealing against Assessment
- How to write a Letter
- Natural Justice