



## ADVOCATE OFFICE

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# A Student Guide to **SELF ADVOCACY**



**STUDENTS' UNION**  
*University of Regina*

### **Acknowledgment:**

Portions of this document have been adapted from "The Advokit," produced by the Penticton Advocacy Network, January 1996.

## **Getting assistance from an Advocate**

The services of an advocate are available to University of Regina students through the University of Regina Student's Union. If after reviewing this manual you feel having the assistance of an advocate would be helpful, you can inquire at the Students' Union Office, Room 221 Riddell Centre or telephone (306) 586-8811 Ext. 204

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## **What is Self Advocacy?**

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Self-Advocacy is:

- Acting or speaking for yourself to ensure your issues are addressed.
- Deciding what is best for you and taking responsibility for making it happen.
- Claiming your personal rights or standing up against unfair or discriminatory treatment.

## **How to Be an Effective Self-Advocate**

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This booklet was developed by the Office of the Advocate, University of Regina Students' Union to assist students who are experiencing difficulties with the University of Regina “system” to advocate for themselves. It provides practical tips on how to be an effective self-advocate as well as background information on the relevant university departments, personnel, and policies related to student issues.

This guide can be used to:

- Identify the kinds of records and information you may need;
- Identify relevant departments and personnel to contact;
- Make you aware of your rights and responsibilities; and
- Help you develop concrete self-advocacy skills.

## **When to Use Self-Advocacy**

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There are many different kinds of problems students can encounter, for example:

- Dissatisfaction with the service received from university departments or service providers;
- Conflict with another student, which is disrupting the learning environment;
- Harassment by another student, which is disrupting the learning environment;
- Difficulties with an instructor;
- Disagreement with a university policy, rule, or regulation;
- Not being allowed to continue in a program due to academic or conduct issues;

- Fees, costs, or refund policies that you think are unwarranted or unfair;
- Disagreement regarding grades;
- Acquiring permission for a late withdrawal from a course or semester; and/or
- Being denied admission to a program when you think you should be admitted.

In some situations you may want the university to assist you in finding an appropriate resolution to your problem or complaint. Other situations may occur as the result of actions the university has taken under various policies and procedures related to student conduct, academic probation, suspension, or termination. The practical tips outlined in this booklet will be useful in assisting you to be clear about what the issues are and what you want to occur.

## What You Need to Know to Self-Advocate

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### What Are Your Rights & Responsibilities?

You have the  
**Right** to:

- Be treated with fairness, respect, and courtesy;
- Be treated as a competent human being;
- Be informed of university policies and procedures;
- Change your mind;
- Ask for what you want;
- Expect confidentiality;
- See the information the institution has about you;
- Not be discriminated against because of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital or family status, physical or mental disability, sex, age, or sexual orientation.

You have the  
**Responsibility** to:

- Treat all people with fairness, respect, and courtesy;
- Respect the right of University of Regina's staff and faculty, and the staff of University of Regina Students' Union to be safe from physical and verbal abuse;
- Become familiar with university policies and procedures pertaining to your chosen program of study;

Responsibility,  
cont'd

- Be honest;
- Let those you are dealing with know if you change your mind and be prepared to accept the consequences;
- Ask what will be done with the information you give the institution;
- Realize that the institution's policies and time limits may interfere with getting what you want.

## Skills Required for Self-Advocacy

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Important  
skills to  
consider

You probably already have the skills you need to advocate for yourself. There are two areas, however, in which many people can use more practice: **keeping records** and **communication skills**.

### *Record-Keeping*

It's important to keep records as you go along. Take as many notes as you can about:

- Who you talked to;
- When you talked to them;
- What was said;
- What action they said they would take;
- When and how they will let you know that the action has been taken;
- What action you said you would take;
- Whether or not you need to call them back.

Actions you could take include:

- Documenting incidents or information;
- Making a habit of making notes immediately following a meeting while your memory is still fresh;
- Asking someone to take notes for you.

It is important to keep copies of everything, including:

- Your notes;
- Copies of papers, exams, and assignments;

- Copies of policies and procedures.

If someone at the University of Regina wants copies of the information you have collected and if you agree to give it to him/her, ask that person to make a separate copy for his or her own use.

## Responsible Communication

Clear & appropriate language is key

Advocacy involves communicating by letter, e-mail, telephone or in person. While e-mail may seem like a convenient way of making contact, it is recommended that in-person communication occur if the matter is important to you. Relying solely on e-mail can lead to miscommunication and unnecessary escalation of the issue or concern. The ability to communicate what you want and to listen to what others are saying will increase your chances of getting your desired outcome. The only way that other people are going to know that you disagree with them, or that you feel your rights have been violated, is for you to tell them in an appropriate manner. Speaking up is a big step towards resolving any problems you may encounter.

When communicating with others:

- Use a “reasonable” tone of voice and attitude;
- Be brief, clear, and consistent;
- Ask for explanations until you understand what is being said;
- Listen to what the other person has to say and repeat it back to them to show that you understand. You don’t have to agree, but try to understand that they have a different point of view;
- Make sure everyone at the meeting or appointment understands what you want; and
- Let people know that you appreciate their efforts, whether or not you get what you want.

As you advocate for yourself, you will probably need to outline your situation repeatedly. The people you deal with in the resolution of your situation will appreciate it if you can be as brief and consistent as possible.

## Take Responsibility for Your Feelings

Staying calm will work to your advantage

You have the right to be safe from physical and verbal abuse and so does the person to whom you are talking. When you show your anger it can make the person you are talking to uncomfortable and effective communication will then cease. Try taking a friend along for support to appointments where you anticipate feeling angry or upset.

# Helpful Questions for the Self-Advocate

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## What Happened?

The following questions are intended to help you be clear about what happened and who you should speak to and deal with.

**Q: What is the problem as you see it?** (be as specific as possible)

**Q: What reasons did the people you were dealing with provide for not giving you what you asked for?**

**Q: What are the names of the people you approached in your attempt to resolve this situation?**

## How Has This Situation Affected You?

**Q: What difficulties has this situation caused for you?**



**Q: What is the priority issue for you to deal with right now?**

**Q: What will happen if this issue doesn't get resolved right away?**

**Q: Are you concentrating on what is most important to you right now?  
If not, why?**

**Q: Do you need assistance or support in this process?**

**Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?**

## How Can You Resolve This Situation?

There is often more than one way to solve a problem. You may already have some good ideas about what to do next.

**Q: What are your ideas about how to resolve this situation?**

**Q: What got in the way when you used these ideas to try to resolve this situation?**

**Q: What do the University of Regina policies say about your rights in this situation?**

**The University Calendar and website [www.uregina.ca](http://www.uregina.ca) are important resources in finding out what policies exist.**

**Q: Based on the information you have collected, what do you want to have happen in this situation?**

**Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?**

# Self-Advocacy

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## Advocating In-Person

The following information may help you get organized and prepared for an appointment where you intend to advocate for yourself.

Be on time  
for any  
appointments  
you make

Name of Person I Need to See: \_\_\_\_\_

Their Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Appointment Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Documents I need to take with me:

- Letters from doctors or other professionals;
- Other documents, papers, exams, and/or assignments;
- My notes and other information I have collected about my situation; and
- A written statement of the problem.

There are some additional points you may want to consider as you prepare to advocate for yourself in a person-to-person meeting:

- Am I clear about what happened, what I want to do about it, what policies apply to my situation and what my rights and responsibilities are?
- Do I want to take someone with me for support, to help me stay calm, to interpret or to act as a witness?
- Could that person take notes of the meeting for me?
- Anything else that I can think of:

List  
important  
details to  
remember

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Once you are at the meeting or appointment where you are self-advocating, talk as clearly and concisely as possible. Try using the communication skills mentioned in the “Responsible Communication” section of this document.

## Self-Advocacy Statement

You may want to follow these guidelines for writing a self-advocate’s statement detailing the problem:

- Keep it short (no more than one or two pages);
- Be courteous;
- Make sure your letter is readable and legible;
- Write about only one issue per letter;
- Make sure you keep a copy of all documents for yourself; and
- If you have access to the technology, try sending your letter by fax or e-mail (also e-mail yourself a copy for your own record-keeping purposes).

Your self-advocacy statement letter should be written in a professional format. Ensure that you include the proper address for the intended recipient, that you refer to the recipient in a professional manner in the salutation as well as the body of the letter and that you cover the essential points in a succinct manner. Always remember to leave a phone number where you can be contacted.

## What If You Don’t Get What You Want?

If the results of your meeting or appointment are not satisfactory, consider the following:

- Embark on an appeal process;
- Contact a supervisor or someone higher up who can change the decision;
- Contact the University of Regina Students' Union [www.ursu.ca/contact](http://www.ursu.ca/contact) or UofR Student Affairs for support and/or advocacy [www.uregina.ca/student](http://www.uregina.ca/student); or
- Other appropriate options you can think of.

## Appealing a Decision

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If you are not satisfied with the results of your self-advocacy and you wish to pursue the matter further, you need to ask if there is a formal appeal process.

If there **is** a formal appeal process, ask:

- Are there appeal forms that I need to fill out and submit?
- Where can I get the appeal forms?
- Which is the appropriate department for me to deal with?
- Do I have to appeal within a certain period of time? If so, what is the time frame?

If there is **no** formal appeal process, ask for:

- The name of a supervisor you can contact about this situation or the University of Regina department that handles complaints like yours.
- A list of departments and university personnel that respond to student complaints and appeals is provided in the following section.

Use the area below to record the necessary contact information for your appeal.

Name:

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Department:

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Location:

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Telephone:

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## **Departments & Personnel Who Respond to Student Complaints & Appeals**

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### **Office of the Associate Vice-President, Student Affairs**

John D. Smith  
Office: RC 251.2  
Phone: (306) 585-4743

#### **Respectful University Services**

Kayla Stefan  
306.585.5400  
respect.matters@uregina.ca

#### **Registrar's Office**

James D'Arcy, MBA  
Administration-Humanities Building, Room 210  
E-mail: registrar@uregina.ca  
Phone: 306-585-4127

### **Office of Appropriate Instructional Faculty Dean or Regional Campus Principal**

#### **Dean of Arts**

Dr. Joseph Piwowar, Classroom Building, CL 426  
Phone: 306-585-5653  
Email: Arts.AssocDean-UG@uregina.ca

#### **Dean of Education**

Dr. Jerome Cranston  
Office: ED 309, Faculty of Education,  
E-mail: Jerome.Cranston@uregina.ca  
Phone: 306-585-4500

#### **Dean Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies**

Dr. Harold Riemer,  
Office of the Dean: Centre for Kinesiology, Health and Sport, Room 225.37  
Phone: 306-585-4131  
E-mail: khs.dean@uregina.ca

**Dean of Engineering**

David deMontigny - Ph.D., P.Eng., FEC

Associate Dean (Academic), Professor, Engineering, Office: ED 409.2 E-mail:

david.demontigny@uregina.ca

All undergraduate student inquiries: engg.ada@uregina.ca

Phone: 306-337-2277

**Dean of Business Administration**

Andrew Gaudes

Office: ED 508.2

E-mail: Andrew.Gaudes@uregina.ca

Phone: 306-585-4162

**Dean of Science**

Michelle Kowbel

Administrative Assistant to the Dean

Office: LB 225

E-mail: michelle.kowbel@uregina.ca

Phone: 306-585-4143

**Dean of Nursing**

Karen Lehmann, RN, MSN

Associate Dean (Undergraduate)

Office: Research and Innovation Centre, Room 511

E-mail: nursing.assocdean.ug@uregina.ca

Phone: 306-337-2995

**Dean of Media, Art, and Performance**

Rae Staseson

Office: RC269.1

E-mail: MAP.Dean@uregina.ca

Phone: 306-585-5510

Fax: 306-585-5544



## **Instructor from Appropriate Department**

### **Student Affairs- Information & Advocacy**

#### **Enrolment Services: 306-585-4591**

New students, future students, admissions, campus tours, student loans, scholarships, bursaries

#### **Registrar's Office: 306-585-4127**

Transcripts, convocation, confirmation of enrollment, transfer credit, student number, name change

#### **Counselling Services: 306-585-4076**

Personal counselling with psychologists and clinical counselors

#### **Academic Advising - 306-585-4076**

Information about University of Regina programs  
Assistance registering for classes  
Understanding academic regulations and requirements  
Group and individualized learning support services

#### **Financial Services for Students: 306-585-4123**

[financial.services@uregina.ca](mailto:financial.services@uregina.ca)  
Tuition fees and charges to your student account

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