

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

POLICY

CODE OF CONDUCT – LA TROBE UNIVERSITY and its STUDENTS

LEGISLATION

The conduct of the University and its students is governed by a number of pieces of external legislation such as Acts involving privacy, occupational health and safety, equal opportunity, discrimination and administrative law.

There are a number of objects of the University detailed in the La Trobe University Act which among other things confer the right on the University to make Statutes and Regulations for the orderly operation of the University.

Some of this legislation directly impacts on the conduct of the University and students, for example Statutes or Regulations involving Discipline (S16) or Reviews and Appeals (S39). Other legislation codifies conduct in specific areas eg use of computing facilities, while some other legislation deals with how the University conducts its core business.

POLICY

University policy was determined by Academic Board in May 1995 when it endorsed the AVCC Guidelines contained in Universities and their Students – Expectations and Responsibilities.

A slightly abridged copy of these guidelines is reproduced below outlining the University's responsibilities and thus what students might reasonably expect and conversely the responsibilities of students and what the University might reasonably expect.

A University Responsibilities: Student Expectations

- 1 Potential students will have reasonable access to current and accurate information about available university courses, application and entry procedures, credit transfer policies and financial implications prior to the enrolment period.
- 2 Students will be selected for entry into university by fair and open procedures with published criteria outlining access for all levels of candidacy. The principles upon which selection decisions are made will be stated clearly and adhered to by the university.
- 3 Students enrolled in a particular course can normally expect to complete that course in the format as described in official university publications, providing they make satisfactory progress. Where changes to courses are made during the normal period of candidacy, these should not disadvantage students.
- 4 Written information about each unit or subject will be made available to students no later than the first week of the academic timetable. The information will outline unit or subject objectives, workload expectations, assessment procedures, attendance requirements, reading requirements, laboratory involvement and other requirements of the student. Such information will not be changed unless for exceptional circumstances, in which case students will receive adequate warning and consultation. A clear statement on the nature and unacceptability of academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism and fabrication or falsification of data, and on individual rights and responsibilities regarding the proper use of copyright material will be included in this information.

- 5 The university will endeavour to provide a suitable environment for teaching and learning and research supervision in which students will be stimulated to reach a high level of intellectual attainment.
- 6 The teaching-learning environment should be a positive and cooperative one where students will have reasonable access to staff to discuss issues and problems and can expect fair, critical and helpful assessment and feedback on their academic work in a timely manner.
- 7 The university will provide for appropriate dissemination of final assessment results to students within a reasonable time of the completion of units or subjects.
- 8 The university will produce a clearly outlined appeal mechanism, which will provide students with an opportunity to review and to question formally their results.
- 9 The university will endeavour to provide a harmonious work and study environment in which concerns and complaints will be addressed and resolved as quickly as possible. Student grievances that relate to academic standing and progress will be dealt with quickly and satisfactorily through a clear set of procedures provided by the university.
- 10 The university will provide opportunities for students to participate in the functioning of the university at various levels and to provide feedback on the teaching-learning environment.
- 11 At all times students can expect the university to hold confidential all personal information and to release it outside the university only with the consent and knowledge of the student or when legally required to do so.
- 12 The university will endeavour to address the reasonable needs of all its students regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, disability or background.
- 13 The university will endeavour to provide an environment for students which is free from harassment and discrimination as set out by relevant university policy and State and Federal Anti-discrimination legislation. Where alleged harassment or discrimination occurs, procedures will be available to students to facilitate expeditious and just resolution of grievances. The relationships that university staff develop with their students should not provide any basis for the abuse of the power that staff have over students in the university environment nor of the trust that students may legitimately expect to place in staff.
- 14 The university will encourage a network of support for all students to be developed which may include access to health services, recreational facilities, counselling services, learning assistance, child-minding facilities, graduate career planning, housing and accommodation information.
- 15 Student Representative Organisations have played a traditional and significant role in the life of Australian universities. It is expected that the university will support such organisations, as the university deems appropriate, within the legislative framework applying to the university and its administration.

B Responsibilities of Students: University Expectations

- 1 Students are responsible for making themselves aware of all university rules and regulations pertaining to their rights and responsibilities as students. They can expect that the university will make such rules and regulations readily available to them to access and, where appropriate, to acquire.

- 2 Students are expected to be aware of all unit or subject information made available to them and to raise any questions or concerns with the appropriate academic staff member in a timely manner.
- 3 Students have a responsibility to participate actively and positively in the teaching-learning environment. It is expected students will attend classes as required, maintain steady progress within the unit or subject framework, comply with workload expectations and submit required work on time.
- 4 The university is entitled to expect honest work at all levels from students. Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication or falsification of data, are not acceptable. Students are also expected to be aware of their individual rights and responsibilities regarding the proper use of copyright material.
- 5 Students are responsible for monitoring their own progress within the teaching-learning environment and the academic program. They will have reasonable access to academic staff for assistance and to the various academic support services.
- 6 Students have a responsibility to participate in the functioning of the university and to provide feedback on the teaching-learning environment. Student participation is important as students represent a key constituency within the university and provide useful perspectives on its operations.
- 7 Students are expected to act at all times in a way that respects the rights and privileges of others and shows commitment to the ideals of a university with special reference to excellence in performance and freedom of expression.
- 8 Students are expected to be aware of their responsibilities under the statutes of the university and to abide by these statutes.
- 9 Student Representative Organisations have played a traditional and significant role in the life of Australian universities. It is expected that these organisations will continue to act responsibly and in the best interests of all students attending universities and that they will be supported, as the university deems appropriate, within the legislative framework of the university and its administration.

PROCEDURE

- 1 The undergraduate (and Graduate Diploma in Education for teacher registration) admissions are channelled through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) and the University is bound by system rules and guidelines which protect the rights of prospective students. Selection criteria are advertised in advance in the VICTER (enabling choice of secondary school subjects) and in the VTAC Guide for the next selection period.
- 2 Postgraduate course admissions should be on the basis of clear selection criteria available to all applicants.
- 3 Subject descriptions are published in the Course Handbook and on the Web and should not normally be changed. Where this is necessary, students should be given a revised subject outline in the first lecture, clearly outlining the curriculum and the assessment criteria. In rare cases where it is desired to amend the assessment during semester the faculty office should be consulted. If the faculty is agreeable, the students may be consulted and if there are no significant objections, a change may be effected. In all cases, many weeks notice must be given to all students.

- 4 The University's policy on plagiarism is the subject of another policy note. Other provisions for academic misconduct are covered in the Examination regulation (21.12) and the Academic Misconduct regulation (16.2).
- 5 The University's Statute on Discipline (S16) and its subservient Regulations provide procedures for handling incidents where students do not respect the rights of other members of the community.
- 6 The University has Statutes on Copyright (copying) and use of the University's computer facilities.
- 7 The University has a policy on the reassessment of student work which is the subject of another policy note. Students are encouraged to seek feedback from subject co-ordinators and may seek a reassessment through the Head of School. Failure to obtain satisfaction may be followed-up with the Dean or the University Ombudsman.
- 8 The University has developed a range of avenues under which student grievances and appeals can be handled. These are outlined in Statute 39 – Reviews and Appeals and its subservient Regulations.
- 9 The University has well developed procedures to handle cases of harassment and discrimination. Advice can be provided through the Equity and Access Unit.
- 10 Students are informed of their responsibilities and rights (for example the Code of Conduct is reproduced in the Union Diary).

PRACTICE

- 1 The University has a well-established program of regular student feedback on subject presentation.
- 2 The University has student representation on Council, Academic Board, Council and Academic Board's major committees and faculty boards.
- 3 The University has comprehensive programs to support equity and students with disabilities. This support is led at Pro-Vice-Chancellor level and involves several major University Committees.
- 4 The University has a major program of Academic Orientation which assists first-year students make the transition to successful University study.
- 5 Procedures are invoked to handle cases of inappropriate student behaviour as provided in the Discipline Statute and its Regulations. Periodically students are involved for example in assault, harassment of other students or unacceptable behaviour in lectures. Sanctions include the ability of academic staff to suspend students from their classes for one week to the Vice-Chancellor's power to exclude students from the University. Deans or the University Secretary can fine students up to \$500.

COMMENT

- 1 While it would be beneficial if prospective students could be informed on 'credit transfer policies' prior to enrolment, it is unlikely that full credit information can be available at this time. Credit assessment can often involve research and discussion with students and hence may occur at enrolment or even later.
- 2 Student participation on University committees can be impeded by lack of interest in particular committees and limited attendance.

- 3 There is a difficulty in anticipating that students will be aware of the statutes and regulations. While they agree to be bound by this legislation on enrolment, it is unrealistic to expect that students will seek this information when relevant and read it carefully. The University attempts to inform students of important University rules in the Course Handbook and Information for Students (published in the Union Diary).

ADG

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