

SUBJECT: Advocacy Services	POLICY NO: SL-3	LAST REVIEWED: March 2018
APPROVED BY: Council	MANAGED BY: Executive Director	NEXT REVIEW: March 2020

SUMMARY

Policy Statement

BCITSA provides meaningful support services and advocacy initiatives to engage BCIT students in both their academic careers and the broader non-academic environment. BCITSA empowers students to take action and encourages a positive and proactive student community.

Purpose of This Policy

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Define clearly the ways in which BCITSA advocates for students through Advocates and Advocacy Services.
- Provide students with information regarding their rights and responsibilities.
- Outline the procedures for students interacting with Advocates.

Application of This Policy

This Policy applies to all students of BCIT regardless of status, including prospective students and alumni, as well as all employees involved with Advocacy Services.

Related Documents and Legislation

BCIT

- Policy 5101 – Student Regulations
- Policy 5102 – Student Code of Conduct (Non-Academic)

BCITSA

- GOV-3 – Advocacy

Forms Associated With This Policy

N/A

Amendment History

- Created [DATE]
- Amended [DATE]

DEFINITIONS**Advocacy Services**

Advocacy Services is defined as all activities or services where Advocates work in conjunction either with specific students or with groups of students to enhance the quality of student life.

Advocate

The Advocate is an employee responsible for meeting with students, faculty and staff of BCIT, and BCITSA to help the same interpret and navigate issues of academic and non-academic conduct at BCIT.

BCIT Education Council

The BCIT Education Council is the BCIT entity responsible for setting educational policy, programs, and priorities at BCIT.

Representation

For the purpose of this Policy, Representation is defined as support, education, and guidance to a student, prospective student, or alumni who requests the services of the BCITSA Advocacy office in any academic and non-academic conflict they may experience at BCIT. Under no circumstances does BCITSA consider Representation to be compulsory or mandatory, and Representation shall only be provided at the request of an individual seeking it. BCITSA respects the right of all students to opt to reject BCITSA Representation and represent themselves in any Advocacy-related activity.

For greater clarity, this definition of Representation pertains to students as individuals. A definition for Representation pertaining to students in terms of their collective membership is located in Policy GOV-3 – Advocacy, and is distinct and separate from this Policy. All disputes with respect to the definition of Representation shall be resolved by the Executive Director.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Executive Director

The Executive Director is responsible for the interpretation and enforcement of this Policy.

Vice President Student Affairs

The Vice President Student Affairs is responsible for liaising with the Advocates on any Advocacy-related matters that relate to discussions or matters at the BCIT Education Council.

Advocates

The Advocates are responsible for understanding to the best of their abilities all relevant BCIT and BCITSA Policies and Procedures, and for helping students interpret and navigate the same. Advocates are also responsible for informing BCIT personnel of any BCITSA Advocacy-related Policy or Procedure.

POLICY

1. Advocacy Services

1.1. Representation

- a.** BCITSA represents the academic and non-academic interests of all students at BCIT.
- b.** BCITSA shall work to ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate fully in their learning environments and to understand their rights and responsibilities.
- c.** Advocates reserve the right to determine the most effective form of Representation to provide to a student given the situation, and shall not be required to adopt a specific form of Representation upon request of the student.

1.2. Working with BCIT

- a.** Advocates shall work collaboratively with BCIT, its policies, and officials regarding all Advocacy Services.

- b.** Advocates shall work with BCIT to:
 - i.** Educate students about BCIT policies;
 - ii.** Ensure that students have reasonable and timely access to appropriate BCIT personnel and resources;
 - iii.** Educate all students, faculty, and staff about student rights and responsibilities as active agents in the educational process; and
 - iv.** Ensure that all BCIT policies and procedures, and any other pertinent related information such as course outlines, are available for all students.

- c.** Advocates shall work directly with students, and shall not communicate on behalf of any student without that student's express written consent.

1.3. Right to Dissent from BCIT

- a.** BCITSA reserves the right, acting reasonably, to dissent from BCIT, its policies, and officials where it deems that doing so is in the best interest of representing students.

- b.** BCITSA and its Advocates reserve the right to dissent from BCIT under any of the following conditions:
 - i.** Where BCIT officials and/or staff act inconsistently with established practices, policies, and procedures;
 - ii.** Where students are treated unfairly; or
 - iii.** Where BCITSA receives a mandate from students through established governance practices.

- c.** BCITSA and its representatives shall not dissent from BCIT under any of the following conditions:
 - i.** Where such dissent would undermine the academic integrity of BCIT;
 - ii.** Where such dissent would place the interests of one student and/or group of students in conflict with the interests of all BCIT students.

1.4. BCIT Policies and Procedures

- a. Advocates shall only operate within established BCIT policies and procedures.

2. Student Advocacy

2.1. Referrals for Advocacy

- a. Any employee, Executive, or student that is working or otherwise interacting with a student that they believe may benefit from utilizing Advocacy Services is encouraged to refer that student to an Advocate.
- b. Any referral to an Advocate shall be considered confidential, and the referrer shall not be linked directly to the referral.

2.2. Commitment of Confidentiality

- a. BCITSA recognizes and acknowledges the sensitive nature of Advocacy, and aims to protect the interests of any student that comes forward with an Advocacy-related issue.
- b. All communications and information supplied by a student for an Advocacy-related activity to an Advocate or any other employee or Executive shall be considered confidential, and shall only be disclosed with the express written consent of the student.
- c. If an Advocate has reason to believe that a student may harm themselves or others, they are required to contact BCIT Safety & Security, as well as the proper authorities.
- d. Where an Advocate has a statutory duty to disclose information to any authority, they shall do so, and shall advise the student of the same.

2.3. Advocates

- a. Advocates shall work with students to educate them about their rights and responsibilities to better engage in the Advocacy process.

- b.** Advocates shall advise students, but each student shall be ultimately responsible for determining and pursuing their own intended course of action.
- c.** Advocates shall commit to assisting students in a variety of ways, including but not limited to the following:
 - i.** Interpreting BCIT or BCITSA policy issues;
 - ii.** Advising on concerns or issues with instructors, BCIT personnel or other students;
 - iii.** Advising on concerns with course outlines and requirements;
 - iv.** Grade appeals;
 - v.** Advising on academic integrity issues;
 - vi.** Proof-reading communications to instructors or BCIT personnel; and
 - vii.** Upon the request of a student, providing Representation.
- d.** Advocates shall not be permitted, nor shall they be expected, to do any of the following:
 - i.** Provide legal advice;
 - ii.** Make a decision on behalf of a student without the prior express written consent of the student;
 - iii.** Order or command BCIT to reverse a decision;
 - iv.** Circumvent BCIT or BCITSA policy and procedures to resolve students' issues;
 - v.** Circumvent any collective agreement or contract to which BCIT or BCITSA is a party to; or
- e.** When the Advocate is requested to provide Representation for a student, they shall do so only when deemed appropriate by the Advocate, and only as authorized by the student.
 - i.** Advocates shall honour any request of refusing Representation from a student.
 - ii.** The Advocate shall not provide any information that is not already disclosed without the express written consent of the student.

2.4. Student Resources

- a. Advocates shall work with BCIT to ensure that students are provided with access to all applicable BCIT policies and procedures that relate to their issue.

2.5. Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaints

- a. Advocates reserve the right to deem an issue brought forth by a student vexatious or unreasonable, and may discontinue Advocacy Services on that issue.

PROCEDURE

1. Advocacy Procedures

1.1. Procedure for Student Concerns

- a. Each student shall be responsible for determining and pursuing their own intended course of action relating to their educational experience. Advocates shall assist students in navigating the advocacy process.
- b. Advocates shall provide students with information and resources relating to relevant BCIT policies and procedures.
- c. The Advocate shall provide the student or students with referrals and/or resources to assist them through the advocacy process.
- d. The student shall decide how they wish to proceed.
- e. The Advocate may attend meetings as requested by the student, but only in a supporting capacity. The student shall lead and act on their own behalf at all times.
- f. A student who decides to not proceed any further with their issue reserves the right to end the process and their interactions with the Advocate at any time.

1.2. Appealing an Advocate’s Decision to Deem an Issue Vexatious

- a. When an Advocate deems an issue vexatious or unreasonable, they shall advise the student of their decision in writing, and may cease Advocacy Services regarding the issue in question.
- b. If a student wishes to appeal the decision of an Advocate to deem an issue vexatious or unreasonable, they shall submit a written appeal to the Executive Director outlining why they feel their issue is valid.
- c. The Executive Director shall review the appeal and make a final determination on whether or not to resume Advocacy Services on the issue. The Executive Director may, at their sole discretion, choose to meet with the student or the Advocate before making a determination.
- d. The Executive Director shall inform the student of their decision, no later than one week after receiving the appeal.
- e. The decision of the Executive Director shall be considered final, with no further recourse for appeal.

1.3. Student Requesting a Different Advocate

- a. If during their interactions, a student feels that the Advocate is not working in their best interest or if the student feels that their needs are not being met, they may request to work with a different Advocate.
- b. The student shall submit a written request to the Executive Director outlining why they are requesting to work with a new Advocate.
- c. The Executive Director shall review and determine the validity of the request, and shall inform the student of their decision, no later than one week after receiving the request.
- d. The decision of the Executive Director shall be considered final, with no further recourse for appeal.

- e. The ability to provide a different Advocate is subject to the availability of the Advocates, and such requests may be refused due to operational need.