



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON
University of Victoria

Tips on Making Effective Decisions (Adapted from the *BC Ombudsman Quick Tips Guide*)

Step 1: Identify the Issue

Clearly identify the issues or questions you have to determine. You must make, can use a question prompt to identify the issue. For example, did the student violate the academic integrity policy by cheating? Ensure that you have the jurisdiction to make the decision and have the relevant policies on hand.

Step 2: Determine the rules

Make sure you know and clearly understand the rules that apply. Make sure the rules provide you with the authority to make the decision and that you understand the scope and limits of that authority. Rules include university and faculty specific academic regulations or policies.

Step 3: Give Notice of your Decision

Make sure you inform students affected by your decision in advance of your decision. Explain the decision making process and the rules that apply, including the specific criteria you will use to make the decision. Share any information or evidence that you will rely on to make your decision.

Step 4: Gather Evidence

Determine and gather the information and evidence you need to make a well informed decision. If you don't have the information you need, then make the necessary attempts to obtain it. Resolve any conflicting evidence and be prepared to explain how you considered the information to reach your conclusion. Make sure you are basing your decision only on relevant facts in light of the rules that apply.

**** If you are a the investigator in the matter consider the following****

Make reasonable inquiries or investigations before making a decision. A decision that will negatively affect a person should not be based merely on suspicion, gossip or rumour. There must be facts or information to support all negative findings. The best way of testing the reliability or credibility of information is to disclose it to a person in advance of a decision

Act fairly and without bias. If, in the course of a hearing, a person raises a new issue that questions or casts doubt on an issue that is central to a proper decision, it should not be ignored. Proper examination of all credible, relevant and disputed issues is important;

- Conduct the investigation without unnecessary delay; and
- Ensure that a full record of the investigation has been made.



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Step 5: Provide an opportunity to be heard

Invite the student to provide you with any information they have. It is important to get the student's side of the story before you make your decision. It is also important students' have the opportunity to review and respond to information collected that may affect them negatively. Make sure that you give the student enough time to respond to you.

Step 6: Make your decision in a timely manner

Make your decision by applying the rules to the information you gathered. Make sure you understand and follow the rules that apply, consider only relevant information, reasonably exercise any discretionary power you have and make your decision based on the individual circumstances of the case before you. Your analysis of the facts should be clearly tied to the rules that apply and lead to a logical and reasonable conclusion.

A timely decision is made within reason or permitted by policy. Please keep in mind, an unreasonable delay may impact students' future academic progress and would be unfair.

Step 7: Communicate your decision by providing reasons

Your reasons need not be long, but concise and sufficient. Explain your reasons for making the decision in simple language. Make sure you explain how you applied the rules to the information and evidence in order to reach a decision. It is important to explain how you considered the person's information and argument, and how you factored it into your decision. Make sure there are no gaps in your reasoning - the person receiving your decision should not have to guess how you made your decision or fill in gaps to understand your decision.

Reasons explain how and why a decision was made and can help lead to:

- Greater acceptance of decisions
- Better informed reviews and appeals
- Transparency in decision making
- Increased public accountability

Step 8: Give information about appeal or review

Give information about appeal or review options. Tell the student about any appeal or review processes that are available to them if they are dissatisfied with your decision. Make sure to also tell them about any time limits that apply.

Step 9: Document your decision

Clearly document your decision so that others can see what information and evidence you looked at, what rules you applied, and how you reached your conclusion. If you rejected certain evidence in the process, explain the reason why.