



# Office of the Ombuds Graduate School Student Services

Confidential. Impartial. Informal. Independent.

## ABOUT THE OMBUDS FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Since 2016, the Office of the Ombuds has provided confidential, impartial, informal, and independent conflict resolution and problem-solving assistance to all Graduate School students. The office offers a safe place to voice university-related concerns and review options to manage and address those concerns. In addition, the office serves as a catalyst for change by identifying patterns or trends on campus, offering feedback, and making recommendations about university policy or practice when appropriate to those who may have the power to effect change.

Conversations with the ombuds are voluntary. The ombuds holds all communications in strict confidence unless compelled by a court or there is an imminent risk of serious physical harm.

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## WE'RE HERE TO HELP

### *Why Meet with the Ombuds?*

People visit the ombuds for many reasons. Some people just want someone to listen. Some want someone to serve as an objective sounding board who can help them think through a situation. Some want information about whether and how a university policy or practice applies to them. Some are uncertain about how to navigate a difficult situation and don't know whom to ask for help. And some have tried other avenues to address their concern but haven't found the help they needed.

Reasons graduate students visit the ombuds include, but are not limited to:

- Interpersonal disputes
- Administrative roadblocks or bureaucratic runarounds
- Academic progress
- Career development
- Grade disputes
- Ethical dilemmas
- Research-related matters including authorship, proprietorship, conflict of interest, or scientific misconduct
- Abrasive conduct, incivility, or problematic behavior
- Unfair treatment
- Harassment or discrimination
- Health and safety
- Threats or retaliation
- Advising relationships
- Billing, tuition, or funding concerns

### *What to Expect*

The ombuds will listen to your concerns, help you think through your situation, and, together with you, identify and evaluate possible options for moving forward. At all times, you retain control over how your concern will be addressed. Whether as a first step, a last resort, or somewhere in between, the ombuds is here to help. No problem is too big or too small.

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## CONTACT

The ombuds is available to meet on both the Danforth and Medical campuses. Meetings are by appointment only. To schedule an appointment, call **314-379-8110**.

Please note that communicating with the ombuds by email is discouraged since privacy cannot be ensured.

For additional important information, please visit **[ombuds.wustl.edu](http://ombuds.wustl.edu)**.

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## HOW THE OMBUDS CAN HELP

### *The Ombuds Can:*

- Provide a safe place to discuss issues and surface concerns
- Listen
- Help think through and evaluate possible options
- Explain Washington University policies and procedures
- Gather relevant information from other resources
- Assist in preparing for an important conversation
- Facilitate conversations between two or more people
- Make referrals to other campus resources
- Track trends
- Recommend policy changes when appropriate
- Suggest constructive processes for addressing challenging issues
- Provide tailored conflict resolution education and training
- Promote fairness and equity

### *The Ombuds Can Not:*

- Take sides or advocate for any individual, group, or the university
- Make decisions
- Offer legal advice
- Provide psychological counseling
- Establish, change, or set aside policies
- Accept formal complaints or serve as an agent of notice for Washington University
- Replace any formal process of the university
- Conduct investigations, adjudicate, or arbitrate any dispute
- Agree to serve as a witness in any administrative or legal proceeding at Washington University or elsewhere
- Maintain records



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## STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

*The ombuds follows the standards of practice and code of ethics set forth by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA), including:*

**Confidentiality.** The ombuds holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence unless there is an imminent risk of serious physical harm or compelled by a court. To safeguard the identity of and communications with visitors, the ombuds does not keep written records.

**Impartiality.** As a neutral third party, the ombuds is available to help all Graduate School students. The ombuds does not take sides on any issue or advocate on the behalf of an individual or the university. Instead, the ombuds promotes fair and equitable processes and procedures.

**Informality.** Conversations with the ombuds are voluntary, informal, and “off the record.” The ombuds complements other formal and informal services but does not replace them. Moreover, the ombuds is not authorized to receive notice of claims against the university.

**Independence.** The ombuds functions independently of all other offices at the university (reporting to the executive vice chancellor for administration for budgetary and administrative purposes only) but has access to senior administration to convey information about perceived issues and trends on campus. The ombuds retains sole discretion over how to work with those who visit the office for interpersonal or systemic concerns.



Washington University in St. Louis

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OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS