

Memorandum of Understanding (the “MOU”) as Between:

University of Waterloo (the “University”)

a university established by an Act of the Legislature of the Province of Ontario, with its main campus located at 200 University Avenue W., Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G1

and

**The Federation of Students, University of Waterloo, carrying on business as
Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (“WUSA”)**

A corporation established under the laws of the Province of Ontario

and

Graduate Student Association – University of Waterloo (“GSA-UW”)

A corporation established under the laws of the Province of Ontario

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON

WHEREAS:

(A) The University of Waterloo is committed to the just and fair treatment of students. In keeping with this commitment, the University and students share the funding of the Office of the Ombudsperson.

(B) As a member of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO), the Office of the Ombudsperson operates in accordance with the ACCUO Standards of Practice. Specifically, the Office functions independently from the institution and from student associations, allowing Office staff to act impartially. The Office receives and handles complaints and inquiries in a confidential manner.

(C) Nothing in this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is intended to be legally binding or shall be construed as creating any legally enforceable rights or obligations between the parties with the exception only of the provisions in clauses II.1.g, II.1.h, II. 3, II.6, and II.9 and Articles III and IV which are legally binding. This MOU is therefore a statement of intent which sets forth the general basis upon which the parties wish to proceed; no contract will arise as to the subject matter hereof (notwithstanding the seven legally binding clauses referred to above) unless and until an agreement is negotiated, approved, executed and delivered by the parties.

I. Purpose of MOU and Definitions

1. The purpose of this MOU is to set forth the conditions for the operation of the Office of the Ombudsperson.
2. By signing this MOU, the signatories agree to direct their officers, agents, employees, councils and committees to respect its terms and to cooperate fully with the Ombudsperson when requested.
3. The parties to this MOU agree to fund the Office of the Ombudsperson in accordance with Article III of this MOU.
4. In this MOU:
 - (a) "Funding Partners" means those groups that provide financial support for the Office of the Ombudsperson, namely the University and the students, as represented by WUSA and GSA-UW.
 - (b) "Office" means the office of the Ombudsperson as established under this MOU.
 - (c) "Ombudsperson" refers to both the person holding the title of Ombudsperson and such other staff who may be authorized from time to time to carry out certain functions of the Office of the Ombudsperson.
 - (d) "Policies" means those policies and procedures established by the University from time to time.

II. Office of the Ombudsperson

1. **Functions:** The Office of the Ombudsperson shall function independently of all decision-making structures of the University, WUSA, GSA-UW, and other signatories to this MoU. Its functions shall be:
 - a. To carry out impartial investigations of complaints or grievances about any aspect of University life at the request of any student, or upon the Ombudsperson's own motion. Before undertaking an investigation, the Ombudsperson will ensure that other avenues have been reasonably exhausted. The Office may offer mediative and advisory support at any stage to assist a person to resolve a problem by themselves and to avoid more formal procedures.
 - b. To serve as a general information centre for students and other members of the University community about University resources, procedures, policies, practices and rules. The Office will advise students of their rights and responsibilities in University situations. The Ombudsperson is expected to search actively for the answers to any pertinent questions.
 - c. To make recommendations to those in authority with a view to remedying unfairness in the situation of an individual student, as appropriate.
 - d. To recommend to those in authority changes in rules, Policies, and practices which would have the effect of making the University, WUSA, GSA-UW or any other signatory fairer in its operations.
 - e. To provide advice to students as they navigate University processes, particularly those governed by Policies 33 - Ethical Behaviour, 42 - Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence, 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, 71 - Student Discipline, Policy 8 – Freedom of Speech, and 72 - Student Appeals, as well as non-academic processes over which the University has jurisdiction (e.g., housing, Campus Safety and Security, and parking services).

- f. To, at the request of students, review the University's compliance with its Policy-mandated processes.
- g. To review data and trends related to Policy outcomes and identify areas of concern to the appropriate University leaders on Policies and their administration.
- h. To meet regularly with student leaders on issues related to the purpose and function of the Office of the Ombudsperson.
- i. To consult or be consulted, as appropriate, on the development of new and revision of existing University Policies.

2. Interactions: Informality is the prevailing atmosphere in dealing with the Office of the Ombudsperson, with only minimal notes kept and shuttle diplomacy being the preferred method of settling concerns. Wherever possible, Ombudsperson staff guide students through managing a situation on their own. Refer also to clause II.1.a., regarding mediative and advisory support.

3. Confidentiality: The Office of the Ombudsperson will respect the right of every member of the University community to have information kept confidential. Confidentiality will be respected even though acceding to such a request may prevent resolution of a problem. The Ombudsperson may disclose information where, in the opinion of the Ombudsperson, there is an imminent risk of serious harm and/or as may be permitted or required by law. The Ombudsperson is considered to have a duty to disclose, even if doing so may violate University of Waterloo Policy. No party to this MOU may penalize the Ombudsperson, or their Office, for exercising this duty; though, they may for failure to exercise this duty.

4. Special Concerns: It shall be the special concern of the Ombudsperson that decisions about individual students are made fairly. Among other things, that means:

- a. with reasonable promptness;
- b. in accordance with applicable Policies;
- c. taking account of all relevant information; and
- d. in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness.

The Ombudsperson shall also be concerned that procedures and criteria used in making decisions are well defined, and clearly communicated to those affected.

5. Access to Files and Persons: The Ombudsperson shall have access to relevant files and persons in order to gather information needed in fulfilling the functions of the Office as it relates to an individual case. Requests by the Ombudsperson for information shall be handled expeditiously by all members of the campus community.

6. Avoiding Conflicts of Interest: The Ombudsperson will avoid actual and perceived conflicts of interest and refrain from activity that could compromise the independence of the Office. Specifically, the Ombudsperson shall not:

- a. Be a voting member of any committee, hiring board or council of the University, WUSA, GSA-UW, or any other signatory.

b. Make University Policy or replace established legislative or judicial procedures, although any or all of these may be investigated or questioned, and recommendations may be made for their improvement; and/or

c. Exercise a judicial function, or make binding decisions in any case.

7. Operations:

a. The Ombudsperson shall establish consistent policies and practices for the Office. These will be posted on the Office website and made available upon request.

b. The Office will normally function on a first come, first served basis, though the Ombudsperson shall have discretion to make exceptions.

c. Informality and openness will characterize the procedures of the Office.

d. Cases will be handled promptly and in accordance with this MOU.

e. The Office of the Ombudsperson shall be located in a space within the Student Life Centre of the University which the Ombudsperson, acting reasonably, finds suitable. The Office of the Ombudsperson will ensure communication pathways with students are accessible and broadly available to accommodate for varied location and availability of students.

8. Investigations on University Compliance with Policy or Processes:

a. An investigation by the Ombudsperson will be undertaken at the Ombudsperson's discretion. Normally, the Ombudsperson will investigate only if:

i. the person or persons affected agree the matter should be investigated;

ii. the matter is related to the University;

iii. other avenues or means to address the concern are exhausted, unavailable or for good reason unacceptable;

iv. the party raising the concern is a student of the University or the party raising the concern is a former student of the University, but only in respect of matters arising out of and crystallizing during their time as a student.

b. An investigation by the Ombudsperson normally culminates in a written, confidential report. A draft report will be provided to each party for comment with a specified timeline for responses. A final report will typically contain:

i. a summary or description of the information gathered in the course of the investigation;

ii. an analysis of the information, and its significance and relevance to the claims of the parties;

iii. a synthesis of the parties' responses to the draft report; and

iv. the Ombudsperson's reasoned conclusions and recommendations.

c. The report will not disclose any information without the agreement of the party providing it. If a party is unwilling to have key information included in the report or shared with other parties, the Ombudsperson has the option of terminating the investigation without making any findings or recommendations.

d. All members of the University community are required to fully participate in any investigation or review conducted by the Ombudsperson. Any member of the University community to whom a recommendation is addressed by the Ombudsperson shall make a reasoned and timely response.

e. If, in the opinion of the Ombudsperson, the response is unsatisfactory, a timely response is not forthcoming, or if it is suspected key information is withheld to circumvent the progression of the investigation, the Ombudsperson may, at their discretion, engage supervisors of the respondent up to and including the appropriate Vice President.

f. The Ombudsperson may refuse to investigate a complaint which appears frivolous, vexatious or untimely, or would otherwise be an abuse of the Ombudsperson's function. A letter explaining the refusal will be provided to the complainant upon request.

9. Record Keeping

a. The Ombudsperson shall maintain suitable records of inquiries and cases in accordance with the University's information retention Policy. The files of the Office shall be for the exclusive use of the Ombudsperson and shall not be released to anyone else for any purpose except where required by law. However, the Ombudsperson may quote from the record in reports or correspondence.

b. It follows that the Office of the Ombudsperson is not an office of record; advising the Office of the Ombudsperson of a situation is not a substitute for advising the appropriate authority.

10. Annual Reports: The Ombudsperson, consistent with all offices supported by the Student Services Advisory Committee ("SSAC"), shall produce to the Secretariat of the University, WUSA, and GSA-UW two annual reports that will make the signatory parties aware of the Office's work and demonstrate the Office's accomplishments for the previous period, copies of which shall be provided to the SSAC. The Office will also produce an annual public report to the community. While the report to the signatories (shared with the SSAC) is and shall be treated as confidential by the Secretariat and SSAC, it is of course appropriate that there will be considerable overlap in the content of the reports.

11. Additional Tasks: The Office of the Ombudsperson may assume additional tasks from time to time. Such tasks should serve the campus community in a way that is reasonably consistent with the basic mandate. One such task is performing educational outreach on topics relevant to the University community. Another is reviewing draft Policies and procedures upon the request of any of the signatories, particularly policies that govern in some way the lives of students at Waterloo or its Affiliated and Federated Institutions..

III. Funding for the Ombudsperson's Office

1. In order to safeguard the independence of the Office, the costs of the Office shall be borne by the Funding Partners. Specifically, and absent any mutual agreement to the contrary for specified operating year(s), the University will contribute fifty percent (50%) of the Office's operating budget. The remaining will be funded by students through student fees approved by the SSAC.
2. Note that continued funding for the Ombuds Office will be reviewed per the terms of the SSAC and communicated to the University. In the event that such funding shall not continue, the University may, at its option, terminate this MOU on not less than ten (10) business days prior written notice.
3. In order to assist the Funding Partners, the Ombudsperson will:
 - (a) Review the Office budget proposals and make recommendations on the budget to the Funding Partners prior to the commencement of the fiscal year and early enough to account for the fee collection cycle. Under no circumstances shall the operating budget be exceeded without the express written permission of the Funding Partners; and
 - (b) Make recommendations to the University on staffing and any other employment- related matters. As of the date hereof, the current intended staffing and related job descriptions for the Office of the Ombudsperson are attached hereto as Appendix "A".

IV. Term of MOU, Amendments, Termination and Renewal

1. The term of this MOU shall be five years from the Effective Date.
2. Amendments may be proposed by any signatory at any time.
 - (a) Proposed amendments that are deemed by the Ombudsperson to not influence funding may be considered and approved as appropriate by all signatories independent of the SSAC;
 - (b) Proposed amendments to the MOU that are deemed by the Ombudsperson to influence funding requirements will be considered by the SSAC and will require the approval of the SSAC and all signatories.
3. This MOU may be terminated by mutual consent of all parties or by written notice from any one or more signatories on twelve (12) months written notice.
4. Eight (8) months prior to the expiration of this MOU, the parties shall review the terms of this MOU and enter into discussions concerning its renewal.

V. Signatures

1. This MOU may be executed and delivered in counterpart copies and by facsimile or human readable digital format, and such copies shall be binding on the parties. This MOU is not binding on any party until executed by all parties.

Signed as an MOU on the date set out below.

Signed for and on behalf of
University of Waterloo

Authorized Representative

Print Name and Title

Date

Authorized Representative

Print Name and Title

Date

Signed for and on behalf of
**Federation of Students,
University of Waterloo,**
carrying on business as
**Waterloo Undergraduate
Student Association**

Authorized Representative

Print Name and Title

Date

Authorized Representative

Print Name and Title

Date

Signed for and on behalf of
**Graduate Student Association –
University of Waterloo**

Authorized Representative

Print Name and Title

Date

Authorized Representative

Print Name and Title

Date

Job Description



Job Title:	Ombudsperson
Department:	Secretariat, Office of the Ombudsperson
Reports To:	University Secretary
Jobs Reporting:	Case Manager, Office of the Ombudsperson
Salary Grade:	USG 16
Effective Date:	September 2024

Primary Purpose

The Office of the Ombudsperson (“Ombuds Office”) is an independent unit that is supported by the University Secretary, to whom the Ombudsperson reports. The Ombuds Office shall provide an accessible, independent, impartial, and confidential service through which students receive guidance and advice about their university-related concerns and complaints regarding university policies, procedures, and decision-making structures. The office is an important resource to the University of Waterloo community to aid and support students in understanding of policies, procedures, and processes within the university and in the identification of opportunities for improvement.

The Ombudsperson plays a key role in promoting fairness in university decision-making and is expected to be a person of high integrity and promoter of ethics to inspire trust and address confidential issues.

The Ombudsperson may receive any university-related inquiries or concerns from University of Waterloo students. Concerns may also be received, at the discretion of the Ombudsperson, from University applicants whether accepted or not at the time of the initial contact, as well as from former students where the concern arose during their active student status.

The Ombudsperson is empowered to examine complaints of unfairness, and on that basis have access to relevant individuals and information as necessary to fulfill their role. Any party who refuses such cooperation must respond in writing with reasons to the University Secretary.

The Ombudsperson may conduct an inquiry of concerns and complaints notifying those in authority and providing recommendations with a view to remedying an individual situation, and/or identify any policies, procedures or practices that appear unclear, inequitable, or unfair. Committed to equity, diversity and inclusion principles, the Ombudsperson assists students in exploring and evaluating options and determining an appropriate course of action with an aim to resolve disputes before they escalate. The successful resolution of complaints contributes to the development of a supportive and inclusive environment for all students across the university.

The Ombudsperson must review matters received with objectivity, a sense of fairness, and sensitivity to all involved and/or impacted groups. The incumbent must exhibit mature judgement with an appreciation of the university and academic environment and analyze information from disparate sources. The Ombudsperson must achieve a high degree of credibility and integrity throughout the University community. The incumbent also serves as change-agent through identification of systemic issues and areas to be addressed through changes to University policy or procedures.

The Ombudsperson serves as a expert resource and advisor on university policies, as appropriate, in support of addressing systemic issues and other areas identified through the work of the Ombuds Office.

The Ombuds Office must comply with the professional standards of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO). The Ombuds Office supplements but does not replace the University's existing resources for formal conflict resolution. The mandate of the Ombuds Office is guided by a Memorandum of Understanding between the University and its undergraduate and graduate student associations.

Key Accountabilities

Leadership and Strategic Direction

- Responsible for the establishment of a new Ombuds Office for the University, and for providing overall leadership, management, and administration for the Ombuds Office
- Responsible for the establishment of a clear mission and vision for the Ombuds Office, including the development of short-and long-term strategic plans
- Oversee the financial, human resources, and other managerial responsibilities within the Ombuds Office, including:
 - Overall direction and leadership to staff; including development or refinement of job descriptions to create and support a robust and effective Ombuds Office for the university.
 - Preparation and implementation of annual and multi-year budgets consistent with objectives of the office and with due regard for the joint funding model for the office and related accountabilities
- Act as the distinct advocate to ensure procedural fairness in university decision-making on behalf of the University of Waterloo, working independently of both the individuals who seek guidance and university administration, to consider all sides of an inquiry impartially, objectively, and equitably, while being mindful of conflicts of interest
- Establish procedures and workflow for receiving administrative, academic and individual complaints from the University student community, including consistent policies and practices, ensuring effective use of Ombuds Office resources, and with a view to handing inquiries and investigations in a timely manner
- Remain up to date on relevant laws and regulations to ensure compliance with government guidelines and university requirements, policies, and procedures
- Demonstrate transparency and congruency in beliefs and actions; holds high ethical standards, integrity, and credibility, and treats all parties with fairness and respect
- Monitor on an ongoing basis, the effectiveness of the investigation process and, improves efficiencies where deficiencies are noted
- Exercises excellent judgment and discretion in dealing with highly sensitive issues

Dispute Resolution, Consultation, Advice and Referral

- With sound knowledge of University policies and procedures, as well as the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness, provide advice and guidance to students in regard to their rights and responsibilities, and appropriate procedures to follow in order to resolve complaints proceedings
- Serve as a confidential source of expert information and referral, to aid in answering individuals' questions, and assist in the resolution of concerns
- Operate in an advisory capacity, assisting students involved in academic and non-academic misconduct matters and complex proceedings within the university including participating at hearings if requested by a student
- Facilitate discussion and use informal channels to build trust, consensus and seek resolution
- Facilitate communication, dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving to identify a range of reasonable options to resolve issues or concerns

- Work with students to plan strategies and explore or evaluate options on how best to proceed with the aim to resolve disputes before escalation occurs
- Empower students to deal directly and effectively with their concerns, guiding them to advocate for themselves and through provision of an objective perspective
- Through impartial advice and administration, ensure and sustain the credibility and integrity of the Ombuds Office and processes
- Mediate complaints according to university policies or procedures or upon request of the parties to a dispute
- Ensure that procedures and criteria used in making decisions are well defined, and clearly communicated to those affected
- Conduct thorough and objective investigations regarding both individual and systemic issues with a focus on fact-finding, fairness, timeliness, and attention to detail
- Guide and assist students experiencing complex and/or conflict situations in the preparation of their cases
- Advise students of their rights and responsibilities, offer general guidance on the appropriate channel(s) of redress for any concern or complaint, and make referrals to appropriate bodies whether internal or external to the university community
- Maintain strict confidentiality of all personal information of students; does not undertake any course of action on a student's behalf without the express consent of the individual except to the extent required by law

Investigations

- Establish intake and investigation plan to guide the initial steps of the process; determine what allegations or relevant facts are in dispute and identify potential sources of evidence
- Collect evidence from all appropriate sources including witness interviews and hard evidence (e.g., digital evidence, documentation)
- Consistently consider and adhere to university policy, principle of natural justice and fair process when collecting, assessing, and weighing evidence in support of findings
- Adhere to established timelines and hold accountable for any procedural delays
- Provide regular updates to internal clients, complainant(s), respondent(s) and their support personnel
- Prepare a final report for presentation to the client setting out the allegations, evidence, relevant procedural matters, findings (facts, credibility, and policy analysis)
- Remain well informed of all relevant legislation, policies, and enhancements to investigatory practices

Policy Review and Support

- At the request of students, review university's compliance with its policy-mandated processes
- Regularly review the university's processes relative to policy to instill confidence that the university regularly complies with its own policies
- Work to improve systems and develops best practices and procedures
- Review data and trends related to policy-related outcomes and identify areas of concern to university leaders
- Provide recommendations with a view to remedy an individual situation, identify any policy, procedure or practice that appears unclear, inequitable, or unfair
- Work in collaboration with university policymakers, to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of students are adequately defined in the policies and procedures and published, and that awareness of such rights and responsibilities is created and maintained

- Review, investigate, and advise regarding any gaps or inadequacies in relevant policies and procedures, which may affect the ability of students to function as members of the university community or which may compromise their human rights or the rules of natural justice; ensure these are brought to the attention of the proper administrative authority
- Review draft policies and procedures that govern the lives of University of Waterloo students or Affiliated & Federated University College students
- Serves as a expert resource and advisor on university policies, as appropriate, in support of addressing systemic issues and other areas identified through the work of the Ombuds Office

Data and Reporting

- Safeguard and keep confidential all information received in the Ombuds Office; responsible for data management, ensuring compliance with university requirements, policies, and procedures
- Entitled to access relevant information under the university's care, custody, or control as required for the performance of the Ombudsperson's functions
- Maintain strict, confidential records of inquiries and cases in accordance with the University of Waterloo's information retention policy and obligations under provincial and federal law; sourcing case files for statistical analysis and/or legal obligations.
- Maintain and secure information systems and determine how and to whom confidential data can be released
- Exercise discretion over whether or how to engage regarding individual, group, or systemic concerns, including bringing a concern to the attention of appropriate individuals.
- Produce timely, high quality, plain-language memoranda, reports, guidance, and tools to assist with policy interpretation, advice and to inform the university community about insights and trends to support policy and procedural reform.
- Publish and communicate annual Ombuds Office Report to university leadership, the Board of Governors, and Senate, in addition to the university community in support of transparency and university values and culture, and compiles other reports for key stakeholders as required (see above).

Internal Relations and Education

- Establish communications plan and conduct outreach programs and workshops to educate the university community on the establishment and role of the Ombuds Office
- As a resource for policies and procedures – create guides, training materials, and other educational tools to assist students in understanding and exercising their rights and responsibilities Performs educational outreach on topics relevant to the university community.
- Works with faculties on general student-related issues and concerns
- Maintains membership in good standing and compliance with the professional standards of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO).
- Well-informed of relevant memberships and associations such as the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO); Ombudsman Ontario, and the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) to stay abreast of the latest knowledge and best practices
- Consult regularly with the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association, Graduate students Association, Staff Association, and Faculty Association to ensure the needs of the campus community are being met with respect to the mandate of the Ombuds Office Liaise with faculties, student residence, and other student service offices on student related issues and concerns.

**All employees of the University are expected to follow University and departmental health and safety policy, procedures, and work practices at all times. Employees are also responsible for the completion of all health and*

safety training, as assigned. Employees with staff supervision and/or management responsibilities will ensure that assigned staff abide by the above, and actively identify, assess, and correct health and safety hazards, as required.

Required Qualifications

Education and Qualifications

- University degree in a discipline associated with law, social work, conflict management, and/or ethics
- Master's degree or professional degree (e.g., JD, LLB) in a related discipline considered a significant asset
- Formal mediation or conflict resolution training from a recognized institution (e.g., Certificate in Mediation or Conflict Resolution) is required
- Current membership with the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO) is an asset; (institutional membership to be acquired within first year of employment).
- Current clear Police Vulnerable Sector Check is a requirement of this position

Experience

- Ombudsperson experience is strongly preferred, though substantial related work experience may be considered
- 8-10 years of experience conducting dispute resolution, mediation, and negotiations
- Significant experience conducting initial intakes, discussing concerns and options, and providing institutional level recommendations
- Experience and knowledge applying relevant provisions of human rights legislation (e.g., Ontario Human Rights Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act), Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and university obligations
- Experience within a post-secondary education setting is an asset
- Familiarity with the academic environment and an understanding of the challenges faced by students within a higher education institution
- Experience conducting investigations and reporting writing
- Experience working with people of diverse backgrounds and cultures is also desired
- Experience in the development and review of policies and procedures/guidelines preferably in an academic setting (committee process, collegial decision-making, Board of Governors, Senate, student government, residence systems etc.)
- Experience working with administrative law, tribunals, and procedural fairness
- Experience providing consultative services in managing discrimination and harassment, anti-racism; understanding of cultural diversity and needs of special populations

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Understanding of the business requirements of an academic institution, the ability to identify and respond to the needs of university departments, and the ability to interpret and revise appeals procedures
- Demonstrated leadership related to strategy development and implementation designed to support equity-deserving groups
- Ability to build trust within a diverse community, fostering a sense of equity and inclusion for all
- Strong mediation and negotiation skills including the ability to listen, synthesize relevant information, and diffuse tension
- Exceptional interpersonal skills to build trust and rapport, and maintain neutrality when dealing with a variety of scenarios
- Proven strength in building and maintaining strong relationships with students

- Experience building collaborative relationships with diverse stakeholder groups and senior leadership; providing guidance on a wide range of complex and diverse legal, procedural, and regulatory matters
- Robust communication skills, both written and verbal, with the ability to express ideas clearly and concisely, including effective public relations and speaking skills
- High degree of understanding in procedural fairness and equitable practices
- Exceptional analytical skills to assess complex situations with effective decision-making abilities to guide a fair and impartial process that comprises accurate evidence assessment
- Proven organizational and time management skills to deal effectively with multiple demands, conflicting priorities, and deadlines
- Knowledge of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) and Ombudsman Ontario, along with the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO), and the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI)
- Computer literacy in MS Office Suite in a windows environment

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** Internally, this position interacts with direct reports, the University Secretary, on an on-going basis, and provides reports to the Board of Governors, its standing committees, and Senate. This position also interacts regularly with Associate Deans, Associate Vice-Presidents, Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Anti-racism, Campus Support & Accessibility, Conflict Management, Office of Academic Integrity, Human Resources, Special Constable Services, and Faculty or Faculty representatives, when appropriate. In addition, this position will interact with student governing bodies, the Graduate Student Association, Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association, Staff Association, and Faculty Association. Externally, this position interacts with Ombuds Offices at other universities and colleges and relevant associations including but not limited to the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO).
- **Level of Responsibility:** The Ombuds Office is autonomous in its direction and leadership, led by the Ombudsperson, accountable for independently creating and executing the responsibilities and decision-making. The Ombuds Office functions independently of all decision-making structures of the University.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** This position has decision-making authority of all items outlined above. Using their discretionary authority to use good judgement and diplomacy, the Ombudsperson is responsible for making sound decisions on all matters related to their portfolio. The Ombuds Office provides support and guidance to the campus-wide community on all university-related concerns and complaints regarding university policies, procedures, and decision-making structures impacting students. The Ombudsperson must act independently of both individuals and university administration to ensure an impartial and equitable process.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** This position requires routine physical activity on a regular basis, in relation to the need to establish relationships across campus. The incumbent is frequently required to sit for extended periods of time at a desk and on the computer while in meetings, preparing reports and recommendations etc. This position requires regular mental and visual concentration while working on the computer, writing, and reviewing documents for detail and accuracy. Visual strain as a result from these activities. This position also requires extended listening and concentration while consulting, mediating, and facilitating, in addition to performing investigations. Responding to emotional and aggressive behaviour is possible, given clients can be experiencing a range of negative

emotions

- **Working Environment:** Exposure to stress and pressure associated with potentially emotionally charged situations resulting in exposure to disagreeable experiences when meeting with individuals who are in distress. Involves moderate psychological risk resulting from ongoing interactions with individuals who have a specific concern or conflict with one or more individuals.

Job Description

Job Title:	Assistant Ombudsperson
Department:	Office of the Ombudsperson
Reports To:	Ombudsperson
Jobs Reporting:	n/a
Salary Grade:	Click here to enter text
Effective Date:	Click here to enter text

Primary Purpose

The Office of the Ombudsperson ("Ombuds Office") is an independent unit that is supported by the University Secretary, to whom the Ombudsperson reports. The Ombuds Office shall provide an accessible, independent, impartial, and confidential service through which students receive guidance and advice about their university-related concerns and complaints regarding university policies, procedures, and decision-making structures. The office is an important resource to the University of Waterloo community to aid and support students in understanding of policies, procedures, and processes within the university and in the identification of opportunities for improvement.

The Ombuds Office must comply with the professional standards of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO). The Ombuds Office supplements but does not replace the University's existing resources for formal conflict resolution. The mandate of the Ombuds Office is guided by a Memorandum of Understanding between the University and its undergraduate and graduate student associations.

The Assistant Ombudsperson will act as the first point of contact for the Ombuds Office and is responsible for receiving visitors, triage of concern(s), and attempts to resolve issues quickly through communication before escalating them to the Ombudsperson. Key duties include intake, complaint analysis, identifying relevant issues, providing information to complainants, and determining if a complaint falls within the jurisdiction of the Ombuds Office, potentially referring cases to appropriate channels when necessary.

Key Accountabilities

Intake Coordination

- Receives and documents complaints from visitors via phone, email, or in person, gathering necessary details about the issue and the complainant's concerns
- Maintain correspondence through the Ombuds Office email and ensure responses are made promptly.
- Educates complainants about the Ombudsman's role, complaint process, and potential outcomes
- Analyzes complaints to identify the key issues at hand and determines if they fall within the Ombuds Office mandate
- Analyzes complaints to identify main issues and flags complaints which are judged to be exceptionally serious, sensitive, high profile or systemic in nature When necessary, escalate complex, sensitive, high profile, systemic, or unresolved complaints to the Ombudsperson

Job Description



- If complaint falls outside the mandate of the Ombuds Office, refers the visitor to the appropriate office or provides guidance on alternative avenues for redress

Early Resolution

- Identifies and explains relevant university processes and policies
- Facilitates discussions and use informal channels to seek resolution
- Works with students to plan strategies and explore options on how best to proceed
- Clarifies goals and promotes problem-solving
- Empowers students to deal directly and effectively with their concerns
- Listen and provide an objective perspective

Case and Records management

- Creates and maintains comprehensive and accurate case file documentation, ensuring all relevant information is documented, scanned, and transferred to the case management system
- Maintains the confidentiality and privacy of personal information
- Monitors complaint/case file documentation and background follow-up information, ensuring all information is accurate, complete and appropriately documented
- Monitors student cases and maintains records to allow for constant analysis of trends
- .
- Assists the Ombudsperson and collaborates on case file investigations, providing background information, document preparation and research support and input to support escalated case file resolution
- Builds effective and trusting relationships with students and the broader University community, to probe and resolve sensitive and potentially contentious issues
- Manages relationships with diverse group of stakeholders, ensuring deliverables and expectations are effectively managed and any issues are resolved.

Promotion of the Office

- Assists the Ombudsperson with activities that promote the Ombuds Office on campus
- Communicates effectively with University community members to emphasize the importance of the Office and its role at the University

**All employees of the University are expected to follow University and departmental health and safety policy, procedures and work practices at all times. Employees are also responsible for the completion of all health and safety training, as assigned. Employees with staff supervision and/or management responsibilities will ensure that assigned staff abide by the above, and actively identify, assess and correct health and safety hazards, as required.*

Required Qualifications

Education

- University degree in a discipline associated with social science, law, social work, conflict management, and/or ethics or an acceptable combination of education, training and experience.
- Formal mediation or conflict resolution training from a recognized institution (e.g., Certificate in Mediation or Conflict Resolution)
- Current clear Police Vulnerable Sector Check is a requirement of this position

Experience

- 3-5 years of experience conducting initial intakes, discussing concerns and options.

Job Description

- Experience using case/complaint management systems (CMS)
- Familiarity with the academic environment and an understanding of the challenges faced by students within a higher education institution
- Experience within a post-secondary education setting is an asset
- Experience working with people of diverse backgrounds and cultures is also desired

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Demonstrated commitment to customer service and quality principles in service delivery
- Demonstrated ability to work with and respond effectively in a diverse population
- Integrity and commitment to fairness
- Demonstrated ability to communicate with individuals who are distressed, emotionally distraught or who may require special accommodation
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Strong analytical skills
- Conflict resolution and mediation skills
- Detail-oriented approach to record keeping and case management
- Knowledge of University policies and procedures
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** Internally, this position mostly interacts with the Ombudsperson. Additionally, this position may interact with staff within the following units: Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Anti-racism, Campus Support & Accessibility, Conflict Management, Office of Academic Integrity, Human Resources, Special Constable Services, and Faculty or Faculty representatives, when appropriate. Externally, this position interacts with Ombuds Offices at other universities and colleges and relevant associations including but not limited to the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO).
- **Level of Responsibility:** The Ombuds Office is autonomous in its direction and leadership, led by the Ombudsperson, accountable for independently creating and executing the responsibilities and decision-making. The Ombuds Office functions independently of all decision-making structures of the University.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** This position has support from the Ombudsperson for all major decisions.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** The incumbent is frequently required to sit for extended periods of time at a desk and on the computer while in meetings, responding to inquiries to the Office, maintaining the Case Management System etc. This position requires regular mental and visual concentration while working on the computer, writing, and reviewing documents for detail and accuracy. Visual strain as a result from these activities. This position also requires extended listening and concentration while consulting, mediating, and facilitating concerns brought forward by visitors. Responding to emotional and aggressive behaviour is possible, given clients can be experiencing a range of negative emotions.
- **Working Environment:** Exposed to stress and pressure associated with front-facing support positions when meeting with individuals who are in distress. Involves moderate psychological risk resulting from ongoing interactions with individuals who have a specific concern or are in conflict with one or more individuals.