

Difficult Conversations - Role of the Faculty Ombudsman

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Duties and Responsibilities

- ❑ Duties defined by faculty rule 3335-5-45.3
 - <https://trustees.osu.edu/bylaws-and-rules/3335-5>
- ❑ Overall responsibility is to provide confidential/impartial conflict resolution services for faculty
- ❑ Consultation with the ombudsman is voluntary
- ❑ Most effective if faculty seek help early in the process before relationships have eroded

International Association of Ombudsman (IOA): Principles of Practice

- ❑ Independence – outside of the formal organizational chart of the university
- ❑ Neutrality - impartiality; not an advocate for any individual, group or entity
- ❑ Confidentiality – interactions are private and no records are generated; exceptions include cases where there is a perceived threat of bodily harm or otherwise required by law
- ❑ Informality – does not participate in formal university procedures

https://www.ombudsassociation.org/assets/docs/IOA_Standards_of_Practice_Oct09.pdf

Common categories of concerns

- Clarification regarding policies/procedures
- Disputes over salary and workload expectations
- Perceived unfairness/bias/discrimination
- Issues regarding privacy/confidentiality
- Inappropriate or abusive language and behaviors
- Concerns about career advancement
- Problems with institutional unresponsiveness
- Interpersonal conflicts and “office politics”

Impact of COVID-19

- ❑ Further erosion in communication
- ❑ Barriers to negotiation process
- ❑ Physical isolation resulting in increased stress
- ❑ Not bringing problems forward until later in their evolution

How can the ombudsman help?

- ❑ Listen to concerns – neutral and non-judgmental
- ❑ Help faculty clarify issues and focus on desired outcome(s)
- ❑ Help identify possible options/strategies
- ❑ Serve as a source of information such as relevant policies, procedures and university resources

How can the ombudsman help?

- ❑ Suggest strategies for effective negotiation
- ❑ Serve as a neutral person in the room
- ❑ Serve as a sounding board – provide practice setting
- ❑ Help formulate written communications
- ❑ Refer faculty to other offices and services as necessary

How can the ombudsman help?

- ❑ Help to locate, understand and interpret a university policy or procedure
- ❑ Determine what policies might apply to your concerns
- ❑ Facilitate constructive dialogue

Appointments during COVID-19 Restrictions

- ❑ Zoom or telephone appointments can be scheduled.
- ❑ Typical initial appointment is 60 minutes
- ❑ Avoid sending sensitive or confidential information via e-mail.
- ❑ Preferred contact: rudmann.1@osu.edu

The End

