

(1) The Peer Ombuds Officer is available to:

- anyone in the DGE community who has a concern about an issue related to the professional environment, and either:
 - feels uncertain about who is the appropriate person to resolve their concern,
 - or knows who the appropriate point of contact is, but feels uncomfortable approaching him or her.

(2) Specific examples of the types of issues that are commonly raised with ombuds include:

- Ethics issues
 - Academic integrity
 - Intellectual property
 - Responsible conduct of research
- Any kind of misconduct
 - Harassment, discrimination, abuse of power, bullying, unfair treatment
 - Fear of coming forward or of acting to stop unacceptable behavior
 - Retaliation or fear of retaliation
- Interpersonal relationships
 - Among colleagues
 - Between an advisor and advisee
 - Between a supervisor and supervisee
- Working conditions
 - Health or safety issues
 - Diversity or inclusion
 - Compensation or benefits
 - Performance appraisal or disciplinary action

(3) The Peer Ombuds Officer is committed to:

- listening, in a neutral, non-judgmental way, to concerns about issues related to the professional environment;
- helping any person who has a concern take the right next step to get the issue addressed, by:
 - discussing a range of possible solutions, from focused to generic,
 - providing information about who has the authority to fix the problem, and how to get in touch with them, which the individual can then act on to resolve the issue by herself or himself, or
 - providing additional support to help someone approach the right person, such as:
 - discussing a strategy for easing into a potentially difficult conversation,

- reviewing drafts of written correspondence to encourage language that is likely to promote understanding and elicit cooperation;
 - accompanying that person to a joint meeting, where the Peer Ombuds Officer would have the back of and act as an advocate for the person who originally raised the concern, or
 - when someone feels that anonymity is absolutely necessary, practicing shuttle diplomacy (i.e., personally acting as a proxy) to elevate the issue in such a way as to get it onto the radar of someone who can take action, while protecting the identity of the person who originally raised the concern.
- following up to ensure that:
 - progress is being made in addressing the issue,
 - the individual is satisfied by whatever action is finally taken, and
 - the action is actually an effective long-term solution.

(4) How it would work:

- Consultations
 - Get in touch with the Peer Ombuds Officer in person, by phone, or by email;
 - Meet one-on-one with the Peer Ombuds Officer for an initial discussion of the issue and possible next steps;
 - The Peer Ombuds Officer and the consulting party each do what they agreed to do in the initial meeting;
 - The Peer Ombuds Officer keeps in touch with the concerned party informally until she/he is satisfied that the original concern has been successfully addressed.
- Reporting
 - Peer Ombuds Officer meets regularly with the DGE director to summarize, in generic terms, issues that have been raised, initial steps taken toward addressing the issues, and progress made toward implementing solutions. Details of particular cases would not be discussed.
 - Based on the nature and frequency of particular issues that arise, the Peer Ombuds Officer periodically makes recommendations to the DGE director for generic changes in institutional policies or procedures.

(5) What someone approaching the Peer Ombuds Officer should expect:

- an informal, low-stakes, completely off-the-record mechanism to help address whatever is concerning, worrying, deeply troubling, vexing, or irritating him or her about the professional environment at DGE,
- a response that is 100% supportive, honest, impartial, and professional,
- and near absolute confidentiality (only exceptions in cases when someone indicates that she/he or someone else in the community is imminently in harm's way).

- (6) What someone approaching the Peer Ombuds Officer should *not* expect:
- that the Peer Ombuds Officer is happy to listen to pure ‘venting.’ While it is entirely appropriate for someone to be frustrated, upset, or similar, for the Peer Ombuds Officer to be any help at all, the party needs simultaneously to be committed to finding a solution.
 - that the Peer Ombuds Officer will provide an immediate solution to the problem. While the Peer Ombuds Officer may be able to help sift through relatively minor issues, the primary goal would be to connect (either directly or via proxy) a student, postdoc, or staff member who has a serious concern to the people in leadership positions who actually have authority to fix things.

Further Information

In general, you can bring to the Peer Ombud Officer any issue about which you think something ought to be done, especially when you are not sure where else to go, or what to do. The ombud could be your initial point of contact for raising a new issue, or the place you turn to when you feel that other channels you have already tried have not worked. Additional information on the Ombuds role is available through the International Ombudsman Association at <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/resources/ioa-topical-practice-guides>. The DGE Peer Ombuds Officer adheres to the code of ethics and standards of practice of the IOA:

- 1) Code of ethics:
http://www.ombudsassociation.org/sites/default/files/Code_Ethics_1-07.pdf
- 2) Standards of Practice:
http://www.ombudsassociation.org/sites/default/files/IOA_Standards_of_Practice_Oct09.pdf