
Committee Responsibility: Board of Directors**Adopted:** February 2016**Procedure:** -**Last Amended:** March 2018

PREAMBLE

To-date Douglas College does not have an independent ombudsperson service to assist students with appeals, conflicts and disputes on matters relating to student rights and fairness. As mandated by the Bylaws, the Students' Union will provide an ombudsperson service to assist members. The Students' Union will also advocate for the creation of an independent ombudsperson office at Douglas College.

1. PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Ombudsperson shall provide confidential and informal assistance to members in, resolving appeals, conflicts and disputes and in addressing fairness issues at Douglas College.

2. SERVICES PROVIDED

The Ombudsperson will provide the following informal assistance to members:

- Listen to student concerns and assess the situation presented;
- Answer questions or help find others who can;
- Provide information on college policies and procedures, as well as related student rights and responsibilities;
- Assist students in gathering information about their case;
- Discuss possible courses of action, including steps to resolve problems informally;
- Assist students in filing appeals;
- Assist students in preparing for conversations with supervisors, instructors or administrators, or for formal hearings;
- Participate in meetings between students and College officials as a witness; and,
- Refer students to service departments, or external agencies, for assistance and/or advice.

The Student Advocate will not:

- offer counseling; or
- act as a legal or other representative for students.

3. SERVICE USAGE AND ACCESS

This service shall be open to all current Students' Union members. When resources or circumstances allow, both former members and prospective students may also access the Ombudsperson.

4. OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The following operating principles shall be applied by the Ombudsperson service:

- **Confidentiality:** the Students' Union will maintain the confidentiality of information provided to the Ombudsperson unless directed otherwise by the student providing the information. This confidentiality enables students to discuss matters with the Ombudsperson and receive advice without taking action. Confidentiality will be deemed void if a student makes comments about doing harm to themselves or others, or if a student speaks to the Ombudsperson about a criminal act. The Ombudsperson is neither a lawyer nor medical professional, and there is no legal privilege attached to communications between students and the Ombudsperson.
- **Independence:** The Students' Union operates independently from Douglas College and is responsible to students who are Students' Union members. The Ombudsperson will act independently of Douglas College, and in executing their work, remain independent of any work undertaken by the Students' Union in providing general advocacy and representation of the student body to Douglas College.
- **Avoiding Conflicts of Interest:** The Ombudsperson will seek to avoid conflicts of interest between their work in the role of Ombudsperson and other duties they perform for the Students' Union, and with respect to their working relationships with members of the campus community. The Ombudsperson shall not represent a member in their dealings with the Students' Union.
- **Operations:** The Ombudsperson's work shall be delegated to a staff person of the Students' Union and be part of that staff person's job description.
- **No Duty to Assist:** The Ombudsperson shall review each request for assistance and shall, at their sole discretion, determine whether the Ombudsperson service shall be provided to the requesting student based on the merits of the case and the structures under which Douglas College processes student complaints and appeals. The Students' Union does not have a legal duty to represent a member regardless of their circumstances.
- **Zero Tolerance for Abusive Behavior:** The Students' Union has zero tolerance for abusive, harassing or bullying behavior and any student acting in such a manner with the Ombudsperson shall be immediately released from the service.

5. REPORTING

The Student Advocate will maintain records on assistance provided and annually produce a report on the service.

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