

## Welcome to the UCT Office of the Ombud

The Office of the Ombud was established in January 2011 to provide the UCT community with a confidential, informal and independent resource to help raise concerns, resolve disputes and promote equitable treatment within the university. As such, this facility is intended to enhance the general wellbeing of the UCT community.

## Where does the term Ombud come from?

The word “Ombudsman” dates back to 1809 when the Swedish parliament instituted a new position in the civil service known as the Justice Ombudsman. This referred to a public official appointed to investigate citizens’ complaints against government agencies. In Swedish it means “citizens’ defender” or “a representative of the people.” It is a gender-neutral designation and either Ombud or Ombudsperson is considered an acceptable derivative of the term.

## Who can visit the Ombud?

All members of the University of Cape Town community: namely staff (PASS and academic), students (current and alumni) as well as visitors and contractors.

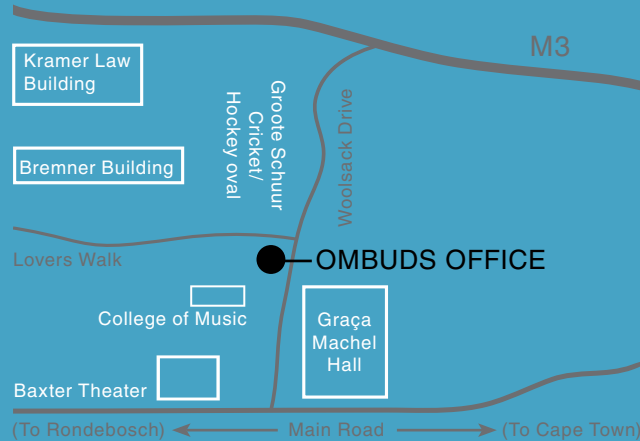
## What is an Ombud?

An Ombud is a designated, independent and neutral dispute resolution practitioner whose main function is to provide confidential and informal assistance to the university community when disputes arise.



## Map

UPPER CAMPUS



The Office of the Ombud is located in Old Staff Cottages, Lover’s Walk, Lower Campus, directly opposite the School of Dance. Please phone to make an appointment or establish if we will be in the office when you need us.

**Tel:** 021-650 4805

**Fax:** 021-650 5208

**Email:** ombud@uct.ac.za

**Website:** www.uct.ac.za



**OMBUD'S** OFFICE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Independent **Informal**  
**Impartial** Confidential



**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**  
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD



UCT's Ombud, Zetu Makamandela-Mguqulwa.

## Is there any risk in contacting the Office of the Ombud?

No, all members of the university community have a right to visit the Ombud. The university policy provides assurance that you will not suffer reprisal for seeking the services of this office.

The Ombud may exercise discretion in accepting or declining issues addressed to her and may, at her discretion, decline to consider conflicts or issues deemed outside the office's mandate. When declining such a case, the Ombud will direct you to the relevant body within the university, if one exists.

## Why come to the Ombud?

The Office of the Ombud supplements, but does not replace, the existing structures. You may contact the Office of the Ombud:

- When you feel you have been treated unfairly.
- When you are not sure where to go or what options exist to assist you in your situation.
- When you are unsure which policies, procedures or regulations apply to your situation.
- When you feel a university policy, procedure or regulation has been unfairly applied to you.
- When you have a complaint or want to discuss a sensitive concern.
- When you have been through other university channels but you are still dissatisfied with how your matter was handled.

## How can the Ombud help?

### Evaluation of options

- The Ombud will help you to look at the issue from all perspectives. You will be helped to identify the options available to you. In all interactions, the Ombud will remain impartial and your case will be handled in strict confidence.

### Upward feedback

- With your permission, the Ombud, as a neutral third party, may give feedback to other stakeholders by making recommendations for change or presenting options for addressing the issues raised as a result of a dispute.

### Information/referral

- The Ombud can assist visitors to resolve their disputes by redirecting concerns to other offices that may be better suited to mediate the disagreement.

### Informal fact finding

- The facts of the conflict may have to be investigated, with the permission of the visitor, for a balanced and comprehensive picture of the problem to emerge.

### Mediation

- The University of Cape Town has adopted mediation as a primary tool for resolving disputes and conflicts, as it offers the opportunity to provide a holistic, therapeutic and educational outcome. UCT has trained mediators to handle this type of work across campus.
- Mediation is an informal and voluntary process which takes place with the consent of all parties involved to negotiate and arrive at their own settlement.

## Cornerstone Principles

The Ombud at the University of Cape Town belongs to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and adheres to its Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. See [www.ombudsassociation.org](http://www.ombudsassociation.org). There are four main prescribed principles, namely: Independence; Informality; Impartiality and Confidentiality.

## Independent

The Office of the Ombud is independent of the university administration in structure, function, and appearance. The Ombud reports to the Chairperson of the University Council but has access to the Senior Leadership Group of the university in order to convey perceived issues and trends on campus. While no records are kept, the Ombud will furnish anonymous aggregate data in annual reports.

## Informal

As an informal resource that considers the interests of all people, this office encourages people to solve their problems at the lowest effective level before they escalate. While it is an off-the-record office, the Ombud identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues without breaching confidentiality, and provides recommendations for responsibly addressing them.

## Impartial

The Office of the Ombud impartially considers the interests of all parties involved in a situation in order to assist them in reaching mutually acceptable agreements that are fair, as well as consistent with the University of Cape Town's mission and values. This office will not serve as an advocate for the university or an individual.

## Confidential

Probably the most important thing about the Ombud's Office is the fact that it is a SAFE place for you to visit. The Ombud will treat all communications with those seeking assistance in strictest confidence. The identity of visitors and the substance of concerns raised will not be shared without consent. This commitment to confidentiality is unwavering; the only exception occurs where there is an imminent threat of serious harm.