

Ombudsperson Policy

1. Purpose

St. Mary's University commits to building a fair and equitable campus and to establishing and maintaining the function of the Ombudsperson in accordance with the principles of independence, impartiality and confidentiality that govern this function. The main purpose of this policy is to define the framework for the function of Ombudsperson and its roles and responsibilities.

2. Scope

St. Mary's University Office of the Ombudsperson provides an independent and impartial service to protect the rights of its students, faculty and staff (the University Community). While the Ombudsperson does not have the authority to over-rule decisions, they can consider complaints, make informal enquiries, conduct formal reviews, draw conclusions, and recommend changes to decisions and to university policies and procedures.

3. General Procedures

3.1. The Ombudsperson:

- a. may receive inquiries or complaints from any member of the University Community. The Ombudsperson shall not receive complaints from any person (for example, a parent or friend) on behalf of a member of the University Community.
- b. does not have jurisdiction on matters of internal governance of the Student Associations
- c. shall not interfere with any matter covered by an existing collective agreement
- d. does not replace the mechanisms of the University or the Student Legislatures but may assist members of the University Community with information or advice about the process to be followed and about problem-solving options, or with an intervention. If the Ombudsperson refuses or discontinues an intervention, written reasons explaining the refusal or discontinuation shall be provided to the complainant.
- e. the Ombudsperson's decisions to intervene or not, and his or her recommendations, shall be final and without appeal.
- f. shall not intervene in cases where they may be in a conflict of interest. In such cases, the Advisory Committee may appoint another person to act temporarily as Ombudsperson.

Approval Authority	Responsible Office	Effective Date	Date Last Revisited	Review Frequency
Academic Council	VP Academic	December 1, 2025		Every 5 years

3.2 General Principles

- a. The Ombudsperson shall not undertake an investigation until all established processes of dispute resolution and channels of appeal have been exhausted.
- b. The Ombudsperson shall be independent of the University and Student Legislative Councils. The Ombudsperson shall act in a confidential, fair, and impartial manner
- c. The Ombudsperson provides recommendations and advice to members of the University Community to help resolve concerns in an informal, effective and accessible manner.
- d. The Ombudsperson adheres to the Standards of Practice of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons and to the Statement of Ethical Principles of the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman.
- e. The Ombudsperson considers administrative fairness principles: relational, procedural and substantive fairness.

3.3 Roles and Responsibilities

- a. The Ombudsperson receives and handles inquiries and complaints, and has the power to investigate, as appropriate. The choice of which methods or which modes of intervention are the most appropriate in the circumstances is at the discretion of the Ombudsperson.
- b. The Ombudsperson shall have access to applicable laws and policies relating to confidentiality and protection of privacy, to all files, records, reports, documents and information needed to fulfill the functions of the Ombudsperson.
- c. Requests by the Ombudsperson for information shall be handled in a mutually convenient and expeditious manner by all members of the University Community.
- d. The Ombudsperson may, at any time, draw to the attention of the University's or Student Associations' policies, rules or procedures that appear unclear or inequitable.

3.4 Appointment of the Ombudsperson

If, after all channels of appeal have been exhausted, a member of the University wants to use the services of an Ombudsperson, the member will send a letter of request to the AVP Enrolment and Student Experience or the AVP Human Resources.

The selection committee, made up of the AVP Enrolment and Student Experience, AVP Human Resources, VP Academic, and the President of the Student Legislative Council (as needed), will select the Ombudsperson to a third-party contract.

3.5 Responsibilities of the selection committee:

- a. To select the person who shall hold the contract of Ombudsperson;
- b. To provide advice to the Ombudsperson, as needed;
- c. To recommend the budget of the Ombudsperson;

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- d. To respond to complaints relating to the work of the Ombudsperson;
- e. To review this policy every five years or as needed.

If the Ombudsperson intervenes in a matter involving one of the members of the Selection Committee, that member shall temporarily withdraw from the Committee. A temporary member of the Selection Committee from the same category will be the designate.

3.6 Funding the Ombudsperson

The University will bear the costs of the operations of the Ombudsperson. When students are involved, the University shall contribute 50% of these costs and the Student Legislative Council will contribute the other 50%.

4. Definitions

The following definitions apply in this policy:

"Advisory Committee" means the Ombudsperson Advisory Committee.

"Ombudsperson" means the Ombudsperson and the staff working for the Ombudsperson, unless the context indicates otherwise.

"Student Legislature" means the associations representing undergraduate and graduate students at St. Mary's University.

"University" means St. Mary's University.

"University Community" means students and employees of the University, in particular:

- a. students, meaning individuals registered as students at the University, whether full-time or part-time (including current students, applicants for admission, former students and alumni), at the undergraduate or graduate level;
- b. employees, including all academic and support staff as well as those whose salary is paid through sources other than the University's operating funds, such as grants, research grants and external contracts;
- c. adjunct and emeritus professors.