



Title: POLICY ON OMBUDSERVICES

CLASSIFICATION:

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

ADOPTED:

June 6, 2016

I. PREAMBLE

Dawson College is an institution committed to fair practices and to the respect of the rights and obligations of all the members of its community. The College ombudspersons are designated impartial individuals whose major function is to provide confidential and impartial advice to students. The effectiveness of the ombudspersons is dependent on the cooperation and goodwill of students, faculty and staff.

II. OBJECT

The object of this policy is to delineate the roles, responsibilities, sphere of activity, reporting structure and process for nomination of the ombudspersons of Dawson College.

III. MANDATE OF OMBUDSPERSONS

The mandate of the ombudspersons is:

- To promote fair and equitable treatment for Dawson students within the College
- To facilitate the resolution of complaints pertaining to procedures and policies
- To promote a constructive informal approach to conflict resolution
- To provide students with a source of information about policies, rights and avenues of redress .
- To suggest to appropriate parties changes or improvements to college rules and procedures.

IV. OPERATING PRINCIPLES OF OMBUDSERVICES

Confidentiality

All matters dealt with by the ombudspersons are handled in strict confidence. Nominative information shall not be disclosed without the knowledge and written consent of the person(s) seeking the services of the ombudspersons.

Neutrality

The ombudspersons are neutral, impartial, unaligned and objective. The ombudspersons' function is not to serve as student advocates, but rather as impartial mediators, problem solvers, and advisors. The ombudspersons have no personal interest or stake in and incur no personal gain or loss from the outcome of an issue. The ombudspersons avoid situations that may cause or result in conflicts of interest for the ombudspersons. The ombudspersons work to deliver the most informed options as possible to get the problem or complaint resolved.

Access to Documents

The ombudspersons shall have such access to College documents and records as is legal and required for them to discharge their mandate. Such access shall be provided to a student's record only with the student's written consent, and shall under no circumstances be provided to confidential personnel files or personal evaluations.

V. SPECIFIC ROLES OF THE OMBUDSPERSONS

To act as an information or referral source

Upon students' request, the ombudspersons provide direction on procedures or regulations affecting students, gather information not easily accessible to students, refer students to persons able to resolve the problem, assist in the use of appeal procedures, inform students about existing policies, rules and procedures, and advise students as to the appropriate channel of redress for any concern or complaint they may have. In addition, the ombudspersons assist students upon their request as provided for in various College policies such as grievance recourse, grade review, sexual harassment, etc, and act to inform the student body about relevant policies and procedures.

To act as a facilitator

Upon students' request, the ombudspersons facilitate communication and the informal seeking of solutions to student complaints concerning administrative staff or faculty.

To deal with complaints

In dealing with student complaints, the ombudspersons' primary concern is that:

- i. Students are aware of appropriate policies and procedures, and that these policies and procedures are followed by all concerned.
- ii. Students fully understand their rights and responsibilities as established in College policies and procedures.
- iii. Decisions affecting students are made with reasonable promptness and communicated to the students concerned without delay.
- iv. Procedures used to reach decisions are appropriate and that the motives upon which such decisions are based are clearly communicated to the students concerned.

To make recommendations in specific cases

The ombudspersons may recommend solutions to any concerned party when they consider such action appropriate.

To bring to the attention of those in authority any policies, rules or procedures affecting students, which appear unclear or inequitable or which may jeopardize the rights of students. The ombudspersons may suggest changes to existing policies, rules or procedures and offer advice on the development of new policies, rules or procedures.

To provide advice to faculty regarding policies, procedures, rights and obligations of students, within the mandate of the ombudspersons

To keep confidential written records of specific cases and interventions for a period of three years, in addition to whatever data is necessary for the compilation of an annual report to the Board of Governors.

To submit an annual report to the Board of Governors by October 31st of each year

The report shall detail activities of the ombudspersons, including statistics on all complaints received and shall make recommendations, as necessary. The annual report shall be made generally available to the Dawson Community.

To serve on relevant College committees, as requested by the College

VI. REPORTING STRUCTURE

The Director of Student Services shall be responsible for the supervision of the work of the ombudspersons, the performance of their duties as set out in this policy and all matters of their contractual obligations. Within this context, it is understood that the ombudspersons, to be effective and credible, must have the autonomy they need to carry out their duties. Consequently, the Director of Student Services shall not exert control over matters pertaining to the substance or details of the work of the ombudspersons as described in this document.

Notwithstanding the above, members of the Dawson Community who wish to register complaints or concerns about the actions of the ombudsperson(s) are invited to address these complaints or concerns to the Director of Student Services, who will deal with them in accordance with established College procedures.

The College Board of Governors shall establish an “Ombudsperson Sub-Committee”. The mandate of this sub-committee is to monitor, assess and direct the Ombudspersons’ work. The sub-committee will meet at least once every semester, and may be called upon to meet in other instances as needed.

The objectives of the committee are to act as a resource to Ombudspersons, provide advice and guidance; to receive periodic updates and a formal annual report from the Ombudsperson prior to dissemination to the Board of Governors and the College Community at large; to safeguard the neutrality and integrity of the Ombudspersons’ Office.

VII. APPOINTMENT OF OMBUDSPERSONS

Ombudspersons will be selected from among those members of the Dawson staff who possess the following qualities: respect for students and staff; superior communication skills; discretion and confidentiality; knowledge of and loyalty to Dawson College, its values and mission; knowledge of College and government policies and procedures as they apply to students; honesty, integrity and tact; ability to work effectively and efficiently without supervision.

Ombudspersons shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors upon the recommendation of the Director General.

The College shall ensure that an alternate Ombudsperson is selected and appointed. The alternate's mandate shall be to act in the absence of the primary Ombudsperson; to provide support, feedback and advice to the primary Ombudsperson.

Appointments shall be made for an initial term of two years, renewable for further terms of two years. During the second year of each term, the Executive Committee shall review the appointments. This review will include consultations with members of the internal community, including students, and, if deemed necessary, with relevant members of the external community.