



Office of the Ombuds

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How can I schedule an appoint to visit the Ombuds?

To schedule an appointment with the Ombuds, email your request for meeting to Brian Godette at bgodette@umaryland.edu.

2. What is an “Ombuds”?

“Ombuds” is the shortened form of the term “Ombudsman.” At the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), the term “Ombuds” refers to the person in the Office of the Ombuds who provides problem solving resources to the UMB campus.

3. What is the UMB Ombuds empowered to do?

The Ombuds can:

- Listen to you and discuss your concerns.
- Answer your questions or refer you to someone who can.
- Explain how University policies or procedures work.
- Help you identify options or obtain information to help you resolve a problem.
- Facilitate communication among people in conflict.
- Recommend changes to policies/procedures that appear outdated or problematic while maintaining confidentiality.
- Refer you to appropriate office should you wish to file a formal complaint.
- Provide other forms of assistance to help you resolve a problem informally.

The Ombuds cannot:

- Make or change University decisions, rules or policies.
- Set aside a decision or supersede the authority of another University official.
- Duplicate an existing grievance procedure.
- Provide legal advice or act as substitute for union representation.
- Testify in formal grievance, or legal proceedings with respect to confidential communication.
- Conduct formal investigations.
- Accept notice of claims against the University.

4. When should I contact the Office of the Ombuds?

Any kind of University related problem may be brought to the Office by any member of the OMB community. You might want to contact the Ombuds when:

- You need an impartial and confidential sounding board.
- You think you have been treated unfairly.

- You want to report a problem but first want to get a sense of possible outcomes or process.
- You want to discuss a University policy or practice that you think is unfair or problematic.
- You've been through a formal grievance in which it appears procedural errors were made.
- You are not sure how to interpret a University policy or procedure.
- You are not sure which University policy applies to your situation.
- You need a referral to the UMB Workplace Mediation Service.
- You are not sure where else to turn for help and need guidance.

5. What happens when I contact the Office of the Ombuds?

You may email any time to make an appointment. Initial appointments are usually an hour, but can adjust according to your availability, and we will do our best to accommodate your schedule.

6. What kinds of concerns are commonly brought to the Office of the Ombuds?

- Clarification of a policy or process.
- Concerns about inequities in work or pay.
- Concerns about unethical or inappropriate behavior.
- Concerns about health and life safety.
- Interpersonal conflicts, office politics and problems with workplace climate.
- Concerns about career advancement and job satisfaction or security.
- Advice on having a difficult conversation.

- The Ombuds is not authorized to receive notice of claims against the University, but the Ombuds can help you identify the formal channels you can use for this purpose.

7. I may want to file a formal complaint.

Can I talk to the Ombuds first?

Yes. While the Ombuds is not authorized to receive formal complaints, the Ombuds can help you better understand processes and potential outcomes before you decide whether to file a complaint. The Ombuds can also help identify alternatives to formal grievance procedures, and direct you to the appropriate procedures and office should you wish to file a formal complaint.

8. What makes the Ombuds different other resources at UMB?

The Ombuds is situated outside the management structure at UMB and reports directly to the Provost/Executive Vice President. The Office provides confidentiality which allows you to have off the record conversations about highly sensitive problems.

9. Can the Ombuds represent me?

No. The Ombuds is independent and neutral and does not take sides on behalf of any individuals or cause. It only advocates for fair process. Accordingly, the Ombuds is not a substitute for anyone's lawyer, representative or counselor. Working with the Ombuds may help you address your problems or concerns effectively, but contacting the Ombuds Office does not constitute giving notice to the University of any claims you might have.

10. Will the Ombuds maintain confidentiality of my communications with the Ombuds?

Yes. Confidentiality is essential to the functioning of the UMB Ombuds Office. Communications with the Ombuds are made with the understanding that they are confidential. The only exceptions to this confidentiality are when, during the course of your communications with the Ombuds, you give permission to the Ombuds to make disclosure and the Ombuds agrees to do so and when the Ombuds determines that there is a violation of law or there is an imminent risk of serious harm.