

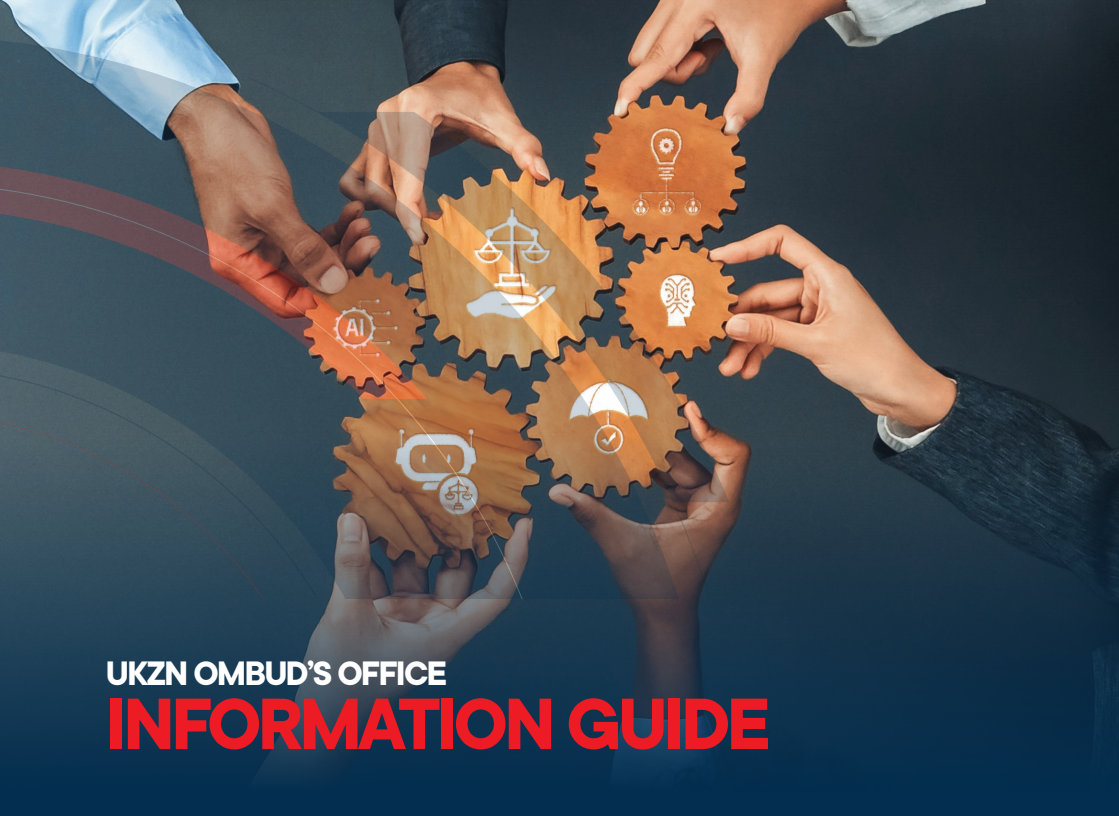
UKZN OMBUD'S OFFICE INFORMATION GUIDE

**PROMOTING FAIRNESS, GOOD ADMINISTRATION,
AND RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE
UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY**



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL™
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INSPIRING GREATNESS



UKZN OMBUD'S OFFICE INFORMATION GUIDE

"PROMOTING FAIRNESS, GOOD ADMINISTRATION, AND RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY."

The Office of the Ombud is an independent, confidential, impartial office that assists members of the University community in addressing concerns, resolving disputes, and navigating University processes.

The Ombud serves as a neutral resource and does not advocate for any individual, department, or University authority. Instead, the Ombud promotes fair treatment, procedural fairness, accountability, and good administration.

MANDATE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE OMBUD'S

The primary functions of the UKZN Ombud Office are to receive, review and facilitate the resolution of complaints and concerns in a fair, independent and impartial manner. The Office provides these services:



INFORMAL ADVICE & GUIDANCE

We provide information about university policies, procedures and options to help you make informed decisions.



LISTEN & SUPPORT

We offer a safe, confidential space where you can share your concerns and feel heard.



CLARIFY & HELP EXPLORE OPTIONS

We help you understand your situation, identify options and consider possible next steps.



FACILITATE RESOLUTION

With your consent, we may facilitate dialogue or meetings to help resolve concerns collaboratively.



IDENTIFY & ADDRESS TRENDS

We identify patterns and systemic issues and share observations and recommendations to strengthen policies, practices and services.



PROMOTE FAIRNESS & ACCOUNTABILITY

We champion fairness, respect and accountability in the university community.

WHO CAN USE THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUD



Students



Staff



Prospective Students (where appropriate)



Alumni (where appropriate and within jurisdiction)

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Independence: The Ombud operates independently from University management and decision-making structures.

Impartiality: The Ombud is neutral and does not take sides.

Confidentiality: Information shared with the Ombud is treated confidentially, subject to applicable laws and exceptional circumstances.

Informality: The Ombud does not replace formal grievance, disciplinary, appeal, or legal processes.

Fairness: The Ombud promotes equitable and respectful treatment for all members of the University community.



OUR COMMITMENT TO THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

THE OMBUD'S OFFICE IS COMMITTED TO:

- Promoting fairness and accountability
- Supporting respectful engagement
- Encouraging early resolution of disputes
- Improving administrative practices
- Identifying systemic concerns
- Strengthening trust within the University community



HOW WE CAN HELP

THE OMBUD'S OFFICE CAN:

- Listen to concerns and complaints
- Clarify University policies and procedures
- Identify available options for resolution
- Conduct impartial reviews of complaints
- Facilitate communication between parties
- Recommend fair and appropriate remedies
- Identify systemic issues affecting the University community
- Promote good administrative practices
- Provide conflict resolution support
- Make referrals to appropriate University offices

WHAT THE OMBUD'S OFFICE DOES NOT DO

THE OMBUD'S OFFICE DOES NOT:

- Replace formal appeal or grievance procedures
- Provide legal advice
- Provide psychological counselling
- Advocate for one party over another
- Overturn academic judgments
- Adjudicate, impose remedies or sanctions,
- Enforce or change University policies or rules.
- Make decisions on behalf of the University
- Act as a legal representative
- Accept legal notices on behalf of the University
- Advocate for one party over another
- Conduct formal investigations



WHEN SHOULD YOU CONTACT **THE OMBUD'S OFFICE?**

YOU MAY WISH TO CONTACT THE OMBUD IF:

- You believe you have been unfairly treated or a process has been unfair.
- You are unsure where to take your concern.
- You have tried to resolve an issue through internal processes without success.
- Communication has broken down.
- You need guidance on available options.
- You are concerned about maladministration.
- You wish to discuss a matter confidentially before deciding what to do.

HOW TO SUBMIT A COMPLAINT TO THE OMBUD



STEP 1

IDENTIFY THE ISSUE YOU WANT TO RESOLVE, AND ATTEMPT TO FIRST RESOLVE THE MATTER INTERNALLY.

Where appropriate, attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual, department, or service area concerned.

Examples:

- Speak to your lecturer, supervisor, manager, or service provider.
- Raise your concern with the relevant Head of School, Department, Faculty, or administrative office.
- Use any available internal processes before approaching the Ombuds.

Note: You may still contact the Ombud for guidance if you are unsure how to proceed or if local resolution is inappropriate.



STEP 2

CHECK WHETHER THE MATTER FALLS WITHIN THE OMBUD'S JURISDICTION

The Ombud generally considers complaints relating to:

Examples:

- Unfair treatment
- Administrative decisions and actions
- Delays and poor service delivery
- Failure to follow policies or procedures
- Communication breakdowns
- Procedural fairness concerns
- Maladministration

For more information about the mandate and functions of the UKZN Ombud's Office, please refer to the Ombud's Terms of Reference, available on this website under "Forms and Information Sheets"



STEP 3

DOWNLOAD AND COMPLETE THE COMPLAINT REFERRAL FORM AVAILABLE ON THE OMBUD'S OFFICE WEBSITE.

Take time to read through the form and gather the necessary information before completing it.



STEP 4

GATHER RELEVANT SUPPORTING INFORMATION

When submitting a complaint through the Ombud's secure channels (email, telephonically or in person), you are required to provide the following information:

Personal details:

- Name and surname
- Contact details

Details of the complaint:

- A clear description of the issue(s)
- Date(s) and timeline of the events
- Names and contact details of the individuals or departments who are involved or expected to respond to your complaint.
- An outline of relevant correspondence(s) or supporting documents
- Details of any steps already taken to resolve the matter, for example:
 - Who have you approached?
 - What was the outcome?
 - Why does the matter remain unresolved?

Details of the desired outcome

- What resolution are you seeking?
- What remedy do you believe would be fair and why?



STEP 5

SUBMIT YOUR COMPLAINT

Submit your complaint within 1 month

You must submit your complaint within 1 month of being aware of the issue. Complaints submitted after this time limit may not be accepted unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Channels for submitting a complaint

Complaints may be submitted through any of the following channels:

- **Email Submission:** Send an email or a completed complaint referral form and supporting documents to the Ombud's Office email address, ombud@ukzn.ac.za.
- **Telephone Submission:** Contact the Ombuds Office by telephone on **(27) + 31 260 3602** to discuss your concern. An Ombud's staff member will record the details of your complaint and may request supporting documentation where necessary. If required, a follow-up consultation may be arranged to obtain additional information and clarify the issues raised.
- **In-Person:** Visit the Ombud's Office to discuss and submit your complaint directly to an Ombuds staff member. Our office is located at Westville Campus, L Block, ground floor, Room 6C, next to ICS.

PLEASE RETAIN COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED.



ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORT

If you require assistance due to a disability, language barrier, or other accessibility need, please contact the Ombud's Office. Reasonable accommodations will be made to assist you in submitting your complaint.



THE OMBUD'S PROCESS:

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER YOU SUBMIT YOUR COMPLAINT

STEP 1: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE COMPLAINT

The Ombud's Office will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within the prescribed service standard (for example, within 3–5 working days). The acknowledgement will:

- Confirm receipt of the complaint
 - Provide a reference number
 - Outline the next steps
 - Identify any additional information required
-

STEP 2: INITIAL ASSESSMENT

The Ombud will assess whether:

- the matter falls within its jurisdiction
 - sufficient information has been provided
 - referral to another office is more appropriate
 - informal resolution may be possible
-

STEP 3: ENGAGEMENT

The Ombud may facilitate discussions, seek information, or engage relevant departments. Where appropriate, the Ombud may:

- Request additional information
 - Review relevant policies and records
 - Engage with University departments
 - Facilitate communication between parties
 - Explore possible resolution options
-

STEP 4: EXPLORATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROPRIATE INTERVENTIONS

Possible resolution pathways are discussed with you. Where appropriate, the Ombud may:

- Facilitate a resolution
 - Refer the matter to another office
 - Investigate the complaint
 - Recommend corrective action or propose measures to address concerns and promote fairness.
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STEP 5: RESOLUTION AND POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Information and Guidance

The complainant is provided with information, clarification of policies, procedures, rights and responsibilities, and advice on available options.

Referral

The matter is referred to the appropriate University office, department, or established internal process where the Ombud lacks jurisdiction or where another remedy is more appropriate.

Facilitated Resolution

The Ombud assists parties in resolving the matter through facilitated dialogue, communication, negotiation, or informal mediation.

Recommendation for Administrative Action

The Ombud makes recommendations aimed at addressing procedural concerns, administrative errors, delays, or service delivery issues.

Recommendation for reconsideration of a decision

The relevant decision-maker is requested to reconsider a decision where concerns regarding fairness, reasonableness, or procedural propriety have been identified.

Corrective Action

Appropriate steps are taken by the responsible office to rectify an error, provide clarification, amend a process, or address an administrative oversight.

Systemic Improvement

The Ombud identifies recurring issues or systemic concerns and recommends improvements to policies, procedures, communication practices, or service delivery processes.

No Further Action

- Following review, the Ombud may determine that:
- The matter falls outside the Ombud's mandate;
- There is insufficient information to proceed;
- Appropriate procedures were followed and no administrative concerns are identified; or
- The complaint has already been adequately addressed through existing processes.

Withdrawal of the Complaint

- The complainant elects to withdraw the complaint before the Ombud process is concluded.

Closure of the Matter

- The matter is closed once it has been resolved, appropriately referred, recommendations have been communicated, or no further intervention is warranted.

