

# Brandeis University Ombuds

Members of the University Ombuds staff are available as a confidential, independent, impartial, and informal resource for all members of the Brandeis Community including undergraduates and graduate students, faculty, staff, and alumni. In our role as ombuds staff, we support the dignity, well-being, and safety of each visitor by providing a safe space to confidentially talk off the record about difficult situations. We meet personally with you to actively listen to your concerns and discuss options for conflict resolution. We provide feedback to university officials on trends in an effort to promote an inclusive community where individuals from all backgrounds and life experiences are heard and valued in our community.

## ***Some Frequently Asked Questions***

### ***You say the process is confidential – really, how confidential is it?***

Very. As in no notes (or notes destroyed post meeting(s)), no use of your name, no reporting to another office or individual, no retained email, a separate phone line, and a safe and private meeting space. There are only two instances where this changes and you would be aware of each. 1) If you are a danger to yourself or other(s), and 2) if you give explicit permission for your Ombuds to speak with someone. Those really are the only instances where strict confidentiality changes.

### ***Does anything get reported back to the university?***

Yes. Ombuds are charged with reporting trends and other information that helps the university create a supportive and effective working and learning environment. These trends and information could include something as simple as noting the need for a campus bus route to be altered, to pointing out that a campus policy is consistently misinterpreted. However, in no instance will the individuals raising these issues be identified or named.

### ***What is the relationship between the Ombuds and various grievance and/or appeal procedures?***

There is no formal involvement between Ombuds and University grievance and or appeal procedures. Ombuds are in a position to know about all the policies and procedures that are available to you to resolve a particular issue. Your Ombuds can help you think through various strategies, formal and informal, for resolving an issue. Ombuds are not advisors or witnesses, nor will they appear in any formal University process.

## Ombuds Staff



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***Why would Brandeis support an office where people can go to voice their concern about Brandeis?***

Brandeis is committed to social justice and to ensuring that all members of the Brandeis community are working and learning in an environment that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Ombuds have two roles in this effort to support social justice: 1) we support all students and employees in addressing issues that impede their ability to work and learn; and 2) we serve as a centralized resource for the University on the extent to which campus policies and practices are equitable and effective.

The two roles of the Ombuds support Brandeis' commitment to social justice. Ombuds Office supports an ethical and civil culture encouraging mutual understanding and resolution through respectful dialogue and fair processes.

**Who visits the office?**

Open to all faculty, staff, students, researchers, alumni, trustees, and anyone who has an issue related to Brandeis University.

Visitors come to the Ombuds Office to informally discuss any issues affecting ones' work or studies. Option ranges from just talking to requesting information on policies and procedures at Brandeis.

**Ombuds role:** Our role is to listen and help the visitor(s) identify issues, goals, and options; visitors are empowered to make their own decisions regarding next steps.

**Uniqueness of the office:**

**Confidentiality:** Information shared by all visitors will never be disclosed without visitors' permission except as required by law or when the Ombuds determines there may be an imminent risk of serious harm. The Ombuds Office maintains no records that identify visitors to the office.

**Neutrality:** Ombuds do not serve as an advocate for anyone to any matter brought to the office. Ombuds encourage productive communication and fair processes.

**Independence:** Ombuds Office is independent in structure function and appearance.

**Informality:** Ombuds office does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedures.

**Examples of concerns and issues:** Career management, work/academic environment, research related concerns, Harassment, Bullying, discrimination, illness, and disability, communicating difficult and sensitive information, University Policies and Requirements, and any issue may be brought to the Ombuds Office.

**Ombuds Work with visitors:**

- **Coaching** on verbal and written communications.
  - **Facilitation** of one on one or group meetings within a department to raise and address issues or concerns.
  - **Shuttle Diplomacy:** to help convey pertinent information between conflicted people.
  - **Share Information** about resources, policies, and procedures.
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