

Roles & Responsibilities of Fellowship Program Ombudsman

“Ombudsman” is a gender-neutral Swedish word that means “citizen’s representative”

Principles:

Each Fellowship Program is required to appoint an ombudsman. The position of Ombudsman is intended to promote a positive and safe environment for fellowship education. This role provides a confidential resource that fellowship may access to discuss personal, professional or program-related concerns.

Ombudsman Profile:

The ombudsman must function at arms-length from the fellowship program to ensure confidentiality and an impartial perspective. The program ombudsman should be a faculty member outside the fellowship program’s Division. It is preferable to avoid selecting a current Program Director or Division Head for this role, although a previous PD is a reasonable choice.

Fellows may engage the Ombudsman on issues including, but not limited to, any of the following:

- academic performance and progress in fellowship training
- interpersonal issues
- harassment, discrimination
- learning environment

Confidentiality & Impartiality:

Regular (twice-yearly) meetings with the fellowship group are strongly encouraged to ensure that trainees have an established relationship with the ombudsman. These routine meetings provide an opportunity to “check-in” with the fellows and address concerns in a proactive manner. Additional meetings with a single fellow or fellowship group can be arranged on an as-needed basis.

The ombuds will maintain university and PGME privacy and confidentiality standards. All information and records will be confidential. Under extraordinary circumstances the ombudsman may disclose information to other individuals or organizations without the consent of the student where there is a serious threat to life, or imminent risk of harm.

The ombudsman will provide guidance to facilitate resolution of complaints or issues raised by fellows with regard to the program, faculty members or the broader learning environment. The Ombudsman may take any of the following actions to support the fellow:

- Listen to fellow concerns or complaints
- Discuss potential strategies to resolve conflict
- Clarify and review relevant policies and procedures
- Review and assist in the assessment of relevant options available to the learner so an informed decision on how to proceed can be made
- Coach fellows on achieving resolutions in a professional manner



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- Promote discussion with relevant parties
- Direct the fellow to appropriate resources, including PFSP, Resident Affairs & Physician Wellness, PG Dean, OPED etc
- When appropriate and permitted by policy, attend meetings (including appeal hearings) as a support to the fellow but not as an advocate or in place of legal counsel

The ombuds will not:

- Offer psychological counseling
- Offer legal advice
- Participate in or assist students in appeals other than as a support (as above)
- Directly advocate on behalf of a single fellow or group of fellows

The ombudsman is expected to maintain impartially and respect the interests and concerns of all affected parties. The ombudsman will recuse him/herself from situations where there is a real or perceived conflict of interest.