Implementation and Improvement of Ombudspersons and Their Work: Dos and Don’ts

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Implementation of ombuds system

Why?

For whom?

How?

What should be avoided?
Implementation of Ombudssystem

Why?

Concrete Case

Need of consultation in conflict situations

• Prevention of misconduct
Memorandum: Proposals for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice
Revised version July 2013

To be applied by all German universities and research institutions

www.dfg.de
Implementation of Ombudssystem
Why?

Case
Need of consultation in conflict situation

- Prevention of misconduct
- Comprehension of necessity
- Quality management and quality protection
Implementation of Ombudssystem

For whom?

Scope of application
All members of the institution in question

Need of basic conditions
• Visibility
• Reachability
Implementation of Ombudssystem
For whom?

Scope of application
All members of the institution in question

Need of basic conditions
• Visibility
• Reachability and availability
• Confidentiality
Ombuds office should be placed in „hidden“ environment; as far away as possible from
• Head of Institution
• Steering Committee
• Deanary ...

Rumours and smattering inhibit suitable conflict solutions
Implementation of Ombudssystem

How?

Structure

Framework conditions

- Appropriate resources
- Unrestricted independence
- Freedom from subordination

Guidelines, Rules, Bylaws

- Unequivocal descriptions and definitions:
  - Number of ombudspersons, deputy regulations
  - Scope of action and decision-making
Implementation of Ombudssystem
How?
Structure

Appreciative environment
Positive and supportive attitude
→ Head of institution, colleagues ...

Practical implementation
  Office space and working material
  Reasonable equipment and facilities
  Practical assistance
Implementation of Ombudssystem
How? Person

Clear criteria for appointment / election

Basic qualifications and requirements
(beyond personal authority, integrity, research experience)

Knowledge of GSP-rules (local, (inter)national)
Competences in consultation, conflict solving and mediation
Interdisciplinary perspective
„Soft“ skills, such as openness, empathy
Implementation of Ombudssystem

How?

Person

Ombudsperson is seen as
  confessor, pacifier;
  arbitrator, judge;
  loyal colleague, representative of the institution

Infact he / she is a researcher, could be
  → competitor, rival
  → co-worker, friend

Impact on impartiality and trustworthyness
Implementation of Ombudssystem
How? Person

Further training
  Mediation, Conflict management etc.

Reasonable Compensation
  Reduction of teaching load
  Relief of other duties, administration
  Money (?)
  Employed ombudsperson?
Implementation of Ombudssystem
How?
Person

MEET THE OMBUDDY!

Professional counselling and networking

Exchange of experiences
Learning from own mistakes
Support of other ombudspersons
→ Regular meetings
  • Strain relief
  • Strengthening
  • Increase in professionalism
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