

# **2025 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

## **International Ombuds Association**

### **New Guidance for Dual Role Ombuds**

#### **Relevant Rubric Area(s):**

1. Response: Providing Anonymous and Non-mandatory Reporting Resources and Tools
2. Response: Improved Policies
3. Remediation: Confidential Resources and Support Services

#### **Description of Work:**

IOA's Advocacy Committee developed a new resource to assist ombuds in advocating for themselves within their organizations. This resource provides valuable guidance and best practices for organizations establishing or evaluating a dual role ombuds position. The Board of Directors approved the Guidance for Dual Role Ombuds, which was announced in April 2025.

#### **Guidance for Dual Role Ombuds**

Organizations should strive to have a full-time, dedicated ombuds trained by the International Ombuds Association (IOA) who adheres to IOA Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. The IOA Standards of Practice state, "Ombuds are mandated to hold no other positions that could compromise their independence. Any non-ombuds duties must not interfere with their primary role, and clear communication regarding their ombuds functions is paramount." Some organizations choose not to employ full-time, fully embedded ombuds. Alternative models may include part-time ombuds with no competing roles, contract ombuds, and dual role (sometimes referred to as "collateral") ombuds, who hold additional roles within the organization. The document's purpose is to guide those in dual role ombuds positions.

#### **Distinguishing Roles**

Dual role ombuds should not hold additional positions in areas of compliance, as this compromises their ability to follow the Standards of Practice. Equally important, they should not report to a compliance office.

If an ombuds holds multiple roles within the organization, the ombuds shall be transparent about their other official organizational duties to educate and disclose potential conflicts of interest to visitors to the ombuds office. Perceived or actual conflicts of interest are more apparent if the ombuds fills dual roles. Full transparency of the multiple roles is essential, as it facilitates the visitor's understanding, choice, and agency in using the ombuds office.

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### **Additional Considerations**

When structuring or operating ombuds offices where the ombuds has multiple roles, additional considerations include, but are not limited to, disclosing mandatory reporting requirements, developing a charter, handling conflicts of interest, protecting visitor confidentiality, establishing defined document retention procedures, maintaining and using separate and distinct websites and email addresses, identifying separate confidential spaces for meetings, and regularly attending relevant professional development.

**Website for further information (if applicable):** [International Ombuds Association](#)

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