

Annual report 2022

Ombuds Officer for students

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1 Introduction

Teaching is an important task of TU Delft and a safe environment is more conducive to learning. *Trust is key* was one of the most powerful statements made during TU Delft's most recent AccessAbility Week, a statement that resonated with the university itself and its entire student community.¹

Helping to safeguard and restore trust is therefore an important part of the role of the Ombuds Officer for Students. This encompasses mutual trust between students and lecturers and among students, but also trust in the organisation and the system. The Ombuds Officer for Students helps safeguard trust by enabling students to report problems and conflicts and by adopting a solution-oriented approach. As such, the Ombuds Officer for Students is part of the organisation's checks and balances. This is important in view of the context of current issues within the student world, such as (sexual) harassment, welfare and diversity and inclusion, as well as issues such as increasing juridification and the implementation of rules and policies.

The new Ombuds Officer for Students joined TU Delft in January 2022, making 2022 a year of exploring the following themes: rules, regulations and practices within higher education, connections between individual students and the organisation and the scope of the position of the Ombuds Officer for Students. The first year was one of ample fascinating insights that invite further exploration.

This annual report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2022. In that year, 32 students submitted reports to the Ombuds Officer for Students. These reports will be discussed in chapter 3. Before that, chapter 2 gives a brief outline of the position of the Ombuds Officer for Students at TU Delft. Chapter 4 contains several reflections and recommendations following the cases and themes that emerged in 2022. Finally, the report lists action points for 2023 and discusses the professionalisation of the Ombuds Officer.

Where this annual report refers to the Ombuds Officer, it means the Ombuds Officer for Students.

¹ Presentation by Stefan Persaud, lecturer at the Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering, kick-off AccessAbility Week, on 20 March 2023.

2 Introduction to the position and the organisation

2.1 The Ombuds Officer for Students at TU Delft

TU Delft has had a student ombudsman since 1996 and therefore has a long history of public advocacy in higher education. Previous student ombudsmen included W. Knippenberg, E.P. Moors, J.M. van Splunter and N.W. Graafland. Ombudsman Job van Luyken first became Employee Ombudsman in March 2019, and has spent the past 18 months as Student Ombudsman too, after Niek Graafland retired. The official name of the position is now no longer “ombudsman” but “Ombuds Officer”. January 2022 marked the first time that TU Delft had two ombuds officers, one for students and one for employees, each for 0.5 FTE (the Ombuds Officer for Students is now at 0.6).

As the previous Ombuds Officer for Students had left TU Delft before their successor started, there was little opportunity for handover and familiarisation apart from a single phone call. As such, the new Ombuds Officer for Students was forced to set out on her own quest to explore the organisation and the role. Fortunately, many people within (and outside) the organisation were willing to provide valuable assistance by sharing information and contacts and answering numerous questions. With a view to continuity, it would be good to develop documentation about the role and organisation. As far as the former goes, the Integrity Office has already begun drawing up a comprehensive job description.

2.2 The evolving role of the ombuds position and amendment of the policy

Over the past year, the Ombuds Officer has observed that thoughts on the role and duties of ombuds officers are evolving. The information provided by colleagues inside and outside the organisation, literature and practical situations painted a picture of divergent views, which appears to be partly due to differences between ombuds policies and the professional backgrounds and personal preferences of ombuds officers. There is some disagreement, for instance, on whether ombuds officers should deal with individual complaints or rather focus on issues beyond individual cases. The question of whether or not ombuds officers should conduct investigations themselves is also regularly raised. Terms like complaint, report, investigation, counselling, signalling, and more are not found in all policies, nor is there a uniform interpretation shared by all organisations. The discussion of broader themes, such as whether social safety falls

within the remit of ombuds officers - and how - also fits in this context,² as there is currently no consensus among ombuds officers on this topic.

The topic of social safety and (sexual) harassment within organisations and the corresponding duties and roles of ombuds officers also has a significant influence on thinking about the interpretation of the ombuds position. This is partly a consequence of the requirement that all universities appoint an Ombuds Officer for staff from 1 July 2021, following a provision of the collective labour agreement for university staff. In contrast, students in higher education have been plagued mainly by problems with regard to the implementation of policies and regulations.

The divergent ideas on the duties, remit and procedural approach of ombuds officers have meant that, for the new Ombuds Officer for Students, the past year has also been one of exploring the most appropriate interpretation of the ombuds function. On 13 July 2021, the Executive Board decided that the role of the Ombuds Officer for Students was to be reviewed.³ The experiences of the past year and the (follow-up) questions that were raised in the process can contribute to a new, modern job design tailored to the target audience and the organisation. Work on this will continue in 2023 in collaboration with various stakeholders and with the needs and interests of students in mind.

2.3 Internal contacts and activities

To get to know TU Delft better, the Ombuds Officer for Students conducted many introductory interviews with TU Delft employees, administrators and consultative bodies in 2022. Examples include staff from parts of TU Delft such as ESA, Safety and Security, Legal Affairs, the Integrity Office and the Diversity & Inclusion Office, as well as members of governing bodies and faculty staff. The Ombuds Officer for Students also met many TU Delft employees during structural administrative consultations such as the Plasa consultation, the consultation of the Heads of Education and Student Affairs, the Study Climate Group and the consultation of the secretaries of examination committees. The Ombuds Officer for Students also met several staff members during meetings about student cases.

Within the student body, the Ombuds Officer for Students was introduced to the community liaison officer and members of the student council, the meeting of presidents

² On this, see the article by Job van Luyken, De ombudsfunctionaris personeel als haarlemmerolie ?, Tijdschrift voor Klachtrecht, vol. 17, no. 1, 2021, p. 6-9.

³ The work of the Ombuds Officer for Students is currently still based on the Student Complaints Policy (Annex 3 to the TU Delft Executive and Management Regulations).

of study associations, the student official and board members of the Welcoming Week board. The Ombuds Officer also took the time to study the social map of TU Delft: confidential advisors, student psychologists, central student counsellors and academic counsellors. With some of those mentioned above, the Ombuds Officer now has regular consultations.

Besides introductions, the Ombuds Officer participated in various activities to learn about the world on campus, such as a campus tour, activities during the Welcoming Week, the How-are-you week, a study climate tribe session on diversity and inclusion, Studium Generale's Fitting in (intercultural communication) workshop and Enabled TU Delft Week.

2.4 External contacts

The Ombuds Officer also met her colleagues at other universities in 2022. She regularly liaises with the Student Ombudsman at the University of Leiden and is an active member of Voho, the Association of Ombudsmen in Higher Education.

3 Reports to Ombuds Officer for Students: figures 2022

This chapter presents the basic details of reports to the Ombuds Officer for Students. It discusses the number of reports, the part of TU Delft the reports concerned, the profile of the reporters, how the reporters came to the Ombuds Officer and the subject of the reports. Chapter 4 will then offer some reflections on this.

3.1 How many reports were received in 2022?

The Ombuds Officer for Students received 32 reports in 2022, some of which are still pending.

Just as the term "ombudsman" has now been substituted for "ombuds officer", the term "complaint" has now also been substituted for the term "report". The word "report" has various different meanings, encompassing a wide array of signals and signs, complaints and other expressions of dissatisfaction.

Most reports were filed by students who were stakeholders in the report themselves. One report was filed by a bystander and one report was filed by a (representative of a) student body. However, under the current policy, the Ombuds Officer has no power to deal with reports from bodies. Most reports were made in writing by email, while several were made by telephone. The Ombuds Officer did not receive any anonymous reports.

To compare the number of reports with previous years, the table below shows the numbers from the 2020 annual report⁴, adding the years 2021 and 2022. The number of student reports in the year 2021 was never published. The number of reports looks to have risen sharply in 2022, which is difficult to explain. The previous Ombuds Officer and the successor may have had different methods of registering reports or may have had different thoughts about their remit. Moreover, no comparison can be made to the report figures for 2021.

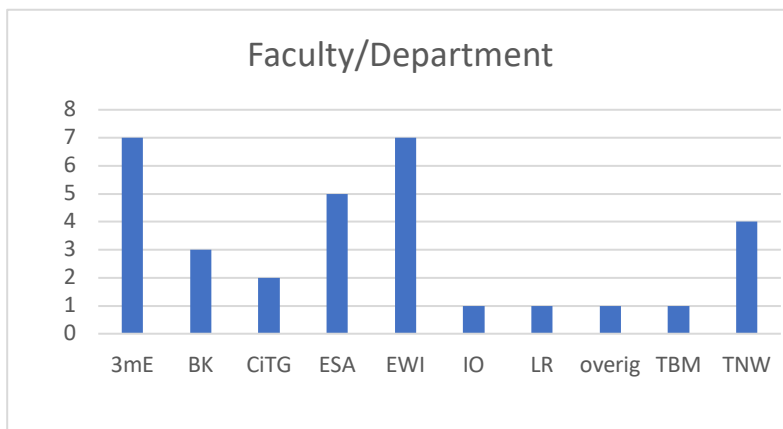
calendar year	2012	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
number	13	14	13	12	10	8	13	9	?	32

⁴ The 2020 Annual Report of the Student Ombudsman is attached as Part II to the 2020 Annual Report of the Central Student Complaints Desk.

3.2 Which part of TU Delft did the reports concern?

Most reports concerned the 3mE and EEMCS faculties and the ESA department. However, the figures are so low that they cannot be indicative of a trend or structural issues. One report was not linked to any faculty or department. For abbreviations, please refer to Annex 1.

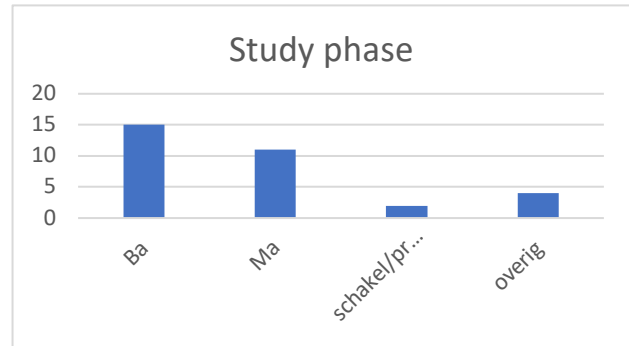
Faculty/Department	Number
3mE	7
A+BE	3
CEG	2
ESA (Education and Student Affairs)	5
EEMCS	7
IDE	1
AE	1
other	1
TPM	1
AS	4
	32



3.3 What is the profile of the reporters?

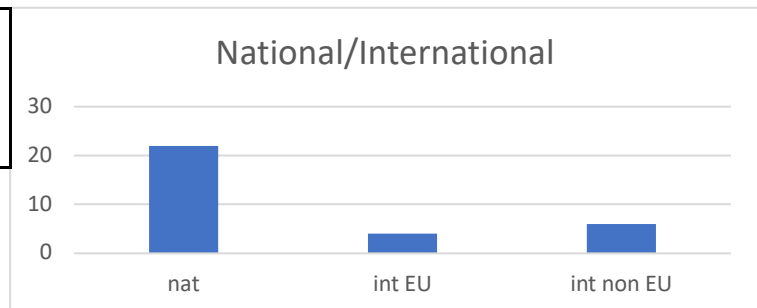
Most reports are from undergraduate students. The category 'other' consists of students who had already left TU Delft or had yet to enrol.

Study phase	Number
bachelor	15
master	11
bridging/premaster	2
other	4
	32



31% of all reports were made by international students.
International students account for 25% of the total student body.

Nat/Int	Number
national	22
int EU	4
int non-EU	6



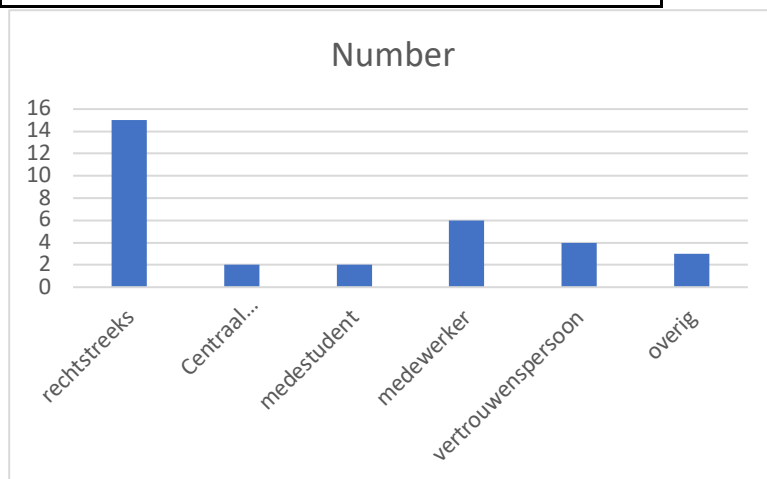
44% of reports were made by a female student.
Female students account for 31% of the total student body.

m/f	number
m	18
f	14

3.4 How are reports made?

Half of all reports were made directly to the Ombuds Officer. The other half was referred to the Ombuds Officer, usually by a confidential advisor or another TU Delft employee. The reports in the 'other' category were handed over by the previous Ombuds Officer, or by an Ombuds Officer from another university.

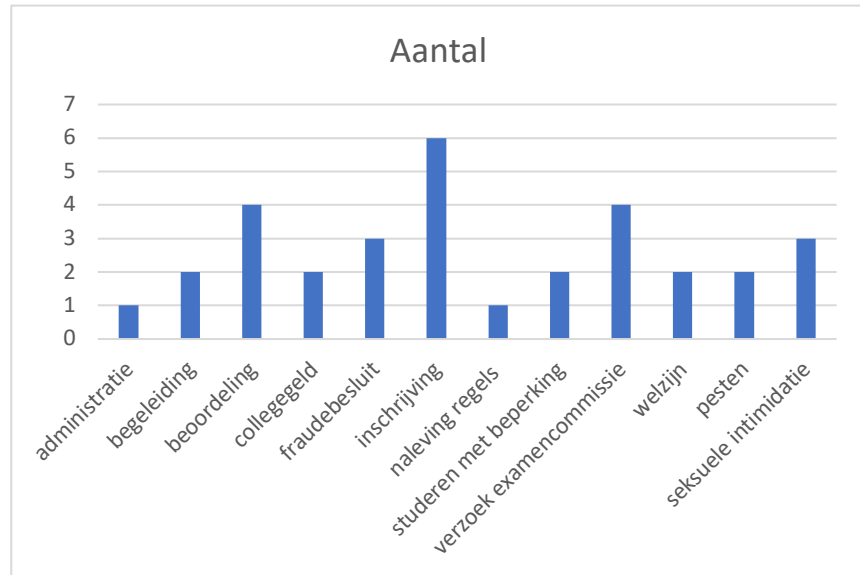
Route	Number
direct	15
via Central Complaints Desk	2
via fellow student	2
via employee	6
via confidential advisor	4
via other	3
	32



3.5 What are the reports about?

The subject matter of the reports is indicated below. Some reports could be classified in multiple categories. The reports are listed based on the most prominent issue.

Subject of report	Number
administration	1
supervision	2
grade	4
tuition fees	2
fraud decision	3
enrolment/registration	6
compliance with rules	1
studying with a disability	2
request Board of Examiners	4
welfare	2
bullying	2
sexual intimidation	3
	32



The majority of student reports are linked to “bureaucratic” problems, to the way that rules, guidelines and policies are implemented. Students may disagree with a certain decision, for instance, or believe that their case warrants an exception.

For the misconduct category, the subdivision commonly used in the description of psychosocial workload in the Working Conditions Act has been followed. This classification was designed for employees, but is also quite useful for students when it comes to categorising misconduct. The categories of misconduct are: direct or indirect discrimination, sexual harassment, aggression and violence, bullying and excessive workloads⁵.

Reports of sexual harassment concerned only situations between students. No TU Delft employees were involved.

⁵ See Article 1(3)(e) of the Working Conditions Act.

3.5.1 Impression of reports

To flesh out the open categories mentioned above, the Ombuds Officer describes the subjects in slightly greater detail below. In doing so, we have stayed as close as possible to the qualification given to the reports by the students themselves. The descriptions below do not imply that these qualifications were endorsed by the Ombuds Officer and are not an indication of the seriousness of the report.

- *administrative processing*: late registration of grades obtained abroad; also complaints about communication;
- *supervision*: complaints about supervision, expectations and changing requirements during final project phase;
- *assessment*: poor internship assessment, including complaints about poor supervision and unclear requirements; test assessment, including a report about how EAB implemented a decision; assessment, including a complaint about insufficient feedback on assessment;
- *tuition fees*: institutional fee for a double bachelor's degree due to graduation date; high student debt for international students;
- *fraud decisions/ invalidation*: penalty imposed for fraud, but student denies the events on which the decision is based; complaint about invalidation for lack/ambiguity of test instructions; complaint about information about scope of penalty after transfer to another faculty;
- *enrolment/registration*: problem with tuition fee debit authorisation, resulting in student being unenrolled; compensation for late enrolment; request for information on re-enrolment after interruption of studies; scheduling admission procedure detrimental to international student; admission procedure/ranking;
- *compliance/explanation with/of rules*: participation rules;
- *studying with a disability*: change to testing/assessment detrimental to students with dyslexia; slow and bad-faith handling of request for effective adjustment leading to more distress;
- *requests to and decisions of Board of Examiners*: rejection of cum laude, request for permission for substitute courses, rejection of international minor course

package, including complaint about poor communication/pillar to post; exemption of required course; request for extra exam/oral in connection with the difficulty of online testing for students with dyslexia;

- *welfare*: mental and emotional problems leading to study delays; report requesting more attention and care for students with mental health problems;
- *bullying*: unsafe treatment or exclusion by lecturer, abuse of power by lecturer;
- *sexual intimidation*: emotional and sexual manipulation by fellow student, sexual harassment at student association; harassment by fellow student.

3.5.2 From practice

Below are two examples of cases submitted by students to the Ombuds Officer. The descriptions were anonymised and aspects of the cases were modified to make it impossible to identify the students involved.

Fraud decision

Last year, one student was penalised for committing fraud during an online test. As a result, he was not allowed to take exams during Q1. The student acknowledged the offence and accepted the penalty. The student subsequently enrolled in a master's degree programme at another faculty under the University's 'zachte knip' scheme, which allows undergraduate students to take graduate-level courses if they meet certain conditions. The student complied with the penalty and took the outstanding Q1 bachelor's exams and Q1 master's exams in the Q2 resit period. This led to a significant workload, as he also had to sit the Q2 master's exams at the same time, and the student subsequently failed several exams. Over the summer, the student heard in passing that penalties imposed by one faculty do not, in principle, apply at other faculties, after which he realised that he could have sat his Q1 master's exams in Q1. He wondered why no one had told him about this, especially because he had specifically asked an academic counsellor about how the penalty worked. The Ombuds Officer spoke to several TU employees who were aware of the case. An interview was eventually held with one of these employees and the student in the presence of the Ombuds Officer, during which processes, policy and the implementation thereof and communication were discussed. All parties involved benefited from the interview, after which the case could be closed.

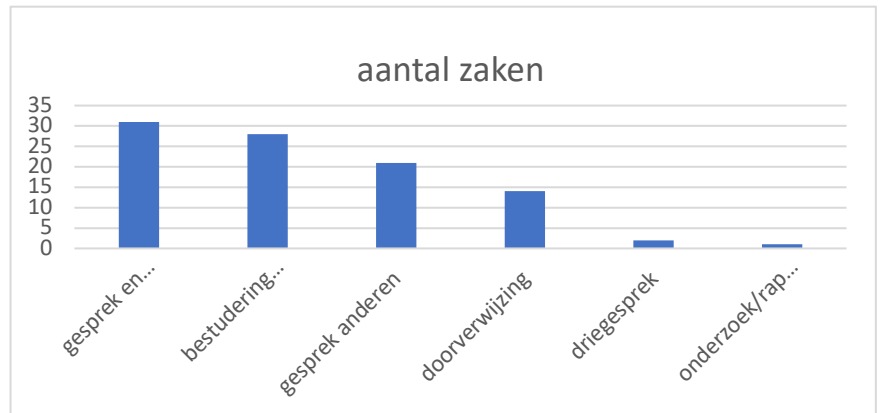
Lecturer communication

One student came to the Ombuds Officer to report the conduct of a lecturer who she felt had bullied and excluded her. The student had wanted to start her final project for her bachelor's degree but did not meet all the admission requirements, as she had not yet passed a compulsory course. The student was still keen to start the final project in order to prevent serious delays in her studies. She approached the lecturer, who responded rather bluntly. The student felt that she was left to her own devices and started to panic, as the start date for the final project phase was rapidly approaching. The student also asked other employees to be admitted to the final project phase and was given permission to start the final project before the Ombuds Officer could intervene. This solved the practical problem. However, the lecturer in question had also sent an email to the student, which the latter experienced as unfair treatment. As a result, she doubted whether she should take part in this final project at all. The Ombuds Officer subsequently scheduled an interview with the lecturer and informed the student of the outcomes of this interview. The latter felt sufficiently reassured and started the final project, for which she ultimately obtained a passing grade. After completing the final project, the student took her time to contemplate the issue and pointed out that she felt aggrieved by how the lecturer had addressed her in their email correspondence and wanted a ruling on the matter. When the Ombuds Officer told her that she would have to submit a complaint to the Complaints Committee for Misconduct, the student decided to let the matter rest.

3.6 What did the Ombuds Officer do?

This section discusses the work⁶ done by the Ombuds Officer in response to the reports.

Activities	several matters
interview and advice	31
document review	28
interview others	21
referral	14
trilateral interview	2
investigation/report	1



When a student submits a report - usually by email, sometimes by phone - the Ombuds Officer always invites the reporter for an interview. These interviews usually take place on campus in the Ombuds Officer's room and sometimes online, for example if the student is not in the country.

During the interview, the Ombuds Officer will often ask students to send written evidence, such as documents and e-mail messages to better understand the context of the student's report. If necessary, a second interview will follow to examine and discuss the content of those documents in more detail.

During the interviews, the student and Ombuds Officer can get acquainted and the student can tell their story. They discuss the report together and identify the facts and rules involved. During the interview, the student is given ample opportunity to share their needs and wishes, to point out what they find most important and to explain how they want the matter to be pursued. Options and possible solutions are identified.

⁶In the internal job description, the duties of the Ombuds Officer are summarised as follows: providing independent advice to the reporter (listening ear, explanation of e.g. regulations, advice), mediation (shuttle mediation, discussion facilitator), independent advice to faculty or department (interviews with employees, case exploration, written or oral advice), conducting investigations (focused on context and formation of decisions and courses of action, e.g. communication methods and manners) and investigating broader patterns or structural issues.

The next step depends on the nature of the report and the student's preferences: the report may be referred to another official or body within the organisation, handled with a written or oral advice, a second interview with the reporter, an interview with other parties involved or an investigation are other follow-up options.

For referrals, the Ombuds Officer always favours a warm handover, consulting in advance with the person to whom the report is referred or assisting the student in the process.

Several students reported issues related to decisions against which they should issue an objection or appeal. The Ombuds Officer has no power in this regard, and was therefore forced to refer these students to the Examination Appeals Board or the Objections Committee. In these cases, the Ombuds Officer for Students provided information on appeals and objections procedures and the applicable terms and deadlines.

The Ombuds Officer also looked into the deeper details of the problems for students who needed this assistance and in particularly complicated cases. Some students struggled to fully understand the decision or the factual or legal basis thereof. Without acting as an advocate or saying anything about the likelihood of success, the Ombuds Officer helped several students analyse their cases to help them identify the key issues and formulate their objections clearly. Students could then lodge their own appeals or objections and take the matter to the appropriate body. Several students returned to the Ombuds Officer with questions about the settlement phase preceding the formal handling of the notice of objection or appeal.

With the student's permission, the Ombuds Officer also regularly conducted interviews with others involved in the issue, including an academic counsellor or central student counsellor, a head of Education and Student Affairs or the person against whom the report was made. These interviews were mostly of an exploratory nature with the aim of clarifying events and practices. In some cases, these interviews were all that were needed to resolve the matter, and several students were satisfied by the explanation given or found it easier to accept the situation now that they had more information.

There was one interview with a student and the person mentioned in the complaint in the presence of the Ombuds Officer, giving those involved the opportunity to explain their side of things and how certain actions came across or were interpreted.

Reports about (sexual) harassment are mostly made to confidential advisors. In 2022, the Ombuds Officer was involved with several reports of harassment reports after referral by a confidential advisor. These reports were dealt with in an advisory and amicable manner and in consultation with other TU Delft officials, such as confidential advisors and Integral Safety Department employees.

If, after an interview, an issue is not sufficiently clarified or resolved, the Ombuds Officer may - if they see fit - delve further into a case to paint a more detailed picture. In 2022, the Ombuds Officer did so for one issue. After further investigation based on documentation and interviews, a report was prepared for the competent authority with a written analysis and recommendations.

4 Reflections and recommendations

4.1 Number of reports

In 2022, 32 reports were made to the Ombuds Officer for Students. Although more than in previous years, it should be noted it is a very small number of reports given the university's 27,000-strong student body. As such, the Ombuds Officer for Students feels that statements of a more general nature and broader conclusions on more structural problems, for instance, can't be justified. Although the reflections and recommendations formulated below are general in nature, they are not based on conclusions about the course of events or the performance of staff or students in general. They are intended as reflections arising from the cases that have emerged over the past year and can serve as inspiration for further follow-up questions and explorations.

Adding to this, 2022 was a year of establishing a foothold and getting to know the organisation for the Ombuds Officer. As such, the exploratory nature of the year means that there is no adequate basis for formulating a large number of recommendations.

4.2 Visibility of the Ombuds Officer

A low number of complaints does not necessarily mean that all is well. The Ombuds Officer is certainly not known to all students and not all employees know that there is a dedicated Ombuds Officer for Students. The issues of accessibility and findability were regularly discussed in talks with confidential advisors, academic counsellors, staff from the Integrity Office and others. It is important that the clarity of information and roadmaps be improved so that students know which staff member they can go to with a particular problem.

The Ombuds Officer is yet to be added to several roadmaps and information brochures. Information on the TU Delft website could also be improved, and issue that has already been brought to the attention of the Integrity Office and ESA, but to which the Ombuds Officer is willing to contribute. Work on this will continue in 2023.

4.3 Clarity on role of Ombuds Officer

Chapter 2 discussed the changing role of the Ombuds Officer in terms of duties, themes and procedures, as well as the intended review of TU Delft's Student Complaints Policy. It is important that clear and well-considered choices are made to overhaul the role of the Ombuds Officer for Students and that this new role is described clearly in the new policy. The Ombuds Officer will contribute to this process, tapping into the experience gained in 2022. In 2022, consultations on this issue started with various departments, including the Integrity Office, Legal Affairs and ESA.

4.4 Learning from reports

The primary purpose of the Ombuds Officer is to solve issues or problems reported by students, but the same reports are also a valuable feedback mechanism for the organisation. Students are true experts by experience and can therefore help the organisation formulate policy and fine-tune decision-making process.

It is useful to study reports closely to draw lessons from them that could benefit the organisation as a whole, regardless of whether the reports in question are justified or not and whether they can be resolved.

Suitable reports can be explored inductively, giving rise to follow-up questions that may provide the organisation with a roadmap for further improvements. Examples could include: how is the final project process and final project supervision organisation, how is lecturer/student communication organisation, what issues do students with a disability or chronic illness face, etc. Follow-up questions could possibly be worked up into more general topics.⁷ In practice, the Ombuds Officer has noticed in several occasions that employees of the organisation use a report from a student to think about improving processes, for example in the area of information provision.

Many students also cited the learning effect of complaint handling as an important motivation for submitting a report to the Ombuds Officer, as they do not want the same thing to happen to another student or want practices to improve. This demonstrates a strong commitment to TU Delft and a desire to contribute to improving the organisation.

⁷ For this approach, see Manja Bomhoff and Yvonne van der Vlugt (2021), *Volgende keer beter! - Leren van klachten over je organisatie*.

A famous quote reads “a complaint is free advice”, which is why it is so important to look at reports and complaints from this perspective and examine their value to the organisation with curiosity.

4.5 Multiproblems

Experience has shown that many reports have multiple aspects and it is key that this be recognised quickly. Students may simultaneously have an administrative problem, such as an incorrect registration of a grade, that effectively causes other problems, such as delays to starting an internship, as well as having to await a decision on an appeal, while also experiencing communication problems with a university employee. In these complex situations, students may make a decision or focus only on certain issues - whether on the advice of others or not - while all other issues remain, resulting in delays, missed deadlines or *faits accomplis*. When a student reports a problem, it is therefore important to take a broad perspective and examine their entire situation. The Ombuds Officer has the following message for students: do not wait too long to visit your academic counsellor and make sure to discuss any important study-related decision, even if you think that nothing can go wrong.

4.6 Referrals to the Examination Appeals Board

In several cases, students have turned to the Ombuds Officer for issues when dealing with pending appeals to decisions that were being assessed by the Examination Appeals Board (Eab).

In these cases, the Ombuds Officer reminded the student of the need to submit a notice of appeal and noticed that many students do not know exactly how to submit a notice of appeal and what to include in such a notice. At the same time, students often struggle to systematically analyse the decision itself, the factual basis of the decision and the legal basis of the decision, while such an analysis is needed in order to come up with clear arguments.

Students also have many questions about the amicable settlement phase. These could be questions about the process, such as: "Who is the best person to bring to the interview?", as well as domain-specific questions about the issue at hand and the particulars.

Drawing up concrete information for students about the objection and appeals process may be valuable, and the same goes for the amicable settlement phase. A more structured approach to formulating and justifying appealable and objectable decisions may also help.

4.7 Email and communication hygiene

In dealing with reports, the Ombuds Officer regularly comes across email correspondence between a student and a TU Delft employee or body. Most of these exchanges are clear and unambiguous, but some emails also contain texts that can foster miscommunication and irritation. Written communication can come across differently or harsher than intended, which is something for both students and employees to keep in mind.

In a different context, the same goes for email communication on all kinds of administrative matters, such as registration/enrolment, tuition fees, graduation and more. There are often standard templates and boilerplate texts for these emails, but it is important to bear in mind that students with specific questions may feel unheard when they receive a standard response that does not provide a clear answer. This can prompt prolonged email exchanges in which neither party gets their intended message across. In such cases, a face-to-face meeting is better.

For complicated matters, the Ombuds Officer therefore recommends that students and employees suggest having a face-to-face meeting if they find themselves repeatedly emailing each other back and forth without resolving the matter at hand. Furthermore, they are advised to keep email communication professional and respectful at all times, even in stressful situations.

4.8 Graduation date

Good, concrete and accessible information helps students make better choices. The Ombuds Officer therefore believes that it is important to provide concrete information about the graduation date, as this date is material for other matters such as tuition fees and student finance. Guidance for students should explain how the graduation date is determined, highlighting the implications of the date and why it is important for students to know about it.

4.9 Sexual intimidation

Sexual intimidation and other forms of harassment among students have received a lot of attention inside and outside TU Delft in 2022. A lot of work was done to engage in dialogue on this topic, with the Safe Space performance during the How-are-U week being a particularly good example. The issue has also been highlighted by the committee organising the Welcoming Week, which covered myriad aspects of harassment including standards, culture, the role of associations, help and support.

Contributing to the prevention of (sexual) harassment among students, starting a dialogue and putting in place proper procedures to deal with reports are all part of creating a safe study climate. It is important to continue activities in this area and work towards making them sustainable for the sake of continuity.

5 Action points 2023

For 2023, in addition to handling reports, the Ombuds Officer has the following action points:

- Provide input for the revision of the TU Delft Student Complaints Policy and, where necessary, the further elaboration of the job description;
- Contribute to promoting the visibility of the student ombuds function as part of TU Delft's welfare systems;
- Build relevant contacts and networks within and outside the organisation;
- Work on further professionalisation;
- Continue to pay attention to issues relevant to students arising from cases and student-related developments within higher education, such as accessibility.

6 Professionalisation 2022

The Ombuds Officer for Students strives to acquire, improve and/or maintain knowledge and skills in areas such as handling reports, effective (conflict) resolution techniques, investigations and investigative methods, trend analysis, legal knowledge (education law), communication with persons with complex issues, organisational knowledge and analysis and theme-specific knowledge (social safety, studying with a disability, student welfare, etc.)

In 2022, the Ombuds Officer participated in various courses and knowledge meetings, such as a pilot course entitled *De onafhankelijke organisatie-ombudsman* (The independent organisational ombudsman), Voho meetings (Association of Ombudsmen in Higher Education), a lecture day on social safety, a masterclass on RET by TU Delft student psychologists, Education Law Training and a webinar on misconduct. At the same time, the Ombuds Officer also studies relevant literature.

7 In conclusion

The role of the Ombuds Officer is special and versatile and requires continued development. Although it is a solo position, no Ombuds Officer can properly fulfil their duties without the cooperation and support of others inside and outside the organisation. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to show me around, answer questions, provide valuable explanations, or just have a cup of coffee with me. I would also like to thank the students who made the effort to share their report and story and I invite all students to continue to do so in the future.

I welcome input and feedback. If you have any questions, comments or tips, please get in touch: c.g.m.wensveen@tudelft.nl or 06-43213534.

8 Appendix 1: Abbreviations

3mE : Faculty of Mechanical, Maritime and Materials Engineering (3mE)

A+BE : Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment

CEG : Faculty of Civil Engineering & Geosciences

ESA : Education & Student Affairs

EEMCS: Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science

IDE : Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering

AE : Faculty of Aerospace Engineering

TPM : Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management

AS : Faculty of Applied Sciences

EAB : Examination Appeals Board