An ombudsman is an independent, confidential, and non-aligned office. The ombudsman advocates for fair and equitably administered processes, but does not advocate on behalf of the student. Rather, the office works to help parties better understand the nature of the problem and what their options are for addressing it.

A new student service
The office of Graduate Student Ombudsman was created in 2012 to serve as an informal resource for addressing student problems and concerns. Dale Moore, current assistant dean of The Graduate School, was appointed as the first Graduate Student Ombudsman and continues to serve in that position.

803.777.4243  gradschool.sc.edu/students/ombs.asp

Best Practices

Confidentiality
Confidentiality is a distinguishing feature of the ombudsman office. In order to preserve this, no notes or records of any kind are maintained relative to the identity of the individual student. This includes the categories of gender, race, department, college or school. The only category that is tracked by the ombudsman is the nature of the issue discussed.

Tracking Student Concerns
From July 1, 2012 to July 31, 2013 the Graduate Student Ombudsman met with 143 graduate students. The three most common concerns were service/administrative issues; evaluative relationships; and legal, regulatory, financial and compliance related issues. Grade disputes typically do not fall within the purview of the office.
Where can I go for other concerns?

Academic issues (such as grade disputes) are usually and best handled at the departmental level. Talk to your professor first. Then see your chair, then your college dean.

Students with personal concerns have access to 12 free counseling sessions per year. Make an appointment by calling 803. 777. 5223.

SUMMARY

Common student concerns were clustered around service/administrative issues; faculty/student conflicts; issues with legal implications (including harassment, discrimination, and intellectual property); and the perceived fairness of policies and standards. Although service/administrative issues were the largest group, and often the most easily reconciled, they still had a profound influence on the student’s general impression of their graduate school experience.