



<b>Student Grievance Procedure</b>	  <b>Weizmann Institute of Science</b>
Category: Ethics, Behavior, and Discipline	
Created by: Gili Vainer	
Last updated: December 10, 2023	
<b>Feinberg Graduate School</b>	

## Student Grievance Procedure

### General


1. The purpose of this procedure is to establish guidelines for the appointment and responsibilities of the Student Ombudsperson (hereinafter “the Ombudsperson”) at the Feinberg Graduate School (hereinafter: “FGS”), their authority, operating procedures, and the obligation of all FGS units to cooperate with the Ombudsperson.
2. In this procedure, the terms below are defined as follows:
  - 2.1. A student: Student; postdoctoral fellow; visiting student
  - 2.2. Studies: Studies, including as a visiting student;

### Appointment of the Ombudsperson

3. The Ombudsperson is an independent and impartial authority.
4. The Ombudsperson shall be appointed by the FGS Dean and shall be in the position of Full Professor.
5. The Ombudsperson shall be appointed for a three-year term in office, and will not serve for a term exceeding more than six consecutive years.
6. The Ombudsperson shall not investigate a complaint in situations where there is a legitimate concern about a conflict of interest or if they have already formed an opinion or rendered a different decision pertaining to the complaint. In cases where the Ombudsperson is precluded from investigating the complaint, the Ombudsperson shall notify the Dean, who will then appoint another qualified individual to conduct the investigation.

### Authorities

7. The Ombudsperson shall address complaints submitted by FGS students and applicants for FGS studies (hereinafter: “candidates”) concerning academic, or administrative personal matters, that the complainant alleges were not adequately handled by the relevant parties.
8. As a general rule, the Ombudsperson shall handle complaints in which, based on their assessment, all available routes of resolution within the relevant units have been exhausted. However, the Ombudsperson retains the discretion to address student or candidate complaints

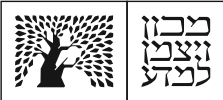

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and initiate an investigation before these referral options have been fully exhausted if, in their opinion, the circumstances warrant such action.

9. The Ombudsperson is entrusted with ensuring that the students and candidates' rights are upheld under reasonable and fair conditions, in compliance with both legal provisions and the FGS's regulations; that FGS's units operate without prejudice or arbitrariness, adhering to the principles of good administrative governance; that an appropriate study environment that respects human dignity in all its aspects is maintained, especially in terms of respectful interpersonal interactions and communication, recognizing students' professional competencies, ensuring proper treatment, and providing students with suitable opportunities to fulfill their full academic and scientific potential under accepted and fair conditions.
10. The Ombudsperson will not handle complaints falling under the authority of the Commissioner for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment. If a complaint within the purview of the Commissioner for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment is submitted, the Ombudsperson will forward it to the Commissioner, while also referring the complainant to the Commissioner.
11. The Ombudsperson will not handle complaints that are under consideration by other authorized entity within the Weizmann Institute, including disciplinary issues, scholarships, and student housing. Additionally, the Ombudsperson will not serve as an appellate body for decisions made by these entities.
12. At their discretion or in instances where the parties involved in the complaint are not affiliated with the FGS, the Ombudsperson may choose to refer a particular complaint to the Institute's internal auditor and/or Institute Ombudsperson and/or the Legal Office, whether in conjunction with or in lieu of the Student Ombudsperson's investigation.
13. The Ombudsperson will operate administratively within the FGS, which will provide all services and administrative support for the Ombudsperson's office, with a commitment to maintaining confidentiality.

### **Obligation to cooperate with the Ombudsperson**

14. The units and staff of the FGS are obligated to cooperate with the Ombudsperson. Upon the Ombudsperson's request, they shall provide any information required for the investigation of a complaint.
15. The units shall promptly and efficiently respond to the Ombudsperson's queries, and in any case, within seven working days from the date of the Ombudsperson's request. Their response to the Ombudsperson will include the rationale behind the unit's decision concerning students or candidates, as applicable.


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## Submitting a complaint

16. A complainant shall submit the complaint in writing to the Ombudsperson via email at [Ombudsperson.student@weizmann.ac.il](mailto:Ombudsperson.student@weizmann.ac.il) or through the online form, whose wording is similar to the one attached to this procedure.
17. The complaint must include the following applicant details: Name, ID/passport number as applicable, phone number, email address, details of any prior procedures conducted as per sections 7 and 8 above, and information about any ongoing procedures or previously submitted claims/complaints.
18. The complaint should be well-reasoned and provide a detailed, factual account of the events in a clear and respectful manner. It should describe the alleged injustice or harm, specify the desired remedy, and include, if possible, relevant documents with regards to previous applications made to the relevant units and any other available document.
19. Whenever feasible, the complaint should be submitted promptly after the decision in question has been made.
20. Complainants have the option to request that the investigation of their complaint regarding the relevant parties be conducted anonymously. However, the initial complaint must contain identifying information. In cases where anonymity would hinder the investigation, the Ombudsperson shall notify the complainant and seek their consent to proceed with the investigation while disclosing their identities. If such consent is not granted, the Ombudsperson will conclude the handling of the matter, subject to section 28 below.
21. All parties involved in the complaint are responsible for safeguarding the privacy and rights of both complainants and defendants.

## Investigation of complaint and recommendation

22. The Ombudsperson shall commence an investigation into the complaint involving the relevant parties. A copy of the original complaint, as submitted, may be shared with all relevant parties.
23. The Ombudsperson may condition the investigation on receiving all pertinent material from the complainant.
24. Meetings between the Ombudsperson and the complainant are permissible, provided they occur in the presence of an additional FGS representative. These meetings will be documented and require the complainant's signature for approval.

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25. If the Ombudsperson determines that the complaint, as initially presented, lacks merit, the Ombudsperson may inform the complainant that there is no basis for intervention.
26. Upon the conclusion of the complaint investigation, the Ombudsperson shall provide recommendations as follows:
  - 26.1 If the Ombudsperson finds the complaint justified, they may propose modifications to the decision affecting the complainant or suggest an alternative suitable resolution. These recommendations will be submitted to the Dean of the FGS for determination. The Ombudsperson may choose to alert specific units within the FGS to decisions or actions that appear inappropriate.
  - 26.2 The Ombudsperson may recommend the modification of procedures found to be erroneous or inadequate during the investigation of a complaint, and these shall be conveyed to the FGS Dean.
27. The Ombudsperson may refer decisions in complex issues, to the FGS Dean for resolution.
28. The Ombudsperson possesses the authority to act based on their judgment during the investigation of a complaint. This includes the option to continue an investigation even if the complainant wishes to withdraw it, meet with FGS officials provided records of such meetings are maintained, include in the recommendation sections intended only for specific recipients, to address individual privacy concerns, and other pertinent considerations, etc.
29. The Ombudsperson may notify the Legal Office of the complaint and consult with the Legal Office at their discretion.

### **Ombudsperson's recommendation**

30. The Ombudsperson's recommendation shall be sent to the Dean within 21 working days from the date of complaint submission. In complicated cases, the recommendation will be sent within 30 working days from the date of the complaint submission.
31. The Dean retains the authority to evaluate and determine whether to accept or reject the Ombudsperson's recommendation and to request supplement inquiry. In cases where the Dean chooses to reject the Ombudsperson's recommendation, a clear and reasoned explanation shall be provided within reasonable timeframe.
32. A copy of both the Ombudsperson's recommendation and the Dean's decision shall be forwarded to the complainant and the relevant unit.
33. The decision made by the Dean shall be final and conclusive.

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## Reports

34. Annually, and no later than the conclusion of the first semester following the academic year for which the report relates, the Ombudsperson shall compile and submit an annual report. The annual report shall encompass a comprehensive summary of the Ombudsperson's activities throughout the year. It should encapsulate the key elements of complaints, omitting any identifying information about the involved parties, while presenting the Ombudsperson's conclusions and recommendations.
  
35. The annual report shall be submitted to the Dean of the FGS and the President of the Institute. A copy of the report will also be provided to the Institute's Legal Office. At the discretion of the Ombudsperson and the Dean, the report, or relevant sections thereof, may also be disseminated to the heads of the units implicated in the complaints, where the Ombudsperson has made recommendations aimed at enhancing their functioning or altering their work practices.