

LSC Ombudsperson

The LSC Ombudsperson provides confidential, *informal*, independent, and neutral dispute resolution advisory services for all members of the LIGO Scientific Collaboration. (The policy of the LSC for *formally* addressing interpersonal concerns or problems is described in [LIGO Document M1300005](#).) The Ombudsperson assists all members in identifying and evaluating options for resolving and managing conflicts, provides various types of informal mediation services, and makes referrals to other appropriate academic and community resources. The LSC Ombudsperson is meant to help with conflicts that arise in LSC working groups or events, not in problems internal to an academic institution, which usually can be mediated by the appropriate offices in the host institution.

The Ombudsperson is familiar with the organizational structure of the LSC and can provide current information about services, programs, policies, and procedures. Due to its informal, confidential, and independent role outside the administrative structure of the Collaboration, notice to the Ombudsperson about a problem does not result in the generation of records, nor does it constitute legal notice to the member host institution about the existence of a problem. For those interested in making official complaints to the university about a problem, the Ombudsperson can assist by making appropriate referrals.

The LSC Ombudsperson reports only to the LSC Spokesperson, but does not share any confidential information. The LSC Ombudsperson may be a member of the LSC, but should not have any other leadership or supervisory role that may compromise the Ombudsperson's impartiality.

The LSC adopts the role definitions from the International Ombuds Association copied below from <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/resources/what-ombuds> :

The Organizational Ombudsman—Role and Function

The primary duties of an organizational ombudsman are (1) to work with individuals and groups in an organization to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues or concerns, and (2) to bring systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution.

An organizational ombudsman operates in a manner to preserve the confidentiality of those seeking services, maintains a neutral/impartial position with respect to the concerns raised, works at an informal level of the organizational system, and is independent of formal organizational structures. Successfully fulfilling that primary function in a manner consistent with the IOA Standards of Practice requires a number of activities on the part of the ombudsman while precluding others.

Activities and functions most frequently undertaken by an ombudsman include, but are not limited to:

- Listens and understands issues while remaining neutral with respect to the facts. The ombudsman doesn't listen to judge or to decide who is right or wrong. The ombudsman listens to understand the issue from the perspective of the individual. This is a critical step in developing options for resolution.
- Assists in reframing issues and developing and helping individuals evaluate options. This helps individuals identify the interests of various parties to the issues and helps focus efforts on potential options to meet those interests.
- Guides or coaches individuals to deal directly with other parties, including the use of formal resolution resources of the organization. An ombudsman often seeks to help individuals improve their skill and their confidence in giving voice to their concerns directly.
- Refers individuals to appropriate resolution resources. An ombudsman may refer individuals to one or more formal organizational resources that can potentially resolve the issue.
- Assists in surfacing issues to formal resolution channels. When an individual is unable or unwilling to surface a concern directly, the ombudsman can assist by helping give voice to the concern and /or creating an awareness of the issue among appropriate decision-makers in the organization.
- Facilitates informal resolution processes. An ombudsman may help to resolve issues between parties through various types of informal mediation.
- Identifies new issues and opportunities for systemic change for the organization. The unique positioning of the ombudsman serves to provide unfiltered information that can produce insight to issues and resolutions. The ombudsman is a source of detection and early warning of new issues and a source of suggestions of systemic change to improve existing processes.

What an ombudsman does not do:

Because of the informal, neutral, confidential and independent positioning of an ombudsman in an organization, they typically do not undertake the following roles or activities:

- Participate in formal investigations or play any role in a formal issue resolution process
- Serve in any other organizational role that would compromise the neutrality of the ombudsman role
- Receive notice for the organization
- Make binding decisions or mandate policies
- Create or maintain records or reports for the organization