

Based on Article 31 and Article 32 of the Law on Higher Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 82/2018 as well as Article 70 of the Statute of the South East European University, the University Board, at its meeting held 22.11.2019, approved this:

Rule on the Work of the Student Ombudsperson

Aim

Article 1

- (1) Student Ombudsperson contributes to maintaining the highest standards of academic life and effective support for students in the independent and impartial review of student complaints that have not been resolved by the department or faculty. This also includes the work and conduct of the BIC for the services that provides to students and the Student Parliament and Association.
- (2) Student Ombudsperson is independent, impartial, confidential and honest. He / she does not represent students, the university in any organization or group, internal or external and cannot be elected as a representative in any university body. He/she does not advocate for any individual. He/she works for fair and equitable administration of processes as well as expected standards of professional conduct and service. The use of Student Ombudsperson services by students is on a voluntary basis and is not a mandatory step in any procedure or process.
- (3) The Student Ombudsperson cannot investigate any matter in which there is a conflict of interest or that compromises the neutrality of the position. In this case, he/she seeks support from the Secretary General and/or from the President of the Student Parliament and Association.

Approach

Article 2

- (1) The Student Ombudsperson is elected from among full-time students of the University, for protection of student rights.
- (2) The appointment is done by the Senate of the University with a majority of the votes of the members, based on the public call, upon the proposal of the Student Parliament of the University but from the candidates from outside the Parliament. The public call is announced by the Student Parliament as soon as the Student Parliament bodies are elected.
- (3) The term in office of the Student Ombudsperson is two years, without the right of reappointment.
- (4) Student Ombudsperson dismissal procedure can be initiated by Student Parliament, while dismissal decision is approved by the University Senate, by a majority vote of the total number of members.

Ombudsperson Competencies

Article 3

- (1) Student Ombudsperson acts upon a submission of an appeal by the student or on his/her own initiative if s/he finds that the student's right has been violated by University authorities or by a member of the University staff.
- (2) For his/her work, the Student Ombudsperson submits an annual report to the University Senate.

- (3) The Student Ombudsperson may consult with other staff and students, inspect the documents and obtain independent legal advice, as required.
- (4) Upon formal inquiry, he/she may make recommendations for resolving complaints to the Pro-Rector (for academic issues), the Secretary-General (for administrative or general issues) or President of the Student Parliament and Association. For very serious violations, he/she may choose to report the matters directly to the Rector or the President of the University Senate.
- (5) The Student Ombudsperson may also make recommendations for changes in university practices to prevent the re-submission of similar complaints and dissatisfactions.
- (6)
- (7) Student Ombudsperson reports annually to the University Senate and the Student Parliament and Association. He/she reports on the types of grievances, student dissatisfaction, general functioning of grievance or other relevant procedures and processes. Student Ombudsperson may be required to attend Senate meetings in person to present findings.

Responsibilities

Article 4

- (1) The Student Ombudsperson:
 1. Will provide regular information on the role of the Student Ombudsperson to ensure that students and staff are aware of this position, its role and values, in cooperation with relevant departments;
 2. Will provide current information on University policies and procedures in order to advise students on their rights and responsibilities in relation to these processes;
 3. Will receive and record objections, complaints, or issues submitted by a student or group of students objectively and confidentially;
 4. Will confirm and ascertain that the student or group of students has taken all necessary steps to resolve the matter within the faculty or unit;
 5. Will conduct investigations informally to decide if the investigation is needed;
 6. Actively facilitate informal discussions to identify the best opportunities to solve the problem and ascertain when issues are completed;
 7. Will support the operation of the student grievance procedure, in cooperation with the Quality Office;
 8. Independently will investigate the grievance if further action is needed and make recommendations for resolving grievances with the Pro-Rector (for academic issues), the Secretary-General (for administrative or general issues) or President of the Student Parliament and Association;
 9. Regularly will inform student or student group of the progress of any matter;
 10. Will provide an annual general report on his/her work;
 11. Will participate in trainings that are relevant for the position and will contribute with general advice and ideas about the related policies and processes as required;
 12. Will perform the work in accordance with all legal requirements, University Statute, Statute of Student Parliament and Association, policies, procedures, guidelines and follow the mission of the University.

Required skills

Article 5

- (1) The Student Ombudsperson is required to have ability to communicate in the two local languages used at university level (Albanian and Macedonian);
- (2) He/she is required to have relevant computer skills for communication and archiving
- (3) He/she is required to have the ability to negotiate positively with both students and staff
- (4) He/she is expected to have problem solving skills and initiative
- (5) He/she is required to have the ability to work independently
- (6) He/she is required to have skills to compile reports and do basic data analysis.

Support

Article 6

- (1) The Student Ombudsperson may request and receive support and advice from the Legal and Procurement Service, Quality Assurance Office, Human Resources Office, Dean's Offices, Student Service and other departments as needed.

Required forms and procedures

Article 7

Forms:

- Complaint/request form
- Student Ombudsperson reporting form

Procedures:

- Grievance procedure
- Academic rules as published
- Administrative rules as published
- Statute of Student Parliament and Association
- BIC procedures such as e.g. the Procedure for accommodation in dormitories

Final Provisions

Article 8

This Rule comes into force on 01.12.2019.