

# Ombudsperson Roles and Responsibilities

James Madison University provides ombuds<sup>1</sup> support for students, staff, and faculty. The Faculty Ombudsperson (“ombudsperson”) is a resource for faculty members who have a question, dispute, or other concern and wish to discuss the matter with an independent and neutral third party. The ombudsperson serves as a confidential consultant and referral agent who uses an informal process to offer assistance to faculty members to address a variety of work-related concerns.

## Role of the Ombudsperson

The ombudsperson does not serve as an advocate, but rather will consider all questions and concerns in an objective and impartial manner. Consultation with the ombudsperson is not a substitute for participation in formal procedures.

In executing their duties, the Faculty Ombudsperson will use the [\*International Ombudsman Association \(IOA\) Standards of Practice\*](#) and the [\*IOA Code of Ethics\*](#) as reference points in defining the role and conducting the activities, some of which include:

- Receiving questions and/or concerns from faculty member
- Conferring with the faculty member
- Considering options for the faculty member
- Referring the faculty member to appropriate resources when applicable
- Assisting the faculty member in understanding and applying university policies, rights and responsibilities

In addition to supporting individual faculty members, the Faculty Ombudsperson serves the university by making recommendations and offering feedback regarding policies and procedures affecting faculty to the Faculty Senate and relevant university administrators. The ombudsperson will provide a report to the Provost and Academic Council once a semester and provide a report annually to the Faculty Senate. The ombudsperson will also provide a written report to the Provost at the end of each year.

## Selection of the Ombudsperson

The Faculty Ombudsperson shall be a tenured faculty member. They shall be someone with experience in university governance at James Madison University and shall be familiar with:

- University rules and policies, including those in the JMU Faculty Handbook
- Tenure and promotion guidelines
- Established university policies and operating procedures

In addition, the ombudsperson should have the skills shown below.

- Exemplary interpersonal skills
- Excellent problem solving skills
- Exceptional oral and written communication skills
- Effective conflict management abilities

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<sup>1</sup> Webster's: One that investigates, reports on and helps settle complaints.

### **Reporting and Appointment**

The position of the Faculty Ombudsperson reports to the Provost. The faculty member in this role will serve in the position at the pleasure of the Provost and may be removed at any time for any reason.

Appointments and reappointments to the position of the ombudsperson are made by the Provost, in consultation with the Faculty Senate. The appointment is a three-year term, with renewal for the second and third years of the term dependent upon: (a) mutual agreement by both parties and (b) satisfactory execution of the duties and responsibilities by the appointee. The incumbent ombudsperson may be appointed for a second consecutive term but may not serve more than two consecutive terms.

The Provost will evaluate the performance of the faculty member serving in this administrative role. The Provost's evaluation of the administrative duties will be provided to the faculty member's home unit for inclusion in the faculty member's annual performance evaluation.

### **Compensation**

It is anticipated that the Faculty Ombudsperson will need to be available for in-person or virtual consultation for an average of no more than ten hours each week during the academic year. Summer responsibilities may be negotiated separately, depending on the university's needs. Reassigned time and/or supplemental salary will be determined by the Provost, in consultation with the dean and academic unit head for the faculty member serving in the appointment.

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