



31 January 2025

**PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT ACADEMIC OMBUDSMAN
FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF AFFAIRS**

for the period from 1 January to 31 December of 2024.

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Context

The post of Academic Ombudsman was established by Ordinance No. 30 of the Rector of the University of Warsaw dated 16 August 2011 on the appointment of an Academic Ombudsman at the University of Warsaw (hereinafter referred to as Ordinance No. 30). Anna Cybulko took up her post on 1 November 2011. At the end of September 2012, Anna Cybulko was appointed for a second term of office (the first full term, i.e. four years), covering the period from 1 October 2012 to 1 October 2016. With effect from 1 October 2016, Anna Cybulko was appointed for a second full term, which ended on 30 September 2020, and on 1 October 2020, for a third term lasting until 30 September 2024.

On September 11, in conjunction with the resignation of Anna Cybulko, PhD., from acting as the Ombudsman of the University of Warsaw, the Rector of the University of Warsaw, Prof. Alojzy Z. Nowak, entrusted Magdalena Miksa, the previous Deputy Academic Ombudsman for Student Affairs, with fulfilling those duties.

This report is based on the provisions of section 11 of Ordinance No. 30, according to which: “Prior to 31 January each year, the Ombudsman shall submit a written report of their activities to the Rector”.

Responsibilities and organisation of work

In 2024, activities were conducted in accordance with the principles and procedures developed in previous years and covered all the areas of responsibility of the Academic Ombudsman identified in *Ordinance No. 30*, i.e.:

- Conflict prevention and promotion of ADR (alternative dispute resolution), in particular, the promotion of a work and study environment free of discrimination and mobbing, and working to strengthen equality and diversity.
- Domestic and international cooperation to promote and develop ADR and to strengthen equality and diversity.
- Direct assistance activities - interventions on reported cases.



- Signalling (*whistleblowing*) activities and proposing systemic development changes and remedial solutions.

Contact with stakeholders was conducted in person, by e-mail, telephone and through virtual communication platforms such as Google Meets and Zoom. For the security and confidentiality of the proceedings, the initiation of intervention by the Academic Ombudsman or representatives of her team is required to obtain written authorisation from the reporting person. Authorisation may be given during a meeting at the Ombudsman's office, or sent by post or internal mail in hard copy or attached to an e-mail as a scanned copy.

Academic Ombudsman Team

In 2024, the Academic Ombudsman was supported in her work by: Magdalena Miksa, acting deputy Ombudsman for student affairs, Elżbieta Felkner, acting as office coordinator, Paulina Górnicka, acting as communication specialist, Anna Wąsowska, PhD, acting as staff affairs specialist (having left the team in November, recruitment for the position is ongoing). In December, Wiktoria Obidniak-Marciniak joined the team, acting as student affairs specialist.

Two staff members of the Academic Ombudsman Team have been appointed to anti-mobbing positions:

- Since 30 May 2018, Magdalena Miksa has acted as anti-mobbing Coordinator, pursuant to *Ordinance No. 49 of the UW Rector, dated 14 May 2018, on counteracting mobbing at the University of Warsaw*;
- On 22 June 2018, Elżbieta Felkner was appointed as Secretary of the Anti-Mobbing Committee.



Activity Report

Prevention of conflicts and promotion of ADR

In support of the development of alternative dispute resolution within the university community and the promotion of a safe work and study environment free from violations of the law, discrimination and mobbing, the Academic Ombudsman undertook in 2024 the following initiatives:

- Continuation of regular information meetings to educate and disseminate knowledge on aid providing entities operating at the University of Warsaw. Members of the Academic Ombudsman team participated in a series of meetings with first-year students during adaptation days. They also visited students from the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies and Faculty of Medicine. During those meetings, they gave an overview of the Ombudsman's work at the university and answered questions about what kind of help to expect and in which cases to report problems.
- Provision of trainings on discrimination and equal treatment and co-presenting (together with Prof. UW Julia Kubisa, PhD.) networking meetings for faculty proxies for equality and anti-discrimination affairs.
- Provision of trainings on anti-bullying and conflict resolution.
- Cooperation with the Statutory Committee on the revision of the Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Mobbing Procedure.

Cooperation within the University

The Academic Ombudsman cooperates with numerous organisational units and collegiate bodies operating at the University. Cooperation includes mutual referral of



cases within the area of competence, as well as joint problem-resolving and the search for adequate solutions. In 2024, the Academic Ombudsman cooperated with, among others:

- The Rector's Proxy for policies against discrimination and sexual harassment, Prof. UW Julia Kubisa, PhD.
- Proxies for Equality at individual faculties.
- The Anti-Mobbing Committee at the University of Warsaw, established pursuant to Ordinance No. 24 of the Rector dated 26 February 2021 in the area of anti-mobbing at the University and Magdalena Miksa, the anti-mobbing coordinator at the University of Warsaw.
- The Rector's Committee for Preventing Discrimination, when intervening in complaints of discrimination against staff members or students.
- The Centre for Dispute and Conflict Resolution (CRSiK) at the Faculty of Law and Administration, among others in the area of mediation.
- The Psychological and Counselling Services Centre (CPP) and the Office for Persons with Disabilities, in particular regarding problem solving for people experiencing psychological and emotional difficulties.
- Offices at the University of Warsaw.
- The representatives of the student self-government bodies and the Student Ombudsman.
- Student research groups and student organisations.

National and international cooperation

The Academic Ombudsman also cooperates closely with the Academic Ombudsmen, the proxies for equality and proxies for security affairs appointed at other Polish universities. As the first person in Poland to be appointed as an Academic Ombudsman, she initiated the establishment of the Academic Safety and Equality



Network (ASBiR – www.asbir.pl). Once the Association was officially registered (since April 2023), she was elected Chairperson of the Board.

The Academic Safety and Equality Network serves as a forum for exchanging good practices, sharing experiences, signalling problems and seeking solutions to difficulties common to the academic community. The important role of the Network consists in the ability to shape good practice, particularly in the area of anti-discrimination and anti-mobbing.

On 18-19 April 2024, the Academic Ombudsman, together with her team, participated in a seminar “Security and Equality at the University. Challenges and Solutions”, which was organised as part of the Academic Safety and Equality Network (ASBiR) by the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn.

In July, the Office of the Academic Ombudsman for Student and Staff Affairs hosted Yuliya Radanova from Mykolas Romeris University in Lithuania for a two-week internship. The guests had the opportunity to learn about the activities of the Academic Ombudsman at the University of Warsaw, the specifics of its work and the way the office is organised.

The Academic Ombudsman also represents the University of Warsaw at events organised by central institutions: conferences, seminars and expert meetings. Among the more important national activities in 2024, the following are notable:

- Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Academic Safety and Equality Network and representatives of the Školské ombuds platform (ŠOP) under the slogan “Supporting the Academia. Czech-Polish Seminar of Academic Ombuds” at the Faculty of Arts and Educational Science of the Silesian University in Cieszyn (8-9 March).
- Participation in the “Community of diversity, equity and inclusion - towards supporting well-being and sustainability” conference at the University of



Silesia in Katowice. The meeting was devoted to the problems of implementing policies and plans regarding equality and diversity as well as other aspects of developing the well-being of various groups, with particular attention to the gender context (21-22 March).

- Acting Academic Ombudsman Magdalena Miksa attended the Third Symposium of the Deans' Offices of Podlasie Universities, held under the slogan “Good practices in the dean's office” at the Faculty of Engineering Management of the Bialystok University of Technology. One of the main topics of the meeting was a list of good practices in the area of inclusivity and anti-discrimination (13 December).

The Academic Ombudsman developed contacts abroad to gather knowledge and good practices supporting the introduction of new equality, diversity and anti-discrimination measures at the University of Warsaw. A key component of international cooperation carried out by the Academic Ombudsman was the activity within the European Network of Ombudsman in Higher Education (ENOHE – <https://enohe.net/>). On 12-14 June, the Academic Ombudsman for Students and Staff Affairs attended the Conference “From Plato’s Academy to Portugal: Democracy, diversity, and the role of the ombudsperson in higher education” organised by the European Network of Ombudsman in Higher Education (ENOHE) and University of Beira Interior in Covilha.

On 4-8 March 2024, the Deputy Academic Ombudsman participated in a study visit to Barcelona dedicated to the topic of “Emotional Intelligence: Identify, Harness & Manage Emotions.”

Implemented information and promotion activities

In 2024, actions were undertaken in order to inform about and promote the activities carried out by the Academic Ombudsman. Communication on the activities of the



Academic Ombudsman took place through the website www.ombudsman.uw.edu.pl and the @OmbudsmanUW profile on Facebook. The information published on the website www.ombudsman.uw.edu.pl was mainly devoted to:

- ongoing events, i.e., meetings with representatives of other UW units, other universities' representatives and members of organisations bringing together experts from the national and international academic community;
- conducted trainings and workshops for employees on conflict resolution and mediation and the promotion of alternative methods of dispute resolution, including prevention against undesirable phenomena;
- cooperation with the Student's Council of the University of Warsaw, the Student Ombudsman, and meetings with students, among others, as part of adaptation days at UW faculties;
- new solutions introduced at the University, among others, on policies against discrimination, mobbing and other undesirable behavior;
- educational content promoting attitudes of tolerance, respect and acceptance of diversity in the academic environment.

Information published on the @OmbudsmanUW profile on Facebook, in addition to the topics mentioned above, also covered the ombudsman's working methods, as well as served to promote current valuable initiatives for equal treatment and the creation of a safe, open and diversity-respecting academic environment.

The content published on the website and Facebook page was aimed at all groups within the academic community both in terms of support (students, doctoral students, research and administrative staff of the University of Warsaw) and systemic solutions being implemented at the University of Warsaw (ombudsmen from other universities, potential and actual partners of joint projects, etc.).



“Hate hurts. Mind your words” Campaign

A significant part of the Academic Ombudsman's activities in 2024 were the ones related to the preparation and implementation of the information and education campaign aimed at fostering dialogue and countering hate speech at the University of Warsaw, i.e., “Hate hurts. Mind your words”. The campaign, prepared under the Academic Ombudsman’s substantive supervision, was coordinated by her team. The project partners were: the Chief Equality Officer, the Rector’s Proxy for Policies Countering Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, the Psychological and Counselling Services Centre (CPP), the Press Office, the Student's Council of the University of Warsaw and the Student Ombudsman.

As part of the campaign, upon the request of the Academic Ombudsman, on each faculty there were appointed liaisons in order to implement the campaign in their respective units. For this purpose, posters, flyers and infographics were prepared and distributed in both paper and electronic forms. An advertising spot and a series of educational videos with employees and students of our University were created. Information about the campaign has also been included in the university's magazine, on the University of Warsaw's website, faculty websites and on the university's social media.

As part of the campaign, the Academic Ombudsman has also collaborated with the Students’ Council of the University of Warsaw and the Student Ombudsman, with whom regular meetings have been held. As a result of these, a student event was held as part of the campaign "Hate hurts. Mind your words" during a Christmas Eve event organised by the Students' Council on the University's main campus.

The campaign has contributed to raising awareness of the issue of hate and hate speech, as well as the need to respond to such phenomena among both employees and students. There were 5 reported incidents of hate speech, which were addressed



appropriately. Intervention meetings were also held to clarify the situation and take steps to avoid the occurrence of similar incidents in the future.

Next year, will see the continuation of the campaign's educational activities, including workshop meetings for employees and further networking of communities advocating for safe communication and against hate speech and hate itself.

Direct assistance activities

The Academic Ombudsman performs the duties resulting from the provisions of *Ordinance No. 30*, according to which her tasks include assisting individuals and organisational units of the University in resolving disputes and conflicts and in dealing with violations of the rules governing academic life. Below are statistics showing the number, type and thematic cross-section of cases, which were submitted to the Academic Ombudsman in 2024.

The statistics also show the number and type of actions taken.

Number of submitted cases

In 2024, 411 cases were submitted to the Academic Ombudsman. 23 cases were continued from the previous year. Detailed data on reporting of cases and the dynamics of change are presented in Table No. 1 below.

Table No. 1. Impact of cases between 2014 and 2024.

| Year | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Number of submitted cases | 111 | 125 | 118 | 146 | 196 | 252 | 265 | 315 | 332 | 335 | 411 |
| -- current year cases | 103 | 119 | 111 | 134 | 185 | 240 | 254 | 308 | 312 | 312 | 388 |
| -- cases continued from the previous year | 8 | 6 | 7 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 7 | 20 | 23 | 23 |



Applicants

Pursuant to § 4 of *Ordinance No. 30 of the Rector of the University of Warsaw*, the Ombudsman shall take action:

- once the matter has been brought to the attention of the member of the academic community concerned,
- at the request of the student or doctoral student self-government authorities,
- at the request of the Rector,
- on the Ombudsman's own initiative.

Cases brought to the Academic Ombudsman are most frequently the ones submitted by individuals concerned, who present their problems individually or in groups. Problems are also occasionally submitted by direct superiors or representatives of the unit's authorities, asking for support in analysing and diagnosing the problem or intervening directly in the case. There have been cases submitted by relatives of or individuals closely connected to those affected.

Among those reporting a problem, more than half (66%) are students of first and second-cycle studies, and 26% are employees, including research, administrative, as well as research and technical staff. Only 3% of reports came from doctoral students (see Table No. 2 for a detailed distribution of reports).

Table No. 2 Academic status of the reporting person

| reporting entity | Number of submitted cases | % |
|--|---------------------------|-----|
| Student | 271 | 66% |
| Employee (in person or through their superior) | 107 | 26% |
| Doctoral student | 14 | 3% |
| Faculty Plenipotentiaries for Equality/Student Ombudsman | 5 | 1% |
| Other | 14 | 3% |



The distribution of reporting cases according to academic status is not significantly different from the previous years' ones. 2024 is another year in which cases from all faculties and units of the University of Warsaw were submitted to the Academic Ombudsman. This can be read as a signal that information about the existence and operation of the Academic Ombudsman is present in all academic units of the University. A summary of reports by university unit is shown in Table No. 3.

Table No. 3 A summary of reports by university unit

| Faculties and units | number of submitted cases |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Faculty of „Artes Liberales” | 2 |
| Faculty of Archaeology | 12 |
| Faculty of Biology | 8 |
| Faculty of Chemistry | 5 |
| Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies | 6 |
| Faculty of Philosophy | 6 |
| Faculty of Physics | 8 |
| Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies | 2 |
| Faculty of Geology | 4 |
| Faculty of History | 12 |
| Faculty of Applied Linguistics | 18 |
| Faculty of Mathematics, Informatics and Mechanics | 9 |
| Faculty of Economic Sciences | 16 |
| Faculty of Culture and Arts | 6 |
| Faculty of Political Science and International Studies | 22 |
| Faculty of Modern Languages | 38 |
| Faculty of Oriental Studies | 20 |
| Faculty of Education | 7 |
| Faculty of Polish Studies | 31 |
| Faculty of Law and Administration | 22 |
| Faculty of Psychology | 12 |
| Faculty of Sociology | 9 |



| | |
|--|----|
| Faculty of Applied Social Sciences and Resocialisation | 7 |
| Faculty of Management | 14 |
| Scientific and teaching unit | 29 |
| Doctoral schools | 5 |
| Central administration offices | 21 |
| Student Residence Hall | 8 |
| Other | 52 |

Topics of the cases

Among the wide variety of cases reported to the Academic Ombudsman, it is possible to distinguish thematic groups into which the primary issues fall. A summary of problem areas by reporting entity is catalogued in Table No. 4.

Table No. 4 Summary of thematic areas of submitted cases by reporting entity

| Topic of the submitted case | Reporting entity | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------------|
| | student | student | laboratories | plenipotentiary | faculty | authority | other | final total |
| conflicts and communication difficulties | 16 | 3 | 24 | | | 16 | 1 | 60 |
| unethical behaviour | 10 | 1 | 11 | 2 | | 16 | 5 | 45 |
| equal treatment | 2 | | | | | | | 2 |
| organisation and course of study | 75 | 2 | | | | 2 | 2 | 81 |
| LGBTQ+ persons' issues | 101 | | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 104 |
| complaint against a lecturer/supervisor | 14 | 4 | 1 | | | 2 | 1 | 21 |
| difficulties of living in a student hall of residence | 10 | 1 | 1 | | | | | 12. |
| work conditions and personnel policies | | | 26 | | | 4 | | 30 |
| mistreatment (mobbing or discrimination) | 7 | 2 | 11 | 1 | 2 | | | 23 |
| other | 16 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 4 | | 30 |
| Final total | 251 | 14 | 81 | 5 | 45 | 10 | | 411 |



Student affairs

In 2024, a significant increase in the number of applications compared to the previous year was noted. The subject matter of the reported cases mainly focused on problems related to the course of studies and conflicts, both between students and lecturers. There has also been an increase in the number of reports concerning the issue of hate, hate speech and discrimination, which may indicate a growing awareness of the boundary between freedom of expression and violation of another person's dignity.

Among the problems reported, organisational issues such as difficulties with receiving course credits, changes in credit obtaining rules during the course or financial problems predominated. There was also a high number of cases in which people with emotional difficulties have reported problems both in their relationships with students as well as in their contact with lecturers. It should be noted that there was a significant increase in the number of submissions brought by transgender persons who need support for functioning at the University in accordance with their lived gender. In 2023 the Academic Ombudsman and her deputy provided support in 57 cases, while in 2024, the number of student submissions recorded in this area had increased to 101.

In 2024, the number of reports of sexual harassment remained at a similar level to last year. The cases reported by students are the ones that require not only intervention, but also emotional support. It is essential that the university not only react to these reports but also offer psychological support and provide a space where those affected by these situations feel safe. Educating about boundaries, respect and responsibility is also necessary to prevent such incidents in the future and to support those who have already experienced harassment.

As in the past year, a significant trend continues to be the increasing number of cases filed by international students. This entails the need for more support in terms of functioning at the university and in legal and organisational matters.



The extent of the problems faced by students indicates a growing need for support in both emotional and organisational areas, highlighting the relevance of the work of the Academic Ombudsman and her team.

Cases submitted by staff

In comparison to last year, there is a clear increase in the number of multifaceted cases involving conflicts at different organisational levels. These problems often transcend typical relational or organisational issues and become more complex disputes that have multiple backgrounds - both substantive and arising from differences in values, attitudes to work or organisational culture.

The conflicts being reported increasingly involve situations where there is no clear party at fault and the problem affects entire groups or teams, requiring more complex analysis and research. This concerns both disputes between employees and those between supervisor and subordinate. The submissions demonstrate the necessity for a deeper understanding of the sources of tensions and their multifaceted nature, encompassing not only communication but also substantive and organisational issues.

In the face of mounting problems, it is also evident that the number of cases related to mobbing and discrimination has increased, involving more complex forms of violations, not only on an individual level but also in a group context. More serious cases require the initiation of procedures, and some become more challenging to resolve without the involvement of larger teams.

Another facet that has changed compared to the previous year is the increase in the number of cases of unethical behaviour, both in relation to employees and students. Complaints about inappropriate discussion in forums or copyright infringements have become more complex, which may be indicative of growing internal tensions within the institution. Submissions also include more ambiguous cases where the boundaries



between acceptable behaviour and violation of ethical standards have become increasingly difficult to define.

All these developments point to the growing complexity and diversity of cases, which require more detailed analysis and thorough investigation of the sources of problems. With respect to the previous year, there is a clear increase in the number of situations that require a coordinated approach and the cooperation of different units in order to accurately understand and solve the reported problems.

Actions undertaken

Pursuant to § 7 of Ordinance No. 30, the Ombudsman may take the following actions on reported cases:

- providing relevant information on the functioning and legal regulations in force at the UW;
- indicating the units/persons competent to handle the case;
- providing support in dealing with a case by obtaining information or clarifying the matter with the relevant unit;
- conflict resolution support: diagnosing the problem and choosing how to solve it;
- recommending/conducting mediation;
- presenting information and recommendations to the Rector, which fall within the Ombudsman's responsibilities concerning the identification of necessary systemic changes and modes of operation at the University.

Table No. 4, presented below, shows the distribution of actions taken by the Academic Ombudsman in response to issues raised with her. The summary is simplified, and in fact the categories are not disjointed, with some cases falling into several categories.

Table No. 4 Type of actions undertaken by the Academic Ombudsman*.



| Action undertaken | Number of submitted cases |
|--|---------------------------|
| Providing relevant information on the functioning and legal regulations in force at the UW and coaching (support in diagnosing a problem and selecting a solution) | 75 |
| Indicating the units/persons competent to handle a case | 27 |
| Intervention in the unit (obtaining information or clarifying the matter) | 157 |
| Coaching/educational conversation | 29 |
| Mediation (recommendation, guidance) | 21 |
| Signalling in writing (providing a description of the difficulties encountered and/or recommendations for necessary systemic changes or corrective measures) | 2 |
| Support in initiating other procedures | 7 |
| Conflict management | 2 |
| Other | 20 |

**In 13 cases, no action was taken and 12 were not included because actions were taken in 2025*

The category of “*providing relevant information on the functioning and legal regulations in force at the UW*” includes both helping the person reporting the problem to understand their own factual and legal situation, and to choose optimal solutions, as well as support for the UW units in the proper interpretation and application of existing legal regulations. Coaching activities included assistance provided by the Academic Ombudsman in situations of conflict, or harassment of an employee (particularly when there was no agreement to mediate or intervene) and development support for employees experiencing difficulties in their work lives. This action often involves indicating the units or persons competent to handle the case. On the other hand, the interventions indicated under point two, i.e. “*indicating the units/persons competent to handle the case*” include situations in which the Academic Ombudsman did not undertake any assistance actions of her own but instead redirected the person reporting the case to the appropriate person or unit.



Mediation

Mediation is an amicable way of resolving conflicts, disputes between parties, and in this case between staff and/or students of the University of Warsaw. Mediation aims to reach a satisfactory, lasting and acceptable solution for the parties to the conflict, through voluntary and confidential discussions in the presence of a mediator, i.e. an impartial third party. Mediation takes place in a neutral place, in a safe atmosphere and allows the parties to re-establish dialogue in order to resolve a dispute by means of negotiation without entering into conflict or confrontation. In 2024, mediation was conducted by the Academic Ombudsman or redirected to the Dispute and Conflict Resolution Centre attached to the Faculty of Law and Administration of the University of Warsaw.

In 2024, 21 cases were submitted to the Academic Ombudsman where mediation was recommended. As a result of these recommendations, the Academic Ombudsman and a mediator from her Team conducted 7 mediation proceedings, with 5 cases referred to the Centre for Dispute and Conflict Resolution. Within one mediation process there were between 3 and 12 meetings and discussions with the parties. In the vast majority of cases, the parties reached an agreement.

The fact that it is becoming more frequent for the person reporting the case to request mediation demonstrates an increased awareness among the University of Warsaw community on alternative dispute resolution and on the growing willingness to use mediation and other ADR methods.

Implemented activities in support of LGBTQ+ persons

In 2024, the Academic Ombudsman and her team undertook numerous activities aiming to improve the situation of transgender, transsexual and non-binary persons studying at the University of Warsaw. The lead person in this area was Magdalena



Miksa, the Deputy Academic Ombudsman for Student Affairs, who is currently acting as Academic Ombudsman.

A project that allows transgender and non-binary persons to use their preferred data in the USOS and APD systems without having to change their metric data is still being implemented. Until systemic solutions are implemented at the university level, a system of support has been established for LGBT+ persons in terms of data and pronouns used and e-mail address changes. A form has been created for those wishing to use their preferred data during classes at the UW and to change their e-mail address. The support path that was developed has allowed us to estimate the scale of the needs of trans and non-binary persons studying at the University of Warsaw. Based on the forms received, 89 people have requested support. The request to change their e-mail address concerned 49 people, while 68 people reported the need to inform lecturers of the preferred data and pronouns used. Those submissions were analysed and forwarded to the relevant units, to Proxies for Equality (where they were appointed) or to the Heads of Teaching Units. The support included providing information on the name used, pronouns and a request to respect the student's wishes, identifying a proxy for equality or contact person (from the Academic Ombudsman team) from whom instructors can obtain information on transgender issues. During the implementation of the first stage of providing support, the Deputy Academic Ombudsman for Student Affairs maintained regular contact with the Heads of Teaching Units and the Faculty Proxies for Equality.

It should be emphasised that transgender persons in need of support in terms of functioning at the University contact the Academic Ombudsman not only at the beginning of the academic year and regarding general matters (concerning the change of e-mail address or preferred pronouns). In the 2024, there is a marked increase in the number of submissions brought by transgender persons who are in need of support for functioning at the University in accordance with their lived gender. The



Academic Ombudsman and her deputy have received submissions regarding individual problems where specific support was needed in order to ensure the safety and comfort of the student and/or to ensure that actions undertaken are in line with current legislation. In some cases, the Ombudsman was also required to signal and intervene in situations where the wishes of a transgender person were not respected.

Summary and development prospects of the office

In 2024, a marked increase in the number of submissions and their complexity has been observed, which is associated with the changing needs of the University of Warsaw's academic community. Reports on conflicts between employees, mobbing, discrimination and issues related to (non-)compliance with academic rules and regulations as well as procedures have become more diverse. A rise in the number of cases related to the functioning of transgender people who need support in adjusting the academic environment to their lived gender also represents an important area that requires special attention. The increase in the complexity of cases as well as rising public expectations are reasons to consider the expansion of the Academic Ombudsman team and its reorganisation.

In view of the above, we see the need for changes in the team structure. Our proposal is to create three specialised units that will enable better management of various issues and more effective support for the academic community in the key areas:

Mediation and Staff Affairs Unit - the unit dedicated to resolving disputes and conflicts among employees, including mediation and team facilitation. It will also deal with cases of mistreatment of employees and unethical behaviour in the working environment.



Student and Doctoral Student Affairs Unit - the unit dedicated to providing comprehensive support for student and doctoral students affairs, which also focuses on resolving conflicts between students and lecturers and providing support for compliance with academic procedures. Its key tasks will include:

Academic procedures support - assisting students with problems relating to credit-obtaining rules, access to learning materials, deadlines, attendance and backlogs.

Administrative procedures improvement - activities aimed at changes that increase accessibility, fairness and efficiency of academic and administrative processes.

Creating tools to support faculty employees - developing materials and solutions to facilitate communication and more effective enforcement of academic responsibilities by students.

Educational Unit - the unit dedicated to initiating socio-educational activities aimed at promoting inclusivity, a safe working and study environment free of legal violations, discrimination and mobbing. An important area of this unit's activities will be the development of measures to facilitate the functioning of transgender and non-binary persons at the university.

Thanks to the proposed reorganisation, it will be possible to improve the adaptation of activities to the growing needs of the academic community. The creation of specialised units will enable a more personalised handling of submissions, as well as a faster response to the needs of employees, doctoral students and students. The Educational Unit may play a vital role with its initiatives strengthening the interpersonal competences of the academic community, which in the long term may translate into a reduction in the number of escalating conflicts. More effective support for transgender people will also be an essential part of building an atmosphere of inclusivity and equality at the University.



It is worth mentioning that in the previous year, the Academic Ombudsman team has enriched its activities thanks to the involvement of volunteers from among the students of the University of Warsaw, which has made it possible to establish closer contact with this group to better understand their perspective and to create space for joint initiatives. In 2025, the Academic Ombudsman team plans to continue to pursue the policy of involving student volunteers by extending it to include the possibility of providing internships.

An important part of the changes also includes closer collaboration with student representatives to better identify their needs and implement solutions tailored to the real challenges of the academic community. In addition, the office will seek to build stronger relationships with non-academic organisations, aid institutions and NGOs. This will ensure that persons reporting their cases in order to seek help can be referred to specialist centres that provide relevant support.

As part of activities aiming to improve standards of ethics and transparency at the University, a key step will be the implementation of a clear and publicly accessible **Code of Ethics**. This document will standardise rules of conduct and clarify on the rights and responsibilities of members of the academic community.

These changes align with the broader strategy of the University of Warsaw, which seeks to strengthen an academic culture based on respect for values, open dialogue and effective management of relationships within and outside the university.