



International[®]
Baccalaureate

ROLE OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE IB

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October 2008

FOUR SECTIONS

A: KEY QUESTIONS

B: CODE OF ETHICS

C: THE PROCESS

D: SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

A: KEY QUESTIONS

- What is an ombudsman?
- Why was such a position created?
- Who can contact the ombudsman?
- Other questions?...

What is an ombudsman (1)?

- o Someone who helps with:
 - o Questions
 - o Concerns
 - o Issues
 - o Suggestions...

What is an ombudsman (2)?

- o Someone who has easy access to members of senior management.
- o Someone who has access to all IB documents (within the limits of the law).
- o Someone who has no formal power.
- o Someone who works by influencing people on both sides of an issue...

Why was such a position created?

- The major changes that face the organization could lead to a feeling of insecurity for schools and for IB staff.
- It is becoming good practice to create such a position for all organizations.
- An ombudsman can help in identifying key areas of concern from schools and IB staff...

Who could contact the ombudsman?

- School personnel (heads, coordinators, teachers, counsellors...)
- Members of IB staff
 - For organizational reasons
 - For personal reasons
- Associations of IB world schools
- IB professionals (volunteers)
- Students, parents, and the general public...

Other questions?

- The ombudsman post is a part-time position.
- The ombudsman works mostly from home (Canada).
- The ombudsman travels to conferences, staff meetings etc. to meet different IB people.
- For serious issues, the ombudsman could travel to meet those concerned...

B: CODE OF ETHICS

- Confidentiality
- Accessibility
- Independence
- Impartiality

Confidentiality

- The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence.
- The Ombudsman keeps no records containing identifying information.
- The Ombudsman prepares any data and/or reports in a manner that protects confidentiality (unless that confidentiality has been waived)...

Accessibility

- It is easy to contact the Ombudsman.
 - Web page gives contact details
 - E-mail
 - Phone
- The process is simple.
 - Web page explains the role.
 - The process is informal.
 - You talk directly to the ombudsman
 - There is a limited need for paperwork...

Independence

- The ombudsman office is independent from other departments.
- The ombudsman holds no other position which might compromise his/her independence.
- The ombudsman has adequate resources to ensure an efficient and effective process...

Impartiality

- The Ombudsman is a designated neutral reporting monthly to the Director General and annually to the Board.
- The Ombudsman is impartial (or more accurately, partial to both sides).
- The Ombudsman looks for solutions that do not favour any particular party...

C: THE PROCESS

1. Active listening
2. Exploration of options
3. Enabling
4. Reporting

1. Reactive: active listening

- Reduce any stress and/or tension.
- Act with openness, respect and compassion.
- Collect all pertinent information.
- Explore the situation from different perspectives.
- Clarify the key elements of the situation...

2. Reactive: exploration of options

- Identify possible options.
- Evaluate the pros and cons of each option.
- Help the people involved select the best option.
- Help the people involved take ownership for their decision(s)...

3. Reactive: enabling

- Coach people to help themselves.
- Facilitate an exchange of information and perceptions between the people involved.
- Use the idea of mediation when necessary.
- Use other methods of Alternate Dispute Resolution...

4. Reporting: upward feedback

- Report on number of contacts, type of contact, category of person initiating the contact.
- Identify systemic trends and give early warnings.
- Recommend changes to communication, procedures, training or systems.
- Give an honest evaluation on the effectiveness and efficiency of the ombudsman office...

IN SUMMARY

The IB ombudsman...

- Is a problem-solver.
- Acts when the formal processes are not successful or are not pertinent.
- Acts within a code of ethics.
- Proposes realistic solutions to individual and systemic problems within the organization.
- Ideally, solves problems before they arise!

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

1. Authorization and evaluation of schools
2. Workshops (professional development)
3. Information and documentation

1. Authorization and evaluation of schools

1. Prioritize the practices (obligatory, recommended, nice to have) in the document “Programme standards and practices”.
2. Standardize the format of school visits.
3. Standardize the report writing.

1. Authorization and evaluation of schools

4. Reduce the time it takes before the school receives an official answer.
5. Establish the differences between a “matter to be addressed” and a “recommendation”.
6. Ensure consistent and relevant feedback for diploma evaluation.

2. Workshops and other training

1. Increase the number and maintain the quality of “master” workshop leaders.
2. Ensure that all participants in a particular workshop are at the same level.
3. Improve the quality and quantity of information available on the WSL website.
4. Harmonize what obligatory training is required before a school can be authorized.

2. Workshops and other training

5. Recognize (in some way) all types of training.
6. Set up more partnerships for workshops.
7. Increase the number of online workshops.
8. Facilitate the participation of people from other regions.

3. Communication and information

1. Coordinate the various e-mails that are sent to schools for the various IB departments.
2. When policy is involved, ensure that the head receives a copy.
3. Take an inventory of the relevant documents available for each programme.
4. Write a summary of the content of each document.

3. Communication and information

5. Determine if the reading material is obligatory, recommended or “nice to have”.
6. When a document is updated, prepare a list of the major changes.
7. Update the information on the public website and indicate when the information was updated.
8. Explain how each document was researched and indicate the name of the person in charge of its production.

AREAS TO BE INVESTIGATED FURTHER

1. Organizational culture within the IB.
2. Equity of treatment for the professionals that help the IB fulfill its mission (volunteers).
3. Decision-making process within the IB.
4. Effect of organizational change in the IB on school perception of services.

END OF THE PRESENTATION

Thank you

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DISCUSSION

- ***How could the IB improve its services to schools?***
 - Questions
 - Concerns
 - Issues
 - Suggestions