

## **Function and description of the Ombuds Office**

### **1. PURPOSE**

The Ombuds office (ombuds, also referred to as ombudsman or ombudsperson) strives to promote a fair, respectful, inclusive, and supportive culture for the CSIA, and works to ensure that all members of the organization are treated in a fair and equitable manner.

### **2. SCOPE OF SERVICES**

All members of the CSIA community can use the ombuds services. Members of the CSIA community include employees, course conductors, members, and volunteers serving on committees (of the CSIA or its regions). The ombuds services are free for CSIA community members.

Members of the CSIA community can confidentially raise, clarify, and discuss any organization-related concerns with the ombuds. The ombuds assists in the informal resolution of matters brought to its attention and has full autonomy to determine when and how ombuds services are performed, including providing general information, referrals, coaching, mediation, or facilitation services (or any other alternative dispute resolution service). The ombuds may undertake fact-finding/investigations and make recommendations for systemic changes within the organization, either on the basis of a complaint brought to its attention or on its own initiative. Upon request, the ombuds may provide workshops or other educational sessions or provide advice on policy or process development or review.

The ombuds will not review matters for which the issues are being managed through a parallel administrative or legal process (e.g., legal action or tribunal). In addition, upon being informed that a legal claim or notice of a potential legal claim has been received by the CSIA, the ombuds shall immediately withdraw from a case and shall cease any communication with the community member seeking assistance.

The ombuds may withdraw from or decline to participate in a matter if they believe that their involvement would be inappropriate for any reason, frivolous or that the complaint has not been raised in good faith. The ombuds has sole discretion about whether to accept anonymous complaints. If the ombuds refuses to take up a case or withdraws from a case, a written statement of the reason shall be provided, upon request, to the community member seeking assistance.

### **3. SUPPORT FOR THE CSIA COMMUNITY**

Members of the CSIA community have the right to use the ombuds without reprisal or retaliation. Employees may utilize reasonable time away, consistent with workplace expectations and needs, from their work to visit the ombuds. No one will be compelled to use the ombuds or be required to seek permission to use the ombuds or to disclose the contents of any conversations with the ombuds.

### **4. STRUCTURE/INDEPENDENCE**

The ombuds is appointed by the CSIA board of directors.

The ombuds is considered independent of all structures of the organization. Communication with the ombuds does not constitute notice to the organization about the existence of alleged violations of law or organizational policy. Contacting the ombuds does not trigger any human resources or organizational process.

The ombuds is an advocate for fairness, not for individuals or the organization. The ombuds may make recommendations about policies or participate in organizational processes as a voice for fairness, however the ombuds has no decision-making role or authority within the organization. In carrying out its responsibilities, the ombuds does not create policy or replace established legislative, judicial, or administrative rules or procedures.

The ombuds may request such access to all files, offices, and staff of the CSIA as it deems necessary to perform its duties, and staff are required to provide prompt and full responses to all ombuds' inquiries.

### **5. OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

The ombuds applies the principles of fairness (procedural, substantive, relational, and equitable) in their work.

The ombuds may initiate informal inquiries into matters that come to its attention without having received a specific complaint from a directly affected member of the community, or in cases where the complaint was withdrawn.

In addition, and notwithstanding the above, the ombuds may initiate an investigation into matters that come to its attention through complaints or on its own initiative. For clarity, this is a function of an ombuds in Canada, however not in all jurisdictions. The outcomes of an ombuds investigation are non-binding.

The ombuds may become aware of potential deficiencies in organizational policies or procedures as the result of a community member's concerns, or by other means.

The ombuds draws deficiencies, concerns, and fairness issues to the attention of the CSIA managing director or person of authority and may recommend a review of the policy or procedure, or specific improvements to the policy or procedures.

Upon the conclusion of an inquiry, the ombudsperson shall advise the member seeking assistance of any findings and any formulated recommendations.

The ombuds adheres to the International Ombuds Association's [Standards of Practice](#) and [Ethical Principles](#), which provide that an ombuds (ombudsman, ombudsperson, ombud) be independent, impartial, informal and confidential. These standards contribute to promoting the understanding of the role and function of the ombuds.

- **Independence:** The ombuds operates independent of the organization and is not part of or aligned with management or any particular business or operational unit.
- **Impartiality:** The ombuds is impartial and does not take sides. The ombuds advocates for fairness rather than for any individual, department, or organization. The ombuds reviews facts objectively, without any bias for or against the issue under review.
- **Informality.:** The ombuds operates as informally as possible to resolve concerns. The ombuds will decline to participate in or give evidence to any formal adjudicative or administrative processes related to concerns brought to its attention.
- **Confidentiality:** Matters discussed with the ombuds are kept in confidence and will not be discussed with anyone without express permission from the member of the community consulting the ombuds office, unless the ombuds believes, in their sole discretion, there is an imminent risk of serious harm to oneself or to a community member. The organization will not ask or require the ombuds to disclose information that community members provided to the ombuds in confidence.

## 6. ANNUAL REPORT & RECORD KEEPING

The ombuds will issue an annual written report to the board of directors by December 1 of each year. The report shall detail activities of the Ombuds Office, including statistics on the concerns and complaints received, and shall make recommendations as necessary. The CSIA board shall ensure that the appropriate CSIA level of authorities consider and respond to the recommendations

contained in the report. The organization will publish to the members of the community any annual reports issued by the ombuds.

Other reports that the ombuds may provide, or the organization may request, may include information on use of the ombuds and trends, systemic issues identified by the ombuds, and descriptions of outreach and educational activities.

Unless required by law, the ombuds will not release any identifying information about complaints or members of the CSIA community, without their express permission from the member of the community

The ombuds ensures that all confidential information and records are stored securely, with access limited to ombuds personnel or other approved individuals for technical support purposes. Information will be stored and maintained in the manner and for the duration that the ombuds deems appropriate in accordance with ombuds best practices.

## **7. OMBUDS QUALIFICATIONS/MEMBERSHIPS/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The ombuds will maintain training, experience, and credentials as appropriate to a practicing ombuds and as set out in the ombuds services agreement. The ombuds may maintain professional memberships while engaged by the organization and may participate in professional development. It is understood by the ombuds that the organization will not be liable for any fees related to memberships or professional development unless this has been confirmed in writing.

## **8. ACCOUNTABILITY**

Complaints about the ombuds should be made in writing and directed to the CSIA managing director and/or board of directors, who may suspend or remove the ombuds from office for failure to perform the duties of the office or violation of the standards of professional conduct of an ombuds.

For questions about this document, please contact by email [csiaamscombuds@snowpro.com](mailto:csiaamscombuds@snowpro.com) or by phone at 1-800-811-6428 ext.113.

This document may be amended only at the agreement of the ombuds and the CSIA and it remains in effect unless revoked by the CSIA board of directors.

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