

# **Office of Student Ombudsman procedures**

**Procedure to receive and direct situations of conflict presented to the OSO. The practice standards state the following with respect to the informality in procedures:**

Within what is considered “informality” of the functions and standards of the SO, there is: to listen, give and receive information, to identify and reformulate the problem, to develop with the user a gamma of solution alternatives, among others.

Asking for services or coming to the OSO is voluntary and is not an obligatory step in the complaint process established by the policy of Certification 119 UPR Governing Board (2014-2015). The SO:

Complements, but does not substitute the formal channels.

Assists or aids the user, when possible, to establish alternatives that contribute the resolution of the conflict.

Does not participate in the jurisdictional procedures or formal investigations. When a formal investigation is requested, the SO refers it to the corresponding offices or the individual ones.

## **Procedure to inform the university community.**

To inform and let the university community know about the existence of the OSO, there are presentations, pamphlets, posters and an informative brochure for students and other members of the university community. There is also a day of welcome and orientation for the incoming students on the dates assigned for student orientation. This information is also offered to new teaching faculty on the day assigned for this orientation.

Pamphlets are distributed, posters are put up and there are manuals with the basic information about the OSO and how to request services.

Presentations, brochures, manuals and the instructions of the protocol (steps) to request the services of the OSO are available on the institutional web page, specifically in the OSO portal.

## **Channels to present a situation entailing a conflict.**

Within the channels for presenting complaints in which students are involved, they may present them directly to the corresponding department director, the Office of Security and Surveillance, the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Student Affairs and in the OSO.

It is important to point out that the claimant can come to be interviewed by the SO in any part of the process. Before, during, or after having spoken about the issue with the claimant or with the corresponding director or dean.

Under the protection of the binding rule set forth on the aforementioned Certification 119, the OSO of the UPR-Cayey, has established the steps to be followed (protocol) for the effective attention of situation entailing conflicts between students and the University Community on campus.

Any member of the university community (students, teaching, and non-teaching personnel) in a situation entailing conflicts in which a student is involved, has the option of visiting the OSO (office 305-306, third floor in the computer building) for orientation, request services (facilitator, conciliator, negotiation, mediation, defender of student's rights, among others) that the OSO can offer within the framework of the student rights and duties set forth in the regulations.

The claimants may, if necessary, initiate contact or receive orientation, or coordinate meetings, by phone, email or private message, or coming to the OSO.

The SO sees any claimant that comes to the OSO at the moment, except in special situations. For example, when the SO is not present due to the fact that he or she may be attending or facilitating a meeting outside of the office.

According to the complexity of the situation of the conflict presented, the client is given an orientation about the corresponding laws and regulations. If the SO's intervention is deemed necessary and in agreement with the claimant, communication is established between the parties involved in the situation.

The information provided by the student is totally confidential. Notes may be taken to make our advisement, intervention, and commitment to confidentiality more efficient. Confidentiality is established by Certification 119 UPR Governing Board (2014-1015) as well as by the standards of the IOA, and is only given up of there is an "imminent risk of serious damage."

In case that the client requests the intervention of the SO, after having received an orientation and having exhausted the actions within their responsibilities or if not feeling capable to perform them themselves, alternatives for the resolution of the conflict are then considered according to the case, in agreement with the functions set forth in Certification 119 UPR Governing Board.

In the cases where norms have been established to settle the situation, the role of the OSO is to advise and watch over the compliance of these norms or procedures. For example, the Academic Senate Certification about the claim and revision of grades.

**Some examples of conflict situations that are presented to OSO are:**

**Academic:**

conflict in the classroom, grade revisions, grade changes, equivalencies, degree requests, qualifying exam, lack of academic integrity;

Financial aid, tuition remission, scholarship, housing;

**Administrative:**

Deferments, reimbursements, changes, administrative drops, reenrollment;

Interpersonal Situations:

Request for security and vigilance, protection orders, pursuit, harassment, sexual violence;

Any other situation in which students are involved, whether they are teaching or non-teaching faculty, personnel or other students.

Each case is taken care of informally and independently. Follow-up is given until the situation or conflict has come to an end.