

IGC Fairness Advocate, Ombudsperson Office

The Office of the Ombudsperson works with the IGC community members to ensure they are treated fairly and can learn and work in a fair, equitable, and respectful environment.

The Ombudsperson Office of the IGC aims to offer a safe place for institute members at any level who face any form of harassment or other interpersonal difficulties to discuss their concerns and understand their options while guaranteeing full confidentiality. It also handles cases of scientific misconduct claims that, after evaluation, can be brought to the IGC Direction. As such, the Ombudsperson Office has a central role in supporting the IGC and guaranteeing the well-being of all IGC members.

The office aims to collaborate, educate, investigate, and recommend change. It functions according to three core principles:

Confidentiality: all information received by the members of the Office from a person who brings forward a concern or complaint will only be shared with third parties if the plaintiff agrees to it in writing. The fact that somebody visited the Ombudsperson also protects information.

Impartiality: the information the Ombudsperson Office receives will be regarded with the utmost objectivity. The Ombudsperson Office is neither an advocate of the individual bringing forward the complaint nor of the institution.

Independence: the Ombudsperson Office operates independently of all other administrative structures within the institute.

Office Organization

The office consists of at least two members with no direct link to the IGC. The members take office for as long as they wish. Should a member wish to step down, a three-month notice should be given to the IGC Direction. Any member of the institute can request an appointment with the Ombudsperson Office (see Members and contacts), which must be scheduled within the following two weeks from the request at the convenience of all involved.

Formal complaints can be received by either or both, at the plaintiff's discretion, by email and/or over an appointment held at an office outside of the IGC premises. As necessary, the office

members will hold meetings with the IGC Direction. The office produces a brief report annually summarizing the number of contacts in that year, persistent problems that might have been identified, and proposed solutions.

Subject matters of the Ombudsperson Office

1. Conflicts that cannot be resolved or disclosed within the IGC's institutional framework (i.e. with support from the team Head or the IGC Direction)
2. Provides the ability to address subtle insensitivity and unfairness that do not rise to the level of a formal complaint but create a disempowering work environment.

The office can identify potential systematic problems in the institute's operation, which are reported to the IGC Direction.

Interventions of the Office

The Ombudsperson office provides advice and information, acts to empower IGC members to deal directly and effectively with their concerns and suggests a possible course of action. The Ombudsperson office members do not provide mediation services.

Once a problem has been analysed, the office suggests a course of action, which is communicated to the complaining party. If individual action has not solved the issue, the office can contact the IGC Direction. Together, they will decide on a course of action. If necessary, the office can advise for an internal and/or external investigation to be set up by the IGC Direction and suggest other measures to mitigate any systemic problem identified.

Current members

- Susana Filipe, Deputy Director of the secretary general, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
- Jorge Lucas, Legal Department, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

Contacts: ombudsoffice@igc.gulbenkian.pt