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Forward

During this reporting year the ombuds officer dealt with 121 cases. It is striking that the nature of many of these cases corresponds with issues raised in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2013. In the NSS, Leiden University's score for certain areas of information provision left room for improvement. However, whereas the NSS only serves to draw attention to such issues, the role of the ombuds officer goes much further. The ombuds officer can identify sources of irritation and make concrete recommendations as to how problems can be resolved. Swift action is often required, which means that quick referral of cases to the ombuds officer is of utmost importance. The earlier a student contacts the ombuds officer, the more effectively the ombuds officer can do his/her job. Two thirds of the cases brought to the ombuds officer in 2013 were dealt with within three to four weeks.

Complaints about provision of information

Provision of information was the subject of many complaints in 2013. Specifically, it would seem that information about laws and regulations does not always appear on our website as quickly as it should. Students assume that they have found the most recent information when this is not always the case. This leads to complaints, particularly as faculties and departments are aware of new laws and regulations and implement them accordingly. On top of this, information that might be of relevance to students is not always available in English. As a result, international students have limited access to information. When students do not have access to complete and up-to-date information problems can arise. Furthermore, methods of assessment are not always clearly and concisely explained in the e-prospectus. This results both in complaints to the board of examiners and to the ombuds officer.

Excessive response time

Just as in previous years I have received complaints about excessive response times. Some complaints concerned boards of examiners that failed to adhere to previously agreed response times. In some cases it was evident that certain boards of examiners allowed students to wait a very long time for decisions (up to ten weeks). Not only do such cases lead to complaints about study delay, but these failures to meet agreed deadlines also seriously damage the student's trust in the professionalism of that particular board of examiners. As a result, students tend to contact the ombuds officer directly with their complaint, rather than contacting the board of examiners. On such occasions I have been able to discuss the complaint with the board of examiners in question, and as a result, a decision has been issued for the student. This removes the necessity of the student submitting a formal complaint to the board of examiners and then to the Examinations Appeals Board.

I would like to thank the Executive Board and all the students who have turned to me in my role as ombuds officer for the trust they have placed in me.

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General

Role of the ombuds officer

Every student¹ who is registered at Leiden University and who makes use of the educational facilities and services offered by the university is entitled to call on the ombuds officer. In a large and complex organisation such as Leiden University it is possible that a student can feel that he or she has been treated unfairly and, as a consequence, wishes to lodge a complaint. This can apply to current students, alumni and external students. Frequently students are able to resolve problems themselves upon receiving advice from the ombuds officer. Only if this solution does not work does the ombuds officer take up the case². She remains impartial, assesses the case on the basis of all the facts, and then issues an advice, referral or opinion. The ombuds officer checks that all the applicable rules are being followed and that all procedures are correctly carried out. The central question is always - has the student been treated fairly?

The university finds it very important that complaints are taken seriously. If a complaint is found to be justified the ombuds officer can issue advice on how to resolve the problem and make sure it does not reoccur. The ombuds officer can also issue advice during a mediation process or when an issue has been reported. In this way complaints can lead to the issuance of advice, which in turn can lead to improvements in the quality of the organisation's services, information provision, regulations and procedures. The role of the ombuds officer is also to contribute to the optimal treatment of students by Leiden University staff and to make sure that complaints lead to improvements. In addition, the ombuds officer has the task of pointing out reoccurring problems. These are brought to the attention of the department, faculty or Executive Board. The ombuds officer discusses the problems encountered on a yearly basis with Professor S.E. (Simone) Buitendijk, vice-Rector Magnificus and member of the Executive Board. Student anonymity is always ensured.

The duties of the ombuds officer, which in 2013 was a 0.4 fte position, consist of consultations, preparatory case research, documentary research, and the writing of statements, findings and final reports. The position is supported to a limited extent by the secretariat of the Student and Educational Affairs Department (SEA). The ombuds officer is also responsible for recording and archiving.

Dealing with complaints

Most students submit their cases to the ombuds officer by email. The ombuds officer will first check that she is authorised to deal with the complaint. This is always done by way of discussion with the complainant. If it concluded that the ombuds officer is not authorised, research will be undertaken to find out to whom the student should submit his/her case. The ombuds officer may have other reasons for not taking on a case, for example if the case is clearly unjustified or if the student has not yet discussed the case with the faculty. In the case of the latter, the ombuds officer will first give the faculty the opportunity to resolve the issue. In some cases the problem can be resolved by the student him/herself after discussing the problem with the ombuds officer. In these situations the ombuds officer simply provides the student with the information he/she needs about relevant regulations, procedures, rights and duties.

In general the ombuds officer will first undertake research before issuing information. Thereafter the other party involved will be invited to make comment and, if required, all the relevant documents will be requested and verified. In all cases the ombuds officer requests advice from a legal staff member or from a staff member at the Student and Educational Affairs department (SEA).

¹ Art. 3 Reg. relating to the ombuds officer

² Tasks and powers are established in: Regulations relating to the ombudsperson

It is important that the facts of the case are well researched. This ensures that all the information required for a successful resolution is brought to light.

The ombuds officer initially strives to resolve problems through mediation. In many cases this results in the elimination of the reason for the complaint and, as a consequence, the student's trust in the faculty can be restored. Mediation is generally the most practical method for all parties as it is less stressful than a formal complaint procedure. As a neutral third party, the ombuds officer can assist the parties in finding a common frame of reference. This helps to restore the relationship between student and staff member. If mediation is unsuccessful a student can request that a formal enquiry into the complaint be made. Once this enquiry has taken place an official opinion is issued and recommendations are made as to how the consequences of the problem can be dealt with and how reoccurrences can be avoided.

Cases dealt with

121 cases were submitted to the ombuds officer in 2013. The ombuds officer was authorised to deal with 104 of these cases. In eight of the cases the ombuds officer was not qualified due to the nature of the complaints. These complaints concerned general policy, for example institutional tuition fees or fines for late exam registration. In these cases the ombuds officer listened to the complaint and provided information. It is important that there is a place within the organisation where complainants can be heard and referred to the correct person or organisation for assistance. If such a place does not exist the complainant will send repeated letters to the wrong people or organisation, resulting in frustration and longer delays in finding a solution.

In nine cases the ombuds officer was not qualified to deal with the case because the complaints were made by staff members or parents. In two cases advice was requested by a complaints coordinator at a faculty. In this reporting year five prospective students and one former student requested advice or submitted a complaint. In two cases the assistance of the ombuds officer was requested by students acting together, however the complaints were dealt with as one case. One student also submitted four complaints within one case. In this reporting year one formal complaint was submitted. All other cases were dealt with by way of issuing advice, referral or active mediation by the ombuds officer.

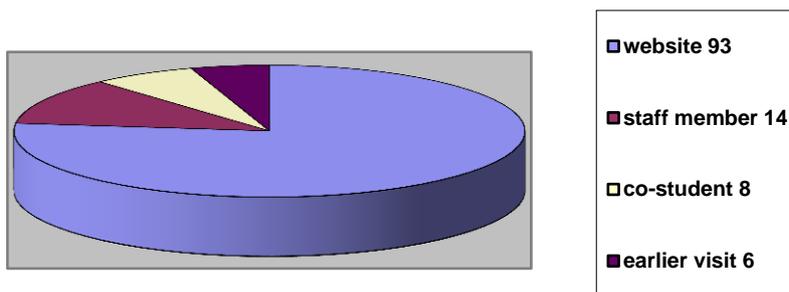


Figure 1 Number of referrals per referral channel



Figure 2 Number of cases per subject group

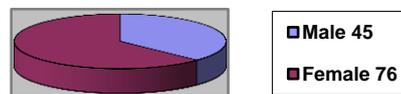


Figure 3 Number of cases according to gender

Other: staff, parents of students

It is notable that comparatively more Master's students turned to the ombuds officer in 2013. This is not surprising, given that many of these students are undertaking a one year Master's programme. For this

group, protracted procedures and missed deadlines can lead to issues of time pressure. As a result, students looking for a quick resolution turn to the ombuds officer. Students following a pre-Master's also have only one year to complete their programme. In addition they have fewer opportunities to re-take exams within the programme.

Table 1 Number of cases per faculty/department

Faculty	Registered students 2010	Cases 2010	Registered students 2011	Cases 2011	Registered students 2012	Cases 2012	Registered students 2013	Cases 2013
Archaeology	460	5	441	2	443	0	474	2
Humanities	4.586	24	4.368	26	4.704	23	5.467	19
Medicine /LUMC	2.494	7	2.500	7	2.468	13	2.532	7
Law	4.265	15	4.509	5	4.801	16	5.013	14
Social Sciences	4.230	18	4.406	23	4.482	22	4.961	19
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	1.951	6	2.040	2	2.310	4	2.661	4
Campus Den Haag ³	794		937	0	1.187	3	1.573	4
ICLON	237		293	2	309	4	326	5
Expertise centre / Support services ⁴		12		22		17		22
Central Administration		0		0		4		2
Future, former or external students ⁵								6
Total								104
Consultations with staff members						3		6
Not under jurisdiction or duties of ombuds officer		2		2		4	8	
Other (e.g. parents)						2		3
Total	19.017	89	19.494	91	20.704	116	23.007	121

The largest number of cases submitted to the ombuds officer was from the Faculty of Humanities, which is a large faculty in terms of registered students. This was due to the fact that the organisation and administration

³ Incl. Leiden University College the Hague

⁴ Campus facilities organization, SEA expertise centre (SOZ), University Library (UBL), ICT Shared Service Centre (ISSC)

⁵ Art. 3 lid 1 Regulations relating to the ombudsperson

of the new English-taught Bachelor in International Studies was not optimal. Some students were concerned that the quality of education would suffer as a result, however this turned out not to be the case. The ombuds officer compiled the cases and then passed them on to the programme coordinator of International Studies, who took them over. In addition, access to the lecturing staff and provision of information was optimised. Furthermore, a number of students contacted the ombuds officer about not being admitted onto Master's programmes. The ombuds officer let the students know that it is not her role to facilitate student admissions. Students should first make a formal appeal against the admission committee's negative decision. Thereafter, if they feel it necessary, students can submit a complaint about the way their case has been dealt with to the ombuds officer. The ombuds officer provided information to the students about the relevant procedures and, in some cases, referred the students to the Examination Appeals Board.

Table 2 Percentage of cases in relation to number of students per faculty

Faculty	Cases 2013	% Cases 2013	% Students 2013
<i>Archaeology</i>	2	2.71	2.06
<i>Humanities</i>	19	25.67	23.76
<i>Medicine /LUMC</i>	7	9.46	11.01
<i>Law</i>	14	18.91	21.78
<i>Social Sciences</i>	19	25.67	21.56
<i>Mathematics and Natural Sciences</i>	4	5.41	11.57
<i>Campus Den Haag</i> ⁶	4	5.41	6.84
<i>ICLON</i>	5	6.76	1.42
Total	74	100%	100%
<i>Expertise centre / support services</i> ⁷	22		
<i>Central administration</i>	2		
<i>Future, former and external students</i> ⁸	6		
<i>Consultations with staff members</i>	6		
<i>Not under jurisdiction or duties of ombuds officer</i>	8		
<i>Other: (parents etc.)</i>	3		
Total	121		23.007

It can be observed in this table that the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Law have the most favourable results. Campus Den Haag and Medicine/LUMC have average result. The faculties of Archaeology and Humanities scored above average. ICLON and the faculty of Social Sciences scored well above average.

⁶ Incl. Leiden University College the Hague

⁷ Campus facilities organization, SEA expertise centre (SOZ), University Library (UBL), ICT Shared Service Centre (ISSC)

⁸ Art. 3 lid 1 Regulations relating to the ombudsperson

Procedures

There are various ways in which a student can bring a case before the ombuds officer. If the ombuds officer receives a request for information an advisory process is set up. A mediation process is then begun at a later stage, which develops in line with the progress of the case. Most cases are resolved by way of some form of mediation. However if a student feels that mediation has not been effective a formal complaint enquiry can be started. The ombuds officer may also receive reports of problems or wrongdoing from students. In such cases the ombuds officer notifies the faculty or department concerned and in some cases makes recommendations.

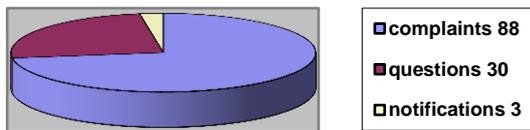


Figure 4 Types of cases dealt with

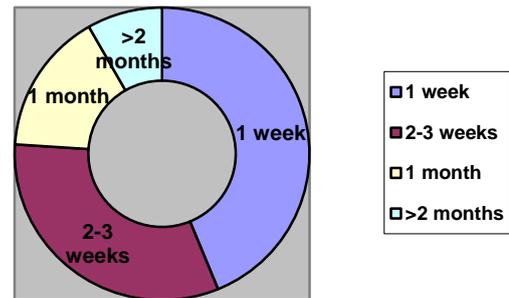


Figure 5 Average processing time of complaints

The processing time of cases depends on various factors, such as the planning of appointments with third parties and the complexity of the case. Two thirds of cases were dealt with within two to three weeks. Due to the cooperation shown by staff members 53 cases were dealt with within one week of the initial meeting with the complainant. Other cases took somewhat longer. Ten cases took two months or longer, whilst nineteen cases took one month.

Nature of cases dealt with

Some cases were based on more than one problem area. This is the reason why there are more types of case than the total number of cases handled. Just as last year, most cases concerned education. Some cases concerned exam commissions that made students wait an excessive amount of time (> ten weeks) for decisions. In those cases the ombuds officer could find no exceptional circumstances that might have led to the delay. With the introduction of the new student loan system and the BA/MA construction in 2015 students have less time than ever. This has resulted in increased levels of concern brought about by excessive response times. This reporting year has seen an increase in the number of complaints about the provision of information. Some cases concerned complaints about incomplete or insufficient information, for example the lack of information on assessment norms in the prospectus. In these cases the ombuds officer notified the study programme in question about the issue. In some cases it was apparent that agreements on thesis supervision were not clearly laid down, resulting in an inability to fall back on these agreements when needed. In another case, a communication problem between a thesis supervisor and a student was not recognised early enough, which resulted in supervision coming to a standstill and the student running the risk of study delay. In this case the ombuds officer issued advice which resulted in the resumption of supervision.

Tabel 3 Nature of cases dealt with

Organisational		
Administration	<i>Ineffective administration leading to stagnation of activities. For example grades not entered into uSiS (on time) / incorrect or incorrectly recorded grades</i>	1
Accessibility	<i>Total lack of access / lack of response leading to stagnation</i>	3
Treatment	<i>For example offensive / intimidating / blunt. Behaviour contradictory to the code of conduct for lecturing staff, or unapproachable attitude resulting in stagnation and lack of trust</i>	7
Communication	<i>Miscommunication: student needs to know something but receives incomplete explanations</i>	12
Information (incorrect - or lack of information)	<i>Situations in which a student needs to know something. For example assessment norms not available / information provided is not correct / provision of information is not up to date</i>	29
Facilities / provisions	<i>Not good or not available, e.g. exam location</i>	7
Procedures (e.g. right of inspection of exams or marking period)	<i>The organisation does not abide by the regulations / regulations or procedures are not carried out properly</i>	22
Financial	<i>Complaints about payments / refunds not granted / fees incorrectly charged / re-registration required due to errors made</i>	16
Education		
Educational support	<i>Stagnation of studies, thesis-internship support, in terms of procedures and/or communication</i>	13
Quality of education	<i>Content of education provided. For example lack of trial exams / exams not relating to education provided / disturbances during exams</i>	12
Coordination of education (e.g. planning)	<i>Planning of exams or re-takes / feasibility of the study programme / courses offered / sequencing of study elements</i>	6
Research		
Examinations / Tests	<i>Complaints about exam commission / about tests (answers, not relating to materials covered) / complaints about assessment / complaints about non-issuance of grades / fines for late registration</i>	22
Legality (e.g. with reference to the Education and Examination Regulations)	<i>New method of evaluation introduced without prior notice / changing of grades / exceeding the maximum grading period / incorrectly or inconsistently evaluated work</i>	13
Registration (for courses, as a student)	<i>Admission procedures / restriction of registration on courses</i>	18
Other	<i>Origin / nature of the problem lies outside the university</i>	1

Observations and findings

In 2013 the ombuds officer observed the following bottlenecks and notified the faculties or departments concerned and, if needed, the Board of Governors.

Board of examiners response time

As in all other years, I have received complaints about excessive response times.

Recommendations

- Adhering to stipulated response times;
- Establishing response time for other types of requests and adhering to them.

Response times student applications and requests for registration

It is the role of the admission committee to determine whether students can be admitted onto a Master's programme on the basis of the admission requirements. The committee provides the faculty board with its advice and the faculty board then issues a decision.

Requests for admission are submitted by students to Leiden University Admissions Office. If the documentation is found to be in order the Admissions Office then sends the application to the faculty at least one month before the commencement of the Master's programme in question. The applicant is notified of this fact and informed that a decision on his/her application can be expected within four to six weeks.

It is apparent that in some cases the admission committee instead adheres to the deadlines stated in the Regulation for Admission to Master's Programmes. Here it is stated that it must be established whether an applicant meets the admission conditions by the last day of the month in which the Master's programme commences (= September). As a result, the student in question can only start his/her studies in October as opposed to September.

Recommendations

- Agree on clear deadlines for processing applications and requests for student registration and make this information available;
- Each faculty should adopt these deadlines for processing applications and requests for student registration and publicise these on its website;
- The current regulations permit the issuance of final decisions at the end of September. My advice would be to evaluate this ruling and change September to August.

Statement of exams taken elsewhere and diploma not yet issued

In order to register as a Master's student at another university students require a temporary proof of graduation statement from Leiden University (statement of exams taken elsewhere and diploma not yet issued). This statement can only be stamped and issued once the student has obtained his/her Bachelor's degree. A possible consequence of the 'Bachelor's before Master's' rule is that students may encounter study delay if the completion date of the Bachelor's and the start date of the Master's are not adjoining.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the results of exams re-taken in the last period of the Bachelor's programme are issued on time.

Bilingual website

Leiden University encourages international students to come and study with us. It is therefore a logical step to offer information in two languages. Lack of an English translation of all relevant information can lead to complaints

Recommendation

- Ensure that there is an English translation of all information that is of relevance to students

Diversity

In terms of ethnicity there are no notable patterns. Students of non-western ethnicity and students of western ethnicity submitted a similar number of complaints to the ombuds officer. Complaints from each group were also similar in nature and subject matter. However, reactions to problems may have differed somewhat. Cultural differences can play a role in the impact of certain problems. For example students of non-western ethnicity may have a different view of the lecturer - student relationship. For example, during a case concerning educational support, it came to light that a student who had not been able to finish a course or thesis had not dared to say that he had not understood or ask the lecturer what he had done wrong. In the eyes of the student, to have done so would have implied that he was judging his lecturer.

Recommendations

- Staff members within the organisation who encounter situations of this nature are advised to increase their awareness of international and intercultural teaching practices.

uSis-Fines

Faculties do not follow the same regulations in this respect and students find this extremely unfair. If a student fails to register for an exam before a certain deadline he or she can be obliged to pay a fine before the exam grade is published in uSis. However this rule does not apply to all official grades. Students who are following courses at more than one faculty may discover that individual essays and written assignments are subject to the fines system at one faculty, whereas at the other faculty this is not the case. This situation arises because students who are, for example, taking a minor at a different faculty fall under a different Education and Examination Regulation (OER).

Recommendation

In order to solve this problem a university-wide regulation could be introduced which would clarify the situation for all. Due to recent developments this recommendation is no longer applicable; the Dutch minister of education considers exam-fines to be illegal.

Summary of recommendations:

- Create an environment which facilitates Bachelor's students in finishing their studies on time;
- Enforce set deadlines for dealing with formal requests from students;
- Establish and enforce deadlines for other types of request;
- Establish and publish clear deadlines for processing applications and requests for registration from students;
- Make sure there is a full English translation available of all information that is of relevance to students;
- Make sure that information, rules and regulations are kept up to date.

Professionalisation

The effectiveness of the ombuds officer is directly related to the quality of her work. Therefore advancement of knowledge and training is required if the ombuds officer is to continue fulfilling her role in a positive manner. For this reason the ombuds officer takes part in the National Meeting of Ombuds officers in Higher Education (abbreviated to LOOHO in Dutch). Six universities of professional education take part, as well as the VU, Delft, Utrecht and Leiden universities. In 2013 three meetings took place. Subjects that were discussed included professionalisation, the application of ombuds officer regulations and the position of the ombuds officer within various institutions. Information is also made available through various channels by the European Network for Ombudsmen in Higher Education (ENOHE) and the American International Ombudsmen Association. Such information concerns developments in the area of the right of complaint and jurisprudence in the area ombuds officer's duties.

Periodical peer meetings took place in 2013 between the ombuds officers from the VU, ROC-Amsterdam and Zaandam, and Leiden. During these meetings experiences and knowledge were exchanged. The ombuds officer also has access to information on the right of complaint via the newsletter and symposia of the Association for the Right of Complaint (Vereniging voor Klachtrecht). This association seeks to further professionalise and improve internal and external complaint regulations in order to advance the competencies of internal and external complaint handlers. On 13 November the ombuds officer took part in the workshop entitled “Informeel terug klagen” (informally complaining back) which was organised by the Association for the Right of Complaint.

In order for the ombuds officer to function to the best of her ability and provide students with the correct information it is essential that she remains up to date on policy and organisational matters, in particular those that concern internal regulations. This was achieved in part by attending a meeting between the University Council and the Board of Governors and a meeting of the Faculty Student Council, and by periodically taking part in meetings between the acting director of Academic Affairs and the director of Student and Educational Affairs. In addition, the ombuds officer took part in meetings with student deans and held occasional meetings with the student psychologist. In addition, the ombuds officer takes part in a meeting with the university's confidential counsellor for students and the confidential counsellor for staff three times a year.

Examples of cases dealt with

The following examples are anonymous and chosen at random. They are intended to provide an indication of the range of complaints received. The choice of examples is limited due to privacy regulations which state that students and faculties may not be identifiable. The use of terms such as him or her is random and not always correct. The terminology is deliberately vague in order to protect the identity of the student. The descriptions only cover the main issues. There is no true indication of the number of meetings or the amount of time spent on the case. In the case histories below the students submitted their complaints to the faculty, but they were not resolved to their satisfaction.

1320 Procedure: shuttle mediation advice

Processing time: three weeks

In mid-February a student contacted the ombuds officer to complain about the internship guidance she had received. She received an insufficient grade for her internship report and, as a consequence, could not successfully complete her Bachelor's programme. She had lodged an appeal with the Examinations Appeals Board against the decision issued by the Board of Examiners. This decision stated that she could submit her report again but without being entitled to do a re-take.

Nevertheless the student began her Master's programme in January, as she was convinced that the problem would soon be resolved. However she then spoke to a student dean who informed her that she should appeal against the decision of the Board of Examiners and it would most likely take until April before a decision was issued. The student had not realised this. The student dean also informed her that due to the 'bachelor's-before-master's rule' she could not be admitted to the Master's programme until her Bachelor's programme had been successfully completed. The student asked the ombuds officer if anything could be done about the situation.

The ombuds officer explained that the appeals process cannot be hastened. Furthermore, the 'bachelor's-before-master's rule' is a governmental regulation that the university cannot change. In a meeting between the ombuds officer and the student dean it was noted that a tentative provision to permit admission to the Master's during the appeals process was included in the formal request to the chairperson of the Board of Appeals. In the meantime the student received notification from the Student and Educational Affairs department (SOZ) that her registration on the Master's programme had been cancelled as she had not met all conditions for admission. This notification contained an appeals clause. The ombuds officer concluded that there are no provisions for cases of this nature. The student faced the possibility of serious study delay due to the failure to meet the requirements for Master's admission. The appropriate course of action would have been to ask the Board of Examiners to issue a conditional admission decision. However this course had not been followed.

Due to the urgency of the situation the ombuds officer took swift action. She informed the head of the Student Administration department about the lack of clear procedures in this respect, and requested cooperation in finding a solution to the problem. A meeting was then initiated between the faculty in question and the secretary of the Board of Appeal. In agreement with the faculty board, the student was given permission to take part in the study programme on the condition that her exam results would not be issued until a decision was made on the appeal. The SEA department re-activate the student's

registration, thus allowing her to access all the necessary facilities. The ombuds officer then closed the case.

1319 Educational guidance: mediation

Processing time: one month

A Bachelor's student made an appointment. She complained about the behaviour of one of her teachers when she refused to sign a plagiarism statement during a plenary meeting. The student stated that the teacher informed her that she would have to leave the study programme if she refused to sign the statement. She was very shocked by this. She wondered what her rights were in this situation. The reason she refused to sign the statement was that, in her opinion, by doing so she confirmed that suspicion of plagiarism was enough to have her excluded from the study programme. She found that this statement did not offer protection to students. In her opinion the reaction of her teacher confirmed this assertion.

The ombuds officer explained that plagiarism statements are issued to students as they are declarations of intent. This declaration of intent is only intended to warn students about the consequences of plagiarism and let them know that the university strenuously checks for offences. The ombuds officer informed the student that the regulations on plagiarism can be found on the website. The maximum penalty in proven cases of fraud is exclusion from exams for a period of one year. This decision is issued by the board of examiners, therefore appeal to a higher authority is not possible. With the student's agreement the ombuds officer contacted the teacher in question to hear her recollection of the events. The teacher disputed the fact that she has said that the student must leave the study programme if she failed to sign the plagiarism statement. She did however state that she did not understand the student's reluctance to sign.

With the agreement of both parties a three party meeting took place, under the guidance of the ombuds officer, in order to discuss the complaint and bring about a solution for all parties. During the meeting a new issue became apparent. It was clear that the student's mistrust of the teacher had been brought about by the way in which the teacher reacted to and gave feedback on the student's work. The student believed that she had received harsh criticism of her work which led to feelings of insecurity. The teacher explained that the level of the student's work varied a great deal. She wished to make the student aware of this issue by pointing out what the student was capable of. Both parties reached an understanding of the other party's point of view. The student realised that the quality of her work was her own responsibility. The teacher realised that a different approach would likely lead to better (academic) results.

Both parties stated that trust had been restored to a sufficient level to allow academic guidance to continue and new agreements to be made. The ombuds officer then closed the case.