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The dominant theme of the year under review was delay. In many of the cases submitted to me, students had either fallen behind in their studies or were afraid that they were going to. In such circumstances, it is important that they can approach the Student Ombudsman sooner rather than later. And in almost all of these cases, that was possible within a week. Not only enrolled students, but also prospective students, parents and other interested parties manage to find their way to me. Both the VU University website and VUnet provide sufficient information about the ombudsman service. Students can also contact me using a form available from the Complaints Desk, and WhatsApp has become a frequently used medium for this purpose.

From the cases to come before me, it is apparent that a complaint often has an advisory function, too. It is important to consider this, because the university is not just an educational institution: it is a learning organization as well. By describing the cases I have dealt with and presenting the resulting recommendations, my annual report should therefore serve as a useful aid for others within the organization. Study delays, for example, are just as undesirable for the entire student body and the university in general as they are for the individual students affected. For that reason, amongst the recommendations contained in this annual report are a number intended specifically to prevent such delays.

I would to thank the Executive Board and all the students who have consulted me as student ombudsman for the trust they have placed in me.

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THE POSITION OF STUDENT OMBUDSMAN

Every student at VU University Amsterdam, including those from other institutions who make use of its educational facilities, may enlist the services of the Student Ombudsman. This includes external PhD students without an employment contract with VU University,1 VU students at the Academic Centre for Dentistry Amsterdam (ACTA) and students of Amsterdam University College (AUC). After all, no matter how meticulously procedures and policy are formulated, human error can never be totally eliminated and things may still go awry. That is when complaints arise.

In many cases, students can try to solve the problem themselves with advice from the Student Ombudsman. They should first give the faculty or service a chance to resolve the matter. Only if this fails, or the student is not entirely satisfied, is the Student Ombudsman called in.2 She does not take sides, and consider matter the objectively in order to give advice, make a referral or formulate a decision. The Student Ombudsman checks that the regulations and procedures have been followed correctly. The central question is whether the student has been fairly treated. Grievances concerning general policy fall outside the ombudsman’s remit, however, and so need to be addressed through other channels, such as the Faculty or University Student Council or the programme committee.

As stated in the regulations (Regeling Studentenombudsman), the Student Ombudsman is an independent and neutral person with whom the student can discuss a problem or grievance concerning the university, the faculty or a member of staff in an informal and confidential setting. The main difference between the Student Ombudsman and other counsellors is that she has the means to investigate a grievance formally and to issue a judgement.

It is in the interests of both students and the university that complaints and grievances be taken seriously. The Student Ombudsman makes a key contribution to this process. If a complaint turns out to be well-founded, she can formulate recommendations to resolve it and to prevent recurrences in the future. In some instances, she may also offer recommendations after a mediation process or in response to a report. Accordingly, some complaints

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1 PhD students who have an employment contract with VU University Amsterdam may approach the Staff Ombudsman. Since 1 March 2013, the Student Ombudsman has also held this post on an ad-interim basis. To fulfil this task, her working hours have been extended by 0.2 FTE.

result in advice which helps improve services, communication, regulations and procedures.

The Student Ombudsman also aims to help optimize working relationships by translating complaints into points for improvement, and alerts faculties, services or Executive Board to recurrent problems and complaints, and to clear breaches of the rules and regulations.

Once a year, the Student Ombudsman discusses the issues she has dealt with – whilst guaranteeing student anonymity – with Rector and Executive Board member Professor Frank van der Duyn Schouten.

Besides discussing matters with students, the Student Ombudsman spends time on a whole array of tasks, such as establishing facts, combing files, recording findings and compiling interim and final reports.\(^3\) The only external support provided, by the secretarial staff at the Administration Office, is in the distribution of the annual report.

The Student Ombudsman takes care of registration and filing herself.

Since hers is a part-time position, and also because she cannot be contacted during meetings, it is important that callers can leave a message when she is not available. At these times she redirects calls to her mobile telephone. She can also be contacted through the WhatsApp messaging service and Telegram. Students can simply send a message from their mobile phone at no extra cost, and the Student Ombudsman can respond rapidly. This helps keep the service’s access threshold low. Other ways of making an appointment are through the Student Services Desk in the main building or, of course, with the Student Ombudsman herself.

**HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

Most students submit their case to the Student Ombudsman by e-mail or WhatsApp. Students still have access to the ombudsman’s services after completing their studies, providing the incident took place no more than one year earlier and the complainant was studying at VU University Amsterdam at the time.

At the first meeting the Student Ombudsman checks that she is the right person to deal with the matter. For instance, she cannot deal with harassment complaints – that is the job of the confidential counsellor\(^4\) – or with cases where there is still an opportunity to lodge an objection or appeal with the Examination Appeals Board (College van Beroep voor de Examens, Cobex)\(^5\). Nevertheless, in almost all of these cases a conversation with the student is needed in order to determine the exact circumstances and

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\(^3\) Also the assessment of competence and admissibility.


whether or not at least part of the complaint falls within the Student Ombudsman’s remit. Some cases, after all, are made up of several different aspects. If she is not empowered to deal with them, the simpler cases are registered as “not admissible by the Ombudsman”.

She may also decide not to take up a complaint for other reasons; for example, because it is clearly unfounded. In these cases, she explains to the student that the rules and regulations have been followed properly. And if the student has not yet discussed the complaint with the faculty, the Student Ombudsman will first give the faculty a chance to resolve it.

In some cases, then, the student solves the problem independently after talking to the Student Ombudsman and being furnished with information on the relevant regulations, procedures, rights, obligations and options. Often, the Student Ombudsman will perform a preliminary inquiry before providing the required information. The other party will then be asked to comment and documents can be requested and, if necessary, verified. On matters relating to internal regulations, the Student Ombudsman may occasionally request advice from a legal expert at VU University or a member of staff at Student and Education Services [Dienst Student & Onderwijszaken, SOZ]. At faculty level, she may contact a study adviser, a programme co-ordinator or the head of the Education Office. It is essential in all cases to obtain a clear picture of the complaint, as this provides information likely to contribute to a solution. Both the student and the organization are better served by finding a solution than simply deciding that there are grounds for complaint.

If another body can solve the problem, the Student Ombudsman will refer the student accordingly. For example, suspected academic misconduct can be reported to the Ombudsman for Academic Integrity,6 problems concerning examinations can usually be brought to the attention of the relevant examination board and complaints of inappropriate behaviour, such as discrimination, can be referred to one of the confidential student counsellors.7 The Student Ombudsman can also provide information in this area, but will make every effort to pass the student on to the right place as quickly as possible.

The Student Ombudsman aims to solve problems through mediation. In many cases, this results in the withdrawal of the complaint and thus helps to restore the trust in the faculty that has been damaged. As an independent party who

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6 Professor S. Miedema; http://www.vu.nl/nl/over-de-vu/profiel-en-missie/uitgelicht/integriteit/ombudsman/index.asp.
is not accountable to any programme, the Student Ombudsman can search for a common frame of reference in which the relationship between the student and staff member can be restored. In addition, mediation is a more pleasant and expedient option for all concerned, and faster than a formal inquiry. If the preliminary investigation so indicates, the parties will be invited to participate in a three-way meeting (led by the Student Ombudsman) to resolve the complaint. As always, the Student Ombudsman remains impartial.

Mediation is no less labour-intensive for the Student Ombudsman than a formal inquiry. Looking into the complaint, hearing the parties and bringing them together usually requires several sessions. If mediation is not an option or is no longer possible, or if it has failed to deliver results, the student can still request a formal inquiry. This will be followed by a decision. Moreover, recommendations can be formulated to remedy the consequences of the problems or to prevent a recurrence in the future. Two formal complaints were submitted in 2014, one about educational support and the other about a combination of educational support and communication. The ombudsman’s inquiry into one outstanding complaint from 2013, also about educational support, was completed in March 2014 and the resulting report was submitted to all parties, to the board of the faculty concerned and to the Executive Board of the university.

CASES IN 2014
One hundred and twenty-five cases were brought before the Student Ombudsman in 2014, and 124 of them had been dealt with by the end of the year. Four fell outside her remit, but the students concerned were referred to the correct individual or body. Although she is not empowered to take up complaints about general university policy, the Student Ombudsman listened to the problems in this area, discussed options and passed on relevant information. It is, of course, important to have a place in the organization where such problems can be aired and where complainants can be referred to the right body. Experience has shown that if this does not happen, the complainant sends letters and e-mails to different members of staff – usually to the wrong address – which not only takes up a great deal of time but also frustrates the complainant without bringing a solution any nearer. On three occasions, members of staff sought advice about problems with a student. The issues they raised included the right way to channel student complaints and inappropriate behaviour on the part of a student. Again, the Student Ombudsman listened, advised and referred the persons concerned to the right body.

In two of the 125 cases, the Student Ombudsman was approached by several students at once. Each of these joint complaints was counted as a single case.
Twenty-three cases (18.4 per cent) were submitted by students of non-western ethnicity; this rate has fluctuated within the 15-20 per cent range for some years.

Most of the complainants found the Student Ombudsman through the website or were referred by members of staff. Seventeen completed the online form provided by the Complaints Desk [see below].

Since there are far more undergraduates than postgraduate students at VU University Amsterdam – 16,752 versus 77658 – it is striking that more of the latter approached the Student Ombudsman in 2014. One reason for this could be that they come under greater pressure during their courses, which usually last only one year, than undergraduates on three-year BA and BSc programmes. A hold-up when preparing their thesis or a hard-to-reach tutor has more immediate repercussions for them, making them more likely to take action quickly.

**NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS**

Proportionately, the greatest number of cases handled by the Student Ombudsman in 2014 came from students in the faculties of Medicine and of Psychology and Education. The issues raised by medical students included problems with the provision of information, whilst students from the other two faculties complained, among other things, about educational matters, such as supervision and co-ordination. In a few cases, prospective students felt that they had been treated discourteously when asking questions about their chosen course of

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\(^{9}\) Source: count as of 1 October 2014, Student and Education Services

\(^{10}\) The faculties of Arts and Philosophy merged in 2014 to form the Faculty of Humanities.

\(^{11}\) Prospective students, relatives of students.
study, or were unable to find the information they needed on the relevant website. The Student Ombudsman investigated these complaints, and in several instances contacted the programme concerned. The cases which reach the ombudsman are those which students feel have not been dealt with properly by the faculty or service concerned, or which have reached an impasse or escalated. Of all students at VU University Amsterdam, fewer than 0.5 per cent ever contact the Student Ombudsman.

HANDLING
The way a case is handled depends on the form in which it is submitted to the Student Ombudsman. Questions are usually dealt with by means of information and advice, and possibly mediation at a later stage. Most complaints are settled through mediation.

As mentioned previously, most cases are dealt with through mediation. A mediation session can pinpoint the exact source of the grievance and – because it elicits a response from the other party – can steer the complaint in a totally different direction, which may point the way to a solution. If the student feels that mediation has failed, a formal inquiry can still follow. In 2014, one such inquiry resulting in a written report was conducted.

Students may also report problems or wrongdoing to the Student Ombudsman. She then informs the faculty or service in question and, in some cases, makes recommendations.

NATURE OF CASES IN 2014
A case can extend across more than one problem area. That is why there are more subjects than processed cases. All cases are registered, whether founded or unfounded.

A substantial number of the cases dealt with in 2014 – 34 in all – concerned educational matters, with no faculty exempt. Once again, they included a number related to the supervision of theses. For example, several students complained that their studies had been delayed by numerous changes of supervisor. Also, as every year, a large number of complaints were received about issues of fairness. For instance, can a tutor award a fail mark due to alleged plagiarism if the accusation is still being considered by the examination board?

Some students complained that a faculty or service had failed to comply with relevant rules or procedures. In several cases, an examination board had breached its own deadline for reviewing or responding to an objection.

The Student Ombudsman was contacted by a number of complainants who felt that a lack of effort on the part of a fellow student on a joint assignment had resulted in too low a mark for them. They found it unfair that such work was assessed collectively rather than individually. Moreover, the manner of submission meant that it was not clear which student had made what contribution. The Student Ombudsman does not
concern herself with the actual content of marking of assignments, of course, but she does check that the rules have been followed and that the assessment protocol is available to students.

Cases listed under “treatment” include those in which students complain that tutors or other members of staff have made derogatory remarks about their abilities and potential. Matters of this kind are ideally suited to mediation.

The Student Ombudsman referred some students to other bodies such as the examination board or the Examination Appeals Board [College van Beroep voor de Examen, Cobex]. Surprisingly, many students still appear to be poorly informed of the possibility of lodging an appeal. On some occasions it was only necessary to explain the regulations to the student, whilst on others actual intervention by the Student Ombudsman was needed.

The heading “Other” covers cases that could not be accommodated elsewhere, such as complaints about a binding recommendation on the continuation of studies and about an abolished degree specialization.
Seventy-six cases could be dealt with within one working week after the intake interview. As always, this was partly thanks to the co-operative attitude of the members of staff concerned. The rest took more time. Thirty-seven took two weeks or more and 16 took longer than two months, in part because of scheduling issues – staff have busy timetables – and in part because of the complexity of the case itself. Three cases were carried over into 2015.

As well as resolving complaints, in general terms the Student Ombudsman also endeavours to prevent them from arising in the first place. To this end, in 2014 she held several meetings with faculty board members, teaching co-ordinators and other personnel to discuss points of contention.

In 2011 the Student Ombudsman launched an initiative to form a working group called Social Safety on the Campus (Sociale veiligheid op de campus). The aim of this group – to which she now acts as an adviser – is to organize a Social Safety Meeting at VU University Amsterdam and to ensure that employees know what to do if, say, they are threatened with violence, and can pass on this knowledge to students if necessary. Besides helping to prevent aggression, this approach promotes a proactive attitude and enhances the effectiveness of support services. In the long run it should also prevent complaints, because students who feel that their study environment is safe are less likely to complain about it. The working group met twice in 2014, but now intends to adopt a different form in order to achieve its objective.

Advice based upon actual cases was submitted to the university organization with the aim of preventing future complaints about the same matters. In one case the advice related to a procedure that was not easy for students to find, whilst in another it concerned thesis supervision.
PROVISION OF INFORMATION
Since most Master’s degree programmes last only one year, they put the student under a lot of pressure. Because of this, it is important that they know at all times – not just at the beginning of the year – who to approach with queries related to their studies and what to do should problems arise when they are preparing their thesis.

THESIS SUPERVISION
• On a number of occasions, students have complained that their principal supervisor only made it apparent that their thesis was inadequate after it had been submitted for final assessment. In such cases, the student is not only taken by surprise but is no longer able to revise their work. The Student Ombudsman believes that a thesis supervisor should reveal any doubts about quality as soon as they arise, or least indicate at an early stage how he or she regards the work and on what points it requires improvement.
• If the supervisor becomes unavailable for any reason, it is only reasonable to expect the programme to assign a new one without delay and to inform the student of the change. This prevents unnecessary study delays.
• It is worth considering recommending that, in their role as study advisers and thesis supervisors, tutors record all agreements reached with students in their student files.

RESPONSE TIMES
The university’s Rules and Guidelines for Examination Boards state clearly that these bodies should “reach a decision no later than six weeks after receipt of an objection”. In 2014 a number of students complained that this deadline had not been met, with potential repercussions for their chosen course of studies. With the introduction of the new student loans system at the start of the next academic year, it will be more important than ever that decisions be reached within the allotted timeframe in order to prevent study delays with financial repercussions. In any case, students should be able to rely on examination boards complying with their own rules in respect of response times.

RAISING AWARENESS
To ensure that students know about the existence of the Student Ombudsman and what she does, Dutch and English web pages are maintained on VUweb. Because new students join the university each year, the ombudsman service was reintroduced to various student organizations at the start of the academic year.

academic year. And the Student Ombudsmen met the committees of student societies and the faculty student councils at the Rector’s Welcome gatherings held in November and February. She also presented her 2013 annual report to a couple of faculty boards.

All of these activities were aimed at providing information which would ultimately improve the visibility, perception and accessibility of the ombudsman. For the same reason, she moves her office to a new faculty each year. In 2014 her host was the Faculty of Sciences.

PROFESSIONALIZATION

Needless to say, the effectiveness of the Student Ombudsman also depends upon her ability to do a good job. Continuous learning, training and knowledge development are essential. It is for this reason that the Student Ombudsman participated in, and in fact chaired, the National Consultation Group of Ombudsmen in Higher Education (Landelijk Overleg van Ombudsmannen in het Hoger Onderwijs, LOOHO), which met three times in 2014. The topics addressed at these meetings included professionalization, the application of the ombudsman regulations and the position of the ombudsman in the various institutions. During the year, however, LOOHO decided to reconstitute itself as an association and so, on 6 June 2014, the VU University student ombudsman and her counterpart from Leiden University signed the founding charter of the new Association of Ombudsmen in Higher Education (Vereniging Ombudsmannen in het Hoger Onderwijs, VOHO). To mark this occasion, the Higher Education Press Agency (Hoger Onderwijs Persbureau, HOP) conducted an interview with the Student Ombudsman.13

Membership of the European Network of Ombudsmen in Higher Education (ENOHE) and the US-based International Ombudsmen Association provides all manner of information about the latest developments in complaints law and jurisprudence in the field in which ombudsmen work. The ENOHE organized a World Congress of Ombudsmen in Higher Education at Warsaw University with the theme “Higher education ombudsmen and empowerment”,14 at which the VU University Student Ombudsman delivered a paper entitled “Difficult complaining behaviour”.

On 26 November 2014 she took part in a seminar organized by the National Board for Research Integrity (Landelijk Orgaan Wetenschappelijke Integriteit, LOWI) to

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14 15-18 May
mark the 10th anniversary of its foundation. Topics addressed at this event included procedural best practices and integrity standards.

Also in 2014, she attended a number of peer-review meetings with her opposite number at Leiden University, at which they shared experiences and expertise. She can also access professional information through the newsletter and symposia of the Association for Right of Recourse (Vereniging voor Klachtrecht), which is committed to further professionalizing and improving the internal and external handling of complaints and is currently developing right of recourse and promoting the competencies required to deal with internal and external complaints.

To be able to function effectively and to inform students correctly, the Student Ombudsman must keep up to speed with policy and organization, in particular as regards internal regulations. This involves maintaining good contacts with the University Student Council (Universitaire Studentenraad, USR) and playing an active part in the VU University Legal Consultation Group (Juristenoverleg VU). She also attends meetings of the staff confidential counsellors and the VU University Ombudsman for Academic Integrity twice a year, and at least as often meets the Director of Student and Education Services to hear about developments in that area and, if necessary, to discuss points for improvement arising from complaints received.

As well as being kept informed through a variety of bodies, in some cases the Student Ombudsman also makes an active contribution to their discussions. Such activities are, however, limited as they are only feasible if her impartial position is not compromised. She does participate actively in the sounding board group Study with a Disability (Studeren met een beperking) and in consultations with the student counsellors.

The Student Ombudsman provides information on her tasks and the nature of her job upon request to VU University staff and students.

Chosen more or less at random, the cases described below have been anonymized to protect the identities of those involved. Although the need to preserve total anonymity has limited the choice, it is hoped that they will shed some light on the diversity of complaints. Unfortunately, highly complex cases could easily be linked to a particular individual or faculty and so have had to be omitted from this selection.
A student approaches the ombudsman with a complaint. In her view, her thesis supervisor has been responding far too slowly. As a result, she claims, she had not completed her degree by 1 September and so had to re-enrol at the university – and pay tuition fees – for an extra year. Had her supervisor responded promptly when contacted in July, she believes that she would have been able to graduate before 1 September. The deadline for submission of the final version of her thesis was 9 June, but she did not actually hand it in until the end of July. Having heard nothing from her supervisor after two weeks, she e-mails him and the second reader of the thesis. According to the Academic and Examination Regulations, after all, written work should be reviewed within 10 working days of submission. The supervisor still does not respond – evidently, he is on holiday. But the second reader does write back a few days later, to say that he has not yet seen the thesis or the supervisor’s commentary on it. Two weeks later, at the end of August, the second reader finally forwards the supervisor’s commentary to the student. This reveals that he has failed the thesis. The student then sends the supervisor a list of questions in order to find out what she needs to change, but he now informs her that she has no further entitlement to supervision as the allotted number of hours have been used up.

The Student Ombudsman advises the student that, during the summer holiday in July and August, it is acceptable for responses to take
After completing his first degree at another university, a student enrolled on a one-year Master’s degree programme at VU University Amsterdam in the 2013-2014 academic year. When he arrived, he says, he discovered that he should have submitted details of the intended subject of his thesis before the course began on 1 September 2013 if he wanted to start work on it immediately. Because he was not aware of this, he was late in providing this information. As soon as he found this out in September, he submitted his details. However, he was not permitted to begin work on his thesis because the original submission deadline was set prior to the start of the summer holiday. If that deadline is not met, problems can arise. Moreover, the student is entitled only to a preset number of hours of thesis supervision. Once they have been exhausted, programmes are in some cases obliging enough to provide additional supervision in order to give the student the opportunity to revise and resubmit their thesis. But these are exceptions: they are not required to do so. The student says that she now understands that her wait for a response was due to the summer holiday, and that she has no further entitlement to supervision. However, she hopes that she can apply to the examination board for additional supervision hours. Consequently, the Student Ombudsman does not contact the faculty.

In the end, the programme allowed the student to resubmit her thesis and she was able to graduate successfully.

CASE 2

PROVISION OF INFORMATION

NO. 14100

RESOLUTION STRATEGY: REPORT
DURATION: FOUR WEEKS

After completing his first degree at another university, a student enrolled on a one-year Master’s degree programme at VU University Amsterdam in the 2013-2014 academic year. When he arrived, he says, he discovered that he should have submitted details of the intended subject of his thesis before the course began on 1 September 2013 if he wanted to start work on it immediately. Because he was not aware of this, he was late in providing this information. As soon as he found this out in September, he submitted his details. However, he was not permitted to begin work on his thesis because the original submission deadline was set prior to the start of the summer holiday. If that deadline is not met, problems can arise. Moreover, the student is entitled only to a preset number of hours of thesis supervision. Once they have been exhausted, programmes are in some cases obliging enough to provide additional supervision in order to give the student the opportunity to revise and resubmit their thesis. But these are exceptions: they are not required to do so. The student says that she now understands that her wait for a response was due to the summer holiday, and that she has no further entitlement to supervision. However, she hopes that she can apply to the examination board for additional supervision hours. Consequently, the Student Ombudsman does not contact the faculty.

In the end, the programme allowed the student to resubmit her thesis and she was able to graduate successfully.

approached his study adviser, who called the thesis co-ordinator there and then. The outcome of their conversation was that the student had indeed missed the deadline and so would not be able to start work on his thesis before February 2014. Nor could he now be matched with an appropriate tutor. The student accepted the situation because, as it happened, it better suited his plans: he wanted to take two other modules in the first semester, which would have left him too busy to start on his thesis. But because he felt that he had been poorly informed, and found it strange that he had to nominate a thesis topic before he had even entered the university, he reported the matter to the Student Ombudsman.

Given the right to reply, the thesis co-ordinator tells the Student Ombudsman that he did not realize that the student might have a problem waiting until February. If he had, he would have acted more decisively. As he points out, tight scheduling is essential to ensure that students do not suffer academic delays. It is for this reason that the programme allows them to start work on their theses from September. Those who wait until February, when they still have to take on a work placement as well, are more likely to fall behind.

In a separate response, the programme administration tells the Student Ombudsman that final-year VU University undergraduates are encouraged to look for a work placement and to consider the subject of their thesis, so that they can make it known at the beginning of their Master’s year. Prior to the start of each academic year, moreover, the faculty holds a meeting for all new Master’s degree students – including those transferring from other universities – at which they are also given this information. Evidently, the student in question missed that and the information is not provided on the website. The co-ordinator confirms that this programme is under considerable time pressure and that good planning is needed to complete it in one year. The Student Ombudsman advises the programme to add this information to its website, so that students know beforehand what to expect and so can make a well-informed decision about whether or not to choose this course.

The student is satisfied that future intakes are to be provided with better information. The Student Ombudsman closes the case.
## CASE 3

### FACILITIES/AMENITIES

Two undergraduates complain to the Student Ombudsman about the problems they encounter as students with disabilities. They experience little adaptability on the part of teaching staff, in the sense that they pay little or no heed to the students’ visual impairments in their choice of teaching methods and aids. Despite the fact that the programme was notified of these disabilities in advance, their tutors are still using visual aids. And even though the problem has been reported to their study adviser, nothing has changed.

The Student Ombudsman asks the students if they have discussed their complaint with the programme administration, in the person of the teaching co-ordinator. They have not.

The complainants also tell the Student Ombudsman that other university personnel have great difficulty finding out what services and assistance they can offer students with disabilities. They would therefore like each faculty or service to nominate a single point of contact for this group.

This complaint about the lack of single points of contact concerns general policy and therefore cannot be taken up by the Student Ombudsman. However, she does promise to pass it on to Student Disability Contact, Help and Information (Studenten Contact Hulp en Informatie bij Beperkingen, SCHIB). She also explains to the students that they can discuss their concerns with the University Student Council (Universitaire Studentenraad, USR) as their representative and advocacy body, and with individual programme committees: “Each programme has its own Programme Committee (Opleidingscommissie, OLC), on which students and tutors are represented in equal numbers. Together, they evaluate the various components making up the programme and formulate points for improvement in the coming year. The OLC also advises on the curriculum, study advice services and the Academic and Examination Regulations (Onderwijs en Examenreglement, OER).”

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**CASE 3 NO. 1458**

**RESOLUTION STRATEGY:** REPORT AND ADVICE

**DURATION:** ONE WEEK

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16 Student Charter, n.2. Art. 5:1:f.
18 “Elke opleiding heeft haar eigen Opleidingscommissie (OLC). In de OLC zitten evenveel studenten als docenten. Samen evalueren zij de verschillende vakken en formuleren ze verbeterpunten voor het komende jaar. Ook adviseert de OLC over het curriculum, de studiebegeleiding en het Onderwijs en Examenreglement (OER).”

Source: [https://vunet.login.vu.nl/services/pages/practicalinformation.aspx?cid=tcm%3a164-370723-16](https://vunet.login.vu.nl/services/pages/practicalinformation.aspx?cid=tcm%3a164-370723-16)