



University Ombudsman

2018-2019 Report

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Regulatory Framework

In compliance with the Regulations Governing the Powers and Functions of the University of Deusto Ombudsman¹, which are in line with the basic principles set out in provision 14 of the current legislation (Organic Law 6/2001), the Annual Report on the Ombudsman's activities from 1 June 2018 to 31 August 2019 is hereby presented. The date stated marks the end of the period, in accordance with the guidelines contained in article 15: "The University Ombudsman shall elaborate an annual report which will include a detailed account of the activities carried out during the previous academic year. The annual report will include information on the number and type of requests, complaints, etc. submitted, those which were not accepted for consideration and the reasons, as well as those which were accepted and the results for the procedures. The report will not contain any confidential or personal information that may identify those concerned".

This report will subsequently be disseminated among the UD staff and students, through the internal information channels, Extranet and social media sites. This document is presented to the public by posting it in the Ombudsman's Office section of the University website, where it can be consulted together with reports from previous years. At the Academic Board meeting held on 24 September 2019, a summary of this report was presented, in addition to some thoughts on the Ombudsman's role and proposals for improvement.

This report has been elaborated taking the greatest possible care to respect the community members' rights and liberties and the rules governing University life, in the strictest confidence with regard to the treatment of the persons and cases put forth, notwithstanding transparency concerning information on the actions implemented throughout the year.

¹ Approved by the Academic Board on 14 March 2013 and published in the BOUD no. 45, Tuesday, 14 May 2013.

² <http://www.deusto.es/cs/Satellite/deusto/es/universidad-deusto/aldezle-defensora-universitaria>

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Introduction

This report follows the guidelines applied to previous versions to facilitate comparison with information from other years.

In line with activities performed in previous years, the Ombudsman has focused on serving all the people who have contacted the service, requesting help or procedures during the last year. Dialogue has been used in every case as a tool to resolve conflicts, intending to reach consensus based on honesty and integrity.

We would like to express our appreciation to the University bodies and persons who have provided information and help to solve conflicts. We would also like to thank all the persons who have placed their trust in the service and contacted the Ombudsman's Office to file a complaint, claim, request consultation and intervention or to point out a problem. We would also like to express our most sincere apologies to any persons who have not felt adequately defended by the Ombudsman's actions or feel that their rights have not been recognised.

1. Previous considerations and nature of the consultations

The following types of cases have been dealt with during this academic year:

- **Complaints.** These are cases in which the person considers that an action or decision made by a University body or individual undermines their rights. Complaints of this type should be submitted to the Ombudsman's Office after having exhausted all other available channels for solution. Nevertheless, people often contact the Ombudsman's Office for orientation, help or advice although they are aware that the service only takes action as a last resort. In some cases, the complaint raised may not be appropriate for this service, in which case it is dismissed.
- **Consultations.** Persons contact the service because they require orientation, information or help concerning the following: regulations, administrative matters, etc. which are often related to requests for assistance in their work or work relationships. The procedures may involve personal matters and are submitted to the heads of University management bodies, which generally solve the problem quickly. In some cases, information alone suffices.
- **Mediation** is one of the interventions offered by the Ombudsman's Office. It is increasingly recommended to solve conflicts arising in university life, often at the express request of a community member or group. No mediation has taken place during this academic year.
- And, lastly, **ex-officio actions.** When it is found that University acts or resolutions or the action of one or more university community members infringes the rights of other members, these actions are undertaken by the

Ombudsman's Office. No ex-officio procedures have taken place this past year.

According to the type of cases, the Ombudsman does not have decision-making power and may make recommendations or suggestions or prepare reports as a result of the complaint submitted. The academic authorities or head office have the responsibility of taking appropriate action according to the case.

Accepting a request for consideration marks the beginning of the process resulting from the application submitted. **Requests may be rejected for consideration** when the requirements established by the Regulations Governing the Powers and Functions of the University Ombudsman are not met (Article 9). Unlike last year, all of the requests submitted in online form were accepted for consideration this past year. As some procedures were forwarded to different University offices, the Ombudsman's services had to wait for their resolutions on several complaints.

Finally, we would like to mention that many university members have contacted the Ombudsman's Office to discuss their problems or seek personal attention. They have been attended in all cases and the service has given them advice according to their different needs.

2. Data, analysis and description of procedures

This section contains the statistics for the matters that the service has addressed, in addition to a summary of the procedures carried out during the 2018-2019 academic year.

Complaints and queries have been solved through the usual personal procedures implemented by the Ombudsman: analysis of the situation and causes, interview with the authorities, body or services concerned, and requests for information or reports. According to the type of case, the most frequent communication channels used with the parties involved have been personal appointments with the Ombudsman, phone and often email. According to the type of case, reports were issued or recommendations were sent to the persons, services or bodies concerned in order to make reparation for damages or improve the service concerned.

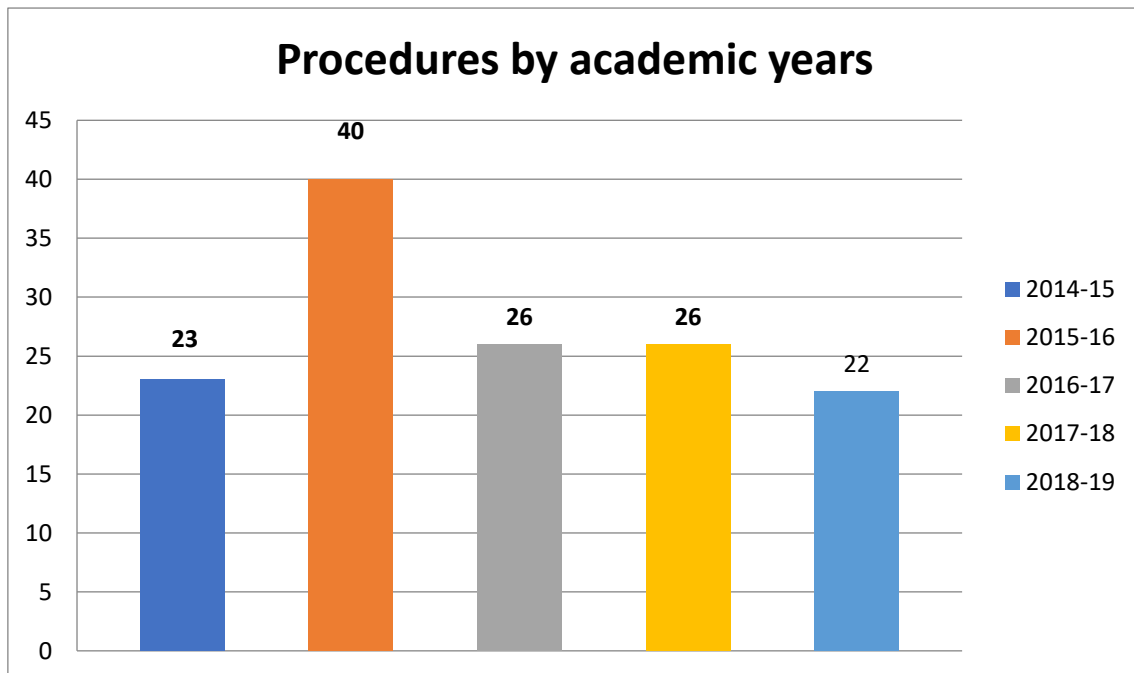
a. Issues addressed

The following section shows the graphics mentioned: development of the procedures, types of actions, by campus, by language used, distribution by groups, distribution by faculties and services, distribution by groups and sex,

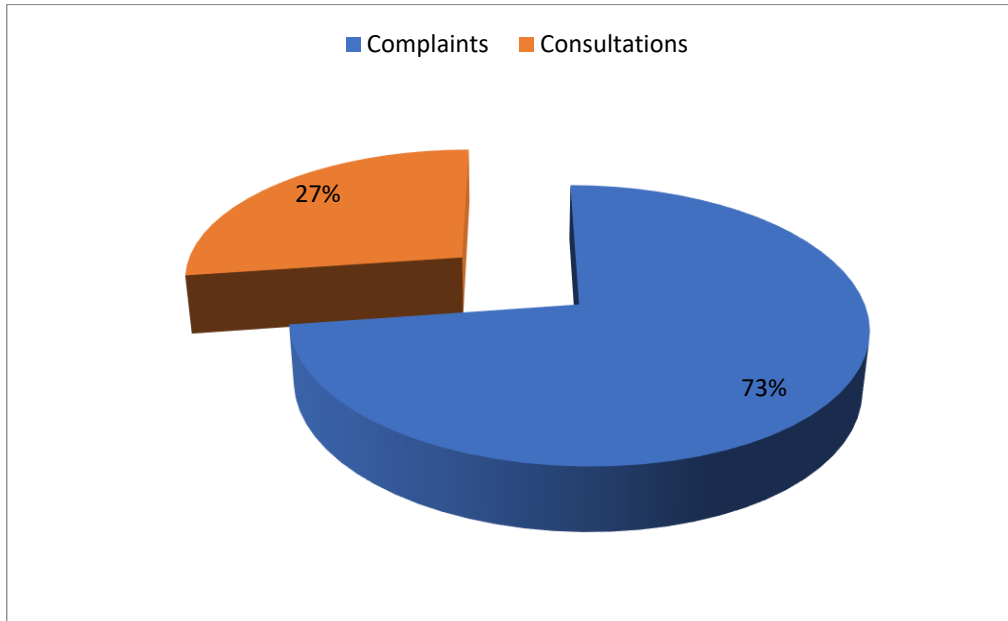
issues by faculties and groups, issues by level of studies, by resolution outcome and lastly, a table showing the procedures and a description of the reason for the request and distribution by groups.

i. Development of procedures

It appears that fewer procedures or interventions are being carried out. There were 4 more interventions in the previous academic year.



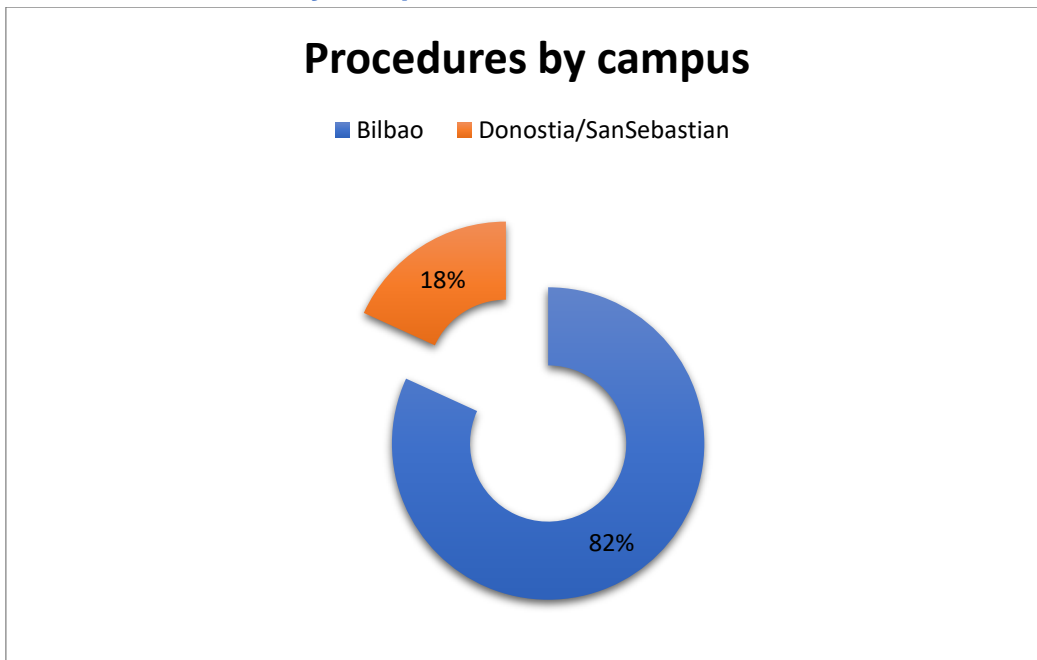
ii. Types of procedures



While the previous report “mentioned a tendency to file fewer complaints and to ask for more consultations”, we find that this tendency has reversed for the year now being reported. There have been fewer consultations and the number of complaints has not varied.

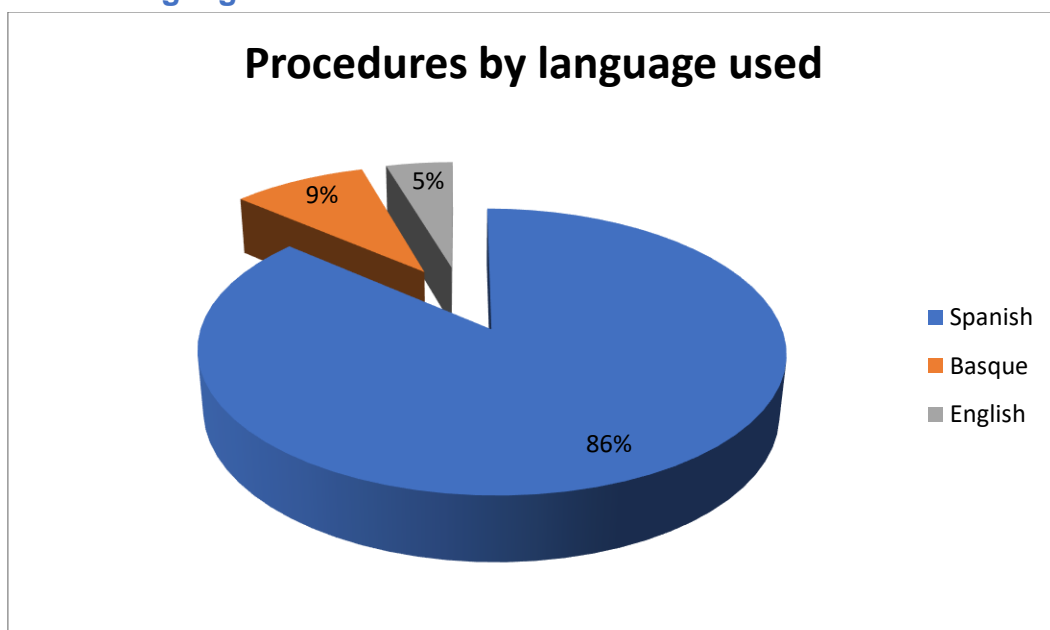
The initial channel used to process requests, etc. was the online form available on the University Ombudsman's website. Face to face and telephone interviews were also held.

iii. Distribution by campus



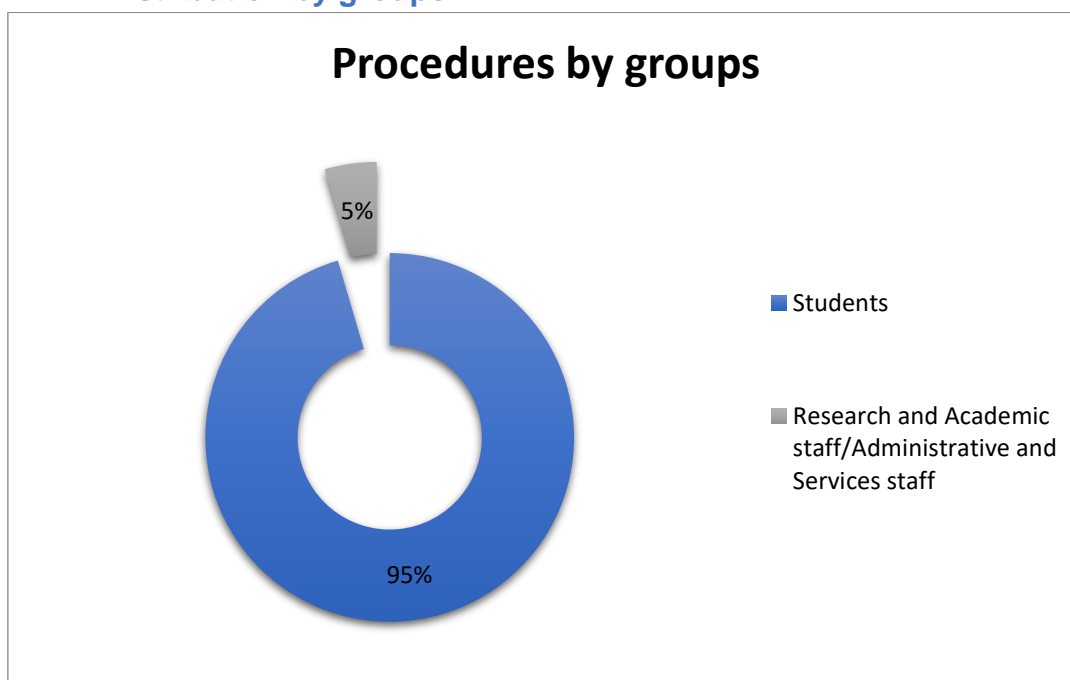
The Bilbao campus continues to register the highest number of interventions with 18 cases while in San Sebastian this figure rose from 4% to 18%.

iv. Language used



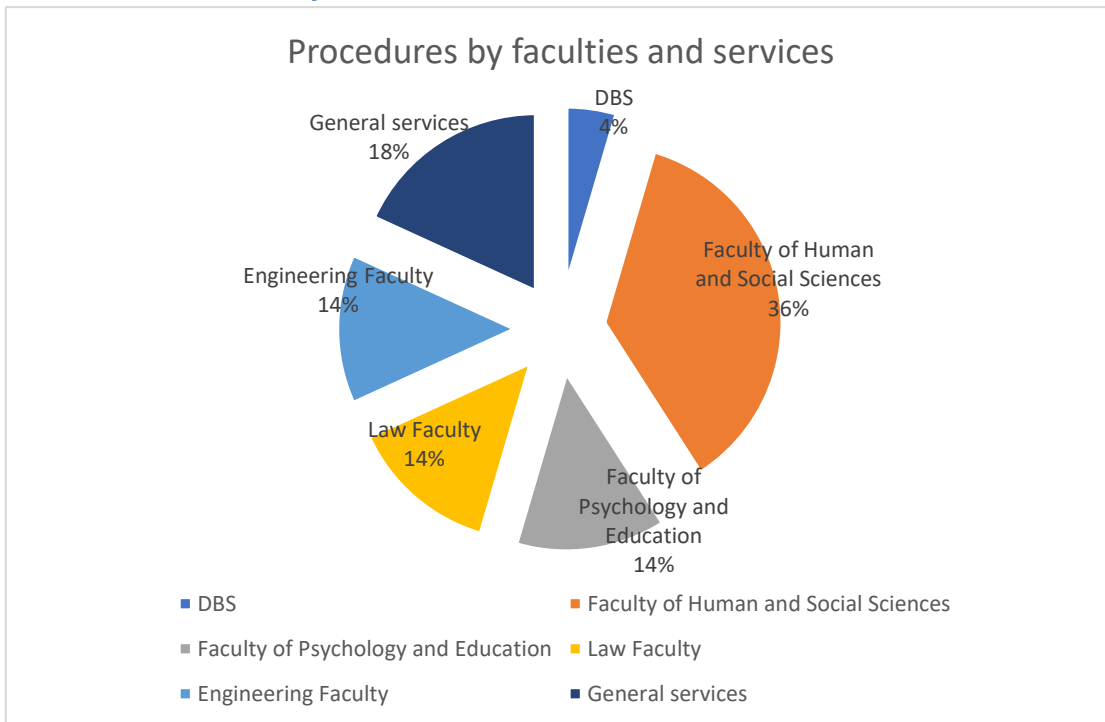
Spanish is the most used language when filing a request. This year, Basque was the second most used language with 2 cases. Finally, one case was conducted in English.

v. Distribution by groups



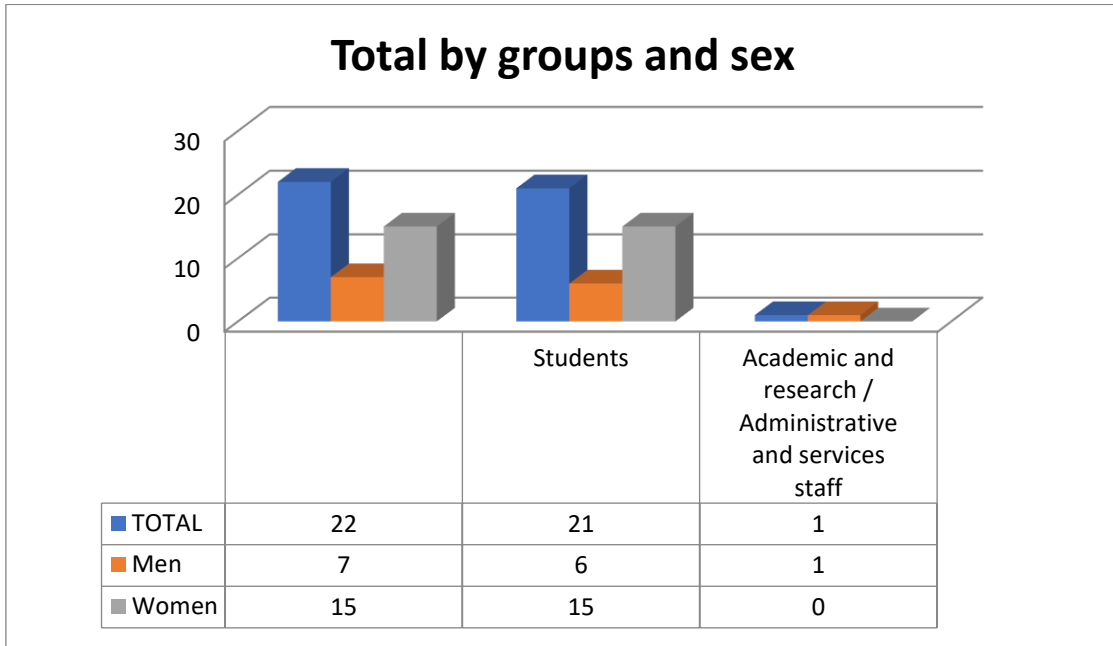
As can be clearly seen in the image, students were once again the most numerous users at the Ombudsman's Office. Except for one case, 100% of the interventions involved students during the year being reported. Of the total 21 procedures, 17 were Bachelor's degree students and 4 were postgraduates. They were followed by the Academic and Research staff (PDI) and Administrative and Services staff (PAS) with 1 consultation.

vi. Distribution by faculties and services



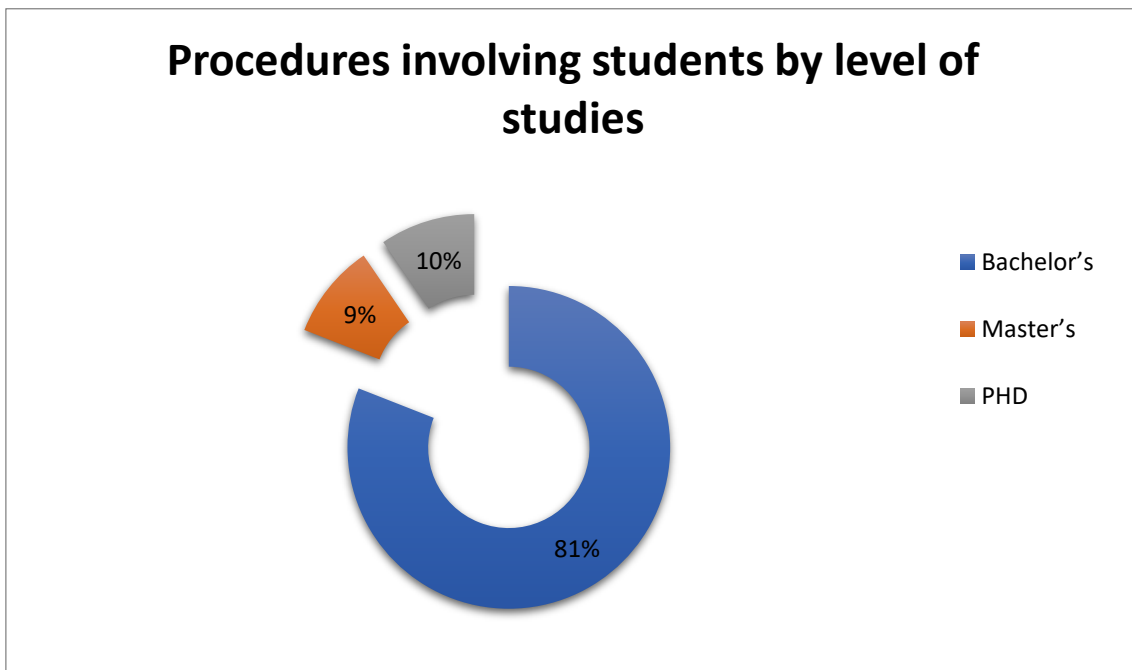
The number of issues addressed by faculties and services is as follows: Administration and Services, 4 actions; and by faculties: Social and Human Sciences, 8 cases; Psychology and Education, 3; Law, 3; Engineering, 3; and finally, Deusto Business School (DBS), 1.

vii. Distribution by groups and sex



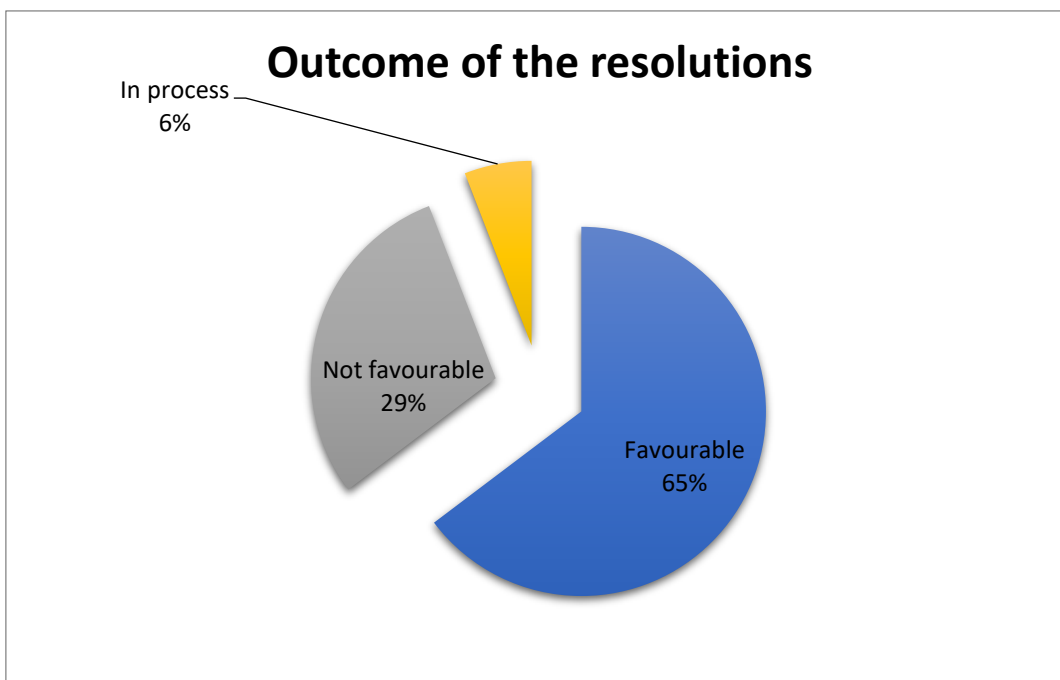
As regards groups and sex, there are differences in the requests, as can be seen in the graph. Once again, this past year there were more women than men in all the groups except for academic and research staff.

viii. Issues by level of studies



As noted in previous reports, the Bachelor's degree students with 17 procedures were the ones involved in most actions with the Ombudsman's Office. There were also 2 cases of Master's students and 2 PhD students.

ix. Outcome of the resolutions



All the consultations were addressed. 65% of the complaints received a favourable resolution, 29% were not favourable and the remaining ones were not processed for various reasons or are now being dealt with. Finally, some complaints were withdrawn by the persons who filed them.

x. Procedures by reasons for request and groups

Reason for request and action	Students	Academic and research/Administrative and services staff
Misunderstandings due to poor information on credits and enrolment	1	-
Recognition of subjects studied at foreign universities, problems with recognition and enrolment	1	-
Complaints concerning teaching and lecturers	3	-

Disagreement on assessment, revision	1	
Problems with marks and official grade records	1	
Enrolment and progress regulations	2	-
Use of library facilities	1	-
Problems with the assessment process of the Undergraduate Final Year Project	2	-
Data protection and unions	-	1
Misunderstandings between lecturers and students	1	-
Deadline changes in administrative proceedings	2	
Discriminatory treatment at University offices	1	
Master's degree credits and specific certificates	1	
Problems with thesis supervision	2	-
Problems with degrees and language requirements	1	
Problems with credits earned in Basque and C1 level	1	-
Total	21	1

b. Data evaluation

At first sight, we might think that there are not significant differences between one year and another although there seems to be a downward tendency in the number of requests. While the reasons for requests vary from year to year, I believe this is also due to the overall situation at the University at a given time.

As noted in last year's report, I would like to highlight that the University as a whole offers quite clearly defined services. Furthermore, many University activities have been set out in regulations, academic rules, action protocols, plans, AUDIT, technical committees, etc. in recent years. Such initiatives doubtlessly facilitate any University member's defence of their rights and legitimate interests before University authorities. They also help the persons and

authorities involved to focus and use the proper channels for all types of problems: academic, administrative, minor conflicts, complaints, etc.

The University Ombudsman's tasks call for the cooperation of university community members, sometimes due to the position they occupy, their duties or simply because they are involved one way or another in proceedings related to a claim or complaint. I must say that the response from practically all of the people who have been asked to cooperate has been excellent and I would like to thank them.

In the last report, I mentioned two areas at the University that could be improved. On the one hand, transparency and, on the other, sanctions for cheating. We discussed plagiarism, the correct or incorrect use of sources, copying, etc. I believe that students need help to improve in these aspects. And we also talked about sanctions. It is the people behind the rules who interpret them and create a culture of transparent fair actions. I think we must underscore the importance of establishing uniform criteria and ways of addressing problems that are very similar. I am aware of the efforts made in different areas and faculties to achieve this and I would like to highlight the innovative steps taken to help students and academic staff.

My experiences during the 2018-2019 academic year have led me to think about another two subjects that have often appeared in the complaints mentioned in this report and which are key to ensure that the University functions properly. Comments like "I didn't know, we were not aware, we weren't informed, we didn't know about this change, they told us that it was on the website, etc." are common. I believe that our university community must be well informed in good time. This means providing accurate information on everything that affects the student's learning, for both administrative and academic matters: application deadlines, credit and degree recognition, submission deadlines for works, provisional marks, assessment criteria, revision deadlines....proper information helps the entire university community and prevents misunderstandings. Furthermore, it is vital to the subject we mentioned: transparency.

The other area I would like to touch on concerns relationships; the way people are treated and listened to. Remarks like "the person who attended us was rude, the lecturer didn't even look me in the eye, they did not pay any attention to me, the tribunal members were not listening to me, etc." have also appeared in complaints. I believe that one of our signs of identity at this University must be the way we deal with people, how we interact and assist them. We need to continue working on this aspect. Also interpersonal relationships between students, which increasingly impact all types of learning. Today's teaching dynamics involve more and more group work between peers, etc. And therefore the need to ensure the quality of relationships.

3. Institutional actions

i. External activities

We attended the 22nd State Meeting of University Ombudsmen held in León on 17, 18 and 19 October. The topics shown below were debated:

- *Fear to file a complaint: possible consequences of a confidentiality breach*
- *The institutional relationship between university ombudsman's offices and university inspection services, the Spanish Ombudsman and equivalent autonomous community offices*
- *The university's public image*

The CEDU yearly assembly was held, during which the following were approved: the Executive Committee's activities, the 2018 economic report and the 2019 budget. Finally, the new Executive Committee members were chosen.

The Ombudsman held a meeting in Madrid with the Ombudsmen, Mara Araluce, University of Comillas and María del Carmen López, University of Loyola, to share experiences and align management criteria, with a view to creating a UNIJES University Ombudsmen Network. The meeting was held on 13 June. We shared our concerns and experiences in a busy day of work and realised the need to give our offices more visibility at our universities and in UNIJES.

ii. Students

Once again, through collaboration with Deusto Campus, courses were offered to students during the academic year. In the first quarter, the course on "Tools and techniques for positive conflict management: negotiation and mediation" was offered and "Bullying and cyberbullying: prevention and intervention tools" was held during the second semester. Both courses were attended by many students who expressed their satisfaction with the initiative.

iii. Others

In the 2017-2018 report, I expressed my intention to propose some changes in the Ombudsman's regulations to the University management with a view to improving our work. These changes were submitted and, after several meetings with the Vice-rector of the University Community and the Secretary General, we expect that the final text will be approved in the 2019-2020 academic year. Changes in both the form and content have been put forth. Those related to the time periods, equalisation or receiving copies of the minutes of the Board of

Directors' meetings are worthy of mention, without excluding the possibility of taking part in the management level meetings that deal with subjects referring to the university community's rights and obligations.

4. Final remarks

We must highlight the two objectives for the Ombudsman's Office that I mentioned in the last report. I referred to **visibility and trust**, with the purpose of making them drivers for improvement to achieve services which are more efficient and respectful with people's dignity. Our intention is to complement and improve the system as a whole through a specialist contribution. I aim to show that a good defence of our university community members' rights and legitimate interests directly contributes to achieving the objectives that the University, as a Jesuit institution, pursues.

I would appreciate any ideas, suggestions or thoughts on this. And also to point out that the reciprocal exercise of rights and freedoms and respect for people and the institution underpin the definition of university co-responsibility and form the common good of all who take part in it.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the people who have placed their trust in us and have contacted our office for their requests. We hope to have given the most appropriate attention to each case, even when the response was not the one expected. We have made the greatest possible efforts to find a satisfactory solution to the problems that have arisen.

In closing, we would like to recognise the respect and consideration that the University community has always shown for the Ombudsman's role.