



2024-2025 Report

Aldezlea

University
Ombudsperson

Joxin Etxezarreta Odriozola

Regulatory Framework

In compliance with the *Regulations Governing the Powers and Functions of the University of Deusto's Ombuds Office*¹, which are in line with the basic principles set out in provision 14 of the current legislation (Spanish University Organic Law -LOU 6/2001), the Annual Report on the activities carried out by the University Ombudsperson from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025 is hereby presented. This date marks the end of the period, in accordance with the guidelines contained in article 15: "The University Ombudsperson will draw up 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 complaints submitted, those which were not accepted for consideration and the reasons, as well as those which were accepted and the results of the procedures. The Report will not contain any confidential or personal information that may identify those concerned."

This Report will be disseminated to the University of Deusto community through the usual channels, such as the internal systems, Extranet and social networks. This document is made available to the general public on the Ombuds Office² section of the University's website, where it can be easily consulted together with reports from previous years. At the Academic Council session on 25 November 2025, a summary of this report and a review of the work conducted will be presented, concluding with words of gratitude to the entire university community, as the 2024–25 academic year marks the end of the Ombudsperson's tenure.

In drafting the Report, an effort has been made to ensure respect for the rights and freedoms of all members of the university community, while maintaining due confidentiality in the handling of personal data and cases presented. Likewise, the information on the actions undertaken throughout the year has been provided with the utmost transparency.

¹ Approved by the Academic Council at its meeting of 14 March 2013, published in BOUD No. 45, and amended by the Board of Directors on 20 October 2020, published in BOUD No. 77, 30 October 2020.

² https://www.deusto.es/en/home/we-are-deusto/team/university-ombudsperson?_ga=2.188145448.1074606660.1759231322-1055873836.1718189674&_gl=1*b3g3sl*_gcl_au*MTA1MTQxNDk0OC4xNzU2ODA5MDI2*_ga*MTA1NTg3Mzg5Ni4xNzE4MTg5Njc0*_ga_ZVJ1XGgKPL*czE3NTkyNDQxNjlkczIxJGcxJHQxNzU5MjQ0NjUwJGo2MCRsMCRoMA..

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Overview

The report will broadly follow the structure of reports from previous academic years, to facilitate comparison of the data with those of earlier years.

In line with the activities performed in previous years, the University Ombudsperson strived to serve all the people who approached the service to request assistance or intervention over the past academic year. Efforts were always made to solve issues through dialogue, trying to reach a consensus.

We would like to thank the University's bodies and those who contributed with their information and help in resolving issues. We would also like to thank all those who placed their trust in our service and contacted the Ombuds Office to file a complaint, lodge a claim, request consultation or report a problem and, most often, request intervention. We would also like to offer our most sincere apologies to those who did not feel adequately defended by the University Ombudsperson's proceedings, or who may feel that their rights were not adequately recognised.

1. Previous considerations and nature of the consultations

The following types of procedures were addressed last academic year:

- **Complaints.** These are cases in which the person concerned considers that an action, fact or decision made by a University body or individual undermines their rights. This kind of complaints should be submitted to the Ombuds Office after having exhausted all other available channels for resolution. Nevertheless, people often contact the Ombuds Office for guidance, help or advice to resolve a problem, although they are aware that the service only takes action once other available resolution channels have been exhausted. In some cases, the complaint lodged may not be appropriate for consideration by the Ombuds Office for several reasons, in which case it is dismissed.
- **Consultations.** Those interested contact the service because they require advice, information or help concerning the following: regulations, administrative matters, etc., which are often related to requests for assistance in their work or workplace relationships. The procedures often involve personal matters and are submitted to the heads of the University's management bodies, which will usually provide a prompt solution to their problem. In some cases, information alone suffices.
- **Mediation** is one of the interventions offered by the Ombuds Office. This is an increasingly recommended course of action for resolving conflicts

arising in university life upon specific request of a community member or a group. No mediation took place last academic year.

- And, lastly, **ex-officio actions**. These procedures are undertaken by the Ombuds Office when they detect acts or decisions of the University, or the conduct of one or more members of the university community that undermine the rights of its members. No ex-officio procedures took place in the 2024-2025 academic year.

Depending on the nature of the cases, the Ombudsperson, who does not have decision-making authority, may issue recommendations or suggestions or prepare reports as a result of the complaints submitted. It is the responsibility of the academic or management authorities to take due action where appropriate in each case.

Admitting a request for processing marks the beginning of the actions arising from the application submitted by the interested party. Requests may be **rejected for consideration** when the requirements established by the Regulations Governing the Powers and Functions of the University Ombuds Office are not met (Article 9). All complaints submitted via the web form were processed. However, as some procedures were forwarded to various levels of the University, the Ombuds Office had to wait for their resolutions on several complaints.

Finally, and beyond the regulated actions, as already noted, individuals seeking support and a listening ear also turned to the Ombuds Office last academic year. In all cases, they were attended to, assisted, and, depending on the situation, given advice.

2. Data, analysis and description of procedures

This section presents statistics on the cases handled by the service, along with a summary of the procedures carried out during the 2024–25 academic year.

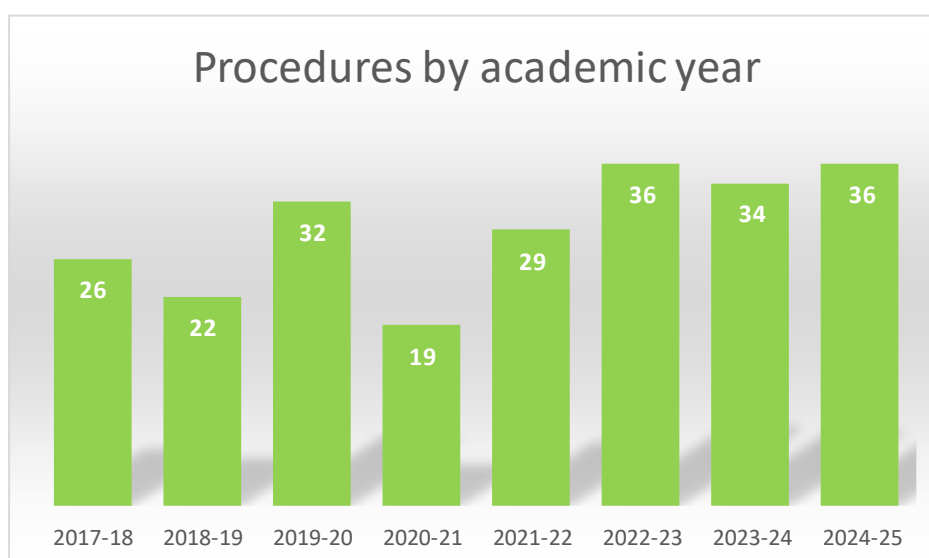
Both complaints and consultations were resolved through the customary procedures run by the Ombuds Office: analysis of the situation and causes, interviews with the authority, body or service involved, request for information or reports. According to the type of case, the most frequent communication channels used with the persons and bodies concerned were personal appointments with the Ombudsperson, or by phone and often by email. Videoconferencing was also used to address and resolve issues. Depending on the nature of the cases, reports or recommendations were issued to the individuals, services, or governing bodies involved, in order to remedy any potential harm caused or to improve the relevant service.

a. Issues addressed

Below are the charts for the following data: development of procedures, types of actions, distribution by campus, distribution by language used, distribution by sector, distribution by centre and service, distribution by group and sex, distribution by education level and outcome of the resolutions. Finally, a table showing the procedures and a description of the grounds for request and distribution by group is also included.

i. Development of procedures

In the 2024–25 academic year, 36 people contacted the Ombudsperson, two fewer than in the previous year. As for the individuals who contacted the office, it should be noted that five did so as representatives of others, either as student group representatives or on behalf of students experiencing the same issue. As shown in the chart, the number of cases has remained roughly constant.



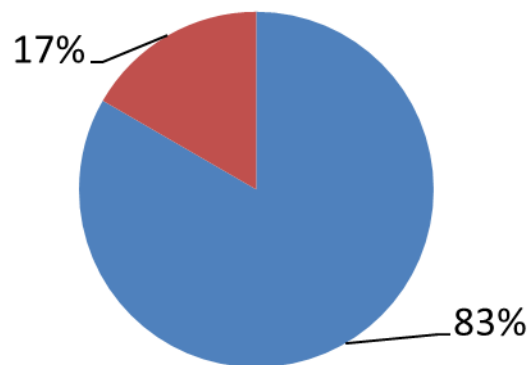
ii. Types of procedures

Regarding the types of requests, the cases in the year under review were mostly complaints, with a decrease in enquiries. It could be assumed that the university community is becoming increasingly aware of the available channels and ways to address issues before approaching the Ombuds Office.

The main channel for submitting requests was the form on the Ombuds Office website. Face-to-face and telephone interviews were also conducted.

Types of Procedures

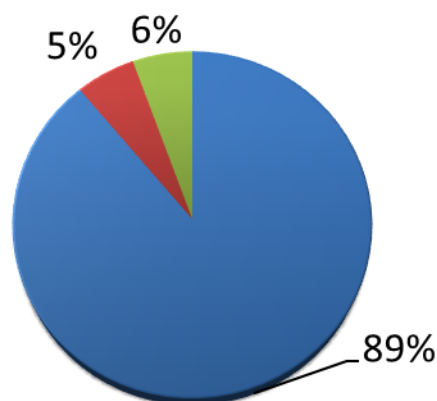
■ Complaints ■ Consultations



iii. Distribution by campus

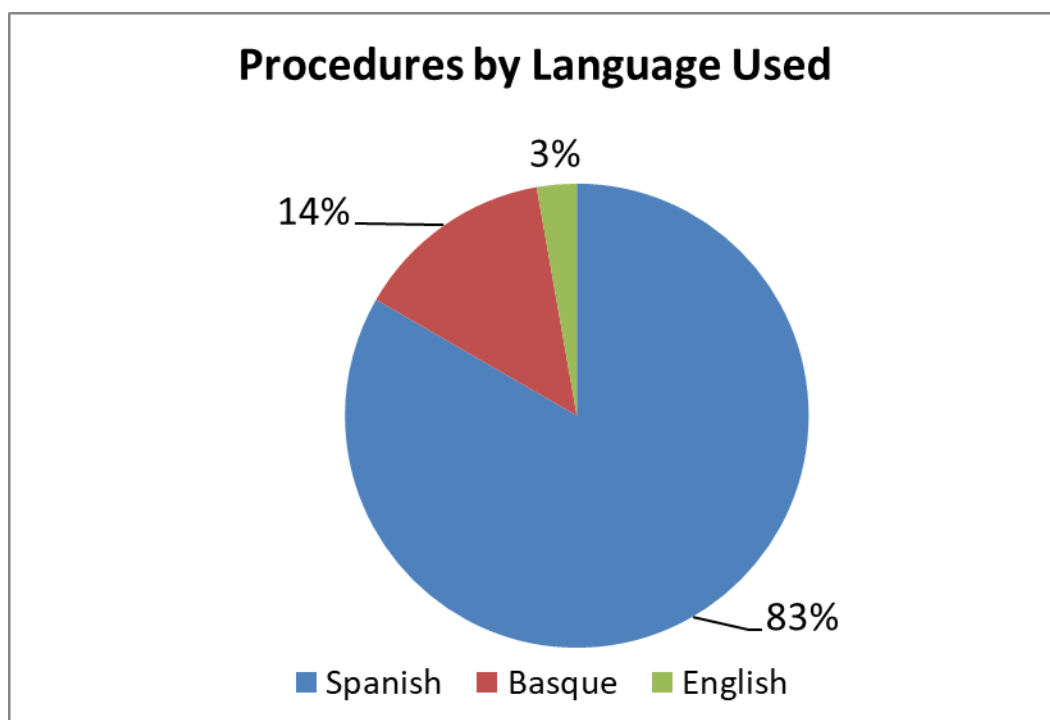
Procedures by Campus

■ Bilbao ■ San Sebastian ■ BAM



The Bilbao campus, accounting for almost nine out of ten cases, had the highest number of interventions. The number of individuals approaching the office at the San Sebastian campus fell sharply compared with the previous year, with only two cases recorded. Two individuals from the Escuela Universitaria de Magisterio Begoñako Andra Mari, an institution affiliated with the University of Deusto, contacted the office.

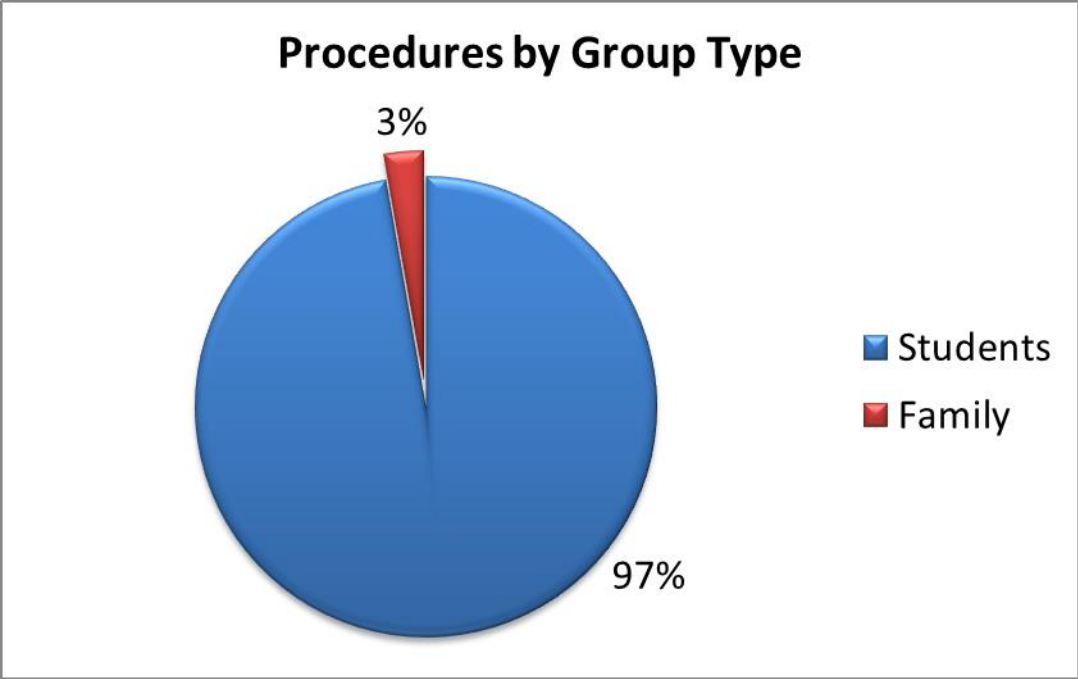
iv. Procedures by language used



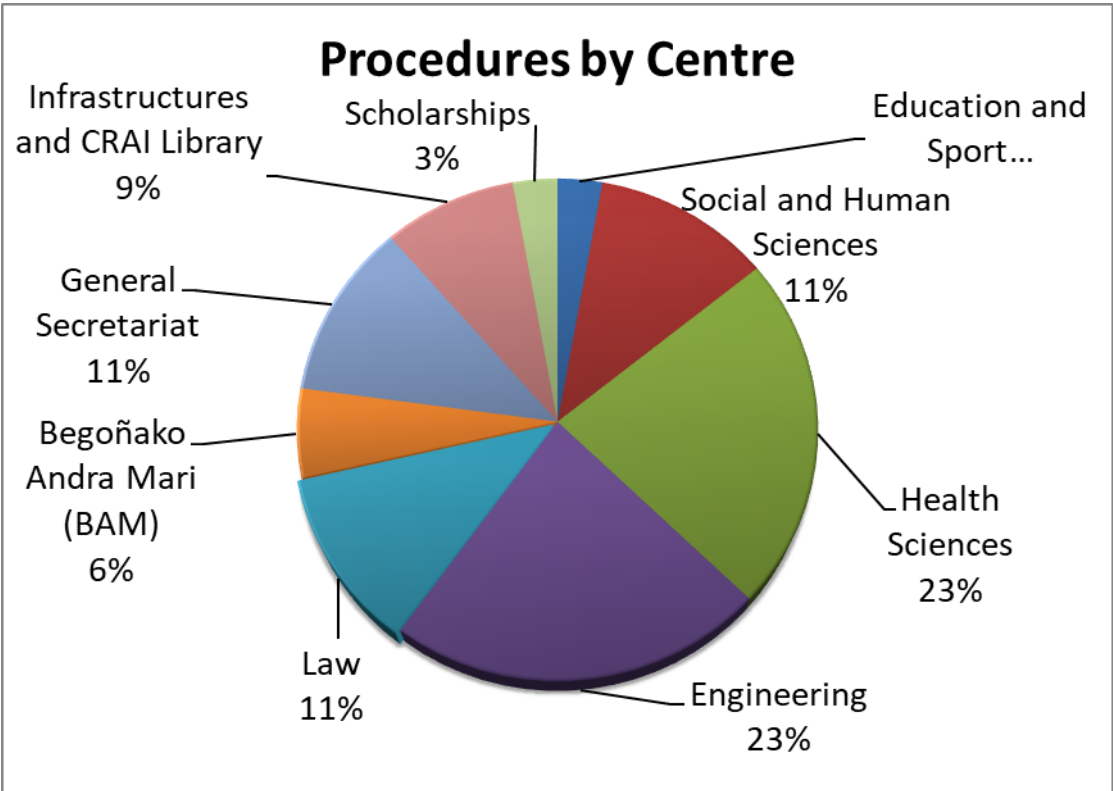
When submitting requests, Spanish continued to be the most commonly used language.

v. Distribution by sector

Once again, students were the group that most frequently made use of the Ombuds Office's services in the last academic year. On one occasion, it was the family, rather than the student, who initially approached the office. During the academic year under review, no members of the technical, administrative, or services staff, nor of the teaching and research staff, contacted the Ombuds Office.



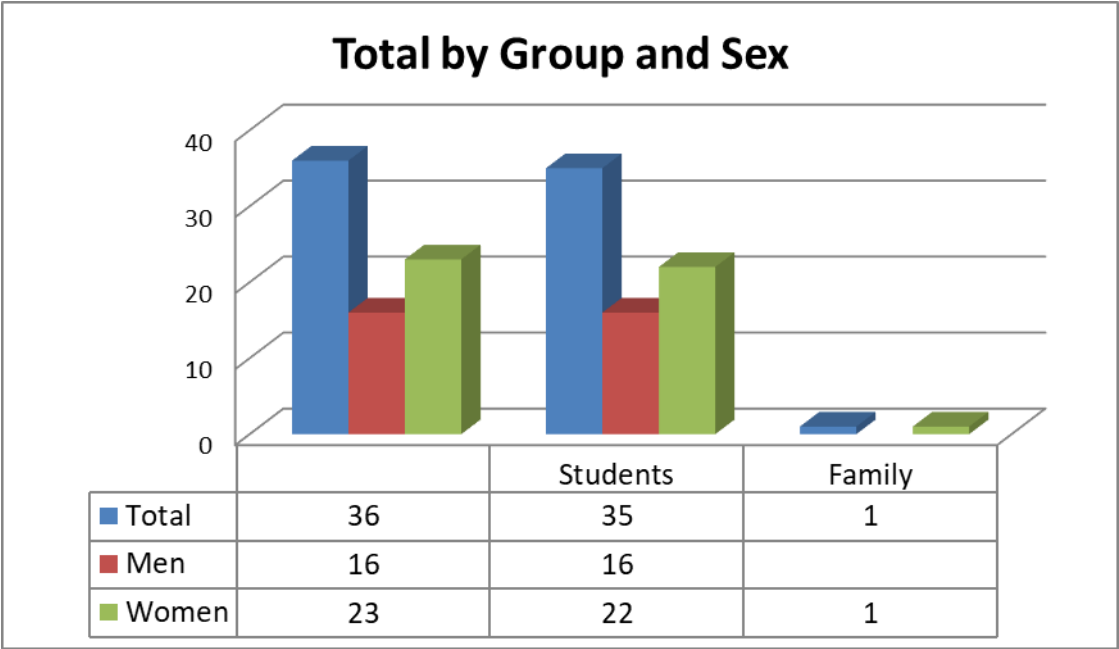
vi. Distribution by centre and service



In the 2024-25 academic year, the Faculties of Health Sciences and Engineering saw the largest proportional increase. Meanwhile, once again, no

individuals from the Faculties of Theology or DBS approached the office. As usual, among the services, the General Secretariat accounted for the majority of cases handled by the Ombuds Office.

vii. Distribution by group and sex



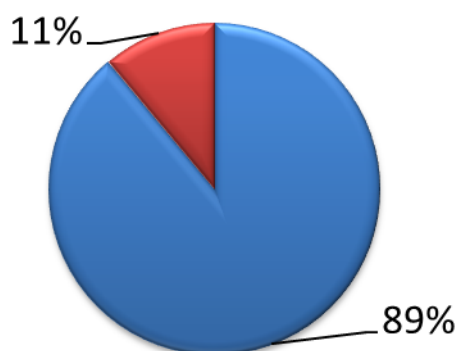
There is a 7 percentage point difference in favour of women among the individuals who approached the Ombuds Office. It is difficult to draw conclusions, as this difference is very similar to that of the previous academic year.

viii.Distribution by education level

Regarding education level, as in previous years, undergraduate students, with 31 cases, represented by far the largest group approaching the Ombuds Office, while postgraduate students accounted for 4 cases.

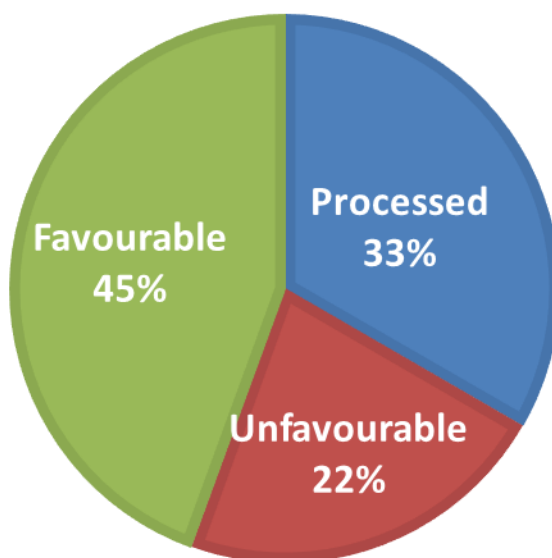
Procedures with Students by Education Level

■ Undergraduate students ■ Postgraduate students



ix. Outcome of the resolutions

OUTCOME OF THE RESOLUTIONS



Compared with the previous academic year, the percentage of resolutions in favour of those who submitted a complaint increased by 11 points. We would like to acknowledge the efforts of all those involved in the various university bodies, who work to ensure that resolutions are satisfactory for the complainant, sometimes by recognising deficiencies or errors, other times by reinterpreting academic regulations or administrative processes. Unfavourable resolutions are

generally for complaints that are difficult to uphold, as they contravene clear rules, such as those on student progression and continuance.

i. Procedures by request type

Grounds for requesting action	Students	Family
Requests related to payments, scholarships, and other matters	4	
Complaints about infrastructure and facilities	2	
Group work room in the CRAI Library	1	
Complaint about the admission process for a degree programme.	1	1
Complaint regarding the consequences of a curriculum change.	2	
Complaint regarding disagreement with assessment, interpretation of regulations, student learning guides, etc.	8	
Issues arising from regulations on academic misconduct	2	
Complaint regarding the end date of an undergraduate degree	1	
Complaint about treatment received from a service or tutor	2	
Complaint regarding timetable changes, difficulties attending classes, or requests to take a subject after the deadline.	4	
Complaint regarding an internship certificate	1	
Enquiry regarding the right to an individual assessment review	1	
Miscellaneous enquiries, such as how to submit various requests, balancing sports and studies, issues with a lecturer, and similar matters	6	
Total	35	1

b. Reflections and data assessment

Regarding the cases handled by the Ombuds Office, 36 individuals contacted the office during the 2024-25 academic year, two more than in the previous year. Over the past eight years, the number of cases has remained steady at around 34. Complaints and enquiries have shown slight variation. Following the trend of the previous academic year, four students also contacted the office on behalf of a group. One of these students represented a group that, in relation to a group exam review, requested the right to an individual review; another concerned the delay in the notification of assessment results; and there were also cases concerning changes to the timetable for practical sessions and subjects in the Medicine degree. The previous trend of family involvement in student cases has not continued. During the year under review, only one family member was involved, lodging a complaint about the undergraduate admission process after the candidate was not accepted. Neither in this academic year nor in the previous one did any members of the technical, administrative, or services staff, nor the teaching and research staff, approach the office. A previous report discussed the reasons, but it remains clear that the Ombuds Office has not yet gained sufficient trust among non-student members of the University of Deusto community to address their concerns, even though such issues certainly exist.

Continuing with the data analysis, 45% of the resolutions were in favour of those who submitted a complaint, representing a 11% increase compared with the previous academic year. It is certainly very rewarding when an intervention leads to a favourable outcome for the person who raised it. Last year, I noted the difficulties in achieving this, emphasising that some complaints conflict with clear regulations, deadlines, and other requirements. It is worth recognising the efforts of the various university bodies, from the General Secretariat to the heads of the Dean's Offices, who carefully analyse each case, take personal circumstances into account, sometimes even acknowledge errors, and strive to provide a satisfactory response to the issues raised.

Analysing the cases by type, in the 2024–25 academic year, the requests for intervention and enquiries were very diverse. Although the range of cases is more diverse than in previous years, we continue to use the three categories from earlier reports: quality of general services and administrative matters; students experiencing difficulties with academic progress and teaching–learning processes, and quality of teaching.

As in previous years, issues related to campus spaces have recurred. This year, they concerned classroom temperatures, pests, and the use of spaces for group work, as in past years. Since the pandemic, room bookings have been restricted, with no more than six people able to register in the CRAI library system, although groups are sometimes larger. Group work requires suitable spaces, both within the CRAI Library and elsewhere on campus. In the 2024-25 academic year, administrative complaints were mainly related to financial matters, ranging from requests submitted after deadlines to payment difficulties for a variety of reasons. Considering the support given and the efforts made to address these issues, it is evident that the University of Deusto shows a strong commitment in this area. We would like to thank everyone involved, together

with their respective supervisors, for their dedication and professionalism in these matters. Another significant category of complaints and claims, as in most academic years, relates to assessment and disagreements with results; at other times, they indicate a request for greater attention from teaching staff to the assessment and grading processes, adherence to deadlines, and similar matters. Our experience over the past eight academic years suggests that issues arising from disagreements with grades are, in most cases, resolved through objective evidence and well-reasoned arguments. It is also true that, with regard to assessment, students sometimes find it difficult to accept the facts, particularly when important matters are at stake—for example, continuing their studies, having to retake a subject, or delaying the completion of their degree. Finally, as in previous academic years, there were enquiries about what to do when students disagree with the assessment they have received.

The third and final section refers to complaints about the quality of teaching. It is noteworthy that, during the 2024–25 academic year, there were very few complaints concerning malpractice in teaching. Two of these related to insufficient or poor support from the tutor. We recall that, in the previous academic year, we emphasised the importance of this role in properly supporting and advising students, especially those experiencing difficulties in their learning processes, facing specific problems in a subject, or encountering issues with a particular lecturer.

Finally, regarding the process for submitting complaints and claims, it is worth noting that on more than one occasion the process was interrupted because the student did not respond to the Ombuds Office when it sought to clarify a situation. At times, it seems that students are somewhat hesitant to pursue and explore the issues raised, perhaps out of concern for unintended consequences. At other times, it could be argued that we have not succeeded in creating an environment of trust; in this regard, I acknowledge my own limitations and errors. Nonetheless, it should be emphasised that the handling of complaints and claims often marks the start of improvements in certain processes; in other words, they contribute to the quality of the service provided. Moreover, it is beneficial for an institution as large and complex as ours to address requests, complaints, suggestions, and other feedback openly and without fear, as they help us identify situations and realities that can be improved or changed.

3. Institutional actions

i. External activities

We attended the annual CEDU (State Conference of University Ombuds Offices) meeting in October 2024 at the University of Huelva. We discussed topics such as *inclusion and support for diversity in universities across teaching, research, and administration; fostering a restorative culture within the university; and the functioning of university ombuds offices: regulatory aspects,*

coordination with other units, and good practices. Presented below are two paragraphs from the previous report, extracted from the CEDU statement.

Significant progress has been made, although the role of University Ombuds Offices still needs further development, as it is unique and distinct from the responsibilities assigned to other university units. It is also important to urge university authorities to ensure, in all cases, full collaboration, as well as adequate provision of human, technical, and financial resources.

It is essential to provide University Ombudsman Offices with recognition and treatment that align with the importance of the crucial role they are entrusted with. To elaborate on this, we urge taking advantage of the upcoming reforms to university statutes, as required by the Organic Law of the University System (LOSU).

As in previous years, we held several meetings with the Ombudspersons from the universities of Unijes, Loyola Andalucía, and Ramon Llull in Catalonia, respectively, to coordinate and support each other in addressing the various challenges and difficulties faced by our respective universities. We also met with the first Ombudsperson of the University of Mondragon to support him at the start of his tenure in the office.

II. Students

As in previous years, we collaborated with Deusto Campus to organise two training courses for students on conflict resolution and on bullying and cyberbullying, which were very well received and highly rated. We met with the Student Council to raise awareness of the functions and responsibilities of the Ombudsperson within the university community.

4. Final remarks

Two final reflections before concluding. On the one hand, I am aware that, at times, the role of the Ombudsperson can be inconvenient for certain university officials, and I apologise if I have not always conveyed issues, deficiencies, or even irregularities appropriately; however, problems cannot be ignored, nor can they be overlooked. Similarly, I also apologise for not always being able to address complex situations, challenges, and issues with the rigour and depth they required. Above all, one recalls problems and conflicts that could have been handled more effectively, or at least more favourably for those raising or experiencing them.

On the other hand, I believe that the Ombuds Office can contribute more to the university community through its autonomy, its global perspective of the university, and its commitment to ensuring respect for individuals' rights and

freedoms and fostering a positive environment. As with those who approach the Ombuds Office, the key word here may also be trust: trust to consult with the Ombudsperson on certain issues, problems, or regulations before they are approved. I would like to share the following example, for which I am grateful: the Vice-Rector for Language Policy consulted the Ombudsperson on the Master Plan for Language Policy, with regard to linguistic rights, before it was approved.

In closing, I wish to express my sincere thanks to all those who have supported us in this work. Listing everyone individually would be too lengthy, so I extend my gratitude to the entire university community. We are pleased if, even in a small way, we have contributed—as I noted in my first report eight years ago—not only to enhancing the services of the Ombuds Office, but also to improving the University's activities and services, the quality of relationships, and the values upheld at Deusto. Ultimately, our efforts have helped convey something intangible yet essential—the Deusto spirit.

I would like to conclude by noting that it has now been two years since we drew attention to the devastation in Gaza, as well as that in Ukraine. I believe the entire university community has a responsibility not to forget the situation in these countries and the plight of their people. Solidarity is one of the University's core values, and it is important that we put it into practice. We must not remain silent in the face of human rights violations.

I hope these words help highlight points for reflection and ways in which university actions can be improved. Indeed, eight years have passed quickly, full of experiences. Throughout this challenging and rewarding journey, I have received much and tried to give back, though surely not enough—I apologise for any shortcomings. To my successor, the new Ombudsperson: give them the floor, grant them their place, and have trust, for their work will benefit both the institution and the community.

I conclude my tenure with satisfaction and wish to close with words of gratitude. I am thankful to all who have approached the Ombuds Office for their trust in the service; we hope that the support provided has been helpful, even in cases where the response did not meet their expectations.

I would also like to acknowledge all Deans, Vice-Deans, Directors, Heads, Secretaries, and other members of the University for their warm welcome and willingness to collaborate.

Finally, I would like to thank the entire university community for their respect and consideration towards the Ombudsperson.