THE STUDENT AMBASSADOR’S SECOND QUARTER
2018

The Student Ambassador’s quarterly newsletter keeps you updated on how the Student Ambassador and many others work to strengthen students’ legal position and develop dialogue and understanding between students and UCPH.

In this issue
...you can read about the Student Ambassador’s 2017 annual report, counselling needs in the second quarter of 2018, the Ombudsman’s new online manual on good administrative governance and The Faculty of Law’s case management system. In addition, you can find a couple of impressions from this year’s conference for student ombudsmen from Europe, the USA, Canada, South America and Australia. And you can read about what happens when you Google “sick leave University of Copenhagen”!

The 2017 annual report
During the spring, Student Ambassador Bo Gad Køhlert presented his 2017 annual report at meetings with the Academic Board on Education Strategy (KUUR), the Study Administration Coordination Committee (SAK), Administrative Management (AL), Senior Management (LT) and the University Board.

The meetings made it clear that the faculties would like to know more about the Ambassador’s insights into the individual faculty. As soon as possible, we will therefore arrange meetings with programme management and relevant employees at each faculty.

The recommendations for the 2018-2019 academic year in the annual report have so far led to the Rector asking those working with the educational area to have particular focus on:

- whether assessors’ academic evaluations in examination appeals adequately explain the assessment, and
- whether the Non-Discrimination Act is included to the relevant extent in connection with the processing of dispensation applications from students with functional impairments.

The Rector informed the University Board of this when the Student Ambassador’s annual report was discussed at a Board meeting on 12 June.
Counselling needs in Q2

In the second quarter of 2018, there were 146 enquiries to the Student Ambassador. This is just over 50% more than in the second quarter of 2017. At the same time, it represents a 20% decline on Q1 2018, which is the quarter with the highest number of enquiries since the establishment of the Student Ambassador function in 2013.

The largest enquiry categories in the second quarter were again dispensations, exams and legal complaints. The number of enquiries about disciplinary cases has increased from 8% to 11% since the first quarter of 2018. A proportion of the enquiries has come from students who have experienced long processing times in connection with cases of suspected exam cheating.

Exemption 22%
Exam 18%
Legal complaint 14%
Disciplinary proceedings 11%
Admission 8%
Sick leave 7%

Admission foreign students 7%
SU 6%
Other 4%
Postponement of thesis 1%
Credit transfer 1%

We have received 146 inquiries in the 2nd quarter of 2018
Use the Ombudsman’s public sector guide

In April, the Ombudsman published his 2017 report. Among other things, the report mentions that there are consequences to wrongfully guiding citizens. At the end of the chapter on citizen guidance, the Ombudsman also refers to overview #5 in the new online manual on good governance, also known as the ‘Myndighedsguide’. In overview #5, you can read about the most important questions government agencies and institutions receive in relation to guidance of citizens.

Based on the inquiries we received from students in 2017, we see that parts of the University’s administration should also more actively follow these sections in the official guide:

- **Sufficient case information** (the inquisitorial procedure principle, overview #8)
- **Justification** (overview #10)
- **Case processing time** (overview #11)

The guide was issued in autumn 2017 and is currently only available in Danish.

Other activities

Case management system at Law

Two years ago, the Faculty of Law set up a system in Access and Excel to register and follow the processing of students’ credit transfer applications, dispensation applications and complaints. At the end of April, the Student Ambassador visited the team lead for the Faculty’s case management team to be introduced to the system.

The Faculty management decided to develop the system primarily for two reasons. To make sure the processing time for credit transfer and dispensation applications is kept within six weeks. And to ensure that students can get continuous information about how far the Faculty has come in the processing of an application or complaint.

The system shows that the average time for an application to be processed is about three weeks. The processing time for most of the complaints falls within the timeframes specified in the Examination Order, etc. At the same time, students can always contact the Faculty’s student information, state their name and student number and on this basis find out how far the Faculty has come in the processing of their application or complaint. In addition, every two weeks, the faculty management receives an overview of case processing times, etc., as a basis for prioritising the faculty’s workload.

Currently, the Faculty is working to identify to which degree case processing tasks and statistical overviews can be transferred to the electronic document management system WorkZone.
International network and inspiration

In June, we participated in the 14th Annual Conference of the European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education (ENOHE). The Conference was held at the University of Edinburgh with participants from a wide range of European countries as well as Israel, the USA, Canada and Australia.

The many international speakers gave a varied and inspiring insight into how ombudspersons are working around the world. From Georgia we heard that all universities in the country are now in the process of establishing ombuds functions. In the first instance to safeguard students’ legal rights and in the long term as a means to strengthen democracy throughout the country’s educational sector.

At the University of Toronto, they have successfully established conflict resolution teams comprised of students. Experience shows that the specially trained students have a unique position to act as conflict mediators and problem-solvers among their peers.

In Scotland, the adoption of the “Complaints Handling Act” in 2011 has made it compulsory for all public institutions to have a complaints processing unit. Each unit must be organised according to fixed guidelines and offer citizens the same complaints procedures regardless of which organisation they want to complain about. One of the most prominent points in the Act is that enquiries must be answered within a maximum of five days if it is a simple question regarding laws or regulations, and no more than 20 days if an investigation must be initiated.

In a joint presentation, the ombudspersons from the USA, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands gave their views on how ombudspersons can contribute to improving PhD students’ conditions. The aim is to reduce the number of conflicts between PhD students and their supervisors as well as to prevent students getting “exhausted” by the process.

Student Ambassador Bo Gad Køhlert gave a presentation about differences and similarities between student ombudspersons in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. He gave the presentation together with a colleague from
Karlstad University and a colleague from Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. The aim was to inspire debate between participants about small and large differences in formal and informal working conditions.

Finally, the conference also featured a number of social events, two guided tours of the University of Edinburgh and a short but intense bagpipe concert.

All in all, the conference gave a snapshot of how important an ombudsperson can be for students’ legal rights and study conditions. It was also inspiring to see how ombuds functions are increasingly an inevitable part of the organisation at both large and small universities all over the world.

Have you Googled “sick leave University of Copenhagen” recently?
During exam periods, we get a number of calls from students who wish to report their absence at an exam due to illness. When we ask them why they are calling us to report their illness, they say “I searched and called the phone number, I found on the page”.

When we do the same – search for “sick leave University of Copenhagen” on Google– the first search result is: studenterambassadoer.ku.dk/rettigheder/sygemelding/. (Corresponding English page: https://student-ambassador.ku.dk/rights/illness/)

Until recently, the page looked like this:

![Image of a bagpipe player]

We have therefore decided to remove our phone number from the page. We have also inserted clearer information about where on KUnet students can read about where they should call in sick.