

ANNUAL REPORT



2024

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MESSAGE FROM THE OMBUD

It is with a deep sense of purpose and reflection that I present the Annual Report for the Office of the Ombud for the year 2024. This report encapsulates the work undertaken from January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024, and highlights the ongoing transformative journey we are on as a university community. It is a testament to our collective commitment to fairness, accountability, and the pursuit of a more inclusive and equitable environment at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

First and foremost, the Ombuds office warmly welcomes the university's 11th vice-chancellor, Professor Mosa Moshabela. The atmosphere during the event of his installation at Sarah Baartman Hall was filled with palpable pride, celebration, and optimism, with cheers and ululations echoing throughout the space. The air was charged with a tangible sense of hope, making it feel as if you could reach out and touch it. As we

embark on this new beginning, our office looks forward to engaging in meaningful and robust discussions, remaining genuinely curious about the possibilities that lie ahead. Let us ensure that the challenges we face, with their highs and lows, do not allow this feeling to fade into a distant memory.

The year 2024 has reinforced the importance of humanity and creativity in addressing the challenges we face as an institution. It has become increasingly clear that traditional approaches to conflict resolution are no longer sufficient in a world that demands adaptability, innovation, and a deeper understanding of systemic issues. As such, the Ombud's Office has embraced a shift towards conflict transformation—a process that goes beyond resolving disputes to addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering lasting, meaningful change.

Conflict transformation is not merely about finding solutions; it is about creating a culture where conflict is seen as an opportunity for growth, understanding, and renewal. It requires us to look at new ways of doing things, to be flexible enough to ride the waves

of change, and to embrace the future with open minds and hearts. This approach is essential for crafting resolutions that are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable for years to come.

The relevance of the Ombud's Office has become more apparent. In 2024, we continued to provide a safe space for the UCT community—a space where individuals can voice their concerns, seek assistance, and explore possibilities for resolution. As the Ombuds office, we hold this space for so many of our visitors who feel there is no way out, no other solutions, no resolution in sight. Together, we work to find that way, to peel back the layers of complexity, and to uncover the root causes of their struggles. Bringing in a multifaceted approach to creating ways through their current crisis and beyond.

This process is not easy. It requires us to unroot deeply entrenched systems and beliefs, to examine the layers of institutional policies, practices and culture—like peeling an onion—and to be ready to rebuild on a solid foundation. A new beginning does not come with all the answers, but it does come with the opportunity to approach challenges with fresh perspectives and a commitment to doing better.

In 2024, we have seen the power of this approach in action. From addressing concerns about institutional racism and power dynamics to supporting individuals navigating workplace challenges, the Ombud's Office has been a beacon of hope and a catalyst for change. We have worked tirelessly to ensure that fairness, equity, and inclusivity are not just ideals but lived realities within our university community.

Unfortunately, the case studies and recommendations in the 2024 report (including those from the prior year added to this report) can be repeated here again as highlights of what we have been dealing with. Many of the concerns

raised then are still open, and for which we have received very little to no feedback. The fact that the same categories and types of concerns continue to come through our doors lets us know that the deeper issues still persist and remain unchanged. This underscores the urgency of addressing systemic biases and entrenched power dynamics that continue to hinder progress.

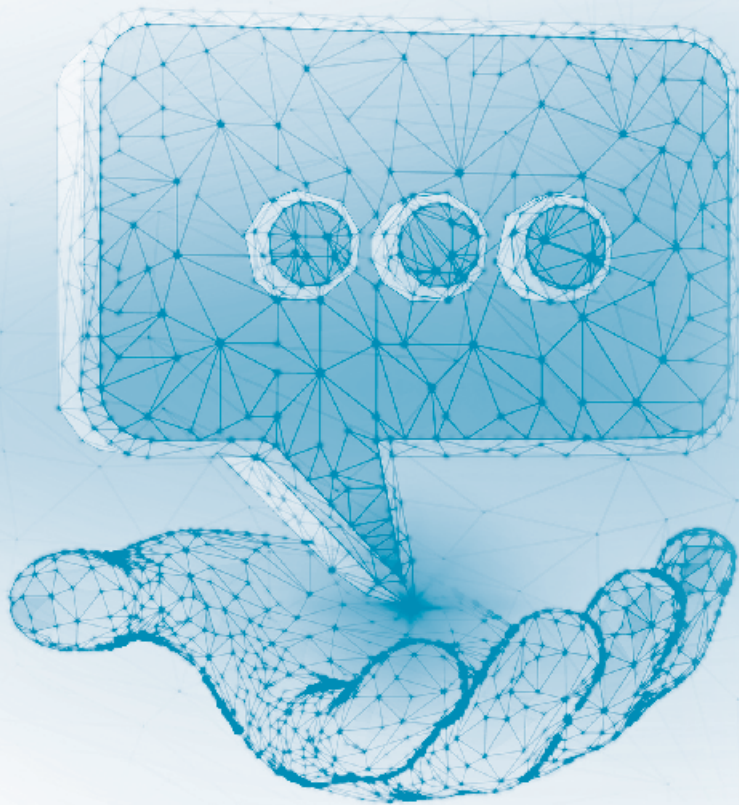
While it's not within my role to highlight the university's successes (and there are many), but rather to identify areas for improvement, I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity this position offers to enhance individual experiences within our university community. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Associate Ombud Ms. Rashieda Khan, who has been appointed for a second term in this role, and also the Office Manager Dr. Birgit Taylor, whose dedication and expertise have been instrumental in our successes this year. I also wish to acknowledge the broader UCT community for their trust and collaboration as we navigate this transformative journey together.

The Ombud's Office is more than a resource—it is a space where humanity and creativity intersect, where conflict is transformed into opportunity, and where the foundations for a brighter future are laid. As we continue to unroot and rebuild, I am confident that we are moving towards a more just, equitable, and compassionate UCT.

Respectfully submitted,



Nashira Abrahams
Ombud, University of Cape Town



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ombud's Office Annual Report for 2024 reflects a year of transformative efforts, marked by a renewed focus on conflict transformation, systemic change, and the creation of a more inclusive and equitable environment at UCT. This report highlights the Office's commitment to addressing deep-rooted challenges, fostering meaningful dialogue, and providing a safe space for the UCT community to voice concerns and seek resolution.

The year 2024 underscored the need for a shift from traditional conflict resolution to conflict transformation. This approach emphasizes addressing the root causes of conflict, fostering a culture of growth and understanding, and crafting sustainable resolutions. In the South African context, where historical inequities and systemic biases continue to shape institutional dynamics, conflict transformation is not merely a theoretical framework but a practical necessity. It requires us to move beyond surface-level solutions and engage with the complexities of power, privilege, and identity that underpin many of the challenges faced by our community. The Ombud's Office has been a critical space for individuals who feel there is no way out, no solution, or no resolution. Together, we work to peel back the layers of complexity, unroot entrenched systems, and rebuild on a solid foundation, all while remaining genuinely curious about people's lived experiences and coaching them through a process of resolution. In most cases, this involves creating psychological safety—a space where individuals feel heard, valued, and empowered to navigate their challenges. The first half of 2024 saw the Ombud's Office addressing concerns mainly related to Student protests, fee blocks, academic exclusions, registration, etc, as

well as the Fit for Study process, which became a focal point for several visitors. The third quarter of 2024 brought to light concerns around succession planning and staff appointments, highlighting systemic inefficiencies in talent retention and development once again. Several visitors approached the Office with grievances related to unsuccessful applications for key positions, despite their extensive experience and qualifications. In addition to these concerns, were many more in relation to policy application within the institution and in particular with Human Resources. This too is reflected in the 2023 Annual Report.

The final quarter of 2024 saw the Ombud's Office addressing many concerns related to the Council resolution of 22 June 2024 in relation to the Gaza conflict. Given that the matter is pending in the courts, we will provide very little details or comment except to say that, those who came to voice their concerns shared how deep this had impacted them on many levels, and again the questions around psychological safety among staff and students were raised. In addition, concerns around the false accusations of sexual assault and harassment being made, emphasizing the need for fair and transparent processes. A trend had also been identified in concerns being raised around

psychological safety and the fear of being treated badly if you came forward against your line or department. The Office also dealt with a significant number of external issues, with visitors seeking assistance for matters unrelated to UCT. These cases were referred to the appropriate external Ombudsing offices.

Analysis of visitor data from 2024 reveals significant trends and operational dynamics within the UCT community. Despite fluctuating visitor numbers, the Ombud's Office consistently provided timely and effective support, demonstrating its commitment to fairness and inclusivity. Comparisons with previous years highlight evolving concerns and changing demographics among those seeking assistance, emphasizing the Office's vital role in addressing a broad spectrum of issues. This data informs our understanding of community needs and guides future strategies for conflict transformation and support services. The graphs and tables in this report, record and describe the visits to our office during the

calendrical year of 2024. The office was contacted by 905 visitors, where these included 157 visitors for full consultations, 147 visitors seeking information only, and 601 visitors contacted via 15 presentations to various section of the university community, including induction and training. The total of visitors for consultations and information only is 304.

A significant highlight of 2024 was witnessing positive outcomes achieved through open communication and collaborative problem-solving. Numerous instances demonstrate how the Ombud's Office facilitated de-escalation of conflicts, clarification of misunderstandings, and the restoration of damaged relationships. These successes underscore the crucial role our office plays in cultivating a supportive and productive academic environment. However, a persistent challenge remains securing meaningful engagement and feedback on the reports submitted by this office. It is my sincere hope that 2025 will see improved collaboration and responsiveness in this critical area.



WHO WE ARE

The Ombuds Office offers a safe and confidential space for visitors to discuss concerns they may be facing in relation to UCT. We receive complaints, concerns or questions about alleged acts, omissions, improprieties, and/or broader systemic problems. The response of the Ombuds Office is tailored to the dynamics of the situation and the visitor's concerns.

As an independent, confidential, neutral and informal resource, The Ombuds Office hears the unfiltered voices of the university community. We are able to spot trends, listen to the narratives of our concerns and recognize patterns of concern.


We actively listen, make referrals, and mediate

disputes as an independent, informal, neutral and impartial third party. We are also entrusted to assist visitors evaluate their options, provide upward feedback, engage in informal fact finding and facilitate conversations between visitors. When a matter has not been dealt with internally, we are obliged to refer it back to the relevant department or faculty.

Frequently, the visitor is displeased about this. Nevertheless, we cannot be the entry point as it dilutes the efficacy of our service. Our office therefore supplements but does not replace internal resources available to the university community and does not accept notice served to the institution.

OUR SERVICES



A portrait of Nashira Abrahams, a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a black turtleneck, a colorful patterned shawl, and a white beaded necklace. She is standing outdoors with green foliage in the background. Her hands are clasped in front of her.

NASHIRA ABRAHAMS
University Ombud |
University of Cape Town

MEET THE TEAM

Nashira Abrahams: Agile ombud, mediator, arbitrator, negotiator Internationally Certified Executive and Life NeuroCoach Master and Multiple Brain Integration Technique (mBIT) coach with a passion for fostering humanity in organisational contexts to transform conflict into sustainable change. Incisive analytical accuracy to ignite systemic transformation, always with diplomacy and utmost regard for human dignity and the mission and values of the

institution. Creative solutions architect with an entrepreneurial, systemic mindset that skilfully links individual wellbeing to performance and organisational profitability. Genuinely curious and moved to be instrumental in diffusing disputes and conflicts with grace, deep empathy, stamina and poise.



28 June 2025

In Memoriam: Ms. Rashieda Khan

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of our beloved Associate Ombud, colleague, and friend, Ms. Rashieda Khan. Her dedication, warmth, and unwavering commitment to justice and support have left an indelible mark on all of us.

Rashieda's kindness, integrity, and spirit will

be deeply missed by everyone who had the privilege of working with her. During this difficult time, our thoughts and condolences go out to her family, friends, and all who knew her.

We hold her memory close and remain grateful for the time we shared. May her soul rest in peace.

BIRGIT TAYLOR, PHD
Ombud's Office Manager
University of Cape Town



Dr Birgit Taylor: My journey began with a BCom in General Management and Industrial Psychology from UNISA, but a deeper calling led me to pursue postgraduate studies in Biblical Studies at UCT. This passion culminated in an Honours degree, a Master's, and ultimately, a PhD in Religious Studies. My Master's dissertation, "Outrageous Women: A Comparison of Five Passages within the Canonical Gospel Passion and Empty Tomb Narratives Emphasizing the Role of Women," reflects my early interest in challenging traditional interpretations. My doctoral work, "It is Time: Theology of Time in the Book of Revelation as Reflected in the Interpretation of Scripture and the Temple Cult," further solidified my commitment to rigorous academic inquiry. Alongside my academic pursuits, I gained

valuable experience tutoring Religious Studies at UCT and working in university administration, including supporting the university Ombud. This experience, coupled with additional training in workplace mediation, naturally led me to pursue further qualifications, becoming a Certified Mediator and a Foundational Restorative Justice Practitioner at UCT in 2024. For the past several years, I've dedicated myself to the practice of Ombudsing and the administrative duties within the UCT Ombud's Office.

THE HISTORY OF THE OMBUDS IN UNIVERSITIES

Since their inception in the early 1960s, beginning in Sweden and spreading across Europe, Australia, North and South America, and eventually South Africa, ombudsman offices in universities have rapidly expanded. Emerging initially from protest movements advocating for human rights and against state brutality and later addressing concerns like anti-war efforts, these offices have played a crucial role in safeguarding students and staff against unfairness, discrimination, and poor service delivery.

Operating with impartiality, independence, confidentiality, and informality, ombudspersons navigate the complex dynamics of university settings, mediating between stakeholders with competing interests. However, tensions often arise between ombudspersons and university managements over independence, impartiality, and adequate resourcing. Key factors influencing these tensions include the nature of their mandates, appointment methods, potential role conflicts, operating arrangements, resources, and leadership capacity. Ombudspersons undertake various activities, with a focus on advising, facilitating change, and disseminating information. However, the question of how to resolve complaints remains a perennial issue, with a preference for softer approaches over adversarial adjudication. Overall, ombudspersons bear significant responsibilities in fostering a caring, respectful, and

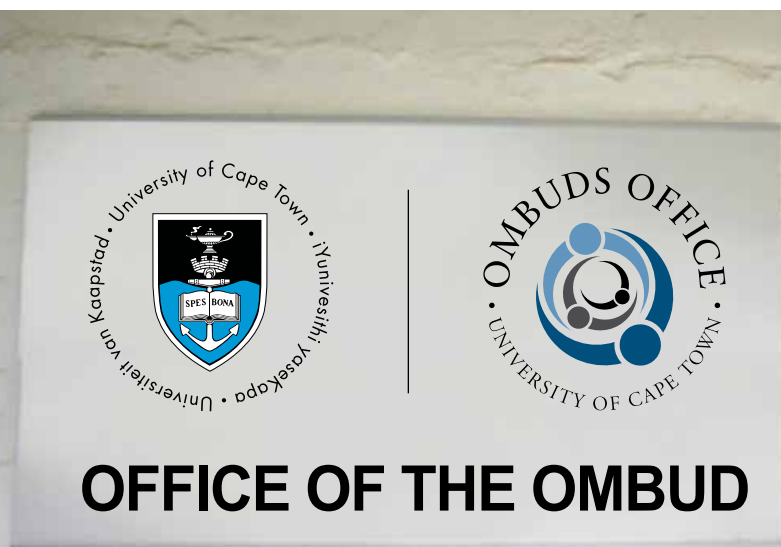
non-conflictual university environment, working alongside various institutional bodies to achieve this goal. Ombudsman offices in South African universities have emerged as essential institutions for ensuring fairness, equity, and accountability within the higher education sector. Drawing from the global tradition of ombudspersons, these offices have become integral in addressing a wide array of concerns ranging from academic disputes and discrimination to administrative grievances. The UCT Ombuds Office stands as a cornerstone in the institution dedicated to fostering fairness, transparency, and accountability within the university community. Established in 2011 to address a diverse range of concerns from students, staff, faculty, and the broader community, the UCT Ombuds Office serves as a trusted resource for conflict resolution and more so conflict transformation.

Through proactive engagement, guidance, and advocacy, the UCT Ombuds Office contributes significantly to cultivating an inclusive and supportive academic environment that upholds the values of equity, respect, and dignity.

UCT's ombud, Nashira Abrahams, explained the role of an ombud:

“ Ombuds services humanise institutions for many constituents. The existence of an ombud's office sends the message that the institution cares about its people and recognises the value of providing informal dispute resolution for members of the campus community. ”

UCT's ombud, Nashira Abrahams, explained the role of an ombud: 23 OCTOBER 2023 | STORY KAMVA SOMDYALA. PHOTO JE'NINE MAY



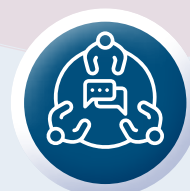
THE OMBUDS OFFICE CAN

- 01 help **ENSURE PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS** in decision-making
- 02 provide **GENERAL ADVICE** to UCT community members about their rights and responsibilities
- 03 provide **GUIDANCE** on internal procedures to follow
- 04 **REFER ENQUIRERS** and concerns to relevant university offices
- 05 **PROVIDE TRAINING** and educational tools
- 06 **RECOMMEND CHANGES** to university policies and procedures
- 07 **IDENTIFY** and address systemic issues

WHAT OMBUDS DON'T DO:

- ✗ They do **not accept formal notices** of complaints or claims filed against an organization.
- ✗ They do **not conduct formal investigations** or disciplinary hearings.
- ✗ Ombuds are **not responsible for making management decisions**, setting organizational policies, or enforcing rules.
- ✗ Ombuds **do not advocate for one party over another**, nor do they take sides in disputes.
- ✗ Ombuds **do not serve as substitutes for formal channels** of dispute resolution.
- ✗ Ombuds **do not provide legal advice**, produce official legal documents, or testify in court proceedings.

REFERENCE : FROM THE IOA



THE IOA

The Association supports organizational Ombuds worldwide working in corporations, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, government entities, and non-governmental organizations. IOA works to promote the continuous development of the organizational Ombuds profession through its Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. These foundational guidelines ensure integrity, professionalism, and ethical conduct among practitioners.

In addition to upholding these standards, IOA facilitates communication and networking among Ombuds, fosters strategic partnerships with professionals sharing similar functions, and engages with government agencies and



other organizations. Furthermore, IOA provides comprehensive support for professional growth, including professional development opportunities, networking initiatives, mentoring programs, and access to a peer-reviewed journal, a news blog, and a variety of online resources.

The association also hosts a robust and engaging annual conference, serving as a platform for collaboration, learning, and innovation within

1. Compensation, Benefits, Honours and Recognition - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.
2. Evaluative Relationships – Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in relationships (i.e. super-employee, faculty-student, colleague-colleague, student-student)
3. Peer and Colleague Relationships – Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in relationships (e.g. manager-employee, supervisor-student, faculty-student, faculty-PASS, faculty/PASS-outsourced, colleague-colleague, student-student)
4. Career Progression and Development – Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e. recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security and separation).
5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance – Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction, etc) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud or abuse.
6. Safety, Health and Physical Environment – Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about safety, health and infrastructure –related issues.
7. Services/Administrative Issues – Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.
8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related – Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.
9. Values, Ethics, and Standards – Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the fairness or organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creating or revision of policies, and/or standards.

OUR VISITORS

We refer to people that contacted our office as visitors, even though they had not “visited” our office physically but contacted us either telephonically or via email. In this regard, we were available for 24 hours a day and for seven days of each week of 2021.

The data we record in order to supply aggregate information for our report is presented in a manner which does not identify any particular visitor so that we are able to maintain their confidentiality. Without an individual visitor’s permission, we do not share any identifiable information towards assisting in a specific issue. This also means that we do not keep any official records.

When a visitor includes us in their correspondence to one or more internal university offices, we respond by explaining that we operate as office-of-last-resort, and only become involved in a concern once the relevant internal university structures and processes have been exhausted in the quest to resolve a particular concern. As mentioned above, occasionally, visitors find this process troubling. Furthermore, our approach is that we communicate with one particular person at a time being the person who has brought a matter to our office. Unfortunately, one of our visitors was particularly upset when we requested for one primary contact to be identified in order for us to attend to the matter that was brought to our office.

The numerical data presented does not fully capture the breadth of issues at UCT that may require attention, but it is my hope that interactions with the Ombud contribute to enhancing the university experience. It’s important to recognize that not everyone facing a problem will seek assistance from the Ombud; there are various other avenues available for support, and where these avenues are effective, they should be acknowledged and commended.

In my office, I often inquire about the steps visitors have taken to address their concerns before approaching us. This helps us understand

the context and whether our intervention is necessary. For instance, if the issue has already been discussed with other parties but remains unresolved, we categorize it as a “C” for consultation.

Visitors to our office seek different forms of assistance. Some bring forward matters that require informal investigation to fully comprehend, potentially involving multiple parties. These cases may lead to resolution or remain unresolved. When visitors seek clarification or information regarding the fairness of a decision or policy application, we categorize it as an “I” since we provide information without engaging in further action.

Additionally, we hold routine meetings with staff members who seek objective viewpoints on issues or provide feedback on matters in which their offices were involved. These interactions, where staff members are not responding to personal implications, are also categorized as “I” meetings.

CASE STUDIES 2024

1.

Student Protests at the University of Cape Town in 2023: A Reflection on Activism and Change

In 2023, UCT witnessed a resurgence of student activism, marked by a series of protests that highlighted a range of pressing issues within the university community. These protests were characterized by their organization, determination, and the diversity of concerns raised by students, ultimately calling for systemic change in various aspects of university life. The concerns raised with our office were not much different to those raised directly with the university and in the public domain.

UCT has a storied history of student activism, particularly during pivotal moments in South Africa's struggle against apartheid. The legacy of this activism has continued into the post-apartheid era, with students regularly mobilizing to address issues of inequality, access, and institutional reform. The protests in 2023 were a continuation of this tradition, driven by both longstanding grievances and new challenges that had emerged in recent years.

One of the primary catalysts for the protests was the ongoing struggle for affordable education. The "Fees Must Fall" movement, which began in 2015, once again reignited as students demanded that UCT take concrete steps toward eliminating tuition fees, fee blocks and addressing financial aid and student housing inadequacies. Protesters argued that the rising cost of education disproportionately affected students from disadvantaged backgrounds and perpetuated cycles of inequality.

Another significant theme was the call for the decolonization of the curriculum. Students argued that the current academic framework did

not adequately reflect the diverse histories and perspectives of South Africa. They demanded a curriculum that includes African knowledge systems and promotes inclusivity, challenging the Eurocentric focus of many academic disciplines.

Protests also centred on issues of racial and gender discrimination within the university. Students raised concerns about the lack of representation in leadership positions and the need for policies that promote equality and inclusivity. This included calls for better support systems for marginalized groups and the establishment of more equitable hiring practices.

The mental health crisis among students was another critical issue. Many students reported feeling overwhelmed by academic pressures and the emotional toll of socio-economic disparities. Protesters demanded improved mental health services and resources, emphasizing the need for a supportive environment that prioritizes student well-being.

The protests in 2023 were marked by a high level of organization and participation. Students utilized social media platforms to coordinate efforts, share information, and mobilize supporters. Demonstrations included sit-ins, marches, and public forums, where students could voice their concerns and demands.

The university administration was initially resistant, leading to clashes between protesters and security personnel. However, as the protests gained momentum and attracted broader attention,

senior leadership began to engage in dialogue with student representatives. This shift was crucial in demonstrating the power of collective action and the importance of listening to the student body. While not all demands were met immediately, the protests successfully raised awareness of critical issues facing the UCT community. The university administration committed to reviewing financial aid policies and exploring ways to enhance the curriculum to reflect diverse perspectives. Additionally, discussions around mental health resources were prioritized, leading to the development of new initiatives aimed at supporting student well-being.

The protests of 2023 underscored the importance of student activism in shaping the future of UCT. They served as a reminder that students are not

just passive recipients of education but active participants in the university's evolution.

As UCT moved forward, the lessons learned from these protests will be vital in shaping an inclusive and equitable educational environment that reflects the diverse voices of its student body. It is time for creative problem solving and doing more than managing the conflict manifested, but rather to peel away what needs to be addressed, to foster long term resolutions. The commitment to dialogue and reform demonstrated by both students and administration offers hope for a more just and equitable future at UCT.

92. These discrepancies highlight potential issues with data management and record-keeping within the administration.

2.

Difficulties Faced by Students (also Staff) Seeking Leave of Absence

During the first quarter of 2024, the Ombuds Office received inquiries from several visitors who were eager to resume their studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT) but faced obstacles in doing so. Notably, two final-year students were informed by their respective faculties that they had missed the deadline for submitting their "Fit for Study" applications, which was set for January 6, 2024. Consequently, they were advised to reapply in June 2024. Unsatisfied with this response due to making application in time from incorrect information they got online and via telephonic conversation with the fit for study department, the students sought assistance from the Ombuds Office.

The first challenge encountered by the Ombuds Office was locating the required Leave of Absence form (ACA37). An initial search on the university's intranet was unfruitful; ordinary staff members could not easily access the relevant forms. Although there were over one hundred administrative forms listed under the Administrative Forms link, the three crucial forms pertaining to Leave of Absence—ACA37 (Undergraduate Leave of Absence Application), ACA43 (Application to Return from Leave of Absence), and ACA53 (Motivation for Acceptance of a Late Submission to the Fit for Study Panel)—were missing.

When the Ombuds Office reached out to the administrative staff responsible for these forms, the response was that the faculty would assist students with the ACA37 form inquiry, directing them to obtain it on PeopleSoft. However, this information was misleading, as further investigation revealed that the forms were not on PeopleSoft, but were readily accessible through the university's website under the Student Administrative Forms link.

Upon contacting the Fit for Study division for information, the Ombuds Office was met with an unusual response: "What is the intended purpose of the request?" This query was unexpected, as the Ombuds Office typically does not face such inquiries when seeking information from university departments. According to the newly drafted Terms of Reference for the Ombuds Service, specifically stipulation 8, it is clearly stated that "[t]he Ombud may request access to information related to visitors' concerns, and such requests will be provided with reasonable promptness by the university departments."

In the course of our investigation, we obtained statistical data regarding student applications for Leave of Absence for the semesters of 2022, 2023, and the first semester of 2024. The data indicated a slight increase in applications for 2024, with 106 student applicants compared to 50 applicants in the second semester of 2023 and 104 applicants in the first semester of 2023.

However, it is important to note that the Excel documents provided by the Fit for Study administration contained several inaccuracies. For instance, the spreadsheet for the second semester of 2023 indicated 45 entries, yet there was no information for Student 40. Similarly, the first semester of 2024 listed 106 student entries, but missed numbers included 5, 22, 44, 70, 80, 81, and 92. These discrepancies highlight potential issues with data management and record-keeping within the administration.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: IMPROVING THE LEAVE OF ABSENCE PROCESS AT UCT

The challenges faced by students seeking to apply for Leave of Absence at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in early 2024 reveal deeper systemic issues that affect not only individuals but the university community as a whole. These challenges highlight the need for enhanced communication, improved access to information, and greater administrative efficiency. Below, we elaborate on these observations and present recommendations aimed at fostering a more supportive and inclusive educational environment.

1. Systemic Issues with Access to Information

The difficulties encountered by students in obtaining the necessary forms and information for Leave of Absence applications indicate significant barriers to access. When essential forms are buried within a labyrinth of administrative documents, it becomes

nearly impossible for students and staff to navigate the system effectively. This lack of accessibility can lead to confusion, frustration, and ultimately, missed opportunities.

To address these issues, the university should streamline the online access to administrative forms. Specifically:

- **Centralized Access Point:** Create a dedicated section on the university's website, prominently featuring all essential forms related to Leave of Absence applications. This section should be easily navigable and user-friendly, allowing students to find the ACA37, ACA43, and ACA53 forms without difficulty.
- **Clear Navigation Instructions:** Provide clear guidance on how to access these forms, perhaps through step-by-step tutorials or infographics that simplify the process for students and staff alike.

2. Enhancing Administrative Efficiency

The responses received from administrative staff regarding form access indicated a disconnect between departments. The claim that forms could only be obtained via PeopleSoft misled both staff and students, revealing a lack of coherent communication between the administrative units. Furthermore, delays in responses from the Fit for Study division and the absence of clinicians to address 'late' applications exemplify inefficiencies that hinder timely support for students.

To improve administrative efficiency, the university should consider the following actions:

- **Regular Training for Staff:** Implement ongoing training sessions for administrative staff to ensure they are well-informed about processes and resources available. Staff should be equipped to provide accurate information promptly and should understand the implications of their responses on students' academic journeys.
- **Streamlined Communication Channels:** Establish direct lines of communication between faculties, the Ombuds Office, and relevant administrative divisions. Regular meetings could facilitate the sharing of information and clarify processes, enabling faster resolution of inquiries and concerns.

3. Ensuring Transparency and Responsiveness

The lack of transparency in the process for applications and the unusual inquiry regarding the purpose of the Ombuds Office's request for information signal a need for greater clarity within university operations. The ambiguity surrounding the criteria for "fitness to return" and the reasons leading to involuntary leaves of absence further complicate students' understanding of their situations.

To foster a culture of transparency and responsiveness, UCT should:

- **Publish Clear Guidelines:** Develop and disseminate clear, written guidelines regarding the Leave of Absence process, including eligibility criteria, timelines, and the rationale behind decisions made by the Fit for Study panel. These guidelines should be readily available on the university website and

communicated through various channels to ensure all students are informed.

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement mechanisms for students to provide feedback on their experiences with the Leave of Absence process. This could take the form of surveys or focus groups that allow students to share their thoughts on what is working and what could be improved.

4. Improving Data Management Systems

The inaccuracies found in the statistical data provided by the Fit for Study administration—such as missing student entries—point to underlying issues with data management systems. These discrepancies not only affect record-keeping but also undermine the credibility of the information provided to both students and administrative staff.

To enhance data management and accuracy:

- **Invest in Technology:** Allocate resources to improve the data management systems used by administrative offices. Upgrading software and training staff on best practices for data entry and management can help mitigate errors and streamline processes.
- **Regular Audits:** Conduct regular audits of administrative data to identify and correct inaccuracies proactively. Ensuring that data records are up-to-date and accurate will enhance the university's ability to respond effectively to student needs.

BY ADDRESSING the systemic issues related to access to information, administrative efficiency, transparency, and data management, the University of Cape Town can create a more supportive environment for its students. Implementing these recommendations will not only enhance the experience of those seeking to apply for Leave of Absence but should be heeded by other Departments too, so as to foster a culture of inclusivity and responsiveness that benefits the entire community. In doing so, UCT can continue to uphold its commitment to providing a high-quality education while supporting the diverse needs of its students.

3.

The Importance of Universities like UCT and Higher Education Institutions Implementing Their Own Workplace Policies and Procedures

Higher education institutions such as the UCT play a critical role in shaping not only the intellectual and professional development of students, but also in modelling the kind of workplaces they envision for the broader society. As institutions that employ a diverse body of academic, administrative, technical, and support staff, universities are not merely centres of learning — they are also complex, dynamic workplaces. For these institutions to thrive, it is essential that they implement robust internal policies and procedures that reflect their values, promote equity, and support the well-being of their communities.

UCT has long held a reputation as one of Africa's premier institutions of higher learning — a place of intellectual rigor, social leadership, and progressive values. Yet, like many complex institutions, UCT faces a growing disconnect between the policies it has on paper and the realities experienced by those who live and work within its ecosystem. While the university has developed a wide array of internal policies intended to promote fairness, inclusivity, and accountability, the consistent and effective application of these policies remains an ongoing challenge.

This gap between policy and practice not only undermines trust in the institution but also erodes the very values UCT seeks to uphold. Without deliberate action, the university risks losing credibility among students, staff, and the broader public. Despite the existence of robust policies on issues such as staff conduct, grievance procedures, mental health support, equity and transformation, psychological safety, and innovation support,

implementation has often been inconsistent and uneven. Some of the key concerns lodged with our office include:

- **Delayed or Inadequate Response to Grievances:** Staff and students have reported that formal complaints — whether related to harassment, unfair treatment, or administrative inefficiencies — often go unresolved or are handled in ways that lack transparency and accountability. The timeframes around some of these grievances are as long as 15 months, to even receive an acknowledgement.
- **Uneven Application Across Faculties and Departments:** While policies are centrally developed, their application can vary drastically across faculties and units, depending on leadership capacity, internal politics, or resource availability.
- **Lack of Communication and Awareness:** Many employees, particularly administrative and support staff, report limited awareness of available policies or feel unsure about how to navigate internal processes. This leads to underutilization of support systems and internal mechanisms for redress.
- **Fear of Retaliation or Reprisal:** Even where policies exist to protect whistleblowers or encourage feedback, there remains a pervasive fear that speaking out could result in subtle exclusion, reputational damage, or career stagnation — effectively silencing those most in need of support.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

To restore alignment between policy and practice, UCT needs to undertake a strategic, university-wide effort to close the implementation gap. Below are several actionable recommendations:

1. Policies should be clearly communicated to all members of the UCT community, not just posted on a website. This could include:

- Regular policy orientation sessions for new and existing staff
- Translations into accessible, plain language
- Departmental workshops to localize and contextualize policy implementation

2. Build Capacity for Effective Implementation

- Training line managers and department heads on fair application and enforcement of policies
- Dedicated implementation support teams within HR and faculty administration to guide processes and ensure consistency
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track how policies are being applied across the institution

3. Improve Accountability Structures

- Define clear consequences for non-compliance, especially for those in leadership positions
- Request reports on policy implementation, including successes, challenges, and follow-up actions
- Establish an independent internal review body that can audit and report on policy adherence without interference

4. Co-create Policy Improvements with Stakeholders

- Rather than a top-down approach, policy implementation strategies should be co-developed with the people they impact most.

- Engaging academic, admin, and support staff in policy refinement
- Hosting regular feedback loops and listening sessions
- Including student and staff unions in implementation oversight

Conclusion:

FROM PAPER TO PRACTICE

UCT has no shortage of policy frameworks or institutional commitments — what it urgently needs is a renewed commitment to turning those commitments into lived realities. The credibility, functionality, and transformation of the institution depend not only on what is written in policy documents, but on what is experienced in lecture halls, offices, and meeting rooms. A university that fails to apply its own policies risks becoming symbolic rather than substantive. But a university that takes policy implementation seriously becomes a powerful model for the equitable, inclusive, and forward-thinking society it aims to help build.

4.

Addressing Succession Planning Challenges at the UCT

This report highlights the concerns of visitors who approached the Ombud's Office for assistance, focusing specifically on issues related to appointments and succession planning. Succession planning is vital for any organization, as it fosters the ongoing development of employees and ensures that key positions remain filled by competent individuals. Effective succession planning helps identify, assess, and develop the skills and capabilities of staff members to meet both current and future institutional needs. By cultivating a pipeline of talent, the institution can enhance their operational stability and foster a culture of growth and advancement among staff.

Two notable cases illustrate the challenges faced by UCT in its succession planning efforts:

- One visitor, who has dedicated 16 years to the university since 2014, applied for a middle management position when it was formally advertised. Despite receiving numerous "exceeds expectations" awards while acting in the role, the selection committee deemed the applicant unsuitable for the position. This unexpected rejection left the visitor feeling puzzled and disheartened, especially given their extensive experience and proven track record.
- Another individual, an external candidate, applied for a senior management position, was shortlisted, and participated in the interview process. After receiving communication that their application was unsuccessful, it became evident that none of the shortlisted candidates were selected. This marked the second attempt

to fill the post, which has now been advertised twice in the last two years. Presently, a staff member is acting in this role, yet it remains unclear how long they will continue to do so.

It is difficult to understand why the current acting staff member could not be appointed permanently, especially when they have already been fulfilling the responsibilities associated with the position. This situation poses serious challenges for the university in terms of retaining talent and ensuring continuous development of its staff. Despite the challenges, UCT offers a range of skills training and professional development opportunities aimed at enhancing employee competencies. The university's Staff Learning and Development Funding policy supports various formal and non-formal training courses, addressing job-related, developmental, and personal learning needs.

Key Training Programs Include:

- **Management and Leadership Skills Training:** Courses such as the Creating the Executive Edge (CEE) Programme and the First Line Management Programme are designed to develop essential leadership skills.
- **Mentoring Training:** The Introduction to Mentoring course equips staff with the skills needed to support and guide others effectively.

These training initiatives reflect UCT's commitment to staff development; however, the practical implementation of these programs requires improvement.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Formalize Development Dialogue:** It is crucial to make the performance and development discussions between line managers and staff more structured and documented. Establishing a formal process will help identify gaps in skills and knowledge more effectively. Staff members reported these dialogues as tick box exercises with little to no engagement on their own development.
- **Enhance Mentorship Options:** Providing staff with a list of available mentors while ensuring that the chosen mentor's details remain confidential from line managers can mitigate potential biases and foster a more supportive mentoring environment.
- **Explore Coaching as an Option:** The current staff learning and development resource guide does not mention coaching as a developmental tool. Offering coaching alongside mentoring can cater to different preferences among staff, as some may find coaching more beneficial for their professional growth.
- **Line Managers as Coaches:** Encouraging line managers to take on coaching roles can leverage their insights into staff performance and help identify areas for development.

WHILE UCT demonstrates a fundamental investment in its staff's learning and development, the practical execution of succession planning remains insufficient. The university must prioritize understanding its needs as an academic institution and develop its employees' capacities to ensure continuity and stability.

By addressing these challenges and implementing the suggested strategies, UCT can enhance its succession planning efforts, fostering a more supportive and growth-oriented environment for all staff members.

5. False Accusations of Sexual Assault

In early 2024, a university student became the subject of a formal complaint submitted to the institution's Office for Inclusivity and Change (OIC), alleging sexual misconduct. Although the complaint was eventually withdrawn in August 2024, with the reason provided as 'false accusation' the extended duration of the process — spanning nearly six months — caused significant distress for the falsely accused student involved. This case raises important questions about due process, policy implementation, procedural fairness, and the institutional handling of sensitive complaints within higher education settings.

- **September to October 2024:** Correspondence with senior leadership failed to adequately address concerns. Repeated requests for clarification on procedural and jurisdictional issues — particularly regarding the formal adoption and legal status of the university's Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment Policy — went unanswered. This further exacerbated concerns about institutional accountability and transparency.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- **March 2024:** A complaint was lodged against the student with the OIC. Despite the eventual withdrawal of the allegation, the protracted investigation period had profound effects on the student's academic progress and mental health.
- **August 2024:** The complaint was formally withdrawn, concluding the case. While the outcome affirmed the student's innocence, the emotional and academic damage had already taken its toll.
- **Late August 2024:** Concerns regarding the handling of the case were raised with a senior university administrator. These concerns were referred to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor overseeing the OIC, prompting a formal response from university leadership.



OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The extended duration of the case, coupled with a lack of clear communication, created unnecessary stress and uncertainty. The delay in resolving the matter contributed directly to the student's academic and emotional decline. There was evidence that the OIC did not adhere to its own stated procedures. Concerns were raised about the lack of a preliminary investigation, failure to consider exculpatory evidence early in the process, and a general lack of discretion and procedural diligence. Repeated attempts to seek clarification and records from university leadership and the OIC were either ignored or met with vague responses. This pattern of non-responsiveness highlighted a broader issue of institutional opacity and avoidance of critical scrutiny.

The consequences of this institutional failure were significant. The student, previously a high-performing academic achiever, had to drop two courses due to stress and emotional fatigue — a clear indicator of the psychological harm caused by mishandled procedures.

To prevent similar incidents and restore confidence in the university's complaint-handling processes, the following actions are recommended:

- The university should urgently review and, if necessary, formally ratify all policies related to sexual misconduct, ensuring compliance with institutional governance requirements. These policies must be clearly recognized as Institutional Rules with proper oversight.
- **A clear, fair, and transparent investigation protocol must be implemented, including:**
 - Mandatory preliminary assessments before formal escalation.
 - Protections for those accused, including timelines and procedural clarity.
 - Mechanisms to ensure critical information and evidence are considered at all stages.
 - Capacity Building and Ethics Training: Staff in key offices, particularly the OIC, should receive enhanced training in procedural fairness, due diligence, trauma-informed practice, and impartial case handling.

- Institutions must develop mechanisms for timely and transparent communication with all parties involved in complaints. This includes acknowledgment of correspondence, provision of updates, and formal avenues for appeals or clarifications.
- Just as complainants are entitled to support, those who are falsely accused must have access to mental health support services, academic assistance, and reintegration resources once cleared of wrongdoing.

THIS CASE underscores the importance of not only having robust institutional policies in place but ensuring that those policies are applied ethically, diligently, and transparently. The mishandling of such a sensitive matter not only caused individual harm but also highlighted systemic weaknesses in policy implementation and accountability structures. To uphold its commitment to inclusivity, justice, and procedural fairness, the university must confront these failures head-on. A comprehensive review and institutional renewal are not only necessary but urgent — to protect both the integrity of the institution and the wellbeing of its community members.

6. Challenges of Psychological Safety at the University of Cape Town in 2023

In 2023, the Ombuds office saw a surge of concerns regarding psychological safety among both staff and students. Psychological safety refers to an environment where individuals feel secure enough to express their thoughts, ideas, and concerns without fear of negative consequences. However, many visitors reported feelings of anxiety, apprehension, and a lack of support, highlighting the need for urgent attention to this critical aspect of the university experience.

Some students reported experiencing psychological unsafety in classroom settings, primarily due to fear of judgment or ridicule. In classes where open discussion is encouraged, some students felt hesitant to share their perspectives, especially on sensitive topics like race, gender, or socio-economic status. In a sociology course discussing systemic inequality, several students expressed that they were afraid to voice their opinions. They worried that their views would be criticized by peers or staff or misinterpreted, which stifled meaningful dialogue. This reluctance led to a lack of engagement and diminished the richness of classroom discussions.

Group projects, a staple of many university courses, was shared as a source of significant stress. Students reported feeling uncomfortable sharing ideas or taking risks in group settings. This discomfort

stemmed from a fear of being dismissed by peers or facing negative feedback. A group of students working on a marketing project hesitated to propose creative ideas, fearing that their suggestions would be rejected or mocked. This lack of psychological safety resulted in a mediocre project outcome, as the group settled for conventional approaches instead of exploring innovative solutions.

The pressures of academic life at UCT, combined with external socio-political issues, contributed to a rise in mental health challenges among students and staff. Many reported feeling overwhelmed and anxious but were reluctant to seek help due to perceived stigma or concerns about being judged. A student struggling with anxiety related to academic workload avoided utilizing mental health services, fearing that seeking help would be seen as a weakness or would impact their academic standing. This reluctance to reach out for support exacerbated their mental health issues, leading to a decline in academic performance.

Faculty members at UCT also faced challenges related to psychological safety. Many expressed feelings of stress and uncertainty about their roles, which impacted their teaching effectiveness and interactions with students. Some faculty members reported feeling apprehensive about addressing



controversial topics in their courses or providing critical feedback to students. This fear stemmed from concerns about backlash from students or administrative repercussions. A lecturer who wanted to discuss the implications of recent protests on campus hesitated to do so, fearing that students might react negatively or report them to administration. This reluctance limited the scope of important discussions, leaving students without the opportunity to engage critically with relevant issues.

Limited Support for Innovation: Faculty members often felt unsupported when attempting to innovate their teaching methods. The lack of a psychologically safe environment led many to stick to traditional teaching practices, stifling creativity and engagement. A professor who wanted to implement a new, interactive teaching style found themselves facing resistance from students who were accustomed to more conventional lectures. The fear of disrupting the status quo deterred the professor from pursuing innovative approaches that could enhance learning experiences.

PASS members also encountered barriers to psychological safety in their work environment. Many reported feeling undervalued or excluded from important institutional decisions, which contributed to a sense of disempowerment. Staff members often hesitated to voice concerns or suggest improvements due to fear of being dismissed or labelled as disruptive. For instance, an administrative officer who identified inefficiencies in a student registration process chose not to speak up, worried that raising the issue would be seen as overstepping boundaries or questioning leadership decisions. Another voiced concerns about not wanting to come forward out of fear of losing their job. This fear of negative repercussions discouraged proactive problem-solving and innovation, ultimately affecting service delivery and operational efficiency. Additionally, the lack of open communication channels and limited recognition of administrative contributions created an environment where staff felt isolated and disengaged, further diminishing morale and collaboration across departments.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Several systemic issues at UCT contributed to the lack of psychological safety experienced by both students and staff:

- **Communication Gaps:** Ineffective communication between departments and the administration often left students and staff feeling unsupported. When individuals sought assistance or clarification, they were met with unclear or unhelpful responses, leading to frustration and confusion.
- **Insufficient Mental Health Resources:** Despite the increasing demand for mental health support, many students reported that resources were limited and difficult to access. Long wait times and inadequate staffing in counselling services created barriers for those seeking help.
- **Cultural Resistance to Vulnerability:** The prevailing culture at UCT, influenced by societal norms, often discourages vulnerability. Many individuals felt that expressing struggles or seeking help would be perceived as a weakness, leading to a culture of silence surrounding mental health and well-being.

THE CHALLENGES of psychological safety highlight the urgent need for systemic changes to foster a supportive and inclusive environment. Both students and staff must feel secure in their ability to express themselves and seek help without fear of judgment or repercussion. By addressing communication gaps, improving access to mental health resources, and fostering a culture that values vulnerability, UCT can create a more psychologically safe environment that benefits the entire university community. This transformation is essential not only for individual well-being but also for the overall academic success and vibrancy of UCT as an institution.

LOOKING AHEAD



This annual report, while presenting observations and recommendations specific to 2024, significantly benefits from incorporating insights from previous years (2019-2023). This broader perspective provides crucial context for understanding the current state of affairs and reveals enduring trends and patterns of concern within our organization. These reports serve as a historical record, documenting not only the immediate challenges of each year but also the evolution—or lack thereof—of systemic issues. By showcasing the recurrence of certain issues across multiple annual reports, we underscore their persistent significance and the urgent need for proactive and sustained measures to address them. The repetition itself highlights a critical need for reflection: what strategies have been employed? What has worked, and what has not? This reflective process is essential for learning and growth.

Furthermore, the inclusion of this historical data signals our commitment to transparency and accountability. It demonstrates that we are not simply reacting to

immediate crises, but actively engaging in a long-term process of understanding and improving our organizational culture. Acknowledging the continuity of these issues is a crucial step towards fostering a culture of continuous improvement, where challenges are not ignored but addressed with sustained effort and a willingness to adapt strategies as needed.

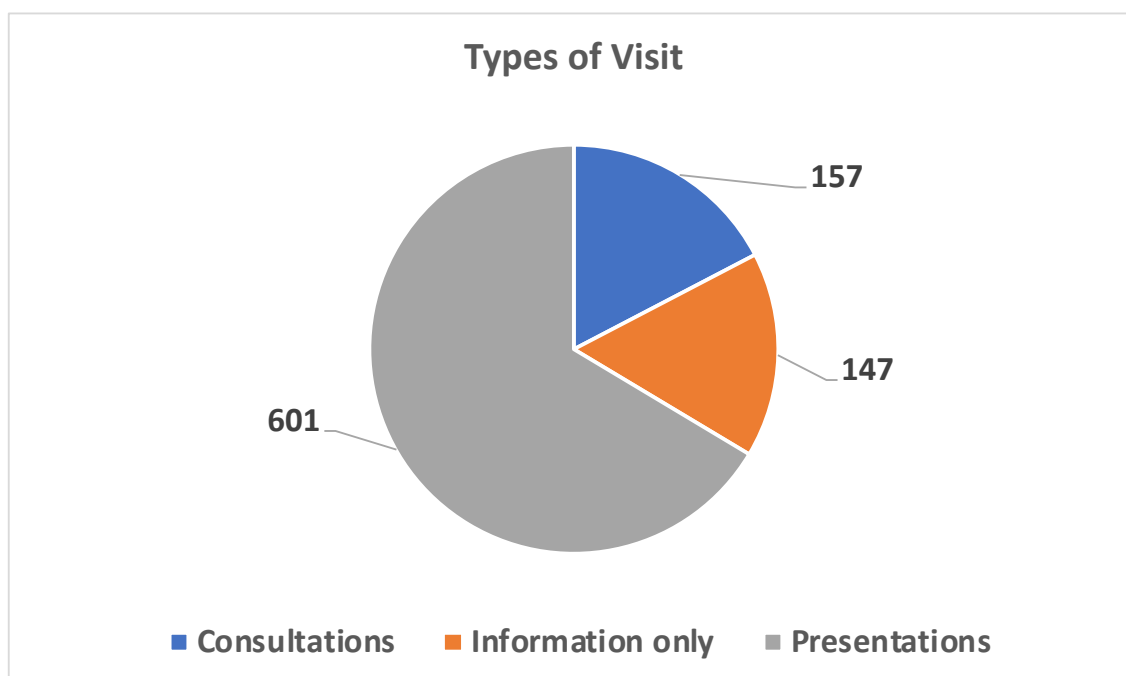
However, the value of this reflective process and the insights gained from these reports are significantly diminished without meaningful engagement and feedback. A persistent challenge remains securing this crucial responsiveness. The lack of substantive feedback hinders our ability to refine our strategies, implement effective solutions, and ultimately, build a more just and equitable environment. It is my sincere hope that 2025 will see improved collaboration and a more robust feedback loop, ensuring that the insights documented in these reports translate into tangible and lasting positive change.

STATISTICS FOR ANNUAL REPORT 2024

ANNEXURE A

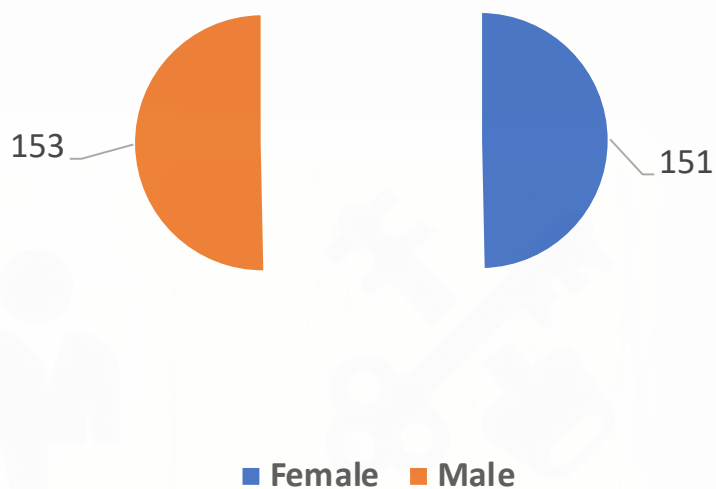
1 January 2024 – 31 December 2024

The graphs and tables below record and describe the visits to our office during the calendrical year of 2024. The office was contacted by 905 visitors, where these included 157 visitors for full consultations, 147 visitors seeking information only, and 601 visitors contacted via 15 presentations. The total of visitors for consultations and information only is 304.

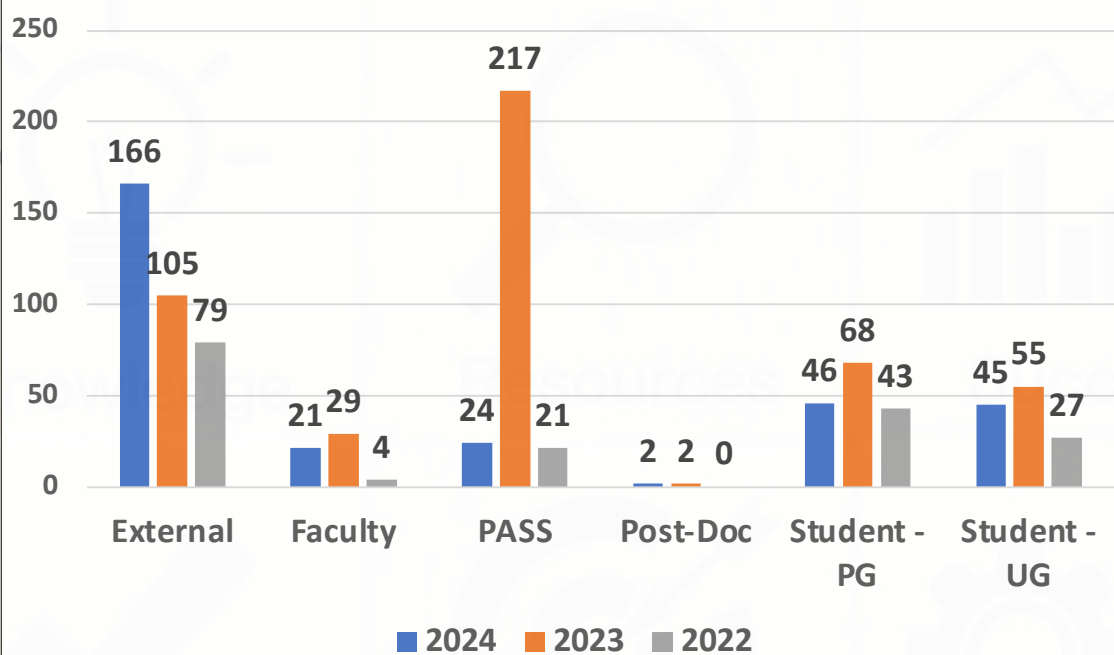


The following graphs and tables will show various breakdowns of the visitors who sought either information or consultations, thus the visitors contacted via presentations will be excluded.

Gender Breakdown



UCT Constituency



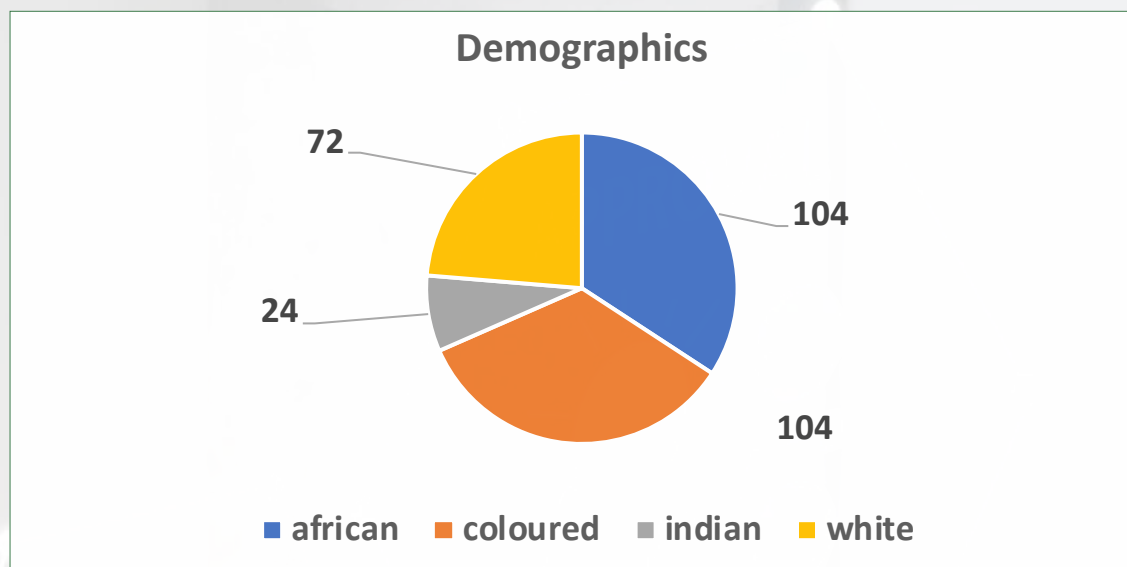
The above chart detailing the visitors according to sections of the university community is shown below in the format of a table:

	2024
External	166
Faculty	21
PASS	24
Post-Doc	2
Student - PG	46
Student - UG	45
	304

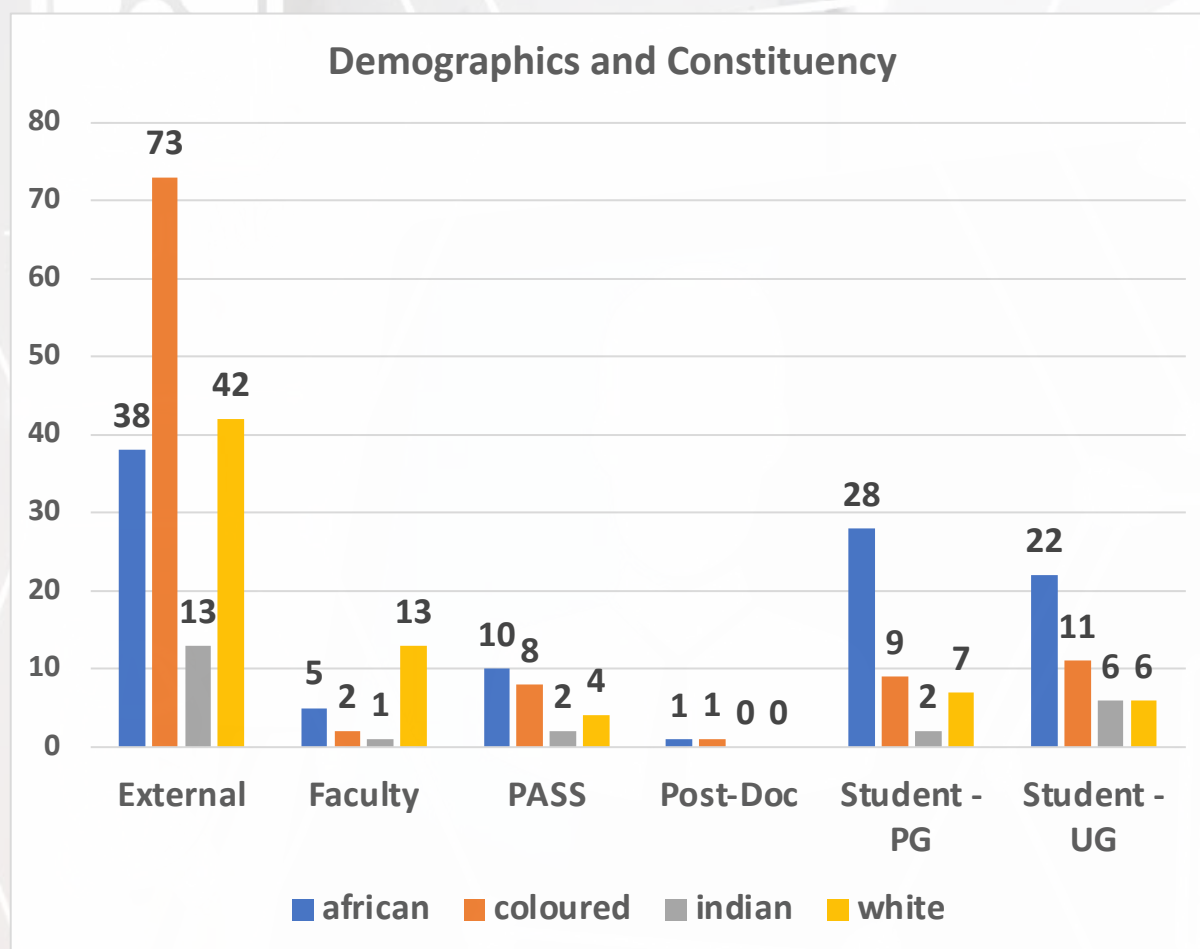
Below is a further breakdown of the type of external visitor to the office:

Type of External Visitor:	2024
Alumni	3
Applicant for staff position	3
Ex-staff	1
Friend or relative of student	34
GetSmarter staff or student	3
PPs office	1
Unrelated to UCT seeking information	121
	166

From a total of 166 external visitors, 121 (73 %) represent those who are not a part of the university community; they are not related to students or staff but are chiefly constituted by those seeking non-academic Ombudsing advice, or those asking general questions pertaining to the university, or those enquiring further into the nature and role of the Ombud's Office. Although the first graph shows 147 visitors seeking information only, some of these contacts resulted in extended consultations, although even a first contact consisting of providing information can take the format of a protracted conversation. Typically, at the beginning of the academic calendar, we have an increase of parents of students and applicants contacting the office, in many cases concerning issues of application, registration, fees, funding, and residence as well as those appealing readmission outcomes. In 2024 we were contacted by a total of 34 parents/relatives/friends of students and applicants.



The above pie chart shows the demographic breakdown of the visitors during 2024, followed by a graph below which combines the UCT constituency with the demographic breakdown.



The above graph showing further detail of the various visitors is based on the following table:

	african	coloured	indian	white
External	38	73	13	42
Faculty	5	2	1	13
PASS	10	8	2	4
Post-Doc	1	1	0	0
Student - PG	28	9	2	7
Student - UG	22	11	6	6

The next table offers a different form of breakdowns of the types of issues¹ brought to the office:

2024		
1	Compensation, benefits, honours, recognition	9
2	Evaluative relationships	6
3	Peer and colleague relationships	1
4	Career progression and development	1
5	Legal, regulatory, financial, and compliance	0
6	Safety, health and physical environment	0
7	Services and admin	252
8	Organisational, strategic, mission related	1
9	Values, ethics, standards	121
		304

The previous table shows that 83 % of visitors brought issues pertaining to services and administration, which includes the provision of information relating to other forms of Ombudsing, information regarding the nature and working process of the office, discussions of issues resulting in the visitor perceiving and reviewing options towards handling the issue within the university structure, and offering information gleaned with the help of university staff, having first received permission from the visitor to share both the issue and their identity.

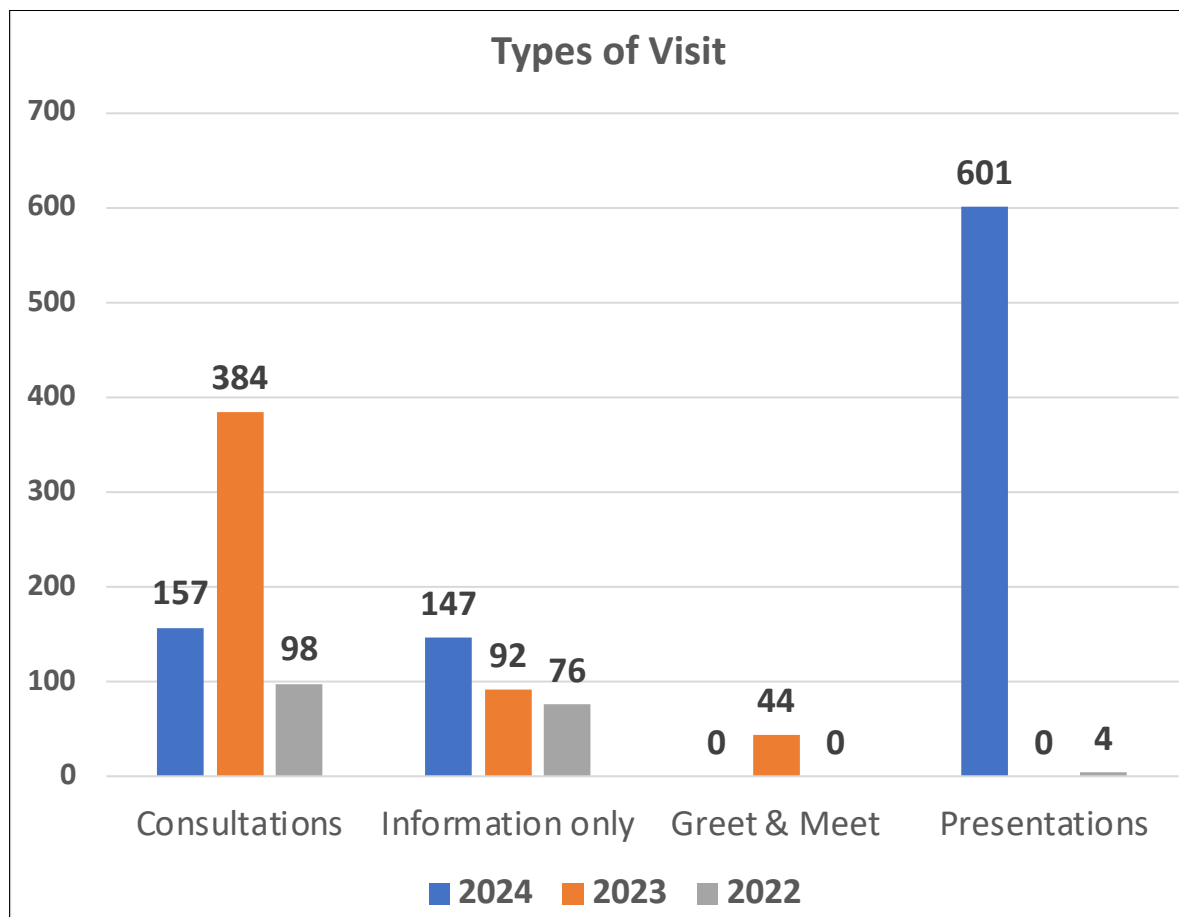
¹ <https://www.ombudsassociation.org/>

Below is a further detailed breakdown of the various issues brought to our office.

Breakdown of issues:	
admitted to hospital	1
application and registration	14
bullying	2
career progression	1
certification	12
conference management issues	1
contract and ethical behaviour	1
deferred exam	1
evaluative relationships	1
events too noisy	1
exclusion	2
fees and funding	27
GetSmarter	3
graduation	4
Greet & meet	1
harassment	20
HR	20
info only	145
job application issue	3
OIC procedures	1
Online High School	1
readmission	6
residence issues	3
RPL (recognition of prior learning)	1
student admin	16
supervision	11
Tribunal (students)	3
UCT shuttle service	1
UCT sports teams' issue	1
	304

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE DATA FOR 2024, FOR 2023, AND FOR 2022:

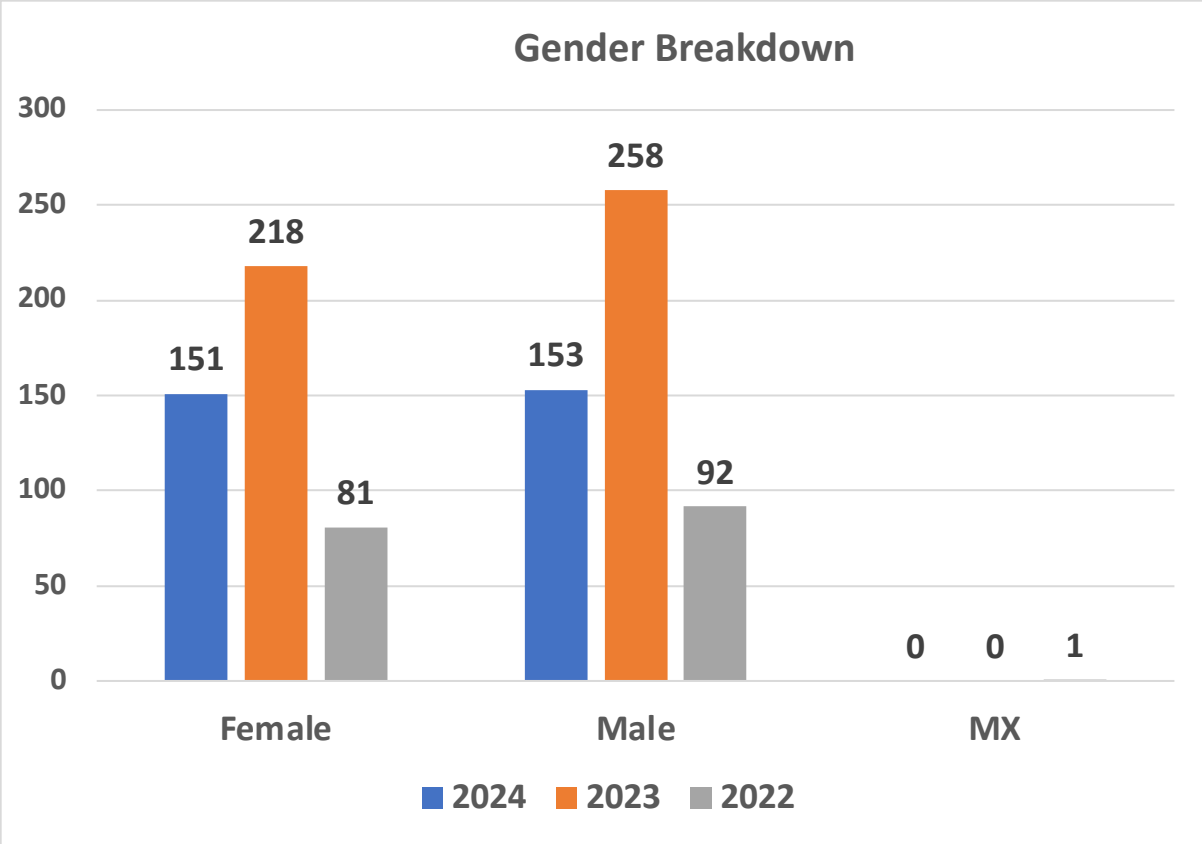
RECENT TRENDS



The information in the graph above is also shown in the table below:

	2024	2023	2022
Consultations	157	384	98
Information only	147	92	76
Greet & Meet	0	44	0
Presentations	601	0	4
Totals (C + I)	304	476	174
C + I + P	905	476	178

Below is a further detailed breakdown of the various issues brought to our office.

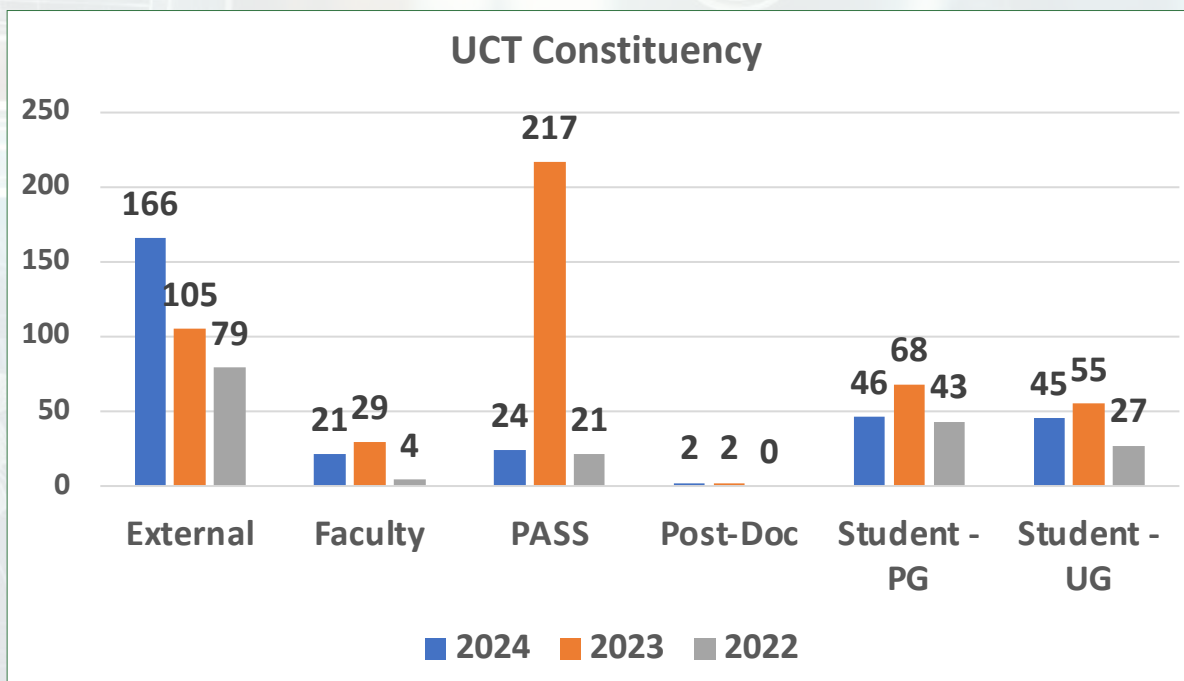


The table below provides the comparative figures for the gender breakdown. The totals reflect sums of visitors for the purposes of information and consultation, thus excluding presentations.

	2024	2023	2022
Female	151	218	81
Male	153	258	92
MX	0	0	1
Totals	304	476	174

Below is a table followed by a graph, both showing the number of visitors according to the constituent parts of the university community per year.

	2024	2023	2022
External	166	105	79
Faculty	21	29	4
PASS	24	217	21
Post-Doc	2	2	0
Student - PG	46	68	43
Student - UG	45	55	27
	304	476	174



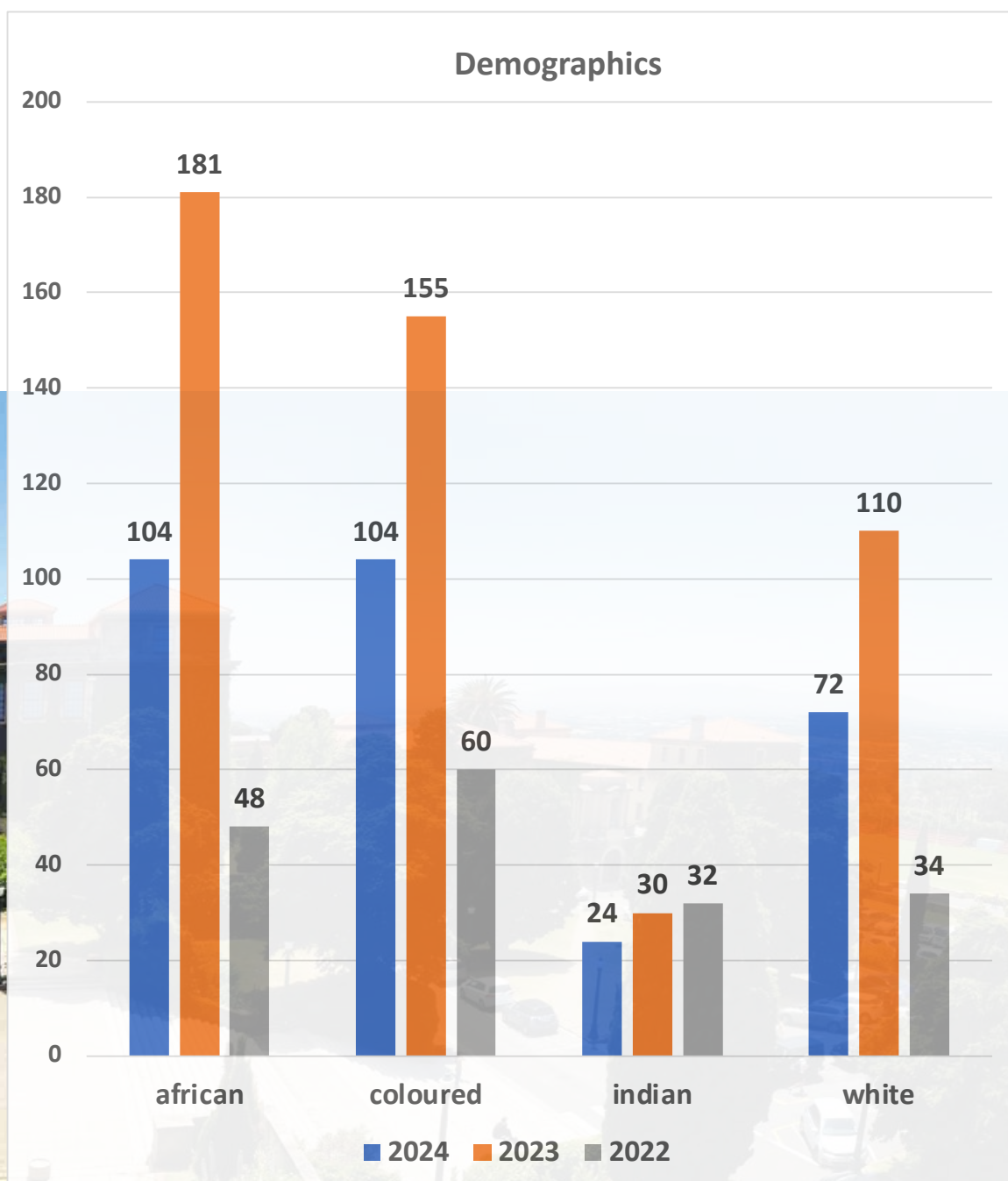
The table below breaks down the types of external visitors over the last three years.

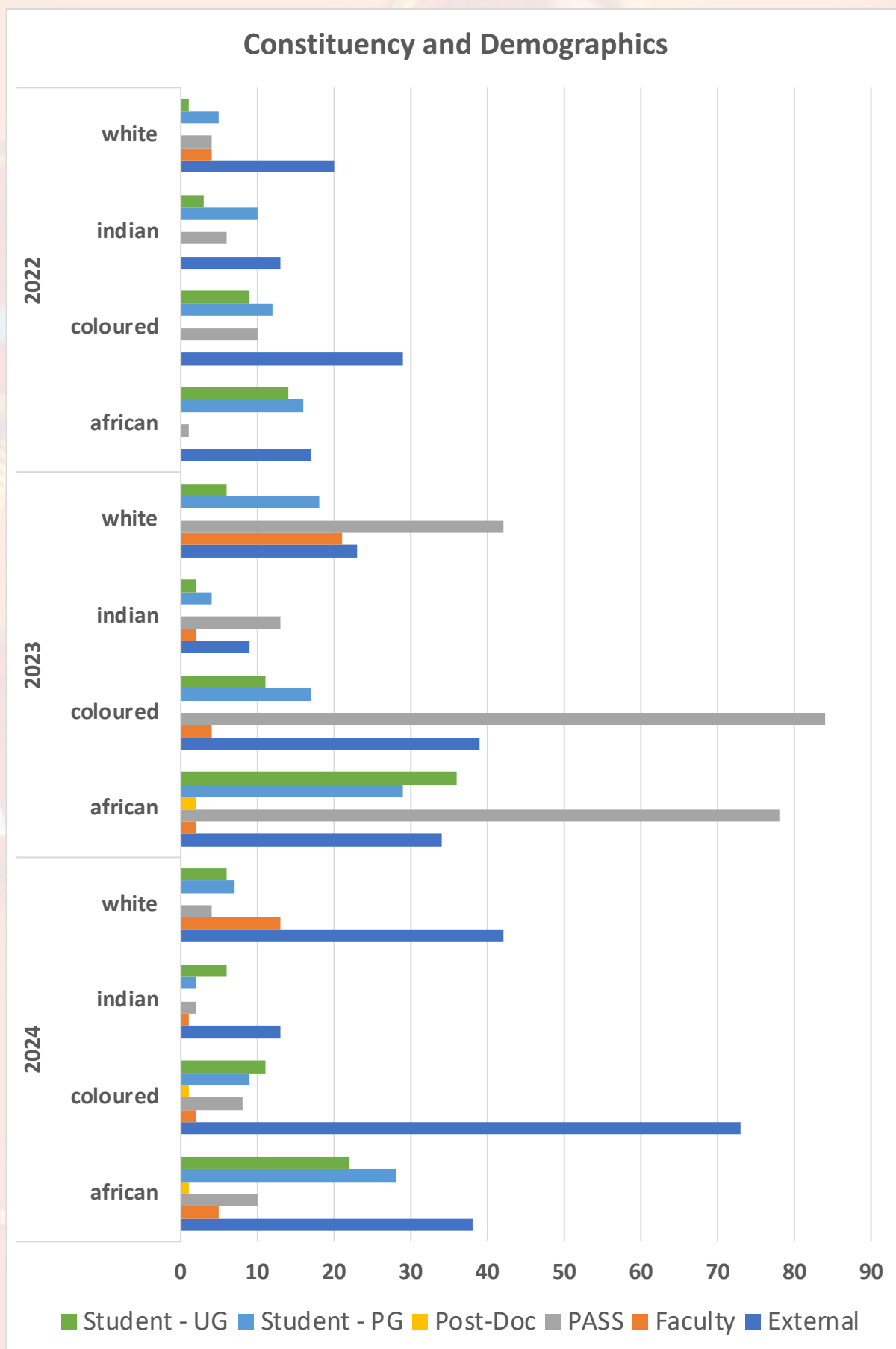
Type of External Visitor:	2024	2023	2022
Alumni	3	4	2
Applicant for staff position	3	2	1
Attendee at Summer School	0	1	0
Consultant	0	1	0
Ex-staff	1	1	0
External institutions of education	0	1	3
Ex-Vendor or vendor	0	2	2
Friend or relative of student	34	26	24
GetSmarter staff or student	3	4	0
Mpati report	0	3	0
PPs office	1	0	0
Tender issues	0	1	0
Unrelated to UCT seeking information	121	59	47
	166	105	79



The next table and graph show the comparison of the demographics of our visitors:

	2024	2023	2022
african	104	181	48
coloured	104	155	60
indian	24	30	32
white	72	110	34
	304	476	174





The graph on the previous page is based on the information portrayed in the table able.

2024				
	african	coloured	indian	white
External	38	73	13	42
Faculty	5	2	1	13
PASS	10	8	2	4
Post-Doc	1	1	0	0
Student - PG	28	9	2	7
Student - UG	22	11	6	6

2023				
	african	coloured	indian	white
External	34	39	9	23
Faculty	2	4	2	21
PASS	78	84	13	42
Post-Doc	2	0	0	0
Student - PG	29	17	4	18
Student - UG	36	11	2	6

2022				
	african	coloured	indian	white
External	17	29	13	20
Faculty	0	0	0	4
PASS	1	10	6	4
Post-Doc	0	0	0	0
Student - PG	16	12	10	5
Student - UG	14	9	3	1

Below is a comparative table of a further breakdown of issues brought to our office during 2024, 2023, and 2022.

Breakdown of issues:	2024	2023	2022
access control	0	1	1
admitted to hospital	1	0	0
application and registration	14	8	18
bullying	2	0	0
career progression	1	0	0
compensation and recognition	0	0	1
conference management issues	1	0	0
contract and ethical behaviour	1	0	0
dissertation and supervision	11	8	0
diversity	0	1	0
DPR appeal	0	1	0
evaluative relationships	1	0	4
events too noisy	1	0	0
exclusion	2	0	0
external educational institutions	0	0	1
fees and funding/financial aid	27	24	21
food services/vendors	0	0	3
GetSmarter	3	4	0
graduation and certification	16	5	1
Greet & meet	1	0	0
harassment	20	27	10
health and safety	0	1	0
highly confidential and sensitive	0	2	0
HR	20	25	9
information only	145	86	67
job application issues	3	3	0
LOA (leave of absence)	0	0	2
media	0	1	0
Mpati report	0	224	0
NBT issue	0	2	0
OIC procedures	1	0	0
Online High School	1	0	0
parking issues	0	1	0
personal loan	0	0	1
plagiarism	0	1	0
readmission	6	0	0
remuneration	0	0	1

Continued ... Breakdown of Issues

Breakdown of issues:	2024	2023	2022
residence issues	3	9	3
RPL (recognition of prior learning)	1	0	0
student administration incl curriculum, deferred	17	38	22
student tribunal	3	0	3
teamwork issues	0	1	0
tender issues	0	2	0
UCT shuttle service	1	0	0
UCT sports teams' issue	1	0	0
values and ethics	0	0	6
vendor issues	0	1	0
	304	476	174

Although it is informative to have access to the above data, it is impossible to evaluate the Ombud's office by the number of visitors it services because the numbers do not reflect a success rate of the office. While a lack of visitors might conceivably suggest a negative impression of the office, ongoing numbers, whether they are higher or lower than before, do not in themselves show a decrease or an increase in success.

Submitted by Birgit Taylor, PhD

OVC OPERATIONS BUDGET 2024

DEPT: OMBUD'S OFFICE OPERATIONS

FUND: 232428 YEAR END REPORT: 2024

OVC OMBUDS OFFICE BUDGET (VCO1079)					
CE Group	DETAILS	2024 FY ACTUALS: JAN-DEC	FY BUDGET JAN-DEC	YTD VAR	%
CO-134	General Admin	62 454	28 800	-33 654	-116,9%
CO-136	Advertising Costs	31 395	0	-31 395	0,0%
CO-142	Consulting & Management Fees	0	64 000	64 000	100,0%
CO-144	Bank Charges	1 065	500	-565	-113,0%
CO-146	Catering & Functions	10 747	5 250	-5 497	-104,7%
CO-148	Computer Consumables	3 621	1 500	-2 121	-141,4%
CO-152	Computer Equipment & Software	33 809	18 825	-14 984	-79,6%
CO-156	Photocopying & Printing	39 846	7 245	-32 601	-450,0%
CO-160	Stationery	9 933	2 500	-7 433	-297,3%
CO-162	Staff Training	0	33 900	33 900	100,0%
CO-164	Telephone & Fax	26 694	29 970	3 276	10,9%
		-1	0	1	-11
CO-132	ADMIN & OPERATING COSTS	219 565	192 490	-27 075	-14,1%
CO-166	TRANSPORT, TRAVEL & SUBSISTENCE	209 447	52 030	-157 417	-
CO-172	LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS	0	4 340	4 340	100,0%
CO-178	INFRASTRUCTURE & SPACE	1 614	0	-1 614	0,0%
CO-197	ASSETS AND CAPITAL PROJECTS	2 985	0	-2 985	0,0%
CO-198	OTHER COSTS	-179 805	0	179 805	0,0%
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES (FUND 232428)		253 806	248 860	-4 946	-2,0%
CO-216	DEPRECIATION AND ASSET DISPOSAL	8 748	8 748	0	0,0%
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE (incl. Depreciation)		262 554	257 608	-4 946	-1,9%

