



## UBB Ethics Commission Report 2023

### 1. Ethics Commission and Rules of Procedure – *summary (common section for all annual reports)*

The UBB Ethics Commission is an independent structure for analyzing research and university management ethics complaints. The Commission operates according to the provisions of Law 199/2024 and HG 305/2024 the Framework Code of University Ethics and Deontology.

According to the law (art 163), the duties of the university ethics committees are:

- a) monitors, within the institutions, compliance with the university codes of ethics and deontology;
- b) ensures the implementation of the orders of the Minister of Education for compliance with the legal framework in the field of university ethics and deontology;
- c) analyzes and resolves deviations from the rules of university ethics and deontology, on the basis of complaints or by self-referral;
- d) contribute to the elaboration of the Code of Ethics and University Deontology, through proposals addressed to the University Senate for adoption and inclusion in the University Charter;
- e) realizes an annual report on the state of compliance with the norms of university ethics and deontology, which is presented to the Rector and the University Senate and constitutes a public document;
- f) carries out preventive activities regarding the violation of university ethics and deontology;
- g) monitors the conduct of courses on ethics and academic integrity;
- h) proposes for adoption to the university senate the rules of organization and functioning of the ethics committees;
- i) collaborates with advisory committees at national level;
- j) other attributions provided by this law or established according to the university charter.

Any person, from within or outside the University, may refer to the University Ethics Committee misconduct committed by members of the University community, only after exhaustion of the right to petition and respecting the University hierarchy. The Commission may self-examine facts, situations or documents issued at different levels that are likely to violate the rules and principles



of ethics in teaching, research and administrative activity, as well as in other aspects of university life.

In 2020, within the Ethics Commission of the Babes-Bolyai University (UBB), the University Ombuds mechanism was established, which operates according to the *Procedure for the organization and functioning of the Ombuds mechanism at UBB*, by HCA no. 7257/27.05.2024. It is an internal UBB body operating on principles of confidentiality, impartiality and independence, providing informal support to members of the academic community, in accordance with the UBB Code of Ethics, the *Guide to Combating Discrimination*, the *Guidelines on Gender Equality at UBB* and the *Procedure for ensuring/protecting mental well-being at UBB*.

The University Ombudsperson discusses with members of the community without prejudice and in an objective manner, acting as a neutral mediator and facilitator, without imposing sanctions. The Ombuds is independent from the UBB management and other administrative authorities and has no binding decision-making authority. The confidentiality of records and communications is strictly respected, and information is only disclosed with the express consent of the parties involved, except in cases of imminent risk of personal injury.

The University Ombuds can make recommendations, mediate disputes and organize discussions to find constructive solutions. Referrals should preferably be made within 30 days of the incident for effective intervention. The ombuds may be called upon when the competence to resolve a conflict is unclear or as a last resort after other avenues have been exhausted.

The role of the University Ombuds includes listening carefully to individuals, analyzing situations, identifying options, clarifying internal policies and procedures, helping individuals to manage conflicts and developing skills to deal with difficult situations. The UBB Ombudsperson complies with the UBB Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, the standards of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and the European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education (ENOHE), of which it is a member.

## **2. Commission activity in 2023 – summary**

In 2023 the Commission continued a pro-active, mediating and educative approach in the spirit of academic ethics, and only secondarily sanctioning.

We maintained the social media page (<https://www.facebook.com/comisiadeeticaubb/>) with various information on research ethics and updated the website with relevant information - [https://www.ubbcluj.ro/ro/despre/organizare/comisia\\_de\\_etica](https://www.ubbcluj.ro/ro/despre/organizare/comisia_de_etica).

In the run-up to the exams, as every year, a presentation of the main rules of research and academic ethics was organized for students and teachers: <https://www.facebook.com/comisiadeeticaubb/photos/pcb.115871026821344/115875793487534/>. We tried to draw attention in a pro-active way, in a manner adapted to the digital generation,



to the phenomenon of plagiarism:  
<https://www.facebook.com/GlasbergenCartoons/posts/2605445156191851> and we distributed this information to students through social media groups.

Also, in the faculty meetings organized under the auspices of the Open Science at UBB project, the Commission contributed to raising awareness of university ethics regulations and practices, and to the dissemination and application of the *Guide to Combating Discrimination*.

At the end of 2023, the process of re-constitution of the Ethics Commission under the new Law on Higher Education no.199/2023 was initiated - student representatives were elected, new members of the Commission were selected in following a public call, and the Commission was appointed in its new composition in 2024.

The Ombuds Mechanism of the Babes-Bolyai University (UBB) saw a significant increase in the number of requests for support, counseling and/or mediation between 2020 and 2023. In 2020, 5 requests were registered, four of them by e-mail and one by telephone. In 2021, the number of requests increased to 15, a tripling from the previous year. In 2022, 14 requests were recorded, of which twelve were made via online platforms and two by phone. In 2023, the number of requests increased to 23, more than four times more than in 2020. This steady increase reflects the growing confidence of students and academics in the UBB Ombuds mechanism. The majority of requests were effectively resolved either through direct meetings with the University Ombuds or through the Ethics Commission, which handled eight of the cases in 2023.

The University Ombuds actively participated at the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of ENOHE (European Network for Ombuds in Higher Education) held in Prague on June 14-16. The event was an essential platform for the exchange of ideas and experiences, addressing challenges specific to higher education. The active participation of the University Ombuds strengthened UBB's position in the community of European university ombudsmen, promoting ethical values in higher education.

In addition to direct support and conflict mediation, the Ombuds Mechanism provided information and advice on academic rights and responsibilities in the framework of the project CNFIS-FDI-2023-2023-0123. This project included four information sessions, held on October 25 and November 22, 2023, in Romanian and Hungarian, addressed to students, teachers and auxiliary staff at UBB.

In 2023, the UBB Ombuds mechanism has proven to be a valuable resource for the academic community, providing the necessary support to solve problems and ensuring that rights and responsibilities are respected within UBB.

In terms of formal referrals to the Ethics Committee, in 2023, there were 15 referrals related to ethics in research or university management.

For these referrals, the committee has met at least twice (on average) to deal with each of them. Committee meetings are held at least once a month or as often as necessary.



Some could be resolved by referrals to faculties (2) or the Administrative Directorate (1), where mediation and conciliation techniques were also used.

Of the 13 remaining complaints, 4 complaints were declared inadmissible - false e-mail account, administrative and not ethical issues, respectively issues within the competence of criminal bodies, and one complaint concerned the plagiarism of publications of a UBB lecturer, so advice was given in order to participate as a party in another sanctioning procedure, conducted by the Gh. Asachi Technical University of Iași.

Sanctions (written warning, suspension of advancement, salary reduction) were decided for 4 referrals, for 1 only recommendations.

One referral was closed after the finding of ethical misconduct but no sanctions were applied due to the fact that the student is no longer a member of the academic community

4 complaints were rejected as unfounded.

The complaints concerned the inappropriate behavior of teachers in relation to students, harassment, inappropriate behavior of students, intercollegiate relations in the UBB administration, self-plagiarism.

In addition, the Rector or the faculties have consulted the Ethics Commission on other situations that might involve issues of academic ethics. However, these situations were not formalized and were dealt with by the UBB management.

Finally, we reiterate the new paradigm of the functioning of the UBB Ethics Commission, in the sense of emphasizing public communication, mediation and education in the spirit of university ethics, with a sanctioning role only in a secondary plan.

President of the UBB Ethics Commission

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