



THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

JUNE 2012 TO MAY 2013

OFFICE OF THE
OMBUDSPERSON





To the entire University community,

Pursuant to Article 8 of the Terms of Reference for the Office of the Ombudsperson, I am submitting our annual report for the period from June 1st 2012 to May 31th 2013.

It continues to be a privilege to serve the University community. We sincerely hope that we have made a positive contribution.

Lucie Allaire
Ombudsperson

September 2013

To those who have sought our assistance, thank you for trusting us with your concerns.

To the members of the Ombudsperson Advisory Committee, thank you for your commitment and wise advice.

To those representatives of the University and of the student associations with whom we work to resolve problems thank you for patiently answering our questions, taking the time to meet with us and consider our perspectives and our recommendations.

Thank you for the creative opportunity to continue to work on improving our listening skills, and to challenge us to connect with your needs and ours with compassion.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of the Ombudsperson has now been open for three years. Our mandate is specified in our Terms of Reference and remains unchanged since we set up the office in 2010.

"The purpose of the Ombudsperson is to provide an independent, impartial and informal dispute resolution process for all members of the University Community. It may make recommendations for resolution in individual cases and may also make recommendations for changes in policies and practices, where appropriate. The Office of the Ombudsperson shall not replace existing channels of appeal at the University..."¹

We have adopted the Standards of Practice of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudsmen. We strive to promote fair resolution of problems and fair process. Feedback from those who have used our services indicates that the vast majority of respondents would call upon us again, and also believe that we handled their concerns fairly. We have access to a wide range of possible interventions available to us in our Terms of Reference: providing information, referring to the proper channels, assisting in finding informal resolutions of problems, facilitating difficult conversations and making recommendations for the resolution of complaints. Not surprisingly, most of our work consist of providing information and referring to the proper channels of redress as well as coaching services.

From our previous reports, we have followed up on two important areas, first the accommodation process for students with disabilities and secondly the process for the examination of allegations of academic fraud. Significant progress was made to better inform students, including international

students, on the regulations governing academic fraud; a line by line review of the regulations has been initiated which should lead to the adoption of new regulations this year. We further would like to bring to the attention of the University the need to provide timely information to students engaged in group work assignments to ensure that they are fully aware of their responsibilities. We have made one recommendation with regard to sanction 2. 0) of Regulations 14.2 as we find its current application problematic with respect to the open ended duration of the sanction.

On the question of the accommodation process, the University intends to propose the adoption of two new policies to provide the necessary framework. However, it must be said that training of faculty is seriously deficient and remains a concern, and that the University has fallen behind in its obligation under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act to provide the necessary training to its personnel. The complaints received at our office concerning the accommodation of disabilities were not directed at the service offered by Access services of the Student Academic Success Service (SASS), but were related to refusals to provide the necessary accommodation within faculties due to a lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities, and to misunderstandings about the process. We also reiterate the importance of being proactive in providing services to students with a hearing disability to ensure that they feel included in the university community.

The University does not have any regulations to provide access to washrooms during examinations. Permission is left to professors' discretion, resulting in situation where some students are not given the same opportunity to demonstrate academic

¹ www.uottawa.ca/governance/ombuds-terms.html

competence when they must leave before the end of the period. We have provided the examples of four other Canadian universities that have adopted such regulations.

Outreach Activities

We believe that it is important to keep abreast of the development in our profession across the country and continue to improve our practice. The Ombudsperson is a director at large of the Executive Committee of the Association of Canadian Colleges and University Ombudsman (ACCUO). She presented a workshop on the work of Marshal Rosenberg, Non violent Communication at the Annual meeting of ACCUO and of the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO) in Halifax in May 2013. We hosted the annual mid-year meeting of ACCUO in February 2013, providing an excellent opportunity to exchange views and common practices across institutions in Canada.

We conducted a number of different promotional activities to reach the entire university community. We participated in different fairs, including Alt 101. We published articles in the Fulcrum and in La Rotonde. We used the services of Community Life to help circulate our messages through their e-newsletter and flat screens across campus. Our messages were also included in the UoZone "Stuff you should know", UOttawa message board and UOttawa Facebook and Twitter accounts. This past



Our team from left to right:
Anirt Rojo, Lucie Allaire and Iman Ibrahim.

summer, the Faculty of Education included our message in their student guides. We have contacted different student associations, such as the Science Student's Association (SSA) to ask them to insert our message in their mass mail outs. We participated at the Centre for Equity and Human Rights Student Awareness Fair in September. We have provided a number of workshops on conflict resolution.

We continue to improve our knowledge and skills by attending different training sessions offered by the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman and by St-Paul's University as well as presenting at the Annual Conflict Resolution Symposium in Ottawa.



UPDATE ON LAST YEAR'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Student Federation of the University of Ottawa's (SFUO) responses to recommendations

1 - Students with disabilities and the UPass

SFUO had committed to simplify the process for excluding some students with disabilities who cannot use public transportation from the obligation to participate in the UPass program. The SFUO examines each request on a case by case basis and has reached an understanding with the OC Tranpo for the exemption of these students. SFUO intends to include a clause to ensure that the human rights of students are recognised explicitly in the next agreement. During this year we have not received any complaints of this nature but we remain available to students if they experience difficulties obtaining an exemption when they are not able to use public transportation because of the nature of their disability.



2 - Accessibility for students with a hearing disability to SFUO services

We have not received any complaints about the lack of accessibility of services to students with a hearing disability that SFUO offers. They reported that they actively involve their Centre for Students with Disabilities in the planning of events, such as 101 Week, and have trained all their staff on accessibility. A new web forum will be launched in the near future.



University's responses to recommendations

1 - Accommodation process for students with disabilities

For the last two years we have made a number of recommendations to address shortcomings we had observed in the process of providing the accommodation to students with disabilities. In our first report, we focused on students with a hearing disability, and last year we broadened our recommendations to all types of disabilities. We encouraged the University to develop a more robust approach through comprehensive policies or regulations, training of personnel, updating its Accessibility Plan particularly to meet the needs of students with invisible disabilities such as learning disabilities or mental health issues.

The University answered last year that they were reviewing their accommodation process with a view to put in place a comprehensive policy framework.

As we publish this annual report, the University has not yet adopted a policy. It has indicated that it has drafted two policies, a Policy on Accessibility and a Policy on the Provision of Accommodation Measures for Students with Disabilities. The stated commitment and intention of the University are to create a truly inclusive work, study and living environment. The second policy under development is intended to establish general principles on the provision of accommodation measures for students with disabilities. By the time this report is published both policies should be posted online for public

consultation before it is submitted for approval by the University's Board of Governors and Senate. We have not seen the two draft policies and cannot comment at this time.

Last fall, the University put in place the Access Network intended to bring together key individuals from across campus to promote best practices and to seek solutions together. This is a promising initiative provided that the Network has the required profile, and can have a real influence in faculties and departments. We have not been informed of the work of this group and *would suggest that the University consider raising its profile and ensure that its role is enhanced and included in the policies under development.*

The University has established a new Human Rights Office to promote the respect of human rights of its students, staff and faculty. We have not seen its mandate and the office is not yet operative as we write this report; certainly an initiative to be followed with interest.

2 - The situation of students with a hearing disability

In our first annual report we had identified gaps in the accommodation process for students who have a hearing disability. We encouraged the University and the SFUO to be more proactive in creating an inclusive environment. Since then some initiatives have been put in place such as guidelines for students on how to obtain interpretation services. ACCESS services has published a document, *Minimizing the impact of learning obstacles, A Guide for Professors*, which contains advice to professors on communicating with deaf and hearing impaired students (page 12). It is always the responsibility of the student to arrange for interpretation; there are no guidelines or instructions to personnel outside the classroom on how to provide their services to these

students. We wonder if the University could do more and whether it is enough to leave it to the student to arrange interpretation services when they need to meet with a university official, whether that be with a professor, or a financial loan officer or any other employee providing services.

The University has put in place a new online web-based customer relations tool called Ventus that allows students to manage their accommodation needs and is intended to provide a better service. We receive very few complaints against the services provided to students with disabilities by SASS Access Service; the team of Learning specialists are by and large much appreciated by the students who have contacted our offices.



As the University prepares to issue policies on accommodation intended to create a more inclusive environment for students with disabilities, *we think that the particularly difficult circumstances of students with a hearing disability should be further addressed beyond what SASS Access service has been able to offer.* While ensuring that students are well informed and have guidelines on interpretation services is very useful, it is also important that personnel in faculties and services be provided with instructions on how to obtain interpretation services when they are communicating with these students.

We continue to believe that it is not just the student's responsibility to make those arrangements and that in order to create a more inclusive environment initiatives by service providers are also required.



3 - Training of faculty and staff in the accommodation process: Clearly progress has been insufficient.

Training of staff and personnel is essential to ensure that accommodation is provided and human rights are respected. It is our understanding that this training is required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act of 2005. As of June 2013, only 16% of faculty had taken the online course, *Service excellence includes accessibility*. The percentage is higher for administrative personnel where approximately half of the staff has taken the compulsory training. I would note that I started reporting on this in my first annual report and while we can see some improvement in the rate, it is an extremely slow uptake. *The lack of progress is a problem that the University needs to address on a priority basis.* Of note, this training has been available online since February 2010, and takes approximately two hours to complete. Also of note, most of the complaints we have received from students with disabilities indicates that there is often a lack of understanding on the part of some faculty about their responsibilities in providing accommodation and the rights of students.

This year we received 39 complaints related to discrimination. Of these, 18 were made by students who had difficulty obtaining accommodation for a disability at the faculty or department level. The two new policies under development should contribute to creating an environment where the process of accommodation is better understood and accepted. *We expect that the policy framework should address the deficiencies in the training of personnel.*



The Vice President Academics recognizes that progress is insufficient and expects that the strategies put in place by the University's new Office of Human Rights will address this deficiency.

4 - Process for managing allegations of academic fraud

Last year, we wrote about our concerns with aspects of the process of examining allegations of academic fraud as well as a need to provide better access to information for all students, but particularly international students.

In our view, the University has made considerable improvements to better inform students about the regulations. Course syllabuses contain references to the Academic Integrity website and regulations 14.2. Last January, the University launched its Academic Regulations Explained website, making the regulations easier to understand and providing many examples. The site is easily accessible from the Students page or through uoZone. Several Faculties have added links to the Academic Integrity website on their home page.



We had drawn attention to the need to focus on reaching the community of international students to identify their needs and identify better ways to reach them. The International Office has taken several useful steps in the last year to reach these students. For instance, welcoming kits include the brochure "Says Who?" from the Academic Writing Help Centre that explains academic integrity and plagiarism. The Office also sends a message to all new international students to again explain academic integrity. It has added on its own website a link to the Academic Integrity website. The University has included this topic on the agenda of a Fall 2013 meeting of the International Office's Roundtable, bringing together vice-deans from all faculties and directors of various academic services.

In my opinion, the University has been very effective in responding to the need to better inform students of the regulations, and promoting better understanding of academic integrity issues.



Our report also contained some recommendations intended to correct weaknesses we had detected in the process of managing the allegations. At the moment, the University has informed us that they have established a subcommittee on academic fraud

in March 2012 to review regulations 14.2 and 14.3 taking into account our findings reported in our 2012 annual report and recommendations provided by the Senate Appeals Committee. The University expects that the work will be completed in the coming months. We are not in a position to comment until we have seen the revisions that will be proposed and implemented. This year, we make three new recommendations related to academic integrity for the consideration of the university.

NEW RECOMMENDATIONS

1 - Academic integrity in group work

We think that students working on team projects need to be better informed of their obligations and that the regulations on Academic Fraud should address this type of situation. The current regulations refer to group work indirectly. However there are clear references to team work and explanations provided in three documents: the Academic Integrity website FAQ's section, the "Says Who?" brochure under the Collaborative Work section and in the "Academic Integrity Student Guide" as well.

While very good information can be found in these documents, the regulation itself lacks precision on these types of situations. We suggest that the professors should be encouraged to explain the responsibilities of all team members when assigning group work, particularly to inexperienced students.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The University should include in its revised regulations a statement to clarify how they apply to group assignments. Furthermore, when assigning group work, professors should be encouraged to include information on the expectations of each member of the team with regards to academic integrity.

RESPONSE OF UNIVERSITY

The regulation will be amended accordingly.

2 - Scope of the mandate of the Examining Committee in faculties

We have seen instances where the Examining committee having dismissed the allegations of academic fraud requested a re-grading of the examination paper of the student. There are no references relating to re-grading in the current regulations. In our view, if the paper or the examination had not been corrected by the professor, it would seem appropriate to grade the paper, but if the paper has already been graded, then the question of when it would be appropriate to re-grade the paper or the examination should be considered and addressed in the regulations.



RECOMMENDATION 2

That the University clarify in the revised regulations on academic fraud when grading or re-grading a paper or an examination is appropriate and the scope of the mandate of the Examination Committees in this regard.

RESPONSE OF UNIVERSITY

The mandate of the Examination Committees will be clarified accordingly.

3 - Application of sanction 2.0), Regulations 14.2

We have found that the application of this sanction exactly as it is worded (see below) leads to a questionable approach because the student is left with an untenable situation of not knowing whether a further extension of his expulsion will be applied and furthermore there is no indication of what standard, if any, the student would need to meet to prevent an extension. This can lead to arbitrary decisions and to the application of further sanctions at the end of the initial period, fundamentally unfair in our view. The wording of the article suggests that the Senate Appeal's Committee must impose a minimum period of three years but in our opinion it should decide the duration of the period of expulsion at the time that the sanction is imposed and not leave open the possibility of revising it and further extending the original period.

The current regulation reads as follows:

14.2.2.o) expulsion from the University of Ottawa for at least three years, it being understood that three years after being expelled, the student concerned may ask the Senate Appeals Committee to review his or her case, with the possibility, where applicable, of having the notice of expulsion withdrawn from the student's transcript – if the student reapplies for admission, the regular admission process shall apply;²

RECOMMENDATION 3

That the University remove "at least" from this article, or that it adopt the practice of specifying the exact period of the expulsion when it applies this level of sanction. Either way, the possibility of applying a further extension should be removed.

RESPONSE OF UNIVERSITY

The university will consider this recommendation.

² www.uottawa.ca/governance/regulations.html#r72

4 - Absence of regulations to allow students to use washrooms during examinations

The University does not have regulations that cover the situation of students who need to leave the examination room to use the washroom facilities. At least four Universities we surveyed have put in place such regulations: McGill, Carleton, Queens and Toronto. We believe that the University should not examine responding to this need within the context of an accommodation process because it should not view it as a special need.

At the moment in this university, permission is given or not at the discretion of the professor. One Faculty has indicated that because there are no regulations, a professor is not obliged to grant the request. It is

unfair for some students to be denied access to washrooms during exams while others are granted permission. Leaving the examination room before the end of the period can impact grades and deny students a fair opportunity to demonstrate academic competence. The four universities that we surveyed have put in place practical regulations that the University of Ottawa should examine.

RECOMMENDATION 4

That the University of Ottawa consider the practices at the four Universities that amend regulation 9.4 in order to ensure that students who need to use the washrooms during examination are allowed to do so.

RESPONSE OF UNIVERSITY

The university will consider this recommendation.

FEEDBACK FROM OUR CLIENTS

We have continued to ask users of our services to provide feedback. The feedback is provided anonymously. We also consider unsolicited feedback that we receive in person. As shown in [Table 1](#), the

results affirm that we are respecting the fundamental principles of confidentiality, impartiality and independence. The respondents have told us that we are accessible and respectful, that we have

Table 1: Results from Clients' Feedback (June 1st, 2012-May 31st, 2013)

QUESTION	YES	NO
1. Was it easy to find the Office of the Ombudsperson?	34	11
2. Did you receive a quick reply to your email, telephone message, or letter?	44	4
3. Was the role of the Office of the Ombudsperson explained to you clearly?	44	1
4. If requested, was your concern handled in a confidential manner by the Ombudsperson office?	32	3
5. Did the Ombudsperson and the staff demonstrate impartiality (i.e. objectivity) in reviewing your concerns?	40	7
6. Did the Ombudsperson staff handle your concerns fairly?	45	2
7. Were you treated with respect?	45	3
8. Would you contact the Office of the Ombudsperson again?	42	5



responded to the issues brought to our office fairly. The great majority of respondents would contact us again, a very positive indication to us.

Some of the people who have written to us have said: «Thank you for listening and helping us understand what happened when everyone else seemed to brush us off, and as well for being diligent and keeping us up-to-date on the subject.»

«Thank you both for the time and effort you have put into my concerns. I only hope that other students know and understand the valuable and expert service that you offer and provide. It is not about confrontations and accusations and complaints. It is about questions and seeking truths and solutions, compassionately and professionally. »

“Thank you for your kindness. Regardless of the outcome of my situation, I am extremely grateful that an office on campus treated me with such respect and take my feelings seriously.”

STATISTICS AND HIGHLIGHTS

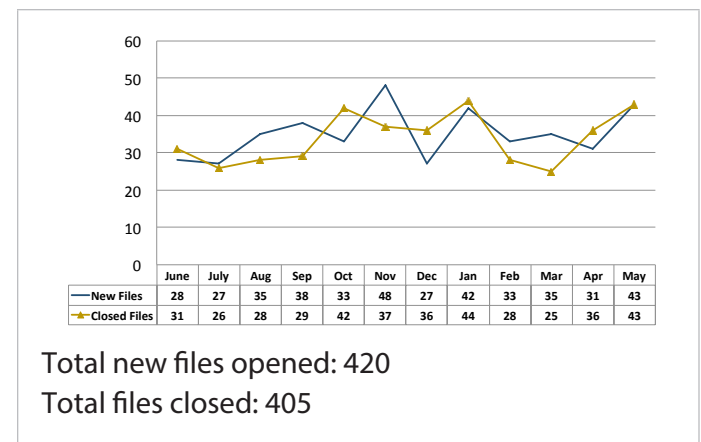
A total of 405 files were closed during this period. Data from these files are reported below, with the exception of [Table 2](#) that contains data from both closed and open files.

1 - Case volume

We carried over 27 files from the previous year, opened 420 new files and completed 405. The breakdown by month is shown in [Table 2](#). We were able to respond to requests within reasonable timeframe. We are meeting our standards of responding to emails and phone messages within 48 hours, reflecting the priority we give to client service.

Our caseload has increased steadily over the last 3 years, indicating that we are better known on campus.

Table 2: Open and Closed Files per Month



2 - Profile of our clients

A - Official languages

We used English in 291 cases and French in 113. Compared to last year, these numbers reflect an increase of approximately 17% in the ratio of our English speaking visitors and a decrease of our French speaking visitors. We can't consider this a trend at the moment but we want to be vigilant to ensure that both language groups feel welcome to consult us.

B - Gender

Significantly more women than men asked for our services, 250 women and 149 men. This ratio is very similar to that of last year and in this case, we think we see a trend. We do not have answers as to the reasons for this difference, but we will pay attention to how we advertise our services to ensure that men can relate to our material.

C - Student/staff breakdown

As expected again this year the majority of persons who consulted us were students: 340 student cases and 33 staff cases. As we noted in our previous reports, this difference is explained largely by the fact that the majority of staff members are represented by unions and all issues related to a collective agreement are excluded from the Ombudsperson's mandate. It is also explained by the larger number of students.

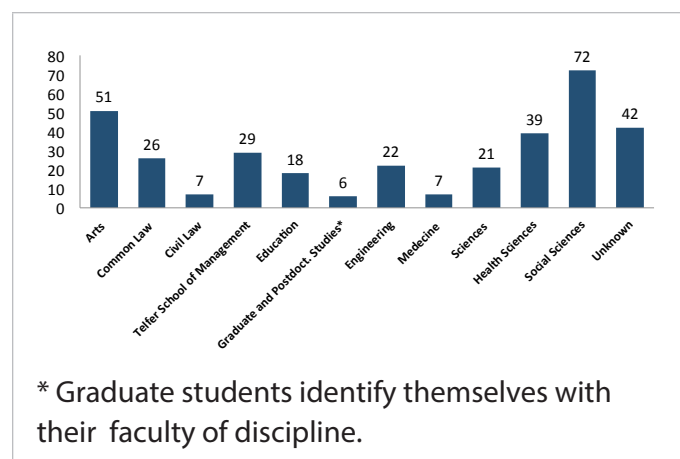
We also note here that the number of personnel who consulted us this year (33 cases) is lower than that of last year (48). We promote our services to the staff of the University while making it clear that our mandate does not extend to matters covered by collective agreements, which limits the instances where our office could be involved.

3 - Students who consulted us

A - Faculty distribution

Table 3 shows the breakdown of student clients by faculty. We have seen students from all Faculties, but fewer from those that are not on the main campus suggesting that we need to make our services better known outside of the main campus. The number of students from the Faculty of Graduate and Post Doctoral Studies is not a good indication of the number of students from graduate levels since they identify themselves with the Faculty of their discipline.

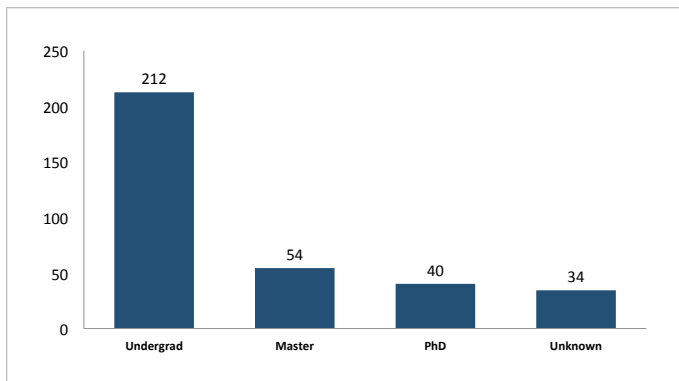
Table 3: Faculty Distribution of Students (total 340)



B - Level of study

Table 4 shows that the majority of the students (212) were undergraduate students; 94 were from the graduate programs. In 34 cases, we did not record the level of study most likely because the problem was not academic in nature.

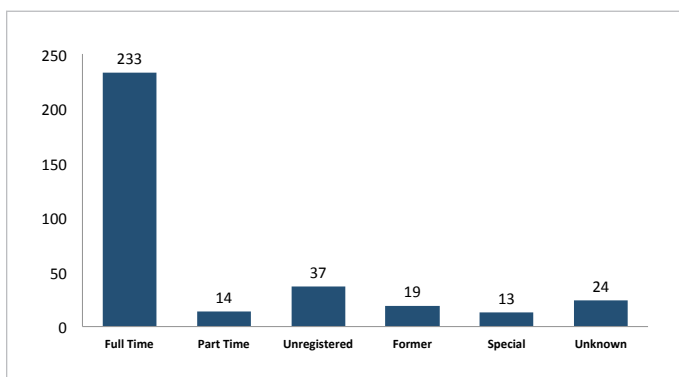
Table 4: Students by Level of Study (total 340)



C - Student category

As expected, the vast majority of our student clients had full-time status as was the case last year. (See Table 5)

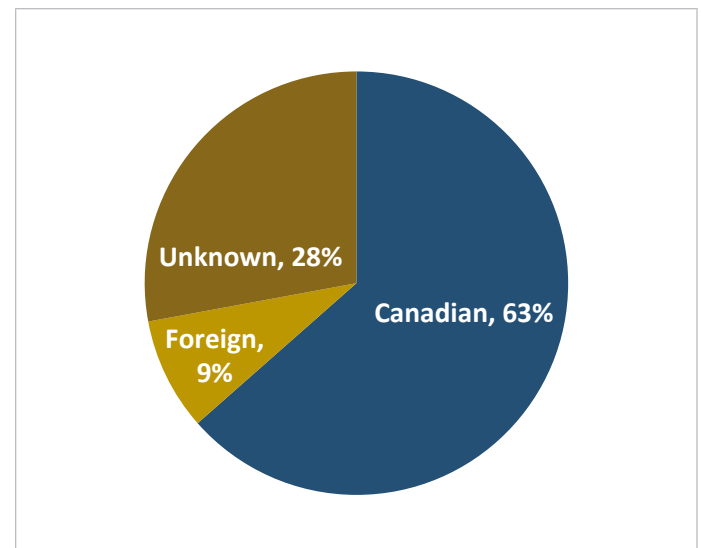
Table 5: Student Category (total 340)



D -Citizenship

The majority of the students were Canadian Citizens: 214 or 63% a similar percentage to last year's at 64%. This year, 29 students reported being foreign students, accounting for 9% of our student clients, a slightly lower percentage than the reported for last year 9.5%. In 94 cases, we did not record citizenship or the individual chose not to disclose it to us. See Table 6.

Table 6: Citizenship of Students (total 340)



E - Minority groups and issues related to Human Rights

We no longer collect information on minority groups. Based on our own experience, the advice from the Advisory Committee of the Ombudsperson and comments from some Senate members last year, we concluded that we had not captured this information in a reliable way and the data collected was thus not useful. We are not prepared to ask our visitors to

complete a self-identification form for this purpose and relying on our observation has produced unreliable data. We remain interested in collecting data that relates to issues of human rights and we have adjusted our data collection form to report on these kinds of issues more fully as follows (please see [Table 7](#)):


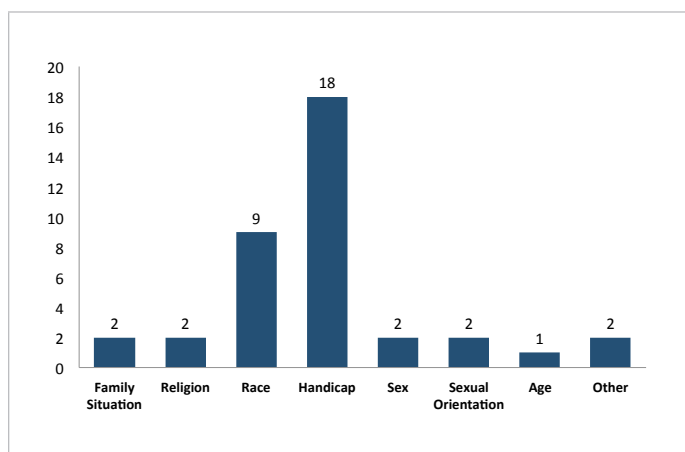
We received 39 complaints related to human rights issues, breakdown as shown in [Table 7](#). Most complaints related to the process for accommodation for disabilities, followed by complaints regarding discrimination on the basis of racial background. 

Table 7: Problems Related to Human Rights Grounds (total 39)



4 - Staff who came to consult us

[Tables 8](#) and [9](#) show the distribution of the University staff members who consulted us by faculty or department, and by type of personnel. We saw a decrease in the number of personnel who consulted us this year. We continue to reach out to staff and to provide them with a safe and confidential place to discuss matters but the issues that we can address are very limited since collective agreements cover most of workplace issues. We are available to non-unionized or excluded personnel as well.

Table 8: Personnel by Organizational Unit (total 33)

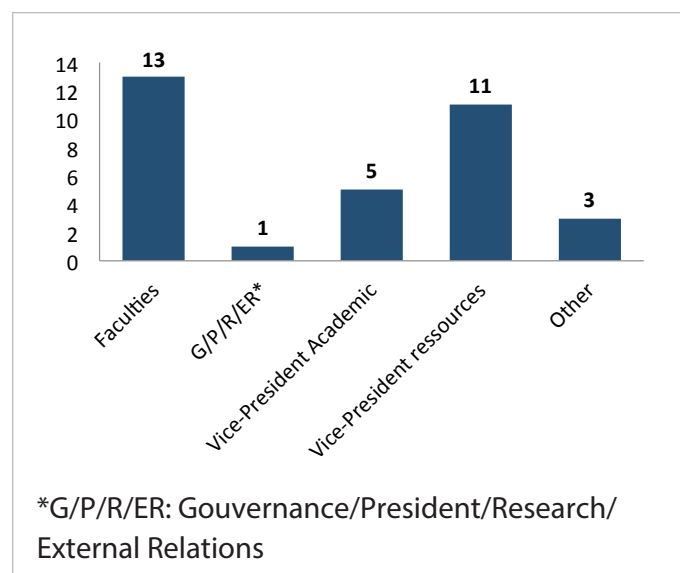
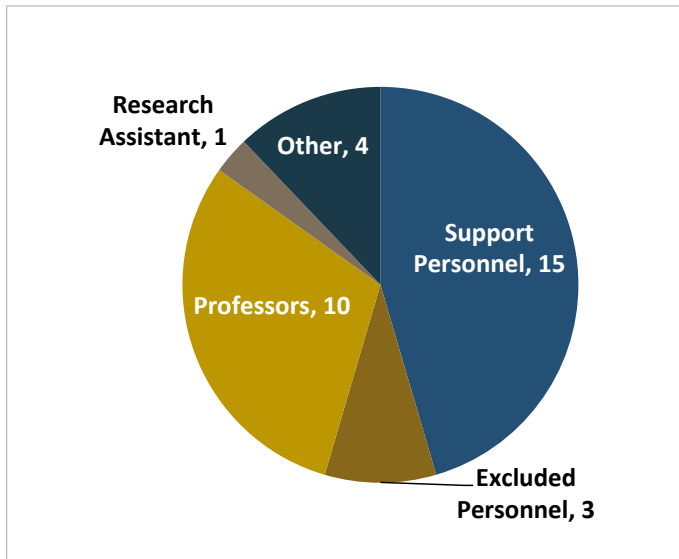


Table 9: Type of personnel (total 33)



5 - Other types of clients (other than students and personnel)

Thirty two persons who contacted us were not members of the University of Ottawa community. In many cases, these were parents calling to obtain information to help their sons or daughters studying at the University. In accordance with our mandate, we must work directly with the students, but we are open to the involvement of parents in seeking resolution to problems.

6 - Types of problems

Table 10 provides a breakdown of the types of problems brought to our attention by students and by staff.

Table 10: Types of Issues by Type of Client

TYPE OF PROBLEM	STUDENT	PERSONNEL	OTHER	TOTAL BY ISSUE
Academic	176	2	4	182
Admission & Registration	28	1	0	29
Student Association	2	0	1	3
Other	37	10	16	63
Relational Conflit	8	3	0	11
Human Rights and Diversity	33	4	2	39
Academic support	17	0	2	19
Finance	48	0	3	51
Harassment	8	3	2	13
Work Relations	2	18	5	25
Residence	7	1	0	8
Security	1	0	0	1
Services by Student Association	11	0	0	11
Supervisor/Student	13	0	0	13
Professor Conduct	4	1	0	5
Total by Client Type	396	43	35	474

Please note that the number of problems does exceed the number of files since there is at times more than one problem reported in a file. Students presented us with 396 problems, personnel with 43 and others with 35 for a total of 474.

Not surprisingly, academic type of problems (such as grade review, allegations of academic fraud) and financial issues (such as scholarship, loans, and reimbursement of tuition fees) represent the majority of issues brought by students. We were consulted on 39 issues related to human rights and diversity.

Staff members consulted us for 43 different problems related to work relations (18 cases) and human rights issues (4 cases). The numbers are quite small and make comparison not very useful in our view.

7 - Services offered and results of interventions

Our office provides a range of services ranging from very informal to more formal type of services, such as when we examine a complaint once all recourses

have been exhausted. Of the 405 files closed this year, the vast majority were handled informally, and 12 were formal complaints.

Table 11 shows that we offered a total of 557 different services in the 405 cases we closed. Our services can be grouped into nine categories described as follows:

- (5) **Information:** Providing information on policies, regulations/rules and channels of appeal
- (6) **Coaching:** Listening and providing assistance to enable the client to make a decision to address a problem
- (7) **Referral:** Listening and referral to the appropriate authority
- (8) **Intervention / complaint examination:** Examination of a formal complaint once all channels of appeal have been exhausted; making recommendations when deemed appropriate

Table 11: Services Offered by Type of Client (total 557)

SERVICE	UNDERGRAD	MASTER	PHD	NOT-REGISTERED/FORMER/ SPECIAL/UNKNOWN	PERSONNEL	OTHER	TOTAL
Information	109	33	13	54	12	19	240
Coaching	34	15	12	16	20	4	101
Referrals	50	19	9	30	5	12	125
Inter: Examin. of complaints	4	0	1	7	0	0	12
Inter: Facilitation	1	2	1	0	1	0	5
Inter: Shuttle	8	1	3	4	0	0	16
Inter: problem resolution	29	8	2	11	4	1	55
Inter: mediation	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Inter: other	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	236	79	42	122	42	36	557



- (9) **Intervention / facilitation:** Facilitation of a dialogue between two parties in conflict
- (10) **Intervention / communication bridge:** Facilitation of the resolution of a conflict by offering a communication bridge between two parties in conflict
- (11) **Intervention / problem resolution:** Direct intervention with the appropriate authorities to find a solution
- (12) **Intervention / mediation:** More formal mediation between two parties, including a written mediation agreement
- (13) **Intervention / other:** Anything that does not fall into the above categories

Mostly we provide information (240), offer coaching services (101) and refer our clients to the appropriate authority (125). At times, we get involved directly to try to resolve a problem (55) or to assist the communication to find a good solution.

We investigated 12 formal complaints – 4 from undergraduate students, 1 from graduate students, and 7 from Unregistered/Formal /Special students. **Table 12** shows the results of this type of intervention. We made recommendations as a result of our

examinations of 5 complaints and we completed the examination of 7 complaints without making recommendations. The University accepted our recommendations in 4 files and refused in one instance.

Examples of the cases we provided recommendations for:

SFUO agreed to reimburse the UPass to a student who had a disability that prevented her from using public transportation and also agreed to examine the process for obtaining exemption from the UPass for other students with disabilities.

Following the examination of a complaint related to the lack of accommodation in a work placement setting, the Chair of the department agreed that preventive measures needed to be put in place to ensure that the student and others with similar needs would receive the accommodation required.

A Faculty Appeal Committee agreed that the student had not been provided with all the documents that it had reviewed in reaching its decision. The student was given the opportunity to obtain the missing documentation and to respond and to be heard.

Table 12 : Examination of Complaints and Results (Total 12)

TYPE OF CLIENT	WITH RECOMMENDATIONS	WITHOUT RECOMMENDATIONS	ACCEPTED IN TOTAL OR IN PART	NOT ACCEPTED	RESULTS UNKNOWN
Student: Undergrad	2	2	2	0	0
Student: Master	0	0	0	0	0
Student: PhD	1	0	1	0	0
Student: unregistered/ former/special	2	5	1	1	0
Student: unknown	0	0	0	0	0
Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Total	5	7	4	1	0

SOME OF OUR SUGGESTIONS

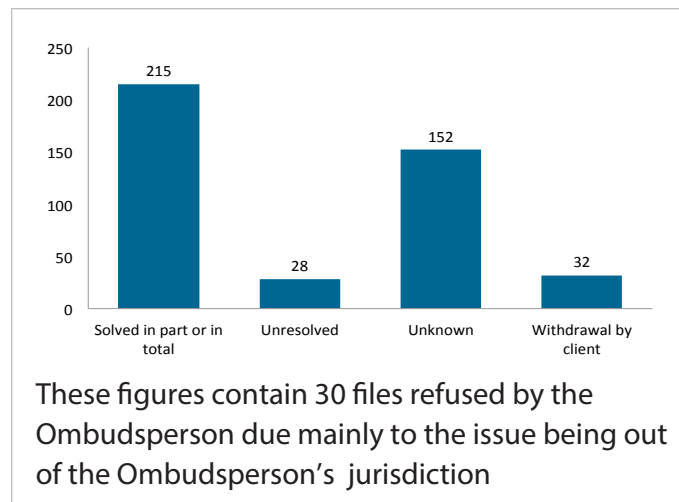
We suggested that the University clarify the deadline for filing an appeal for grade review for final exams at the end of a session to avoid any confusion. Some students calculated the deadline from the date that particular grade in question was posted on uoZone while others calculated it from the date all final grades were posted. Now the deadline is included in the *Important dates and deadlines page*.

Result of our work

We note when possible the outcome after we close files and you will see in [Table 13](#) that in 215 cases, the problem was resolved totally or partially. We were not informed of the outcome in 152 files and in 28 files, the problem remain unresolved totally. At times clients will withdraw their request for service and this happened on 32 occasions this year; usually this is because they were able to resolve the matter, or they

decide that our services cannot be of use. The figures in this table include 30 files where we refused to intervene because our Terms of reference did not cover the issues, for instance where the matter is covered by a collective agreement.

Table 13: Overall Results (all clients)



CONCLUSION

Within an institution of the size of the University of Ottawa, it is understandable errors occur and some decisions need to be reviewed. In addition to the complaint review processes in place in faculties and services, the Ombudsperson offers to all members of the university community a safe place to talk about concerns and examine options to resolve disputes and address issues. Our practice is always guided foremost by our commitment to the principles of

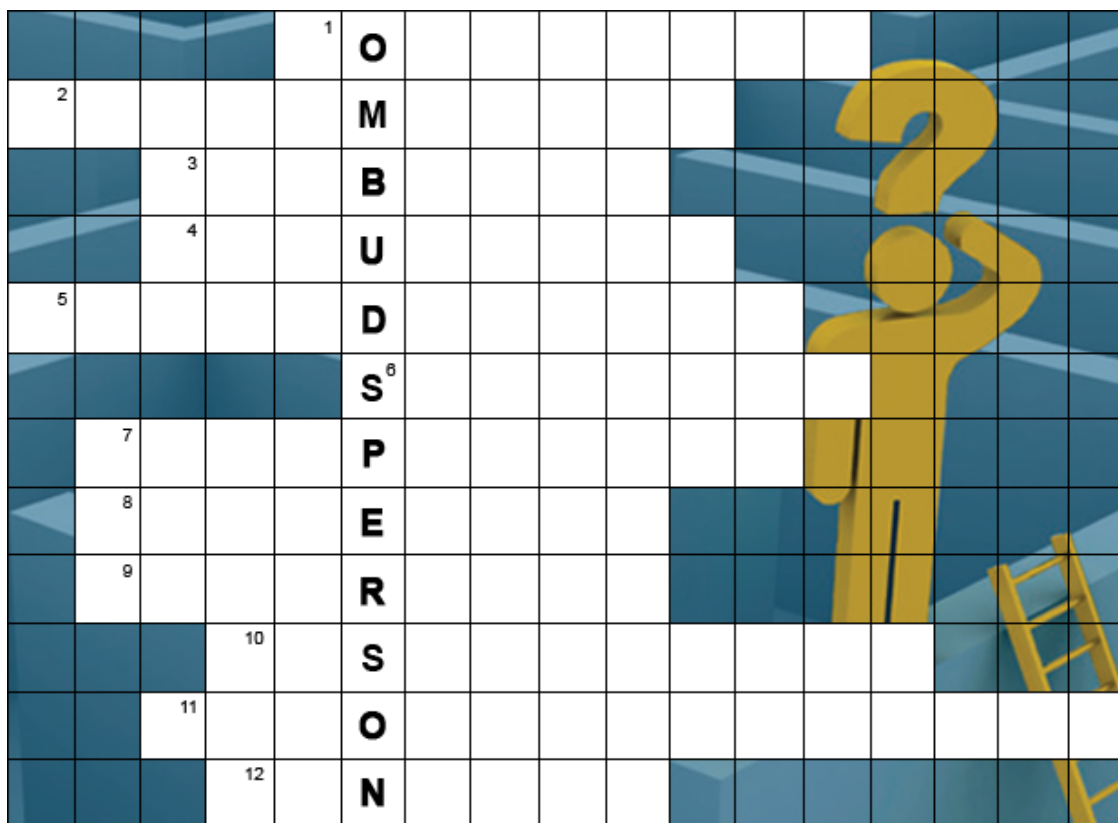
confidentiality, independence and impartiality and the pursuit of fair outcomes. At times, we have intervened directly to resolve problems; sometime simply providing accurate information was all that was needed, and at times coaching our clients in a difficult situation and reframing expectations was useful. Most of our work is done informally and we strive to provide options and support to people in conflict.

It is a fact that our office is complaint driven and that people who consult us believe that they have not been treated fairly. We continue to draw attention to the importance of the three dimensions of fairness which we reported in our second annual report: procedural, substantive and relational. When working with parties in conflict, we emphasize the relational dimension of fairness which tends to be neglected in large organization but which is often essential to restoring confidence and trust. We keep in mind the broader interests of the community, and we aim to contribute to improve existing policies and bring to the attention of the University and Student Associations gaps and ambiguity in policies, regulations or their application that lead to unfair outcomes.

We thank the University for considering our recommendations to improve the regulations on Academic Fraud and to address the gaps with respect to the rights of students with disabilities, particularly as it relates to the accommodation process. We sincerely hope that our contribution will be useful to the students and the entire university community.

"It must be remembered that the ombudsman is also a fallible human being and not necessarily right. However, he can bring the lamp of scrutiny to otherwise dark places, even over the resistance of those who would draw the blinds. If his scrutiny and observations are well-founded, corrective measure can be taken, if not, no harm can be done in looking at that which is good." 1970, Alberta Supreme Court, 10DLR (3d) 47, (1970) AN No 133

Office of the Ombudsperson at the University of Ottawa



1. Accessible to the entire university ...
2. We provide ... on policies, regulations /rules and channels of appeal.
3. We can help you solve administrative or academic ...
4. If you believe you are the victim of an ...
5. We offer a safe and ... resource.
6. In 1965, ... from Simon Fraser University, in British Columbia, succeeded at creating the first Ombudsperson position for higher education in Canada.
7. Our Office is ... of administrative structures and student government.
8. If you feel your rights have not been ...
9. All our examinations are done in an ... fashion.
10. We seek expeditious and just ...
11. You can read our ... on our website: www.uottawa.ca/ombudsperson/
12. Do not hesitate to ... us.

ombudsperson@uottawa.ca | 613-562-5342 | UCU 307 (85 University St.)

1. community
2. information
3. problems
4. injustice
5. confidential
6. students
7. independant
8. respected
9. impartial
10. resolutions
11. recommendations
12. contact