

Confidential

Independent

Impartial



EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT

JUNE 1, 2017 TO MAY 31, 2018

OFFICE OF THE
OMBUDSPERSON



To the University community,



I am pleased to submit the eighth Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsperson at the University of Ottawa, as provided in Section 8 of the Ombudsperson's Terms of Reference. I began my duties on April 9, 2018 at the end of the mandate of the first Ombudsperson, Lucie Allaire, who had led the Office of the Ombudsperson since its inception in 2010. This report covers the period from June 1, 2017 to May 31, 2018.

I would first like to thank Ms. Allaire and everyone on her team for the work accomplished and the results achieved over these first eight years. I would especially like to thank Ms. Allaire for her leadership and service to members of the University community during her mandate, and for her support throughout 2017-18 in achieving a smooth transition. I would also like to underscore the important contribution of Assistant Ombudsperson Marie Boglari, which helped ensure the continuity and quality of all Ombudsperson services since the summer of 2017. People who dealt with Ms. Allaire or Ms. Boglari in the past attest to the high quality of their interaction and have expressed their gratitude.

The Ombudsperson listens, informs, advises, fosters communication, helps identify fair solutions and offers recommendations to improve an organization's policies, procedures and practices. This involves a human engagement with everyone who approaches the Ombudsperson and everyone who answers the Ombudsperson's questions. It also implies a critical lens in analyzing the ties between the individual experience of a problem, and the interpersonal, procedural or institutional dynamics that make up its context.

Our work would not be possible without contact with members of the University community. I would like to thank everyone who used the Ombudsperson's services in the past year, and everyone who answered our questions. I am also grateful for the welcome I have received on campus since I arrived, and the interest shown by the University and by students for the services and recommendations of the Office of the Ombudsperson.

I consider it a privilege to serve the university community. I look forward to getting to know you better in the months to come and making a constructive contribution to your experience.

Martine Conway, Ombudsperson

September 1st, 2018



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Introduction

"The mandate of the Ombudsperson is to provide an independent, impartial and confidential process through which members of the University Community may pursue the just, fair and equitable resolution of University-related concerns. In addition, the Ombudsperson may make recommendations, where appropriate, for changes in policies and procedures and promote discussion on institution-wide concerns."

Terms of Reference for the Ombudsperson at the University of Ottawa

Summary

The Office of the Ombudsperson was created in 2010. The current Ombudsperson began her duties on April 9, 2018, and this report covers the period from June 1, 2017 to May 31, 2018.

On submitting her last report in the fall of 2017, the former Ombudsperson provided an overview of the work accomplished in previous years and updated recommendations. She placed special emphasis on the need for the University to make headway in developing or reviewing policies and regulations to deal with complaints of discrimination and harassment and with requests for academic accommodation for students with a disability.

This 2017-18 report includes a description of the Office of the Ombudsperson's role, its approach and its objectives for 2018-19. It outlines issues that the Ombudsperson monitored during summer 2018 and related recommendations. It shares updates received from the University and student associations on recommendations from previous years. It also includes statistical tables for 2017-18 and examples of cases addressed by the Office of the Ombudsperson.

The role of the Ombudsperson

"With a focus on fairness, equity and respect, the ombudsperson builds capacity to help the institution be accountable to its own value and mission statements. In working with individuals, the ombudsperson facilitates fair resolutions that build trust and fortify the relationship between individual and institution."

Standards of Practice, Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons

A university is a diverse, dynamic community, a place for discussion and the exploration of ideas in an often complex and competitive environment. People contact the Ombudsperson in search of help to resolve problems or conflicts. The Office of the Ombudsperson is designed to function in an accessible, independent, impartial and confidential manner.

The Ombudsperson's role is not to replace existing mechanisms for administrative or academic decision-making or for processing complaints. It is rather to complement them by fostering access to them and offering recommendations when improvements are needed. In this way, the Ombudsperson helps develop a capacity among members of the University community to identify and resolve problems and complaints in a fair, respectful manner.

By examining the ties between individual situations brought to our attention and the institutional context, the Office of the Ombudsperson performs several functions:

The Ombudsperson assists people on an individual basis with information and referrals to existing services while providing them with advice or communication tools as needed. The idea is to listen and help the person identify issues and possible remedies or solutions. Analyzing the situation can help reframe it for a more effective use of available mechanisms.

The Ombudsperson can act as an intermediary, with the individuals' consent, to facilitate communication and foster the search for solutions. The aim is to clarify information, build communication bridges and explore options for reaching a resolution. As a final resort, the Ombudsperson can also examine a formal complaint submitted by a member of the university community. (Situations covered by a collective agreement are outside the Ombudsperson's mandate.)

The Ombudsperson influences change at the systemic level when she offers recommendations to improve policies, procedures and practices applicable to members of the University community, thus fostering fairness and responsibility.

The Ombudsperson promotes best practices for the creation of a fair and respectful environment by maintaining an open dialogue with University and student administrations. For example, the Ombudsperson can offer comments when policies or guidelines are being drafted, provide workshops on tools that promote fair and respectful decision-making, or contribute to more general discussions leading to the identification of issues or priorities within the institution.

2018-19 Objectives

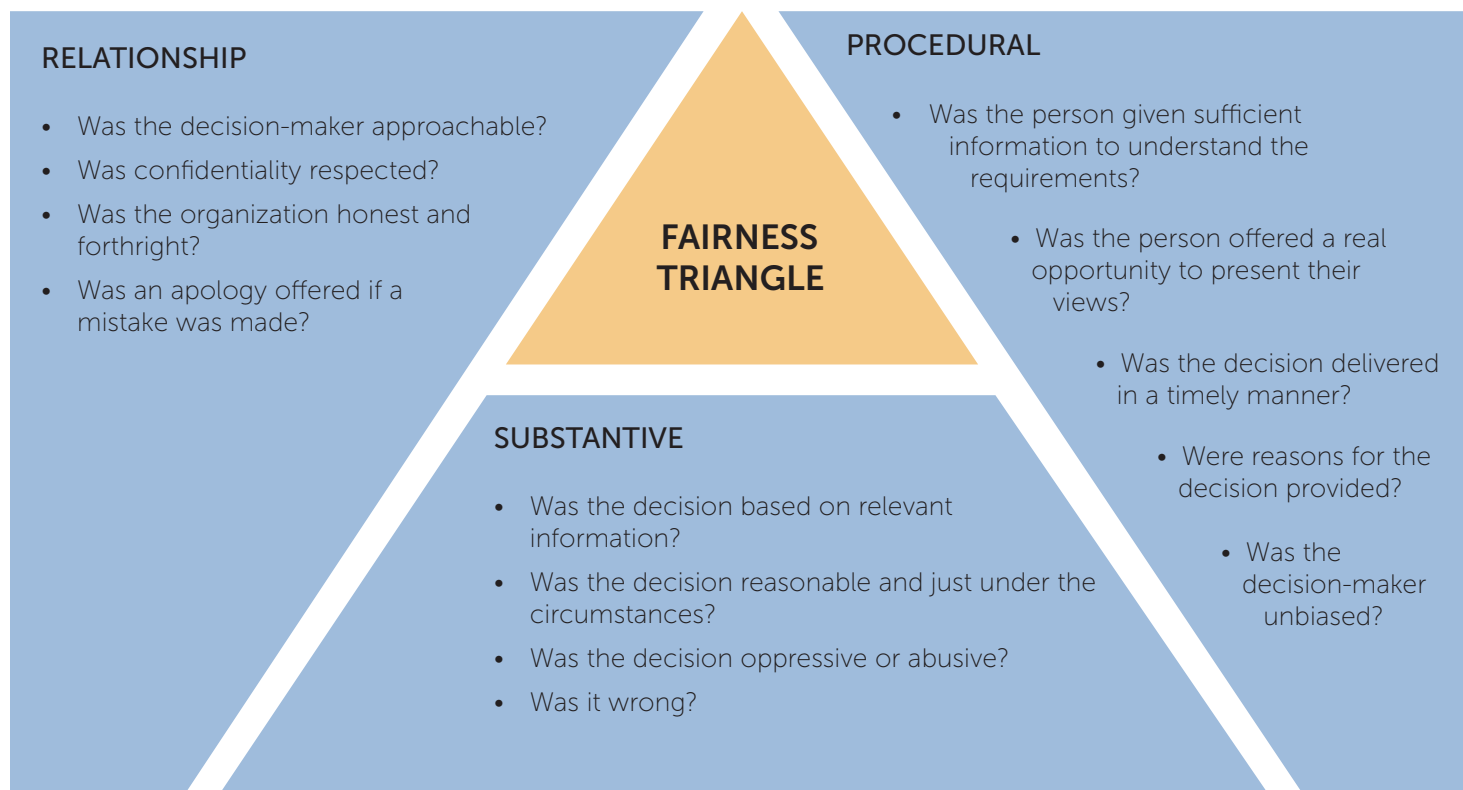
Since the new Ombudsperson began her position in April 2018, priority has focused on ensuring Office services, meeting with University and student representatives, following-up on recommendations made in previous years and recruiting a new Assistant Ombudsperson. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that Évelyne Poisson started in that position on August 27, 2018.

This introductory work will continue in 2018-19, for example through orientation activities (Week 101), meetings with various academic and administrative units, and follow-up on current recommendations. It is also important to establish a stable funding mechanism for the position of Assistant Ombudsperson.

During these discussions, I also hope to learn more about the issues, challenges, opportunities and priorities facing University community members.



Tools for promoting fairness



Material adapted from: Ombudsman Saskatchewan

"[Ontario's Ombudsman] encourages all colleges and universities to consider ways to ensure those who sit on academic appeal bodies understand the importance of ensuring procedural fairness at all levels of decision-making."

2017-18 Annual Report, Ombudsman Ontario

In universities, decisions are made at various administrative and academic levels. To make fair decisions, avoid mistakes and reduce the time spent on complex appeal procedures, it is important to consider how fairness principles apply at each decision-making level, for example at the level of the employee or professor, the department, a Faculty committee, etc.

The Fairness Triangle is a tool that can be adapted to the various decision-making levels of an organization. The University of Ottawa's Office of the Ombudsperson offers information sessions and interactive workshops to discuss how this tool can be used and adapted to the specific contexts of different academic and administrative units.

Please contact us if you are interested in arranging a discussion or workshop in your unit.



A. 2017-18 Highlights

The 2017-18 transition year was managed off-site by the former Ombudsperson and on-site by the Assistant Ombudsperson. The new Ombudsperson took over in April, and this report contains statistics for the year ending on May 31, 2018. During this time, the Office processed service requests submitted by 575 people, including 318 students, 20 University staff members and 237 other persons.

TESTIMONIAL

I would like to thank you for your time and careful listening. Much appreciated!

TESTIMONIAL

We don't always have the power or the voice to express our concerns. I am very grateful for the help I received from the ombudsperson [acting as] a third party.

Table 1. Files Opened and Closed per Year

Year	Files Opened	Files Closed
2017-2018	585	575
2016-2017	674	677
2015-2016	554	540
2014-2015	436	449
2013-2014	396	413
2012-2013	420	405
2011-2012	381	375
2011-2010	194	174

Table 2. People Who Used Our Services

Year	Students	Personnel	Other
2017-2018	318	20	237
2016-2017	402	26	249
2015-2016	316	28	196
2014-2015	309	37	103
2013-2014	337	30	46
2012-2013	340	33	32
2011-2012	295	48	32
2011-2010	152	22	0



Table 3. Categories of Issues

Type of Problem	Student	Personnel	Other	Total
Academic	114	1	9	124
Admission & Registration	48	0	166	214
Student Association	7	0	2	9
Relational Conflict	9	3	1	13
Human Rights	34	0	6	40
Academic support	11	0	0	11
Finance	79	1	31	111
Harassment	5	3	2	10
Work Relations	2	3	1	6
Residence	10	0	7	17
Security	4	0	2	6
Services by Student Assoc.	36	0	3	39
Supervisor/Student	5	0	0	5
Student Conduct	3	2	2	7
Professor Conduct	14	1	2	17
Other	23	9	29	61
Total	404	23	263	690

A person can have more than one issue.

Staff members consulted the Ombudsperson more specifically on matters related to interpersonal conflicts, work environment or allegations of harassment. (Note that situations governed by a collective agreement are outside the mandate of the Ombudsperson.) Other users of our services were usually people applying for admission to the University. This category also includes parents of students and other members of the University community.

Students presented a total of 404 problems or issues, the most frequent regarding academic concerns (114), financial matters (79), admission or registration in certain courses or programs (48), and human rights (34). They also raised issues about student association services (36) such as procedures related to the U-Pass or to the medical and dental insurance program.



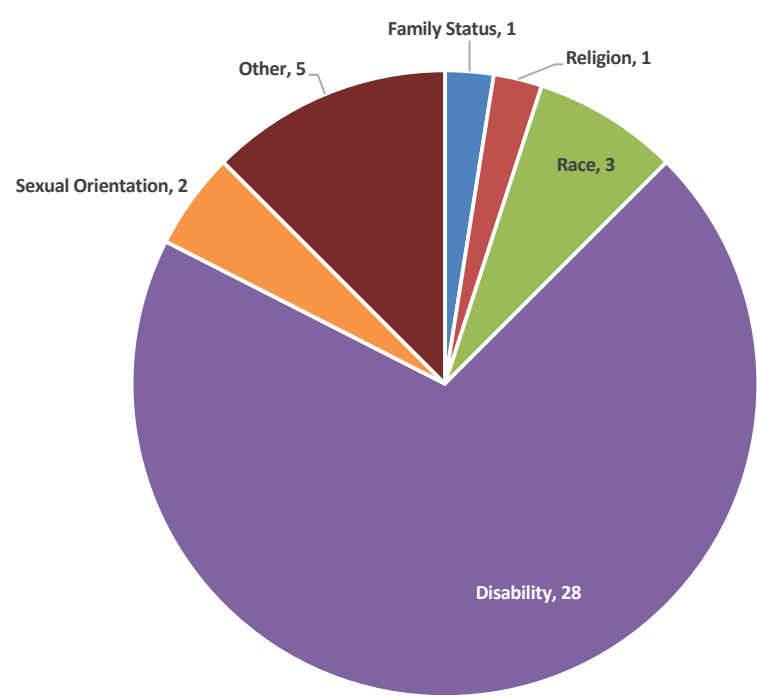
Table 4. Students – Academic Issues

	Academic Fraud	Evaluation	Withdrawal from program	Other	Total
Undergraduate	1	34	1	28	64
Graduate	1	7	2	5	15
Unregistered/ Former/Special	1	4	8	8	21
Unknown	2	4	1	7	14
Total	5	49	12	48	114

A student can have more than one academic issue.

The academic problems most often raised by students included matters related to evaluation (49), followed by situations leading to withdrawal from a program or from the University (12) and academic fraud problems (5).

Table 5. Human Rights Issues (total 40)



Among students, human rights-related problems were particularly related to accommodation for disabilities (24).



B. Examples of cases

Voir le [Table 13](#) à l'Annexe A: Services offerts par type de demandeur.

Examination of a formal complaint - appeal of an academic decision

The Ombudsperson examined a formal complaint from a student after an unsuccessful appeal to the Senate Appeals Committee. The student, who had failed a mandatory component of his program, had requested a retroactive withdrawal from the course but was turned down by the Faculty. The Ombudsperson did not identify any errors in processing the case and did not make any recommendation to the University.

Review of a formal complaint - investigation procedure

The Ombudsperson examined a formal complaint made after a student complained about a professor and had exhausted all other remedies. The Ombudsperson identified delays and errors in the investigation process and related communications. The absence of witnesses able to corroborate the different versions of the facts led to confusion surrounding the steps in the process (determining the admissibility of the complaint, conducting an investigation, analyzing the facts, reaching a decision). The unit in charge accepted the Ombudsperson's recommendations regarding the process and apologized to the complainant.

Advice to an employee - workplace

A non-unionized employee at the end of a contract consulted the Ombudsperson to discuss his experience. The employee had not felt supported by his direct supervisor and said he had had trouble in fully integrating into the team, partly for language reasons. After discussing the matter with the Ombudsperson, the employee identified structural factors that could have assisted his integration into the team and partially averted communication problems with the direct supervisor. He decided to meet with the section manager to pass on his suggestions.

Advice to a student - academic accommodation

A master's student was experiencing symptoms related to a medical condition but was reluctant to request accommodation. He was afraid that by discussing the matter now, he would lose his academic supervisor's support. During a discussion with the Ombudsperson, he explained his reluctance to disclose personal information to his academic unit and to submit medical notes at the start of each session for the same condition.

The Ombudsperson explained how to document the permanent condition with the Student Academic Success Service (SASS) and how to approach the professor to request an extension without revealing specific information about his condition. The student registered with SASS and met with his professor. They had a productive discussion on managing his accommodation needs and deadlines.

Intervention-problem resolution - reregistration after an academic hiatus

After halting her studies for personal reasons a number of years ago, a student submitted an application for readmission and asked to return to her program and resume the last mandatory course. The process ended with the student's admission to the summer session and permission to register. Unfortunately, one final difficulty at registration time forced the student to register for the next semester instead.

Offers of admission are subject to a specific session, and a new application is associated with new costs. The Ombudsperson contacted administration, which heard the specific circumstances of the case and decided to resolve the problem by allowing the student to defer her admission until the following semester.



Intervention-communication bridge - request for admission to a master's degree (professional program)

An applicant for admission to a professional, master's level program contacted the Ombudsperson after seeking clarifications from the program. She was told that her name would be placed on a waiting list. After following-up on the matter, she was informed that her standing on the waiting list and any feedback about the strengths or weaknesses of her application could not be disclosed. To make job-related decisions, she needed to know her chances of obtaining admission to the program.

After contacting the department, the Ombudsperson was able to clarify that the program had not created a waiting list but had instead placed applicants in three groups and was issuing offers to applicants in the first two groups (who more closely met the requirements). Given the number of replies received, the program did not expect to issue offers to applicants in the third group (which included the applicant in question). The Ombudsperson also told the applicant whom to contact to determine whether her application contained gaps or weaknesses that she could remedy.



C. Overview of topics discussed since spring 2018: Comments and recommendations

1. Accessibility and accommodations

In 2018, the University of Ottawa adopted Policy 119 on Accessibility, and launched a process to review and clarify accessibility procedures, especially academic accommodations (see also Section D.1.). These questions concern all universities, and I take this opportunity to underscore the importance of providing students and employees of the University with the tools they need to clearly identify issues and understand decision-making criteria.

It is essential to pay special attention to barriers affecting students with certain chronic conditions, whether physical, psychological or mental. These situations are partly characterized by their invisibility, their relative unpredictability and by how difficult it can be for a person to take certain steps when problems arise.

For example, a person may have difficulty in contacting administration within the prescribed time limits to request an extension, obtain a retroactive withdrawal or submit a medical certificate. Or that person could be asked to submit medical notes for a condition already documented with central accommodation services. If a condition is chronic, it is thus especially important to consider the role of proactive accommodations (which eliminate structural barriers before they occur) as well as retroactive accommodations.

Observations

In the absence of clear procedures, I observed that some students make accommodation requests too late. Or they submit them informally to their professor. If the request is unsuccessful, the student may then lack the tools to appeal (for example, because of missing documentation), but at the same time, the professor, administrator or appeal committee may not necessarily have the relevant information to determine which requests pertain to a protected right under Ontario's Human Rights Code.

Another obstacle occurs when a person requests an exception (to an academic or administrative rule) without clearly articulating the request as an accommodation or human rights matter. Even if the request includes documentation, the responding employee may not recognize the issues involved.

For example, a student was initially denied a retroactive withdrawal and another was initially denied a place in residence. In both cases, the student had documented the medical condition and explained the attendant circumstances in writing. In both cases, the situation was resolved after appeal or third-party intervention.

These situations illustrate

- the need for clear procedures so that students can reliably identify issues;
- the importance of guiding employees to process these requests effectively and fairly.

Recommendation

A review of existing procedures (see D.1) will help clarify current procedures and make these situations easier to process. At the same time, it is important to continue developing tools adapted to the needs of students and employees, while taking into account the various decision-making levels and the range of services that can lead to an accommodation.

More specifically, it is important to:

- consider the role of retroactive academic accommodations and clarify the criteria for ensuring fairness in this area
- sufficiently integrate procedures to foster the academic and non-academic accommodations that a student needs to fully participate
- continue to raise employee awareness about how to recognize accommodation issue, when to consider modifying their analysis and whom to consult on appropriately applying relevant criteria.

2. Admissions

The applicants for admission who contact the Office of the Ombudsperson every year include many who are referred to specific University web pages for answers to their questions, and to InfoAdmission services, the International Office and units that deliver master's or doctoral programs.

This year, a number of applicants for admission informed us of two types of problem. First of all, some people had trouble when they tried to upload documents, like transcripts, for submission to the University. For example, some applicants had uploaded several separate documents at once. After verification by University employees (which can take several weeks, depending on the time of year), they received a message informing them that their file was incomplete and asking them to submit the same documents again.

After discussing the matter with Admissions staff, I was told that the University had already identified this problem, which was caused by new software. Admissions staff indicated that more specific document uploading instructions would be available to applicants in the future.

Secondly, some people wanted to appeal a decision but said they had not received clear instructions on the procedure to follow. For example, they did not know where to address an appeal or what criteria governed an appeal. The website did not provide clear information or forms regarding the possibility of filing an appeal. Moreover, if an appeal was unsuccessful, they failed to comprehend how a fair decision could be reached if the procedure was managed and handed down by the same people who made the initial decision.

In fact, decisions about university admissions are not subject to appeal in every case. At the University of Ottawa, such decisions are open to review in two kinds of situations:

- If mistakes were made or if additional information becomes available that could change the outcome of the University's evaluation.
- If a person can document extenuating circumstances beyond that person's control, such as an illness that affected certain academic results.

When I asked for clarifications about reconsideration or appeal procedures, I learned that the University was in the process of establishing a proactive procedure to document extenuating circumstances at the time an admission application is filed. Applicants for admission will still be able to request a review of decisions in the event of an error or new information, such as more recent grades.



Comments

I would like to thank the Admissions officers who took the time to explain the existing system and future changes to me. Admission to a university is not guaranteed to individuals who meet the requirements published by the institution. Other factors may affect outcomes, such as space in a program, the date of the application or, in more competitive programs, the files of other applicants.

To avoid delay, confusion or a sense of unfairness, it is important to provide clear and accessible information about the procedures available, including whether it is possible to appeal a decision. A significant amount of the confusion and delays that some applicants encountered this year will be eliminated by the development of more specific instructions for document uploading and a process to document extenuating circumstances at the time of the admission application.

Recommendation

I also recommend that the website clarify what review or appeal procedures are available for admission decisions. The existing procedure seems to consist of a verification and re-evaluation (including the submission of additional information), rather than a strict “appeal” procedure. Furthermore, in the minds of many, the word “appeal” suggests a mechanism (such as a committee) separate from Admission Services. The website should include sufficiently clear information for applicants to understand what mechanisms are available, at what level decisions are made and what criteria govern review or appeal procedures.

3. U-pass re-activation

In May 2017, the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa (SFUO) introduced a pilot project involving U-Pass renewal kiosks. However, the system ran into problems in 2017-18, and several students contacted the Ombudsperson in May 2018. Their card (which they tried to renew at the kiosk) would not work on the buses, and they could not get clear information from their student association to correct the problem.

A temporary solution devised by the SFUO and the public transit companies was to extend the “period of grace” during which bus drivers permitted students to use the bus without renewing their pass. However, while technology services looked for a solution to the problem, some students and drivers remained oblivious to the special exception, which led to frustration and additional costs during the period in question.

The students who contacted the Ombudsperson were generally the ones who had not been able to reach the SFUO office and had not received the U-Pass update sent out by the SFUO. Some were on CO-OP placements in the region (and therefore unavailable during office hours). Others were master’s or doctoral students who were not on the SFUO mailing list. Furthermore, they had no social media account, while the SFUO relied heavily on this type of platform for its updates.

The Ombudsperson’s recommendations centred on the following:

- Print out updates and post them near reloading stations, along with SFUO office hours.
- Post office hours on the office door, update them on the SFUO site and include them in messages (email, Facebook) sent to students.

- Forward any U-pass updates immediately to the GSAÉD (representing University of Ottawa graduate students) to have it forward the information to its members.
- Add any U-Pass or office hours updates to the U-Pass program webpage: <http://sfuo.ca/upass>

Response from the SFUO representative (May 2018)

"I have carefully read all of your recommendations and I agree with your suggestions. The situation currently confronting students is frustrating for us in the Federation as well. We will review our crisis communication protocol to prevent this situation from recurring."

Ombudsperson's comment

I thank the SFUO for its response to my suggestions and its willingness to review and improve its communication protocol and update its site. Starting in fall 2018, we hope that card loading will proceed without the problems experienced in 2017-18. However, when a problem arises, the SFUO serves as an intermediary between students (at the undergraduate, master's or doctoral levels) and OC Transpo and the STO. To spare members of the SFUO and GSAÉD additional costs and loss of time, it is vital that the solutions implemented be communicated effectively and promptly.



D. Follow-up on recommendations from past years

1. Development and review of policies and regulations on the protection of human rights

The Ombudsperson had raised questions about processes for accessibility, discrimination complaint management, academic accommodation and retroactive withdrawal requests. Past recommendations stressed the urgency of clarifying the framework and procedures for responding to discrimination complaints filed by students (including revision of Policy 67a and Procedures 36-1 and 36-2 in light of the new regulation on the prevention of sexual violence) and the need to adopt an accessibility policy and develop academic accommodation procedures.

In its response, the University had underscored the need to review all human rights policies to account for new requirements and changes arising from provincial legislation and decisions by Ontario's Human Rights Commission.

The 2016-17 Annual Report also raised the issue of the "all-or-nothing" policy used to respond to requests for retroactive withdrawal (i.e. refusing to grant a retroactive withdrawal unless the student agreed to withdraw from all courses during the period in question). The Ombudsperson asked the University to remind academic units that an absolute "all-or-nothing" policy would be discriminatory, and that each request must be examined based on its merits.

University update

To clarify that each retroactive withdrawal request must be examined on its merits, foregoing any absolute "all-or-nothing" practice (May 2018):

"The Associate Vice-President, Programs will send a memo about retroactive withdrawal requests to the Vice-Deans, Undergraduate and Graduate Studies in June 2018. The Vice-President Academic will follow-up on the matter with the Deans."

On the other items raised by the Ombudsperson (August 2018):

"Over the past year, the Office of Human Rights, the University Secretariat and other units involved continued to work on creating a coherent framework in which all members of the university community are required to refrain from acts of harassment and discrimination."

Policy 67a - Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination and its Procedures 36-1 and 36-2 are (...) under review to unify methods for students and employees, establish a process for managing systemic discrimination complaints and harmonize Policy 67a with the Professionalism Policy of the Faculty of Medicine.

(...) In February 2018, the Board of Governors of the University of Ottawa (the University) passed Policy 119 on Accessibility [which] sets down the guidelines that the University has established to achieve the objectives of Ontario's accessibility legislation and defines roles and responsibilities for accessibility matters.

The Office of Human Rights, in collaboration with the Student Academic Success Service (SASS) and the Legal Counsel Office, is currently working on a policy governing academic accommodation. The policy should be submitted for approval by the various authorities in the fall of 2018.

(...) Every year, SASS offers services to over 2,000 students with disabilities with well established procedures and guidelines. Furthermore, the above parties, in cooperation with relevant faculties and services, processed many academic accommodations under Policy 119 on Accessibility which stipulates the obligation to accommodate our educational services in a timely manner for students with a disability, and under Policy 67a which specifies the obligation to prevent and intervene in cases of discrimination on grounds prohibited by Ontario's Human Rights Code.



The University also worked on applying the various discrimination and harassment policies by training its employees on how to manage complaints and by offering members of its community relevant training programs. (...) Several staff training sessions were held with high participation rates."

Ombudsperson's comments

I appreciate the work in progress on these complex and urgent issues. I have included additional comments on this matter in Section C.1, and I hope to participate in consultations on draft policy and procedures before they are adopted.

2. Adherence to the regulation on academic fraud

In her last report, the Ombudsperson focused attention on the importance of ensuring compliance with Policy 14 on academic fraud. After the University indicated that a working group would start meeting in June 2017, the Ombudsperson referred to her 2015-16 Annual Report, which identified practices that violated the Policy. She also underscored the importance of considering these issues in relation to undergraduate and graduate studies.

University update (summer 2018)

"The working group on academic fraud process and governance (...) met four times. (...) It conducted a comparative analysis of five other Canadian universities, specifically to identify approaches in educational intervention; it documented the various governance practices used by faculties and identified documents useful in creating a guide to best practices for three target groups: professors, inquiry committee members and deans' delegates.

It also compiled a file containing various communications sent to students about academic integrity on our campus [and] gathered the same type of awareness documents from other universities for comparative purposes and to update our communications in this area (content and preferred medium).

(...) [It] launched a review of Regulation 14, introducing clarifications about the "educational approach" as well as a group of sanctions that professors could recommend. It also drafted guidelines for inquiry committee members and deans' delegates.

Finally, adherence to the regulation and its interpretation will be monitored annually, specifically through a future guide to practices and procedures. [The] working group consists of the Vice-Deans of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, representatives of each level of study, the Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and the Associate Vice-President, Programs (...) The group [will present] a draft of its work to the Director of the Student Rights Centre to gather the Centre's comments and obtain its expertise in terms of the support it provides to students."

Ombudsperson's comments

I thank the working group members for the attention they are paying to these questions and would be pleased to comment on the draft once it becomes available.



3. Clarification or application of other University regulations

During summer 2018, the University also offered updates on the following items from the 2016-17 ombudsman report.

- a) Communication of the right to appeal a decision

"Over the past year, the University Secretariat identified nine times that students had not been informed of their right to appeal to the Senate Appeals Committee. A written reminder was issued to all Faculties concerned, and follow-up calls were made to the persons in charge. The Secretariat also pointed out that, by the authority of the Senate Appeals Committee, any decision made following the application of an academic regulation is subject to appeal."

The Ombudsperson also notes that the last annual report of the Senate Appeals Committee had identified the performance of each Faculty in relation to this obligation, and thanks the University for instituting this verification.

- b) Credit transfers with Carleton University

The recommendation was to clarify the policy, relevant forms and the interpretation of requirements leading to credit transfer between both institutions, and to indicate whether grades obtained at Carleton University are to appear on the University of Ottawa transcript.

"The "letter of permission" form has been reviewed and updated. The Faculties were informed about the procedure to be followed in the fall of 2018. The form for credit transfers with Carleton is now on line. All of the desired clarifications and modifications to the forms were reported to the Associate Vice-President, Programs."

- c) Revision of grades - Group work

The recommendation was to clarify how to request a grade revision, whether the assignment was an individual or group assignment.

"Following the last meeting of the academic year with the Vice-Deans (June 7, 2018), an amendment will be submitted to make this clarification. Similarly, guidelines will be developed for professors to remind them of the importance of detailing any instructions regarding the correction of group assignments. These guidelines will be distributed at the start of the fall 2018 academic year."

- d) Revision of grades - Clarification or withdrawal of the obligation to contact the professor

"Regulation 10.3 has been amended to take account of the Ombudsperson's recommendations. The amendment was approved by the Council on Undergraduate Studies and then by the Senate Executive in the spring of 2018. The amendment recommendations should have been examined at the Senate meeting on May 14, 2018, but the meeting was cancelled after the quorum was not met. In the meantime, this has allowed us to meet with students concerned about two other aspects of this regulation. Their observations will be discussed at the June 7, 2018 meeting with the Vice-Deans. Possible amendments to this regulation will then be submitted to the Council on Undergraduate Studies at its first fall 2018 meeting."

e) Retroactive application of program requirement changes

The recommendation was to expand the scope of the wording used in the protected rights clause to include students admitted to the University prior to the fall of 2016 and affected by changes in certain academic policies.

"This situation no longer requires systemic intervention. When the Senate approved the wording on protected rights with respect to academic performance in 2015, Strategic Enrollment Management estimated that 36 students would be affected by the changes at the time. Since most were registered with the Faculty of Engineering, the protected rights clause was applied for these students. For students in other Faculties, exceptions were made. Soon, these amendments will no longer affect any students. Any rare exceptions will therefore continue to be addressed in this way."

f) Requirements for honours degree in Criminology

The recommendation was to have the Senate correct or confirm the requirement for a 7.0 average.

"The administrator of undergraduate programs of the Faculty of Social Sciences confirmed in April 2018 that the CGPA of 7.0 required by the Criminology Department had been withdrawn."

g) Master's research paper

The recommendation was to clarify and standardize conditions governing the steps and fees applicable to master's students writing a research paper (rather than a thesis).

"The working group met in the spring of 2018. Analyses are in progress to gain a better understanding of the situation facing each academic unit. The working group's efforts continue, and it hopes to submit a recommendation to the Council on Graduate Studies this fall."

h) Tuition fees - Domestic students born outside Canada

"Last February we implemented a new process to verify an applicant's status before fee statements are issued. To this end, we contact applicants whose status has not been verified and ask them to submit proof of citizenship, warning them that if we do not receive proof they will be charged international fees."

i) Development of a protocol for responding to situations in which a student's behaviour poses a danger to self or others

"A series of discussions were held and changes were made to the draft guidelines to support students with at-risk behaviours."

Consultation on this document continues and the proposed deadline for its publication is November 15.

Ombudsperson's comments

I thank the University for this update regarding completion or progress on many issues. I will be happy to follow-up as needed.



4. Accessibility fund of the SFUO

The last report by the Ombudsperson expressed concerns over limited access to the SFUO Accessibility Fund by student association members with a disability, as well as the lack of available information on the fund's existence and the way it operates.

The report recommended changes to the SFUO website to provide clear information about the Fund's existence, the procedure for submitting a request for funding and the applicable criteria. It also recommended disseminating information to SFUO members about the Fund's existence, maximizing use of the Fund by members, and submitting an annual report on use of the funds, including the number of requests and their disposition.

The SFUO responded that the Fund would be publicized on the SFUO site and on the site of the Centre for Students with Disabilities, including the online forms. It also said that employees of the Centre and SFUO Reception would be equipped with printed copies of the forms and terms of reference, and would be able to answer requests for information.

During the summer 2018 follow-up on this matter, I noticed that printable forms were available on line, but a website update was needed to make this information easy to find. During the same follow-up, I learned that the SFUO was developing an online system to include information on all SFUO funding available, and to manage funding requests.

Recommendation

In the meantime, I recommended that the SFUO site and the Centre's site be updated prior to September 2018 to include detailed terms of reference about the Accessibility Fund and a link to the form. The information should be placed in a visible location under the "Services" and/or "Resources" headings of the sites to make it easy for members to consult. I have also requested clarifications on the existence of annual reports on use of the Accessibility Fund, including the number and disposition of requests, as recommended in the Ombudsperson's 2016-17 report.



Appendix A : Other statistics on our services

Table 6. Feedback on Our Services

	Yes	No
Was it easy to find the Office of the Ombudsperson?	30	5
Did you receive a quick reply to your email, telephone message or letter?	33	5
Was the role of the Office of the Ombudsperson explained to you clearly?	34	4
If you asked that your name not be released, was your concern handled in a confidential manner by the Ombudsperson office?	25	4
Did the Ombudsperson demonstrate impartiality (objectivity) in reviewing your concerns?	34	5
Did the Ombudsperson handle your concern fairly?	36	4
Were you treated with respect?	37	1
Would you contact the Office of the Ombudsperson again?	34	2

Table 7. Feedback on Our Services

Why did you contact the Office of the Ombudsperson?	
To acquire information	16
To get advice	19
To facilitate communication with others	12
To determine if I had been treated fairly	23
To discuss options or alternatives so that I could handle the problem myself	18
For the Ombudsperson to intervene and to assist with the resolution of the problem	23



Table 8. Official Language Used

Official Language Used	French	English
All persons who consulted us	21.6%	78.4%
Students who consulted us	30.6%	69.4%
Students enrolled in University of Ottawa (Fall 2016)*	31%	69 %

* <http://www.uOttawa.ca/institutional-research-planning/resources/facts-figures/quick-facts>

Table 9. Gender

Gender	Male	Female	Other
All persons who consulted us	40.9%	58.8%	0.3%
Students who consulted us	47.9%	51.9%	0.2%
Students enrolled in University of Ottawa (Fall 2016)*	41.64%	58.35%	--

* <http://www.uOttawa.ca/institutional-research-planning/resources/facts-figures/quick-facts>

Table 10. Students – Faculty Distribution (total 318)

Faculty	Students who consulted us	Students registered in University of Ottawa (Fall 2016)*
Arts	7.6%	12.9%
Common Law	7.2%	5.2%
Civil Law	1.9%	
Telfer School of Management	5.3%	11.6%
Education	2.8%	4.8%
Engineering	7.2%	13.1%
Medecine	1.3%	5.4%
Sciences	7.2%	11.6%
Health Sciences	14.5%	10.8%
Social Sciences	19.5%	24.6%
Unknown	25.5%	--

* <http://www.uOttawa.ca/institutional-research-planning/resources/facts-figures/quick-facts>

Table 11. Students – Level of Study (total 318)

Level of Study	Students who consulted us	Students registered in University of Ottawa (Fall 2016)*
Undergraduate	62.6%	84.7%
Master	12.6%	10.1%
PhD	9.1%	4.6%
Unknown	15.7%	--
Other	--	0.6%

* <http://www.uOttawa.ca/institutional-research-planning/resources/facts-figures/quick-facts>

Table 12. Students – Categories (total 318)

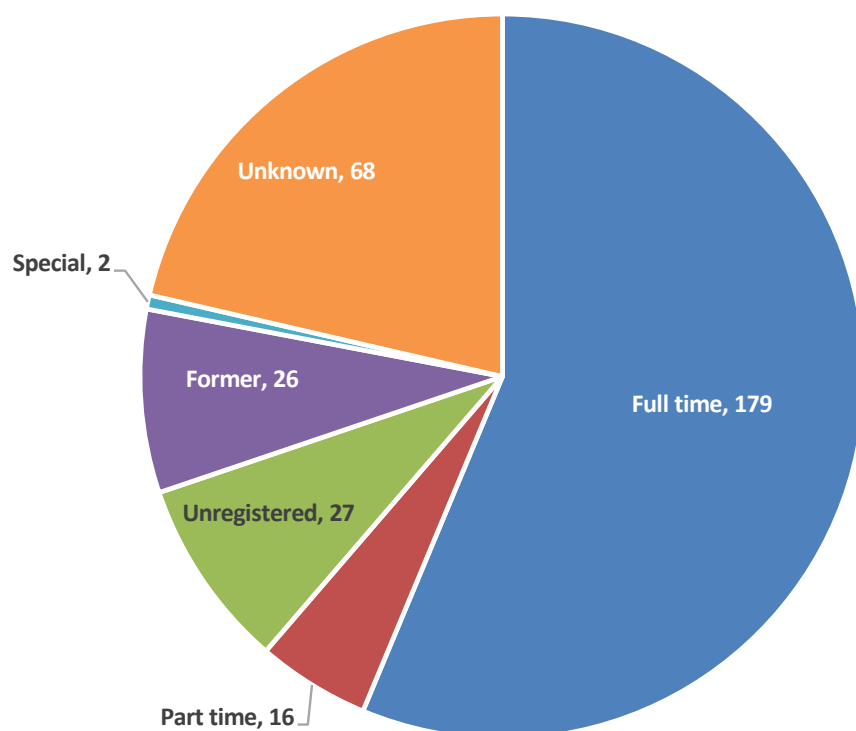


Table 13. Services Offered by Type of Person

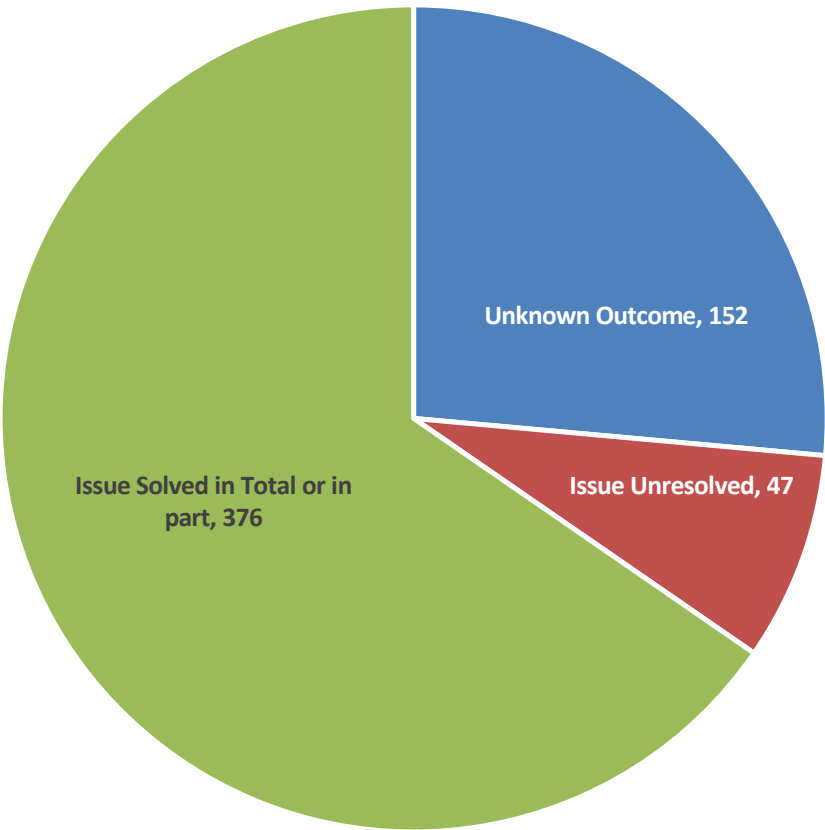
Service	Student				Personnel	Other	Total
	Undergrad	Master	PhD	Unregistered/Former/ Special/Unknown			
Formal Complaint Examination	2	0	0	4	0	0	6
Information	78	16	9	39	6	134	282
Coaching	12	8	5	9	6	2	42
Referral	72	17	10	53	6	192	350
Facilitation	3	1	0	0	0	1	5
Communication Bridge	29	1	1	9	0	4	44
Problem Resolution	12	2	0	9	0	2	25
Mediation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	210	45	25	123	18	335	756

More than one service can be offered to a person.

Table 14. Formal Complaint Examination (total 6)

Type of Person	Without Recommendations	With Recommendations	Accepted in Total or in Part	Not Accepted
Students	5	1	1	0
Personnel	0	0	0	0
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	5	1	1	0

Table 15. Achieved Results - Closed Files (total 575)



44 files withdrawn

37 files refused (no jurisdiction)

The total of unknown outcomes also includes one-time requests for information or advice

