



SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

June 2011 to May 2012



Office of the
Ombudsperson
at the University of Ottawa

To the entire University community,

It is with great pleasure that I submit to you our second annual report as required under Article 8 of the Terms of Reference of the Ombudsperson.

I sincerely hope that we have been of service to those who have sought our assistance, and that the observations and suggestions we have made throughout the year will be helpful.

This report covers the period from June 1st 2011 to May 31th 2012.

Sincerely,

Lucie Allaire
Ombudsperson

October 2012



“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.”¹



¹ Bishop Desmond Tutu as quoted by Robyn Jacobson, *Managing Conflict in Education*, <http://managingconflict.ca> (accessed August 21st 2012)

Acknowledgements

There are many people who have made our work possible and immensely rewarding. First, we would like to offer our gratitude to all those individuals who sought our assistance throughout the year, students, faculty and staff; we hope that we have earned their trust and respect. We want to acknowledge the support of the members of the Ombudsperson Advisory Committee throughout the year; their wise advice and perspectives are always appreciated. Finally, our work would be impossible without the collaboration of the representatives of the University and the Student Associations. They patiently answer our questions, meet us to help resolve problems and thoughtfully consider our different viewpoints in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Thank you all.

Introduction

This is the second year for the Office of the Ombudsperson. Our work continues to be challenging and rewarding. The mandate has remained unchanged and the Terms of Reference have been confirmed by the Advisory Committee:

“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.”²

We have seen a steady increase in the number of people who have requested our services. We continue to reach out to the whole University community to make our services better known. We are satisfied with the level of awareness about our services after less than two years of operation. We have hired a COOP student in Communications to provide us with a fresh look at our communication strategy and help us reach our goal of ensuring that all are aware of the services our office can provide.



We have introduced a user feedback process to obtain useful information on our service. Because we introduced this process in the latter part of the year, the results that we are reporting come from a small number of respondents. Most express satisfaction with our approach and have positive comments to share with us.

We have read the new Strategic Plan of the University of Ottawa, Destination 2020, to understand the direction the institution is taking and to see how we could offer our contribution to these goals. We are particularly interested in the first goal: “A rich, inspiring student experience.”³ The plan identifies 19 separate activities to reach this goal, and in this report, we are offering suggestions in relation to two of these: 1) activity no. 14, “provide a learning environment that supports the growth of all students, including first-generation students and students with disabilities”, and 2) activity no. 16, “offer more quality online services, making information clear, timely and readily accessible with efficient communications.”⁴

In our report this year, we make recommendations to improve how allegations of academic fraud are managed by the University and we offer as well a number of recommendations to ensure that the process of providing the required accommodation to students with disabilities is more responsive.

² University of Ottawa, <http://web5.uottawa.ca/admingov/ombuds-terms.html>

³ University of Ottawa, Destination 2020, <http://destination2020.uottawa.ca/home.html>

⁴ University of Ottawa, Destination 2020, <http://destination2020.uottawa.ca/home.html>

Making our services known to the University community and connecting to the outside community

We conducted a number of presentations to different groups during the year to continue to provide information on our services. For instance, we met with the Counselling Services unit in February 2012, we provided a presentation for new students to the Liaison Office and we participated in a kiosk during Pride week in March 2012. Our brochures are distributed to all students in residence at the beginning of the school year. We had a presence during SFUO's Winter Challenge and la Guerre des tuques in February 2012. We had a kiosk during the President's brunch in September 2011. We welcome all invitations to present the services that we can offer, or training sessions on conflict resolution. In May 2012, we organized a workshop delivered by Dr Jean-Luc Leblanc on the prevention of Compassion fatigue, where both officials from the University and from the Student association participated. Caregivers, and there are many working in this capacity within the University, are vulnerable to the stress of supporting others in need and this workshop was an eye opener for all the participants.

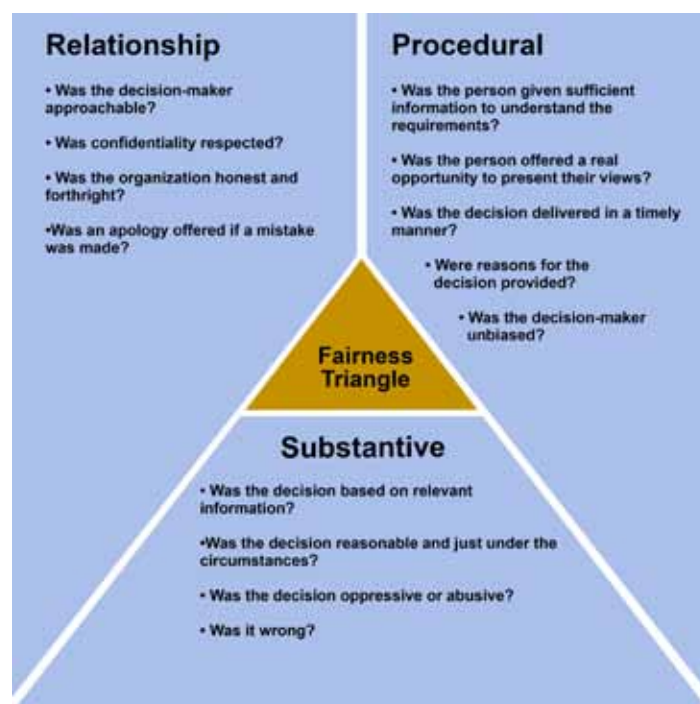
We believe that it is important to keep abreast of the development in the world of ombudsperson across the country and to continue to sharpen our skills and knowledge. To this end, we attended meetings of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) and the Forum of Canadian Ombudspersons (FCO); we attended training in investigation techniques and approaches as well as a webinar offered by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) on bullying and harassment. The Ombudsperson is now a member of the Executive of the ACCUO and will do her best to contribute to the advancement of the role of ombudspersons in higher education.

As members of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO), we have adopted the new Standards of Practice adopted by the association in 2012.⁵ We have been operating under those same principles and have contributed to the development of the Standards.

What is fairness?

If achieving fairness were as simple as giving everyone the same thing, Ombudspersons would not exist! What is fairness? When is a decision that affects us or others unfair? We have all experienced situations in our lives when we felt that we had been treated unfairly. From our childhood, we can remember times when we felt that something was not right or reasonable; that we were not getting our fair share. Everyone can recall situations when "it" happened to us or others around us. When we read the newspapers we are confronted everyday with situations in our community and throughout the world that we consider unfair.

There is no single and simple answer and the beginning of an answer is probably "it depends." To guide us in our practice at the Office of the Ombudsperson at the University, we have adopted a model developed by the Ombudsman of Saskatchewan. We hope that this model may be of interest to you. We have adapted it with our colleague's permission and present it to you below. This model presents an overview of fairness from three aspects: Procedural, Relationship, and Substantive, includes some of the questions we look into when we examine a complaint.



⁵ ACCUO <http://www.uwo.ca/Ombuds/assoc.htm> (accessed August 21st 2012)

Update on Last Year's Recommendations

In last year's report, for the period 2010-2011, we made recommendations concerning the U-Pass, the full participation of students with an auditory disability and the issue of procedural fairness in the examination of complaints of discrimination. We followed up with both the SFUO and the University to see what had been done since.

I: OC Transpo Universal Transit Pass

The complete update from SFUO can be found on our website, in the Publication section.

A new contract was negotiated following the 2012 referendum in which students voted to continue the program. The new price is now \$180.00 per semester. SFUO who also manages the program for the GSAÉD, reports that they have implemented our recommendation to exempt students who live outside the OCTranspo territory to opt out of the program. As we had pointed out last year, these students had very little if any opportunity to use the services they were asked to pay for.

Secondly, SFUO continues to pursue requesting exemptions for students who have disabilities that prevent them from being able to use public transit; they rightfully identify this as a human rights issue. The procedure in place currently requires the approval of OCTranspo; it appears to be a very time consuming and burdensome process for those students who need this type of exemption. The criteria imposed by OC Transpo, namely that the student be unable to take public transportation is, in my view, overly restrictive and unfair. The requirements of university life, such as frequent shifting between buildings or campuses, irregular schedule unlike a typical workplace situation, must be considered in granting exemptions. We continue to believe that process improvements are necessary to be fair to those few students who cannot reasonably be expected to take public transportation and meet their academic needs.

As far as students from the STO territory were concerned, SFUO is committed and hopeful that a similar kind of program can be put in place for the students who live in the Outaouais. It must be recognized that managing a universal transit pass program across provincial and municipal boundaries is a complex job requiring negotiations at many different levels.

II: Issue of procedural fairness in the examination of complaints of discrimination

The complete response from the University can be found on our website, in the Publication section.

The University has now implemented a new policy regarding the prevention of discrimination and harassment, Policy 67a. As well, administrative procedures for the filing of both formal and informal complaints for students, staff and visitors are now in place. This is very positive, and we would like to recognize the University's focus and commitment to ensuring fairness, respect and transparency in managing these types of complaints.

III: The full participation of students with an auditory disability

We were concerned last year about students with an auditory disability who were not receiving equitable access to all services and programs and whose full participation and integration in the University community was compromised. We made nine recommendations addressed mostly to the University, and one to the SFUO.

The full responses from the University and the SFUO on this issue can be found on our website, in the Publication section.

It is encouraging to read that the University is in the process of developing a comprehensive policy and procedural guidelines. A number of accessibility committees have been put in place and we can only continue to encourage this type of initiative for all students with disabilities.

It is however disappointing that the University has not made any significant progress in increasing the number of staff who have completed the on-line awareness training currently available and requiring a minimal investment of time. As we mention later in my report, the rate of completion of faculty stood at 8.7% in March 2012. In this regard, the response of the University falls short of expectations. I had asked them to establish a timetable to reach 100%; encouraging staff doesn't appear to have been sufficient and is obviously not enough.

The University did not implement the recommendation to provide a centralized and easy accessible service for hearing-impaired students. It has indicated that the source of government funds is for credit courses only but that it does respond to requests for extracurricular activities. We would encourage the University to reconsider my recommendation in the context of the new policy and the procedures they are currently developing especially taking a proactive approach of inclusion and universal design rather than an approach of responding to requests. In our view, the structure of the sources of funding should not be the determining factor to ensure that students obtain an equitable access to all services, and that they can participate fully in the university life without obstacles.

The University reports that SASS Access services has published guidelines for accessing interpretation services for the benefit of students. As well, a new on-line tool is under development to improve relationships with customers. These are positive initiatives.

We made one recommendation to SFUO to encourage them to adopt a proactive approach. Of note, they report that they have taken the initiative to make accessibility training mandatory for all staff and board members, a very positive step. They are drafting a unified accommodation policy for the whole organisation and are researching assistive technologies for purchasing and they indicated that they have completely redesigned the website to comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These are positive initiatives and we would encourage them to establish timelines for the delivery and implementation of their different projects and initiatives and to communicate them to their membership.

Recommendations and University Response

We are suggesting to the University two areas that need attention in our opinion: the accommodation for students who have disabilities, and the examination of allegations of academic fraud. The Office of the Vice-President Academic of the University has already responded to our recommendations and we have included their response in blue after each recommendation.

a) Accommodation process for students with disabilities

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Ontario Regulation 191/11 provides Ontario universities with the regulatory framework for the accommodation of students who have disabilities. Of note, section 3 of the Regulation requires that the institutions develop, implement and maintain policies in order to achieve accessibility; sections 7 and 16 address the obligation of the university to provide training on the requirements of the accessibility standards and the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities.

As of March 2012, only 8.7% of faculty had taken the on-line course, *Service excellence includes accessibility* available at <http://www.hr.uottawa.ca/accessibility/>. This 1 ½ hour course has been offered for a few years now with very little uptake from faculty. Professors play a key role, and sometimes are the first person a student who has a disability will approach to discuss accommodation needs. Within faculties, 41% of support staff has taken this training, and in the various departments and services, 56% of staff has done so.

A few important facts to consider:

- Notably, the prevalence of disabilities within the Canadian population generally has increased from 12% in 2001 to 14% in 2006.⁶
- Depression and anxiety are the most common mental health problems faced by young people.⁷

⁶ *Persons with disabilities by age, group and sex* (2006), online: Statistics Canada <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca>. As cited by Nora Farrell, Ombudsperson at Ryerson University (Annual Report 2010-2011) <http://www.ryerson.ca/ombuds/mainsubpages/annualreports/RYERSON%20-%20ListenLearn-book-Final.pdf>

⁷ *News from Mental Health Commission of Canada "Child and Youth Special Edition (Summer, 2011)*, online: Mental Health Commission of Canada <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca>. As cited by Nora Farrell, Ombudsperson at Ryerson University (Annual Report 2010-2011)

- Consistent with this observation made by the Canadian Mental Health Commission, Dr. Michael Van Meringen, Professor of Psychiatry, McMaster University and former Co-Director of the Anxiety Disorders Clinic at McMaster University stated: “The University cohort is entering the age of risk for onset of psychological disorders. The first episodes of clinical depression, panic disorders and generalized anxiety typically manifest in the late teens or early twenties.”⁸
- The percentage of university students with disabilities in Canada using the type of services provided by the Access Service increased from 1.12% in 1991-1992 to 3.8% in 2007. It is notable that this 320% increase in usage is much higher than the 32% increase in the general student population which grew from 335,101 to 442,189 over the same time frame.⁹
- “Increasing number of disabled students- a rise of approximately 10% per year- has resulted in a backlog for the Access Service. Each specialist manages between 350 and 400 student files per year, but only has 300 one-hour appointments per term.”¹⁰

In my first annual report, I made recommendations encouraging the University to develop a comprehensive policy on accessibility and accommodation as part of my review of complaints from students who have a hearing disability. A number of those recommendations apply to all students with a disability.

There are many interesting examples in other Canadian Universities of comprehensive services to students with disabilities, typically one finds Equity and Human Rights offices and Accessibility offices. It could be interesting for the University to look into the various models followed in other institutions.

My experience this year leads me to reiterate the importance of defining accessibility and accommodation obligations and procedures in a regulation or policy that clearly sets out the responsibilities of each party and ensures that standards for accessibility and human rights are met. This year we would like to draw your attention to the needs of students with a so-called invisible disabilities, that is, a learning disability or mental health condition, areas that are still poorly understood or misunderstood. I found that in too many instances, staff members were misinformed about the University’s obligation to provide accommodation. Although the complaints that my office has received this year mostly came from students, the University would be well advised to examine its approach to accommodation and accessibility with the needs of its personnel in mind as well.

I think that, without clear direction from the University to all its personnel, the achievement of Goal 1 of your strategic plan, Destination 2020, which reads “A rich, inspiring student experience,” and specifically item 14, “provide a learning environment that supports the growth of all students, including first-generation students and students with disabilities”, will be jeopardized or at least delayed.¹¹

The current redress processes do not always handle situations arising from the accommodation procedure in an adequate or timely manner. Because the process requires too much time, or decision makers do not have access to expertise in the area of human rights and specifically accessibility, or respective roles are not understood or the procedure is poorly defined, student’s accommodation needs are not always well addressed in the accommodation process in place. As was proposed in last year’s report, the 2007 Accessibility Plan needs to be updated and should specifically address the needs of students with a so-called invisible disability.

⁸ Julia Belluz, “The kids aren’t all right; millennials are the most stressed teens ever – but they’re finding help” *Maclean’s Guide to Canadian Universities (Annual 2011)* 56, As cited by Nora Farrell, Ombudsperson at Ryerson University (Annual Report 2010-2011) <http://www.ryerson.ca/ombuds/mainsubpages/annualreports/RYERSON%20-%20ListenLearn-book-Final.pdf>

⁹ Council of Ontario Universities “COU Submission to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, *Every Door is the Right Door: Towards a 10-Year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy*” (12 March 2010), COU No. 838 4. As cited by Nora Farrell, Ombudsperson at Ryerson University (Annual Report 2010-2011) <http://www.ryerson.ca/ombuds/mainsubpages/annualreports/RYERSON%20-%20ListenLearn-book-Final.pdf>

¹⁰ SASS, Activity Report 2009-2011, University of Ottawa, <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/about/report.php> (accessed August 21st 2012)

¹¹ University of Ottawa, Destination 2020, <http://destination2020.uottawa.ca/home.html>

Recommendations

The University should adopt a comprehensive policy that defines the procedures regarding accessibility, accommodation and human rights for students with a disability, including those with learning disabilities and mental health issues. The policy should set out roles and responsibilities to ensure respect for human rights and provide for training of all the personnel.

To properly respond to conflicts or problems that may arise, the University should establish a separate, adapted and efficient redress process to resolve accommodation issues. Alternatively, it should require that specialized expertise in this field be provided to existing redress panels when they are dealing with human rights and accommodation issues.

The University should update its Accessibility Plan with respect to the needs of students with invisible disabilities, that is, a learning disability or mental health accommodation requirements. The plan should include the need to train personnel in accordance with the requirements of sections 7 and 16 of the Ontario Regulation 191/11 mentioned above.

University Response: *We are currently reviewing all our procedures related to accommodations and will be establishing within a reasonable timeframe a comprehensive policy that will address all aspects of accessibility.*

b) Process for handling allegations of academic fraud

Having reviewed our files involving allegations of academic fraud, I recommend that improvements be made to the process for investigating and dealing with such allegations. The following recommendations address procedural concerns as well as the need to better inform Canadian and International students about rules, definitions and procedures.

The process and requirements related to academic fraud is covered in Academic Regulation 14.2. The website of the University of Ottawa Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost contains the useful Academic Integrity website at: <http://web5.uottawa.ca/mcs-smc/academicintegrity/home.php> .

This website contains important information for all students, yet none of the students who came to see me knew about this website. The website is not in an obvious location, making it hard to find unless you use the search field on the home page. Without using the search field, you must know the University's organizational structure and click seven links to get to the website. Some faculties, such as the Faculty of Arts, have put a link on their home page, but most do not mention the website. Some professors have started to include a reference to the regulations in their course outlines, which automatically provides the information to every student.

Recommendation: *That the University draw attention to the Academic Integrity website on the University's home page and ask each Faculty to include the link to this site on their respective home page. Include a reference to the Academic Integrity website in letters from the Dean informing students about allegations of academic fraud made against them.*

University Response: *In the fall of 2012, we will work with the Communications Directorate to increase the visibility of the Academic Integrity Web site on the University's as well as faculties' home pages. In addition, the letters informing students of the academic fraud allegations brought against them will also be modified to include this important information. We are currently developing a new Academic Regulations Explained Web site that will facilitate the interpretation of academic regulations. This site, which will be launched in the next few weeks, will be more readily accessible to students since it will be included in the new "Students" Web page as well as in uoZone.*

In a number of cases, I found inexplicable and unreasonable delays in various steps of the investigation process. In one case, a student waited over a year to find out that the Dean was dismissing the allegations made against him and, since he was only at step 1 of the procedure, he had not yet seen the allegations. In a number of other cases, the review process took months to complete. Expected timeframes need to be established for each step of the procedure to prevent this kind of problem. Students are greatly affected by allegations of academic fraud, and that must be taken into account in the allegation review process.

Recommendation: *The University should establish and publish the expected timeframe for each step of the procedure to prevent unreasonable delays, and take the necessary steps to ensure that they are adhered to.*

University Response: *As part of the Regulation on Academic Fraud review that will be undertaken this year, we will examine the possibility of modifying this regulation so as to include deadlines for each step of the process. A subcommittee of the Council on Undergraduate Studies was established in March 2012 and is currently examining the operationalization of this regulation and the challenges involved.*

Under the existing procedure, the Dean informs the student about the allegation in writing if a preliminary review shows that the allegation is founded, step 1 of the process. By then, the student has often found out unofficially from the professor that an allegation has been made, but does not necessarily know any details. The student is not heard at this step of the process. This step is reasonable and useful only if it is completed quickly, in a few days. If the allegation calls for a longer, more detailed review, I think students should be informed in writing.

To spend weeks or even months waiting for the Dean's decision is highly stressful for the student and can significantly hinder academic success.

Recommendation: *The first step of the process should take no more than a few days. If that is not the case, the student should be informed in writing about the nature of the allegation and should be given the opportunity to be heard within a reasonable period of time as specified in the established timeframes.*

University Response: *As part of the Regulation on Academic Fraud review that will be undertaken this year, we will examine the possibility of modifying this regulation so as to include reasonable deadlines for informing students of the allegations brought against them. A subcommittee of the Council on Undergraduate Studies is currently examining the operationalization of this regulation and the challenges involved.*

I met a number of international students facing allegations of academic fraud, some of whom had been in Canada for only a few months. Education systems vary widely from country to country, and so do the procedures for handling academic fraud. The University must do everything possible to ensure that international students understand the rules that apply here, and international students must pay attention and become better informed. It is in everyone's interest. The International Office could take on a greater role in informing international students, complementing the work done by the faculties that recruit and welcome them. The home page of the International Office does not mention academic fraud or contain any information on useful links or resources, a missed opportunity in our view.

Recommendation: *The University should assess the needs of international students with regard to academic fraud regulations and create communication products that target international students. The International Office should include information and a link to the Academic Integrity website on its home page, and strive to adequately inform international students.*

University Response: *In the fall, the International Office will start assessing international students' specific needs in this regard and will identify ways of informing them about the applicable academic regulations.*

In some cases I found inconsistencies in the application of Regulation 14.2. In one case, after the Dean had dismissed the allegations, a grade review process was conducted, which is not provided for in the regulation. In another case, the committee investigating the allegation was informed that the student had already gone through the accelerated process, which is contrary to the regulation.

Recommendation: *The University should remind all personnel who manage the process of allegations of academic fraud, of the expectations regarding the process and the application of regulation 14.2.*

University Response: *A subcommittee of the Council on Undergraduate Studies is currently analyzing the operationalization of this regulation and the challenges involved. In the fall, this subcommittee will examine a communication process for informing all stakeholders involved of the various aspects of Regulation 14.2.*

of all emails to avoid any misunderstandings about expectations and services.

Some of the people who have written to us have said:

“The staff was amazing; courteous, helpful, respectful, empathetic”.

“The ombudsperson gave excellent advice and she was very welcoming and easy to talk to.”

“I want to thank the Ombudsperson that helped a great deal. We felt that she helped clarify questions and gave a good direction to our problem. Thanks again for your great help.”

We take this opportunity to remind the reader that our services are strictly confidential, and that we strive to be easy to reach and easy to talk to. There is no need to fill out forms to talk to us, a simple phone call or email is enough.

Statistics and Highlights

All statistics, other than those relating to case volume in Table 2, relate to data gathered from our closed files. A total of 375 files were closed during this period.

We are including some comparisons with our statistics from last year but the reader needs to take into consideration that last year’s report covered a period of 9 months whereas this year’s report covers 12 months.

Feedback from our clients, your opinion really matters to us

In March 2012, we introduced a simple and confidential process to obtain feedback from our clients. We invite our clients to fill out a questionnaire that takes just a few minutes to complete. The feedback we receive is very useful.

Table 1 reports the feedback from the 16 respondents. Overall, the results indicate that we are accessible and that we have responded to the issues brought to our office in a satisfactory manner. The majority of respondents would contact us again, a very positive indication to us.

The feedback we received led us to change our practice of not responding to emails when we are addressed in the CC section of the email only. We now acknowledge receipt

Table 1: Results from Clients’ Feedback (March 1st-May 31st, 2012)

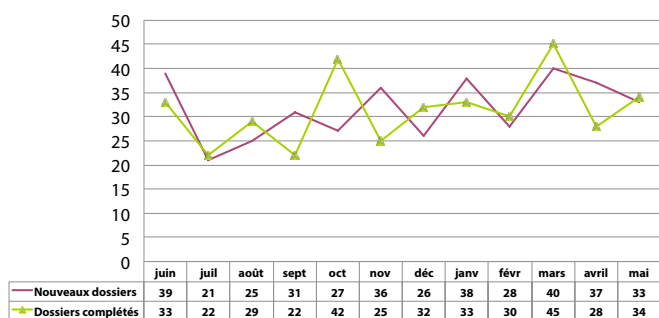
Question	Yes	No
1. Was it easy to find the Office of the Ombudsperson ?	16	0
2. Did you receive a quick reply to your email, telephone message, or letter ?	14	2
3. Was the role of the Office of the Ombudsperson explained to you clearly ?	14	2
4. If requested, was your concern handled in a confidential manner by the Ombudsperson office ?	14	0
5. Did the Ombudsperson and the staff demonstrate impartiality (i.e. objectivity) in reviewing your concerns ?	13	3
6. Did the Ombudsperson staff handle your concerns fairly ?	14	2
7. Were you treated with respect ?	14	2
8. Would you contact the Office of the Ombudsperson again ?	14	2

1. Case volume

We carried over 21 files from the previous year, opened 381 new files and completed 375. The breakdown by month is shown in Table 2. We were able to respond to requests within reasonable time limits, as also reflected in our clients' response to question 2 in Table 1. Last year we closed 174 files over a period of 9 months, compared to 375 for a full year, an increase showing that we have become better known in the university community.

Similar to what took place last year, some cases took only a few days such as those seeking information while others took several weeks or months when the matter presented is more complex, for instance when examining a formal complaint.

Table 2: Open and Closed Files per month



Total files opened 381
Total files closed 375

2. Profile of our clients

A. Official languages

We used English in 241 cases and French in 134. This ratio seems to be consistent with that of last year.

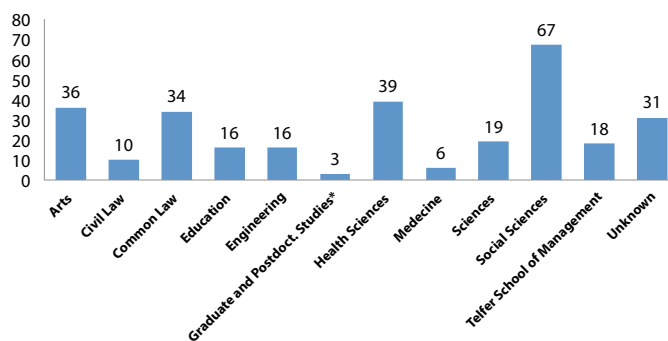
B. Gender

Significantly more women than men asked for our services, 232 women and 134 men. This is a notable increase from last year's gender figure.

C. Student/staff breakdown

As is expected, the majority of persons who came to us were students: 295 student cases and 48 staff cases. As we noted in our previous report, this is explained in part by the fact that staff members are mostly 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 population of students.

Table 3: Faculty Distribution of Students (total 295)



3. Students who consulted us

We completed a total of 295 files with student clients. As was the case last year, most of these cases involved visits by individual students. In only a few instances, a few students came to see us together for the same reason.

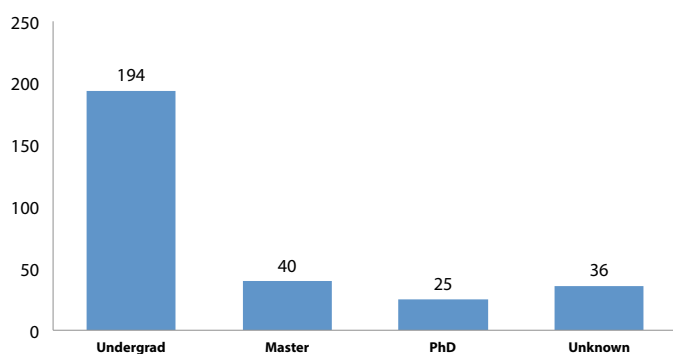
A. Faculty distribution

Table 3 shows the breakdown of student clients by faculty. The majority of our students came from the Faculty of Social Sciences, which is the faculty with the largest number of students, then came the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Law, Common Law section. 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 programs that have asked for services since most students in graduate studies identify themselves with the Faculty of their discipline. We are very pleased to see an increase in the number of visits from each Faculty, and would like to increase our visibility in all faculties and departments particularly those who are off the main campus.

B. Level of study

Table 4 shows that the majority of the students (194) were undergraduate students; 65 were from the graduate programs. In 36 cases, we did not record the level of study most likely because the problem was not academic in nature. In most cases and as was the case last year, problems presented by graduate students are more complex and they take a longer time to resolve.

Table 4: Students by Level of Study (total 295)

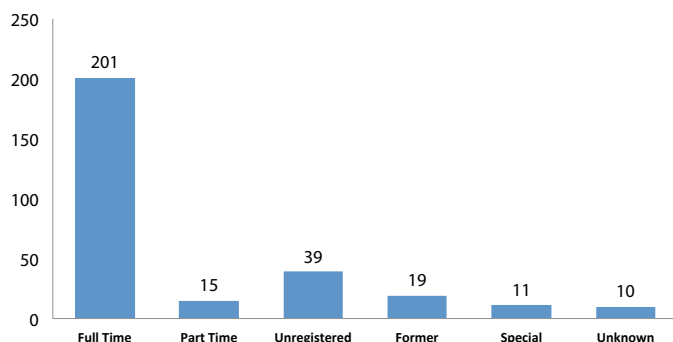


* Graduate students identify their faculty of discipline.

C. Student category

As Table 5 shows, the vast majority of our clients were full time students as was the case last year. We saw 19 alumni who found us through the website, which remains the main source of information for all our clients.

Table 5: Student Category (total 295)



D. Citizenship

The majority of the students were Canadian Citizens: 190 of 295 or 64.4%, a smaller percentage than last year at 80.5%. This year, 28 students reported being foreign students, accounting for 9.49% of our student clients, a slightly higher percentage than the 7.5% reported for last year. In 77 cases, we failed to record citizenship or the individual chose not to disclose it to us.

E- Minority groups

Table 6 that follows contains data on the minority group status of our clients. In total, 34.91% of our student clients, or 103 of 295 cases, were members of minority groups, an increase from our last year's 28%. In both years, the largest percentage was racial minorities, at 30%.

Table 6: Students by Minority Groups (35% of total students)

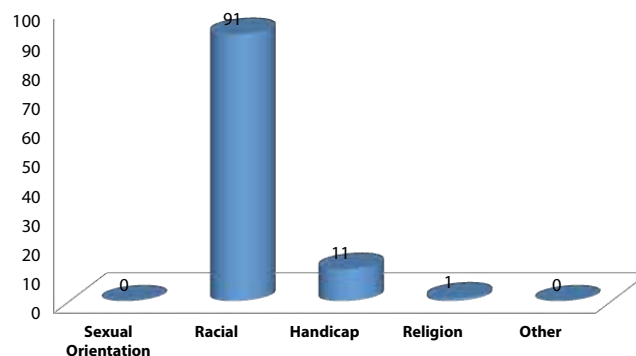
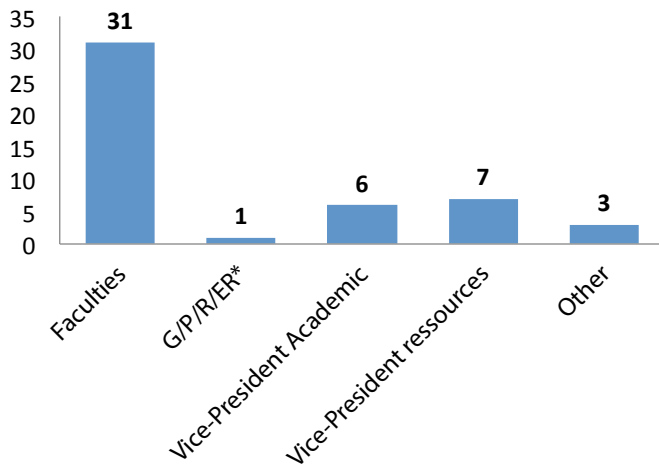


Table 7: Personnel by Organizational Unit (total 48)

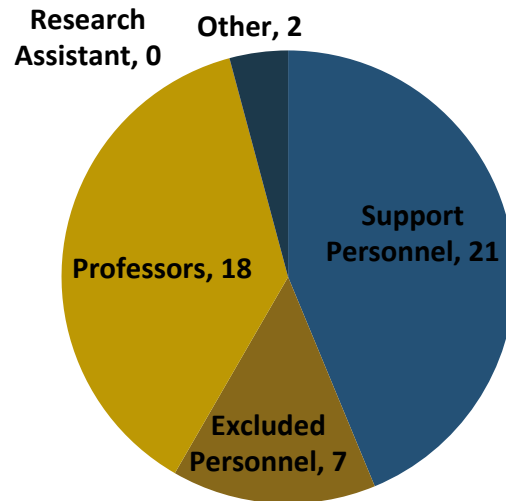


* Governance/President/Research/External Relations

4. Personnel who consulted us

Tables 7 and 8 shows the distribution of the 48 University staff members who consulted us by faculty or department, and by type of personnel. Most came from faculties and most were support personnel. Although the number of staff that asked for our service has more than doubled, it still remains a relatively small number. We have been very pleased to provide staff with a safe and confidential place to discuss matters that trouble them and to help them decide on how they could address the issues they were facing.

Table 8: Type of personnel (total 48)



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

In 32 files, the persons who contacted us were neither students nor personnel of the University of Ottawa. 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 very open to the involvement of parents in seeking resolution to problems.

6. Types of problems

Table 9 provides a breakdown of the types of problems brought to our attention by students and by staff.

The number of problems does not correspond to the number of files since in some instances there was more than one problem reported per file. This year, we had 43 problems presented to us by persons other than students or staff, from parents, contract workers or persons who did not identify themselves.

We recorded 357 problems raised by students, 60 by staff and 43 by others. The majority of the issues of concern to students were similar to last year's and fell under the academic category (118), which includes questions relating to grade review, and allegations of academic fraud; secondly, financial issues (50), such as reimbursement or cancellation of tuition fees, and scholarships or loan issues; thirdly, issues related to academic support (32) and finally, Admission and registration issues (31).

Staff members consulted us for 60 different problems related to work relations (13) and human rights issues (10). The numbers are quite small making comparison not very useful in our view. It should be noted that perhaps the reduction in the number of issues related to harassment that were brought to our attention coincides with the publication in February 2012 of the revised policy 67a, Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination.

A significant number of issues were brought to our attention from persons who belong to minority groups, these accounted for 137 of the 471 problems, or 29.6% of all issues, a similar trend to last year.

7. Services offered and results of interventions

Our office provides different services to respond to the needs of the persons who contact us and vary from very informal to more formal type of services, such as when we examine a complaint once all recourses have been exhausted. Of the 375 files which we closed this year,

Table 9: Categories of Issues by Type of Client

Type of Problem	Student	Personnel	Other	Total by issue	Incidence involving minority groups
Academic	118	5	3	126	35
Admission & Registration	31	0	1	32	8
Student Association	8	2	1	11	2
Other	29	15	10	54	15
Relational Conflit	14	5	5	24	5
Human Rights and Diversity	27	8	2	37	17
Academic support	32	0	1	33	13
Finance	50	4	7	61	18
Harassment	13	8	1	22	7
Work Relations	4	13	7	24	4
Residence	11	0	4	15	0
Security	1	0	0	1	1
Services by Student Assoc.	5	0	1	6	3
Supervisor/Student	14	0	0	14	9
Total by Client Type	357	60	43	462	137

the vast majority were handled informally, and 14 were formal complaints which we examined once all recourses had been exhausted.

Table 10 shows that we offered a total of 537 different services in the 375 cases we completed. Our services can be grouped into nine categories described as follows:

- 1. Information:** Providing information on policies, regulations/rules and channels of appeal
- 2. Coaching:** Listening and providing assistance to enable the client to make a decision to address a problem
- 3. Referral:** Listening and referral to the appropriate authority
- 4. Intervention / complaint examination:** Examination of a formal complaint once all channels of appeal have been exhausted; making recommendations when deemed appropriate
- 5. Intervention / facilitation:** Facilitation of a dialogue between two parties in conflict

6. Intervention / communication bridge: Facilitation of the resolution of a conflict by offering a communication bridge between two parties in conflict

7. Intervention / problem resolution: Direct intervention with the appropriate authorities to find a solution

8. Intervention / mediation: More formal mediation between two parties, including a written mediation agreement

9. Intervention / other: Anything that does not fall into the above categories.

A similar breakdown of the type of services offered is found again this year. Most of our work is informal, providing information (180), coaching (142) and referring our clients (125) to the appropriate office to solve an issue. We were involved directly to try to resolve a problem in 53 different occasions.

Table 10: Services Offered by Type of Client (total 537)

Service	Undergrad	Master	PhD	Not-registered/ former/Special/ Unknown	Personnel	Other	Total
Information	86	18	4	39	18	15	180
Coaching	56	16	9	25	28	8	142
Referrals	59	9	6	26	11	14	125
Inter: Examin. of complaints	4	0	1	9	0	0	14
Inter: Facilitation	6	0	1	6	2	1	16
Inter: Shuttle	2	1	1	1	0	1	6
Inter: problem resolution	26	5	1	19	1	1	53
Inter: mediation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inter: other	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	240	49	23	125	60	40	537

We investigated 14 formal complaints – 4 from undergraduate students, 1 from graduate students, 8 from Unregistered/former /Special students. Table 11 shows the results of this type of intervention. We made recommendations in 6 files and closed 8 files without making recommendations.

Some of our suggestions

1. Some faculties have adopted a different academic calendar and the information on important dates was not complete and easily accessible to the students. The Faculty of Law, Common Law section agreed to clearly indicate on their website the last day to withdraw with a 100% financial credit and the Registrar agreed to include a hyperlink to the Faculty's important dates to ensure that students are adequately informed.
2. The selection process for candidates in the Master's Physiotherapy program was not sufficiently clear and candidates were not well informed about the process and the criteria for selection. We made some suggestions and the Faculty of Health Science agreed to make some changes and responded as follows:

“First, the professor in charge of admission will be responsible for reviewing the process. He will monitor the process. Second, to make the process systematic, it has been decided that interviews will be conducted using a standardized tool developed at McMaster University specifically for applicants to medicine and rehabilitation programs. Furthermore, language skills will now be assessed using a written test that is already used in the speech-language pathology program here. The decision to accept or reject an applicant will depend mostly on the applicant's academic record, since every study has shown that that is the greatest predictor of success, according to the department. The department plans to set up and fine tune the process this year, and then publish it on the website.

As you can see, using the standardized tool and written language test will eliminate the random and vague aspects of the process that you have pointed out. Even though the exact weight of each part of the application has not yet been determined, it is clear that the academic record will be given the greatest weight. The review this year will enable us to make the selection process completely clear and transparent.”

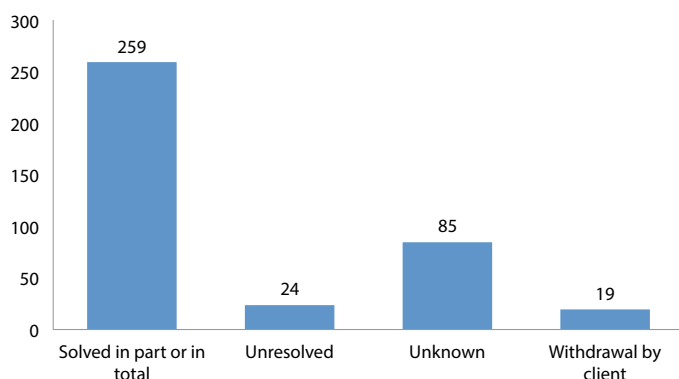
Table 11: Examination of Complaints and Results (Total 14)

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	0	1	0	0	0
Student: unregistered/ former/special	3	5	2	1	0
Student: unknown	1	0	1	0	0
Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	8	5	1	0

Results of our work

As Table 12 shows in the vast majority of cases, we were pleased to assist in solving the problem, in part or in total (259 files). We are not always made aware of the outcome of a matter brought to our attention (85 files) when the person does not get back to us. Regrettably, at times, the problem brought to our office is not resolved (24 files). Sometimes clients will withdraw a complaint or a request for our assistance (19 occasions), mostly because the problem was resolved in the meantime.

Table 12: Overall Results (all clients)



These figures contain 29 files refused by the Ombudsperson due mainly to the issue being out of the Ombudsperson's jurisdiction

Conclusion

We have now completed our second year of service to the university community. The students and staff are now more aware of the kinds of services we provide. Our role and mandate are well defined, and we continue to be comfortable with the terms of reference that were approved before we opened our doors. In reality, however, it can sometimes be hard to accurately describe the work we do and the services we provide. A description of our services has again been included on page 15 of this report to inform readers and provide an overview of the work we do. One thing is clear, we start by listening to each person who comes to us to determine the proper course of action

in each situation and meet our commitment to provide an independent, impartial and confidential service. We believe that most of our clients can resolve their problem themselves, with a little help. Therefore, we try initially to provide them with the information and tools they need to take action themselves, and we always respect their right to make their own decisions.

Most of our work is done informally, that is, we help make it easier to find the right solution by providing clients with useful information, guiding them to the right sources, or coaching them in conflict management. Those who use our services appreciate our work, though it may often go unnoticed by the Faculty and departments of the University. Our work may be done in a more formal way when we deal with a complaint after all channels of appeal have been exhausted, but such cases are rare. We try to see whether or not improvements can be made to prevent a given problem from reoccurring, for example, improving communication or amending regulations.

We have continued learning about the University and student associations with great interest. Our work is rewarding because of the people we meet, the issues we explore and the opportunities we have to help improve policies and practices for both students and staff.



“Too tired to talk and listen, we settle instead for the lulling charms of electronic devices that project pictures, make music, or bleep across display screens. Is it this way of life that’s made us forget how to listen? Perhaps.”¹²

¹² Michael Nichols, *The Lost Art of Listening* (New York: Guilford Publications, 1995) p.2.