



Adapting to Change

2019–2021 Report

uOSATISFACTION



I love uOttawa, and I'm so glad to be a part of it. I'm a first-year student, and I haven't yet experienced much of the University. So far, I can say that the quality of teaching is really good. I'm so satisfied with my profs.... Thank you so much for caring about the student experience and for this opportunity to talk about our problems.

– A grateful student





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Introduction

Mandate

On recent national surveys,¹ the University of Ottawa has tended to rank near the bottom in terms of student satisfaction. In 2018, the provost and vice-president, academic affairs established a working group with a mandate to identify the reasons for that dissatisfaction and examine possible solutions.

Context and overview

Students attach considerable importance to the relationship of trust they have with their university.² In return, the institution must demonstrate that it cares about students' interests and well-being throughout their academic experience, both in the classroom and with its other services.

Since 2010, the University has been conducting an End-of-Program Survey to measure numerous aspects of student satisfaction in the classroom and elsewhere.

In its new Transformation 2030 strategic plan, the University has committed to “improving the student experience academically, culturally, recreationally and socially to prepare students to go out into the world and make their mark after graduation.”

In 2018, the Student Satisfaction Task Force (now called the uOSatisfACTION Working Group, or uOSatisfACTION) set out to identify the irritants adversely affecting the student experience and, consequently, the relationship of trust between students and the institution. That role was renewed and strengthened in Transformation 2030, which states that uOSatisfACTION has to “continue and expand the work begun” to “foster a stronger sense of belonging.”

In its first year of existence, uOSatisfACTION broke new ground by soliciting feedback directly from students about their experience—a first in the academic world.³ We regularly use non-survey channels to solicit student feedback about any issues affecting the experience on campus. For example, between September 2018 and April 2019, we received more than 1,700 comments. In

¹ End-of-Program Survey. National Survey of Student Engagement. Canadian University Survey Consortium. *Maclean's*.

² Universities UK (2017). *Education, consumer rights and maintaining trust: what students want from their university*. <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/what-students-want-from-their-university.aspx>

³ A cursory search yielded no similar initiatives at other universities.



April 2019, the group submitted its first report,⁴ containing a number of recommendations for the provost and vice-president, academic affairs.

In March 2020, academic life on campus was upended by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The majority of students left campus, with teaching largely switching from in person to online. For its part, uOSatisfACTION continued operating and solicited feedback from students about their university experience. No fewer than 1,641 comments were submitted in 2019–2020, while 1,811 were received in 2020–2021.

2019–2021 structure

In response to the recommendations in the 2018–2019 report, the structure of the Student Satisfaction Working Group was streamlined. The initiative is now managed by an operations team consisting of two co-directors, one co-op student and one Work-Study Program (WSP) student per term, and a communications officer.

Operations team members:

- François Chapeau (co-director) (professor, Faculty of Science) (2018–2021)
- Véronic Tardif (co-director) (Office of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs) (2018–2021)
- Julie Gareau (communications officer and special projects, Office of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs) (2018–2021)
- Dani Ablack (co-op and WSP student) (2018–2019)
- Constanta Celac (co-op and WSP student) (2019–2020)
- Alexandre Coucopoulos (co-op and WSP student) (2021)
- Amine Jemmouj (co-op and WSP student) (2020–2021)

Aline Germain-Rutherford (vice-provost, academic affairs) and Rachel Ouellette (chief of staff, Office of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs) provided ongoing support to the members.

2019–2021 actions

uOSatisfACTION's priority was to actively listen to the student community to identify the factors contributing to student dissatisfaction.

uOSatisfACTION's webpage, launched in September 2018, was the hub for the group's activities in 2019–2021, providing an outlet for members of the University community to talk about their experiences. Statistics on the number of comments received, examples of issues that were

⁴ https://www.uottawa.ca/vice-president-academic/sites/www.uottawa.ca.vice-president-academic/files/uosatisfaction_rapport_2018-2019_-_final_en_accessible_v2.pdf



resolved and flash polls on topical issues were added to the webpage on a regular basis. uOSatisfACTION's 2018–2019 report was also posted there.

The chief aim of our communications strategy, premised on the uOSatisfACTION concept, was to promote the web page and the purpose of the project.

- Calls to action were posted across campus (see example below) and communicated to the student community via multiple media platforms.



- Short presentations were held in large classes (2019–2020).
- Solicitation emails were sent to nearly 45,000 students each term, with the exception of summer 2020. The messages were sent over a period of several weeks, beginning usually the third week after the start of the term.

All of the comments received were forwarded to the relevant faculties and services. Personalized acknowledgements were sent to students who signed their comments. Follow-up with faculties and services was undertaken promptly in cases where anonymous or signed comments were required. Names were not disclosed to the faculties or services unless the students in question gave us permission to do so. As a result, many one-time or personal issues were dealt with quickly during the term thanks to exemplary cooperation by the faculties and services.



2019–2020 report

Introduction

The 2019–2020 academic year was marked by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with classes switching online in March 2020. As a result, this part of the report mainly reflects the comments we received while students were still receiving instruction in person on campus.

General data

- More than 7,000 people visited the [uOSatisfACTION webpage](#), for a total of nearly 9,600 views. Just over 5,000 people visited the English-language webpage (for a total of 6,895 views), compared to approximately 2,000 in French (total of 2,698 views).
- As of March 30, 2020, uOSatisfACTION had received 1,641 comments via the web page. Messages could contain comments on more than one topic.
- Most comments (81%) were complaints. Relatively few suggestions (15%) were received (Figure 1).

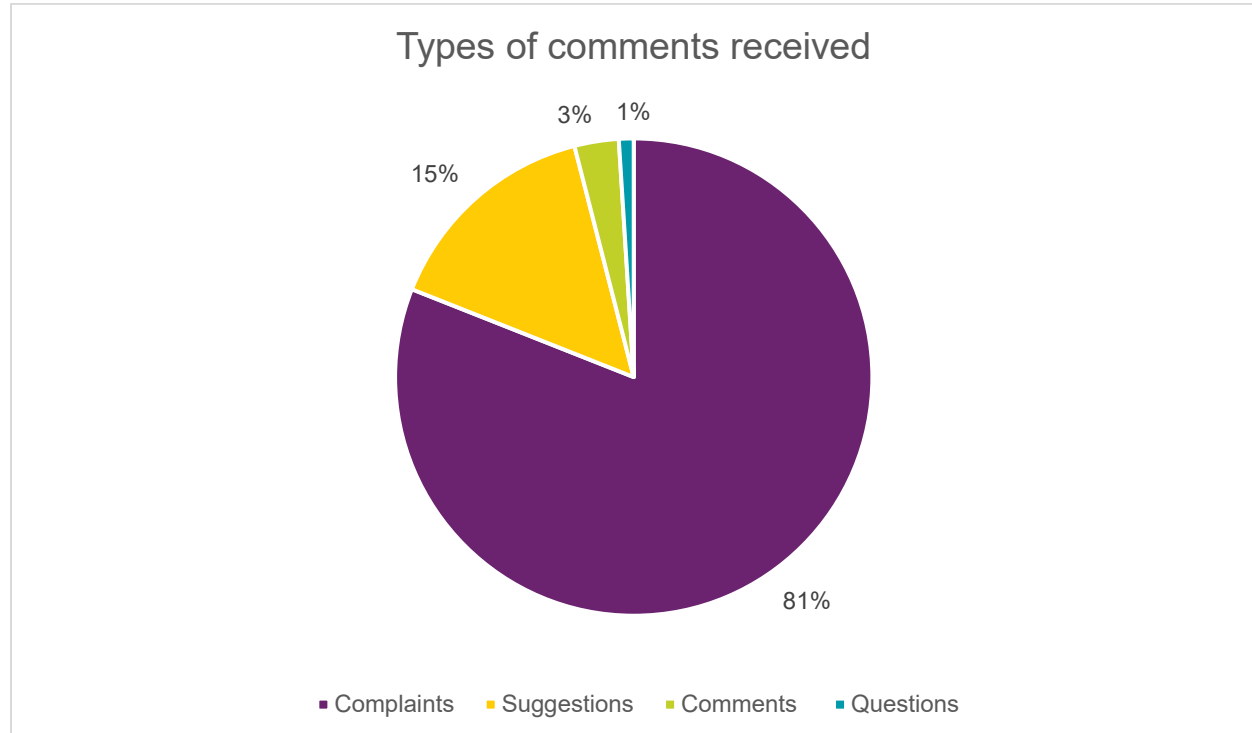


Figure 1 – Types of comments received



- Most of the comments (57%) were in English.
- Signed messages received a personalized acknowledgement and response. They were forwarded to the relevant faculties and services.
- All personal or urgent student concerns (academic or otherwise) were addressed promptly and forwarded to the faculties or services concerned.
- Nearly half of the messages (49%) were signed, and almost all (96%) were submitted by students.
- A relatively equal proportion of students from each level of undergraduate (by year) and graduate studies (Figure 2) sent messages.
- The majority of complaints (79%) came from Canadian students (Figure 3).

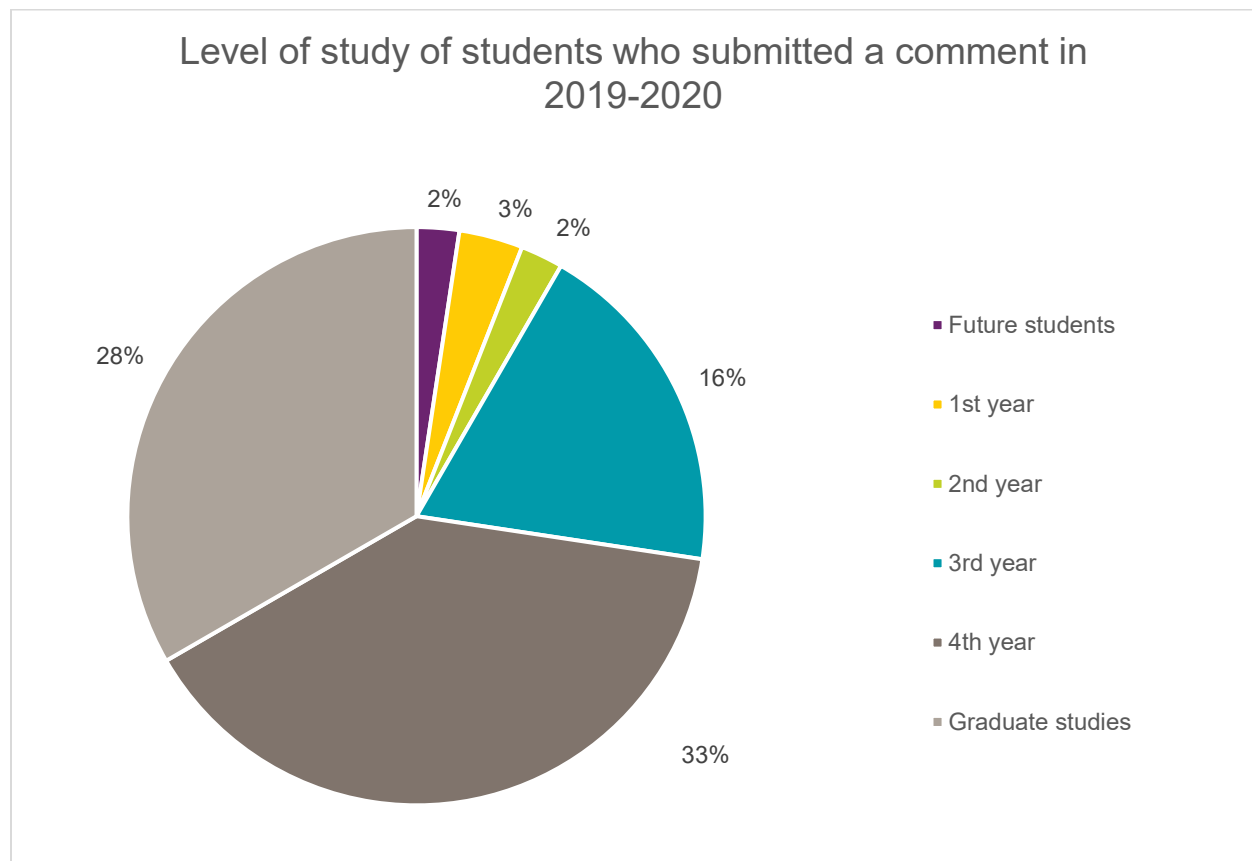


Figure 2: Level of study of students who submitted a comment in 2019–2020 (anonymous comments excluded)



Status of students who submitted a comment in 2019-2020

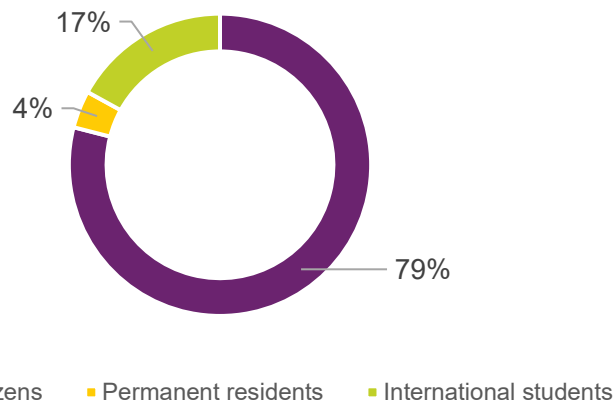


Figure 3: Status of students who submitted a comment in 2019–2020 (anonymous comments excluded)

In this report, the comments received will be addressed under three main topics (Figure 4):

ACADEMICS

Comments mainly related to professors, academic support, exams and course offerings.

SERVICES

Comments regarding the offer and quality of complementary services (mainly food services, sports, mental health services, residences and transportation).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Comments on buildings, maintenance, study areas, etc.

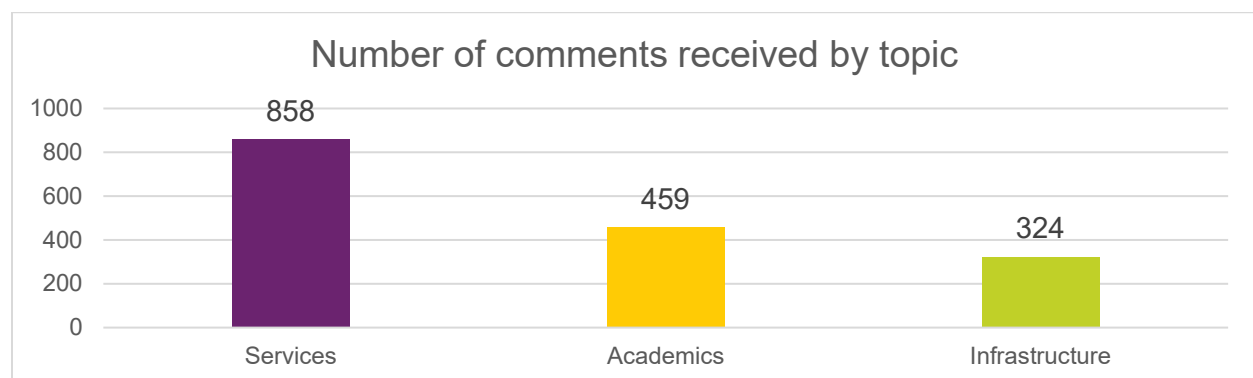


Figure 4 – Number of comments received by topic



Academics

This section includes all comments regarding the academic aspect of the student experience. In 2019–2020, we received 459 comments (Figure 5) about professors, courses, programs, academic support, etc.

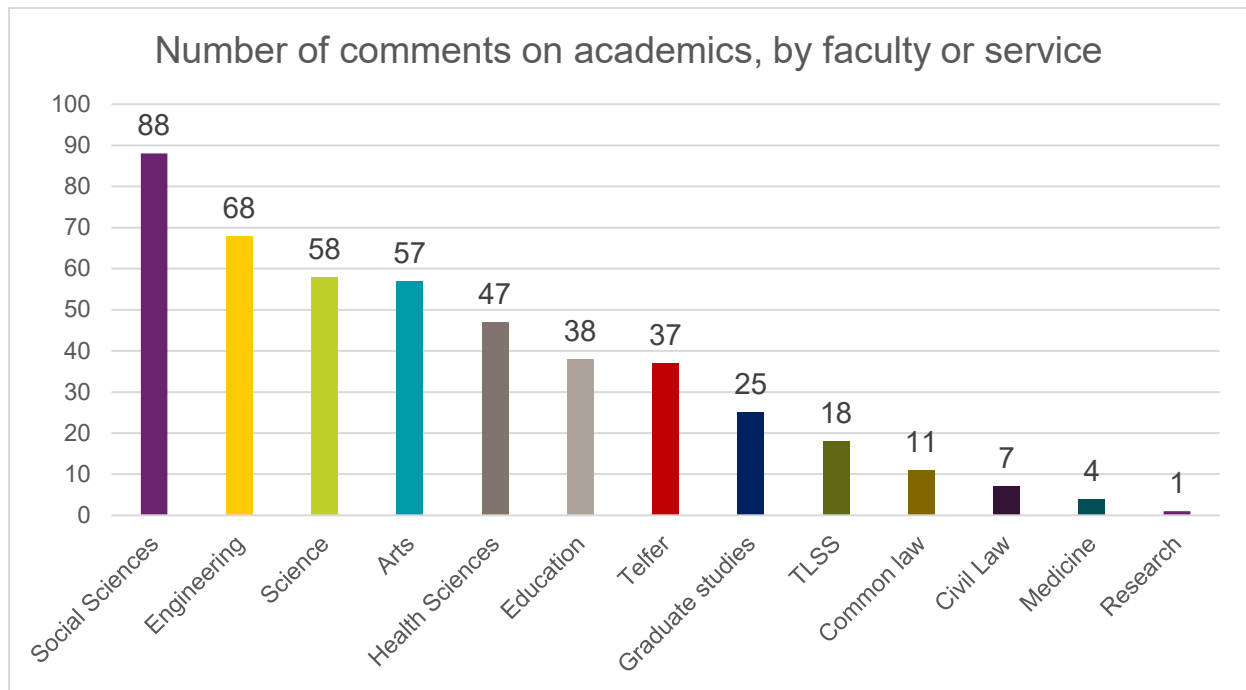


Figure 5 – Number of comments on academics, by faculty or service

Professors

- The 170 comments on professors and their teaching were sent directly to the vice-deans (academic) of each faculty (Figure 6).
- Some professors were mentioned in more than one comment. There was one professor in particular who elicited a number of comments from students.
- The comments received varied in topics: poor teaching skills, shortcomings in graduate student supervision, poor communication skills in the language of instruction or subject matter, derogatory remarks, poor or no use of Brightspace and poor management of student accommodations. There were also calls for more teaching professors and fewer research professors, along with better pay for part-time faculty.

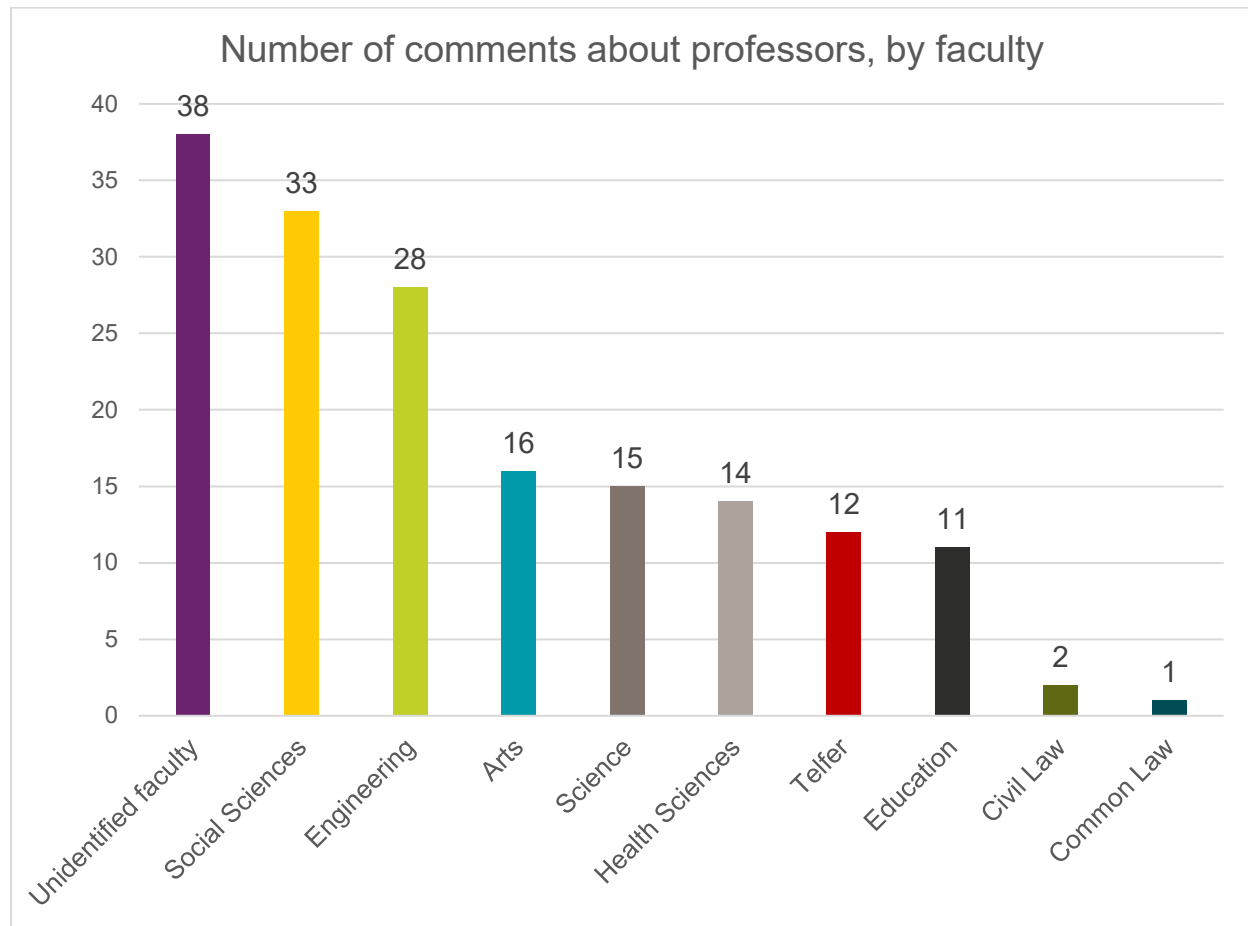


Figure 6: Number of comments about professors, by faculty

SAMPLE COMMENT 1

With all professors that I have engaged with in any department throughout my master's degree, their words and action indicate that their research is much more of a priority to them than their teaching. This has not been my experience at other universities. I understand that professors are split between their research and their teaching, but I am paying for an education, and expect that the professors will generally put the needs of the students first.

SAMPLE COMMENT 2

Listen to the voices of students a little more. I've heard numerous times and went through a rough experience in regards to a bad professor, and it didn't seem like anyone in the faculty cared. Ended up going with nearly the entire class to complain about TAs and the professor, but nothing happened.



Comments on academics

The other comments on academics had to do with exams, classrooms, academic support, the grading system, etc.

SAMPLE COMMENT

Change the grading system. The scale screws over students and essentially rounds down all our grades by 5%. For example, if I finish a class with a 79% and 81%, my average should be 80. But the system converts them to a 7 and an 8, which averages to 7.5 or 77.5%. This means we get a lower grade than our actual averages in the class.

■ EXAMS

Comments about exams mostly concerned the need for better scheduling at intervals of mid-term and final exams. Many students reported having three mid-term or final exams over two days. Others also said that some professors were too strict in marking exams, and that feedback on assignments and exams was lacking. Lastly, some students said they disliked multiple-choice questions.

■ ACADEMIC SUPPORT

The quality of academic support provided by professors and the Office of Undergraduate Studies (OUS) in some faculties was mentioned a few times. Difficulty accessing counsellors and excessive wait times were the chief OUS-related concerns cited.

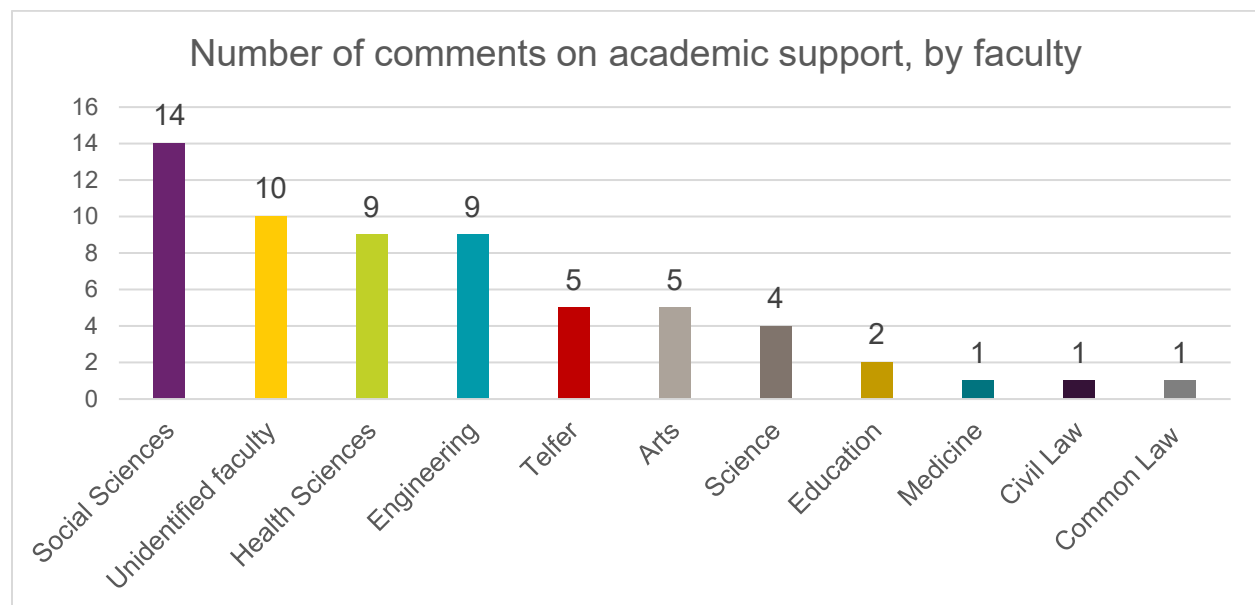


Figure 7: Number of comments on academic support, by faculty



- COURSE OFFERINGS

Comments received had mostly to do with insufficient course offerings (particularly in French) and the limited number of online courses in several faculties. On the other hand, some students said the Faculty of Education has too many online courses.

- CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF COURSES AND PROGRAMS

Excessive workloads, non-adherence to the syllabus in some courses and a lack of hands-on courses in some programs are some of the issues mentioned in the comments received.

- COURSE EVALUATIONS

Several students said the labs in the faculties of Science and Engineering needed to be formally evaluated. Some students questioned the usefulness of the course and professor evaluation process, as it did not seem to be having any impact on the performance of professors who receive negative evaluations year after year.

- CLASSROOMS

Comments received within this category indicate that chairs and tables in some classrooms were uncomfortable. Some students said that there were not enough power outlets for electronic devices and that there was not enough room to move about.

SAMPLE COMMENT

I'm taking linguistics in French, and I'm having a lot of difficulty finding courses in French that interest me. I want to finalize my schedule for next term, but every time I look for a course in French, it isn't offered. However, the equivalent course in English always seems to be available. I've already had to take two courses in English this fall, and I've had to choose two courses in English for the winter term.



Services

In 2019–2020, the lion's share of the comments received (858) had to do with the University's services. Some 20 services were singled out in the comments (Figure 8).

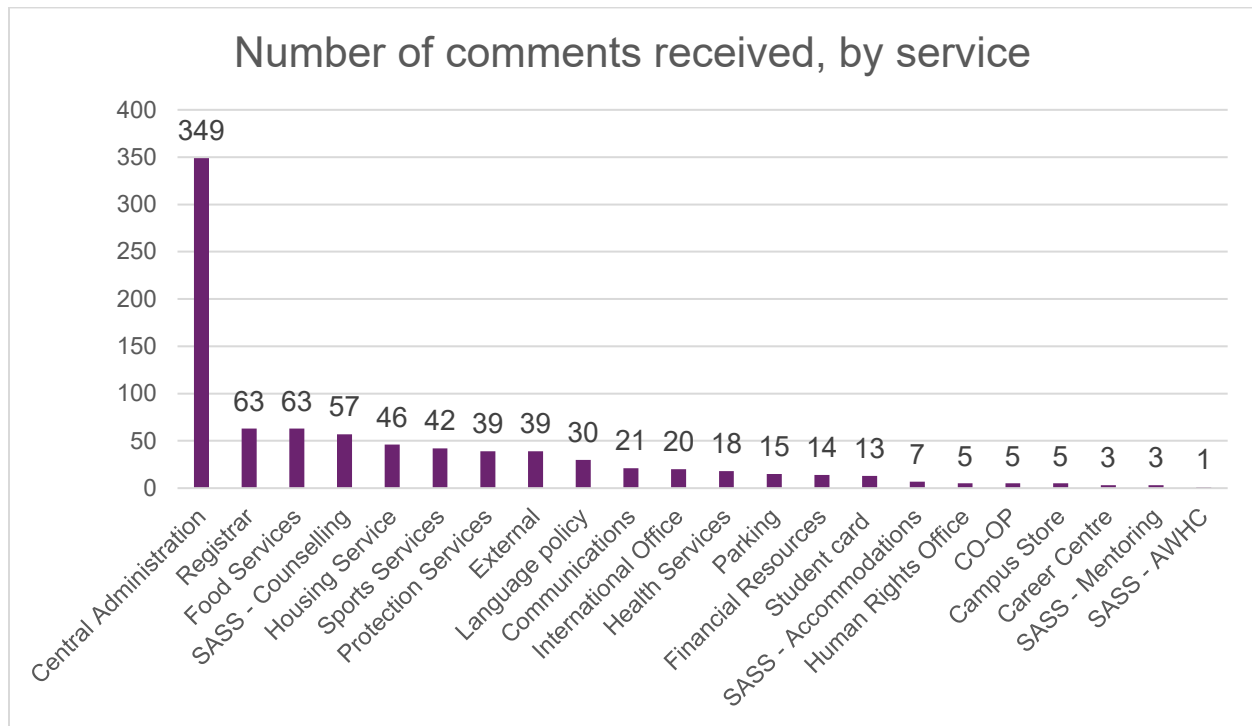


Figure 8: Number of comments received, by service (see Appendix B for complete list of services that were commented on)

■ CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Central administration-related comments mostly concerned mental health, tuition fees, the smoke-free campus issue and campus service quality.

Mental health

Most of the comments called for quicker access to counsellors and physicians for mental health issues. Students also said that professor and student awareness campaigns need to be improved.

SAMPLE COMMENT

Make mental health and medical services more accessible on campus: lower wait times, more funding for resources, clearer and more precise instructions on how to obtain a family doctor on campus. Especially though, raise mental health services and supports on campus.



Tuition fees

A number of students said tuition fees are too high, particularly for international students. They also took issue with certain compulsory additional fees for services, such as the UOSU, the universal bus pass (U-Pass) and Sports Services.

Smoke-free campus

Repeatedly, students said the campus should be completely smoke-free. They gave numerous examples of other university campuses that had adopted smoke-free policies. The issue was also addressed in the 2018 report recommendations.

Service quality

Students expressed much frustration over service quality, which could be uneven depending on the units involved. Language preference and response times were also singled out.

■ FOOD SERVICES

The quality and variety of food served at the cafeteria were mentioned several times. Many students also complained about service quality and speed at CRX.

■ SPORTS FACILITIES

Students said the gyms (particularly the one at Montpetit) could stand to be bigger and kept in better condition. They also said the equipment could be updated.

■ CULTURAL LIFE

Some students said a sense of belonging was missing at the University. They called for more networking activities and opportunities.



Infrastructure

Some 324 infrastructure-related comments were received (Figure 9).

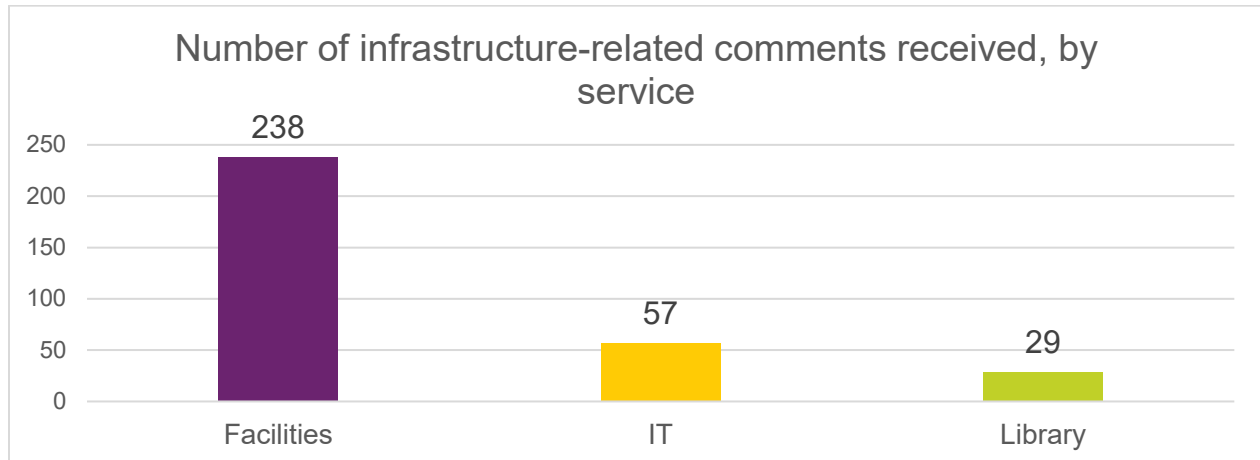


Figure 9: Number of infrastructure-related comments received, by service

The following topics were commented on most often (Figure 9):

- Housekeeping (bathrooms), snow removal, the limited number of microwaves and insufficient maintenance of them, and cleanliness of designated smoking areas were mentioned most often when it came to facilities.
- Finding quiet places to study on campus and in the libraries is an ongoing issue. Students also said there are not enough electrical outlets for recharging electronic devices (e.g., laptops, phones).

SAMPLE COMMENT

Noisy anywhere on campus. Study spaces, library or Learning Crossroads. For students who live far, can't go home and want to study, it's nearly impossible. Extremely decreases learning efficiency. Get us a quiet study area where it is totally quiet.

- Many students called for gender-neutral washrooms (universal washrooms) on campus.
- IT-related complaints mainly had to do with non-operational printers in the libraries and Wi-Fi speed.



2020–2021 report

Introduction

The 2020–2021 academic year was marked by the beginning of the exceptional lockdown situation, which upended university life. With students no longer on campus, teaching occurred mostly online. The entire community had to adapt to this new way of teaching and learning, which obviously generated a considerable number of comments. We received comments about services, but few about infrastructure. Lastly, we received many comments (158) concerning the racism controversy, academic freedom and freedom of expression. They were forwarded to the University's central administration, which is working actively on this file. As a result, it will not be covered in this report.

This section of the report will focus especially on online teaching and other frequently raised issues, such as tuition fees, mental health and service quality.

General data

- In 2020–2021, the [uOSatisfACTION webpage](#) was visited by nearly 6,000 persons and received around 7,000 views. Of those, just over 4,500 visited the webpage in English (total of 5,299 views), while approximately 1,300 people visited the webpage in French (total of 1,550 views).
- As of March 30, 2021, uOSatisfACTION had received 1,811 comments via the web page. Messages could contain comments on more than one topic.
- Most comments (89%) were complaints. Relatively few suggestions (7%) were received (Figure 10).

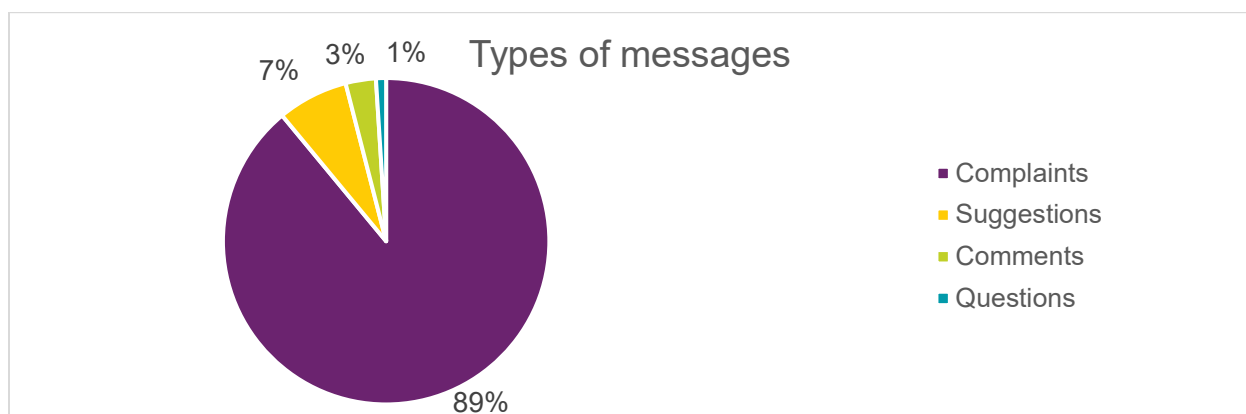


Figure 10: Types of messages (anonymous comments excluded)



- Most of the comments received (89%) were in English (Figure 11).

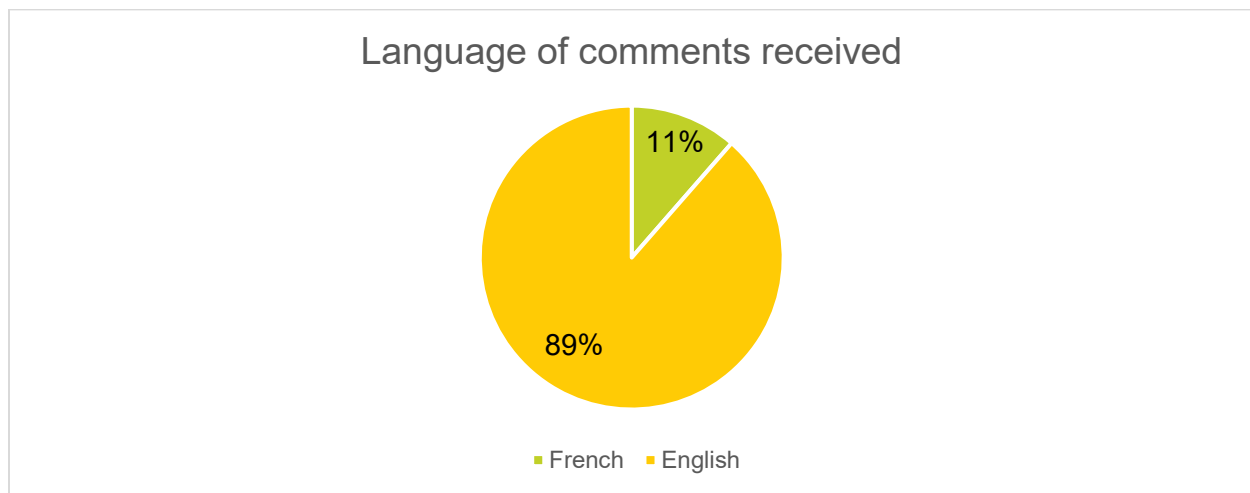


Figure 11: Language of comments received

- A relatively even percentage of students from every level in undergraduate and graduate programs submitted comments (Figure 12).

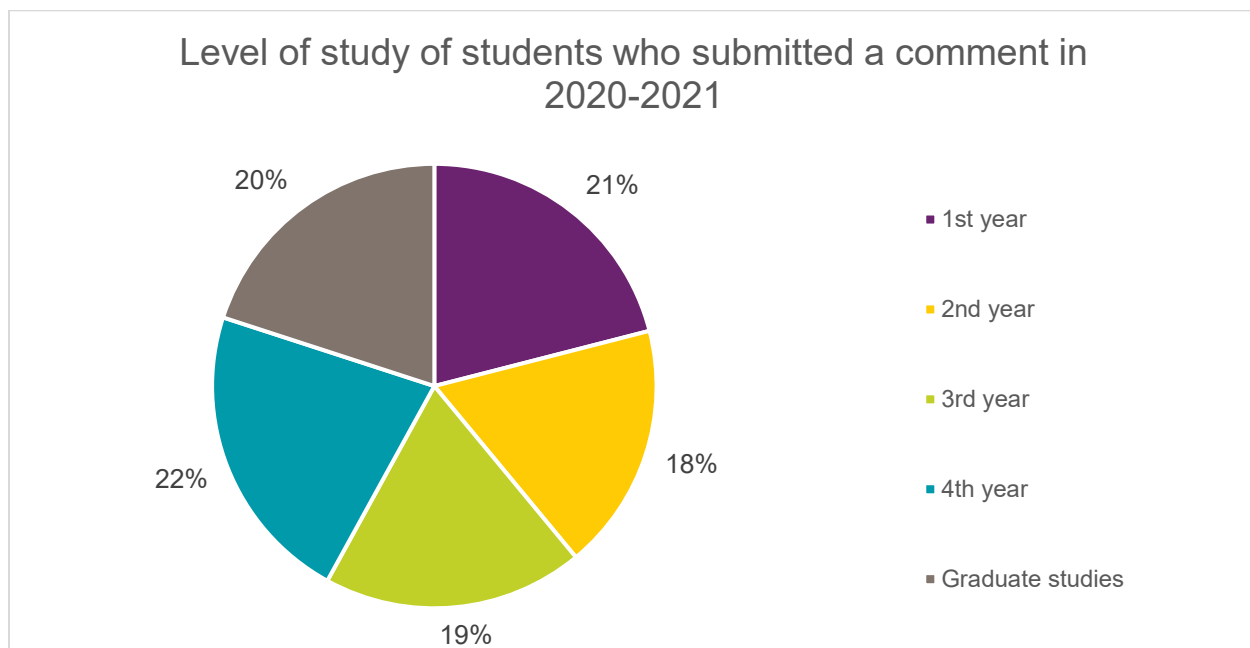


Figure 12: Level of study of students who submitted a comment in 2020–2021 (anonymous comments excluded)

- Lastly, the majority of complaints came from Canadian students (Figure 13).



Status of students who submitted a comment in 2020-2021

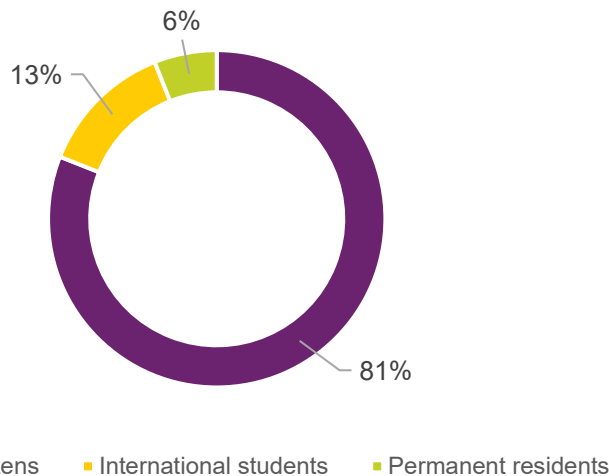


Figure 13: Status of students who submitted a comment in 2020–2021 (anonymous comments excluded)

Academics

Online teaching

Students had a lot to say about the quality of online teaching (See Appendix B). Comments were dominated by issues related to workload, exam management, tests, online tools and general teaching quality. For professors, this new reality obviously required considerable efforts and major adjustments in teaching methods. Figure 14 provides a breakdown of comments by faculty. Comments not attributed to a particular faculty were sent to the University's central administration.

The large number of comments received by uOSatisfACTION shed light on the chief problems students were having with online teaching beginning in the fall term. Many of those comments were sent directly to the faculties for corrective action.

In December 2020, a document outlining the main points raised by the students was sent to the faculties concerned in the hope that adjustments could be made for the winter term. As a result, we received far fewer comments about online teaching during the winter term.

Following are the chief concerns about online classes during the fall term. We have included recommendations with them.

- Some professors do not record their classes. However, students are often not in the same time zone as Ottawa and therefore have to attend classes at awkward times. There can also be internet connection issues. If courses are recorded, students can attend to other obligations (work, family, etc.) in due course and take the bulk of their courses at a time that suits them.



- **Recommendation: All online courses should be recorded.**

- Many professors replaced formal exams with compulsory readings, assignments, group work and multiple quizzes. When added together for each course, those activities can be overwhelming and very time intensive. Students struggle to keep up with the impossible pace imposed on them. All of that stress is compounded by the fact that many students' living arrangements are not ideal for studying.
Recommendation: Instructors need to remember that students take up to six courses per term. Piling on more tests to avoid having to manage formal exams generates considerable stress among students.

- Some professors go over the time allotted, resulting in some courses overlapping on the schedule.
Recommendation: Professors should adhere to course schedules.

- Professors are using a variety of platforms (Brightspace, Teams, Zoom, Adobe Connect, etc.). Some even switch between platforms during classes, making the tools difficult to manage.
Recommendation: The University should harmonize platform use.

- Some professors are not adept at using online tools, leading to needlessly stressful situations and hindering learning. Such lack of proficiency has even greater ramifications when coupled with exam management. For example, for certain kinds of exams on Brightspace, students cannot go back to read over their answers.
Recommendation: Professors should make sure that they know how to use the platforms in question, and that students are familiar with all of the technical parameters of online exams. It is recommended that professors administer a sample exam (with points for participating) prior to the first formal exam to reduce technology-related stress and that they take any necessary corrective action beforehand.

- Many exams are online and open book. They are more difficult, and the time allocated for answering questions is often insufficient.
Recommendation: Such exams are difficult to prepare and challenging to manage online. Professors should be given training in how to create such exams, and they should especially show students how to do them properly. Sufficient time should be allotted for multiple-choice tests so students can read the questions carefully and reflect on the answers.

- The use of Respondus for online exam monitoring is seen as an invasion of privacy.
Recommendation: Professors should explain in their syllabuses that they intend to use monitoring software for online exams, and clarify what it involves.



- Many professors ask students to pay additional fees for online teaching platforms. Such requests are seen as improper and unfair, given the tuition fees students have already paid.

Recommendation: It is strongly recommended that students not be asked to pay additional fees.

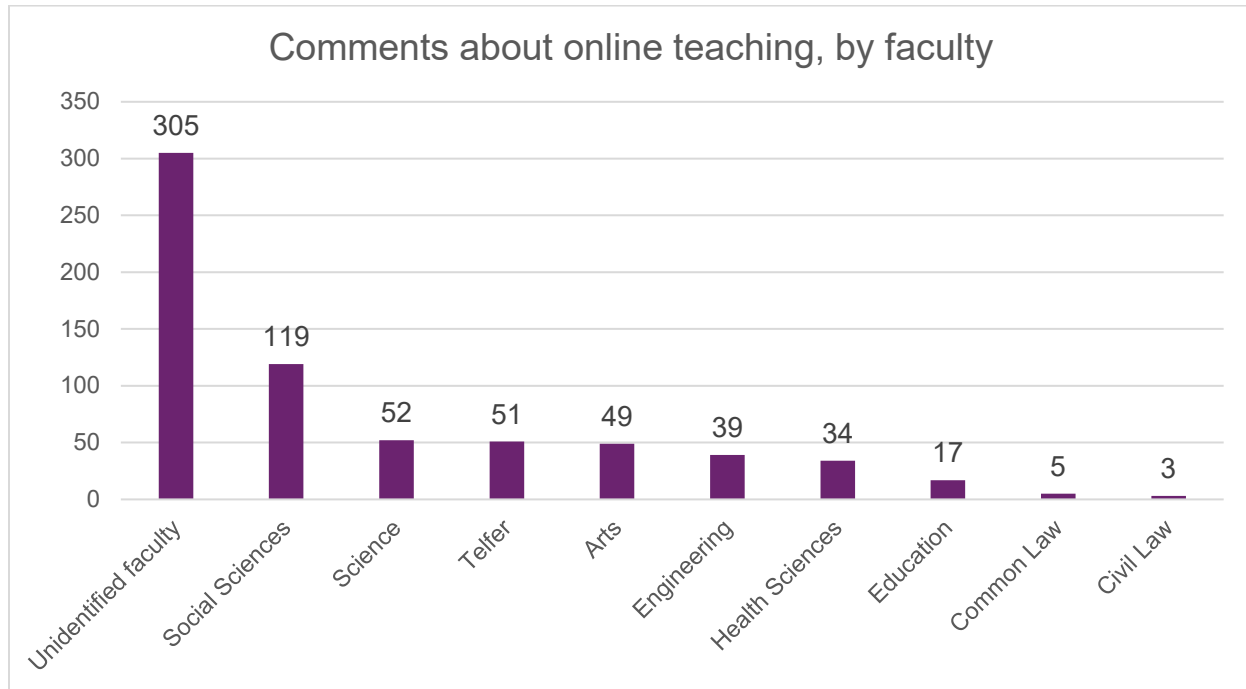


Figure 14: Comments about online teaching, by faculty

SAMPLE COMMENT 1

The level of expertise of the teachers/professors for the class delivery platforms (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.) varies a lot, which influences the class experience. It would be fantastic to have more consistency in how these platforms are used. I would suggest, if it's not already the case, to provide training on these platforms to teachers as part of their orientation. Items like sharing the right screen, muting all participants, using polling functions, etc.

SAMPLE COMMENT 2

Professors have increased workload under the assumption that we don't have other obligations outside of school. This is a gross misunderstanding of the reality of COVID, and directly negates any action taken by the University to mitigate mental illness on campus.



Tuition fees

The status quo in tuition fees was a recurrent topic (199) in the comments. Students said that online education quality is inferior and that tuition fees should have been adjusted accordingly. In addition, many students were unhappy about having to pay various fees, such as for access to sports facilities and the U-Pass, when they could not use those services.

We have been receiving fewer and fewer comments in that regard ever since the University has exempted students from paying certain fees.

SAMPLE COMMENT

LOWER TUITION! We are currently paying a lot of money for subpar education and services that most students realistically will not use. It's ridiculous. Online learning is not the equivalent to in person. I do not have an issue with things going online, as I understand it is a unique situation. But the price should still be lowered to match the situation.

Service quality

During the pandemic, it was often challenging for students to get answers to their questions and access services owing to the shift to virtual classes. Many were unsure where to go or how to communicate with the various sectors, which were using a panoply of communication methods. Of the 120 comments received, roughly half were about the faculties, and the other half, the University's services.

Mental health

While recommendations concerning mental health were made in the 2018–2019 report, the issue was raised again in many of the comments received. In general, students were critical of the lack of mental health resources, the wait times to see a doctor (which is beyond the University's control) and the limited number of counselling sessions. In addition, students often reported feeling isolated and having too much work as a result of online learning. An update on the issue is included in the section on the 2018–2019 recommendations.



Recommendations and considerations

Follow-up on earlier recommendations (2018–2019 report)

Ten recommendations were made in uOSatisfACTION's first annual report in 2018–2019. The following actions were taken in response to the recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1

- Give access to an application that would allow students to provide feedback anonymously and in real time about their professor's teaching and the running of the course (compliance with the syllabus, punctuality, professor's availability outside of class, etc.). At uOSatisfACTION's suggestion, the Teaching and Learning Support Service (TLSS) is currently examining the implementation of such a tool in Brightspace.

A pilot project was instituted in two large first-year classes at the Faculty of Science in fall 2020. A Brightspace survey was amended to ensure respondents' anonymity and assessment continuity during the term. Students submitted more than a hundred comments, enabling the professor (F. Chapleau) to reconsider certain aspects of the course. It is strongly recommended that TLSS work on this project and make it available to all professors.

RECOMMENDATION 2

- Ensure that each USO has developed quality-of-service standards (average response time to emails or phone calls, queues, etc.) to better manage student expectations. Moreover, it is important that these standards be communicated to students.

The standards in question were not developed. However, considerable work was done to support USO staff, e.g., training modules and the addition of a system enabling students to queue virtually and schedule appointments online (QLess). As a result, wait times are being better managed.



RECOMMENDATION 3

- Publish the final exam schedule earlier and post it on the University's [Important academic dates and deadlines](#) webpage to allow students to plan their travel better.

The exam timetable posting date is now regularly announced each term on the "Important academic dates and deadlines" page. In addition, in fall 2020, exam dates were published ahead of fall reading week.

RECOMMENDATION 4

- Offer more summer courses in both languages and announce them earlier in the winter term, even if scheduling is not completed.

The comments concerning this recommendation were sent to the faculties concerned. No comments on this topic were received in 2019–2020 or in 2020–2021.

RECOMMENDATION 5

- Increase the number of classrooms designated as additional study areas at the end of the term and promote the use of these spaces. To this end, Enrolment Management, at uOSatisfACTION's suggestion, has already identified some of these new rooms using posters ([Appendix A](#)) and added all the small rooms on the third floor of the Learning Crossroads building to the list. Students should maintain and enforce silence in study areas.

More spaces and classrooms were made available to students in 2019–2020, and we did not receive any comments on the matter. In 2020–2021, it was not an issue since the campus was more or less inaccessible for students.

RECOMMENDATION 6

- Increase awareness of the new "stepped care" model implemented by the Counselling and Coaching Service of the Student Academic Success Service (SASS) to better support our students, and develop a communication strategy to explain the various services provided by the University of Ottawa Health Services and SASS, and by off-campus community organizations.



A number of actions have been taken since January 2020 to support student mental health and well-being, including a listening tour in fall 2020 to gather feedback from the University community and better identify mental health-related issues and possible solutions. Following the tour, 12 specific recommendations were made by the President's Advisory Committee on Mental Health and Wellness to improve the University's support for students, staff and professors. Professor Elizabeth Kristjansson, the University adviser on mental health and wellness, has been overseeing the implementation of the recommendations and rectifying remaining deficiencies since July 2020.

In particular, the [Virtual Wellness Hub](#) (launched in September 2020) is a clearinghouse of helpful information and resources on mental health and wellness on campus and in the community. The hub also facilitates access to a wealth of services and resources to help students and staff take care of their physical, mental and emotional well-being.

In addition, counselling services were enhanced with the availability of 20 counsellors, including two racialized persons. Moreover, counselling services are now offered in the evening. Lastly, a new case management model is to be launched this year. The model will consist of six case managers and a coordinator. Three managers will be assigned to Student Affairs, while the other three will look after the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Graduate Students' Association, respectively. The case management program will provide a comprehensive range of services to students with complex mental health or socioeconomic needs. The stepped care model will be assessed and subsequently expanded across the University.

RECOMMENDATION 7

- Develop a smoke-free policy, as recommended in the Canadian Cancer Society's report on 100% smoke-free campuses in Canada.⁵ The number of campuses with such a policy has grown exponentially since 2012. In 2018, 65 Canadian universities and colleges were smoke free. Among Ontario campuses, Western and McMaster universities are smoke free.

A report on the subject, published by the Canadian Cancer Society in March 2020, states that 95 Canadian university and college campuses now have a 100% smoke-free campus policy, an increase of 30 campuses over two years. Eight Ontario universities now have 100% smoke-free campuses.

To our knowledge, no action has been taken in that regard. We continue to receive feedback on this topic regularly, with 195 students having submitted comments over the past two years.

⁵ https://cdn.cancer.ca/-/media/files/about-us/media-releases/2018/report-shows-65-university-and-college-campuses-in-canada-are-smoke-free/university-college-smoke-free-campus-national-report-2018-09-14_en.pdf



RECOMMENDATION 8

- Install more charging stations for electronic devices throughout the campus and regularly check that existing outlets are functional, particularly in the Learning Crossroads.

Discussions about adding charging stations took place, but no action resulted. No comments about charging stations were received last year owing to the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION 9

- Review services provided and develop a strategy to ensure quality control of food and service at the Learning Crossroads food court.

Changes were made at the Learning Crossroads food court to speed up service. We will have to see whether students continue to comment on this issue once they return to campus.

RECOMMENDATION 10

- Conduct a study of the help lines on campus and determine if they should be merged into one.
- In the meantime, develop and implement a communication strategy to raise awareness of help lines 6555 (Information Technologies), 2222 (Facilities), 5222 (Human Rights Office) and 5411 (Protection Services) as well as the Emergency button on the University's home page.

An initiative targeting the services mentioned and the Communications Directorate was launched in winter 2020. However, it was interrupted due to the pandemic and the fact that no one had been on campus since the spring of that year. The Facilities service has since put up posters in washrooms to explain how to report maintenance issues. Discussions resumed in summer 2021 to assess options for implementing this recommendation.



Conclusion

UOSatisfACTION: USEFULNESS

After three years, we can now say that uOSatisfACTION is known to a broad segment of the University community and that it plays a major role at uOttawa.

uOSatisfACTION is an active tool for charting the academic experience of our students. It provides an outlet for students and can quickly make the University aware of any major problems undermining the university experience. Through its rapid feedback, uOSatisfACTION brings such issues to the attention of faculties, services and the central administration, and gives them the opportunity to respond quickly.

UOSatisfACTION is a space where students can express their moods, frustrations and anger freely. Students may vent anonymously if they wish. It is not a survey with specific questions on a given topic. Whereas surveys are often a rough way of dissecting a situation or problem to help draw conclusions after the fact, uOSatisfACTION is much more a diagnostic tool for addressing issues quickly, in tune with student moods.

For instance, in October 2020, in the space of a few days, we received dozens of independent comments from students in all faculties, who reported that the total workload in their online courses was too high. We quickly contacted the faculties to let them know, and they took various corrective actions.

Of course, to be effective, uOSatisfACTION has to have the support of all of the University's sectors. Thus far, collaboration has been exemplary, which cannot but enhance student satisfaction.

UOSatisfACTION: COURSES AND PROFESSORS

uOSatisfACTION received a greater number of often anonymous comments about teaching quality last year. The transition to online teaching was obviously a major factor. However, students also seem to have begun to trust uOSatisfACTION, as we hold comments in strict confidence. It should be remembered that most students fear reprisals if they include their names with their comments. We anticipate that uOSatisfACTION will be receiving more and more of these kinds of comments in the coming years.

Comments concerning teaching are carefully reviewed and then forwarded to the faculty concerned if the professor or course is named. If it is alleged that course rules have been blatantly violated (e.g., non-compliance with the syllabus) or if we receive several comments purporting a clear breakdown in communication between the professor and students, the information is immediately forwarded to the home faculty of the person in question. The issues often involve minor problems that can be solved quickly, allowing communication to be re-established between



the parties. It should be noted that uOSatisfACTION merely forwards information it receives to the faculties and does not conduct any investigations.

UOSatisfACTION is a valuable tool for students and professors for reporting teaching-related disagreements or issues. By virtue of its confidential nature, uOSatisfACTION can result in improvements or changes being made right in the middle of courses. It is a win-win situation for everyone. It should be noted that such rapid feedback is not possible with formal course evaluations.

However, if all professors were to activate anonymous surveys (see recommendation 1 above) on their Brightspace page, many of these troublesome situations could be resolved in class without uOSatisfACTION having to intervene or without formal teaching evaluations being negatively influenced by issues that could have been resolved during the course. Anonymity of such surveys is crucial for students to submit their comments without fear of reprisals from the person concerned.

UOSatisfACTION: LIMITATIONS

uOSatisfACTION receives numerous comments that should normally be addressed by the University's services and faculties. Many students seem unaware of whom to contact or are simply discouraged by the slowness of service, especially during peak periods.

uOSatisfACTION can only report these problems to the services concerned and follow up personally in urgent situations. Faculties and services have to inform students about what is available to them. To that end, an effective communications plan taking students' realities into account should be implemented, along with an easy-to-use website. We should consider that, at present, new students are bombarded with all kinds of information during their early days at the University. However, on arriving, these students basically want to know where their classrooms are on our huge campus and what is required of them in their courses. Once the faculties' and services' information campaigns are over, the units tend to think they have accomplished their mission at the start of the term already. However, the students' reality is quite different.

UOSatisfACTION: CONCLUSION

No other Canadian university has anything like uOSatisfACTION, a unique action-based initiative with the power to enhance the academic experience by facilitating communication between students and uOttawa. After three years, we can say that it is working.

Appendix A

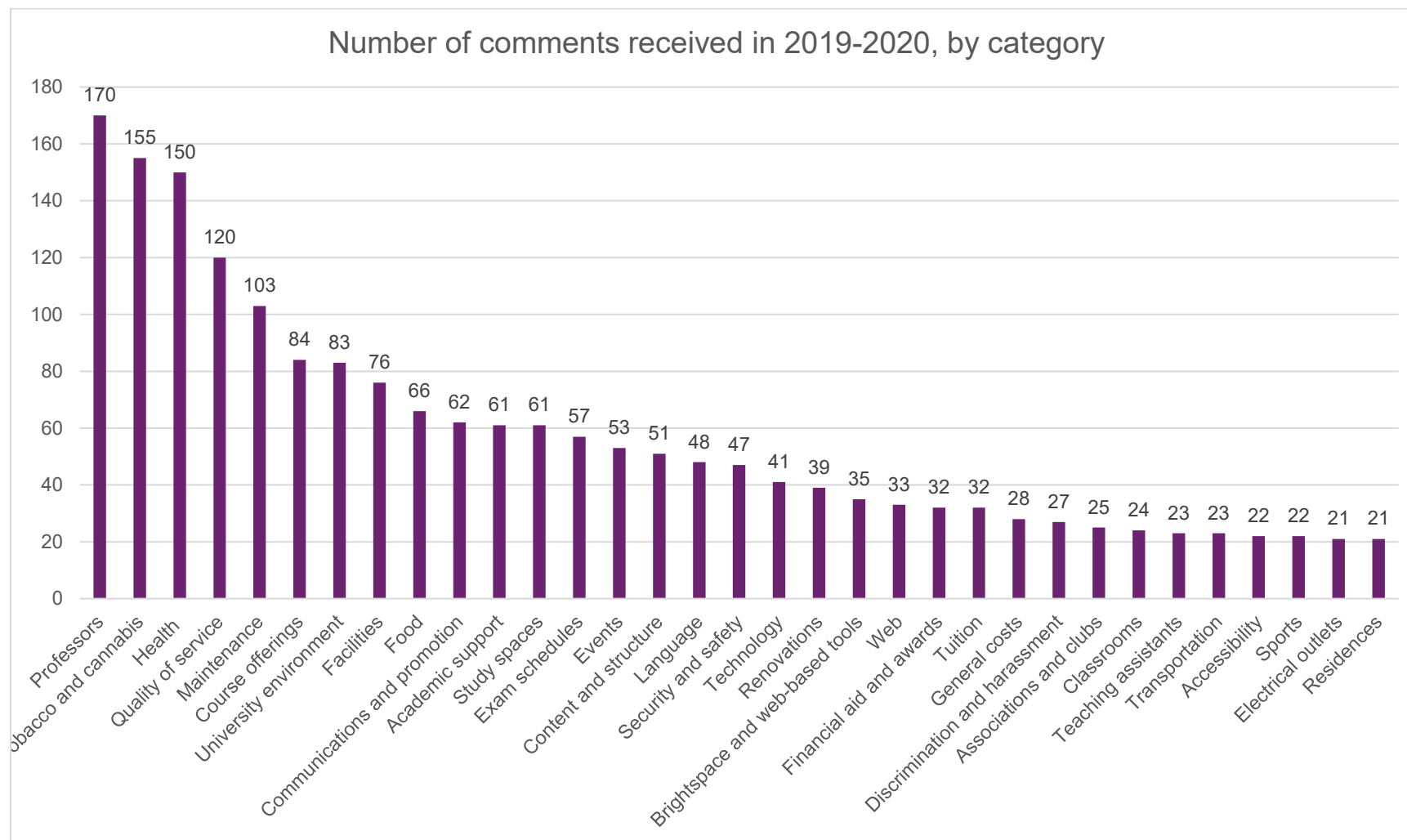


Figure 15: Number of comments received in 2019–2020, by category (excluding categories with fewer than 20 comments)

Appendix B

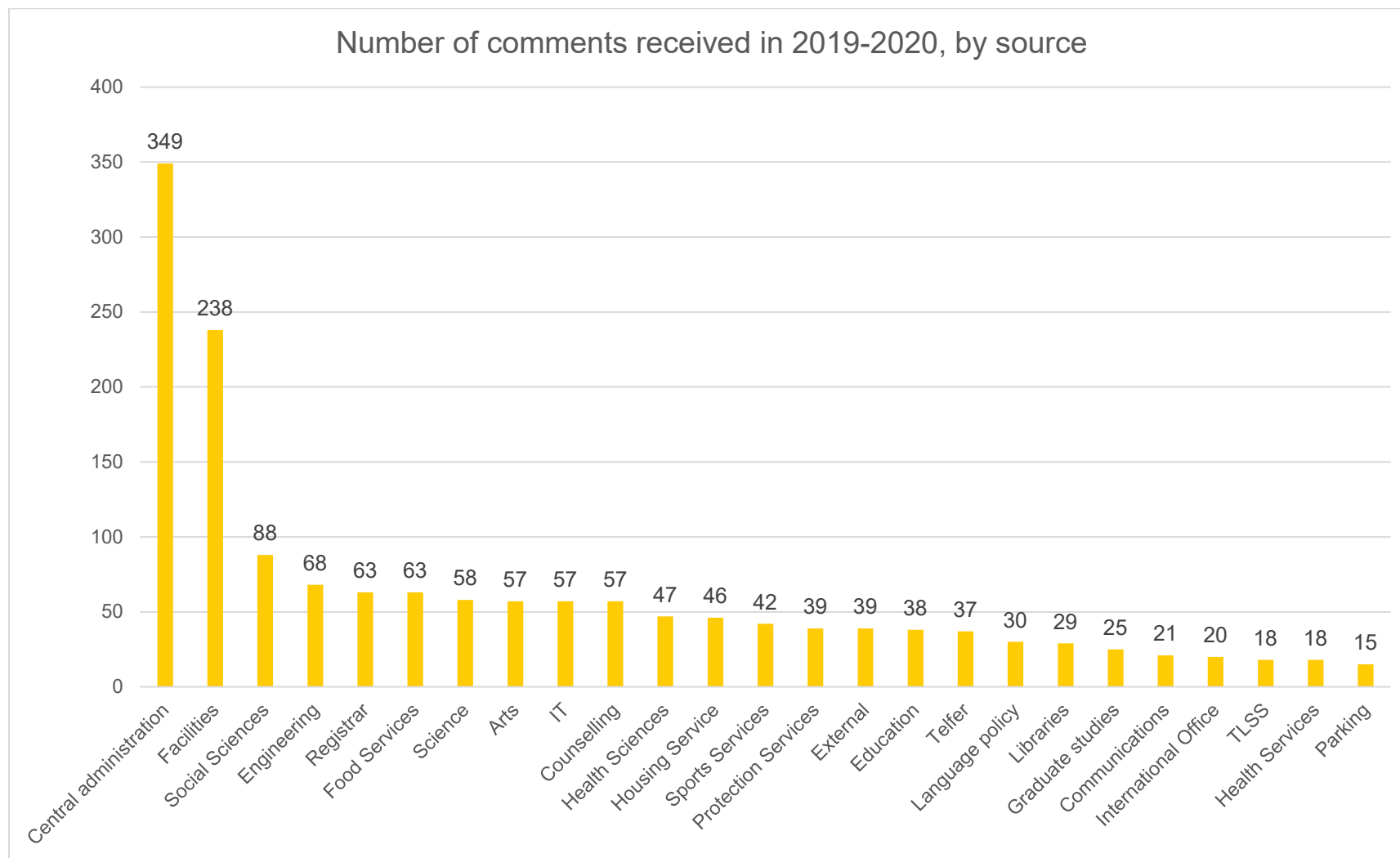


Figure 16: Number of comments received in 2019–2020, by source (excluding services with fewer than 15 comments)



Appendix C

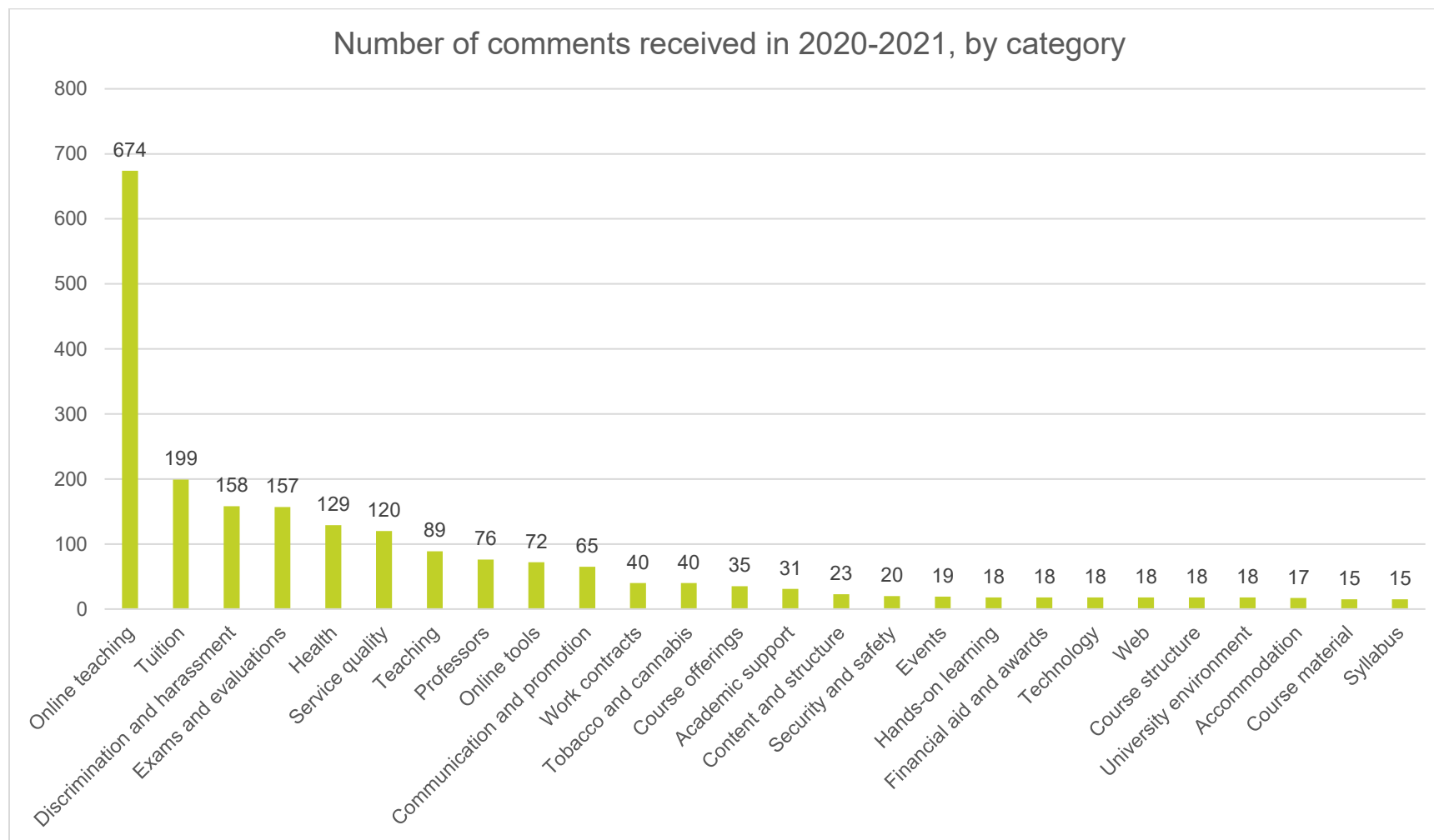


Figure 17: Number of comments received in 2020–2021, by category (excluding categories with fewer than 15 comments)



Appendix D

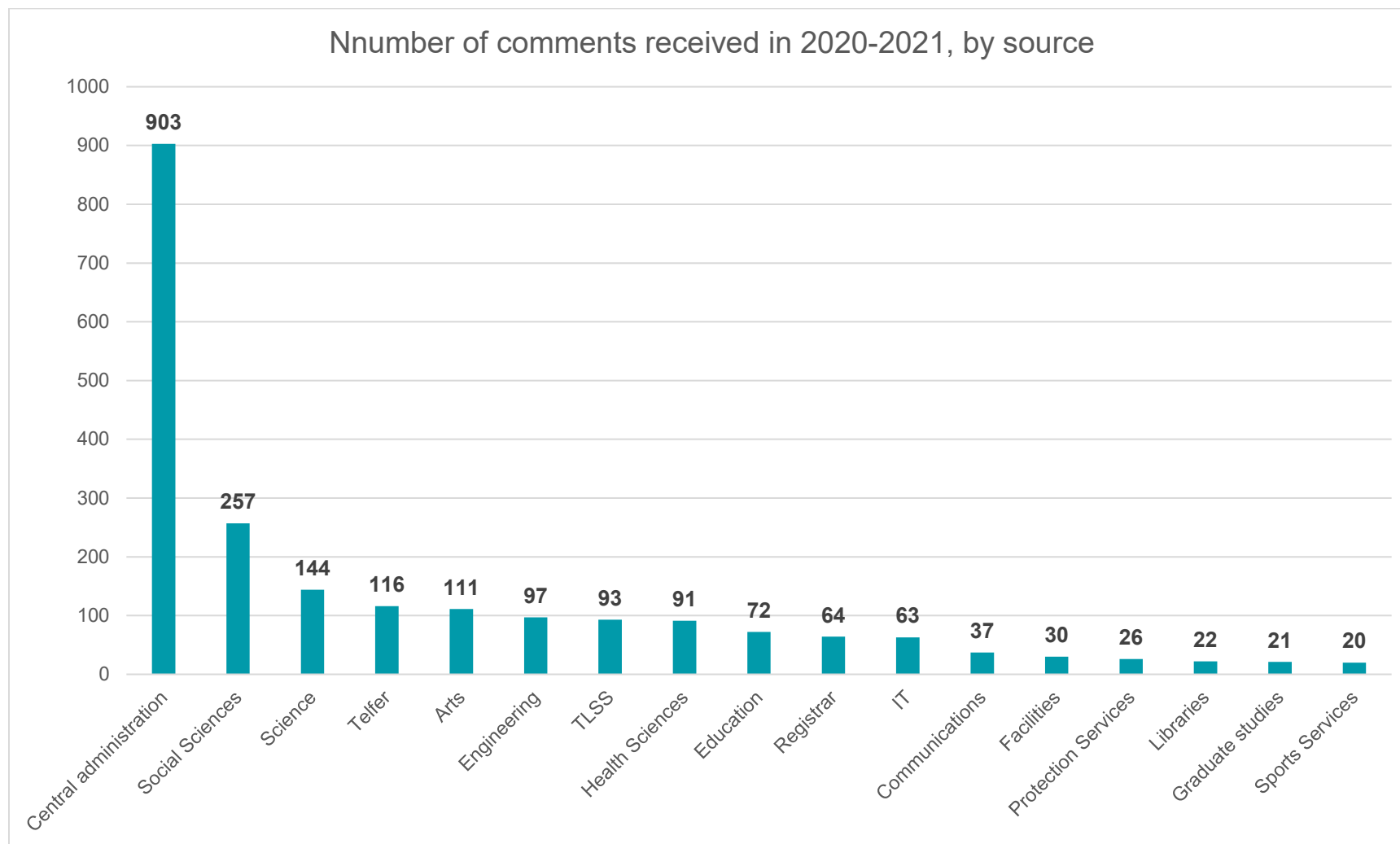


Figure 18: Number of comments received in 2020–2021, by source