

# HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE

## 2013-2014 Annual Report



Figure 1: Image representing the Human Rights Office

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A word from the director, Sonya Nigam ..... 3

1. Human Rights Office ..... 4

    1.1 History ..... 4

    1.2 Mandate ..... 4

    1.3 Team ..... 5

2. Achievements ..... 6

    ➤ Creation of the Human Rights Office ..... 6

    ➤ Human Rights Office website ..... 6

    ➤ Transfer of files ..... 6

    ➤ Task Force on Respect and Equality ..... 6

    ➤ Review of policy 67a and procedures 36-1 and 36-2 ..... 6

    ➤ Consultations on the policy on academic accommodations for students with disabilities .. 6

    ➤ Transfer of Employment Equity Program, data and systems ..... 6

3. Sector reports ..... 7

    3.1 Accessibility ..... 7

    3.2 Diversity and inclusion ..... 8

    3.3 Harassment, discrimination sexual harassment ..... 9

4. 2014-2015 goals ..... 10

APPENDIX ..... 11

Contributors – Human Rights Office 2013-2014 Annual Report ..... 19

A word from the director, Sonya Nigam

It is a great honour and privilege to serve as the University of Ottawa's inaugural Director of the University of Ottawa Human Rights Office.

The Human Rights Office (HRO) was established in the Fall of 2013 and reports to the Associate Vice-President Student Affairs. It amalgamates the following services and responsibilities: (i) the Office of Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination situated under Service for the Academic Success of Students (SASS) and which dealt with student complaints concerning harassment and discrimination; (ii) harassment and discrimination complaints that were the responsibility of the Labour Relations and Academic Affairs groups under Human Resources (HR); (iii) the employment equity and diversity and inclusion responsibilities that were also housed by HR; and (iv) the accessibility policy development work that was under the supervision of the Office of the Vice-President Academic.

The first 12 months were largely focussed on building the infrastructure of the new unit. Office space was secured. New staff was hired and others moved from existing offices. Equipment was purchased and websites were migrated to the new institutional website platform. Security issues were tackled before confidential employment equity data was transferred from HR. In addition, awareness raising and other activities were undertaken and harassment and discrimination complaints were dealt with. For more information about these activities, please refer to the reports from the sectors below.

It was a busy and challenging year that we could not have gotten through without the tremendous courage of a dedicated team and the patience and goodwill of the University community to develop partnerships and new ways of working.

I would like to express a special word of thanks to Ashley Scott, former manager of the Office of Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination, who handled student complaints from 2010-2013. Her work provided a good foundation upon which to build. Thanks also goes to the Labour Relations team and Information Systems support for ensuring a smooth transition of files and responsibilities.

Today, the HRO looks and operates like many other university equity and human rights offices across the country. The creation of the HRO is an important step that allows the University to anchor institutional planning and prevention concerning diversity and inclusion, as well as compliance with human rights and equity obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, and the Federal Contractors Program under one administrative unit. This allows the University to better serve its community by offering a stable administrative hub within which stronger practices can be developed to demonstrate uOttawa's ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion and the right of students and workers to study and work in an environment that is free of harassment and discrimination.

# 1. Human Rights Office

## 1.1 History

The University of Ottawa's Human Rights Office was established in August 2013, which means 2013-2014 is the Office's first full academic year in operation. The Human Rights performs a variety of functions related to:

- ✓ Accessibility
- ✓ Diversity and inclusion
- ✓ Employment equity
- ✓ Harassment and discrimination

During the 2013-2014 academic year, Accessibility was one of the first sectors to be transferred under the Human Rights Office with the transfer of responsibility for implementing the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) from the joint responsibility of the Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost and Human Resources to the Human Rights Office during the summer of 2013.

The Diversity and Inclusion sector, which oversees the employment equity program, was another of the first sectors to be placed under the Human Rights Office. Responsibility for collecting and analyzing employment equity data under the [Federal Contractors Program](#) was transferred from Human Resources to the Human Rights Office in the fall of 2013.

The Office also handles complaints filed by students as well as employees and other members of the University community. The Human Rights Office operates under the authority of University of Ottawa policy 67a, *Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination* (updated February 21, 2012), and accompanying procedures 36-1 and 36-2 as well as under the University's policy related to sexual harassment (policy 67) and any collective agreements in effect.

The Human Rights Office replaces the Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD), which was created by the University in August 2010 and handled complaints specifically from students. Complaints involving employees were at the time handled by the Labour Relations and Faculty Affairs teams of Human Resources. Thanks to the annual reports that were published by the OPHD, we are today able to compare statistics over time for complaints filed by students. The Labour Relations and Faculty Affairs teams have provided the Office with Excel files containing the details on cases they had handled.

## 1.2 Mandate

The mandate of the Human Rights Office is to manage complaints of harassment and discrimination, implement the provisions of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* as well as monitor compliance and help members of the University community develop the necessary skills to ensure integration of inclusive practices here at the University of Ottawa. The Office also manages the employment equity program.

To carry out its mandate, the Office conducts activities focused on prevention in the areas of accessibility, harassment and discrimination as well as diversity and inclusion. These activities, aimed at all members of the University community, involve information sessions as well as educational, awareness and training sessions.

## 1.3 Team

- Sonya Nigam, director
- Mélissa Charest, administrative and communications assistant
  
- Ariana Anam, harassment and discrimination prevention officer
- William Cornet, harassment and discrimination prevention officer
- Yolaine Ruel, senior policy advisor, accessibility
  - Marie-Claude Gagnon, Web accessibility compliance coordinator
  
- Carole Bourque, diversity and inclusion specialist
  - Eren Buyukbicer, project assistant
  - Lavinia Allary, assistant policy analyst
  - Phillip Turcotte, research assistant

## 2. Achievements

### 2.1 Creation of the Human Rights Office

The Office began operations in September 2013. Initially, staff members from other services at the University joined the Human Rights Office, followed by new hires from outside the organization, to complete Human Rights Office team.

#### ➤ **Human Rights Office website**

The Human Rights Office worked on building a brand new site, which will be launched in the near future.

#### ➤ **Transfer of files**

Files related to harassment and discrimination, handled by the Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination between 2007 and 2013, were transferred to the Human Rights Office. The files handled by the Labour Relations group, however, were not transferred.

#### ➤ **Task Force on Respect and Equality**

University of Ottawa President Allan Rock announced the creation of the Task Force on Respect and Equality following two situations involving University of Ottawa students that had raised serious concerns about attitudes and behaviours. The director of the Human Rights Office sat on this task force.

#### ➤ **Review of policy 67a and procedures 36-1 and 36-2**

Almost from the first days of operation, a number of groups have complained to the Office about inconsistencies in procedures 36-1 and 36-2. As a result, the Office drafted updated versions of policy 67a and these two procedures. We intend to hold consultations next year with members of the University community in order to gather feedback on these new versions.

#### ➤ **Consultations on the policy on academic accommodations for students with disabilities**

Another key accomplishment involves consultations with members of the University community on the updated policy on academic accommodations for students with disabilities. A recommendation was made that this be considered an academic policy, like the policy for religious accommodations for students.

#### ➤ **Transfer of Employment Equity Program, data and systems**

The main accomplishments in the area of employment equity were the transfer of the employment equity files, data and IT systems. We also updated and cleaned up the data.

### 3. Sector reports

#### 3.1 Accessibility

In order for the University to meet its obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, the Office developed the necessary training and worked to raise awareness so that members of the University community could acquire new practical knowledge and skills. This work was done in conjunction with a number of other individuals and groups, including the marketing and communications directors of the different units on campus, the Communications Directorate, the Centre for University Teaching, Strategic Enrollment Management, the Centre for Continuing Education, Human Resources, the Office of Risk Management, Facilities and Student Academic Success Service.

The Office created Access Network, a network of individuals from the various faculties and services who are responsible for customer service and communications. Access Network activities allow us to share best practices, facilitate the creation of a community of practice on matters relating to accessibility and help foster an organizational culture that is welcoming and inclusive.

The Office also acted as liaison between the Communications Directorate, the IT department and all the webmasters and communications directors to create a website that is accessible to all visitors. Through funding available for accessibility training, the Office was able to hire a Web accessibility compliance coordinator. Having this person on board has contributed greatly to the Office's ability to coordinate the work needed to develop guidelines, best practices and procedures for the website and electronic communications at the University of Ottawa.

With the collaboration of Accessibility by Design and the Centre for Organizational Development and Learning (CODL), the Office was able to develop a series of 13 training seminars on accessibility for senior managers, supervisors as well as IT and Web specialists. This training can be taken online at any time.

The Centre for University Teaching developed a workshop entitled *Inclusive teaching practices: Reflection and strategies to foster variability and accessible learning environments*. This workshop is part of the Teaching and Learning Support Service (TLSS) workshop offerings. In addition, an accessibility toolkit for teaching practices was added to Accessibility section of the Human Rights Office website.

The Facilities group worked with the Human Rights Office to create 13 designated pick up and drop off stops for accessible transit on the main and Lees campuses as well at Roger Guindon Hall.

Thanks to the contribution of uOttawa's IT group, a new accessibility-related IT support service is now available (to compliment online video tutorials already available). Members of the University community can now get assistance in both official languages on how to create accessible documents. Individuals can access this service through the help line (ext. 6555) or by submitting an online form.

## 3.2 Diversity and inclusion

The diversity and inclusion specialist at the Human Rights Office sits on various external committees that are working to remove barriers to employment and to help employers develop inclusive human resource and management practices. These committees comprise representatives from numerous employers in the region and provide support and tools to individuals looking for work, employers and employees. The major committees include Hire Immigrants Ottawa, Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership and Employment Accessibility Resource Network.

### 3.2.1 Employment equity and Federal Contractors Program

One of the highlights of the year was the work of the information systems group at Human Resources, the University's IT department and the Human Rights Office. These three services worked together closely for a number of months to:

- Transfer the Human Resources employment equity data to the Human Rights Office, ensuring the data exchange was secure and confidentiality was maintained
- Evaluate IT needs and implement the necessary safeguards to protect confidential and personal information held at the Office
- Develop IT solutions to automate statistical analyses of employment equity data
- Create a cooperation agreement between Human Resources and the Human Rights Office to allow sharing of the data needed for analyzing equity-related statistics

Once the employment equity data was transferred and security measures were in place, the Human Rights Office:

- Cleaned up and updated the data, which involved conducting a large-scale self-identification survey and sending a second survey to regular staff members who hadn't responded to the initial survey
- Followed up personally with the employees who had received a questionnaire to answer any questions they had and to solicit their feedback
- Created an accessible electronic version of the questionnaire (previously available only in hard copy)



### **3.3 Harassment, discrimination sexual harassment**

The Office provided training sessions on harassment prevention—two in French and two in English—for employees level 9 and above as part of CODL’s Interaction Management training program.

The Office also met with different services on campus, including Housing Service and SASS, as well as managers and employees of other key sectors (e.g., vice-presidents, Centre for Equity and Human Rights, Protection Services). In September 2013, we provided training to a group of Faculty of Medicine students to help raise awareness of different aspects and problems related to harassment and discrimination. In total, we were able to hold close to 30 prevention activities throughout the year, allowing us to reach many members of the University community.

The majority of the work carried out by the harassment and discrimination prevention officers, however, involved handling complaints filed by members of the University community. At the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year, a single officer was responsible for handling all complaints file by members of the University community. However, in July 2014, a second officer was hired.

Consultation requests involve mainly requests for information on services and possible options. Some requests involve multiple types of interventions. Depending on the situation and the willingness of those involved, cases can be resolved informally in a number of ways—mediation, facilitated dialogue, coaching or through increased awareness. Of course, the Office handles complaints through formal mechanisms as well.

From July 19, 2013, to August 31, 2014, the Human Rights Office received 122 new complaints.

For more information on harassment, discrimination and sexual harassment data and statistics, please consult the appendix.

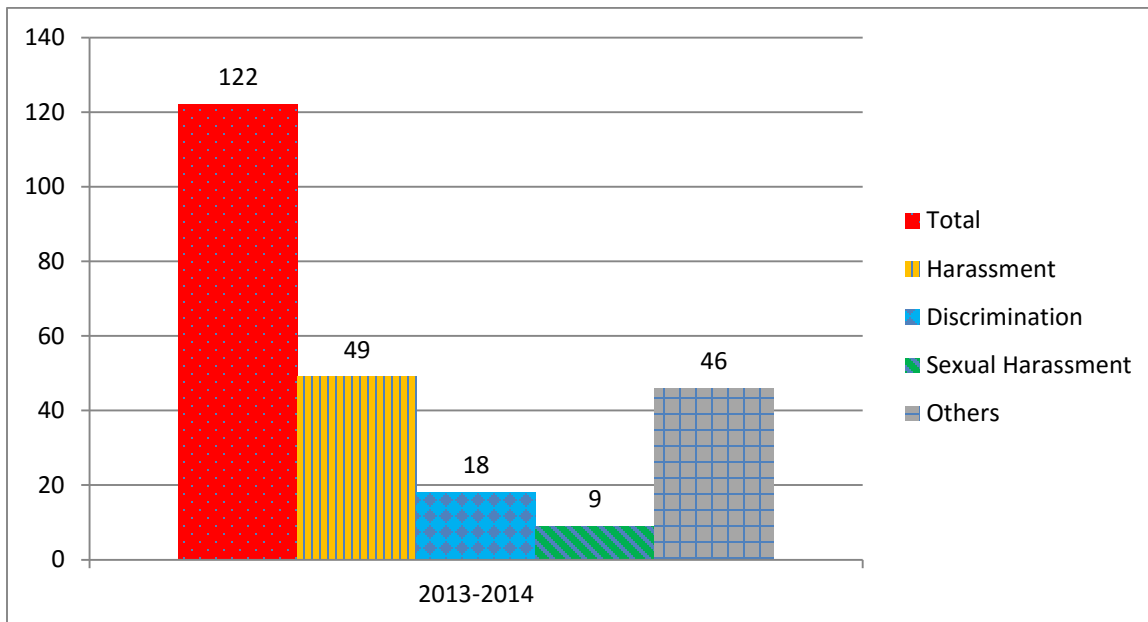
## 4. 2014-2015 goals

Our goals for 2014-2015:

- Increase awareness of the Office among members of the University community through a new website, a brochure and other promotional materials
- Provide accessibility training to support staff so they can increase their knowledge and skills
- Continue consultations on policy 67a and procedures 36-1 and 36-2
- Continue consultations to develop an accessibility policy and a regulation on academic accommodations
- Continue strategic planning exercise for the Human Rights Office
- Increase the frequency and quality of activities related to training, prevention and awareness
- Increase participation of the University community in inclusive social and academic activities
- Deepen understanding of inclusion and inclusive practices on campus
- Evaluate employment equity programs in place in other institutions in order to recommend improvements to the University's current program

## APPENDIX

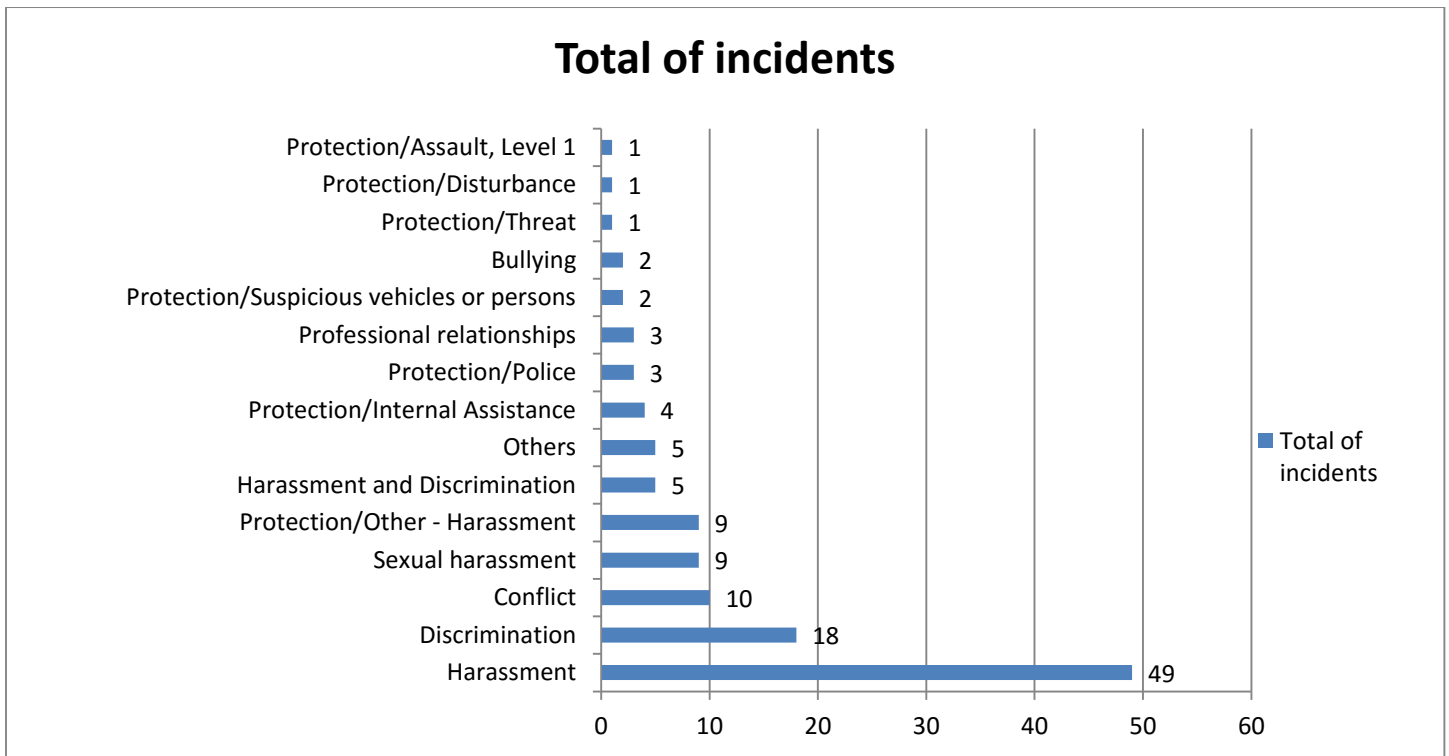
Figure 1 presents the number of complaints of harassment, discrimination and sexual harassment filed in 2013-2014 as well as complaints received for other reasons.



**Figure 1: Summary of cases handled by Human Rights Office, 2013-2014**

Figure 2, below, provides details of the types of complaints received by the Human Rights Office and Protection Services. Because statistics from previous years cannot be compared in the same way as this year's statistics (this year's statistics include complaints from all units at the University), figure 2 shows all complaints received by the Office by type of complaint. We have retained the incident categories used by Protection Services.

We can see from figure 2 that the majority of complaints (40.1%) involve incidents of harassment, while 14.8% involve incidents of discrimination. We can also see that 7.4% of complaints are related to incidents of sexual harassment.



**Figure 2: Number of complaints by category, 2013-2014**

Given that 2013-2014 is a transition year, the data may not be a true representation of the problems on campus. Some incidents may not have been reported while others may have been classified as harassment when they were in fact conflicts. Some incidents are brought to our attention quite late, which has an effect on how they are classed (e.g., a conflict between two colleagues or classmates escalates to the point of becoming harassment or discrimination—or both). As a result, the statistics may leave the impression that there are a high number of cases of harassment on campus when in fact many may be conflicts that were not reported or addressed quickly enough to avoid the situation escalating to the point of a complaint of harassment. This has a significant impact on the Office because it is difficult for us to determine the actual needs of the University community in terms of training and prevention activities

In 2013-2014, some of the complaints received from employees were handled jointly with the labour relations team, while others were handled by the labour relations team alone.

In total, the Office received 122 complaints—even without an extensive campaign to raise awareness about the new Office. Employees were referred to our office by union representatives or the Health, Wellness and Leave Sector (the unit previously responsible for handling employee complaints). Students were referred to our office by the Office of the Ombudsperson, Protection Services, the Student Rights Centre and the Office for the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment. While most complainants contacted us after being referred to our office, some individuals contact us directly by phone or email ([respect@uOttawa.ca](mailto:respect@uOttawa.ca)). The numbers for 2013-2014 are slightly higher than in previous years, even without having promoting our office and services, which clearly demonstrates the importance of the work done by the Office.

***Breakdown of type of complaint, by complainant-respondent relationship***

Table 1 shows that in the majority of cases handled by the Office, the complainant and the respondent were both uOttawa employees and that most involved complaints of harassment (37.7%). This may be indicative a need to provider greater training on harassment for employees. Students, however, reported incidents of various types involving a professor (13.1%) or another student (9.8%).

**Table 1: Breakdown of type of incident reported, by complainant-respondent relationship, 2013-2014**

<b>Complainant / respondent</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Student / student	12
Student / professor (part-time or full-time)	16
Student / employee	8
Student / club, team, organization or service	11
Student / external party	1
Student / unknown	11
Employee / professor (part-time or full-time)	5
Professor or employee / student	6
Professor / professor	2
Employee / unknown	2
Employee / employee	46
External party / employee	2

<b>Complainant / respondent</b>	<b>Harassment</b>
Student / student	4
Student / professor (part-time or full-time)	3
Student / employee	2
Student / club, team, organization or service	2
Student / external party	0
Student / unknown	2
Employee / professor (part-time or full-time)	2
Professor or employee / student	1
Professor / professor	2
Employee / unknown	1
Employee / employee	29
External party / employee	1

<b>Complainant / respondent</b>	<b>Discrimination</b>
Student / professor (part-time or full-time)	4
Student / club, team, organization or service	7
Student / external party	1
Employee / employee	5
External party / employee	1

Complainant / respondent	Conflict
Student / student	1
Student / employee	2
Student / unknown	1
Employee / professor (part-time or full-time)	1
Professor or employee / student	1
Employee / employee	4

Complainant / respondent	Sexual harassment
Student / professor (part-time or full-time)	5
Student / employee	1
Student / unknown	1
Employee / professor (part-time or full-time)	1
Professor or employee / student	1

Complainant / respondent	Protection/ Other - Harassment
Student / student	2
Student / employee	3
Professor or employee / student	1
Employee / unknown	1
Employee / employee	2

Complainant / respondent	Harassment and discrimination
Student / professor (part-time or full-time)	2
Employee / professor (part-time or full-time)	1
Employee / employee	2

Complainant / respondent	Other
Student / professor (part-time or full-time)	1
Student / club, team, organization or service	1
Student / unknown	1
Professor or employee / student	1
Employee / employee	1

Complainant / respondent	Internal assistance
Student / student	3
Student / club, team, organization or service	1

<b>Complainant / respondent</b>	<b>Police involvement</b>
Student / unknown	3

<b>Complainant / respondent</b>	<b>Professor rel.</b>
Employee / employee	3

<b>Complainant / respondent</b>	<b>Suspicious vehicles or persons</b>
Student / unknown	2

<b>Complainant / respondent</b>	<b>Bullying</b>
Student / professor (part-time or full-time)	1
Student / unknown	1

<b>Complainant / respondent</b>	<b>Threats</b>
Student / student	1

<b>Complainant / respondent</b>	<b>Disturbance</b>
Professor or employee / student	1

<b>Complainant / respondent</b>	<b>Assault, level 1</b>
Student / student	1

### ***Complaints referred to Human Rights Office***

The majority of the complaints received by the Office were referred by services or individuals at the University. The Office intervened directly (with complainant and respondent) or indirectly (with service or individual in question). Most referrals came via Protection Services.

The Office also met with the person responsible for the residences to assist with a case.

The Human Rights Office also worked with the Student Right Centre in two cases, which were handled following the official process outlined in administrative procedure 36-1. In two other cases, the Office worked jointly with the Centre to find a way to informally rectify the situation.

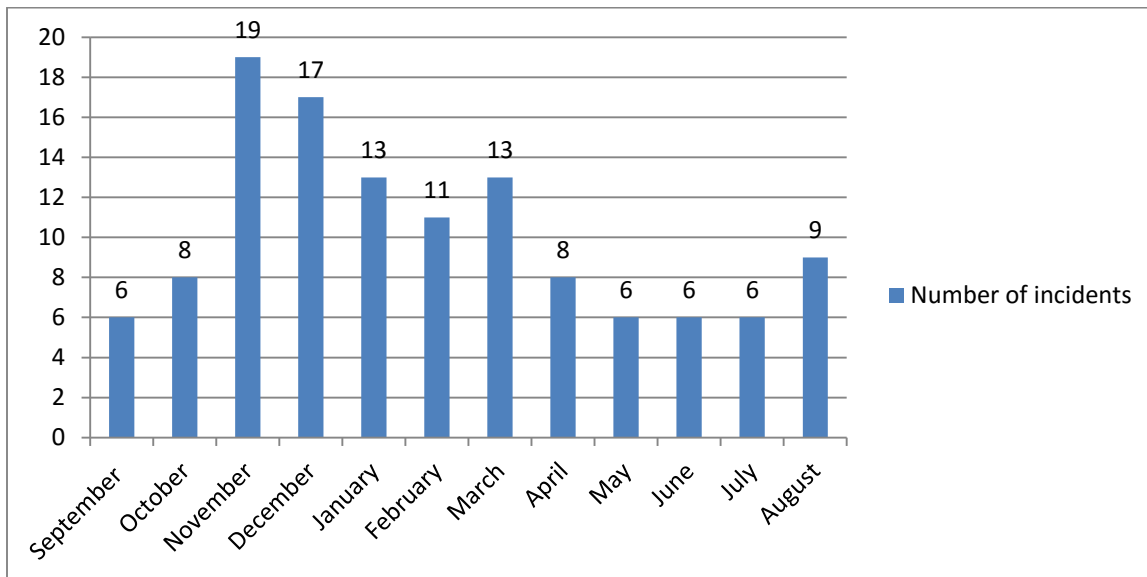
### Complaints filed with Protection Services

Of the 122 complaints received by the Office in 2013-2014, a total of 30 were referred by Protection Services. Of these 30 complaints, the Human Rights Office worked together with Protection Services in 17 of the cases (4 of these cases involved complaints of harassment and 5 involved complaints of sexual harassment). In the remaining 13 cases, we were simply advised of the details of the situations but did not get directly involved.

In total, the Office intervened directly in 109 of the 122 incidents reported. Most of the 109 complaints handled by the Office were received via the informal complaint mechanism outlined in procedures 36-1 and 36-2 of Policy 67a, *Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination*.

### Breakdown of complaints filed during the year

Figure 3 shows that the highest number of complaints was filed in November and December. It is important to point out that a complaint can involve multiple interventions by the Office and that these interventions can stretch over several months. As a result, the Office is busy year round, although it does see a decrease in the number of complaints filed during the summer months.



**Figure 3: Monthly breakdown of complaint files opened, 2013-2014**

### Complaints of sexual harassment

We received nine complaints of sexual harassment in 2013-2014. As mentioned above, six of the files were opened by Protection Services; the Office worked with Protection on five of these cases. Of the nine complaints filed with the Office:

- 4 complaints were resolved informally
- 2 complaints were handled through a formal process outside the Office (although the Office provided consultation and coaching)



- 2 complaints required no follow-up as complainants did not take action following our intervention or decided not to proceed
- 1 complaint was handled through the Office’s official process

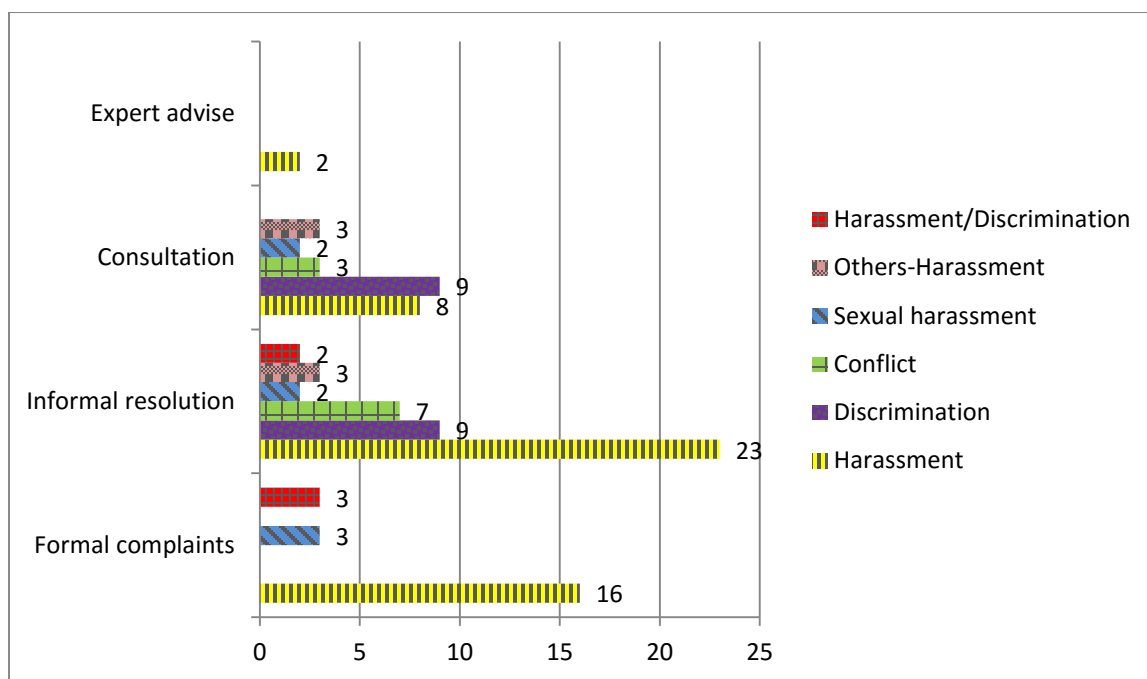
The complaint handled through the Office’s official process was referred to the appropriate authority, in accordance with Policy 67 and the applicable collective agreement. Another complaint is currently being addressed through informal mechanisms.

**Language**

Of the 109 complaints handled, 50.5% were received in English, 32.1% in French and 17.4% in both official languages.

**Breakdown by type of intervention**

Figure 4 presents the type of interventions used for the most common types of complaints. From this figure, we can see that most interventions involved informal mechanisms (coaching, facilitation, mediation, etc.).



**Figure 4: Breakdown by type of intervention for most frequent types of complaints, 2013-2014**

In total, the Office intervened directly in 109 of the 122 incidents reported. Most of the 109 complaints handled by the Office were received via the informal complaint mechanism outlined in procedures 36-1 and 36-2 of Policy 67a, *Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination*.

Of the 109 complaints received by the Office, le BDP handled a total of 18 complaints in accordance with procedures 36-1 and 36-2. Five complaints were referred outside the Office and were handled through formal mechanisms, with the assistance of the Office. Two complaints were handled together with the University of Ottawa’s association of part-time professors (APTPUO), three were handled with the union representing the support staff (SSUO), one with the

Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa (APUO), one with the Union of Student Workers at the University of Ottawa (CUPE 2626), five with the Labour Relations team and nine with Human Resources and SSUO.

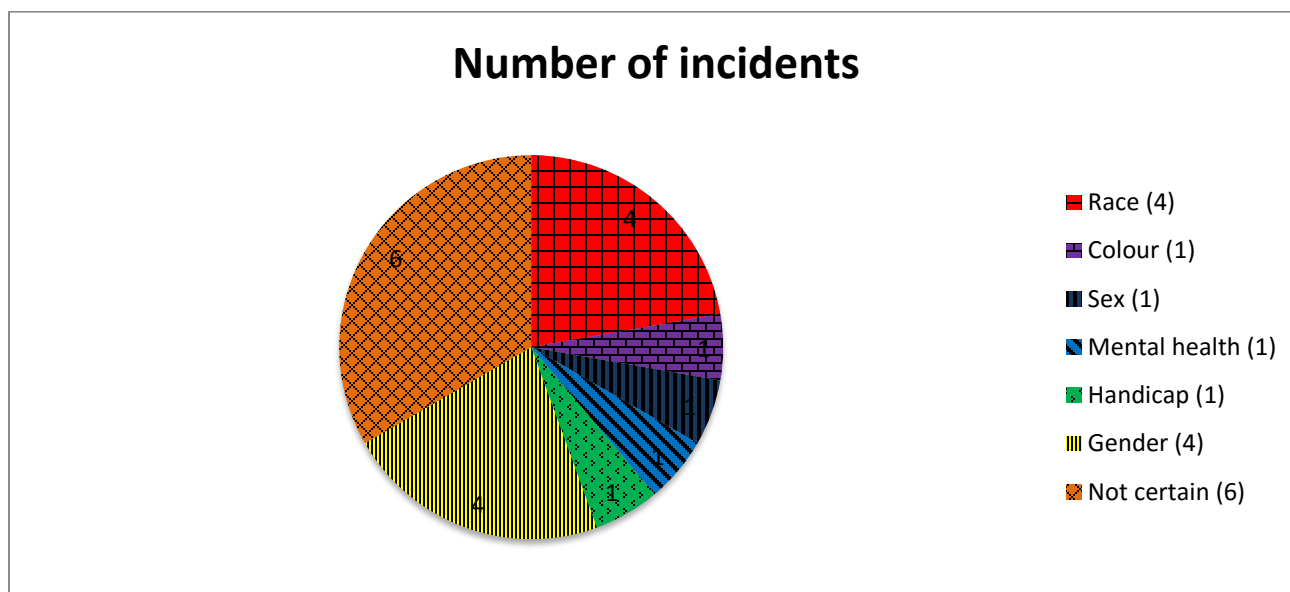
Meeting	Students (procedure 36-1)
Formal complaint	2
Informal resolution	25
Consultation	16
Involvement of specialist	6

Meeting	Staff (procedure 36-2)
Formal complaint	16
Informal resolution	20
Consultation	12
Involvement of specialist	2

**Table 2: Breakdown of type of intervention for 109 complaints received in 2013-2014**

Breakdown of complaints of discrimination based on prohibited grounds

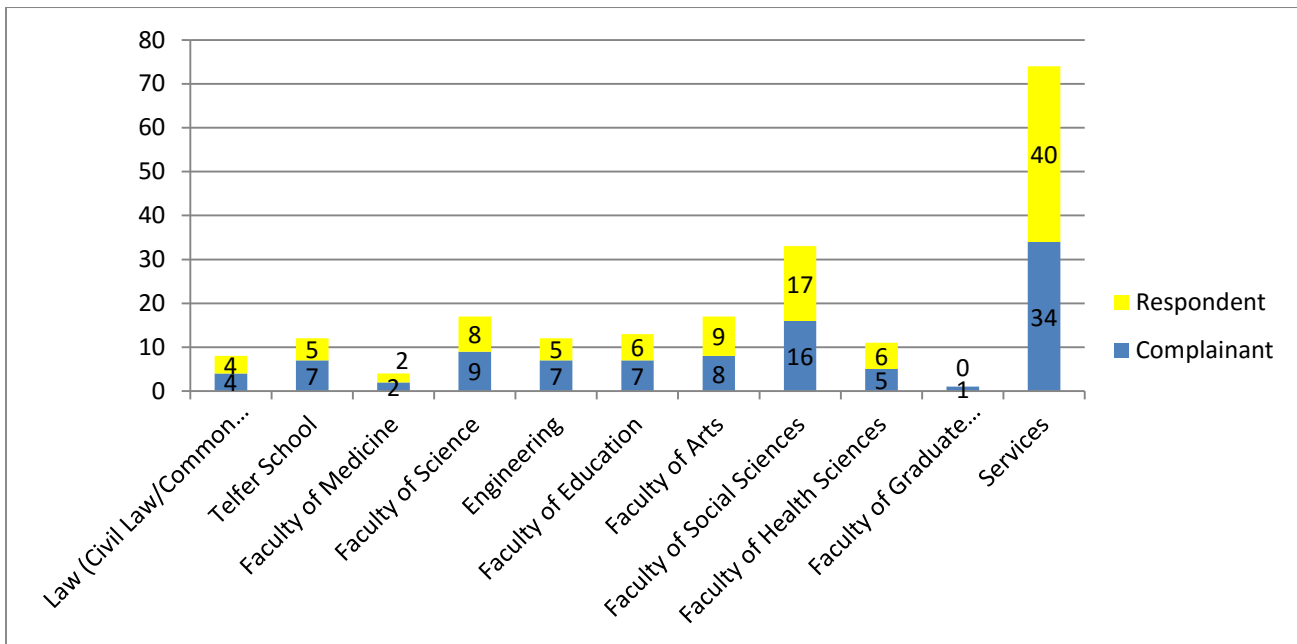
The Office received 18 complaints of discrimination. The breakdown of complaints by prohibited ground is shown in figure 5, below.



**Figure 5: Number of complaints by grounds, 2013-2014**

Breakdown of complaints by faculty and service

Figure 6 presents a breakdown of complaints by the faculty or service of the complainant and respondent. The *Service / office* category includes a variety of University units, such as SASS and the Library. Note that in 40 cases, the complainant or the respondent was not identified. As a result, the Office was unable to determine their faculty or service.



**Figure 6: Faculty or service of complainants and respondents, 2013-2014**

The Faculty of Medicine has its own policies and official procedures for handling complaints, which may explain the low number of complaints received from this faculty.

## **Contributors – Human Rights Office 2013-2014 Annual Report**

We thank the staff members at the Human Rights Office who contributed to this report and, even more importantly, to the success of the initiatives described herein.

Sonya Nigam  
Director

Mélissa Charest  
Administrative and communications assistant

Yolaine Ruel  
Senior policy officer, accessibility

Carole Bourque  
Diversity and inclusion specialist

Ariana Anam  
Harassment and discrimination prevention officer

Lavinia Allary  
Assistant policy analyst