

Annual Report

May 2021 to April 2022

Human Rights Office

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uOttawa

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Message from the from the interim director

For the Human Rights Office, the 2021–2022 academic year was certainly both rich in unexpected turns and productive. Working in hybrid mode, HRO staff continued to train, advise and equip the University community regarding a wide range of topics that are part of our mandate.

In addition to managing a large number of requests and providing high-quality service, the HRO completed major projects, including the adoption of [Policy 130 — Student Rights and Responsible Conduct](#). The policy, the result of a participatory, inclusive process involving members of the University community and the administration, is a tool to promote and ensure respect for the rights of the University community and maintain a respectful, healthy, and safe environment. It will also further the achievement of the Transformation 2030 objective to “[n]urture a sustainable campus culture that promotes overall well-being, embraces diversity, and fuels employee engagement.” We are committed to ensuring a proper implementation of this policy and encourage feedback from all to determine whether the next stages are aligned with university community expectations.

Finally, we wish to mention that this year, for the first time, the University of Ottawa ranked among Canada’s Best Diversity Employers, thanks to its workplace equity, diversity and inclusion measures and initiatives. While aware of the work that remains, the HRO wishes to thank the campus change agents who took part in these initiatives. We continue to encourage the staff involved, whether in the decision-making process or in the provision of goods, services, teaching or opportunities in the name of the University, to continue integrating inclusion in their practices.

We also thank the members of our University community who continue to protect and promote the University of Ottawa’s fundamental values concerning equity, diversity, inclusion and respect.

On behalf of the Human Rights Office, all the best for the 2022–2023 academic year!

About the Human Rights Office

The Human Rights Office assists the University in meeting its obligations with regards to sexual violence and sexual harassment in the workplace under the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#), [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#), [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#), [Federal Contractors Program \(FCP\) compliance assessment policy](#), [Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act](#) and [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#). More specifically, we offer expert advice on development, implementation and assessment of policies, procedures and practices concerning accessibility, sexual violence, harassment and discrimination. This work is done with an eye towards equity, diversity and inclusion at the University.

The Human Rights Office's mandate also includes handling complaints under [Policy 67a — Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination](#), [Policy 67b — Prevention of Sexual Violence](#) and [Policy 130 – Student Rights and Responsible Conduct](#).

For more information, see the [Human Rights Office website](#).

Report objectives

This report documents the actions and commitments of the Human Rights Office between May 1, 2021, and April 30, 2022.

It seeks to:

- Report on the HRO's progress
- Identify obstacles to eliminate and help the HRO meet its commitments
- As necessary, review HRO strategies

Highlights



This year, for the first time, the University of Ottawa ranked among Canada's Best Diversity Employers.



Five buildings at the University of Ottawa received Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification.



A policy on student rights and responsibilities was adopted.



Among the 936 requests and complaints received, the HRO observed an increase in proactive University requests concerning equity, diversity and inclusion, sexual violence prevention and accessibility.



The HRO received several reports dealing with creed under Policy 129 — COVID-19 Vaccination.



According to our data, incidents of workplace harassment, sexual violence and accommodations for students with disabilities on online platforms increased.

A proactive approach

Supporting the University's commitments

The Human Rights Office supported senior management, faculties, services and student groups in taking action to meet the objectives of the following initiatives and programs:

- Universities Canada Principles on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Federal government Dimensions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Canada program
- Comprehensive Approach to Addressing Racism and Discrimination on Campus
- Canadian Accessibility Network
- Okanagan Charter
- Federal Contractors Program

Practicality and openness

The Human Rights Office provided fact-based, concrete recommendations with measurable objectives in the following compliance reports:

- Compliance reports under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- Status reports on accessibility
- Reports on sexual violence prevention
- Overviews of the Federal Contractors Program at the University of Ottawa

Clear, transparent guidelines

Our office collaborated with various units and faculties on the following measures, guidelines, procedures and policies:

- Comprehensive Approach to Addressing Racism and Discrimination on Campus
- Review of Policy 67b — Prevention of Sexual Violence
- Development of measures for a gradual return to campus and accommodations for members of our University community with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Confirming accessibility of IT purchases
- Inclusive procurement
- Air quality-related accommodations (perfume free)

Awareness-raising activities

- Orientation Week
- Wellness Lounge
- A Healthy and Active Campus Lunch & Learn talks
- Short video on consent
- Se connecter au Canada : de l'amitié aux rencontres et tout ce qu'il y a entre les deux
- Begin By Listening Symposium
- Online training (In partnership with Sports Services, 900 student-athletes and fitness staff took online training on sexual violence prevention and Mobilizing the Bystanders workshops.)
- Six Weeks of Sexual Violence Prevention on Campus (for more, see the 2021–2022 Sexual Violence Prevention Report under the [Human Rights Office's reports](#))

Training sessions

- 45 training sessions on sexual violence (for more, see the 2021–2022 Sexual Violence Prevention Report under the [Human Rights Office's reports](#))
- Two sessions on applying public health standards and the duty to accommodate those living with a disability
- Development of the [\(IDEA\) Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility](#) educational tool (French-language version available in fall 2022)
- An information session on understanding neurodiversity
- Leading several discussion groups on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- An information session on promoting EDI in events

Information tools

- [Human Rights Office website](#)
- [Virtual University of Ottawa maps](#)
- [Accessibility Hub](#)
- [Sexual violence support and prevention website](#)
- [Mandatory training \(via VirtuO\)](#)

Consultations with the University community

The Human Rights Office continued to consult the University community through the following committees:

- uOaccessible Advisory Board
- Standing Committee on the Prevention of Sexual Violence
- Action Committee on Anti-Racism and Inclusion under the Office of the Special Adviser, Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence

Involvement with internal committees

- Occupational Health and Safety Committee (Office of Risk Management)
- The committee responsible for applying the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace
- Web Community Advisory Group (Communications)

- Communications officers network
- Mandatory Training Committee (Human Resources)
- Administrative Services Modernization Program Change Agent Network
- Advisory Committee on the Design of Public Spaces (Facilities)

Community involvement

The Human Rights Office assisted the University in meeting its commitment to deepen and enhance its connections to further exchange of resources, expertise and opportunities through the following initiatives:

- [ACCESS-EDU](#) (formerly CADSPPE-L): a listserv for learning specialists at Canadian postsecondary institutions
- Post-Secondary Education Standards Development Committee
- City of Ottawa Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review Project Team
- Francophone community of practice of the [Courage to Act project](#) (addressing and preventing gender-based violence at institutions of higher learning across Canada)
- Council of Ontario Universities Reference Group on Sexual Violence
- Council of Ontario Universities Reference Group Reference Group on EDI
- Partnerships with sexual violence survivor support organizations
- Ontario university AODA counsellors ad hoc group
- Senior Equity Officers Reference Group

Skills development

Continuing education training sessions our staff participated in over the past year included:

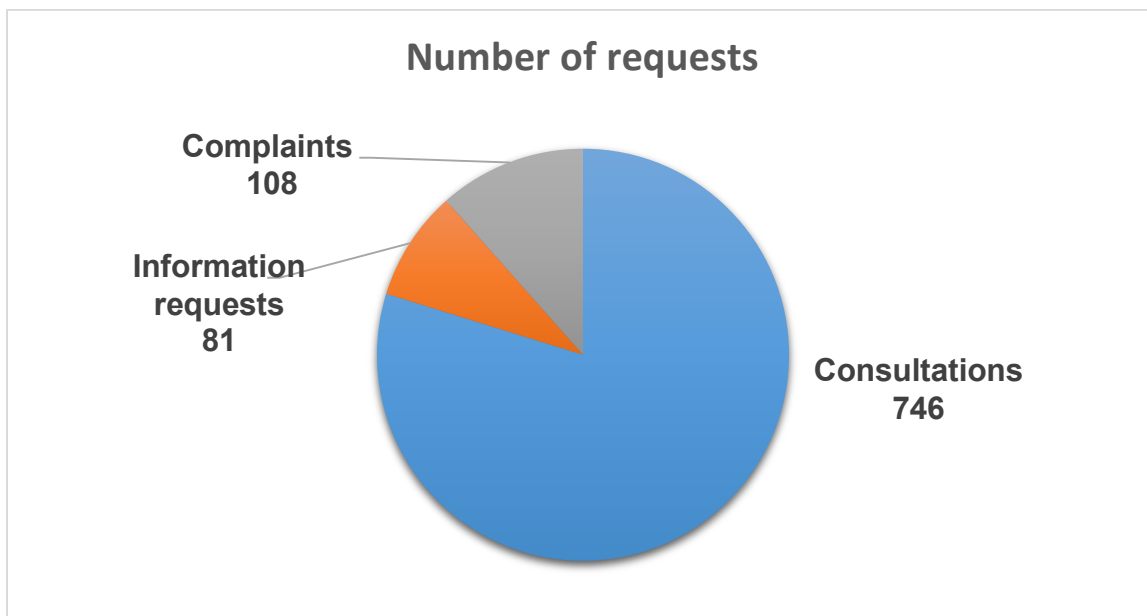
- Human Rights Concerns in Post-Secondary Education: The View from Ontario and Manitoba, Algonquin College
- Virtual consultation: faculty and staff sexual violence towards students — university presidents and HR representatives, Ministry of Colleges and Universities
- Learning Our Strengths Conference 2021: Creating Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive Organizations
- National Forum on Anti-Asian Racism — Building Solidarities, Ryerson University
- Ours to Tell: Ethics of Research in Indigenous and Japanese Canadian Communities
- Understanding and addressing issues of gender identity and sexuality when working with trauma survivors through trauma-informed care approaches
- Chaire de recherche Violences sexistes-sexuelles en enseignement supérieur talk — Subtile hétéro/cisnormativité : une analyse critique des politiques institutionnelles visant à prévenir et combattre les violences à caractère sexuel
- 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusive Trauma-Informed Care
- Vicarious Trauma — An Indigenous Perspective: Cultural Strengths as the Roots of Resilience for Healing Trauma and Building Worker Wellness
- Conference: Sexual Assault on Campus Canada
- Chaire de recherche Violences sexistes-sexuelles en enseignement supérieur talk: Confronting campus sexual violence in the face of rising backlash
- Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health: Accessibility and the Neurodiverse Campus Community, with Tara Connolly of Carleton University's READ initiative
- Inclusion Project and the Global Centre for Pluralism: Employment Equity Partnership Roundtable 2022

- Top Ten Workplace Investigation Cases of 2021, Rubin Thomlinson LLP
- Workplace Assessment and Reviews, Rubin Thomlinson LLP
- Principles in Credibility in Investigations, breakfast talk, Rubin Thomlinson LLP
- Internal Investigations 2022, Rubin Thomlinson LLP
- Centre d'innovation en santé mentale sur les campus: Forum Francophone Virtuel
- How to Build a Comprehensive Accessibility Strategy: SiteImprove (online)
- Workshop: La gouvernance inclusive auprès des conseils d'administration des organismes francophones en Ontario — Le Phénix (online)
- Accessibility and Inclusion Conference, Rick Hansen Foundation (online)
- Digital Violence Against Women and Hate Motivated Violence, hosted by Abigail Curlew (webinar)
- Intersection of COVID, Homelessness and Legal Rights, University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law Health Law Centre, Professor Terry Shloick
- Anti-Oppression Training, Windz training
- Mental Health Medical and Legal Best Practices panel with Dr. Mark Pierce, Neha Chugh and Stephanie (online)
- Black Women Leaders: Diversity in the Legal Profession, Aird and Berlis LLP
- Sexual Violence Conference, University (cross-country event), Joanna Birenbaum and Dan Mikilchuk (BLG)
- State of HRO and NOIDS, uOttawa Centre for Human Rights and Pluralism

Summary of HRO requests

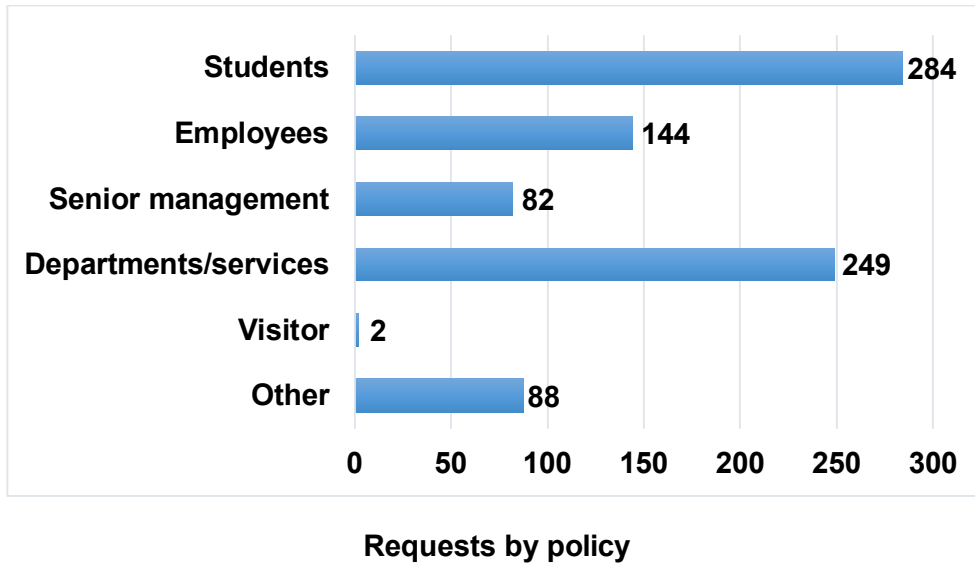
Number of requests

Of the 936 requests received by the HRO across all sections of activity (accessibility, harassment and discrimination, sexual violence, equity, and inclusion), 746 led to a consultation, 81 to a request for information and 108 to a complaint, whether formal or informal.



Composition of requesters

Over 284 students and 144 staff members requested HRO services.

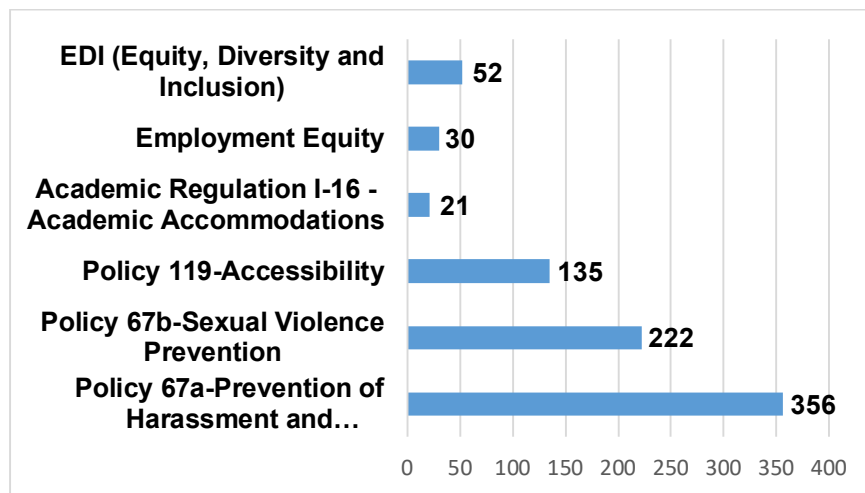


Consultations

To help the University of Ottawa meet its obligations, the HRO offered consultations 936 times to services and faculties including:

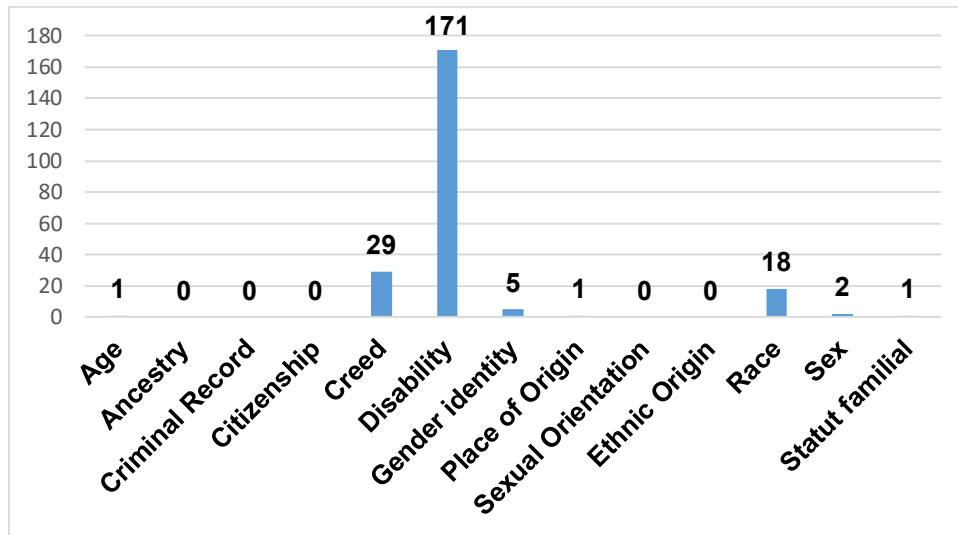
- 356 concerning Policy 67a — Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination
- 222 concerning Policy 67b — Prevention of Sexual Violence
- 135 concerning Policy 119 — Accessibility
- 21 concerning Academic Regulation I-16 — Academic Accommodations

Harassment and discrimination remain, along with sexual violence and accessibility, the most common topics. The HRO also received requests concerning employment equity, workplace harassment and the new Policy 130 — Student Rights and Responsible Conduct. Over 151 requests were unrelated to the office’s mandate.



Requests by human rights code grounds

There were many discrimination-based requests under the Ontario Human Rights Code related to disability (171) and creed (29).

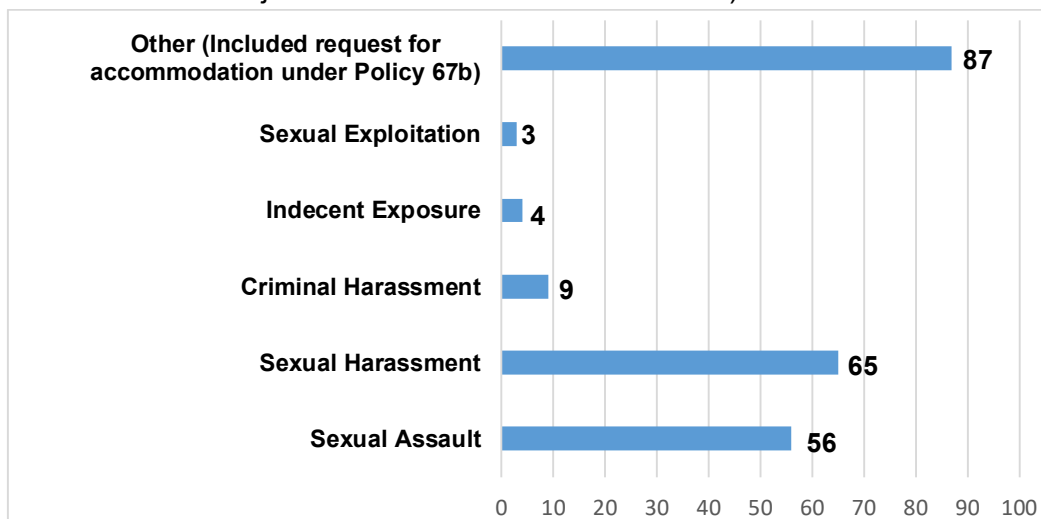


Sexual violence

The HRO received 224 service requests from the University community related to sexual violence, broken down as follows:

- Sexual assault: 56
- Sexual harassment: 65
- Indecent assault: 4
- Criminal harassment: 9
- Sexual exploitation: 3
- Other (not specified): 87

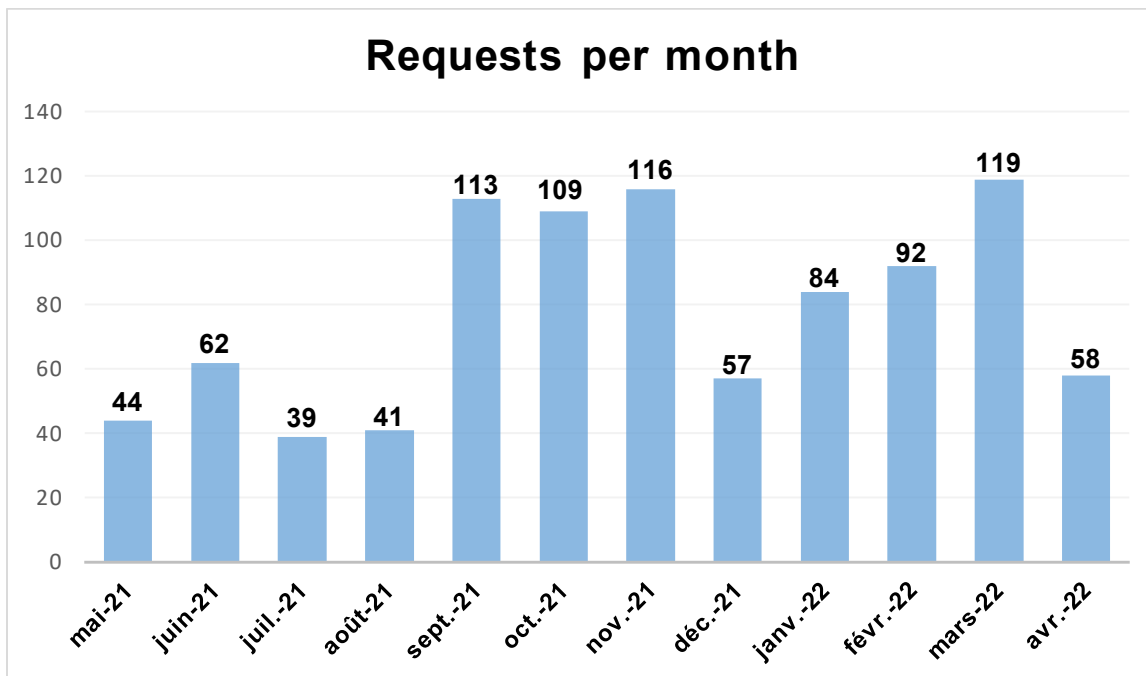
Of these 87 requests, 54 were for accommodations (e.g., deferral of assignments or exams, course changes, application of in-class preventive measures, letters in support of various actions, requests for tuition fee reimbursement and justifications of absences from class).



(For more, see the 2021–2022 Sexual Violence Prevention Report under the [Human Rights Office's reports.](#))

Requests by month

The HRO experienced peak request periods, including in March 2022, when requests numbered 121. The fall was also particularly busy. The start and end of a term are generally when there are the most requests.



Effect of COVID-19 on the HRO's role

COVID-19 had a disproportionate impact on equity-designated or equity-seeking groups. The incidents we became involved in reflect this disproportionate impact in a myriad of ways.

Online interaction

The increase in online interaction, particularly in learning and work environments and in social situations, influenced the types of the incidents brought to our attention. Many of these reports concerned social media posts. Some violated policies that fall under our mandate. More students living with disability said they faced obstacles in the learning environment and on Virtual Campus. Interaction in a virtual workplace also appeared to make conflict resolution more difficult.

As well, we received more reports of incidents of harassment on online platforms, in which the person posting the allegedly harassing comments could not always be identified. In such situations, it can be difficult to investigate or intervene. We continue to look closely at possible solutions with our partners to address these new challenges.

COVID-19 vaccination

Many members of the University community who did not receive the vaccination exemption they had requested under University Policy 129 chose to exercise their right to file a complaint under Policy 67a. The HRO handled a large number of these complaints, which cited, in particular, grounds of creed or religion.

In conclusion, our data from the past two years underline the rapid technological advances and exponential increase in use of technology by members of the University community, and the significant number of issues they raise. They also show the importance of paying particular attention to the needs of members of equity-designated or equity-seeking groups in all our decisions, and to adopt inclusive practices in everything we do.

Many thanks to our partners:

- University of Ottawa Students' Union (UOSU)
- Women's Resource Centre
- Graduate Students' Association (GSAED)
- Housing Service
- Sports Services
- Indigenous Resource Centre
- Communications Directorate
- International Office
- Health Promotion
- Protection Services
- Counselling and Coaching Service
- Student Academic Success Service
- Teaching and Learning Support Service
- CALACS francophone d'Ottawa
- Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre
- Centre for Treatment of Sexual Abuse and Childhood Trauma
- Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women
- Carleton University
- Algonquin College
- Collège La Cité
- CO-OP and Careers
- Faculty of Medicine
- Human Resources
- Research Management Services
- Offices of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs, and of the Vice-Provost, Faculty Relations
- Varsity Athletics
- Telfer School of Management
- Community Engagement Team