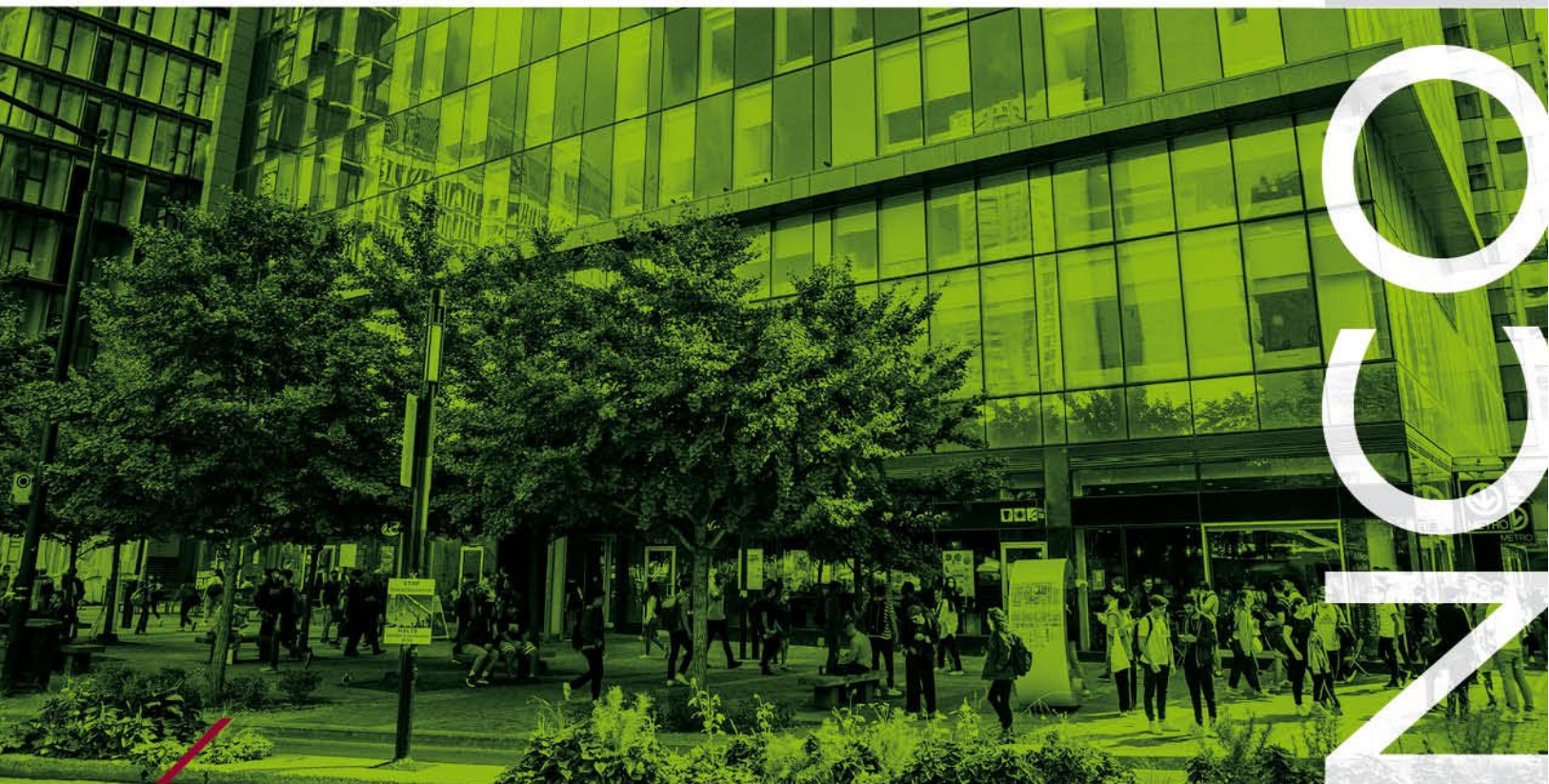


OFFICE OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES  
Promoting Respect on Campus



ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

OCTOBER 2022

CONCORDIA  
UNIVERSITY

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# Office of Rights and Responsibilities: Annual Report 2021-2022

## Introduction

The present report refers to the activities of the Office of Rights and Responsibilities (“**ORR**” or the “**Office**”) from **May 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022**. Submitted to the Secretary-General each year, the ORR’s annual report aims to do the following:

- Offer an overview of the mandate of the Office;
- Present statistics on cases and consultations during the previous academic year;
- Make recommendations with respect to policies or operations of the Office.

The report is made available to the University community via the ORR website [www.concordia.ca/rights](http://www.concordia.ca/rights). It is also submitted, for information purposes, to Concordia’s Senate and Board of Governors.

## ORR’s Mandate

The Office administers the Code of Rights and Responsibilities (the “**Code**”), which sets out the behavioral expectations that apply to all members of the University, including students, faculty, and staff. It explicitly prohibits a range of behaviours, such as threatening or violent conduct, sexual violence, sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination. The Code governs behavior that takes place on campus or on other premises in the course of University activities or events.

When any University member has a behavioural concern, they may approach the Office to obtain impartial, confidential, and independent advice and support in resolving the situation. The Office helps members by reviewing all available options and assisting in selecting the most appropriate approach. Options include:

- Helping informally resolve disputes by providing shuttle diplomacy, mediation, crafting settlement agreements, and/or providing strategies for resolution;
- Initiating the appropriate formal complaint process, such as forwarding cases to the Office of Student Tribunals or to the appropriate human resources authority;
- Directing complainants to another, more appropriate mechanism for addressing their complaints, for example: union grievance, police complaints, etc.

In addition to resolving conflicts, the Office coordinates the University’s response in handling urgent cases and managing behaviours that may pose a danger or threat to our community. Members may approach the Office to flag any such behaviour. The Office then takes immediate steps to direct an appropriate and time-sensitive response, in consultation with colleagues from across the University.

The ORR frequently participates in committees and other University bodies mandated to address behavioural issues. Most recently, this has included the Standing Committee on Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence (“**SCSMSV**”).

## Policies that Guide ORR's Work

In addition to administering the Code, the Office is guided in its work by a number of related University policies, including:

- *Policy Regarding Sexual Violence*
- *Protocol on the Coordination of Urgent Cases of Threatening or Violent Conduct*
- *Policy on Student Involuntary Leave of Absence ("POSILA")*
- *Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Psychological Harassment*

Each policy sets out timelines, decision-making structures and a selection of appropriate responses to potential situations. The policies aim to guide difficult decisions so that they can be made in a timely manner with input from experts from across the University, including the Provost's Office, Campus Security, the Sexual Assault Resource Centre ("SARC"), the School of Graduate Studies, International Students Office, Campus Wellness and Support Services, and others.

## A New Team at ORR

The ORR team is composed of a **Director, Associate Advisor** and a shared **Department Assistant**, who also serves the Ombuds Office. 2021-2022 was a period of significant staffing change, with a new person stepping in to each of the three roles:

- **Director and Senior Advisor:** In January 2021, Concordia appointed Lisa White as its inaugural Executive Director of the Equity Office. She continued to lead the ORR while a search for her replacement took place. A selection committee appointed the undersigned, **Aisha Topsakal**, as the new Director and Senior Advisor of ORR, effective May 1, 2021. Aisha has been at the university since 2014, previously with JMSB's Goodman Institute of Investment Management and the Office of the President.
- **Associate Advisor: Sarvenaz Ezzatpour** stepped into this role in January 2021 on an interim basis to replace Daniel Giglio during his parental leave. Daniel has since accepted a new role at the International Students Office. Sarvenaz was appointed in the permanent role of Associate Advisor effective August 29, 2022. She previously worked as the lead advocate at Concordia Student Advocacy.
- **Department Assistant:** In December 2021, Sraddha Bista moved to a new role at the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities. **Andreea Constantinescu**, who is new to the University, joined ORR as Interim Department Assistant in February 2022.

The staffing changes throughout the year brought with them the normal challenges, requiring that time and resources be devoted to training. Throughout this period of adjustment, we are proud to have maintained our level of service to the University community. This would not have been possible without support from the outgoing ORR team. We extend a warm thank you to our colleagues Lisa White, Daniel Giglio and Sraddha Bista for their assistance.

## The Return to Campus

The ORR team physically returned to the office in **August 2021** on a full-time basis. We share office space on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of the GM building with our colleagues from the Ombuds Office, who also returned to campus at the same time. We were pleased to see our colleagues in person and we have benefited immensely from the spontaneous conversations that can be difficult to replicate in a remote setting.

At the time of writing, our presence on campus has not translated into as many face-to-face meetings with our clients as we would have expected. Students, staff and faculty have continued to opt for remote appointments, despite our availability to meet in person. We have had very few walk-in visitors (3) or in-person meeting requests (under 10) throughout the year.

The ability to collaborate remotely has in some ways been beneficial for ORR. Frequently, we must pull together senior administrators from across the university for urgent meetings – for example, Student of Concern (“SOC”) meetings can require us to quickly assemble a committee with representatives from the Office of the Provost, Campus Security, SARC, Campus Wellness and Support Services and others. Remote meetings facilitate the work of pulling together the needed expertise on short notice.

As the new academic year begins, it remains to be seen whether the ongoing return to campus will impact the number of in-person meetings we host at ORR.

## Data Analysis and Statistical Review

### Activity Summary and Breakdown of Requests for Assistance

The Office categorizes its assistance to members in the following ways:

- **Consultations:** ORR provides information and guidance but usually does not play an active role in the conflict or concern.
- **Formal and informal cases:** ORR provides advice and may also directly intervene, review evidence or play an ongoing role in the situation. This can include forwarding a complaint to the appropriate authority. In informal cases, ORR typically assists in reaching a voluntary agreement to resolve a dispute.
- **Student of Concern (“SOC”)/POSILA:** A SOC file is opened when a student is identified as presenting a potential threat or danger to themselves or others. ORR typically assembles a Case Team to review these files and recommend appropriate actions. Measures can include various interventions, such as connecting students with appropriate resources, restricting campus access or placing a student on a leave of absence.

An ORR dossier typically begins as a consultation. If it ultimately evolves into a case, it is only counted once when reporting the data. Cases are generally categorized as behavioural issues under the Code or as SOC files under POSILA.

In the 2021-2022 reporting period, ORR received **357 new requests for assistance**, compared to the 380 new requests recorded in the previous reporting period (a drop of 6%). In addition to new files, we managed 37 ongoing files carried over from the previous year, for a **total of 394 active files**, compared to a total of 430 active files in the previous reporting period.

Below, you will find a 3-year comparison of total active files processed by ORR in the relevant reporting periods. As we entered the second year of the pandemic, it may be that the slight dip in requests for assistance reflects the lack of in-person interaction on campus.

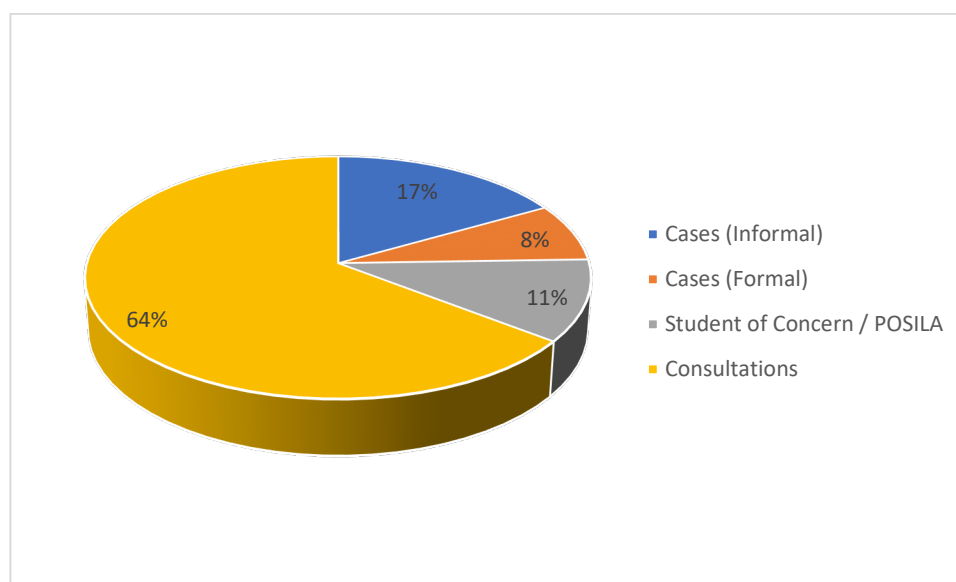
**TABLE 1: 3 YEAR ANNUAL COMPARISON OF TOTAL FILES PROCESSED IN REPORTING YEAR**

Year	Informal	Formal	SOC	Consults	Total
<b>2021-2022</b>	68	31	44	251	<b>394</b>
<b>2020-2021</b>	94	44	43	249	<b>430</b>
<b>2019-2020</b>	71	47	38	268	<b>424</b>

SOC files typically represent the most challenging cases at ORR, often involving complex problems of mental health and requiring threat assessments in collaboration with colleagues from across the university. This year, ORR had 44 active cases involving SOC files, similar to the 43 SOC cases from the previous year.

The relative distribution of services remained fairly consistent with previous years. As illustrated in the chart below, consultations accounted for a majority of services provided in 2021-2022. Also, in keeping with historical trends, informal resolution tends to be preferred over formal resolution. Active formal complaints represented approximately 8 percent of the Office’s activity.

**CHART A: DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICES (2021-2022)**



## Complainant and Respondent Demographics

In the charts that follow, we take a closer look at our Complainant and Respondent demographics in both our complaint and consultation files.

The following definitions apply when we consider demographics:

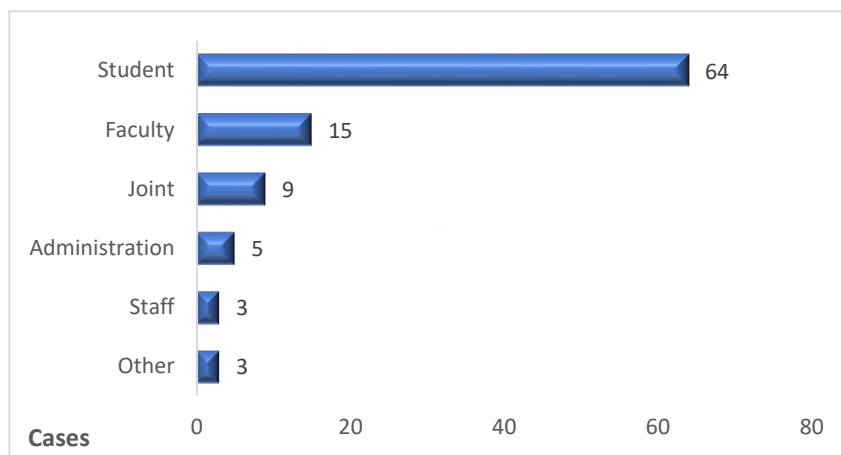
- **Student** - Members registered in any academic program on a full-time or part-time basis, independent students, members registered in non-credit courses, auditors, exchange students and visiting students.
- **Staff** - Full-time and part-time employees who are not faculty members and/or do not perform administrative and/or supervisory functions as specified in the 'Administration' category.
- **Faculty** - Full-time and part-time professors including extended and/or limited term appointments, visiting lecturers, etc.
- **Administration** - Employees and/or units who fulfill specific administrative and/or supervisory functions including Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs, Campus Security, Residence Life, Directors, etc.
- **Other** - Non-members including alumni, contractors, non-academic visitors, volunteers, etc.
- **Joint** - Two or more Complainants and/or Respondents from different demographic categories
- **N/A** - Complainants and/or Respondents who are unknown, unidentified or anonymous. Complainants in the 'N/A' category are typically anonymous and seeking consultation services from the Office, while Respondents in this category are generally either unknown to the Complainant or not identified by the Complainant.

## Who is seeking assistance?

The term “Complainant” is used to refer to any member of the University community who is directly affected by someone’s behaviour and/or as part of their administrative role, raises a concern with the Office. The conduct in question should be within the scope of the Code. If warranted, a case file is opened regardless of whether informal resolution was sought or a formal complaint was launched. In 2021-2022, students followed by faculty members most often requested assistance from the Office in both case and consultation categories.

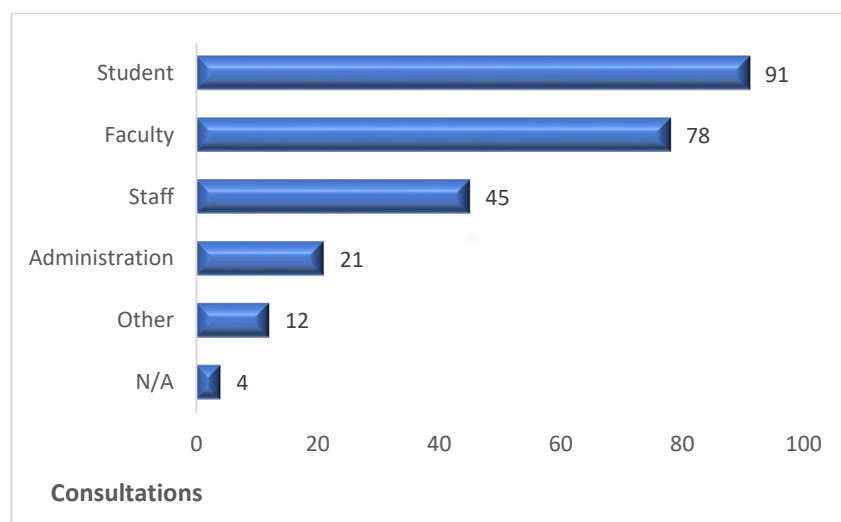
### CHART B: COMPLAINANT DEMOGRAPHICS 2021-2022 (CASES)

*In cases, requests for assistance/complaints were generated by:*



### CHART C : COMPLAINANT DEMOGRAPHICS 2021-2022 (CONSULTATIONS)

*In consultations, requests for assistance/complaints were generated by:*



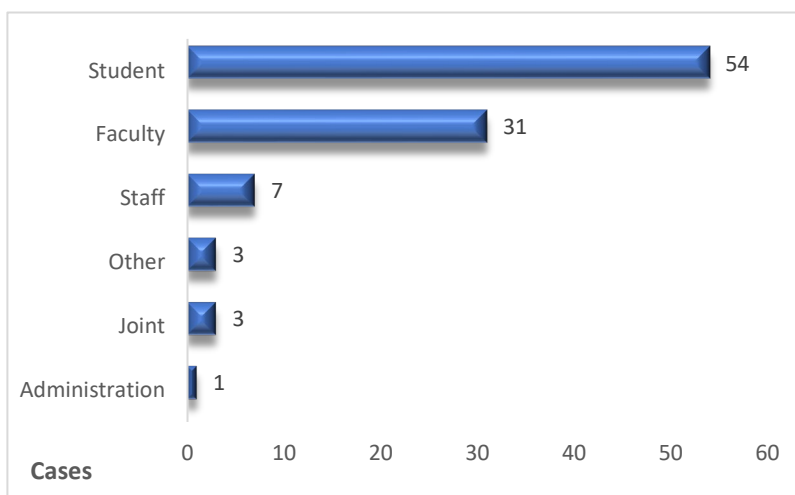


## Who are complaints being made against?

The term “Respondent” refers to the person against whom a complaint is made. A “Respondent” is any member who is alleged to be responsible for undesirable behaviour described as an offense/infraction under the Code. Students were predominantly the identified respondents in both complaints and consultations, followed by faculty.

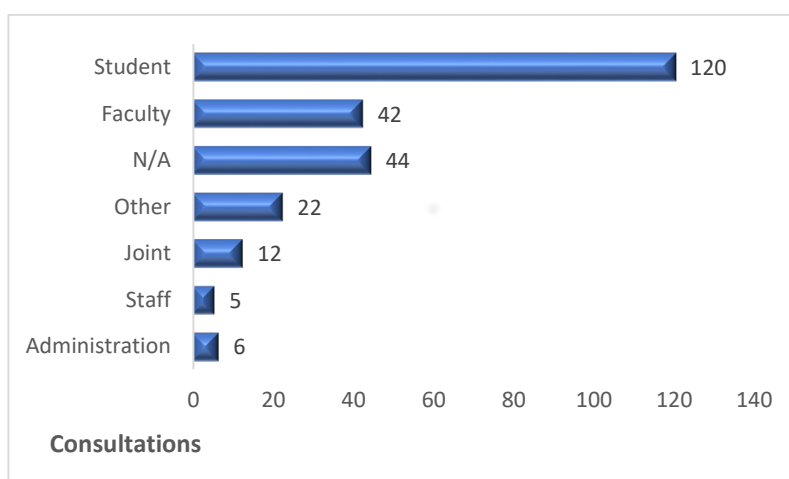
**CHART D: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS 2021-2022 (CASES)**

*In cases, complaints were generated against:*



**CHART E: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS 2021-2022 (CONSULTATIONS)**

*In consultations, complaints were generated against:*



## What infractions are reported to ORR?

Some complaints allege multiple Code infractions. These complaints are counted as a single file, regardless of the number of offences cited. In consultations, complainants will not necessarily allege a complaint or issue that falls neatly under a specific Code article, accounting for the high number in the “Miscellaneous Consultations” category.

Below, you will see a breakdown of all infractions reported. Consistent with previous years, harassment and SOC reports accounted for the vast majority of concerns brought to ORR. Reports of discrimination and sexual harassment were consistent with last year’s numbers. Allegations of threatening or violent conduct decreased significantly, which may reflect the lack of in-person interaction. A decrease was also noted in reports of sexual violence and sexual assault, as well as psychological harassment. The Office will continue to monitor if any trends emerge through future reporting periods.

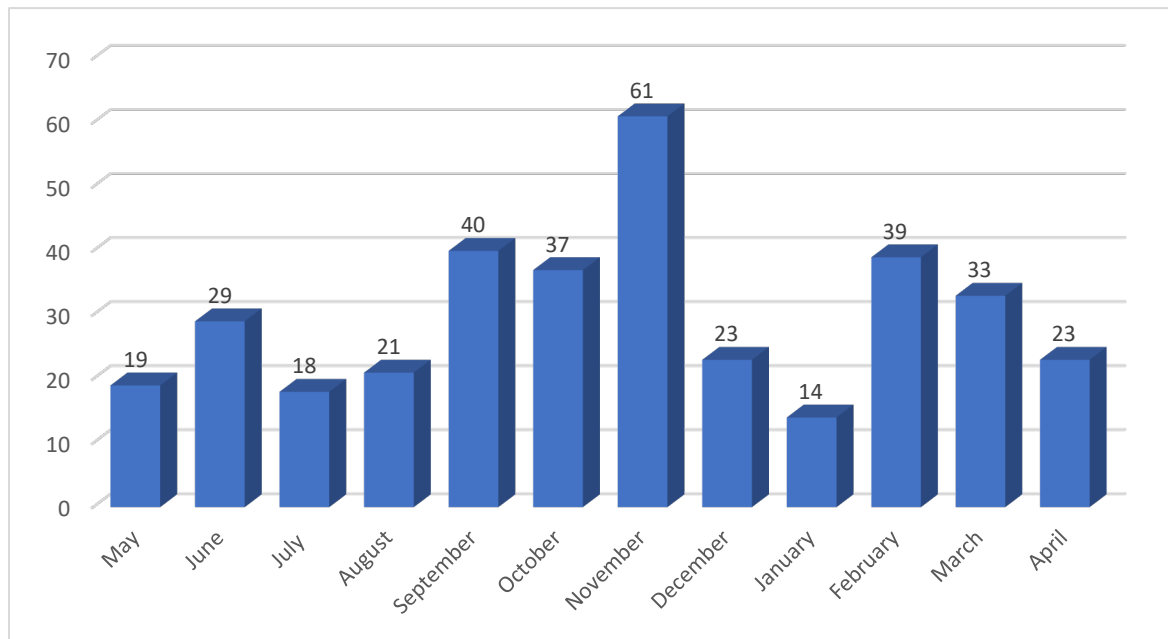
**TABLE 2: BREAKDOWN OF INFRACTIONS ALLEGED IN CASES AND CONSULTATIONS (2021-2022)**

Offences reported	Cases	Consults	Totals 2021-2022	Totals reported in previous year 2020-2021
Harassment	35	72	107	150
Student of Concern	49	49	98	66
*Miscellaneous Consultations	8	72	98	138
Discrimination	18	32	50	40
Sexual Harassment	15	13	28	30
Communication of Discriminatory Matter	8	18	26	28
Threatening or Violent Conduct	10	3	13	54
Sexual Violence and Sexual Assault	3	7	10	27
Psychological Harassment	2	5	7	45
Forging or altering University documents	0	2	2	6
Unlawful use, sale, etc. of controlled substances	1	0	1	1
Hazing	0	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>585</b>

## When do members reach out to ORR?

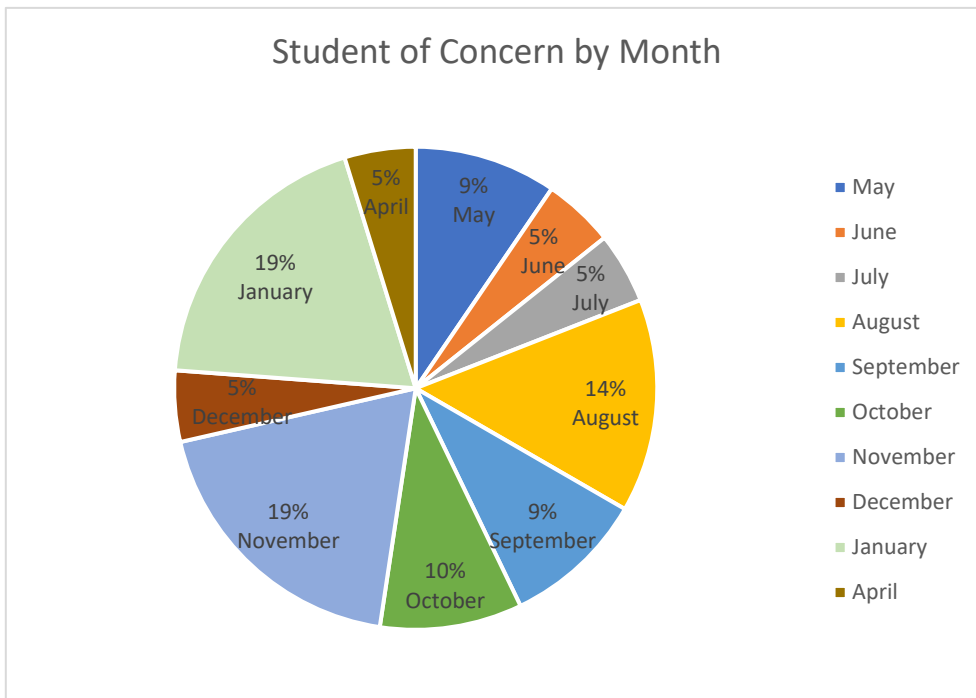
In analyzing new requests for assistance throughout the years (excluding exceptional circumstances), we noted that the Office typically receives more requests in the months of September to November. As illustrated in the chart below, this year was consistent with previously noted trends, with most requests coming to us in the Fall semester.

**CHART F: MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION OF NEW REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE (357)**



*Note: Thirty-seven ongoing requests for assistance were carried over from 2020-2021 and are not reflected in this graph.*

**CHART G: NEW STUDENT OF CONCERN DISTRIBUTION BY MONTH**



*Note: Seventeen ongoing SOC files were carried over from 2020-2021 and are not reflected in this chart.*

Of the 27 new SOC cases received in 2021-2022, the most were reported in the months of November and January. Not surprisingly, SOC reports decreased throughout the summer months.

No students were placed on involuntary leaves of absence in 2021-2022, although two students opted for a voluntary leave from their studies. As always, the SOC dossiers received by the Office required varying levels of intervention, coordination and/or implementation of restrictions, where appropriate.

**Education, Outreach, Promotion and Collaboration**

ORR education and outreach takes place throughout the year and takes many forms. The staff participates in student, faculty and employee orientations, offers workshops and training, and provides information regarding harassment, threatening or violent conduct and dealing with disruptive members.

Throughout the 2021-2022 year, ORR participated in and presented at various University events

and activities remotely. Outreach activities also included providing information to departments regarding ORR policies and approaches to behavioural incidents and concerns.

In last year's annual report (2020-2021), we recommended that ORR and the newly launched Equity Office develop a combined program of outreach efforts, given that discrimination complaints brought to ORR are often tied to problems of a more systemic nature. I am pleased to report that ORR and the Equity Office delivered a series of joint workshops to faculty members throughout the reference year. Lisa White and Aisha Topsakal visited departments to lead discussions and present scenarios on EDI-related topics. The topics covered were varied and included barriers to creating an inclusive classroom, managing difficult conversations, and responding to reprisals when complaints are filed. We look forward to collaborating further with the Equity Office to offer additional resources for our community members.

## Recommendations

The Office may make recommendations regarding situations within a unit, department, faculty or the University as a whole, when such situations have the general effect of violating the rights protected by the Code. Often, these recommendations arise from specific issues or situations that are brought to the Office's attention. The Office also makes recommendations as needed regarding the Code, related policies and its own operations. University members are welcome to submit recommendations for consideration.

As we look ahead, our recommendation for the coming year is that ORR work together with colleagues to deliver a regular series of recurring workshops for academic and non-academic leaders to help equip them with the skills to manage difficult situations and respond to crisis situations. Topics should include how to respond to **students in distress** and how to manage **difficult situations and conversations**.

As the 2022-2023 academic year begins, we are pleased to report that we have delivered our first in-person workshop to all Concordia Chairs on how to manage difficult situations, in collaboration with the Office of the Provost, Equity Office, SARC and the Office of Indigenous Directions. We have also presented to the Chairs of the Faculty of Arts and Science in collaboration with the Ombuds Office. We look forward to continuing hands-on trainings such as these throughout the year.

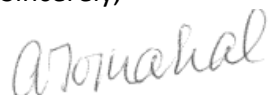
## Closing Remarks

In summary, 2021-2022 has been a year marked by change. In addition to our return to campus, we now have an entirely new team at ORR. Under normal circumstances, the work at ORR is challenging – the transitions of this year required an even greater level of adaptability and agility. We were nevertheless able to maintain a level of service that has elicited positive feedback from students and colleagues throughout the year.

I would like to thank our ORR Associate Advisor, Sarvi Ezzatpour, and our Department Assistant, Andreea Constantinescu, for the hard work and dedication they have shown in their roles since their very first day of joining our office. The enthusiasm, compassion and rigour they bring to the office each day is remarkable. I would again like to thank the outgoing ORR team - Lisa White, Daniel Giglio and Sraddha Bista - for their assistance throughout our staffing changes.

Finally, I would like to extend our thanks to the Secretary-General and our Concordia colleagues for their invaluable support as we have navigated the challenges of this past year. We look forward to working together to ensure that all Concordians can pursue their studies and work in a safe, collegial space.

Sincerely,



Aisha Topsakal

Director and Senior Advisor, Rights and Responsibilities

HARMONY  
 RESPECT  
 CONNECTION  
 THREATS  
 DISRUPTIVE  
 BEHAVIOUR  
 EQUITY  
 DISCRIMINATION  
 COOPERATION  
 COLLEGIALITY  
 DIVERSITY  
 TRESPASSING  
 CIVILITY  
 HARASSMENT  
 THEFT