

Annual Report 2009-10
Focusing on Fairness

Ombuds Office

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ombuds Office's Annual Report for 2009-10, titled *Focusing on Fairness*, is submitted to the Board of Governors as per article 29 of the Terms of Reference of the Ombuds Office (<http://vpexternalsecgen.concordia.ca/documents/policies/BD-2.pdf>). The report describes the mandate of the Ombuds Office, its activities for the year including statistics on the concerns and complaints received as well as recommendations.

For more than 30 years, Concordia University has supported the existence of an independent and confidential Ombuds Office on campus to address concerns and complaints about University life. It was created in 1978 from the merger of the Ombuds Offices of its two founding institutions, Sir George Williams University and Loyola College.

The Terms of Reference of the Ombuds Office define the scope of its operations as well as its different functions. Independent of the University's administrative structures, the Ombuds Office bases its practice on the principles of impartiality, confidentiality and accessibility to all members of the University community. The Ombuds Office assists in the informal resolution of concerns and complaints about policies, rules and procedures. It also acts as an "agent of change" by recommending the development of new policies, rules and procedures or by recommending improvements to them. The Terms of Reference were most recently reviewed in the winter of 2010 and adopted by the Board of Governors in June 2010. The Ombudsperson reports to the Board of Governors as is the model used in other universities in North America and in the Health and Social Service network in Quebec.

To carry out its unique role, the Ombuds Office relies on a small team comprised of Kristen Robillard (Ombudsperson), Marie Berryman (Assistant Ombudsperson) and Blossom Thom (.5 Secretary/Receptionist). The Ombuds Office is currently located in the Guy-Metro (GM) Building. This Report discusses the important limitations of this space and describes attempts being made to find a more suitable alternative.

Informing University members of the role and services of the Ombuds Office is a regular activity. Widely distributing our Up Against a Wall/Au pied du mur pamphlet to the community, making presentations at key times of the academic year, giving workshops, and advertising in different publications are the major tools used. With new users, a more personalized approach is adopted. Before setting the parameters of the working relationship, the mandate of the Ombuds Office is reviewed to highlight the cornerstones of our practice and questions are discussed.

Both the Ombudsperson and the Assistant Ombudsperson stay abreast of current issues and best practices in the field of ombudsmanship. They are active in a number of important ombudsman associations in Quebec, Canada and the United States, attending meetings and conferences. The Ombudsperson is a member of the Executive of the Association des Ombudsman des Universités du Québec. And, after six years on the Executive of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons, she has been named the President for a two-year term. In 2009-10, she was also awarded ACCUO's Special Contribution Award for her outstanding contribution to academic ombudsmanship.

In 2009-10, the Ombuds Office had a caseload of 531. Each case can relate to more than one issue. Concerns and complaints were raised by three groups namely, students, employees (Staff, Faculty, Academic Administrators, Contract) and an “other” category of individuals who had a relationship with the University.

Some salient features of the student caseload:

- 419 students used the services of the Ombuds Office
- 78.3% of the caseload of the Ombuds Office were students studying for credit
- 1.0% of the students enrolled to study for credit at Concordia in 2009-10 consulted the Ombuds Office
- 1 in 6 students studying for credit who consulted the Ombuds Office had international (VISA) status compared to 1 in 9 in the overall student body
- For undergraduate students, academic concerns were the reason for 60% of requests for service. Grades/re-evaluation (34%) was the most common academic reason followed by course management (20%), exams (12.7%), program/degree requirements (10%), academic misconduct (10%) and academic standing (9%)
- Of the academic concerns raised by graduate students, grades/re-evaluation was the most important at 28% followed by supervision (20%), academic standing (12%) and program/degree requirements (12%).
- With regards to “other” concerns, fees were at the top of the list for both graduate students (55%) and undergraduate students (45%)
- Actions taken in student cases included providing information and advice (51%), conflict resolution (27.9%), and expediting situations (15.3%)

Salient features of the Employee caseload:

- 79 employees (Staff, Faculty, Academic Administrator and Contract) or 14.9% of the caseload consulted the Ombuds Office
- 57% of issues raised related to “other” concerns (incl. employment questions, locating/interpreting policies and procedures, how to handle difficult behavior, fees) and the remaining 43% to academic concerns (incl. grades/re-evaluation, course management and academic misconduct)
- Information and advice was provided in 71% of employee cases and prevention was the action taken in 1 of 13 employee cases.

Salient features of the “Other” caseload:

- 31 individuals (5.8% of the caseload) who consulted the Ombuds Office were not current Students, Faculty or Staff but had a relationship with the University (applicants, alumni, retirees, etc)
- Providing information and advice was the action taken in over half of these cases

Individual recommendations made during the course of the year related to administrative, academic and financial issues. These recommendations were sometimes formulated following the incorrect application of a policy, the review of incomplete supporting documentation to make a decision, the lack of appropriate follow up to the terms of a letter of admission or to an agreement and the under appreciation of the consequences of a university member’s health situation when considering a request for an exception to be made. Systemic recommendations included providing better notice to students about upcoming financial deadlines and recommending that consideration be given to providing financial assistance to international students faced with an unannounced tuition fee increase.

Following the review of the 2009-10 caseload, the report focuses on the academic issues of graduate supervision and grades/re-evaluation. Given the difficult situations that follow from failing supervisory relationships, the Ombuds office sees the need to better set the stage for those that are more healthy and productive. The Ombuds Office supports the School of Graduate Studies' up-coming endeavor to have graduate students and their supervisors set both an Academic and a Research Plan at the start of the student's studies. Progress on following the plans will be evaluated on a yearly basis and shared with the School.

With regards to grades/re-evaluation, it was the most frequently highlighted academic issue for undergraduate and undergraduate students. Concerns related to the initial grading of work, obtaining feedback about grading as well as adherence to some important requirements of the Academic Re-evaluation Procedures. As such, the Ombuds Office recommends that

- All Professors adopt the Office of the Provost's recommendation that the Common Course Outline http://provost.concordia.ca/documents/Course_Outline_Guide.pdf be adopted for their courses. The Outline sets important parameters for the course and serves to avoid misunderstandings throughout the term. While headway has been made in this area, it needs to continue.
- That the Academic Re-evaluation Procedures that were last updated in September 2001 be reviewed and widely disseminated to members of the community

Finally, the Ombuds Office wishes to thank Students, Faculty, Administrators, Staff and other community members who collaborated with us to find solutions to University-related concerns and complaints, making Concordia an even better place to learn and work.

MANDATE OF THE OMBUDS OFFICE

For more than 30 years, Concordia University has supported the existence of an independent and confidential Ombuds Office on campus to address concerns and complaints about University life. It was created by the merger of the Ombuds Offices of its two founding institutions, Sir George Williams University and Loyola College. The former office served all University members and the latter worked exclusively with students. When both offices merged in 1978, a decision was made to ensure that Concordia University's Ombuds Office was accessible to all its members. And so it remains today.

The Terms of Reference of the Ombuds Office can be found in section 17.40 of the Undergraduate Calendar and in Part VII of the Graduate Calendar. These terms are also available in English and French in our office and at <http://vpexternalsecgen.concordia.ca/documents/policies/BD-2.pdf>

These Terms of Reference were adopted by the Board of Governors in June 2010 after a review of the December 1998 document was conducted in the winter 2010 term. In January, President Woodsworth struck the Terms of Reference Review Committee comprised of a representative cross-section of the university community. The Committee conducted its review based on a survey of models used in other University Ombuds Offices in Canada and the US as well as written comments submitted by community members who answered the public invitation to participate in the review.

The most significant modification to the Terms of Reference is the reporting structure. While the Ombudsperson previously reported to the President, the Ombudsperson now reports directly to the Board of Governors. This places the Ombuds Office in the best position to ensure its independence which is key to fulfilling its unique role. This reporting model is also found in most universities in North America as well as in the health and social service network in Quebec. With regard to administrative issues that will need to be addressed, the Vice-President External Relations and Secretary-General acts as the liaison between the Board of Governors and the Ombudsperson.

Scope

The scope of the Ombuds Office is described in articles 1-5 of the Terms of Reference. The five defining parameters are as follows.

- The Office is defined as independent of the University's administrative structures.
- Its services focus on concerns and complaints related to application of policies, rules and procedures as well as to their improvement.
- Services are to be impartial, confidential and accessible to all members of the community.
- The Ombudsperson's power is to recommend rather than to impose means to resolve complaints and to improve policies, rules and procedures.
- As informal dispute resolution is key to the approach of the Ombuds Office, it does not have jurisdiction to inquire into the application or interpretation of a collective or employee agreement nor into the alleged violation of the duty of fair representation against a certified union.

Functions of the Ombuds Office

Article 6 of the Terms of Reference highlights the functions of the Ombuds Office:

“Specifically, the Ombudsperson shall:

- a. actively promote these Terms of Reference and the services offered;
- b. inform Members about existing policies, rules and procedures and advise them as to the appropriate channel of redress for any concern or complaint they may have;
- c. assist Members to resolve complaints informally and quickly;
- d. at his/her discretion, conduct an independent and objective inquiry into complaints when normal channels of recourse have been exhausted;
- e. at his/her discretion, conduct an independent and objective inquiry into the application of any policy, rule or procedure of the University;
- f. explain decisions taken by University authorities when complaints are not substantiated;
- g. at his/her discretion, recommend solutions to help resolve complaints;
- h. bring to the attention of University authorities any policies, rules or procedures which appear unclear or inequitable or which might jeopardize the rights or freedoms of any Member. The Ombudsperson may suggest changes to the existing policies, rules or procedures or offer advice on the development of new policies, rules or procedures.”

In carrying out its unique role, the Ombuds Office does not automatically defend the individual seeking assistance nor does it automatically defend the university. Instead, it is entrusted to advocate for fairness. In so doing, it focuses on describing processes that are available to resolve problems, brainstorms as to available options for resolution, coaches and role plays as to possible approaches to follow, inquires into versions of events, considers all facets of a situation before arriving at a conclusion and consults with pertinent parties when making individual and/or systemic recommendations.

RESOURCES

The Ombuds Office relies on a number of resources to fulfill its mandate. They are as follows.

Team

The Ombuds Office team includes Kristen Robillard (Ombudsperson), Marie Berryman (Assistant Ombudsperson) and Blossom Thom (.5 Secretary/Receptionist). Ms. Thom assumes the same role in the Office of Rights and Responsibilities. This 2.5 FTE complement for the Ombuds Office has been constant for approximately 8 years.

Budget

In addition to salaries and office expenses, the Ombuds Office devotes resources to professional development. A list of these activities is provided on page 8.

Space

The Ombuds Office shares adjacent space with the Office of Rights and Responsibilities on the 11th floor of the Guy-Metro (GM) Building in suite 1120. Though these offices provide separate services to the University community, their proximity is useful for ease of client referral and consultation. While this arrangement has been successful in these ways, the space itself is lacking.

In particular, the space is deficient with regards to safety, accessibility and confidentiality. There is in fact only one door to enter and exit the suite of offices. The reception area is small and includes the Secretary/Receptionist's working space. Entering the suite and negotiating the space is a challenge for someone with physical limitations. When there are people in the reception area, maintaining confidentiality of case information requires the Secretary/Receptionist to have to interrupt her work.

These concerns have been raised in an ongoing fashion for a number of years. With some recent moves in and out of the GM Building and the Office of the Vice-President External Relations and Secretary-General now involved in this dossier, it appears that suitable space will become available in 2012. We look forward to this for the greater efficiency of our operations and safety of our staff and visitors.

INFORMING THE COMMUNITY OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND THE SERVICES OF THE OMBUDS OFFICE

In such a large, diverse and vibrant community where students, faculty and staff come and go, informing the members of the role and services of the Ombuds Office is a regular activity.

Informing the community at large

The means that we use to inform the community at large are described below. The beginning of the fall term and the winter term are targeted moments in the academic year.

Up Against a Wall/Au pied du mur pamphlet

In preparation for the Fall term, thousands of our Up Against a Wall/Au pied du mur pamphlet (Appendix 1) are distributed to the New Student Program and the International Students Office to be included in their welcome packages for students. Pamphlets are also sent to the following:

- Academic Departments;
- Access Centre for Students with Disabilities;
- Continuing Education
- Counseling and Development
- Faculty and School of Graduate Studies Offices of Student Affairs;
- Health Services;
- Information Services;

- Office of the Registrar;
- Offices of Senior Administrators;
- Offices of Student Government;
- Student Accounts; and
- Student Associations.

Orientation sessions

The Ombuds Office staff actively participates in orientation sessions for different university audiences. In 2009-10, the following presentations and workshops were given at the following events:

- New Faculty Orientation
- Orientation for New Chairs
- New Undergraduate Student Orientation
- School of Graduate Studies Orientation for Graduate Students
- New Student Program Fairs (September and January)
- Engineering and Computer Science (ENCS) Teaching Assistants' (TA) Orientation
- Workshops on Conflict resolution for ENCS TAs
- Workshops on Conflict resolution for Arts and Science (A&S) and Faculty of Fine Arts (FoFA) TAs
- Orientation for graduate programs (MSc and Ph.D. Administration, Accountancy) in the John Molson School of Business (JMSB)

Advertisements

A full page advertisement describing the role and services of the Ombuds Office is published in each issue of the New Student Program's magazine, *The Bridge*. Such information is also published in the Graduate Student Association agenda that is made available to all graduate students in September.

Informing new users

At the initial contact with new users of our services and with those we may contact in working on a case, we take the time to explain our role and services and highlight the cornerstones of our practice (independence, confidentiality, impartiality, recommendation).

The way in which this is done depends on how the individual has contacted the Ombuds Office. Those we meet in person receive an Up Against a Wall/Au pied du mur pamphlet, those we speak to on the phone receive a verbal explanation and those who contact us by e-mail are referred to the link to the Terms of Reference of the Ombuds Office. Setting the parameters at the beginning of the working relationship fosters trust, encourages exchange and leads to more effective and efficient casework.

IMPROVING OUR PRACTICE

By virtue of the services of the Ombuds Office being independent of the administrative structures of the University as well as confidential, the work can sometimes be solitary. To stay abreast of current issues and best practices in the field, both the Ombudsperson and the Assistant Ombudsperson are active in the Ombudsman community and partake in networking and training opportunities. As to keeping up-to-date with campus life that is also vital to doing our work, staff stay abreast of news both online and through community newspapers as well as by participating in on-campus workshops.

Participation in the Ombudsman community

The Ombudsperson and the Assistant Ombudsperson are members of the:

- Association des Ombudsman des Universités du Québec (AOUQ)
- Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO)
- Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO)
- International Ombudsman Association (IOA)

The Ombudsperson has been a member of the AOUQ Executive since 2002. As for her involvement in ACCUO, she was the member-at-large for Eastern Canada for 6 years. At the Association's Annual General Meeting in Vienna in May 2010 where it was holding a joint conference with the European Network of Ombudsmen in Higher Education, she was named President for a two-year term.

In 2009-10, she was also awarded the ACCUO Special Contribution Award for her outstanding contribution to academic ombudsmanship. Her highlighted contributions included actively participating on planning committees for ACCUO conferences, ACCUO/Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO) joint conferences and more recently for the ACCUO/FCO/IOA joint conference held in Montreal; presentations at several conferences on topics including: "Working with Challenging Behavior" and "Effective Interviewing"; her leadership on the ACCUO mentoring Project to match new and experienced Ombudspersons; her leadership on the ACCUO survey of member offices and her work on the ACCUO Executive Committee.

Meetings, workshops and conferences

Below is a list of meetings, workshops and conferences that the Ombuds Office staff attended in 2009-10.

- AOUQ Annual General meeting (North Hatley, June 2009)
- Concepts et vocabulaire de la stratégie (Serge Alary, Université de Sherbrooke, North Hatley, June 2009)
- Conflict coaching (IOA, Denver, July 2009)
- Contemporary legal issues (IOA, Denver, July 2009)
- Unreasonable Complainant Behavior (FCO, Ottawa, October 2009)
- Le Plagiat dans les universités québécoises à l'ère du numérique (Sous-comité de la pédagogie de la CRÉPUQ, UQTR, Trois-Rivières, Québec, October 2009)
- AOUQ Midyear meeting (Québec, December 2009)
- Students with Disabilities (We Value Workshop Series, Concordia University, December, 2009)
- Sortir vainqueur de la turbulence (Maryse Laurendeau, Université Laval, Québec, December 2009)
- ACCUO Midyear meeting (Montreal, January 2010)

- Causerie sur la Norme et l'engagement: pourquoi la norme est-elle antinomique à la responsabilité et à l'engagement dans l'enseignement universitaire? (Bernard Lapierre, École Polytechnique de Montréal, Montreal, January 2010)
- Involuntary Withdrawals: Prevention, Procedures and Protection Webinar Session (Hosted by Advocacy and Support Services, Concordia University, February 2010)
- Building a Culture of Understanding with International Students (We Value Workshop Series, Concordia University, March 2010)
- Rebirth, Rebuild, Respond!—5th Annual IOA Conference (New Orleans, April 2010)
- Ombudsman master class (IOA, New Orleans, April 2010)
- Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Workshop (Concordia University Department of Security, April 2010)
- Changes to the Graduate Fee Billing Structure—Information Session (Student Accounts Office, Concordia University, April 2010)
- We Value our Native Heritage Workshop (We Value Workshop Series, Concordia University, April 2010)
- Common objectives, different pathways: Embedding Ombudsman principles and practices into Higher Education institutions (ACCUO/European Network of Ombudsman in Higher Education Joint Conference, Vienna, May 2010)

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

Collecting data

Before describing the volume and types of concerns and complaints brought to the attention of the Ombuds Office in 2009-10, a brief explanation of the nomenclature used is required.

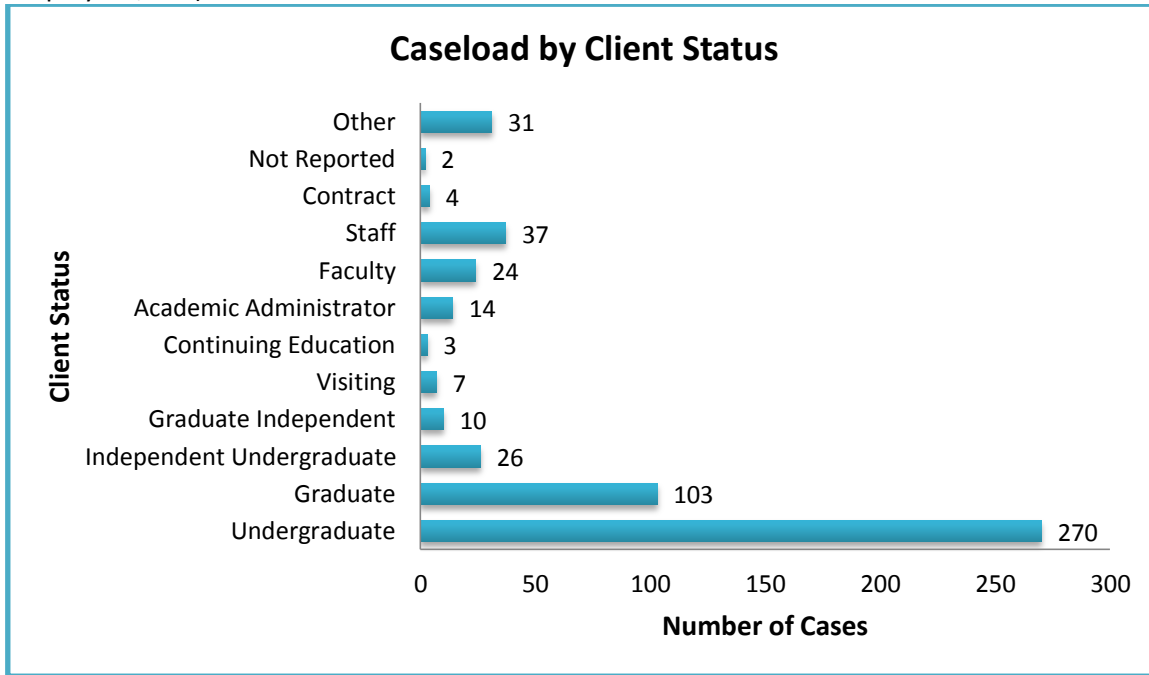
When an inquiry is made regarding a University-related concern or complaint, a case file is opened. The Intake Form (Appendix 2) is used to collect some basic information. This includes (a) the person's status at Concordia University, (b) general demographic information, (c) contact information, (d) how contact was made with the Ombuds Office, (e) a brief description of the issue of concern and any steps taken to address the matter, (f) with whom the matter may have been discussed, and (g) whether permission will be given ultimately to the Ombuds Office staff person to discuss the case with other concerned parties. Issues are then categorized according to a Case Category list (Appendix 3). This essentially describes the nature of the issue of concern. At the conclusion of a case, a Case Result (Appendix 4) is then selected. This describes the action taken in a particular case and how it relates to the different functions of the Ombuds Office. Finally, any individual and/or systemic recommendation made is noted and implementation is monitored.

Caseload by client status

As the following bar chart shows, the Ombuds Office had a caseload of 531 in 2009-10. Each case can relate to more than one issue though only one is recorded. Depending on complexity, some cases can be resolved quite quickly while others require quite some time. Of the caseload, 416 (78.3%) were students enrolled in courses offered for credit. An additional 3 students from Continuing Education availed themselves of our services.

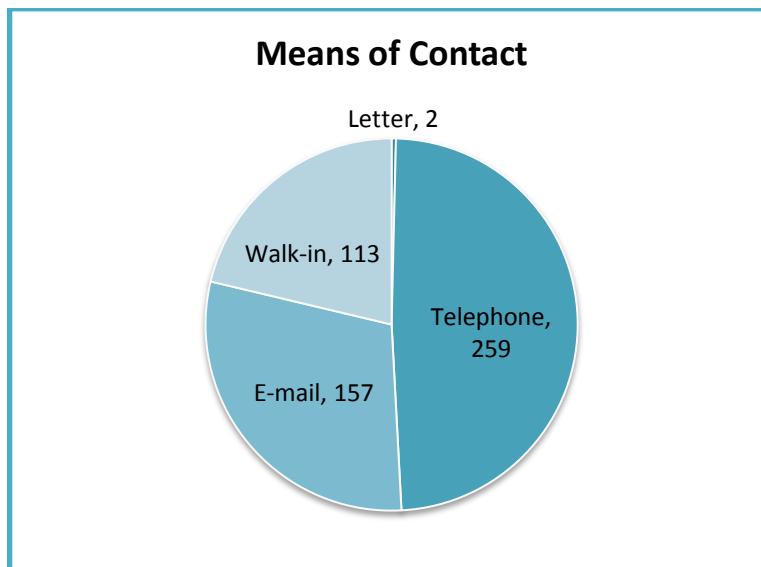
A total of 79 employees consulted the Ombuds Office this year. This group represented 14.9% of the overall caseload or 1 in 7 of those requesting our services.

Finally, 31 individuals or 5.8% of our overall caseload are categorized as “Other”. These individuals were not current students, Faculty or staff but did have a relationship with Concordia (alumni, applicants, former employees, etc.).



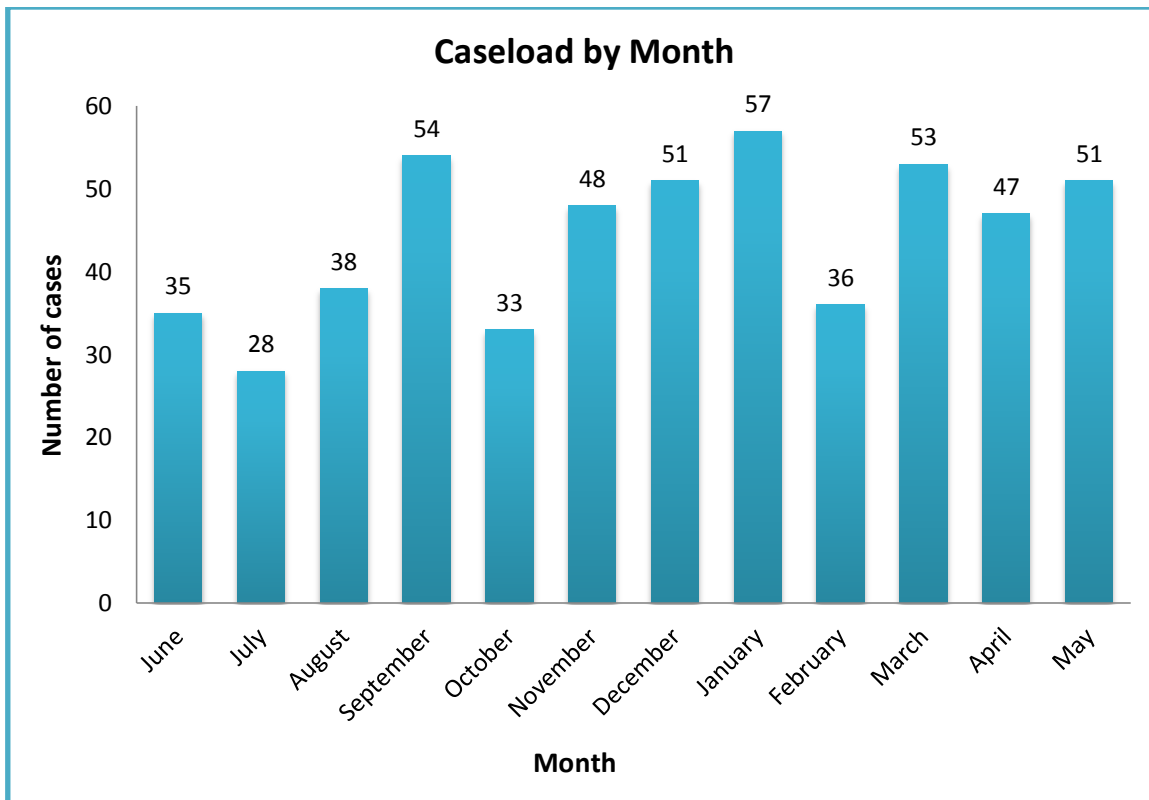
Means of Contact

As the pie chart below indicates, just under half of the users of the Ombuds Office chose the telephone as the initial means of contact, 29.6% chose e-mail, 21.3% walked-in without an appointment and only two communicated by letter. In the last few years, there seem to be a slight shift toward choosing e-mail over walking-in. That being said, over one in five users still prefer to initiate contact in person.



Caseload by Month

The following bar chart shows the volume of cases opened by month in 2009-10. The peak months were January, September and March. The slowest month was July followed by October and June. Looking at the different academic terms, the volume for the winter and fall terms were very similar. With regards to the summer term, it is difficult to fully compare it with the others as the 2009-10 year presented here corresponds to the fiscal and not the academic year. As of the 2011-2012, the fiscal and academic year will be the same.



Student Caseload

As previously stated, 416 students enrolled in courses offered for credit used the services of the Ombuds Office in 2009-10. This represents 1.0% of the 41,218 students enrolled for 2009-10 (Concordia Institutional Planning Office, 2010).

Of those 416 students, 72.6% (302) were studying at the undergraduate level. This is proportionately less than the 83.8% found in the overall student body (Concordia Institutional Planning Office, 2010). Graduate students made up 27.4% (114) of the students seen in the Ombuds Office. This proportion of graduate students seen in the Ombuds office is greater than the 16.2% found in Concordia University's student body (Concordia Institutional Planning Office, 2010). Breaking this down by cycle, the proportion of 2nd cycle students in the Ombuds office was 78.1% (89) and 21.9% (25) for 3rd cycle students. This is representative of the overall population where 81.3% (5,422) of graduate students were enrolled in 2nd cycle studies and 18.7% (1,248) in 3rd cycle work. (C. Tilson, Concordia Institutional Planning Office, personal communication, February 9, 2011).

International students

As the figure below shows, 69 students seen in the Ombuds Office had an international or VISA status. Sixty-eight were studying for credit and one was a Continuing Education student.

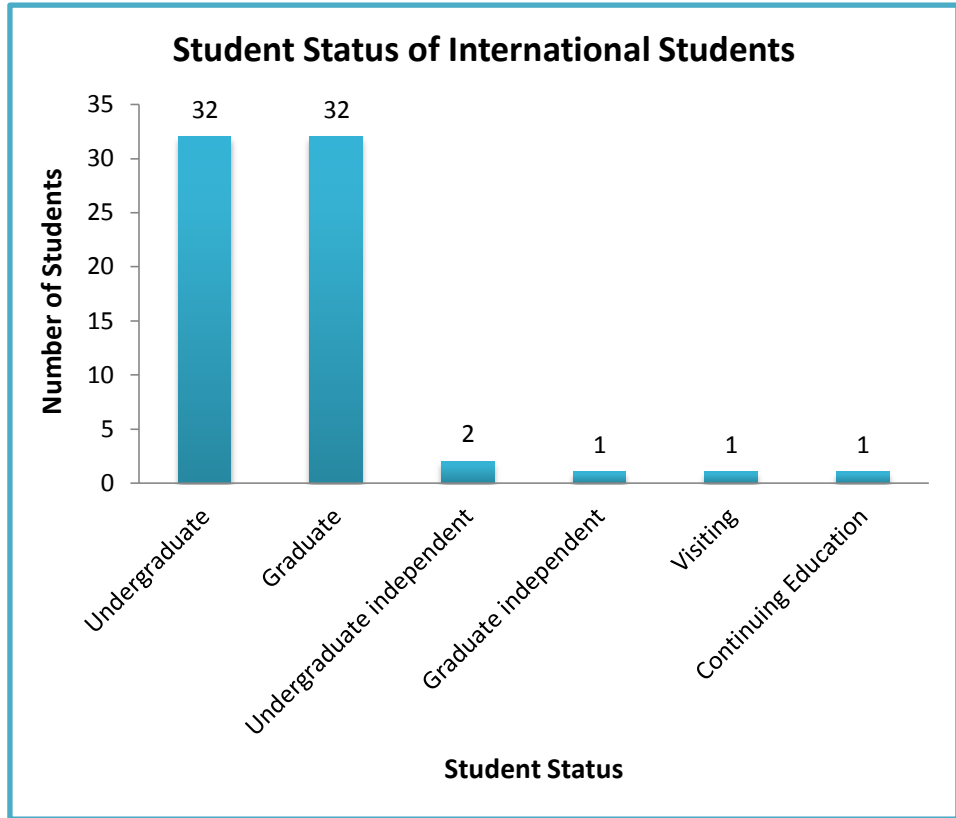
These 68 international students seen in the Ombuds Office represent 16.3% of its student caseload. This proportion is greater than the 11.4% proportion of international students in the overall student body.

(Concordia Institutional Planning Office, 2010) In other words, at

Concordia, 1 in 9 students has an international status while this is true of 1 in 6 student users of the Ombuds Office.

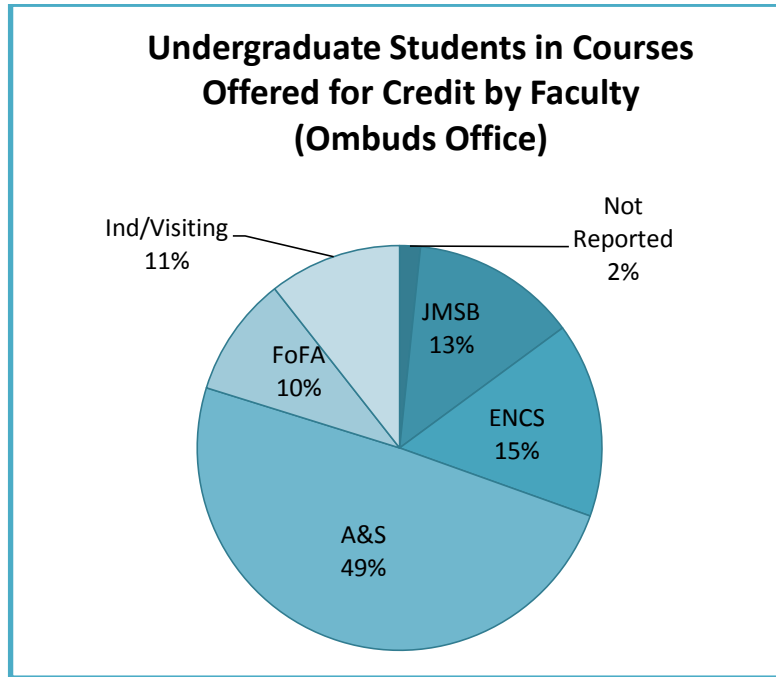
Interestingly, this overrepresentation is found at the graduate level. In the overall international student body, approximately two-thirds are studying for credit at the undergraduate level and the other third at the graduate level (C. Tilson, Concordia Institutional Planning Office, personal communication, September 21, 2010). In

the international student caseload of the Ombuds Office, these proportions are approximately 50-50.



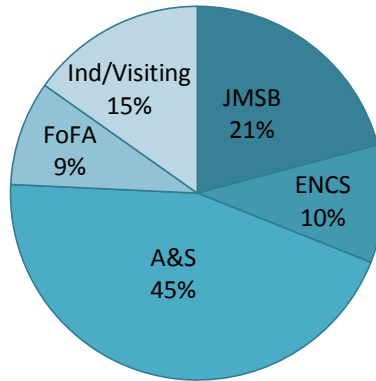
Undergraduate students in credit courses by Faculty

The first pie chart below shows the home Faculty of undergraduate students taking courses for credit who used the services of the Ombuds Office. Almost half (49%) were from the Faculty of Arts and Science (A&S). Fifteen percent were from the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science (ENCS) and 13% came from the John Molson School of Business (JMSB). One in nine students was an Independent or Visiting student and one in ten students was from the Faculty of Fine Arts (FoFA).



When comparing how representative these figures are with those of the overall undergraduate student body described in the second pie chart below (Concordia Institutional Planning Office, 2010), the JMSB is underrepresented in the Ombuds Office caseload. Independent and Visiting students are slightly underrepresented. ENCS and A&S students are slightly overrepresented.

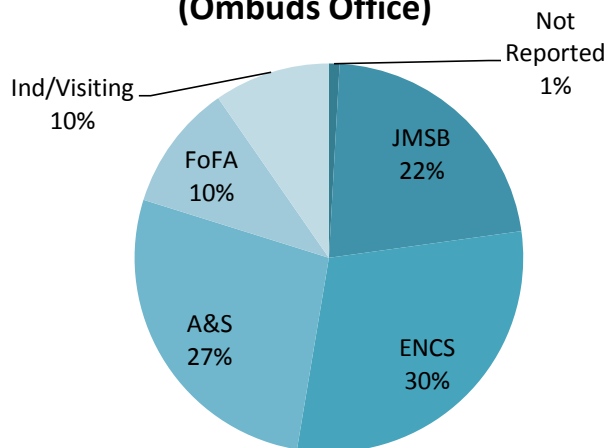
Undergraduate Students in Courses Offered for Credit by Faculty (Concordia)



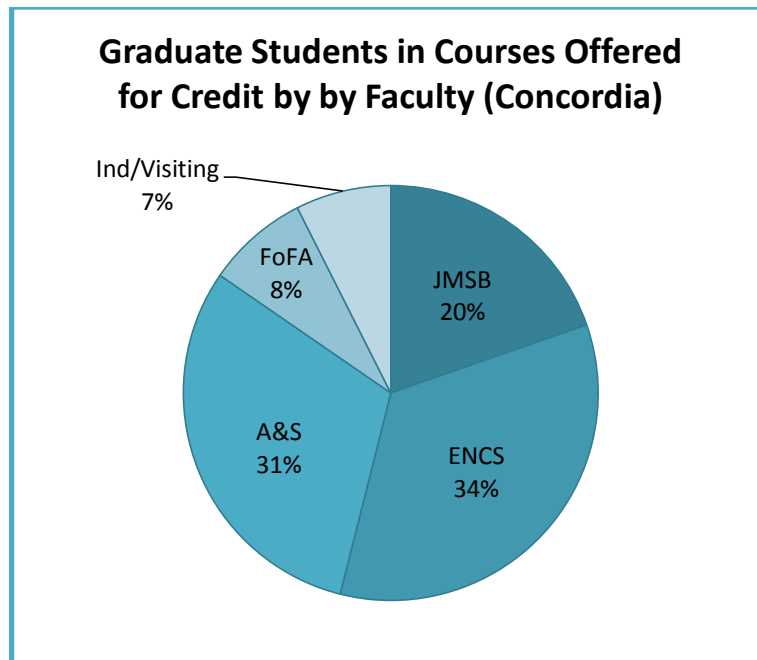
Graduate students in credit courses by Faculty

The home Faculty of the graduate students taking courses for credit who consulted the Ombuds Office is shown in the first pie chart below. Thirty percent of these students came from ENCS, 27% came from A&S and 22% came from the JMSB. Ten percent came from the FoFA and another 10% were Independent and Visiting students.

Graduate Students in Courses Offered for Credit by Faculty (Ombuds Office)



In comparison to the overall graduate student body described in the second pie chart below, the Ombuds Office caseload appears slightly underrepresented for A&S and ENCS. Independent and Visiting, FoFA and JMSB students were slightly overrepresented in the Ombuds Office caseload.



Student by case category

This section focuses on the nature of the concerns that were brought by students to the Ombuds Office. As the table below shows, these are divided into the themes of “academic concerns” and “other concerns.” Each of these is subdivided. When a particular situation is comprised of a different number of aspects, which is often the case, these will be addressed but only one is retained for categorization. It will be chosen according to its importance relative to the student’s academic progress or success.

For undergraduate students, academic concerns were the reason for 60% of all requests for service. At 34%, Grades/re-evaluation was the most common academic reason brought to the attention of the Ombuds Office followed by course management (20%), exams (12.7%), program and degree requirements (10%), academic misconduct (10%) and academic standing (9%).

Similar to the academic concerns of undergraduate students, graduate students most frequently accessed the services of the Ombuds Office to discuss academic issues related to grades/re-evaluation. In fact, 28% of their concerns related to that particular issue. Other academic concerns related to supervision (20%), academic standing (12%) and 12% to program and degree requirements.

With regards to “other” concerns, fees were at the top of the list for both undergraduate and graduate students. This was particularly the case for the latter group for whom 55% of the cases opened in the “other” concerns were related to fees. A closer look indicates that half related to the increase in international fees for 2nd cycle JMSB students. This was particularly difficult for entering students as they had planned their finances on the figures they received in their letter of admission. When they arrived for the fall semester, the increase of \$200/credit greatly surpassed what they had factored in for possible variations in fees once they

arrived. Trying to find work on campus was difficult due to limited availability of positions, working off-campus is possible only after 6 months in the program and a successful first term and the deadlines for applying for awards and tuition remission were in December.

With regards to undergraduate students, the proportion of cases opened about fees was 47.5%. Issues for this group were less targeted than for graduate students. They included concerns about the “Late Payment” charge, missing the deadline to withdraw from a course with full refund (DNE), and establishing Quebec Residency in order to pay fees at the Quebec rate.

2009-2010 Students by Case Category

#	Academic Concerns	Under-graduate	Graduate	Und IND	Grad IND	Visiting	Cont Ed	Total
1	Academic standing	16	6					22
2	Academic supervision	2	10					12
3	Academic misconduct	17	4	1	1			23
4	Admission	5	1		1			7
5	Course management	33	3	2	1	1		40
6	Exams	22	2	1				25
7	Grades/re-evaluation	54	12	6	2	1		75
8	Missing exam and papers	2						2
9	Program and degree requirements	18	5		1			24
10	Intellectual property							0
	Other Concerns							
11	Registration/course change	16	2	3			2	23
12	Fees	47	33	8	2	3		93
13	Financial Aid	1	7	1				9
14	Medical/Compassionate/humanitarian	5		3				8
15	Non-academic misconduct	2	1			1		4
16	Libraries	1						1
17	Residences							0
18	Student associations	3	1		1			5
19	Security/safety	2	5				1	8
20	Employment	3	7					10
21	Access to info/privacy							0
22	Univ. policy & procedures	16	4		1	1		22
23	Non jurisdiction							0
24	Miscellaneous	5		1				6
	TOTAL	270	103	26	10	7	3	419

Action taken in student cases

Depending on the concern/complaint brought to the attention of the Ombuds Office, different actions can be taken. These are defined in Appendix 4. From a review of the table below, the action taken most often with students (51%) is to provide them with information and advice. Generally this approach is educational in nature. When there are means to address a problem, the objective is to provide students with the tools to engage in the process on their own. Depending on the student, more or less coaching may be required. When the means available are less clear cut, the Ombuds Office staff and student will brainstorm about different options, evaluate them and decide on a course of action. In so doing, we hope that students will appreciate that problems and conflict will occur, better understand the principles of natural justice and look to find constructive ways to address their concerns. Hopefully, these skills and the confidence to use them will serve them well in their studies at Concordia and beyond.

Conflict resolution places the Ombudsperson or the Assistant Ombudsperson in an active role as an intermediary to fairly resolve situations. Informal fact finding, shuttle-diplomacy and mediation were techniques used in 27.9% of cases overall. These Conflict resolution techniques were used in one-quarter of undergraduate cases and one-third of graduate cases.

In another 15.3% of student cases, situations are expedited by Ombuds Office staff. This can include cutting through red tape, gathering information needed by a student to resolve a problem or setting up an appointment for a student after providing some background to the person he or she will meet. This action was used much more often with undergraduate than graduate students.

As the table below also indicates, 12 cases were withdrawn. The reasons were as follows. A concern brought to the Ombuds Office was subsequently resolved through other means, a student decided against further pursuing the matter, the student didn't follow-up with the Ombuds Office as planned and the student did not wish to identify herself which prevented any resolution of the concern/complaint.

Four undergraduate and two graduate cases were coded in the "witness" category. This code is used when the Ombuds Office is notified of a situation and no action is requested, appropriate or possible. In these cases the student informed a university member of a situation and copied the Ombudsperson. She then acknowledged receipt of the copy of the correspondence and suggested that the student allow the recipient time to respond before contacting her again.

When a student has followed the usual avenues of recourse to resolve a particular problem and believes that the outcome is still unfair, he or she might approach the Ombuds Office for assistance. If a member of the staff assesses the preliminary facts and determines that there is some merit to the claim, she will conduct an investigation. Five of these were conducted in 2009-10.

Finally, there was one graduate case categorized as "prevention." This categorization is used when a member is designing a new program, procedure or policy and asks the Ombuds Office for its advice on questions of fairness. In these situations, there is no complaint. The focus is to prevent problems.

2009-2010 Action Taken in Student Cases

<i>Client Status</i>	<i>Info/Advice</i>	<i>Expedite</i>	<i>Conflict Resolution</i>	<i>Investigation</i>	<i>Witness</i>	<i>With-drawn</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>TOTALS</i>
<i>Undergrad</i>	133	49	72	4	4	8		270
<i>Graduate</i>	53	7	38		2	2	1	103
<i>UndIND</i>	13	7	5	1				26
<i>GradIND</i>	9		1					10
<i>Visiting</i>	5					2		7
<i>ContEd</i>	1	1	1					3
TOTALS	214	64	117	5	6	12	1	419

Employee caseload

As the 2009-10 Caseload by Client Status showed, 79 employees used the Ombuds Office services in 2009-10. Close to half (46.8%) were Staff, 30.4% were Faculty, 17.7% were Academic Administrators and 5.1% were Contract employees.

Employee caseload by case category

Fifty-seven percent of the issues raised by employees were related to “other” concerns (incl. employment questions, locating/interpreting policies and procedures, how to handle difficult behavior, fees). The remaining 43% related to academic concerns (incl. grades/re-evaluation, course management and academic misconduct).

A little more than two-thirds of staff cases were about “other” concerns. These related to employment questions, locating/interpreting policies and procedure, questions about fees and financial aid, as well as issues of access to information/privacy and security/safety. The balance of the staff cases related to issues of academic misconduct, course management, grades/re-evaluation, academic standing and exams.

Faculty cases related to “other” concerns slightly more than those related to academic concerns. The “other” concerns related to employment questions, locating/interpreting policies and procedure, non-academic misconduct, access to information/privacy and fees. Cases related to academic concerns focused on issues of grades/re-evaluation, course management, academic misconduct, supervision and intellectual property.

More than three-quarters of cases brought to the Ombuds Office by Academic Administrators related to academic concerns. Grades/re-evaluation was the most common concern followed by course management, advising/supervision, admission and academic misconduct. “Other” concerns related to policies and procedures, security/safety and fees.

All contract staff cases related to employment issues, such as expectations and supervision.

2009-2010 Employees by Case Category

#	Academic Concerns	Academic Administrators	Faculty	Staff	Contract	TOTAL
1	Academic standing			1		1
2	Academic supervision	1	1			2
3	Academic misconduct	1	1	4		6
4	Admission	1				1
5	Course management	3	3	4		10
6	Exams			2		2
7	Grades/re-evaluation	5	3	3		11
8	Missing exam and papers					0
9	Program and degree requirements					0
10	Intellectual property		1			1
						0
	Other Concerns					
11	Registration/course change			1		1
12	Fees	1	1	2		4
13	Financial Aid			2		2
14	Medical/Compassionate/humanitarian			1		1
15	Non-academic misconduct		3	2		5
16	Libraries					0
17	Residences					0
18	Student associations					0
19	Security/safety	1		2		3
20	Employment		5	6	4	15
21	Access to info/privacy		1	1		2
22	Univ. policy & procedures	1	4	3		8
23	Non jurisdiction			1		1
24	Miscellaneous		1	2		3
	TOTAL	14	24	37	4	79

Action taken in employee cases

The table below clearly shows that providing information and advice was the action taken in 71% of employee cases opened in the Ombuds Office.

Conflict resolution where the Ombudsperson or the Assistant Ombudsperson acted as an intermediary between the parties was the action taken in 10% of cases.

Prevention was the action taken in 1 in 13 (7.6%) employee cases. As explained previously, this categorization is used when a member is designing a new program, procedure or policy and asks the Ombuds Office for advice on aspects of fairness. The dossiers involved were:

- Establishing Guidelines for Postdoctoral Fellows and Departments
- Reviewing the Code of Rights and Responsibilities
- Developing a Policy on Religious Holy Days and exams
- Establishing criteria for the awarding of the MBA Financial Assistance Programs (fall, winter 2009-10) and designing the application processes
- Establishing an academic misconduct Frequently Asked Questions document for Part-time Faculty

For the remaining cases, 4 were expedited for Faculty and Staff, the Ombuds Office was a “witness” in 3 Staff cases and 2 cases were withdrawn.

2009-2010 Action Taken in Employees Cases

<i>Client Status</i>	<i>Info/Advice</i>	<i>Expedite</i>	<i>Conflict Resolution</i>	<i>Witness</i>	<i>With-drawn</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>TOTALS</i>
Academic Administrators	9		2		1	2	14
Faculty	19	2	1			2	24
Staff	24	2	5	3	1	2	37
Contract	4						4
Total	56	4	8	3	2	6	79

“Other” caseload

As stated earlier in this report, cases categorized as “Other” did not relate specifically to current Students, Faculty or staff but did relate to individuals who had a relationship with Concordia (Alumni, applicants, former employees, etc.). Thirty-one cases were open in this category representing 5.8% of the overall caseload.

“Other” caseload by case category

As the table below illustrates, close to a third (32.3%) of “other” cases brought to the attention of the Ombuds Office were from family and friends. Half these cases related to fees. In the other half, family and friends inquired about academic issues related to their child’s studies. In these cases, the Ombuds Office staff might direct the family or friend to a particular policy (ex. Academic Code of Conduct, Academic Performance Regulations) for information and then strongly suggest that the student contact us directly to review their situation.

Applicants to the University were almost another third (32.3%) of the “other” cases. They consulted the Ombuds Office about admission to a program of study. Sometimes, they requested information about how best to prepare to apply, how to obtain feedback following an unsuccessful application as well as how to contest an admission refusal.

Five (5) alumni used the services of the Ombuds Office as did retired Professors and a former Post-doctoral Fellow.

2009-2010 “Other” Caseload by Case Category

#	Academic Concerns	Alumni	Applicant	Family/ Friend	Citizen	Post- Doc Fellow	Prof. (Ret)
1	Academic standing			1			
2	Academic supervision						
3	Academic misconduct			1			
4	Admission		9				
5	Course management	1		1			
6	Exams			1			
7	Grades/re-evaluation						
8	Missing exam and papers						
9	Program and degree requirements	1		1			
10	Intellectual property						1
	Other Concerns						
11	Registration/course change						
12	Fees	1		5			
13	Financial Aid						
14	Medical/Compassionate/humanitarian						
15	Non-academic misconduct						
16	Libraries						
17	Residences						
18	Student associations						
19	Security/safety				1	1	
20	Employment						
21	Access to info/privacy						
22	Univ. policy & procedures	1					1
23	Non jurisdiction						1
24	Miscellaneous	1	1				1
	TOTAL	5	10	10	1	1	4

Action taken in “other” cases

In over half of the cases that were part of the “other” constituency, the action taken by the staff of the Ombuds Office was to provide information and advice. In close to a third of the cases, the request was expedited. Conflict Resolution was the action taken in 4 cases. The Ombuds Office was a “witness” to a concern brought to another member of the University.

2009-2010 Action Taken in “Other” Cases

<i>Client Status</i>	<i>Info/Advice</i>	<i>Expedite</i>	<i>Conflict Resolution</i>	<i>Witness</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Total</i>
Alumni	5					5
Applicant	2	6	2			10
Family	4	1	1	2		8
Friend	2					2
Citizen		1				1
Post-doctoral Fellow	1	1				2
Professor (Retired)	3					3
TOTALS	17	9	3	2	0	31

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN 2009-10

To provide some insight into the recommendations made in the 531 Ombuds Offices cases opened in 2009-10, here are some examples.

Individual Recommendations

It was recommended that:

- An individual having reported an incident under the Policy on Injury/Incident Reporting and Investigation (VPS-42) be duly informed of the results of the subsequent investigation (implemented)
- A graduate student who did not withdraw from her program after a leave of absence and did not subsequently return to her studies be exempted from paying for more than one term as per financial regulations (implemented)
- A student’s request for a re-evaluation of a midterm exam be granted regardless of it having been returned to him (implemented)
- The DNE Committee grant a retroactive DNE to a student on the basis of the Faculty having omitted to forward his request and supporting documentation in a timely fashion (implemented)
- The DNE Committee grant a retroactive DNE to a student who was unable to withdraw by the deadline on account of a very serious injury and subsequent hospitalization (implemented)
- An advisor apologize to a student for not responding to calls and e-mails leading to her being unable to register for a course (implemented)

- A student be granted an entrance scholarship on the basis of criteria posted on the department website (implemented)
- An advisor exempt a student from a preadmission test on the basis of previous work having been successfully completed for a degree at another university (implemented)
- A professor retroactively change a student's final grade because she had forgotten an earlier conversation that provided the student an extension to submit a final and heavily weighted paper (implemented)
- An international Ph.D. student who was being paid less than promised in his letter of admission for his Graduate Research Assistantship be paid promptly for the outstanding balance and correctly remunerated for the remainder of his contract (implemented)
- A student applicant be reimbursed the application fee on the basis of the Admission Committee having been forwarded the incorrect set of reference letters for review (implemented)

Systemic Recommendations

It was recommended that:

- The Associate Dean of Graduate Programs and the Dean of the JMSB consider providing financial assistance to international students faced with an unannounced tuition fee increase (implemented)
- The Office of Student Accounts send a final e-mail to all registered students reminding them of what their financial obligations will be if they do not deregister before the published DNE deadline (implemented)
- The Faculty of ENCS modify the registration process for the one-time two term CAPSTONE Project course offered over the 2009-10 summer and fall terms (implemented)
- Information about the cost of tuition provided in admission letters to successful international applicants be (a) verified with the Office of Student Accounts and (b) presented as approximate prior to being issued (in progress)
- Graduate students with an outstanding account balance at the end of the fall term be "deregistered" from winter registration (courses, CIP, TLE) (in progress)

FURTHER REFLECTION ON 2009-10 FINDINGS

On the basis of this report's overall case review, the Ombuds Office would like to focus on two academic issues. It hopes that the University will support its conclusions and recommendations.

Supervision of Graduate Students

In 2009-10, supervision was a concern raised by 20% of the graduate students who used the services of the Ombuds Office. The problems raised included:

- Unreasonable delays in receiving feedback from the student's supervisor resulting in additional time and expense required to defend and graduate

- Unanticipated requests for additional academic work from the student's supervisor before he would approve the thesis for submission to the Thesis Office for examination
- Requiring the student to shift his focus to research activities other than his own while still being expected to progress with his own work at the same pace
- Disagreement between co-supervisors unrelated to the student's work causing her delays in finishing her thesis

Cases related to supervision are challenging to resolve and time-consuming. Students are often quite concerned about possible retaliation if they complain and wait to seek assistance. From the supervisor's point of view, they sometimes delay in providing negative feedback to their student. They are not quite sure how to proceed so they wait in the hope that things will improve. Whatever the circumstances, failing supervisory relationships inevitably take a toll on the parties involved.

To set the stage for healthy and productive supervisory relationships, it is imperative that supervisors and graduate students begin their work with a detailed plan of action. When must the course work be completed? When must the Comprehensive Exams be written? When will the supervisory Committee be struck? What funding will the student receive and for what work? When should the thesis be defended in order for the student to respect his time limit for completing his degree?

In a recent discussion with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies for Student Affairs about graduate supervision, the Ombudsperson was pleased to learn that planning is underway for supervisors and students to devise both an Academic and Research Plan at the start of the student's studies. Progress on each plan will be evaluated on a yearly basis and progress reported to the School of Graduate Studies. To complement this, orientation sessions for Graduate Program Directors will continue to be offered to solidify their important role in program management and development. In addition, students will be invited to participate in seminars about successful techniques to successfully complete their requirements.

The Ombuds Office fully supports this endeavor that it expects will serve to level the playing field between supervisors and graduate students, leading to a better graduate experience for the student and a better research environment for the supervisor to move forward with his research program. Hopefully, all involved will have the required support to launch this important activity in 2011-12.

Grades/Re-evaluation

In reviewing the nature of concerns brought to the Ombuds Office over the course of the year, the issue of grades/re-evaluation was the most frequently highlighted academic issue for undergraduate and undergraduate students. Concerns were related to the initial grading of work, obtaining feedback about grading as well as adherence to some important requirements of the Academic Re-evaluation Procedures.

With regards to concerns about the initial grading of work, these arose when course outlines were unclear, incomplete or changed during the term. Students reported feeling that, as a result, they were graded in an arbitrary fashion.

When there is student dissatisfaction with a grade at the end of term, students sometimes report having difficulty exercising their right to see their coursework to review their performance with the professor and to determine whether to request a re-evaluation under the Academic Re-evaluation Procedures. Sometimes professors aren't even aware of this right. E-mail and phone messages from the student go unanswered. This

leaves the student without the necessary information required to decide about requesting a re-evaluation knowing that if she proceeds, her grade could decrease.

When a student does make a request for an academic re-evaluation, concerns are raised about the process. The name of the re-evaluator is not communicated to the student (article 14); notice of any extension to the 30 day delay for the re-evaluation to be completed is not provided (article 17) and the decision is not always accompanied by a reasoned report (article 18). In some instances students will request an appeal but this takes time. Some are graduating and cannot wait and some just don't proceed because they are discouraged by the process.

To address the threefold concerns about grading/re-evaluation two recommendations are proposed:

- That all Professors adopt the Office of the Provost's recommendation that the Common Course Outline http://provost.concordia.ca/documents/Course_Outline_Guide.pdf be adopted for their courses. It sets important parameters for the course and serves to avoid misunderstandings throughout the term. While headway has been made in this area, it needs to continue.
- That the Academic Re-evaluation Procedures that were last updated in September 2001 be reviewed and widely disseminated to members of the community.

CONCLUSION AND THANKS

It's understandable that in a diverse community of over 52 000 people (Concordia Institutional Planning Office, 2010), there will be miscommunication, mistakes will be made, decisions might not be thorough or timely, feathers will get ruffled and so on. That being said, we are pleased to report that there is much good will on the part of Students, Academic Administrators, Faculty, Staff and other community members to work creatively to find solutions to university concerns and complaints. To those, we express our appreciation for collaborating with the Ombuds Office to make Concordia an even better place to learn and work.

REFERENCES

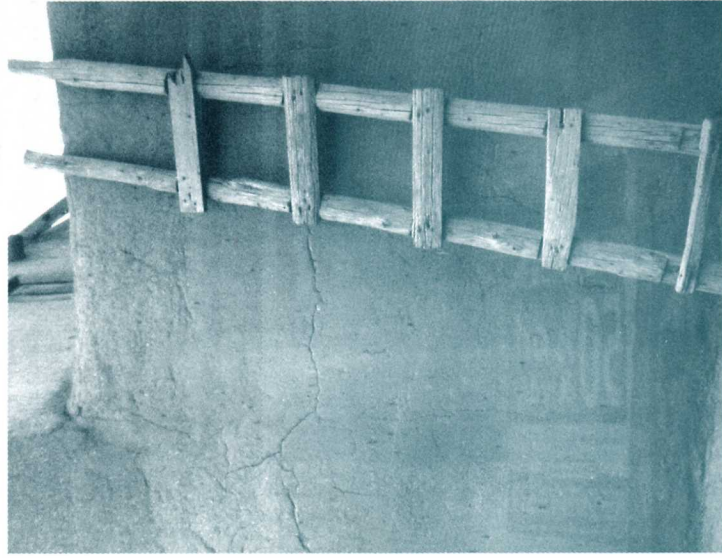
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APPENDICES

Concerns? Complaints?

UP AGAINST A WALL?



Ombuds Office



Helping students, staff, and faculty to resolve conflict – that's what the University Ombuds Office is all about. If you're in a disagreement with an individual, an office or a department of the University or you feel that you've been unfairly treated, you can turn to the Ombuds Office.

What does the Ombudsperson do?

We will discuss your problem in **confidence** and will take no action without your agreement.

We can:

- provide University members with information about their rights and obligations;
- describe avenues and strategies to resolve University related concerns or complaints;
- refer members to others in the University who are best able to be of assistance;
- investigate claims of unfair treatment when the usual avenues for grievance and appeals have been exhausted;
- act as mediators in negotiating solutions.

What kind of powers does the Ombuds Office have?

The Ombuds Office is **independent** of all the administrative structures of the University. We are authorized to **investigate** a complaint in an objective way and to determine whether you have been treated fairly. We have **access** to University records, reports and documents to fulfill our functions.

If your complaint is justified, we can **recommend** a fair solution. We do not have the authority to impose changes in rules, policies and procedures or in people's behavior. However, it is our experience that members of the University community are responsive to our recommendations. If we should conclude that your complaint is not justified, we will take the time to explain our reasoning.

Will the Ombudsperson be my advocate?

The Ombudsperson is not an advocate or someone who will automatically take your side in a conflict. Our job is to consider all sides of a question in an **impartial** way.

Are there problems the Ombuds Office does not handle?

The Ombuds Office does not:

- intervene in conflicts with companies, organizations or individuals outside of the University;
- deal with matters covered by a collective agreement between an employee and the University;
- intervene in situations where a procedure exists to resolve them;
- intervene in situations where we judge our involvement to be inappropriate.

Should we decide not to intervene, we will explain why.

How to contact the Ombuds Office

You can give us a call, send us an e-mail or visit our Office from Monday to Friday between 9AM and 5PM. Evening appointments as well as appointments on the Loyola campus can be made upon request. Our services are available in English and in French and are free of charge.

More information?

We are always pleased to answer questions. Remember: the sooner you get information about a problem that you may be having, the easier it will be to resolve.



Kristen Robillard, University Ombudsperson
1550 De Maisonneuve Blvd. West, GM 1120
Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3G 1M8

Tel 514-848-2424, ext. 8658

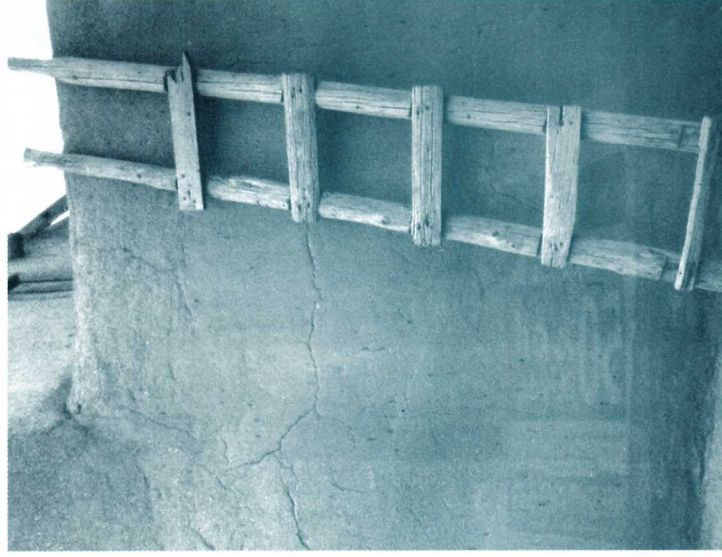
Fax 514-848-4528

Email ombuds@alcor.concordia.ca
www.concordia.ca/ombuds

October 2007

Problèmes? Plaintes?

AU PIED DU MUR?



Aider les membres de la communauté universitaire (étudiants, employés et professeurs) à résoudre des conflits – tel est le mandat du Bureau de l'ombudsman de l'Université. Si vous êtes en désaccord avec un individu, un service ou un département de l'Université ou si vous croyez avoir été lésé dans vos droits, vous pouvez vous adresser au Bureau de l'ombudsman.

Quel est le rôle de l'ombudsman?

Nous traitons des problèmes en toute confidentialité et n'entreprenons aucune démarche sans votre accord. Nous pouvons:

- vous renseigner quant à vos droits et obligations;
- vous suggérer des avenues pour résoudre des situations de conflit et discuter de stratégies;
- vous référer aux personnes ou instances qui sont mieux outillées pour vous aider;
- faire enquête sur les plaintes lorsque les recours habituels sont épuisés;
- agir comme médiateurs pour négocier une solution.

Quels sont les pouvoirs du Bureau de l'ombudsman?

Le Bureau de l'ombudsman est indépendant des structures administratives de l'Université. Nous sommes autorisés à faire enquête sur les plaintes de façon objective et à déterminer si vous avez été traité équitablement. Nous avons accès aux dossiers, rapports et documents universitaires nécessaires à l'exercice de nos fonctions.

Si une plainte est justifiée, nous pouvons recommander une solution équitable. En revanche, nous ne pouvons imposer des changements dans les règlements, les politiques ou les procédures de l'Université ni dans le comportement des gens. Toutefois, notre expérience démontre que les membres de la communauté universitaire accueillent favorablement nos recommandations. Si nous arrivons à la conclusion que votre plainte n'est pas fondée, nous prendrons le temps de vous expliquer notre raisonnement.

Est-ce que l'ombudsman est un avocat?

L'ombudsman n'est pas un avocat et ne prendra pas automatiquement parti pour vous dans un conflit. Nous avons le devoir d'examiner les différentes facettes d'un problème avec impartialité.

Existe-t-il des problèmes que l'ombudsman ne peut traiter?

Le Bureau de l'ombudsman n'intervient pas dans les situations suivantes:

- lors de conflits avec des compagnies, organismes ou individus oeuvrant hors de l'Université;
- lorsque le litige porte sur une question déjà prévue dans une convention collective entre l'employé et l'Université;
- lorsqu'une procédure existe pour traiter le problème;
- lorsque nous jugeons que notre intervention serait inappropriée.

Dans le cas où votre demande serait refusée, nous vous informerons du motif.

Comment communiquer avec le Bureau de l'ombudsman?

Vous pouvez nous téléphoner, nous envoyer un courriel ou passer à notre bureau. Nos heures d'ouverture sont du lundi au vendredi de 9h à 17h. Au besoin, nous pouvons accorder un rendez-vous en dehors des heures normales, ou au campus Loyola. Nos services sont disponibles en anglais et en français et sont offerts gratuitement.

D'autres renseignements?

Il nous fera plaisir de répondre à vos questions. N'oubliez pas que la meilleure façon de régler un problème est de vous informer rapidement des pistes de solution. Nous sommes là pour vous aider.

Kristen Robillard, Ombudsman

1550, boul. De Maisonneuve ouest, GM 1120
Montréal (Québec) Canada H3G 1M8

Tél. 514 848-2424, poste 8658

Télé. 514 848-4528

Courriel ombuds@alcor.concordia.ca

www.concordia.ca/ombuds



Bureau de l'Ombudsman



Appendix 2

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY OMBUDS OFFICE
2009-2010 INTAKE FORM

Intake Number: _____

Date: _____

**Services of the Ombuds Office are confidential.
No information you give will be released without your permission.**

_____ ID: _____
MONTH/DAY/YEAR

Name: _____

Phone (Day): _____ Fax: _____

Phone (Evening): _____ E-mail: _____

Cell/Pager: _____

1. Are you a student:

- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Undergraduate Independent
- Graduate Independent
- Visiting
- Continuing Education

Are you an employee:

- Department Head/Academic Administrator
- Faculty
- Staff
- Contract
- Casual
- Other Please describe _____

2. Are you: Full-time Part-time Male Female

Faculty _____
Department _____
Programme _____

3. Are you an international student? Yes No

4. Is this the first time you have come to the Ombuds Office? Yes No

If yes, how did you hear about us?

- Friend Chair/Prof Orientation Student Services University newspaper
- Calendar Department Pamphlet Student Handbook Web Page

or other _____

5. How did you contact the Ombuds Office? Walk-in Telephone Email Letter

6. Before coming to the Ombuds Office, have you discussed this matter with other offices/individuals?

No If yes, which office/individual

- Academic Advisor Graduate program Advisor Rights & Responsibilities
- Counselling & Development Health Services Services for Disabled Students
- CSU Advocate Human Resources Student Accounts
- Department Chair International Student Office Student Advocate
- Department Secretary Legal Info. Services Supervisor
- External Ombuds Office Professor Union Representative
- Graduate Studies Registrar's Office Undergraduate Program Advisor

or other _____

.../Please turn over

Appendix 3

CASE CATEGORIES

Academic concerns

2. **Academic standing**
3. **Academic advising / supervision**
4. **Academic misconduct**
5. **Admission**
6. **Course management**
7. **Exams**
8. **Grades / Re-evaluation**
9. **Missing exams and papers**
10. **Program and degree requirements**
11. **Intellectual property**

Other concerns

10. **Registration / course change**
This category should be used when the problem is administrative (ex. prior registration conflicts with new work schedule). If student wants to register for/change a course because it will allow him to complete a minor or cluster or permit him to graduate, these should be considered academic concerns under Category 9. Program and degree requirements.
11. **Fees**
Québec/Canadian/International tuition rates, Code Permanent surcharge, retroactive DNE requests, tuition refund requests, Health & Dental Plan fees, library fees
12. **Financial Aid**
Québec, other provinces, non-government aid, Concordia and external scholarships
13. **Medical / Compassionate / Humanitarian Situations**
14. **Non-academic misconduct**
These cases relate to problematic behavior on campus and are usually referred to Rights and Responsibilities and/or Security.
15. **Libraries**
16. **Residences**
17. **Student Associations**
Issues re: ASEQ Health & Dental Plan fees are not to be included here – they are to be recorded under Category 11. Fees.
18. **Security / safety**
19. **Employment**
20. **Access to information / privacy**
21. **University policy & procedures**
This category should be used when the case cannot be categorized under another heading. For example, a case of a student who is in disagreement with being denied Quebec residency should be coded under 11 Fees.
22. **Deleted**
23. **Non jurisdiction**
This category should be used when the Ombuds Office has no mandate to intervene (ex. rental difficulties, off campus housing, external employment). Action taken in these cases is to refer to an appropriate external body.
24. **Miscellaneous**
This category should be used when the Ombuds Office has jurisdiction and the case cannot be categorized under any other heading.

Effective Date: November 5, 2001

Amended: January 21, 2004, March 9 2004

Appendix 4

CASE RESULTS

1. **Information / Advice / Referral / Non-Jurisdiction**
Advising and informing members of the University about the means available to them to resolve whatever grievance or difficulty they have. Often people will contact the Office for an opinion to help them decide whether they have realistic grounds for complaint. Most complaints that are not justified are included in this category; they go no further. Non-jurisdictional cases are those beyond the jurisdiction of the Ombuds Office. In such cases, we offer advice where we can as well as referrals to outside resources.
2. **Expedite**
In expediting a situation an Ombudsperson may cut through red tape, gather information needed by a complainant, resolve an easily solved problem, set up an appointment for someone and explain the background of a case, or take some similar action.
3. **Informal Conflict Resolution**
The Ombudsperson becomes actively involved in seeking a resolution to the case by acting as an intermediary. Recommendations often issue from these cases.
4. **Investigation With / without Recommendation**
The Ombudsperson gathers information, interviews the parties and others involved, examines documents and usually concludes with a recommendation that may pertain to the individual case, to a larger group, or to a policy, practice or procedure.
5. **Witness**
A situation is brought to the attention of the Office but no action is 1) requested, or 2) appropriate, or 3) possible.
6. **Own Motion / Action Without Complaint**
The Ombudsperson decides to investigate a situation that has been brought to their attention in some way but without a specific complaint.
7. **Withdrawn**
Complainants sometimes withdraw cases for their own reasons. The Ombudsperson withdraws from others when it becomes evident that a complaint is frivolous or malicious or when, for some other reason, our continued involvement is inappropriate.
8. **Prevention**
When designing a new program, procedure or policy, University members sometimes consult the Ombudsperson to ask for advice on issues of fairness. In these situations, there is no complaint or grievance. Rather, the consultation is made with a view to prevent such problems.

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