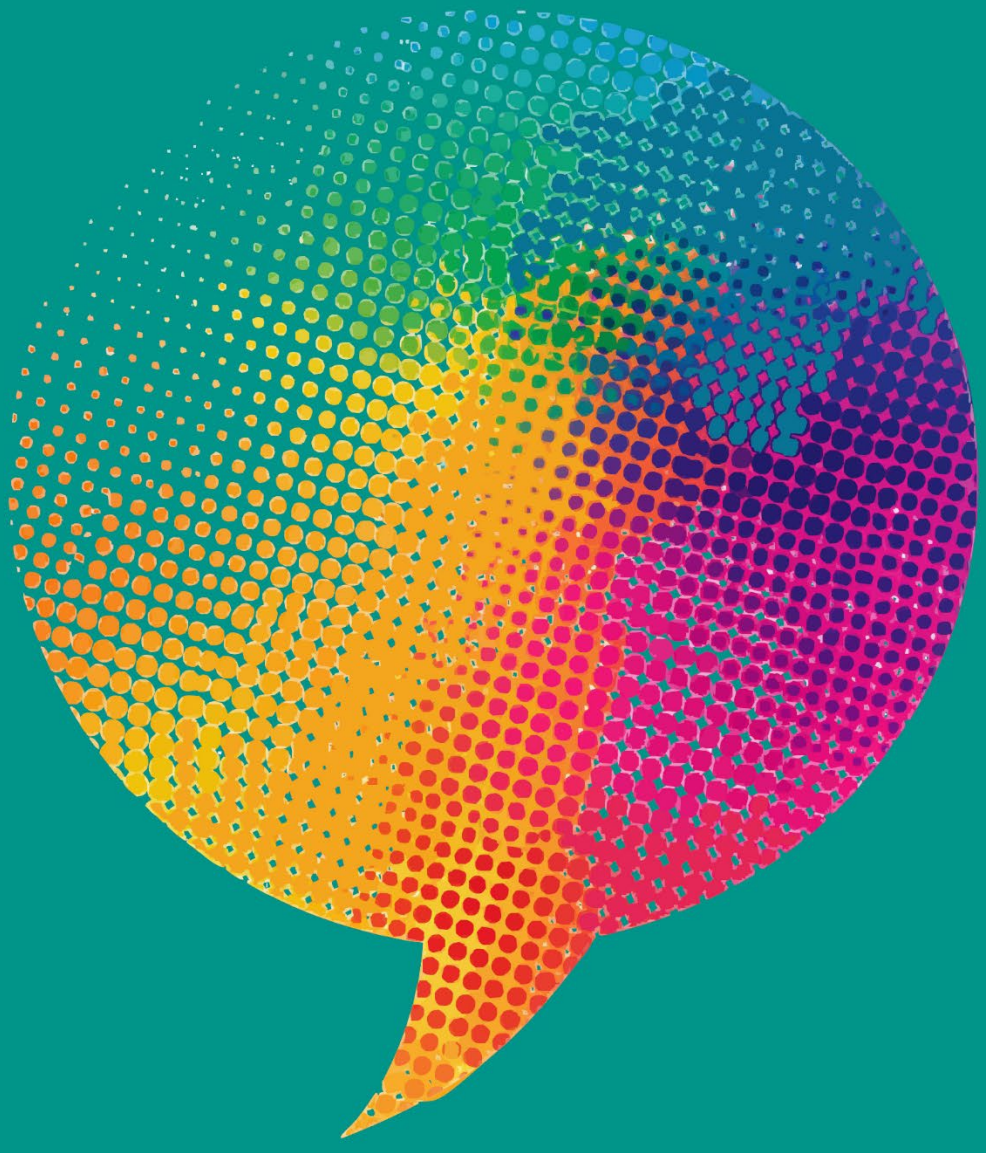
Université Concordia University

OMBUDS OFFICE

Promoting Fairness at Concordia

Annual Report 2025–2026



177-102752

September 24, 2026

Members of the Board of Governors
Concordia University
1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West
Montreal, QC
H3G 1M8

To the Board of Governors;

As per article 29 of the Terms of Reference of the Ombuds Office, I am pleased to submit the 2025-26 Annual Report of the Ombuds Office: Promoting Fairness at Concordia University.

We have provided an overview of the year's activities from May 1, 2025, to April 30, 2026, with several examples of our files and certain recommendations.

Sincerely,

amy fish

Amy Fish, MHSc.
Ombudsperson
Concordia University / Université Concordia

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Ombuds Office Overview

Concordia was one of the first universities in Canada to establish an Ombuds Office in 1978. Our main role is to promote fairness for students, faculty and staff. Specifically, we assist community members with concerns relating to university policies, we offer coaching regarding academic fairness/unfairness and we clarify university procedures. Our office evaluates systemic issues, conducts thorough investigations and offers recommendations when appropriate. We also consult with faculty members, chairs and senior administrators on issues of academic fairness. We collaborate with other departments such as the Office of Rights and Responsibilities (ORR), The Equity Office and the Provost's Office to jointly offer workshops and to respond to community needs.

The core values of the Ombuds Office are: impartiality, accessibility, independence and confidentiality.

The Ombuds Office reports directly to the Board of Governors and is supervised by the University Secretariat.

Ombuds Files 2025-2026

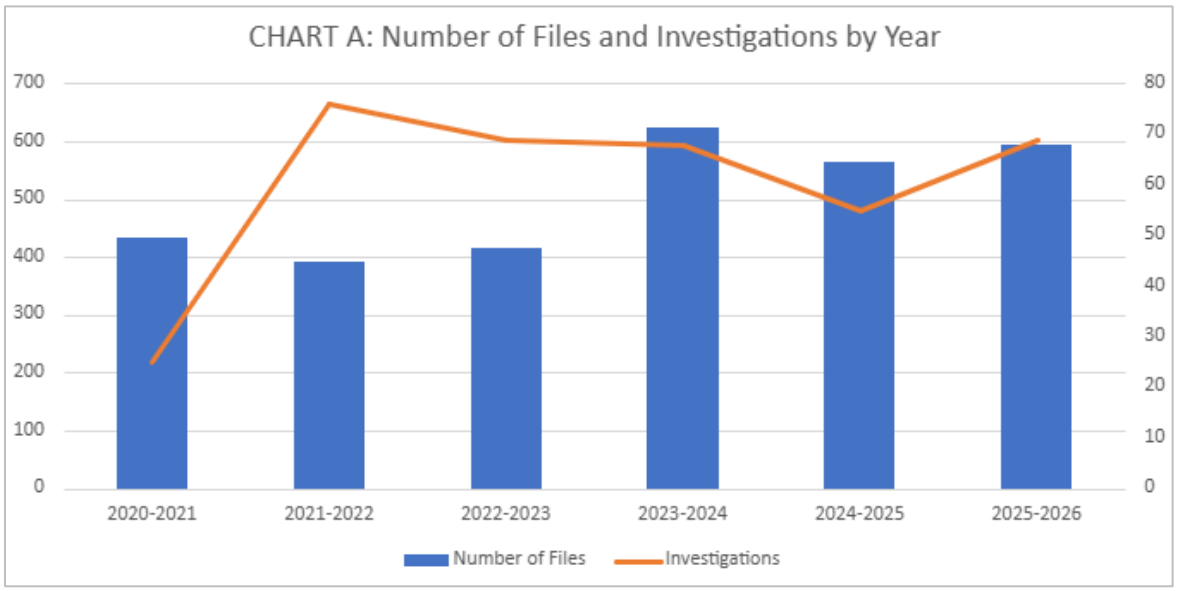
The Ombuds Office normally sees between 500-600 files a year, reflecting approximately 1% of our university community, as is the industry standard. This year, however, we saw an increase of 79.4%, from 565 files in 2024-25 to 1014 files in this reporting year. Speaking with our colleagues at other universities, we understand that it is normal to sometimes experience a spike in files and things normally return to their baseline within a year or two.

In this case, 421 of the files were concerns about online conduct such as social media posts, mainly relating to a handful of incidents. The majority of calls and e-mails came from people outside the university. Every single person who contacts the Ombuds Office gets a response (either email or phone, based on how they contacted us originally).

Social Media Context

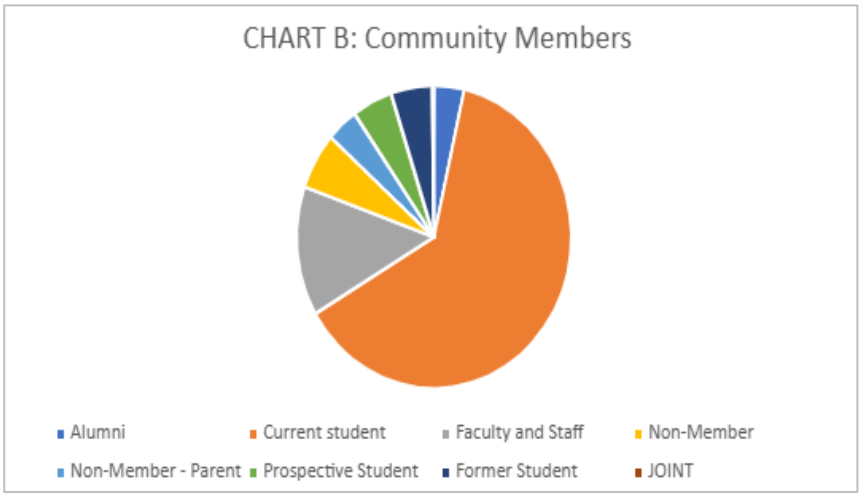
For the past few years, we have noticed an increase in files related to social media posts, for example dissatisfaction with a post by someone believed to be a Concordia student or employee or a concern about posts from a student group. However, this year, complaints of this nature were greater than expected. In 2025-26, we received 421 social media complaints, 382 of which were from non-members. Everyone who contacted our office received a return call or email and the concerns coming from community members were offered a call with the Ombuds Office. No one accepted our offer. We suggested that those with a concern about a faculty member contact the faculty member's department chair for assistance. The option to complain directly to the social media platform was also offered as a viable alternative. Although these files were for the most part outside of our jurisdiction, they were all responded to within a few days of receipt and represent a marked increase in volume within our office.

Removing those from the equation, we have an increase in total files of approximately 20% from last year. We also had an increase in complexity, as measured by the number of investigations we conducted, 69 this year compared to 55 in 2024-2025. This is still in line with our post-Covid investigation numbers, which range from 55 to 76 investigations per year.

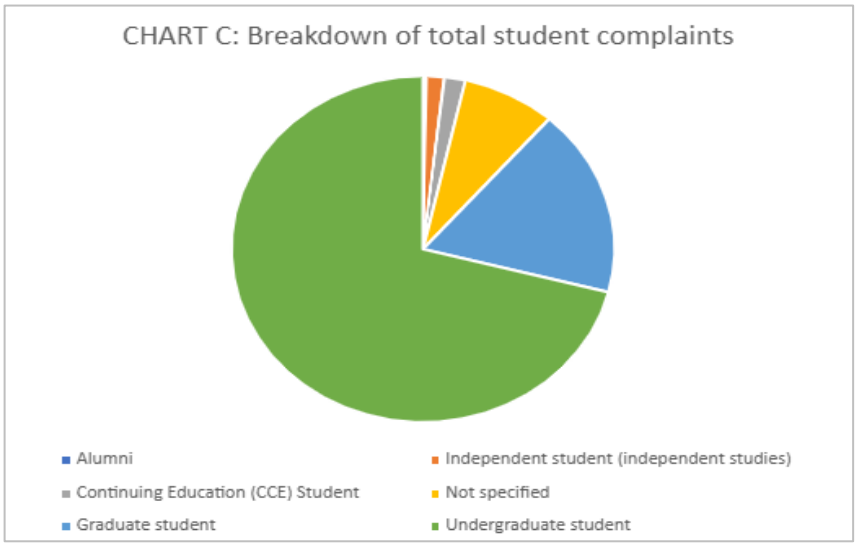


Community Member Overview

This year, 41% of our calls and emails were from outside the University, classified as non-members. If we remove this group from our analysis[1], we can see that other than that anomaly, this year was very similar to previous years in terms of community member breakdown. Most of our files (63%) came from current students, in fact this is the identical percentage as last year. The next largest group was faculty and staff, with 14%.



The category of Current Students can be further broken down to include Undergraduate (71%), Graduate (18%) and the remaining is a combination of several categories as shown in Chart C, below.

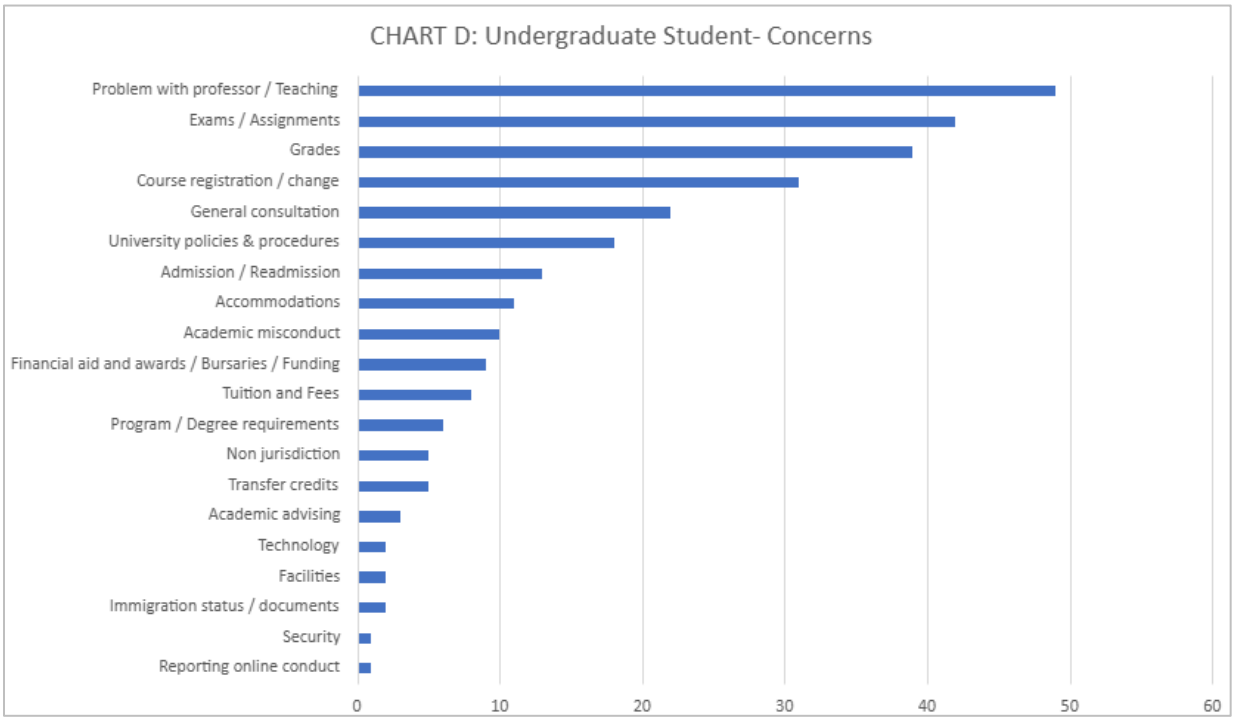


[1] The 382 calls and emails we received from non-members regarding social media will not be part of our overview analysis.

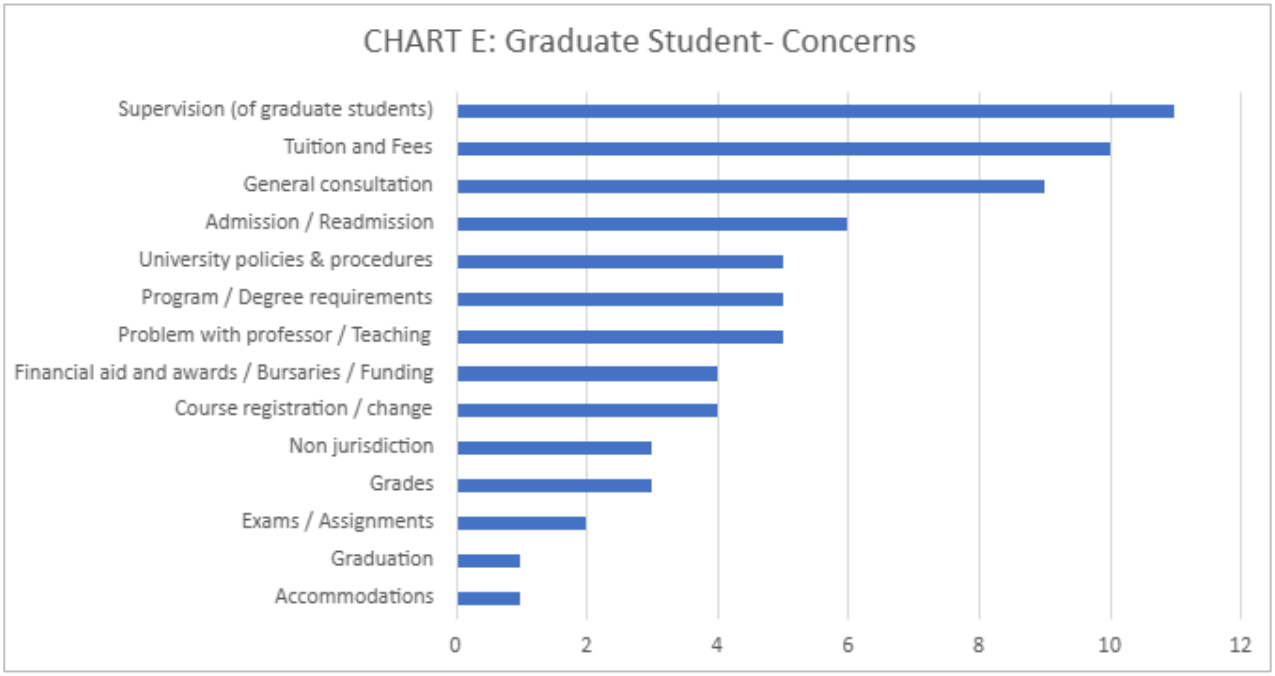
Student Concerns

The number one cause of undergraduate concerns this year was the same as last year, “problem with professor/teaching.” This category ranges from a challenge in communication (e.g., lack of response to emails) to a concern that the course material is outdated. The next largest category this year was “exams/assignments”. This could be where a student believes they were graded unfairly, or their request to defer an exam was denied or there were issues with the way the exam was administered.

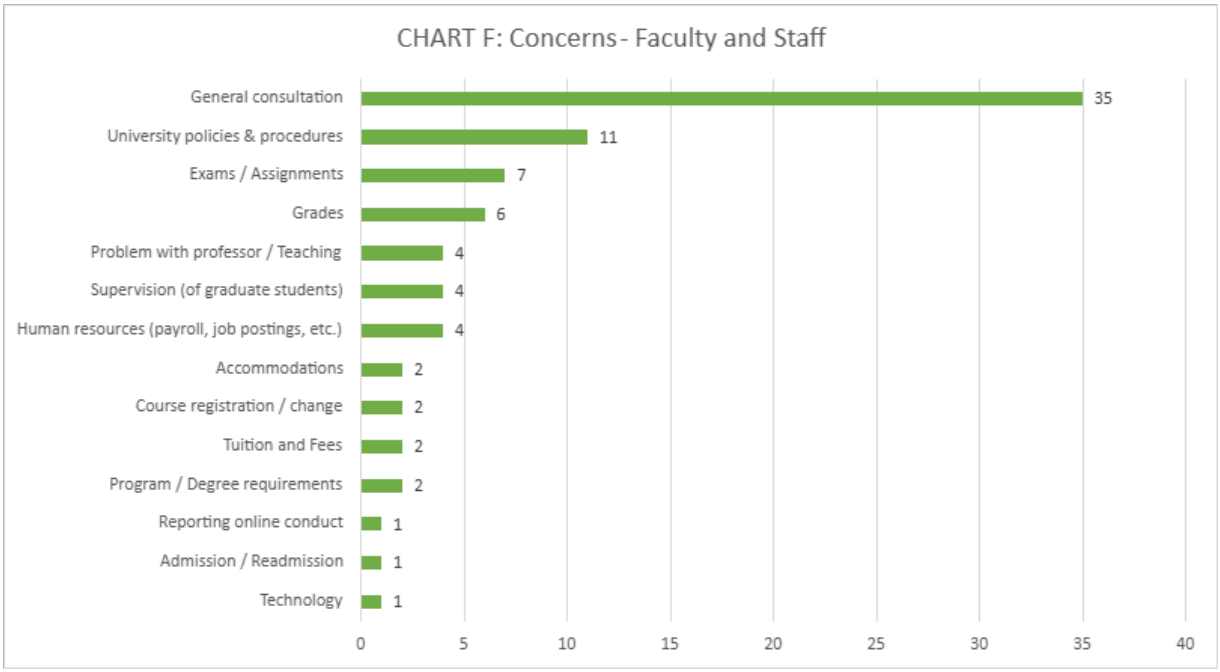
The full list is presented in Chart D, below.



This year, 69 Graduate students came to us for assistance. The main reason for coming to the Ombuds Office was “supervision issues”. Some possible examples include conflict regarding submitting work for publication, a desire for additional (or less) feedback or disappointment in being dismissed and having to find another supervisor. The second reason was “tuition and fees”, mainly due to issues understanding the tuition policies and the way funding is disbursed.



Faculty and Staff Concerns



Faculty and staff files were up this year from 64 to 82, but this is mainly because of the growth in general consultation. For consultation files, members of Concordia faculty or staff speak with the Ombuds Office for advice. For example, we provided advice regarding communications with students, applications of academic policy and possible limits to accommodations.

Select Recommendations 2025-26

The Ombuds Office had several recommendations this year. Below please find some examples:

A student came to our office because other students were cheating during exams. Specifically, students were using cell phones to look up answers to exams and to take pictures. There was a suspicion that these pictures were being exchanged between students so that answers could be provided in real time. After an in-depth investigation, the Ombuds Office recommended that a university-wide task force be struck to review options to deal with inappropriate use of cell phones during final exams. The recommendation has been accepted, and the task force has been struck. As always, we appreciate the openness and collaboration of the Provosts' Office and the Registrar's Office.

A graduate program at Concordia was requiring applicants to complete pre-requisite electives which don't exist at the Undergraduate level. We recommended that this situation be amended to either offer the electives or to modify entrance requirements so that students who complete their Undergraduate degrees at Concordia would be eligible to apply to our graduate programs within the same faculty. We've been told that this evaluation is currently underway and we thank the departments and the School of Graduate Studies for working with us on improvements like this one.

In investigating a file regarding final exams, we learned that there was a lack of clarity regarding what kind of ID card is acceptable during final exams as well as some inconsistency in the way the rules were applied. We recommended that the wording be updated in the Academic Calendar. This has been changed and we believe this will eliminate confusion in the future.

In conclusion, we thank all our colleagues for their continued collaboration and support, and we appreciate the opportunity to serve this university.