

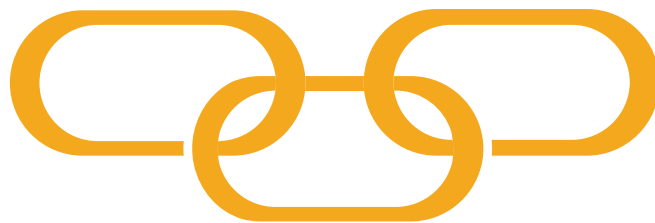
Ombuds Office

Report 2023 - 2024

Carolyn Brendon, University Ombuds



OUR FOCUS IS FAIRNESS



With respect and gratitude, I acknowledge that we are located on the ancestral and traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum agreement.

Table of Contents

Introduction _____	1
Types of Cases _____	2
Who Contacted the Office _____	2
Why Visitors Contacted the Office _____	3
Undergraduate Students _____	3
Graduate Students _____	4
Learners, Former Students, and Applicants _____	6
Faculty and Staff _____	6
External to the University _____	6
How We Helped _____	7
Activities of the Office _____	9
Case Studies _____	10
Observations and Recommendations _____	12
Course and Program Management _____	12
Instructor Departure _____	12
Instructor Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) _____	13
Academic Integrity Sanctions _____	15
Graduate Student Issues _____	15
2022-2023 Report Statistics _____	17
Summary of Recommendations _____	18

Introduction

I am pleased to present the Ombuds Office Annual Report (the “Report”) covering casework from the period of May 1, 2023, to April 30, 2024.

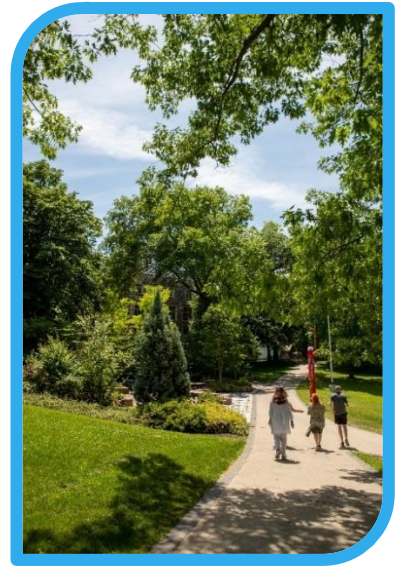
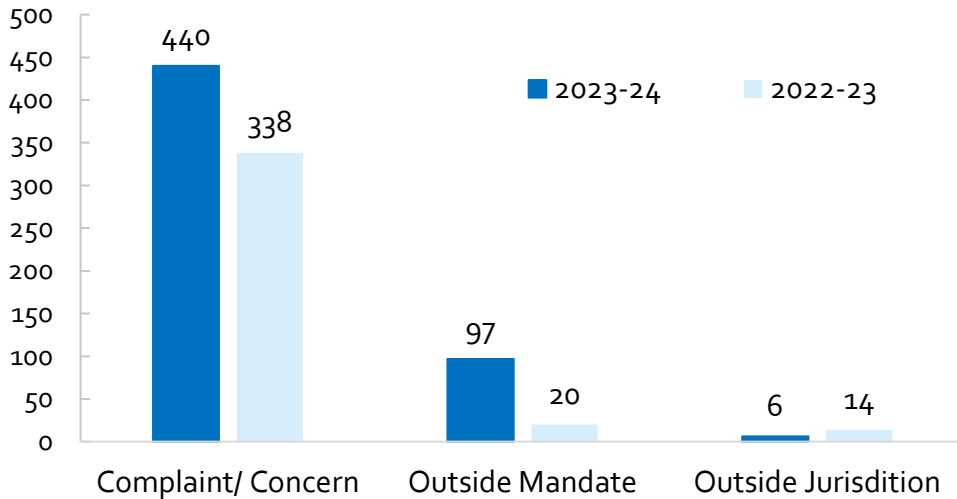
The Ombuds Office (the “Office”) has a broad mandate to advance administrative fairness and equity principles as they relate to policies, procedures, and decision-making that affect students. We consider the three main aspects of fairness when reviewing matters – relational, substantive, and procedural. The Office is founded on several key precepts including impartiality, confidentiality, and independence. The principle of independence is reflected in the reporting and funding structure of the Office. The Ombuds reports to both the President of the University and the President of the McMaster Students Union (MSU) and is otherwise independent of the administrative hierarchies; and the Office is jointly funded and supported by both the University and the MSU, with the Graduate Students Association (GSA) agreeing in principle to providing future financial support commensurate with their membership. In recent years, the McMaster President’s Office has provided additional funding for an Assistant Ombuds position. To advise the Ombuds and aid in fulfilling its unique mandate, the Office is supported by an Advisory Committee consisting of student, staff, and faculty senator representatives.

The Report contains statistical information about the visitors to the Office, the nature of the concerns, and the ways in which we assisted in the resolution of conflicts and concerns as well as trends we have observed, and recommendations aimed at improving fairness for students.

For more information on the Ombuds Office, please visit: www.ombuds.mcmaster.ca

Types of Cases

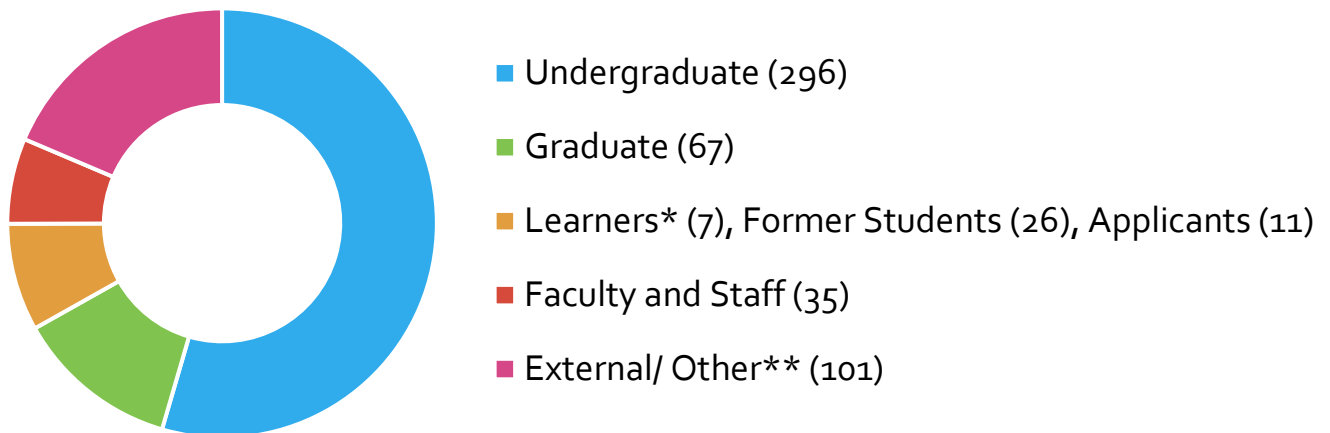
The Office received 543 cases and enquiries between May 1st, 2023, and April 30th, 2024. Cases refer to concerns and complaints that are student related. Enquiries refer to matters that are related to the university but are not student-related (outside mandate) and matters that are not university-related (outside jurisdiction).



The [Ombuds Office 2022-2023 Report](#) can be found on the Ombuds Office website.

Who Contacted the Office

The Office was contacted by a total of 407 students, former students, learners, and applicants; 35 staff and faculty; and 101 individuals outside the McMaster community.



* A Learner is an individual recorded by a faculty office, the Inspire Office, MCE, or a department as enrolled in a Non-Academic Credential, as per the [Certificate, Diplomas and Microcredentials Policy](#)

** External/ Other includes parents, the Ontario Ombudsman's Office***, and those outside the McMaster Community.

*** Ombudsman Ontario is an independent office of the provincial legislature that has oversight over government and public sector bodies, including post-secondary institutions. <https://www.ombudsman.on.ca>

Why Visitors Contacted the Office

Like previous years, the most common academic issues for undergraduate students involve course and program management, grading and evaluation methods, accusations of academic dishonesty, and accommodation for students with disabilities.

There was a total of 761 issues for the period of the Report. The number of issues is larger than the number of cases because a matter may have more than one issue.

Undergraduate Students

Of the 761 issues handled by the Office, undergraduate students brought a total of 445.



- Academic (322)
- Non-Academic (107)
- Unknown/Withdrawn (9)
- Outside Jurisdiction (5)
- Concern about University Member (1)
- Outside Mandate (1)

Undergraduate Academic Issues

Below is a breakdown of the academic reasons undergraduate students contacted the Ombuds Office.

- Course/ Program Management (81)
- Grade/ Evaluation (51)
- Accommodation (33)
- Academic Integrity (24)
- Behaviour of Instructor/ Teaching Assistant (24)
- MSAF/ Petitions (16)
- Appeals (13)
- Application of Policy/ Regulation (10)
- Registration/ Enrolment (10)
- Process (8)
- Academic Advising (7)
- Co-op/Placement/ Internship (7)
- Harassment/ Discrimination (7)
- Examination (6)
- Transcript/Records (6)
- Withdrawal/Reinstatement (4)
- Other (17) (see Table 1)

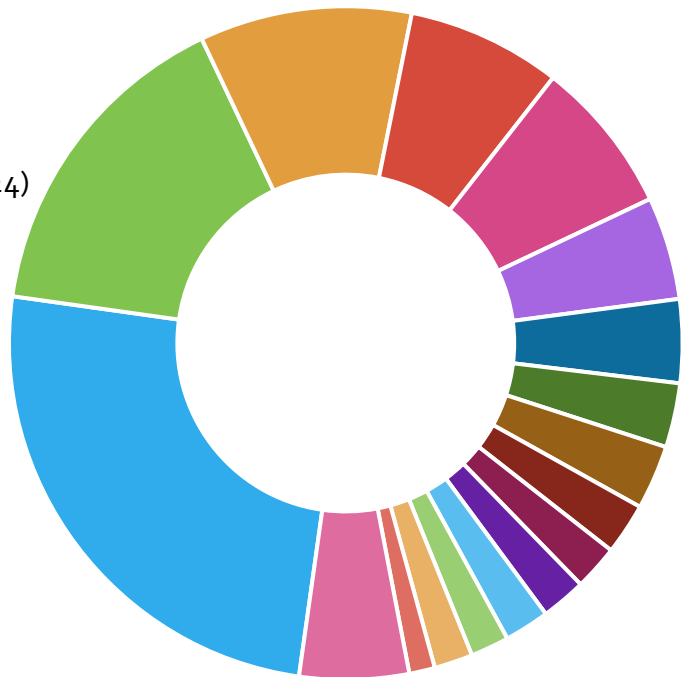
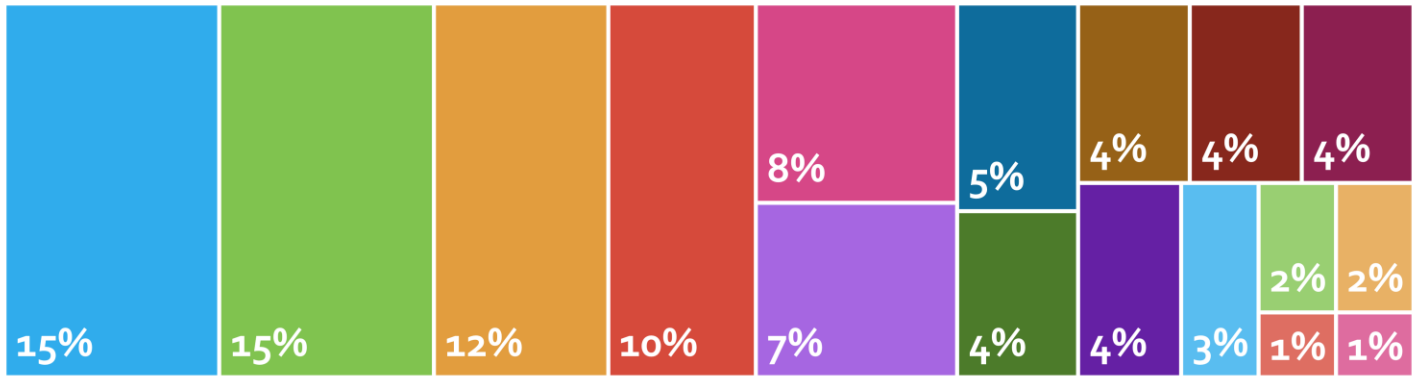


Table 1: Other Academic Issues

Interpersonal Conflict/ Bullying	Admission	Reprisal/ Retaliation
Privacy/ Protection of Information	Professionalism Policies	Thesis/Supervision
Program/Degree Requirements	Quality of Instruction	Technological Issue/ Barrier
Abuse of Power/ Conflict of Interest		

Undergraduate Non-Academic Issues

Below is a breakdown of the non-academic reasons undergraduate students contacted the Ombuds Office:



- Concern about University Member (16)
- Quality of Service/ Office (16)
- Fees/Financial (13)
- Employment/Volunteering (11)
- Student Behaviour (8)
- Student Association/ Club/ Service (7)
- Process (5)
- Interpersonal Conflict/Bullying (4)
- Parking (4)
- Residence (4)
- Rights of Student Groups/ Societies (4)
- Harassment/ Discrimination (4)
- Privacy/ Freedom of Information Request (3)
- Accommodation (2)
- Athletics & Recreation (2)
- Fairness/ Equity of Policy/Regulation (1)

"Hi Carolyn,

I want to share that I got my appeal results today and it successfully worked in my favor... I wanted to share this with you and to say thank you for all the guidance and support, this was a very stressful situation that I hope I never go through it again. Thank you so much once again, your guidance was extremely helpful to me so I'm very glad I found the ombuds office."

- Undergraduate Student

Graduate Students

Of the 761 issues handled by the Office, 120 were identified in connection with graduate student cases.



- Academic (95)
- Non-Academic (23)
- Outside Mandate (2)

Graduate Academic Issues

Below is a breakdown of the 95 graduate student academic issues:

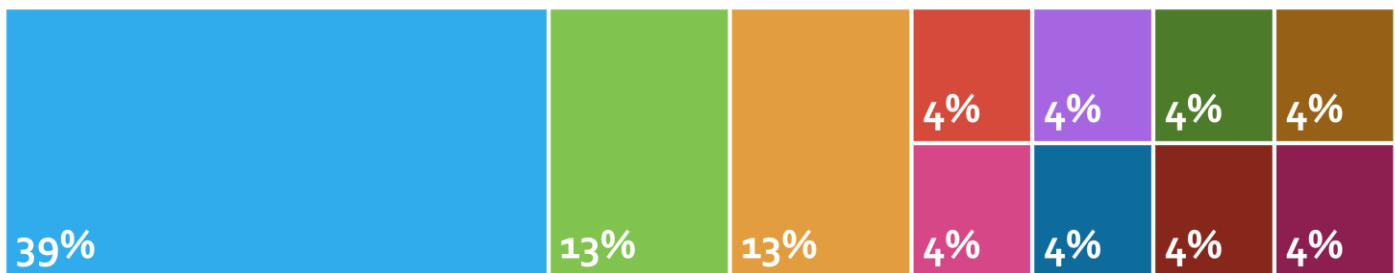


- Thesis/Supervision (23)
- Accommodation (10)
- Course/ Program Management (10)
- Application of Policy/Regulation (6)
- Ownership/ Authorship/ Research Ethics (6)
- Academic Integrity (5)
- Grade/Evaluation (5)
- Withdrawal/Reinstatement (5)
- Abuse of Power/ Conflict of Interest (4)
- Co-op/Placement/ Internship (4)
- Behaviour of Instructor/ Teaching Assistant (3)
- Interpersonal Conflict/ Bullying (3)
- MSAF/ Petitions/ Appeals (3)
- Other (8) (see Table 2)

Table 2: Other Academic Issues	
Process	Professionalism Policies
Examination	Transcript/Records
Privacy/ Protection of Information	

Graduate Non-Academic Issues

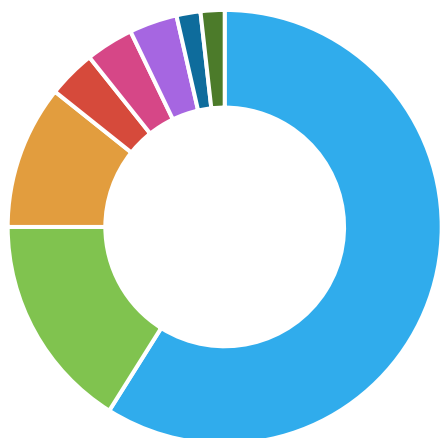
Below is a breakdown of the 23 non-academic graduate student issues.



- Fees/Financial (9)
- Application of Policy/Regulation (3)
- Quality of Service/ Office (3)
- Employment/Volunteering (1)
- Other (1)
- Process (1)
- Reprisal/ Retaliation (1)
- Residence (1)
- Sexual/ Gender-based Violence (1)
- Student Behaviour (1)
- Student Club/Service (1)

Learners, Former Students, and Applicants

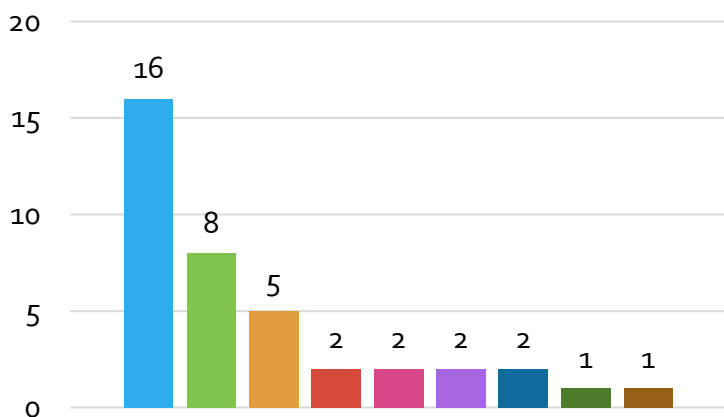
56 issues were brought by learners, former students, and applicants. Below is a breakdown of these issues:



- Academic (33)
- Concern about University Member (9)
- Non-Academic (6)
- Issue on Behalf of Student (2)
- Outside Mandate (2)
- Unknown/Withdrawn (2)
- Concern about University Administration (1)
- Fairness/ Equity of Policy/Regulation (1)

Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff contacted the Ombuds Office about 39 issues. In cases unrelated to students, we provided information and referrals as appropriate.



- Outside Mandate (41%)
- Issue Involving a Student (21%)
- Policy Consultation (13%)
- Concern about University Administration (5%)
- Fairness/ Equity of Policy/Regulation (5%)
- Issue on Behalf of Student (5%)
- Process (5%)
- Application of Policy/Regulation (3%)
- Concern about University Member (3%)

External to the University

A total of 101 issues were raised by individuals outside our jurisdiction such as parents, non-McMaster community members, or the Ontario Ombudsman's Office. This number is higher than usual due to concerns related to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Many of those external to the university who contacted the Office did so as part of a campaign where the same email was sent by different individuals. For statistical purposes, we only counted the first email received from a campaign so as not to distort our overall numbers.

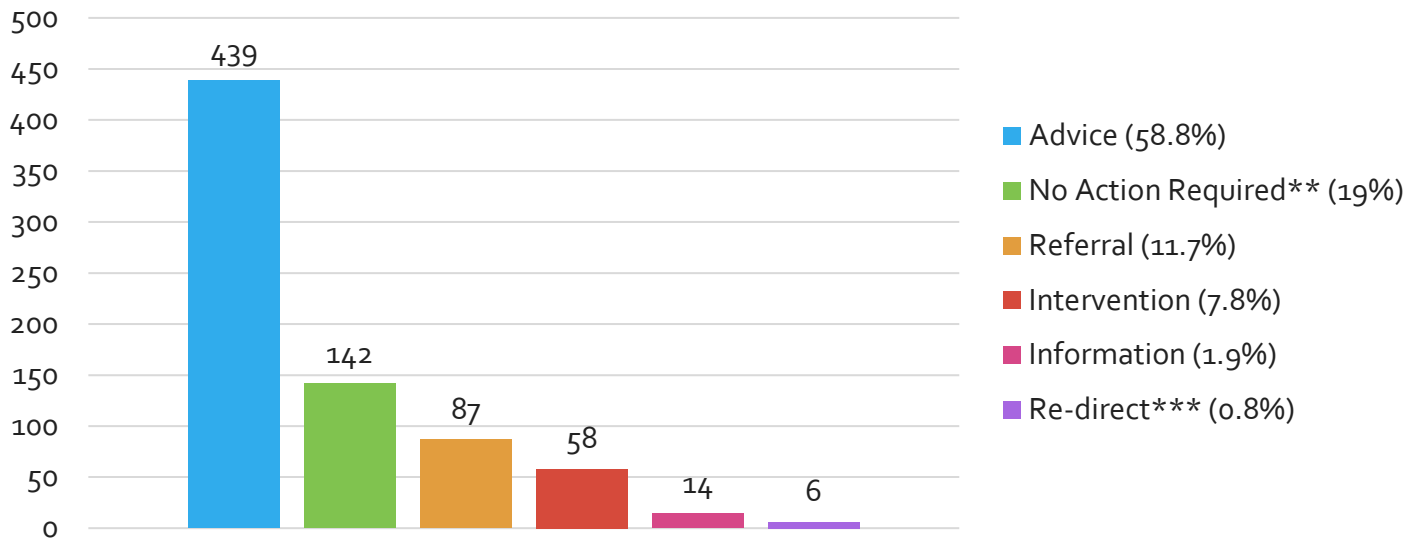
Issue	Amount
Concern about University Member	73 *
Issue on Behalf of Student	16
Concern about University Administration	6 **
Issue Involving a Student	3
Outside Mandate	2
Outside Jurisdiction	1

* If all contacts from email campaigns were included, this number would be 435.

** If all contacts from email campaigns were included, this number would be 1,464.

How We Helped

The actions reported below are based on the 746 issues identified within the 536 closed cases and enquiries*.

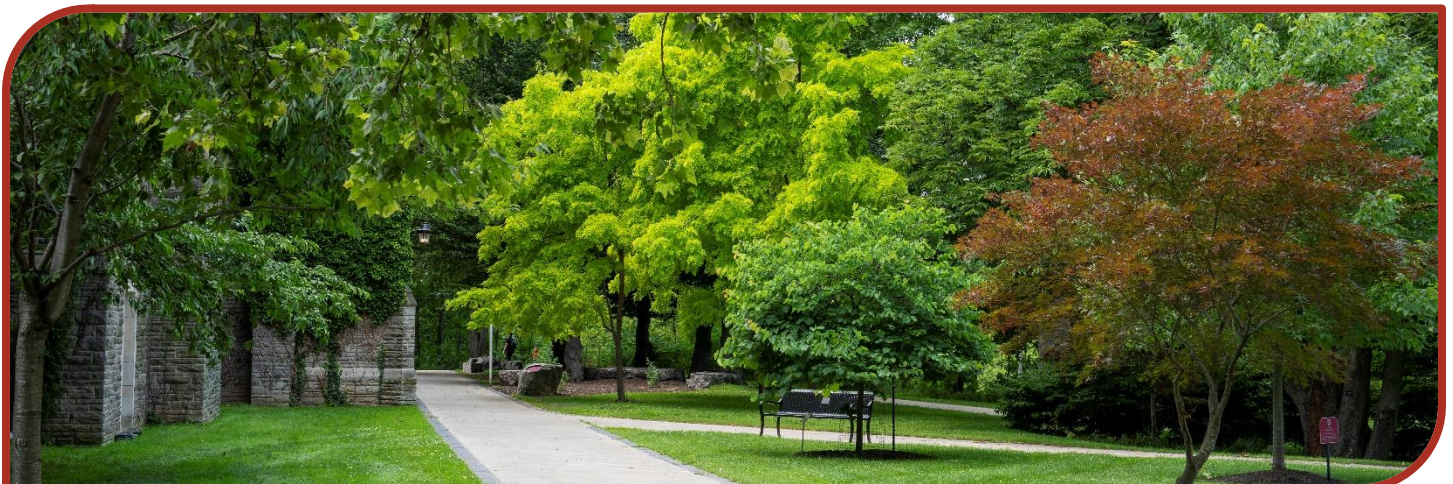


Many concerns are resolved with referrals to appropriate resources on campus. In the majority of cases, I provide “advice” which may include any or all of the following actions: actively listening to a visitor; identifying and analyzing the issues; reviewing the relevant policies, procedures, and regulations; generating self-directed options for resolution; and/or coaching a student on how to communicate effectively with an instructor or decision-maker. Because being engaged in a conflict or the perception of unfair treatment can impact a student’s well-being, I gauge how well a student is coping and inform them of campus mental health and other supports as required.

* Of the 543 cases and enquiries that were brought to the Ombuds Office for the period of May 1st, 2023 to April 30th, 2024, 536 were closed and 6 remain active

** There is “no action required” from the Ombuds Office in some situations, particularly if the matter is outside the Ombuds’ student-focused university mandate. This year, the number of these contacts requiring no action was higher than usual due to the increase in contacts from those external to the university.

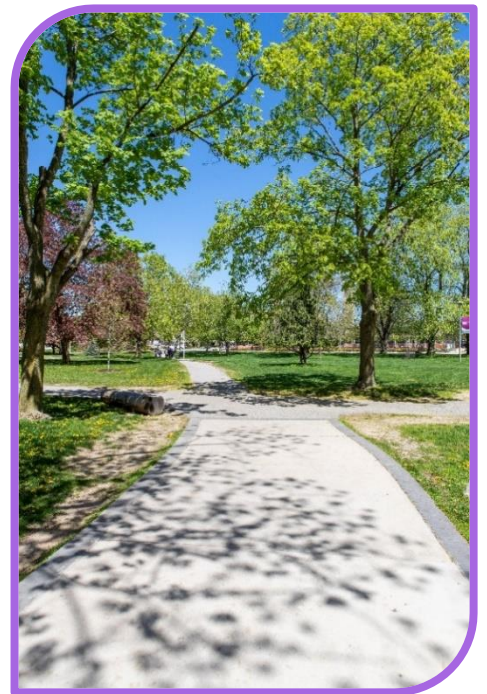
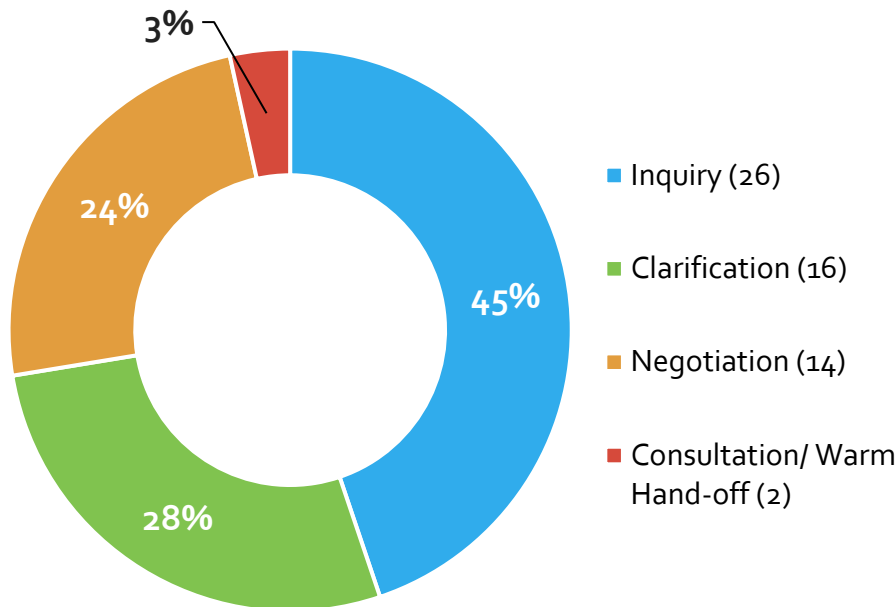
*** Re-directs are referrals to services outside the university.



Interventions

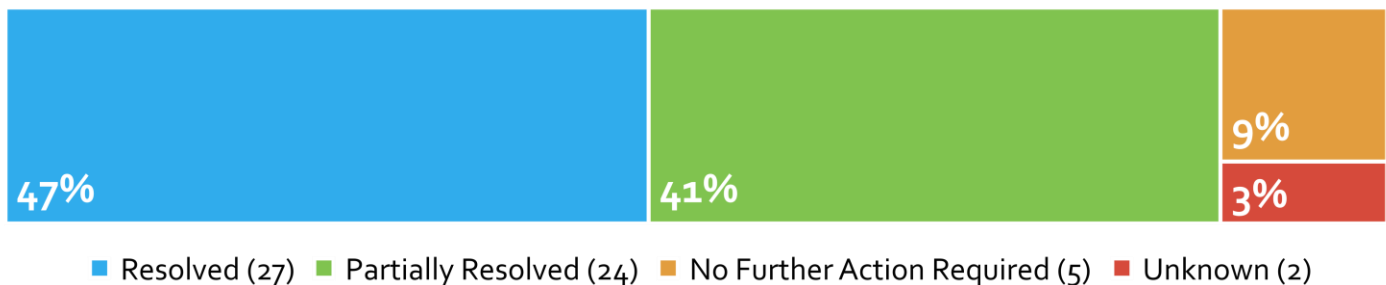
In some situations, and at my discretion, some form of intervention in a matter may be warranted. As the Office has a high level of confidentiality, I would only become involved in a matter after I have obtained consent from the visitor. This year, I intervened in connection with 58 issues. When intervening, I operate informally and beginning at the lowest level within the institution as possible to achieve an early resolution to a matter prior to a formal process being initiated by a student. This informal intervention involves approaching a decision-maker to clarify a situation, discuss fairness concerns, explore options for resolution, or recommend a fair outcome. If my intervention does not resolve a matter, I provide guidance to the visitor on formal dispute resolution avenues within the university such as the [Student Appeal Procedures](#).

In situations where a student has exhausted all university processes, where there is no avenue within the university to resolve a matter, or where there are concerns about the fairness of a university process, the Ombuds operates formally as an “office of last resort”. In this capacity, I may conduct a fair and objective inquiry or investigation, attempt to resolve a matter and, if necessary, make formal recommendations that, if not accepted, can be escalated up to the highest level within the institution and/or be included in the Ombuds annual report.



Intervention Outcomes

In many cases, students resolve matters independently after getting advice from the Office. Where I have communicated with a university decision-maker or official to resolve a matter, we record the outcome as either resolved or partially resolved. In some cases, my intervention involves clarifying information or discussing concerns and, therefore, no further action is required.



Activities of the Office

This has been another busy year for the Office. We developed a new Ombuds website (ombuds.mcmaster.ca) that is more accessible, easier to navigate, and contains additional information and resources helpful to students. In the spirit of continuous improvement, we attended several webinars and workshops relevant to our work. Below is a summary of other activities of the Office:



We participated in various outreach activities to increase the visibility of the Office and enhance the understanding of the Ombuds Role:

- McMaster Students Union Clubs Fest
- Graduate Studies Resources Fair
- Student Success Centre Welcome Week Session
- Training Session for Residence Community Advisors
- Executive Board of the McMaster Students Union

I participated in a variety of professional associations and activities:

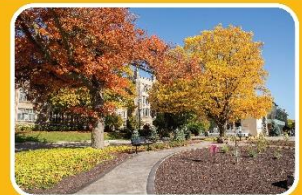
- President of the *Association of Canadian College and University Ombuds (ACCUO)*
- Executive member of *Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO) Board of Directors*
- Co-Chair of the upcoming October 2024 joint FCO-ACCUO conference, "*Ombuds on Edge: Tackling Challenges, Evolving Practices, Enduring Principles*"
- Member of the *European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education (ENOHE)*
- ENOHE Conference Presentation: "*Complaints on Complaints: Higher Education Ombuds and the Issue of Reprisal.*" Prague, Czech Republic (June 2023)

I presented the 2022-23 *Ombuds' Office Annual Report* to the following:

- University Senate
- McMaster Students Union Representative Assembly
- Graduate Students Association Executive Committee
- Student Wellness Centre
- Associate Deans Group
- Undergraduate Council
- Audit and Risk Committee, Board of Governors

Ombuds Office Report 2022 - 2023

Carolyn Brendon, University Ombuds



OUR FOCUS IS FAIRNESS



In addition to discussions with administrators and student leaders on issues impacting students, I participated on new and continuing committees and policy-review working groups:

- University Senate as Observer
- Associate Deans Group (Undergraduate)
- Records Management Community of Practice
- Privacy Community of Practice
- President’s Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community
- Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office Task Force
- *McMaster Student Absence Form Policy (MSAF) Review*
- Hate Crime Protocol discussions
- *Discrimination and Harassment Policy & Sexual Violence Policy Review*

Case Studies

“The Ombuds involvement not only resolved the issue for the student who visited the Office, but also for those students who were similarly situated, thereby ensuring fairness and equity for all impacted students.”

“Minor” Problem

A student approached the Office in their final year of study after declaring a minor using the appropriate university form and learning their request had been denied. They explained that they had sought the advice of an academic advisor in a previous year to determine the courses required to receive a minor, all of which they had taken. The student was frustrated because they had followed the advisor’s instructions and based their course selection on their advice. The student met with the relevant administrator and was informed that the interpretation of the rules had changed and, as a result, they would have to take additional courses to achieve the minor.

Although the student had the option to launch a formal inquiry under the *Student Appeal Procedures*, I agreed to look into the matter in the interest of finding a more timely and efficient informal resolution.

After discussing the fairness issue with the relevant administrator, they agreed to “grandparent” students who had been given advice based on the previous interpretation of the calendar regulations. The Ombuds involvement not only resolved the issue for the student who visited the Office, but also for those students who were similarly situated, thereby ensuring fairness and equity for all impacted students.

“As in many other cases, the Ombuds relies on the support, goodwill, and cooperation of university administrators to resolve student issues.”

Document “Drama”

I was approached by two international graduate students separately about missing original documents from their home universities that they had provided to McMaster in 2019 in support of their applications for admission. Due to pandemic-related factors, the students delayed requesting their documents until 2023 and, by the time they did, the university administrators were not able to locate them despite several searches. The administrators concluded that the documents were destroyed as would be the case for admission documents no longer required. After making inquiries, I learned that the university has since changed its practice and does not retain any original documents from students, so I did not consider this matter to be systemic in nature.

The students reported that they had received email responses from different offices with conflicting information about where the documents had been stored after they were submitted, and, for this reason, the students held out hope the documents were still in existence. Given the students’ lack of a timely request for the documents that were of such great importance to them, even when taking into consideration the impact of the pandemic, I did not conclude that the university had treated them in an unfair manner in destroying the documents; however, I agreed with the students that the communications they had received left a faint hope that this was not the case.

Because of the communications they received and the fact that the documents in question were original paper academic records and were extremely difficult to replace, I agreed to look into the matter. My intervention included following up with the relevant offices to better understand where the documents may have been stored, escalating the matter to a more senior administrator, and offering to conduct a search myself. In the end, an additional search was conducted by a university official, and the missing documents for both students were found. As in many other cases, the Ombuds relies on the support, goodwill, and cooperation of university administrators to resolve student issues.

Highlights of some of the university initiatives that promote equity, belonging, and the well-being of students:

Indigenous Studies program became a department (click [here](#) for more)

Black Student Success Centre celebrated its one-year anniversary (click [here](#) for more)

Free menstrual hygiene product pilot project was launched (click [here](#) for more)

Task Force on Graduate Funding was launched and the final report was completed (click [here](#) for more)

Observations and Recommendations

Part of the role of the Ombuds is to suggest changes to existing policies, rules, or procedures that appear unclear, inequitable, or unfair, and offer advice on the development of new ones. The Provost convened four working groups to respond to the recommendations in *the 2022-23 Ombuds Office Annual Report*. The working group reports are available on the Office of Provost's [website](#).

Course and Program Management

This is a broad category encompassing issues students encounter with the administration of a course or program and continues to be one of the largest areas of concern reported by both undergraduate and graduate students.

Instructor Departure

Several undergraduate students attended the Office with concerns about two different courses in which the instructor had left the university before the course was completed. In both cases, some of the responsibilities of the instructor had been assigned to another member of the instructional team, a teaching assistant and course coordinator, respectively.

While the students understood that the university had no control over the decisions of their instructors to leave the university, they expressed concern that a replacement instructor had not been provided and the remainder of the course did not unfold as anticipated based on the course syllabus. According to students in one of the courses, the remaining in-person lectures were replaced with video recordings, the number of assignments was reduced from five to three, and the test they took earlier in the term was not returned until very close to the final examination date leaving them little time to prepare.



Recommendation:

That the [Undergraduate Course Management Policy](#) state that any significant changes to a course such as the departure of an instructor, require the department chair or director to ensure students receive appropriate communication along with an updated syllabus that, in cases where the instructor has left the university, includes the name and contact information of the individual who is responsible for the course, along with any changes related to the evaluation or delivery method.

Instructor Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI)

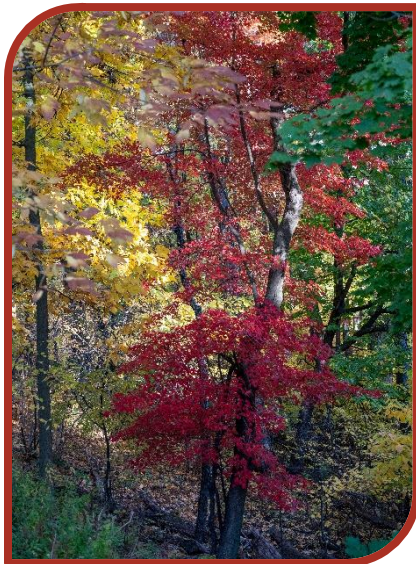
Generative AI makes it possible for machines to learn from experience, adjust to new information, and perform human-like tasks. As this technology evolves and becomes more integrated into many aspects of society, including higher education, university policy continues to develop. The university has created the [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) Advisory Committee](#) that serves as a strategic body to guide the university's endeavors related to AI. Concerns about the misuse of Generative AI have become an emerging issue in our casework.

Evaluation and Pedagogy

Several students have raised concerns about the use of generative AI in their courses to provide evaluation and feedback on their work. They claim these evaluations are often inaccurate with marks being given for incorrect answers and vice versa. As the marking irregularities typically benefited students, resulting, on average, in higher grades than they should have received, the visitors believed these issues were, by and large, not being reported by students. The learning experience was the most serious concern for the visitors as they were of the opinion the feedback was sometimes erroneous and left them feeling more confused about the course content.

The university has provided non-binding guidelines on the use of Generative AI in courses that includes the following:

“Generative AI tools should not be used to provide grades (letter or numeric) for student work. Generative AI tools may be used to provide feedback on student work, provided the following conditions are met:



- When generative AI tools are used to provide feedback of student work this use must be explicitly included in the course syllabus.
- Students should have the ability to opt-out of AI generated feedback.
- AI generated feedback must be checked for accuracy and bias before being returned to the student.
- Documentation of the AI tool used for feedback is required.
- Instructors, or teaching assistants when directed, are responsible for feedback, however it is produced, to ensure appropriateness and accuracy. ”

(Source: [Guidelines on Use of Generative AI in Teaching and Learning, Student Assessment](#))

Recommendation:

That the [Undergraduate Course Management Policy](#) includes the permitted instructor use of Generative AI in courses along with a requirement that instructors provide detailed information on the syllabus about how it will be used in the course.

Student Privacy

In a related matter, a student approached the Office with concerns about their privacy in connection with a course requirement that their work be submitted to a third-party company and for which no information about how their privacy would be protected was provided. The student reported these concerns to the department and were told to contact the company directly to find out about its privacy policy. When the student did so, the company responded that the student would hear back in 60 to 90 days.

The university has provided the following guidelines with respect to privacy protection in the context of Generative AI use in courses for teaching and learning:

- “ If using generative artificial intelligence in courses or for teaching and learning activities, educators and students should use institutionally supported tools that have a completed Privacy and Algorithmic Impact Assessment. McMaster has an enterprise license with Microsoft Copilot. Educators and students who use generative AI should use their McMaster single sign-on credentials to login to Microsoft’s Copilot.
- In selecting third-party technology tools educators must avoid those that sell student data to companies building large language models, as well as companies that use student data to train AI models or to improve services and products; educators should review user agreements and consult with the Office of Legal Services or the Privacy Office if unsure. ”

(Source: [Guidelines on Use of Generative AI in Teaching and Learning; Data, Privacy and Intellectual Property](#))

Recommendation:

That the [Undergraduate Course Management Policy](#) state that instructors who use generative AI in their course provide information in the syllabus on students’ rights to opt out of using third-party generative AI technology tools.



Information Technology Building

Graduate Student Issues

One of the concerns noted by the of the *Task Force on Graduate Funding [report](#)*, is that the time to completion for doctoral degrees across many disciplines exceeds the four-years of full-time enrolment for which doctoral students are typically guaranteed funding. One of the concerns brought to the Office by graduate students is that they are being “slowed down” in their efforts to complete their degree by ancillary activities they have been assigned by their supervisor. These may include applying for research grants; corresponding with journals and editing manuscripts for multi-author publication submissions; mentoring masters and undergraduate students or training them on how to use equipment; booking meeting rooms or other administrative tasks; and/or performing routine duties associated with running a lab.

A doctoral student whose research was being conducted in their supervisor’s lab, reported that when the lab manager left the university, the position was left vacant, and the manger’s not insignificant responsibilities were divided up among the supervisor’s graduate students. Given the inherent power imbalance between students and supervisors, most students are reluctant to refuse to do assigned tasks even when they believe their progress is being hampered as a result.

While there is perhaps an argument that many of the supplemental activities assigned to graduate students contribute to the professionalization process, the benefit to a student of these tasks and the potential impact on their progress are not typically considered by the supervisory committee when conducting evaluations.

Recommendation:

That to increase transparency and decrease the likelihood of a graduate student being assigned excessive or unreasonable tasks that unnecessarily slow their time to competition, the graduate regulations stipulate that all supplemental responsibilities assigned to a student by their supervisor be communicated to the student’s supervisory committee and recorded in the annual committee report.

Academic Integrity Sanctions

In a recent adjudicator decision under the *Academic Integrity Policy* in which a student was found to have committed plagiarism, the student was given educational penalties in addition to standard punitive sanctions: the student was required, among other things, to spend time at the *Writing Center* to review proper attribution methods. I applaud the use of educational sanctions as they acknowledge the role that skills and knowledge gaps may play in some acts of plagiarism, particularly for a first offence. While educational sanctions should not replace efforts on the part of the university to put in place preventative educational measures to ensure all students are aware of proper citation methods, I encourage instructors and faculty adjudicators to consider the appropriateness of educational sanctions when responding to acts of academic dishonesty.

Recommendation:

That the *Academic Integrity Policy* explicitly references educational sanctions as an option for decision-makers to use either instead of or in addition to punitive penalties.




With gratitude

Since Fall 2022, I have had the great pleasure of working with the Assistant Ombuds, Meghan Rego. As the first contact for those visiting the office, Meghan has demonstrated an ability to listen with empathy and has shown great problem-solving, research, and analytical skills. I would like to express my appreciation to the *Ombuds Advisory Committee* for their interest in the work of the Office and their thoughtful guidance. Finally, I would like to thank all those students, staff, faculty, and student leaders who have reached out to us with their concerns or been willing to listen, answer questions, or help resolve issues when I have reached out to them.

If you have any questions about the Report, please do not hesitate to contact the Ombuds Office.

 MUSC 210/211

 ombuds@mcmaster.ca

 905-525-9140 ext 24151

2022-2023 Annual Report Statistics

Below please find a summary of statistics from the [2022-2023 Ombuds Office Annual Report](#).

Case Type	Amount
Concerns/ Complaints	338
Outside Mandate	20
Outside Jurisdiction	14

Visitor Type	Amount
Undergraduate	245
Graduate	49
Staff and Faculty	26
Applicants	11
Former Students	15
Other*	24

* Other included Parents, Ontario Ombudsman's Office, and those outside the McMaster Community

Why Visitors Contacted the Office

Undergraduate Students

Issue Type	Amount
Academic	262
Non-Academic	55
Outside Jurisdiction	7
Withdrawn	5
Outside Mandate	1

Graduate Students

Issue Type	Amount
Academic	68
Non-Academic	16
Outside Jurisdiction	2

Faculty and Staff

Issue Type	Amount
Outside Mandate	15
Issue Involving a Student	7
Application of Policy/Regulation	3
Process	3
Other	2
Issue on Behalf of Student	1

Applicants, Former Students, and Others

Issue Type	Amount
Academic	20
Non-Academic	16
Outside Jurisdiction	6
Issue on Behalf of Student	5
Outside Mandate	4
Other	3
Issue Involving a Student	1

How We Helped

Action	Amount
Advice	284
Intervention	82
Referral	36
Information	22
Re-direct*	13
No Action**	50

Interventions

Intervention Descriptor	Amount
Clarification	39
Inquiry	28
Mediation/ Negotiation	15

* Re-directs are referrals outside university.

** No action was required for several reasons: a visitor did not respond after being offered a meeting; a matter was resolved before the meeting occurred; or a matter was outside the mandate or jurisdiction of the Office.

Summary of Recommendations

Course and Program Management

Instructor Departure Recommendation:

That the [Undergraduate Course Management Policy](#) state that any significant changes to a course such as the departure of an instructor, require the department chair or director to ensure students receive appropriate communication along with an updated syllabus that, in cases where the instructor has left the university, includes the name and contact information of the individual who is responsible for the course, along with any changes related to the evaluation or delivery method.

Instructor Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI)

Evaluation and Pedagogy Recommendation:

That the [Undergraduate Course Management Policy](#) includes the permitted instructor use of Generative AI in courses along with a requirement that instructors provide detailed information on the syllabus about how it will be used in the course.

Student Privacy Recommendation:

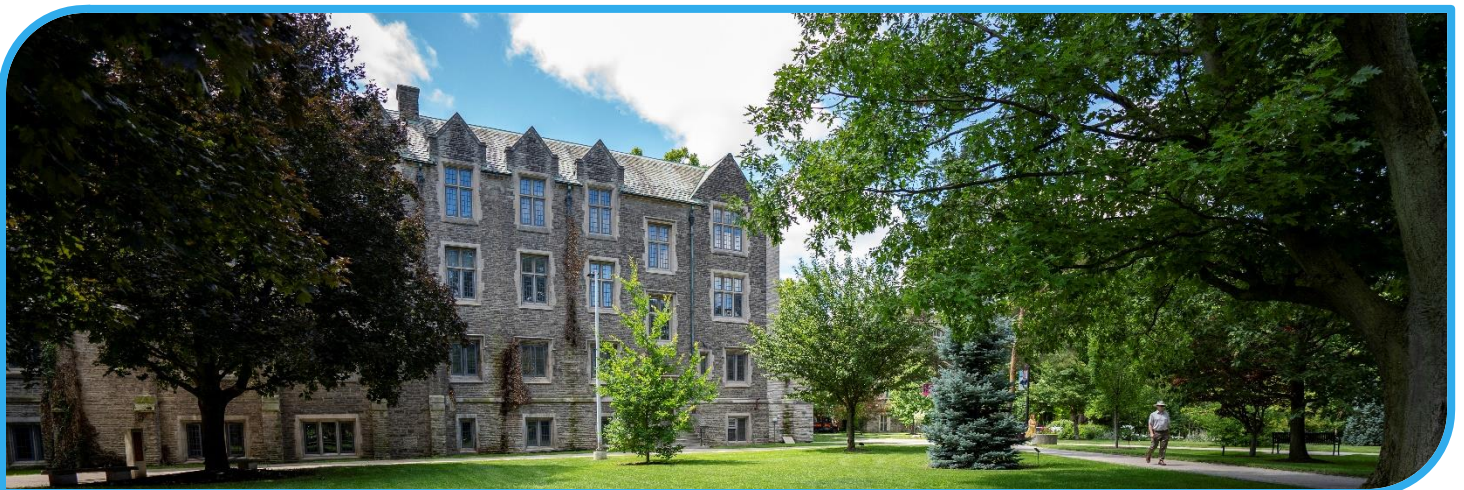
That the [Undergraduate Course Management Policy](#) state that instructors who use generative AI in their course provide information in the syllabus on students' rights to opt out of using third-party generative AI technology tools.

Graduate Student Issues Recommendation:




That to increase transparency and decrease the likelihood of a graduate student being assigned excessive or unreasonable tasks that unnecessarily slow their time to competition, the graduate regulations stipulate that all supplemental responsibilities assigned to a student by their supervisor be communicated to the student's supervisory committee and recorded in the annual committee report.

Academic Integrity Sanctions Recommendation:

That the [Academic Integrity Policy](#) explicitly references educational sanctions as an option for decision-makers to use either instead of or in addition to punitive penalties.



Contact Us

-  MUSC 210/211
-  905-525-9140 ext. 24151
-  ombuds@mcmaster.ca
-  ombuds.mcmaster.ca

