

<http://queensu.ca/ombuds>



Annual Report 2020/21

OFFICE of the HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISOR

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

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WHAT WE DO

YOUR IMPARTIAL RESOURCE PROMOTING FAIRNESS AT UEE'S

The key principles guiding the role of the Office of the Ombudsperson are **independence**, **confidentiality**, and **impartiality**.

The central role of our office is to help **ensure procedural fairness in university decision making**.

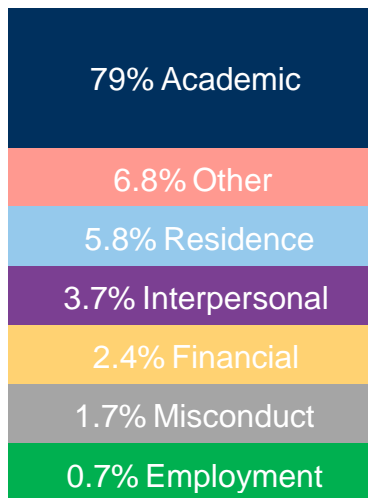
The Ombudsperson and all staff working within the office are precluded from acting as advocates as we have no case management role. Rather, we **facilitate fair processes within the university**. The Office provides general advice to community members about their rights and responsibilities and provides guidance on the procedures to follow. We also proactively review policies, procedures and decision-making frameworks of the university and **identify opportunities for systemic improvement**.

Users are classified depending on the nature of the inquiry for which they contacted the Office and were each assigned a broad category to give a more general overview of the nature of the concern. In some categories, a more specific nature of concern was assigned by using sub-categories.

Academic inquiries continued to be the most frequent topic. Within the academic inquiries received, questions around academic integrity were the primary topic; these included questions around what to do upon receiving a Notice of Investigation and associated next steps such as meeting with the instructor or appealing the finding and/or sanction given.

The second most common academic topic was appeals, which included any non-academic integrity appeal inquiry. These inquiries included seeking guidance on the appropriate appeal process or the appeal letter itself, or seeking clarification on a particular policy that applied to the situation.

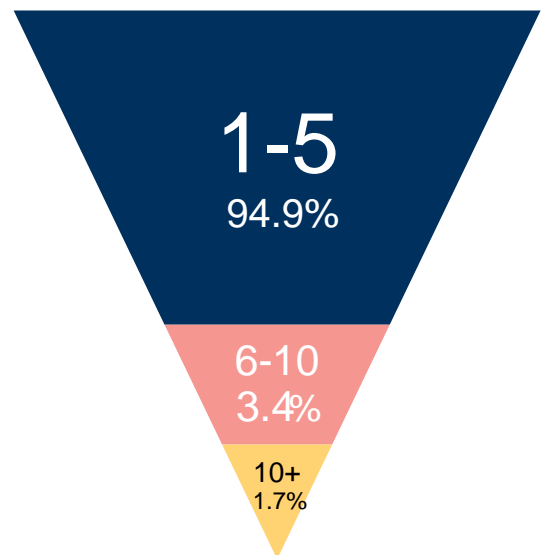
Nature of Inquiry



Academic: Specific Nature of Concern



Average Points of Contact per User



While it is sometimes difficult to quantify the points of contact for each user, users were categorized by considering the number of emails exchanged as well as the amount of time spent exploring the matter further. This may include virtual meetings with the user, connecting with external stakeholders or researching the applicable policy or procedure.

This was the second full year of operation for the Office of the University Ombudsperson following the external review in 2019. The Ombuds staff worked remotely for the entirety of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic which presented its own unique challenges and opportunities.

From transitioning training materials to be delivered online to countless virtual meetings with stakeholders across campus, the 2020 academic year was like no other. The Office participated in a major policy review, contributed material for an undergraduate

OMBUDS ACADEMIC APPEALS ADVISORS

To further align the Advisor role to the updated Terms of Reference for the Office along with consultation from the Ombudsperson Advisory Committee, the name and description of the former 'Dispute Resolution Advisor' role has been finalized. The the f1.3 (d13Et-1.1 (o)3.7 7.

Training for Ombuds Academic Appeals Advisors

Support structures and training materials were developed and implemented to onboard new Advisors. The training included four separate components combining both asynchronous training modules through Rise360 well as live virtual sessions, coupled with tip sheets and a comprehensive guide. The main training module took Advisors through the role in more detail including the Advisor responsibilities, the process for assigning Advisors, as well as working through some of the key University policies they are most likely to use. The Office continue to look for ways to provide continuous education and increase knowledge of the role and responsibilities for Advisors.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The building of strong relationships and ensuring open communication with members of the Queen's community is key in allowing the Office to be able to function efficiently and is even more important while we continue to navigate working remotely. We'd like to thank the Faculties and all our campus partners for their ongoing dialogue and support, with special mention to the partners listed below.

Partners that directly support the mandate of the Office:

- x Lon Knox, University Secretary and Corporate Counsel
- x Audit & Risk Committee of the Board of Trustees
- x Ombuds Academic Appeal Advisors
 - o Alan Abelson
 - o Michael Blennerhassett
 - o Kate Rowbotham
 - o Donald Sackey

In 2020-21, new and continuing initiatives and committee work included:

- x Advisory Committee on Academic Accommodations
- x Academic Integrity Regulations, Roundtable and SubGroup
- x Bias Hate Ad Hoc Response Group
- x Commission on Black Medical Students
- x Discrimination and Harassment Policy Working Group
- x Commission on Black Medical Students
- x Human Rights Legislative Group
- x Non Academic Misconduct Roundtable
- x Non Academic Misconduct Subcommittee
- x Ombudsperson Advisory Committee
- x Policy Advisory Subcommittee
- x SARD Working Group and SubGroup
- x Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Task Force
- x Student Services and Operations SubGroup
- x Truth and Reconciliation Roundtable
- x University Council on Anti Racism and Equity (UCARE)
- x Inclusive Community-UCARE SubCouncil

Our student partnerships across campus included:

- x Alma Mater Society (AMS)
- x Society of Graduate & Professional Students (SGPS)
- x Arts & Science Undergraduate Society (ASUS)

Our campus partnerships across campus included:

- x Human Rights & Equity Office
- x Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre
- x Office of Indigenous Initiatives
- x University Relations
- x University Counsel
- x University Rector
- x Student Affairs & Student Conduct Office

During the 2020-21 academic year, we worked with campus partners on a variety of presentations, training sessions, and events. The following highlights a few select projects.

The 17 Rooms Event

This event at Queen's was a fast-paced, brainstorming approach to generating awareness of and action on the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). The exercise brought together people interested in making a difference into 17 small groups, each tasked with generating ideas and knowledge to make progress towards a particular SDG.

The Ombudsperson participated in the SDG Room 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, which was meant to “promote [peaceful and inclusive societies](#) for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” Participation in this activity allowed the Ombudsperson to meet a new and diverse group of university members, and speak a bit about what the Office does.

Arts & Science Undergraduate Society (ASUS) Appeal Volunteers

The Office provided guidance to the Arts & Science Undergraduate Society (ASUS) Appeal Volunteers.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND INDIGENEITY (EDII)

Queen's University has a stated commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and indigeneity (EDII). In line with this goal, and in support of the Office's own dedication to promoting EDII, the Office has been very involved in EDII initiatives throughout 2020-21.

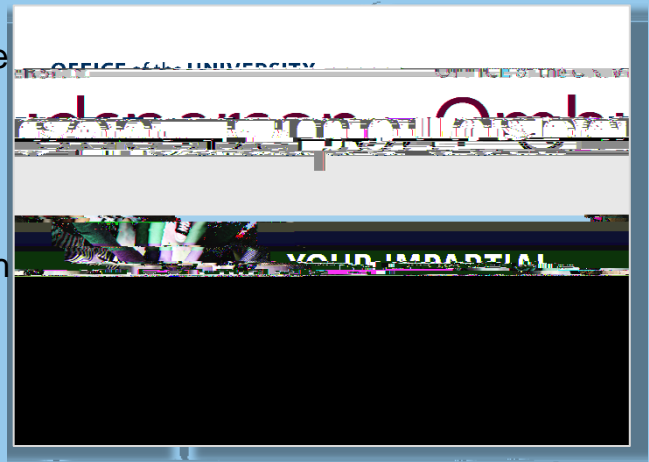
Racism that BIPOC students, faculty and staff face daily at Queen's continues to be an ongoing concern. The Ombudsperson met with individuals to listen to their stories about the pain and isolation of racism, and to provide support and advice to these individuals. In some instances, the Ombudsperson connected with an Advisor from the Human Rights and Equity Office to hold joint meetings with individuals. The confidential nature of both offices and the expertise that each provides were of great comfort to these community members during difficult times.

The Ombudsperson also engaged in activities to advance EDII objectives across campus, including:

- *Lived Experiences of Black Faculty, Staff and Students at Queen's*: At the first Board meeting in September, the Ombudsperson organized and moderated a panel discussion about the experiences of Black faculty, staff and students, and the changes that they would like to see from the Board and senior leadership at Queen's.
- *Anti-Black Racism Training*: The Ombudsperson met with Black faculty and staff from the Human Rights and Equity Office, the Faculty of Education and Smith School to collaborate on the development of anti-Black racism training.
- *Together We Are Blog*: The Human Rights and Equity Office (HREO) invited the Ombudsperson to be a contributor to their Together We Are blog, which provides a safe space for conversations about equity, diversity, and inclusion at Queen's. The piece, entitled [Hope for the New Year](#), was posted online in January 2020.
- *Employment Equity Forum: Redefining Leadership Through the Power of Inclusion*: The Ombudsperson attended this forum hosted by the Human Rights and Equity Office. The goal of the day was to help shape the strategic direction in each of those areas when looking at employment equity along with providing feedback on the draft plan to further define employment equity priorities in the coming year.
- *ACCUO Ad Hoc EDI Committee*: The Ombudsperson is the Chair of the Association of Canadian University and College Ombuds' (ACCUO) Ad Hoc EDI Committee, which has a purpose of working to develop ways for college and university ombudspersons to collectively take action to address racism and anti-Black racism. The Ombudsperson made a statement at the Annual General Meeting on behalf of the EDI Committee paying respects to the Indigenous children who had recently been discovered in unmarked mass graves at former residential schools.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve to a potential endemic state, the Office continues to work remotely moving into the 2021-22 academic year. The Ombuds Office will look to transition to a hybrid delivery model as the academic year progresses, similar to other units across campus, although many students have already returned to in-person activities. Members of the Queen's community will continue to face unique challenges that come along with navigating the dynamics of learning and working through hybrid models.



PROMOTIONAL POSTCARD

Continuing to foster relations with all stakeholders will be ongoing. Other goals that align with the work that we are doing are:

- x growing the revised Ombuds Academic Appeals Advisor Program
- x developing an email campaign showing the benefits of the asynchronous modules in Procedural Fairness and Writing Good Decisions to Faculties and Schools promoting the training to those who have not yet completed them
- x collaborating with stakeholders across campus to ensure key policy updates (Student Academic Appeals Policy) are in alignment with respective policies & procedures within the Faculties and Schools
- x cultivating relationships with student groups to better understand gaps or perceived gaps of support from the Office

We will also continue to provide support to BIPOC members of the Queen's community and work on promoting anti-racism training and initiatives at Queen's.

The beginning of the pandemic taught us that we can be flexible and adjust to any challenges that may come our way, and this is still true as we continue to navigate this new normal. It's clear that the Office of the University Ombuds continues to be an important resource for the Queen's community, and as we look ahead to 2022, we will continue to build on our first two years to provide invaluable support and resources to our students, staff and faculty.

OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY

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