

OFFICE of the UNIVERSITY

Ombudsperson



Annual Report 2018-19

<http://queensu.ca/ombuds>



Queen's
UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

I am pleased to present the 2018-19 Annual Report for the Office of the University Ombudsperson, which covers the period from September 1, 2018 through August 31, 2019.

I would like to begin by giving a very big thank you to Dr. Heather Cole who served as the Interim Ombudsman during this reporting period. Heather's hard work and dedication were instrumental in laying the foundation for the current Ombuds office. I am grateful for all that Heather did during her time as the Ombuds, and I wish her all the best in her new role as the Senior Advisor and Executive Director in the Principal's Office.

The 2018-19 Annual Report provides a summary and highlights of the work of the Office during this timeframe. New methods of tracking and reporting trends were utilized and have been included in this report. The Year in Review section provides a summary of identified systemic issues. Also included in this report is a brief preview of some of the objectives that my team and I hope to accomplish over the coming year.



Although I only started in my new role as the University Ombudsperson on August 1, 2019, I have already observed the importance of the Ombuds office as a resource for students, staff and faculty at Queen's.

It is my honour to serve the Queen's community as your new University Ombudsperson.

Respectfully submitted,

Lavonne Hood
University Ombudsperson

What We Do

YOUR IMPARTIAL RESOURCE ENSURING FAIRNESS AT QUEEN'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**. We are an important resource to the Queen's community in helping students, staff, faculty, parents, and alumni understand policies and procedures within the university and identifying opportunities for improvement.

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**.



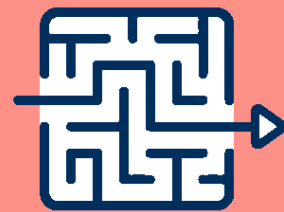
LISTEN

with **confidentiality**,
and **impartiality**
to concerns about
fair processes at
the university



GUIDE

with advice and
resources to
help understand
policies and
procedures



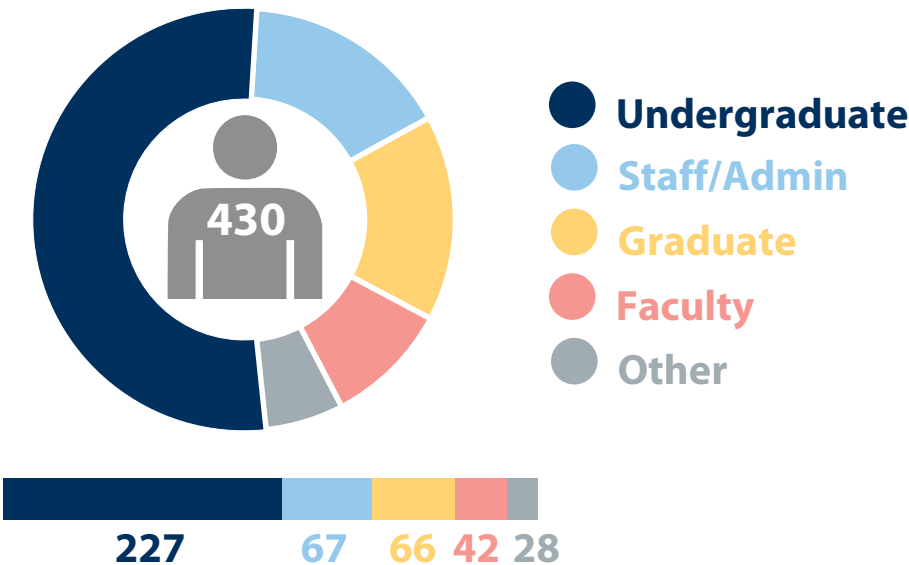
EMPOWER

students, staff,
and faculty
to **navigate**
through university
decision-making

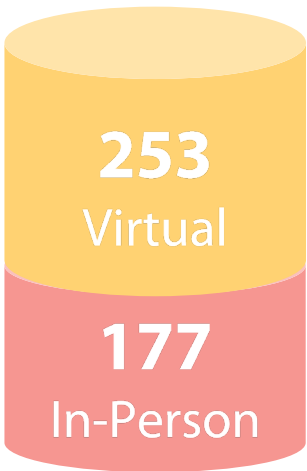
Year in Review

SEPTEMBER 1, 2018 THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2019

Caseload & User Type



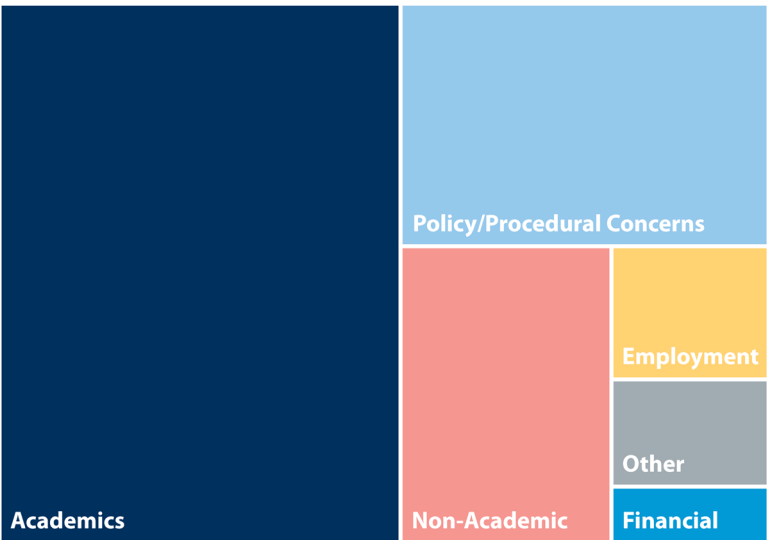
Method of Contact



User by Faculty or Office

Arts & Science	50.1%
Grad Studies	11.3%
FEAS	8.3%
Health Sciences	7.7%
Commerce	7.1%
Education	3%
Residences	3%
Parents	2.1%
Athletics	1.5%
Other Student Org.	1.5%
Law	1.5%
AMS	0.9%
Conduct Office	0.9%
Human Rights & Equity	0.6%
Legal Counsel	0.6%

Issues Addressed



Year in Review

Throughout the last year the Office of the University Ombudsperson has been in a state of transition. As displayed in the statistical graphs, academics, policy and procedural concerns, as well as non-academic issues were the most common areas of inquiry coming through our Office. The following list describes some of the topics in more detail:

- **Academic Policies and Procedures**

Our Office has become a resource for the campus community in helping to understand policies and procedures but also offering advice on issues arising out of current interpretations or procedural implementation. There is ongoing need to work with legal counsel to identify problematic practices and to engage collaboratively with stakeholders in pro-actively addressing procedural issues. In April 2019, the Interim Ombudsman submitted a memorandum to Senate outlining a systemic concern with the Academic Integrity policy and its implementation. Faculties have not adopted consistent policies which has caused some problems for students, especially those taking courses outside of their home faculty or school. A review of academic integrity policies across the campus was recommended and the matter has now been referred to the Senate Committee on Academic Procedures (SCAP).

- **Non-Academic Misconduct**

Our Office continues to be a resource for student respondents involved in non-academic misconduct. This is an essential role for the community but must be carefully balanced with the Office's mandate as a resource, not advocate. The Office serves a necessary function assisting students in navigating procedures and understanding implications of their behaviour as well as possible ways that behaviour may be addressed by the institution.

- **Academic Appeals**

As per the Student Appeals, Rights & Discipline Policy (SARD), students involved in academic appeals are referred to our Office for assistance. In March 2019, the Interim Ombudsman submitted a memorandum reporting back to Senate on several issues raised previously by the University's Harassment/Discrimination Complaint Board about university policies, perceived overlap and inconsistencies as well as a need to review jurisdictional matters of the University Student Appeals Board (USAB). Senate made a formal referral to SCAP to undertake a comprehensive review of SARD and the roles and responsibilities of USAB, which the University Ombudsperson is now facilitating. This review is currently undergoing. Much like the referral to Senate regarding academic integrity policies and procedures, referrals at Senate by the Ombuds are indicative of the new mandate of the Office to identify potential systemic problems so that they may be addressed.

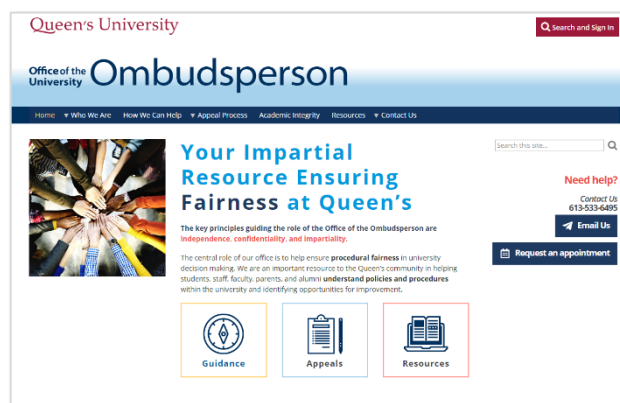
Looking to the Future

The Office of the University Ombudsperson participated in a brand strategy exercise with Queen's University Relations (UR) in September 2019. The UR team helped develop an over-arching brand identity, a new website and a communications plan to introduce our Office to the rest of the Queen's community. While we are an institutional office, we wanted to ensure that our identity was reflective of the fact that we are independent and that our office advises the entire Queen's community of students, staff, faculty, alumni, and parents.

Our Office now has a consistent look and feel when it comes to the website, print materials or a presentation. We also have a new wordmark, along with a set of four colours that resemble the Queen's Tricolour but are softer and represent the welcoming nature of our Office.



PROMOTIONAL POSTCARD



OMBUDSPERSON HOMEPAGE

Overall Goals

Stemming from an external review of the Office, revised Terms of Reference were approved in 2019, which allowed us to refocus the work of the Office and set tangible goals for the next year. These goals include increasing the awareness of our Office across campus, developing training materials on procedural fairness and decision making, empowering stakeholders to navigate processes through self-help resources, implementing survey tools to track user experience with the office, and finally, fostering positive relationships with on-campus partners.

We'll be reaching our stakeholders through a variety of means such as print material, e-mail communication, in-person Faculty visits, staff training sessions, student group consultations, and on-going meetings with current campus partners.

Thank You

The Office of the Ombudsperson at Queen's University has a variety of partners that assist in supporting the mandate of our Office:

- Lon Knox, University Secretary and Corporate Counsel
- Audit & Risk Committee of the Board of Trustees
- Ombudsperson Advisory Committee
- Dispute Resolution Advisors
- Gail MacAllister
- Kathleen Julien-Michels

We'd also like to thank Faculties and all our campus partners for their on-going dialogue and support, in particular:

- AMS
- University Legal Counsel
- Office of Human Rights & Equity
- Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Coordinator
- SGPS
- University Rector
- Student Affairs & Student Conduct Office
- University Chaplain
- University Relations

We would finally like to thank our colleagues in the Association of Canadian College and University Ombuds (ACCUO).

OFFICE of the UNIVERSITY

Ombudsperson

Queen's University

Office of the University Ombudsperson

Robert Sutherland Hall

138 Union Street

Kingston, ON Canada

K7L3N6

(613) 533-6495

ombuds@queensu.ca

<http://queensu.ca/ombuds>



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