

OSO Annual Report 2019 – 2020

Practicing Fairness

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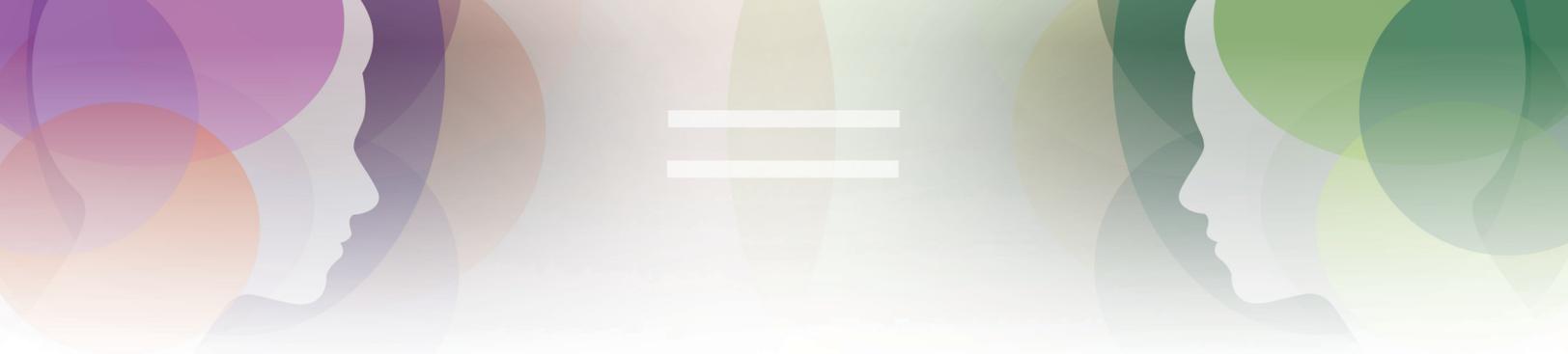
Ombuds at Green and Gold Day

Welcome to a day in the Office of the Student Ombuds



Have you ever met an ombuds on campus? You may be interested in what we can offer you. You can contact us whenever you have a concern about policies and procedures related to conflicts with peers, instructors and supervisors, academic decisions related to your grades, academic standing, graduation status. You can call us if you have been charged with an academic or non-academic offence, or have a complaint about discrimination, harassment, and other forms of inappropriate conduct, or have been accused of such. You may have concerns about copyright and publishing, or a student residence situation or a university-related event off campus, or university-related work and activities in the virtual world. The ombuds will meet with you confidentially to provide a safe environment. The ombuds will not judge you – our focus is on helping you to find your voice to talk about your situation and examine it from multiple perspectives (multipartiality). There is no charge for our service, and we help to examine your situation through an ombuds lens of fairness to ensure you are treated fairly and equitably.

Fairness does not mean just getting your way as there are academic standards and conduct standards. However, this does not mean that you cannot freely express your views, if you are not causing harm to others. Our role is to let you know when and how to exercise your rights in the University community. When ombuds examine issues through a fairness lens, they are asking the following: Was the policy applied with consideration to due process (procedural and substantive) i.e., were you fully informed, were you notified in a timely way, were you given the necessary information to give a full response? Were you informed by the proper authorities of a full, reasoned decision, and did the process unfold as required by



university procedures? Even if these aspects of fairness are met, the ombuds is concerned about two other important kinds of fairness. Relational fairness is about how the information was communicated to you, and whether you were treated with respect. Just as important is equitable fairness. Were your individual circumstances heard to ensure that you were on a level playing field when a decision was made? The ombuds will ask questions around these aspects of fairness to help you so that you can thrive in an inclusive, safe, discrimination and harassment-free campus.

Our client base is students; however, we provide advice to faculty and administration. We also respond to general public inquiries, but never on a specific student case because of our confidentiality rules.

We are an important resource to the University community and public, and advocate for systemic change when barriers that some may not see because of their privilege, silence others who are marginalized and have a right to be heard.

Do Higher Education Ombuds Have Professional Associations?



ACCUO

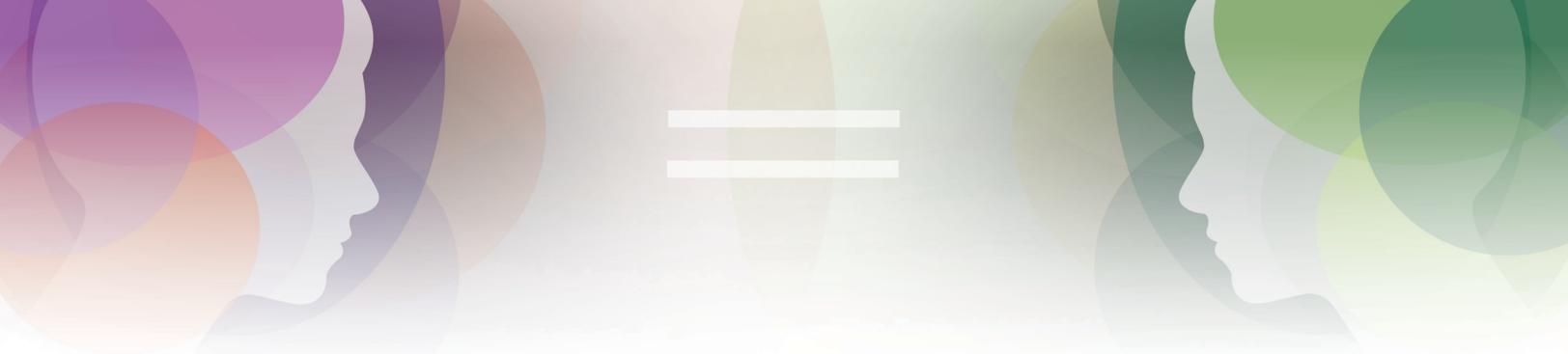
ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
OMBUDSPERSONS

The Office of the Student Ombuds, as a member of the bilingual Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO/AOUCC), follows their Professional Standards of Practice. These guiding standards are: independence, confidentiality, impartiality, and accessibility. While adhering to these guiding standards, it helps to build trust in the work we do as ombuds.

What Services Do We Offer?

As ombuds we are advocates for fairness, not your personal or legal advocate. Whenever there are formal processes, we follow these to ensure due process; however, there are many informal modes of resolution, and if you come to see us early, we can advise on the suitability of these for your situation. These services include:

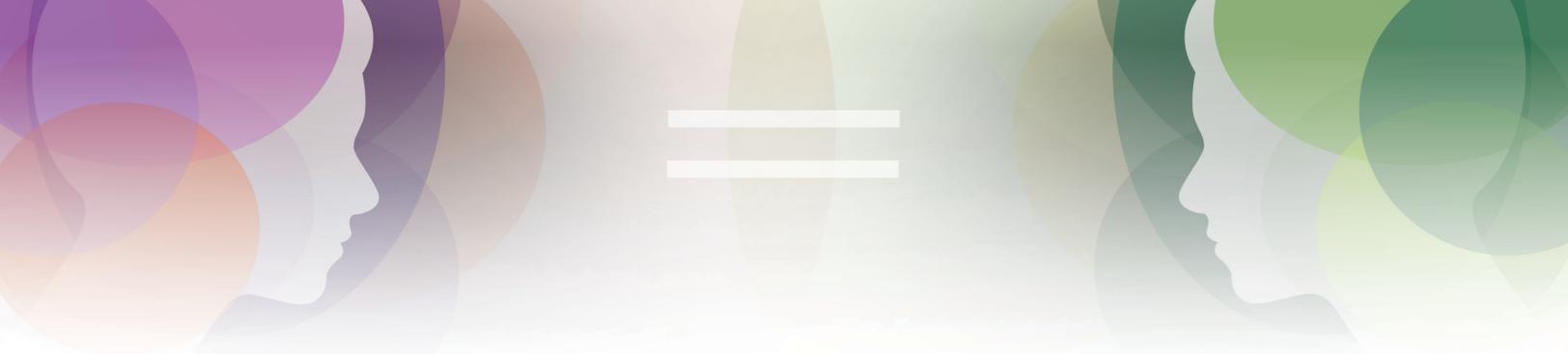
- **Conflict Management Coaching** (AKA “conflict coaching”) offers individualized coaching to examine issues holistically and develop communications skills for resolving supervisory/instructor conflicts, student discord, lab/workplace conflicts.
- **Peacekeeping Circles** are for graduate students, students working in labs/group projects, etc. Peacekeeping circles facilitate private conversations with groups of individuals to rebuild trust in their relationship before discussing the difficult issue(s).
- **Restorative Conferences** are structured confidential meetings between those involved in a conflict where one or more have experienced harm. The conference helps a party recognize consequences of the harm caused and how to repair that harm.



- **Shuttle Diplomacy** requires the ombuds to act as a non-biased intermediary between parties in discord, helping them to reach a mutual agreement without direct contact. Parties may be reluctant to meet face-to-face, but desire to come to a resolution.
- **Mediation** is an informal, confidential conflict resolution process in which two or more parties voluntarily agree to meet with a mediator/co-mediators to discuss their issues through an interest-based process and come to a mutual non-binding agreement. OSO offers facilitative, transformative, narrative, and neutral-evaluation approaches.
- **Appreciative Inquiry** is conducted when a party believes a procedural error was made in a university administration process for which appeals have been exhausted or none exist. An ombuds reviews documents and makes a non-binding recommendation.

We offer interactive campus education sessions on topics such as “Exercising Your Rights Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Student”; “Resolving Supervisory Conflicts”; “Resolving Group Project Conflicts”; “Guidelines on Use of Social Media”.

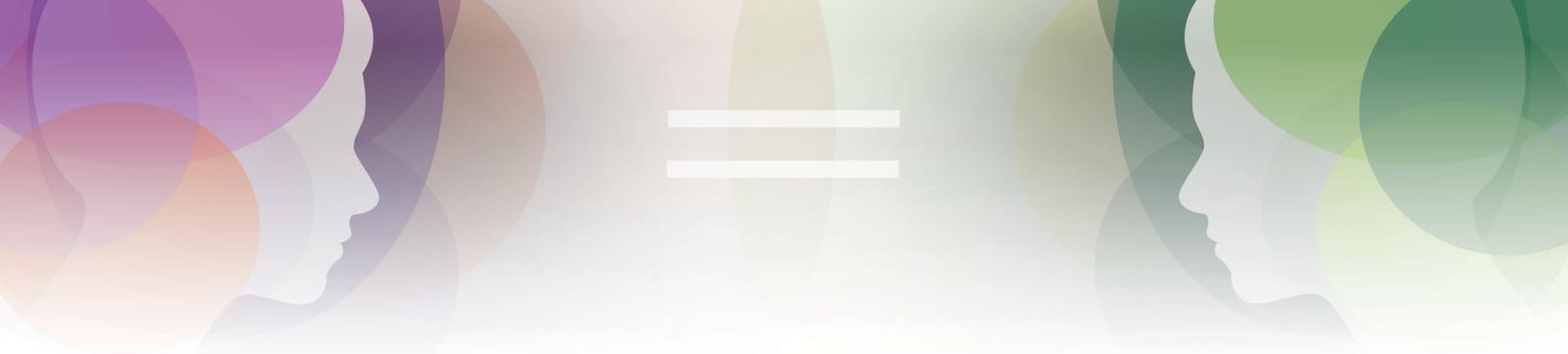
We also respond to community education requests on conflict resolution, facilitated mediation, etc.



Students show appreciation for their Ombuds 2019 – 2020

“ I was required to withdraw for a second time and was so scared I did not know where to go or my options going forward. The Ombuds office took me through all of the steps to prepare for my first, and second appeal with the Academic Appeals Committee. I did not know about all the places I could go for support if it were not for the ombuds service. I was able to get academic support as well as successfully appeal my required to withdraw. I went to the office not knowing where to start and left feeling empowered in my studies and be more than prepared to graduate for Fall 2020. I felt that I can be very honest with what I was going through and know that the office is there for my benefit and are looking out for my interests alone. To know that everything I say will not be used against me is very reassuring. I believe independence is important to the ombuds office because they offer a place for students to go for grievances and will offer advice on where to go without any bias. The independence of the ombuds office allows them to help you understand the University policy, and help you know all of your rights as a student. Overall I am very appreciative of Ombuds services and all that they offer. ”

“ Really thank you again for all of your advice and guidance. This supervisory/funding situation has turned out better than I ever thought it could. ”



“

Thank you. The Office of the Students Ombuds is a great resource on campus for students seeking various supports. After I failed my first academic standing appeal, I was at my wit's end because I couldn't get the evidence I needed to defend myself. Your suggestions to obtain the missing records worked wonders and my appeal returned to the....on advice of the.... Your editing of the second... appeal was good. You helped me develop questions for the Respondent and for witnesses. My questions sounded more appropriate after your edits. The appeal process is a very formal and daunting experience. Your calls for regular breaks, pacing me well, and checking how I was doing all helped. In short, I don't think I would have come as far without an ombuds. I think it's important to have such a good resource on campus, one that's free of charge and not affiliated with any particular faculty, to take a neutral stance to help students.

”

“

I received help from you a month ago regarding my missing midterm exam mark. I would like to sincerely thank you for helping me with my appeal letter. You did not only help me with my letter but also gave me hope through a tough situation. Although the chair did not approve it, the dean recently just approved my appeal! Thanks to you, I am able to take up a discipline in my second year and hopefully be able to graduate in 3 more years. This has been the best news for me this year....I hope you get to help more people! Once again, thank you so much!

”

University Ombuds Staff 2019 – 2020



Left to right, back:

Remonia Stoddart-Morrison,
Meagan Eckel,
Bhuva Narayanan,
Fenya Fitzpatrick

Seated:

Natalie Sharpe,
Brent Epperson



Natalie Sharpe, Director of the OSO, received the Pete Small Award in November 2019 from the California Caucus of College and University Ombudspersons, its highest award to demonstrate excellence in academic ombudsing and for leaders in the field who have advanced the profession. Natalie has worked to promote regional, national and international ties among ombuds in higher education as the President of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO/AOUCC). In June 2019, ACCUO became one of five higher education ombuds associations to sign a declaration in León, Spain to promote the practices and values of higher educational ombuds worldwide. Natalie has presented papers internationally to tackle current global issues and challenges in higher education and share recommendations on individual and systemic fairness. In January 2020, representing Canada, she was one of five higher education ombuds invited by the Ombudsman at the largest Mexican University (UNAM) in Mexico City to present on ombuds values and practices, and how to enhance the role of the higher education ombuds nationally and globally.



Dr. Brent Epperson, Graduate Ombudsperson at the University of Alberta for over six years, combines his research in macro-level issue framing with training in mediation and restorative practices to mitigate campus conflicts. Prior to becoming an ombudsman, as a student representative for several years, he was active in university governance and student advocacy at the provincial and federal levels and contributed frequently to higher education reform debates in the Canadian press. He simultaneously serves as a Visiting Researcher at Campus Saint-Jean, where he is taking part in projects on ombudsman practice, media representation and issue framing in health care, and the evolution of Canadian identity. Brent holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Montana, a PhD from the University of Alberta, and certificates in mediation and best practices for ombudsman offices.



Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, Undergraduate Ombudsperson, is also an international PhD student, and a former school principal. “As Interim Undergraduate Ombudsperson, I work mainly with undergraduate students from across the university to assist them in navigating university policies and procedures of the university. I listen to students’ cases and concerns, explain the various options available to them and advise to aid them in self-advocacy. I attend meetings with students to ensure fairness and due process, and to guide them through the appeal processes. An important part of the work I do is helping students recognize additional impacts that going through these university processes are causing and ensuring they are connected with resources to help them during this time. Additionally, I sit on several OSO committees as a non-voting member, giving advice to help in making the policies and procedures fair for all involved.”



Kara Blizzard, Augustana Campus Ombudsperson, continued to provide on-site services to students who required assistance. She also referred serious cases to the main campus ombuds, and was completing her role at the end of the winter term 2019. With the Covid-19 moving services remotely, the Augustana ombuds will not be filled until further notice. Thanks to Kara for her ombuds service to Augustana students.

Ombuds Interns 2019 – 2020



Fenya Fitzpatrick, Undergraduate Ombuds Intern, a senior student in the Faculty of Arts, Fenya reflects on her work in the OSO. “Working as an Undergraduate Ombuds Intern, I learned so many invaluable lessons. During my time at the Ombuds Office, I worked with undergraduate students from all walks of life, attended conferences and regional meetings, helped facilitate presentations, and even presented my very first poster. I learned about university policies and processes, and how to help undergraduate students navigate those experiences with fairness in mind. I was also a member of the Communications Committee for the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons. My time as an Ombuds Intern has given me so many opportunities to expand my work experience and learn more about what I want to pursue for my future. I feel like I can finish my last two years as an undergraduate student with more focus and drive thanks to working at the Office of the Student Ombuds.”

Addressing University Service Barriers for Students with Mental Health Concerns

Fenya Fitzpatrick, Undergraduate Ombuds Intern
Office of the Student Ombuds, University of Alberta

Changes in the Discussion Around Mental Health

The World Health Organization describes mental health as "... a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2005). Over time, society has begun to better understand mental health and wellness. In Canada, mental health and wellness is an aspect of people's lives that is becoming more openly discussed and addressed. This change in the way that our society understands mental health has led to public institutions reflecting this in their policies and procedures, examples include the Bull List Talk Toolkit and services offered by The Canadian Mental Health Association. Institutions such as universities now incorporate mental health into the learning environment in order to make campus a safe place for everyone. As more of these policies and initiatives are being utilized by students, it is becoming more apparent that university student's mental health is still something that needs to be addressed.

University Initiatives

The University of Alberta has taken many steps to improve its support systems for students struggling with mental health. This has included the University's Duty to Accommodate policy, which outlines the university's responsibility to students who require special accommodation (University of Alberta, 2012). "The duty to accommodate obligates the University to make reasonable adjustments, to the point of undue hardship or as required by law, in the delivery of services (including teaching and the method of evaluation) and the conditions of employment in order to reduce or eliminate the impact of discriminatory rules, policies, practices, standards, terms of employment, or decisions, which have an adverse impact on an individual or group of individuals based on a characteristic or perceived characteristic referenced in the Protected Grounds." (University of Alberta, 2012). Accessibility Resources handles individual requests for duty to accommodate (Accessibility Resources, n.d.).

The Office of the Dean of Students has launched initiatives to help services become more accessible to students with mental health concerns, which has included offering more resources with regard to mental health. The Office of the Dean of Students has also implemented new initiatives to offer more support for students with regard to mental health. Some of these new initiatives include Access Open Minds and Access Outreach (Kevin Fries, personal communication, February 19, 2020).

Dr. Andre Costopoulos, Vice-Provost and Dean of Students states: "We need to work hard as institutions to build the networks and partnerships that will allow us to get our students the extra resources they need. This requires a serious policy conversation with governments at all levels, and strenuous advocacy efforts on the part of university administrators for increased resources in the public system. Resources must be invested in public health systems to help persons in deep crisis who happen to be university students." (Costopoulos, 2017)

Human Resources offers multiple programs and services for staff members to learn more about mental health, such as Mental Health First Aid, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, and The Working Mind (Sara Flower, personal communication, February 19, 2020). The Continuity Social Work Team also offers training specifically designed for front-line staff to learn how to assist and support students, especially if they are in distress (Listening to Support Students in Distress, Front Line Staff Training, n.d.).

Moving Forward

Student advisors play a very important role when it comes to assisting students who have mental health needs. While many student services do not exist to specifically address those concerns, and student advisors are not mental health workers trained to counsel students, it is beneficial for advisors to know how they can best assist a student to get the help that they need.

Further initiatives that could address how best student advisors can help students struggling with mental health include:

- Having an extensive knowledge of mental health services on campus
- Continuing to be a resource for students by referring students to these services when needed
- Taking training that is offered at the university through The Office of the Dean of Students or Human Resources that addresses best practices when discussing mental health with a student (For example, Mental Health First Aid or Front Line Staff Training offered by the Community Social Work Team)

Students' Mental Health

It is apparent that mental health concerns are an issue for many university students. According to the National College Health Assessment in 2019, 51.5% of surveyed Canadian students from 58 different institutions felt so depressed that it was difficult to function within the last 12 months, and 48.0% of the students surveyed felt overwhelming anxiety within the last 12 months (As cited in American College Health Association, 2019). Both of these percentages have gone up compared to the last assessment done in 2016, where they were 44.4% and 44.5%, respectively (As cited in American College Health Association, 2016). The pie charts below reflect these statistics.

Growing Need

With more students accessing university-funded mental health services, many institutions are struggling to keep up with the demand (Hensley, 2019). This means that students may experience more wait times or shorter appointments with mental health staff, and if it is not made clear to them what services are available on campus, they could end up feeling isolated and more stressed. An article in the Globe and Mail's Canadian University Report expressed that since university students are now more comfortable seeking out help, they may reach out to other university staff such as academic advisors to be connected to university mental health resources (Dean, 2018).

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
OFFICE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDS



Meagan Eckel, Undergraduate Ombuds Intern, senior student in the Faculty of Science, states: “Having the opportunity to work with students and various people within the university provided me the valuable experience. Most importantly, I became more empathetic because of my time as an ombuds.”

Megan’s performance in her role is best described by one of her students clients: “I would like to share my experience Meagan Eckel....throughout the process I didn’t have any family, friends, or anyone else support. It was only Meagan who helped me during bad days. She was the only person with whom I could share my feelings which made me feel relaxed and focused on my daily life rather than just focusing on my mistakes. If Meagan wasn’t there, I would have lost myself in the past two months. I am so grateful to have her and your institution beside me and like me, other students who unknowingly make mistakes. There is a saying that the real friends are those who are with you in difficult situations which Meagan has done on behalf of your institution. Lastly, I would say congratulations for your team member has done such an incredible job.

Student-Centered Design – Putting Students at the Forefront of Service and Program Development

Meagan Eckel, Undergraduate Ombuds Intern, Office of the Student Ombuds

Purpose:
Student services and programs are in place to help students complete university successfully. Working to acquire a university degree can be a difficult time for students as competition and the pressure to succeed are intense. In addition to the responsibilities associated with being a student, students encounter challenges that all humans being experience (i.e. mental health concerns, financial issues, family emergencies). The possible combination of challenges that students face are endless and constantly evolving. Student services have progressed and are meeting the needs of more students than ever. As student services continuously evolve, it is important to ensure that students are integrated in developing cohort-specific services. Student services provide support throughout academic careers and assist in developing life skills (i.e. time management and coping strategies) that enable professional and personal success. When designing programs, students need to be continuously integrated in the process. How do we put students at the forefront of developing programs to meet their needs?

Collaboration Continuum:

As complexity of an issue increases, engagement of individuals must also increase (Aox, 2018). Student issues are often complex, utilizing collaboration may maximize outcomes.

Student-Centered Design (SCD):
SCD is similar to Student-Centered Learning (SCL). Both value placing the students at the centre. SCL, more specifically, is a theory that emphasizes the importance to focus on student needs when designing programs (European Higher Education Area, 2016). The European Students Union (ESU, 2015) puts forward nine principles to form a framework for assessing SCL. The principles are:

- Ongoing reflective process
- Does not have a “one size fits all” solution
- Students have different learning styles
- Students have different needs and interests
- Choice is central to effective learning
- Students have different experiences and background knowledge
- Students should have control over their learning
- Is about enabling not telling
- Needs cooperation between students and staff (ESU, 2015).

To ensure continued development of SCD, a similar framework may be used to assess the progress of the services.

Components of Student-Centered Design

Where are we currently on the continuum?
Some Current University of Alberta

Initiatives:

- **Access Committee and Youth Council:** Youth group facilitated by the Access Open Minds team to engage students on how to promote mental health on campus (University of Alberta, 2020).
- **Dean of Students Advisory Committee:** Consists of 20 students from diverse faculties, years of study, genders, and nationalities (L. Huxley, personal communication, February 24, 2020). They discuss various topics that affect students (i.e. students who parent and food services, L. Huxley, personal communication, February 24, 2020).
- **International Student Advisory Committee (ISAC):** Consists of ~30 international students who are active members in the university community (G. Palmer, personal communication, March 3, 2020). The committee discusses concerns brought up by ISAC members and also provides feedback to university departments on various projects (G. Palmer, personal communication, March 3, 2020).
- **Days of Action Committee:** Composed of 20 members, representing various student groups and services. Not all members are students, but all members are there to ensure students needs are viewed holistically (H. Ritz, personal communication, March 3, 2020). The committee members are tasked with engaging the campus community in an effort to identify systemic issues that plague students and appropriate solutions.
- **University of Alberta General Faculty Council:** Composed of ~100 members representing deans, faculty members, staff, and students (General Faculties Council [GFC], 2019). Their mission is to work together to develop a vision for the university moving forward (GFC, 2019).

Recommendations:
As there are several training programs that exist within the university, the following can be used to further develop student collaboration in service and program development:

- **Awareness:** To ensure all students interested in being a member of student governance are able to easily access the information. This may be many students interested in governance who are not aware of the student membership positions. In addition, some students may not feel they have the prerequisite skills. Relevant training may be important to maximize participation and influence in university governance.
- **Life skills training:** Include additional skills training in all student training programs, for example, communication, conflict resolution, and advocacy skills.

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Bhuva Narayanan, Graduate Ombuds Intern, is a PhD Candidate from the English and Film Studies Department. "I gained valuable communication and active listening skills as an intern at the OSO. With the help of my mentors, I developed confidence in my ability to balance empathy and efficiency when faced with high caseloads. Helping to organize a quarterly regional meeting and attending training workshops, a regional conference, and Peacekeeping Circle training not only helped me expand my professional and personal networks, but they also equipped with technical skills for a career outside of academia. I was able to draw on these skills and my research experience to present a poster at the Student Advisors' Conference at the University of Alberta. Working at the OSO has also allowed me to explore ways in which my graduate research interests can enrich my work as an ombudperson; I am currently collaborating with my colleague at the OSO to publish two articles in the California Caucus of College and University Ombuds and the Journal of the International Ombudsman Association (JIOA).

Using The Cultural Intelligence Framework to Reduce Conflict
 Bhuva Narayanan, Graduate Ombuds Intern
Office of the Student Ombuds, University of Alberta

Background

Between 2010 and 2018, Canada saw a 154% increase in the number of international students. The stakes are especially high for these students; failure to adjust to Canadian cultural norms may result in academic and social isolation, which affects their ability to succeed in their programs.

Many Canadian universities have resources for international students, but much of this information focuses on teaching students about Canadian culture and helping them understand the process of cultural adjustment. This does not guarantee that these students will have the skills to use this information towards developing strategies to cope with problems that arise as a result of intercultural differences. The four-dimensional Cultural Intelligence (CQ) model developed by Soon Ang and Linn Van Dyne provides a useful framework to guide students through the process of creating adaptive strategies using their cultural knowledge.

Elements of CQ

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) refers to individuals' ability to adapt and perform in diverse workspaces. Early CQ scholars theorized that individuals' success in adapting to cultural differences depended on their ability to translate cultural knowledge into tangible strategies. Based on this, Ang and Van Dyne (2008) developed a 4-dimensional model that highlighted the main capabilities that individuals need to develop to work in culturally diverse settings.

CQ DRIVE: Your motivation and interest in interacting with diverse networks.

↓

CQ KNOWLEDGE: What do you know about the cultural norms of his setting?

↓

CQ STRATEGY: What problems do you foresee arising from these cultural differences? How do you plan to navigate them?

↓

CQ ACTION: Evaluate how you yourself act in multicultural settings. How can you improve your ability to adjust to different cultural contexts?

Preparing International Students

- Advisors need to be aware of the unique cultural challenges that contribute to conflict.
- Introduce students to the CQ framework during graduate orientation presentations and provide case studies based on intercultural interactions so that they have a frame of reference for navigating intercultural interactions.
- When international students come in for advice about interpersonal conflict, ask questions about communications styles, beliefs, and expectations to determine if the issue is a result of cultural differences.
- Work with the student to address CQ Strategy and CQ Action so that they are equipped with the tools to evaluate the situation and adjust their behaviours according to the cultural context.
- Encourage international students to discuss their issues with their lab members and supervisors so that they are made aware of how the student's cultural background informs their communication style.
- Remind students that CQ is a learning process that takes time and experience.

Office of the Student Ombuds: International vs. Domestic Students

The figure below illustrates the percentage of international and domestic students that the OSO served between 2018-2019 relative to the percentage of international and domestic students that were registered at the University of Alberta that year. Although international students only comprise 20% of total student population, they make up 47% of our clientele.

Office of the Student Ombuds: Issues

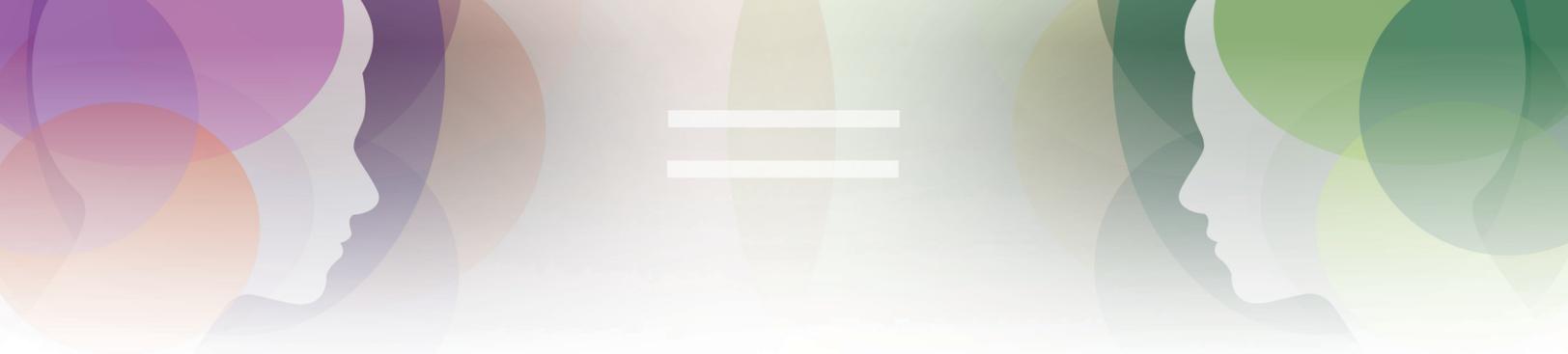
The figure below illustrates the various issues that the OSO saw between 2018 and 2019. Interpersonal conflict is the most common issue and the most common non-academic issue raised by our clients.

CQ and Conflict

- Various studies have demonstrated that high CQ levels result in fewer workplace disputes (Goncalves et al. 2016; Caputo et al. 2018; Kubicek et al. 2019).
- In these studies, individuals with stronger adaptive skills were found to be more attuned to the ways cultural backgrounds affect communication. This made them more likely to handle mistakes as learning opportunities.
- CQ skills can be applied in academic and lab settings to reduce interpersonal conflict as a result of cultural differences.
- Teaching individuals CQ skills develops their ability to adapt to various work settings effectively and reduces the need for mediation when conflict arises.

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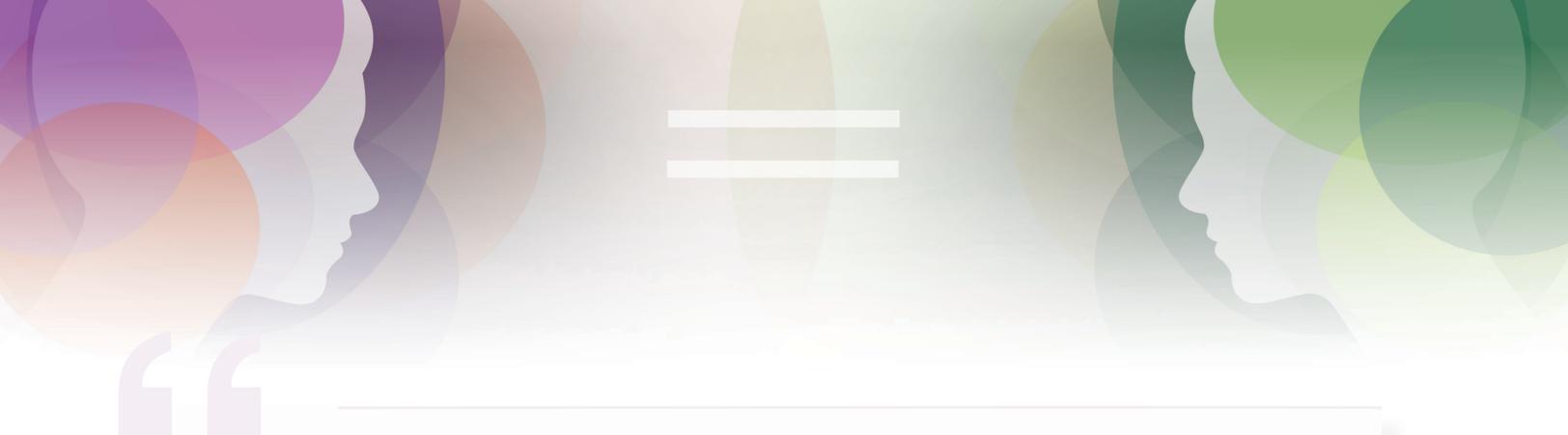
Mentoring Interns

This undergraduate and graduate internship program builds and hones students' ombuds skills incrementally via shadowing, mentoring and supervision. For details, contact: ombuds@ualberta.ca.



Natalie Sharpe: The internship program completed its fifth year of operation. It is a carefully-supervised program. I revise the Intern Manual annually, adding new components deemed to be necessary and at the request of our interns to tailor to their specific learning needs throughout the year. The internship program has worked closely with well-developed internships through ALES, Arts, Science, Business and some of these are tied to the Career Centre. Not only do the interns learn the necessary skills of doing ombuds work in accordance with the Professional Standards of Practice of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) but they are also held to the rigorous standards of a personal career development plan that is monitored and evaluated with the coordinator of each program, thereby ensuring a quality learning and career development experience. As Director, I supervise and evaluate the ombuds internships. I can attest to the success of our interns in building further education and career capacity in areas such as ombudsing, mediation, and law.



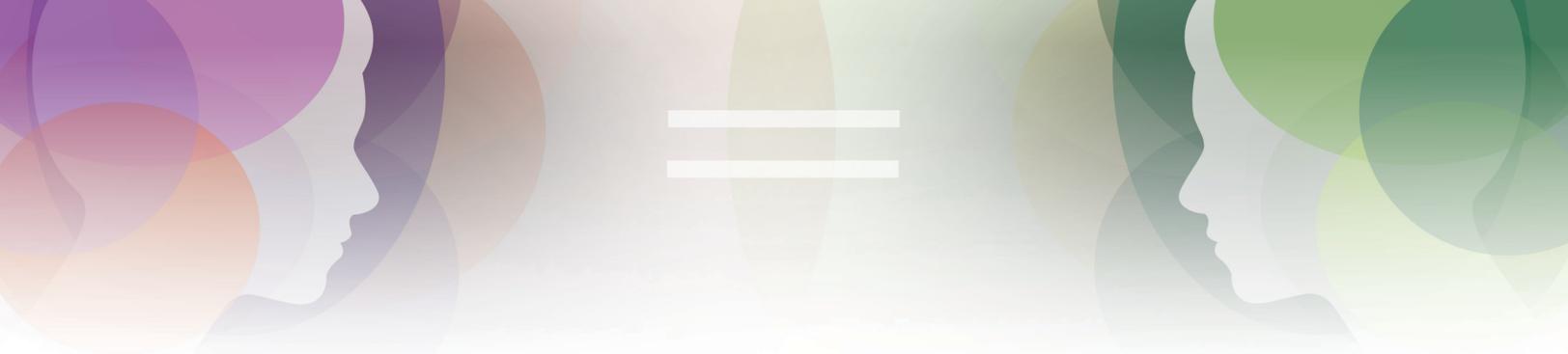


Brent Epperson: The Office of the Student Ombuds offers a unique and formative internship opportunity every year for graduate and undergraduate students. The close mentorship of senior ombuds is a key element of this internship program that helps to prepare talented and hardworking students for careers in conflict resolution, law, civil service, and university administration (among other fields). As Graduate Ombudsman, I spend the most time working with the Graduate Ombuds Intern, who generally takes more complex cases than their undergraduate intern colleagues. I provide all interns with opportunities to shadow cases at the start of their internship. Shadowing proceeds to interns taking their own cases with coaching and assistance as needed. The Graduate Ombuds Intern has the opportunity to develop and deliver presentations on OSO services to students, faculty, and staff in collaboration with me and independently. Throughout their internship, all OSO interns have access to mentorship from senior ombuds in their case management and projects required for completion of their placement.



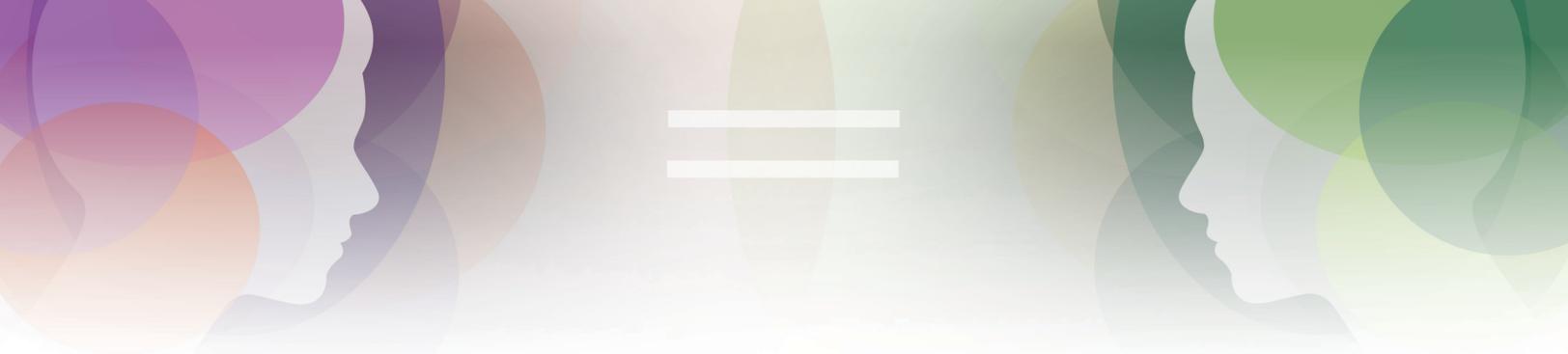
Remonia Stoddart- Morrison: One of my tasks is the mentoring of our ombuds interns. Each year the Office of the Student Ombuds welcome three new interns, eager to assist students to successfully navigate university policies and procedures. As this role is new to our interns, mentorship is vital so as to help build their skills and capacity in taking on their role. Apart from training sessions that I carry out with the interns, they are able to consult with me on cases they are dealing with whether to get my perspective on it or to ask for my input as to additional advice that they may need to give to clients. As ombuds work requires a lot of interaction with students and the issues that are affecting them, a part of mentoring is checking in regularly with interns to ensure that they are managing well and taking care of themselves as they do this work.





OSO Activity Summary: 2019 – 2020

- Fairness Day on Campus with the Alberta Ombudsman Fall 2019 (See pictures)
- OSO conducted 65 Education and Orientation workshops on campus
- Attended 362 client-associated meetings outside of the office
- Attended 31 formal appeal hearings
- Engaged in 6 Alternative Dispute Resolution processes
- Discussions with Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Restorative Practices Initiative
- Workshop for Bridges Orientation and Transition Year Program for First Peoples' House
- Orientation for Alberta International on the services of OSO
- Academic Integrity Workshop for the Faculty of Law International Graduate students
- Panel Presentation for Employers on Faculty of Science Internship Program
- 2 Workshops on Healthy Graduate Student-Supervisor Relationships
- 2 FGSR Presentations on Mitigating Conflict in Graduate Student-Supervisor Relationships
- Workshop on Supervisory Relationships with Neuroscience graduates
- Workshops on Conflict Resolution and Supervisory Relationships in several departments
- 2 Transitions Orientations to international students on OSO services
- 2 GSA orientations on the Graduate Ombudsman role and OSO services
- 2 Workshops for Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine on Conflict Resolution
- Workshop for Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research on Conflict Resolution
- Grad Ombuds Role at Faculty of Medicine Ethics and Scientific Integrity Day
- Conflict Resolution Workshop for Faculty of Medicine



- Presentation of ADR (Informal Conflict Resolution methods) in the workplace for MBA program
- Workshop on Managing Group Conflict for Faculty of Engineering
- Community Outreach to WISER on Managing Conflict (Mediation Skills)
- Conflict Resolution and Governance sessions for Postdoctoral Fellow Association
- Graduate Students Association orientations and the role of Graduate Ombudsman
- Marketplace OSO Information Booth for Graduate Students in School of Public Health
- Mitigating Conflict presentation at Campus St Jean
- Staff Professional Development Training in QPR Suicide Prevention; Peacemaking Circle; Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity; Supporting Survivors of Sexual Assault, Unitea
- Workshop on “How to Nurture a Culture of Wellbeing for Graduate Students” in November 2020 with Dr. Suzanne Ortega, President of the Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, D.C.
- Attended meetings of the Alberta Network of Ombuds in Higher Education
- Invited Guest Rina Meyers, Ombuds Director, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
- Attended ACCUO regional meeting at U Victoria, focusing on Truth and Reconciliation
- Attended ACCUO regional meeting at Simon Fraser U, with a workshop on Transformative Mediation by Kimberly Jackson Davidson, Ombudsperson, the Yeworkwha Belachew Centre for Dialogue, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio
- Attended ACCUO regional meeting at Ottawa University addressing equity challenges in practice today and best practices.
- OSO presented professional papers in Canada, USA, Mexico, and Spain

OSO On Campus



Transitions Info Mart 2019



Orange Shirt Day 2019



Fairness Day on Campus with the Alberta Ombudsman



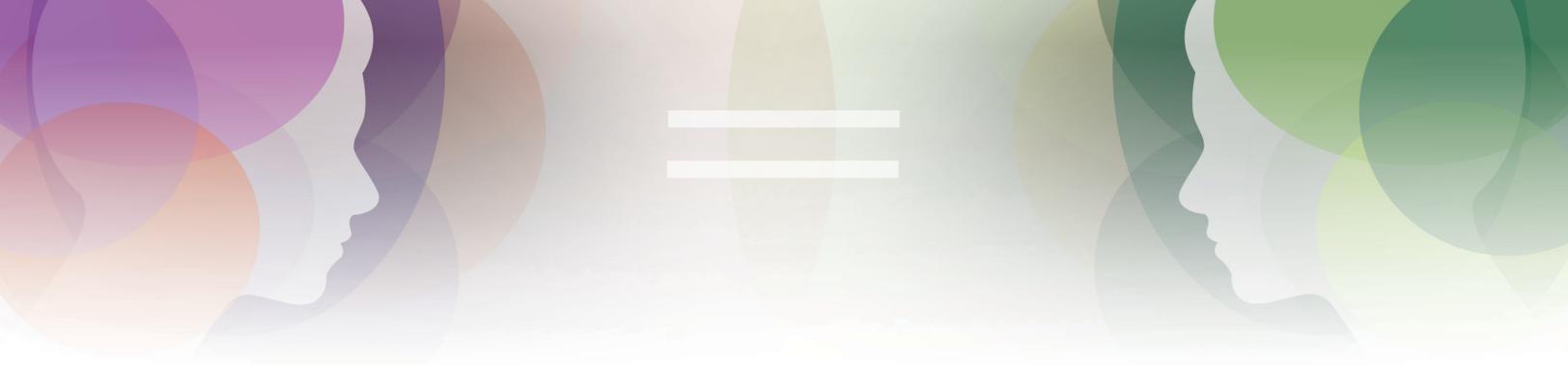
Alberta Ombudsman Daniel Johns, Diann Bowes with Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, OSO

Fairness Day Activities: The OSO and the Alberta Ombudsman collaborate to explain the different roles of the provincial ombudsman and the higher education ombuds and their range of services. The ombuds explain the various kinds of fairness through an ombuds lens, offering hands-on learning activities such as the fairness wheel and questions around procedural, administrative, relational and equitable fairness. You can ask the OSO ombuds and the Alberta Ombudsman about a career in ombudsing.

Demographics of OSO Casework 2017 – 2020

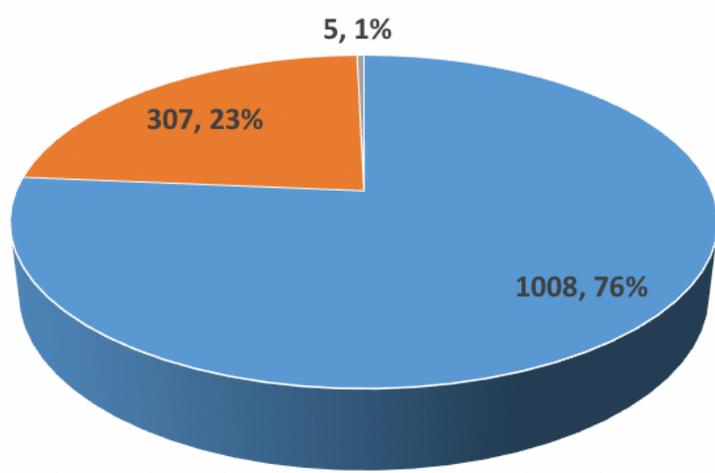
Reporting Years Comparison (Apr. 1 – Mar. 31)		2017 – 2018	2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020
Clients		1108	1192	1320
	Undergraduate	858	904	1008
	Graduate (includes Med Residents and Postdoctoral Fellows)	239	281	307
	Others (parents, admin, outside inquiry)	11	7	5
	International*	584	552	522
	Domestic	512	616	758
	Residence Status Unknown	2	23	44
	Contacts and Visits	2770	2169	2568**
	Average Number of Visits per Client	unknown	1.8	2.0
Issues***		1261	1516	1573
	Academic	610	659	786
	Conflict	184	240	165
	Academic Offence	346	474	455
	Non-Academic Offence	24	34	34
	Discrimination/Harassment Allegations	31	32	42
	Miscellaneous	68	77	91
Activities				
	Investigative Meetings	361	342	362
	Committee Meetings	243	153	154
	Formal Hearings	23	30	31
	Informal Resolution/Appreciative Inquiries	25	6	6

International students are a smaller portion of the total student population, yet their visits double those of domestic students. **Contact hours are typically scheduled for 1 hour but may vary from ½ hour to 2 hours. There is little variation of total hours spent on meeting with clients. ***Clients may present with more than one issue. (Glossary: **Academic** includes required to withdraw (academic standing), grade appeals, exam deferrals and re-examinations. **Conflict** may involve interpersonal, supervisory, student-professor conflicts. **Academic Offence** includes plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation of facts. **Non-Academic Offences** include disruption, vandalism, and inappropriate behaviour. **Discrimination/Harassment** allegations related to sex, gender, racial, disability, family status discrimination, duty-to-accommodate violations. **Miscellaneous** includes fines, housing on campus issues, etc.) **Investigative Meetings** are tied to instructor, chair, Associate Dean, Discipline Officer, Protective services meetings related to an allegation; **Formal Hearings** are Formal University Administrative Tribunal Hearings (i.e., the various university appeal boards); **Informal Resolution**, eg, Conflict Management Coaching, Mediation, Shuttle Diplomacy, Appreciative Inquiry



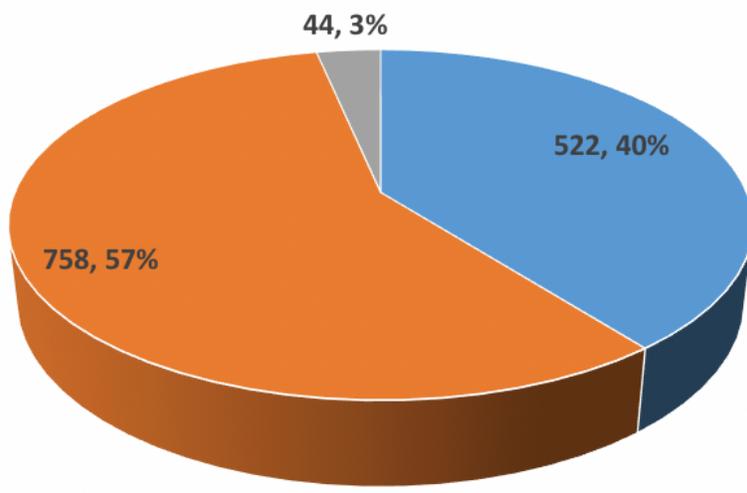
OSO Client Population 2019 - 2020

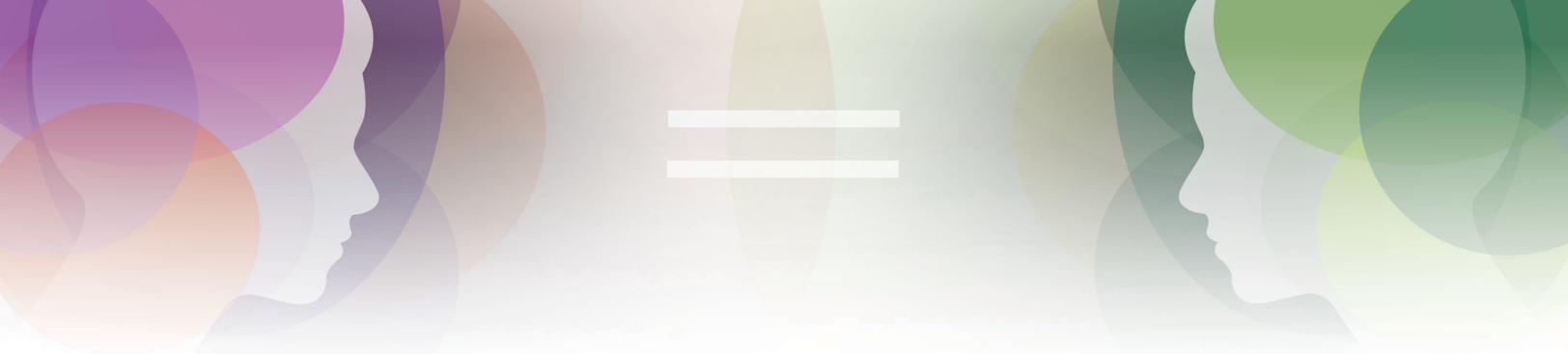
■ Undergraduate ■ Graduate (inc PDF, Med Res) ■ Others



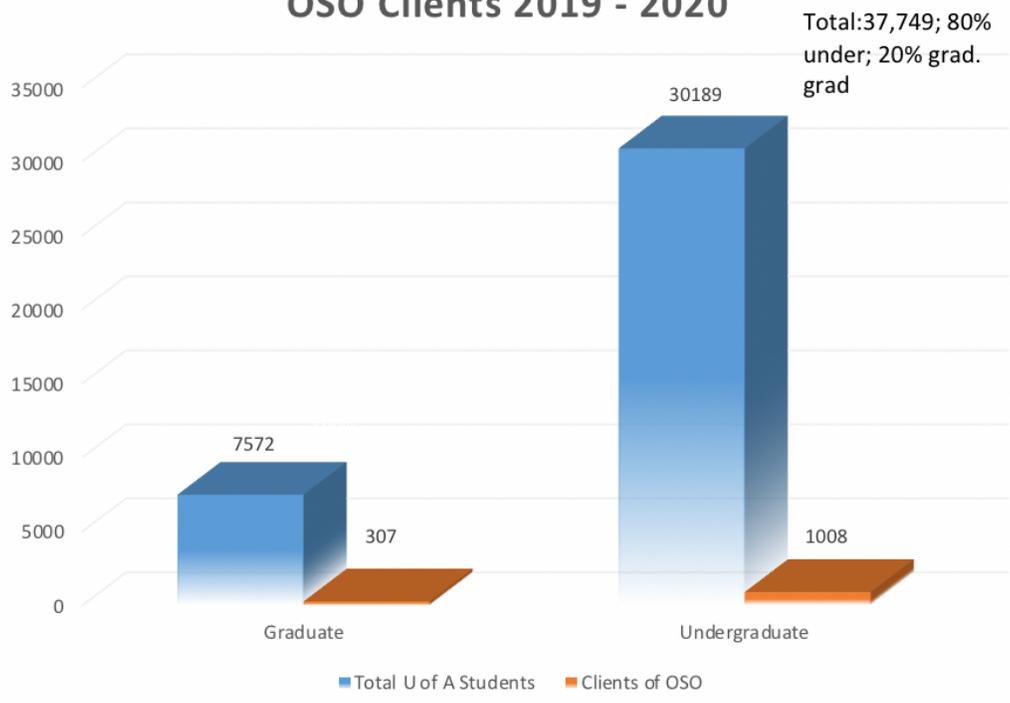
Residence Status of Clients 2019 - 2020

■ International ■ Domestic ■ Residence Status Unknown

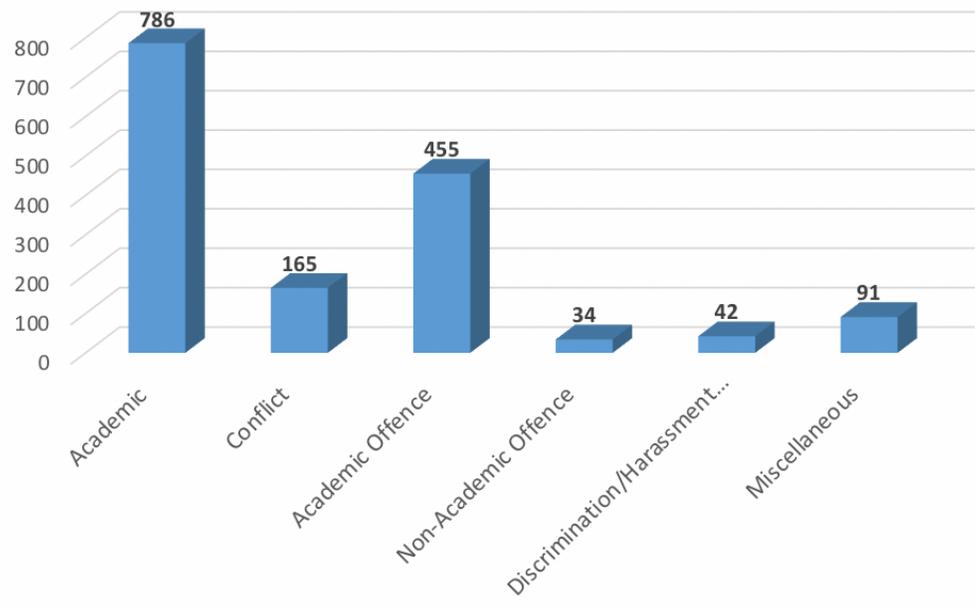


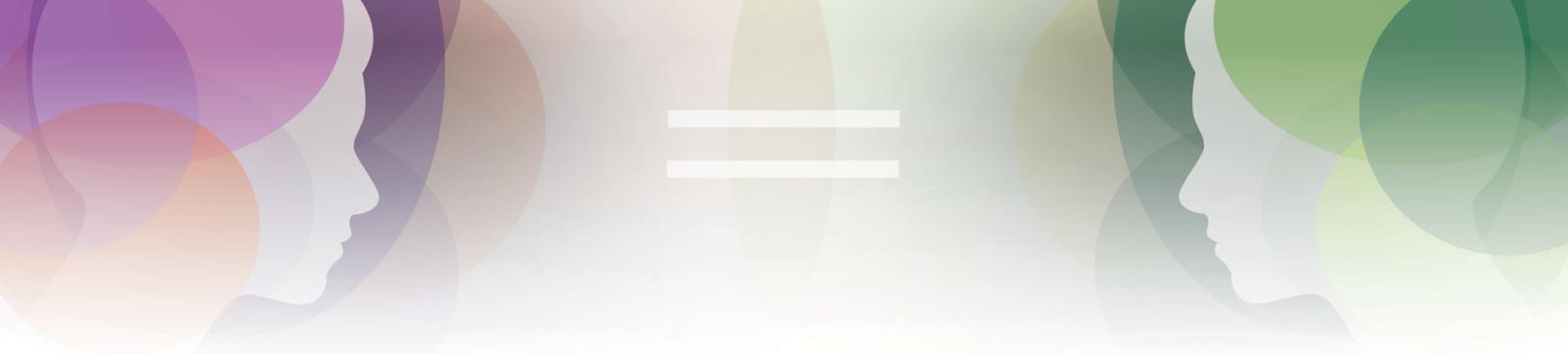


OSO Clients 2019 - 2020



OSO Cases/Issues 2019 - 2020





Review of OSO Recommendations for 2018 – 2019

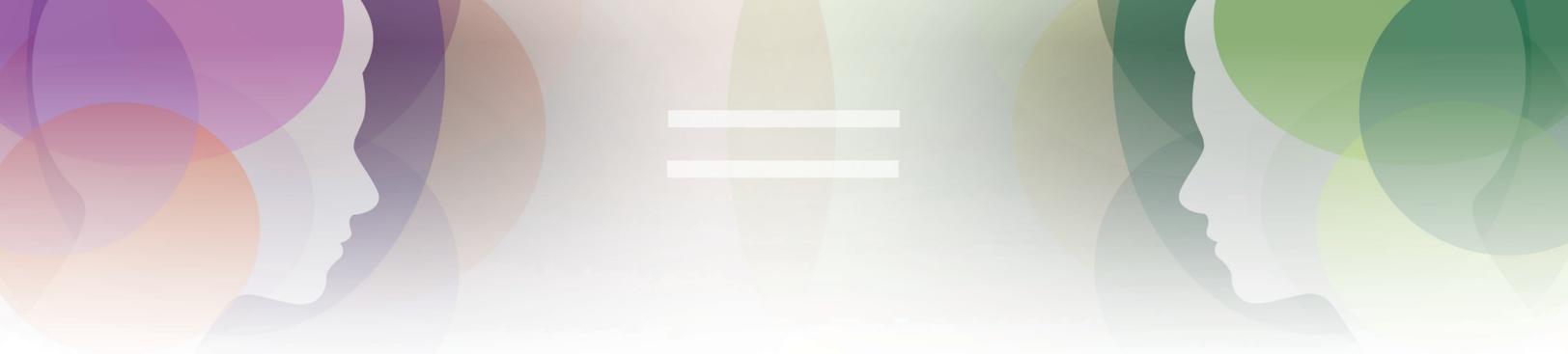
RECOMMENDATION #1: The OSO completes and submits its strategic analysis, and proposed changes to the DOS/University by the end of March 2020, explaining how its new mandate, mission, vision and values, Terms of Reference, and recommended reporting relationship reflect the current structure with internship program and meet the professional standards of higher education ombuds offices nationally and internationally.

Rationale: This will ensure that the ombuds office is better positioned to fulfill its obligations to the university community with the highest level of integrity; it will also add protections to the ombuds office to carry out its important function in promoting individual and systemic fairness and acting as an agent of positive social change.

- **Response** — This was being drafted for final submission in March and due to the Covid-19 pandemic and move to remote delivery it was delayed until May after this report. We will be asking to implement its recommendations in the 2020-2021 reporting period.

RECOMMENDATION #2: The OSO focuses on sharing regional, national and global perspectives on institutional Best Practices, as it has a unique lens and opportunity through its network of ombuds in higher education to address current universal issues and challenges within higher education. **Rationale:** By sharing institutional best practices, we can focus on these common issues, and promote solutions to improve effective, fair, and timely institutional responses.

- **Response** — During the 2019–2020 reporting period, we attended and presented at several workshops, regional, national and international conferences which has increased our capacity to serve the students on campus. Our national professional organization, the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons is one of five international higher education organizations in the world to enter a collaboration (the León Declaration) with the the European Network of Ombudsman in Education where we share best practices and promote the safeguarding of the ombuds role in higher education.

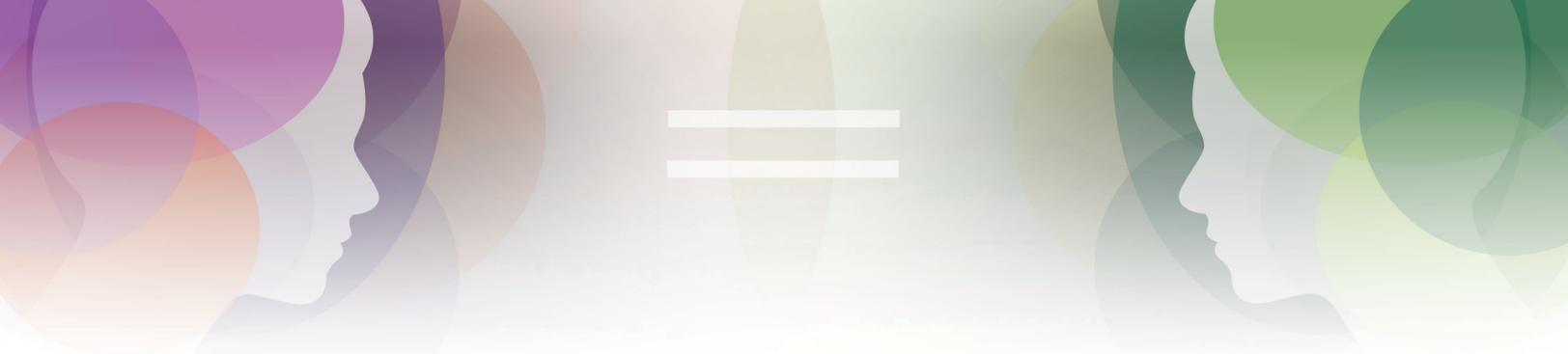


RECOMMENDATION #3: The OSO will continue to work with university partners on Restorative Practices Initiatives. The OSO conducted an information session to GFAC and FGSR Council this year to promote restorative practices in the graduate student community. The OSO supports initiatives that have been completed to date, with the goal of moving towards a restorative campus. OSO efforts in this matter were, in part, incorporated into the Restorative Initiatives for Sexual Violence (RISV) Working Group, which has representation from the OSO and FGSR. The OSO will further continue to support and consult on the efforts of the recommendations from the RISV Working Group. The OSO has also continued efforts on restorative initiatives specific to the graduate student and postdoctoral communities in order to reduce supervisory conflicts. **Rationale:** Restorative practices promote timely resolution, address power imbalances, and promote healthy well-being for the campus community.

- **Response** — The OSO works with students (especially graduate students) to create opportunities for empowerment and self-advocacy through coaching and training to manage supervisory and peer conflicts restoratively. This is offered through individual ombuds consultation meetings as well as training workshops at request of departments and FGSR.

RECOMMENDATION #4: The OSO recommends reviewing the role of the Augustana ombuds as inspiration to establish an on-site ombuds at Campus St Jean (CSJ) to provide services in the French language. The OSO will continue to work with Campus St Jean (CSJ) and Dean of Students (DOS) initiatives to study the potential and feasibility of this position. In the interim we will continue to provide bilingual services for CSJ students from the main campus. **Rationale:** Ombuds services must be accessible to our student populations and campuses, and recognize our diversity as a bilingual university.

- **Response** — As the role of the Augustana Ombuds is being reviewed and due to the pandemic situation, the position will not be filled and all students from Augustana will be provided with the full services of the OSO staff from main campus. Promotion of the OSO's contact information to students of Augustana is ongoing to ensure that they are able to contact us for support. It is hoped that these services will be enhanced in the future. Similarly all CSJ services are being administered remotely from a bilingual ombudsperson.

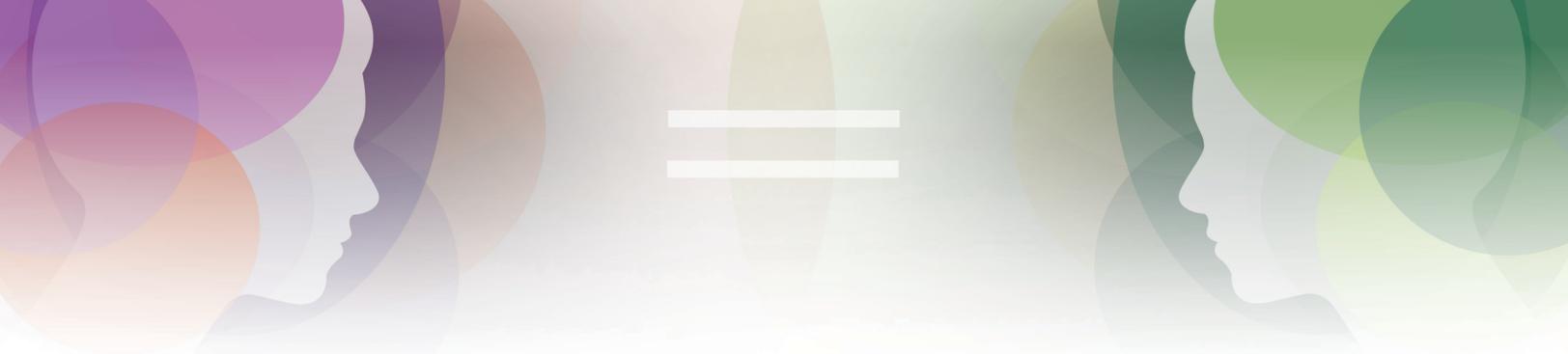


RECOMMENDATION #5: The OSO recommends that additional support services be made available to postdoctoral fellows (PDFs) as there is an ongoing perception of inadequate support since the recent status changes provincially. The OSO will continue to collaborate with the Post-Doctoral Fellows Association (PDFA) and HR representatives who serve the postdoctoral community to ensure equitable treatment in the area of supervisory/work conflict. **Rationale:** There are perceived gaps with respect to support services and appropriate referrals for post-doctoral fellows. As the number of PDFs increases, including many international visitors, it will be necessary to find ways to increase support services to ensure fair and equitable treatment of this important and diverse group.

- **Response** — Efforts need to be made to ensure the PDFA is informed of how to route its concerns as many continue to seek assistance from the Graduate Ombudsperson. OSO will make the effort to work with various parties, including the Non-Academic Staff Association (NASA) representative for PDFs to help with this transition.

RECOMMENDATION #6: The OSO recommends that professional faculties consider requesting a series of workshops through the ombuds and other Dean of Students (DOS) services to address areas such as communication, conflict resolution, effective complaints, maintaining professional relationships, and professional use of social media. The OSO will continue to work closely with faculties that request these important sessions throughout the year, but it would be useful to offer these proactively rather than reactively after incidents. **Rationale:** OSO casework has shown that students may need to gain practical skills through workshops and role plays about their communication style and teamwork interaction, and the importance of confidentiality in professional settings.

- **Response** — The OSO has presented workshops in the past and is currently discussing with professional faculties to present these before students enter their practicum placements. Faculties that have not considered this before are encouraged to contact the OSO.



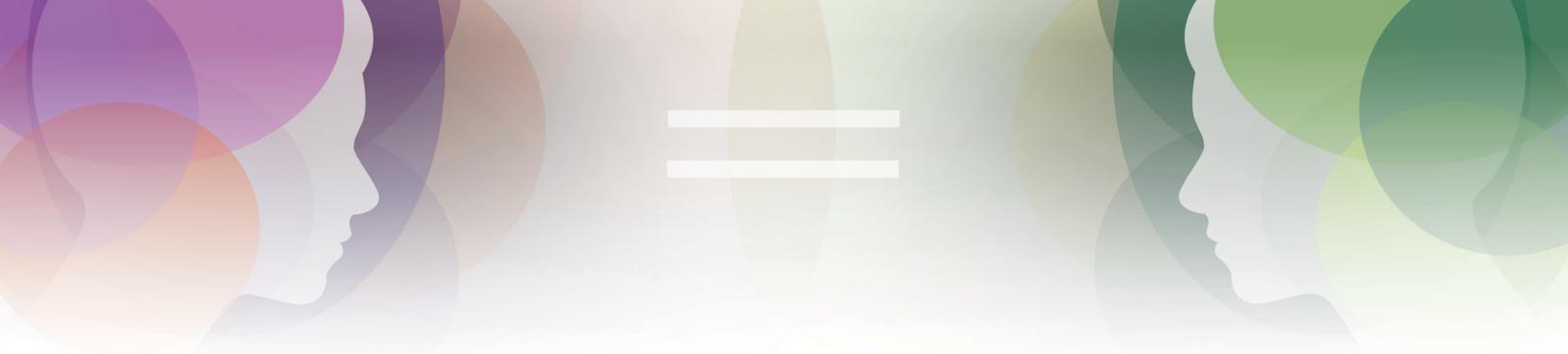
OSO Recommendations for 2019 – 2020

RECOMMENDATION #1: The OSO recommends the implementation of the strategic plan for the office, which was submitted to the Dean of Students. This includes the OSO mandate, mission, vision and values, Terms of Reference, and recommended reporting relationship in order to meet the professional standards of higher education ombuds offices in Canada and globally.

- **Rationale:** The strategic plan will enable the OSO to fulfill its obligations to the university community. It will also add greater protections to the OSO in promoting individual and systemic fairness.

RECOMMENDATION #2: The OSO recommends the collaborative development of a restorative practices program in the graduate student community in order to more effectively mitigate supervisory and working group conflicts. Between 2016 and 2018, dialogues and workshops on a restorative practices initiative were held in collaboration with the Office of the Student Ombuds, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, the Dean of Students, the Graduate Students Association, the Postdoctoral Fellows Association, the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights, and the Office of the VP Research. While those dialogues showed broad agreement on the need for more restorative practices on campus, and helped to identify resources, no program was implemented.

- **Rationale:** A restorative practices program would enable more timely resolution of conflicts, address power imbalances, and promote a healthy culture of conflict management on campus.



RECOMMENDATION #3: The OSO recommends promoting the role and ensuring the availability of ombuds services for Augustana and Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ) students. All university websites and brochures for the Office of the Student Ombuds as well as university appeal and complaint processes should be made available in French for CSJ students. In collaboration with the Dean of Students and the Dean of Campus Saint-Jean, provisions should be made to ensure the availability of ombuds services in French.

- **Rationale:** Ombuds services must be accessible to our student populations and campuses, and recognize our status as a bilingual university in which many academic programs and administrative services are offered in both English and French.
-

RECOMMENDATION #4: The OSO recommends the promotion of education sessions on communication and collaboration guidelines on student group projects. To this end, course outlines should include clear academic expectations on group work and approaches to dealing with conflicts. The Office of the Student Ombuds presented an education session on establishing clear guidelines for student group projects, including approaches to dealing with conflicts for a large class this year, and provided information for the professor on course outline guidelines.

- **Rationale:** Clear communication of expectations and strategies is essential to reduce both conflicts and Code of Student Behaviour (CoSB) cases.
-

RECOMMENDATION #5: The OSO recommends that the University explore all possible virtual modes for students to readily connect with the university and each other, and examine best practices from HE institutions, including online Higher Education institutions, in this regard.

- **Rationale:** Some Higher Education institutions, such as virtual universities, have long-established practices to ensure student engagement in academic life, including student exchange, that may be helpful during the pandemic and virtual delivery. The OSO encourages the support of faculty and students in the use of all possible media (telephone, video conferencing, email, instant message, etc.) to keep students and faculty engaged in this process. It is essential to recognize the need and implement moral supports as some members of the university community may experience alienation and health challenges in transitioning to the distance learning environment.

Appendices: i) OSO Presentation Titles

Contact ombuds@ualberta.ca for a copy.

Using the Concept of Intersectionality to Achieve Equitable Fairness

FCO/ACCUCO BIENNIAL CONFERENCE APRIL 2019 TORONTO CANADA

CARTER MACDONALD, CAMOSUN COLLEGE
REMONIA STODDART-MORRISON, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
NATALIE SHARPE, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Confronting Privilege to Achieve Equitable Fairness: An Intersectionality Approach to Ombudging

ENOHE JUNE 2019 LEÓN SPAIN

NATALIE SHARPE, CANADA
JOSEF LEIDENFROST, AUSTRIA

The Role of the Canadian HE Ombuds in the Wake of a Societal Call-to-Action against Campus Sexual Violence

FCO – ACCUCO Conference Toronto April 2019

Natalie Sharpe, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada
Carolyn Brendon, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada

RAISING THE PROFILE OF HIGHER EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN IN CANADA AND GLOBALLY

STRATEGIES FOR AWARENESS: NATALIE SHARPE
PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY OMBUDSPERSONS (ACCUCO/ADUCC) &
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDS, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA
UNAM, MEXICO CITY, JANUARY 2020

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA OFFICE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDS

Politics, Partisanship, and Radical Empathy in Ombuds Practice

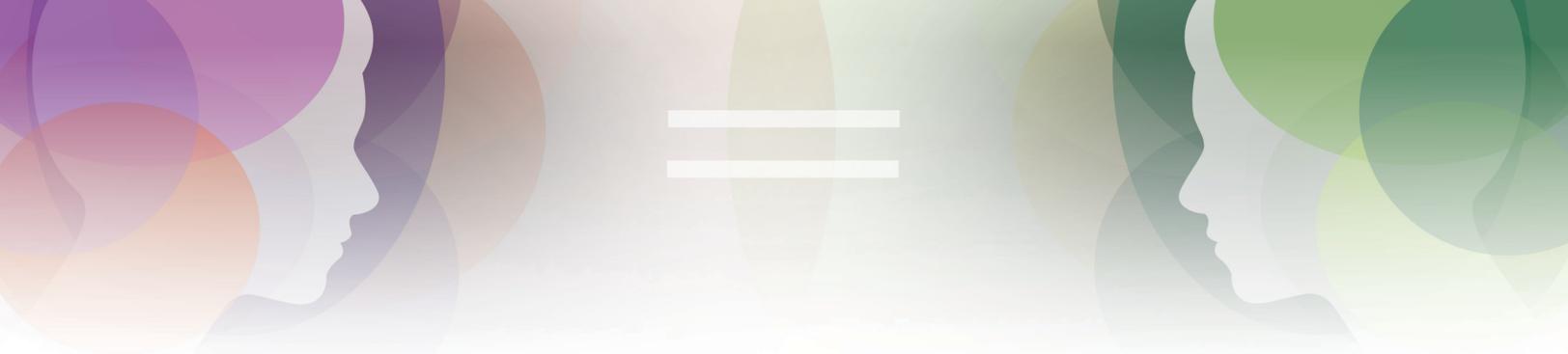
CCCUCO Conference, Asilomar
November 11, 2019

Dr. Brent Epperson, Graduate Ombudsman, University of Alberta
Bhuva Narayanan, Graduate Ombuds Intern, University of Alberta

ENOHE 2019
Students on the university front line:
Why aren't you using graduate student staff to support early resolution efforts?

Natalie Sharpe, B.A.(Hon), M.A.
Office of the Student Ombuds, University of Alberta
Heather McGhee Peggs, B.A.(Hon), LL.B.
Graduate Conflict Resolution Centre,
University of Toronto

graduate conflict resolution centre



The Ombuds Lens of Fairness and the Fairness Triangle



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
OFFICE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDS

Natalie Sharpe, President of Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons; Director, Office of the Student Ombuds, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta Canada
MEXICO CITY, UNAM, January 2020

Conflict Management in the Workplace

WISER Presentation ECHA1-190
February 15, 2020



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
OFFICE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDS

Natalie Sharpe, B.A.(Hon), M.A. Director
Dr. Brent Epperson, PhD. Graduate Ombudsperson
Fenya Fitzpatrick, Undergraduate Ombuds Intern

Mastering Conflict
DoS Student-Staff Training

FACILITATORS:

- REMONIA STODDART-MORRISON, INTERIM UNDERGRADUATE OMBUDSPERSON
- BHUYA NARAYANAN, GRADUATE OMBUDS INTERN
- FENYA FITZPATRICK, UNDERGRADUATE OMBUDS INTERN

February 27, 2020

Students' Advisors' Conference 2020

Practicing Equity:
Strategies for Equity in Action

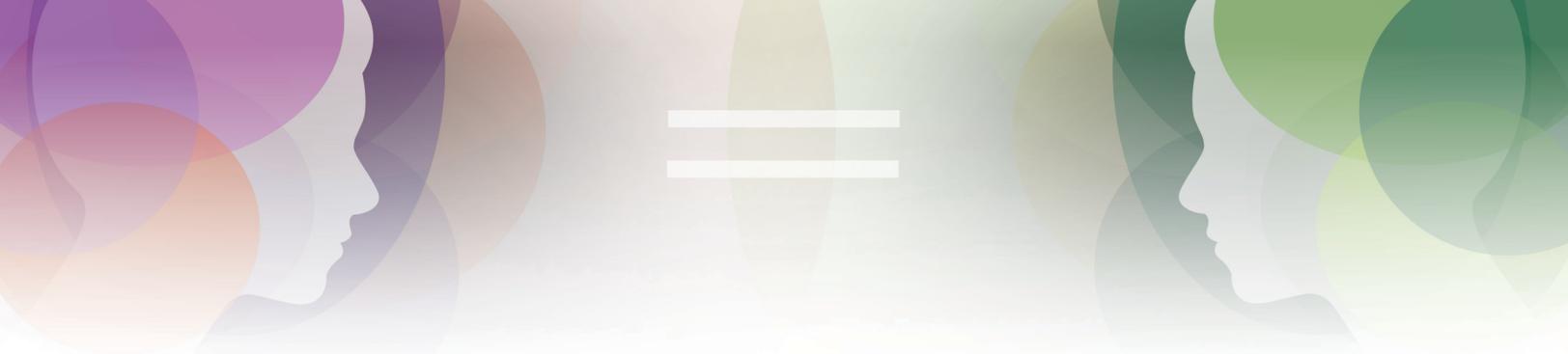
Presenter: Remonia Stoddart-Morrison
Office of the Student Ombuds
University of Alberta
March 5, 2020



COMMUNICATING & COLLABORATING ON GROUP PROJECTS

BASIC COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES TO REACH COMMON GOALS

Natalie Sharpe and Remonia Stoddart-Morrison
Office of the Student Ombuds (OSO)
2-702 SUB



Office of the Student Ombuds



FACULTY OF LAW – September 2019

Academic Integrity & The Code of Student Behaviour

Natalie Sharpe, Director
Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, Ombudsperson
Meagan Eckel, Ombuds Intern
Office of the Student Ombuds, University of Alberta

www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca

**Mitigating Conflict and Developing
Communication Skills for Better Working
Relationships**

Department of History and Classics

October 9, 2019

Dr. Brent Epperson, Graduate Ombudsperson
Office of the Student Ombuds
University of Alberta

 **Office of the Student Ombuds** 2-702 Students' Union Building

**Mitigating Conflict and Understanding
Perspectives in Dispute Resolution**

Modern Languages and Cultural Studies (MLCS)

September (2019)

Dr. Brent Epperson, Graduate Ombudsman
Bhuva Narayanan, Graduate Ombuds Intern
Office of the Student Ombuds
University of Alberta

 **Office of the Student Ombuds** 2-702 Students' Union Building

Appendices: ii) Regional, National and International Ombuds HE Meetings and Alliances



Simon Fraser Regional ACCUO
September 2019



**University of Ottawa
Regional ACCUO**
January 2020



ACCUO/AOUC Annual General Meeting 2019 – Toronto, Canada



Member & Special Recognition certificates



FCO – ACCUO Ombuds Conference 2019 Toronto Canada



Lars Mannerheim Distinguished Service Award

THE LEÓN DECLARATION



REDEPEES



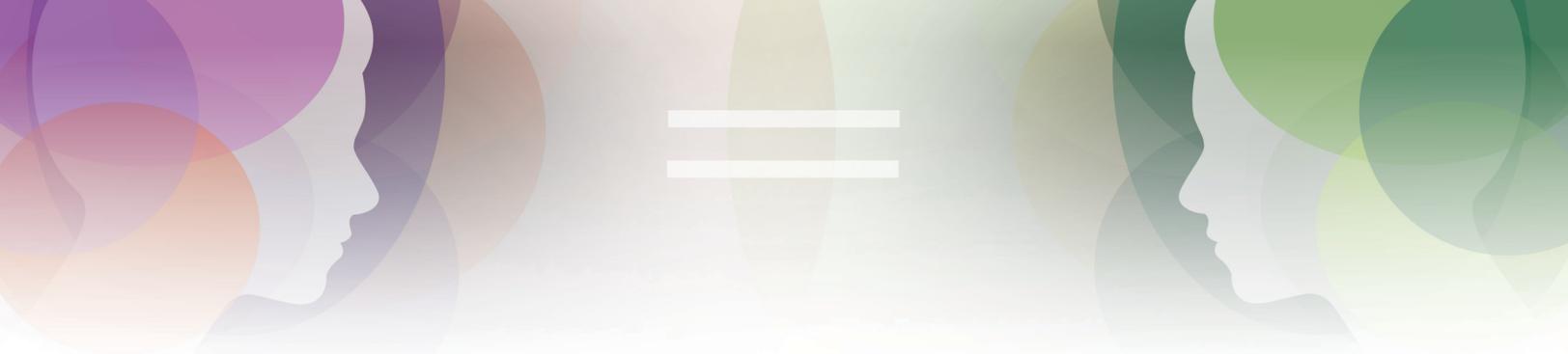
DECLARATION ON INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN OMBUDS IN HE

This declaration on international collaboration between ombuds networks in higher education is made on conclusion of the XV ENOHE conference held in León, Spain, in June 2019. The declaration is made in line with the aims of ENOHE as specified in Para 2 of its statutes to provide support to, exchange experiences and knowledge of the role and main principles of the ombuds in higher education, and cooperate with international institutions, associations and networks sharing the same or similar goals. In the spirit of cooperation we, the undersigned representatives of networks from Spain, Portugal, Canada, Latin America and Europe hereby declare:

- that we will look into areas of common interests, especially as identified during the Leon conference;
- that we will set up an electronic forum to update this thematic list and make it public;
- that we will encourage each other to participate in our respective network activities including annual conferences, internships and training courses, webinars and electronic discussion fora;
- that we will periodically review progress on collaboration and inform our respective stakeholders accordingly;
- that we will support each other in developing and safeguarding our networks.

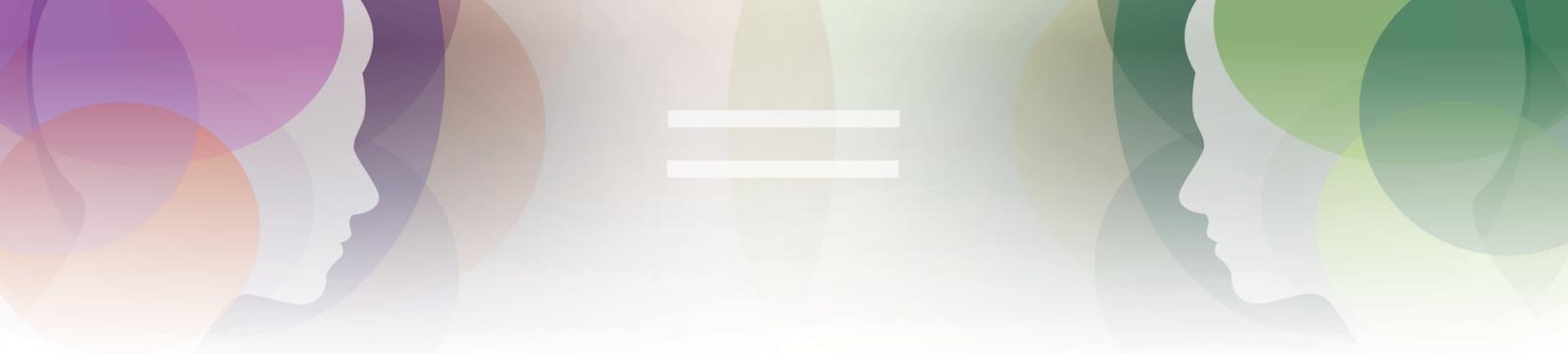
Signed at Signed at León, Friday 28th June 2019, by the following people: Emilio Olias-Ruiz (CEDU) Berta Batista (REDEPEES) Natalie Sharpe (ACCUO) Wilfredo Ardito (RIdDU) Josef Leidenfrost (ENOHE) on, Friday 28th June 2019, by the following people:

Emilio Olias-Ruiz (CEDU Spanish Network), Berta Batista (REDEPEES Portugues Network), Natalie Sharpe (ACCUO Canadian Association), Wilfredo Ardito (RIdDU Latin-American Network), Josef Leidenfrost (ENOHE European Network)



Appendices: iii) Conference Meetings Presentations and Publications

- (1) Epperson, Brent. “The Ombudsman in Public Sector Governance: Politics, Partisanship, and Multi-Partiality.” Annual Conference of the California Caucus of College and University Ombuds (CCCUO). Asilomar, California. November 2019.
- (2) Epperson, Brent. “La révolte contre la taxe carbone: Représentations médiatiques en Alberta (2015-2019).” Campus Saint-Jean Research Symposium. University of Alberta. Edmonton, Alberta. November 2019.
- (3) Genieys, William, Mohammad Saïd Darviche, & Brent Epperson. New American Custodians of the Policy State In Comparative Perspective: The Cost Containment Issue and Collective Action in U.S. and French Health Policy. International Public Policy Association (IPPA) Conference. Montreal, Quebec. June 2019.
- (4) Epperson, Brent and Frédéric Boily. “The Revolt Against the Carbon Tax: Examining the Alberta Case (2015-2019).” Western Political Science Association Annual Conference. San Diego, California. April 2019.
- (5) Carter MacDonald, Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, and Natalie Sharpe. “Using the Concept of Intersectionality to Achieve Equitable Fairness”. Forum of Canadian Ombudsman/Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons Biennial Conference. Toronto, Ontario. April 2019.
- (6) Remonia Stoddart-Morrison. “Practicing Equity: Strategies for Equity in Action”. Student Advisors’ Conference. University of Alberta. Edmonton, Alberta. March 2020
- (7) Natalie Sharpe and Carolyn Brendon. “The Role of the Canadian HE Ombudsman in the Wake of a Societal Call-to-Action Against Campus Sexual Violence”. Forum of Canadian Ombudsman/ Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons Biennial Conference. Toronto, Ontario. April 2019.



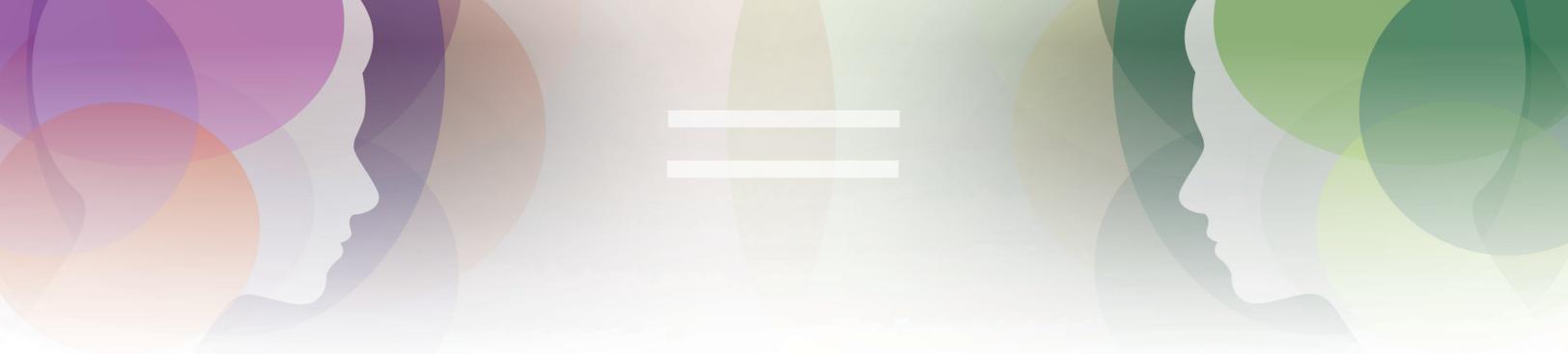
[8] Marta Alonso de la Varga, Paulino Cesar Pedro Prieto, and Natalie Sharpe. The Innsbruck Descriptors 2015. A Reality Check 2019 with Insights from Spain and Canada. European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education Conference. León, Spain. June 2019.

[9] Natalie Sharpe and Josef Leidenfrost. “Confronting Privilege to Achieve Equitable Fairness: An Intersectionality Approach to Ombudsing.” European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education Conference. León, Spain. June 2019.

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Appendices: iv) Working Remotely From Campus

March 17 – 31, 2020

Two internal office guides, one on policy and procedures, and one on self-care.

