

**OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OMBUDSMAN
ANNUAL REPORT
SEPTEMBER 1, 2016 TO AUGUST 31, 2017**

Introduction

The Office of the University Ombudsman was established in July 2014. This report covers the period from September 1, 2016 ending August 31, 2017.

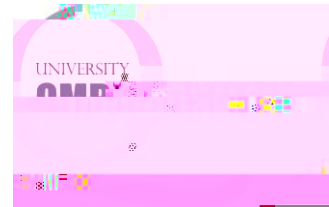
The Office provides independent, impartial and confidential advice. The Office also may facilitate the informal resolution of concerns and complaints in support of university policies and procedures, in accordance with best practices in organizational conflict management. Persons who, acting in good faith, have filed a complaint or sought the assistance of the Office of the Ombudsman or participated in an investigation/inquiry or made an effort to resolve a problem must be able to do so without fear of reprisal.

The University Ombudsman is Harry Smith. Accountable to the Board of Trustees through the Audit and Risk Committee, the University Ombudsman is an independent, impartial and confidential resource for students, staff and faculty to find information and receive guidance, consultation, and advice about their university-related concerns and answers about university policies, procedures, and decision-making structures and systems. As an advocate for fairness, the Ombudsman may work informally to facilitate resolutions to problems and conflict, and investigate complaints of unfairness that may lead to recommendations for change.

The Ombudsman publishes an Annual Report provided, for information purposes, to the Board of Trustees, the Senate, the Principal, the AMS and the SGPS.

Role of the University Ombudsman

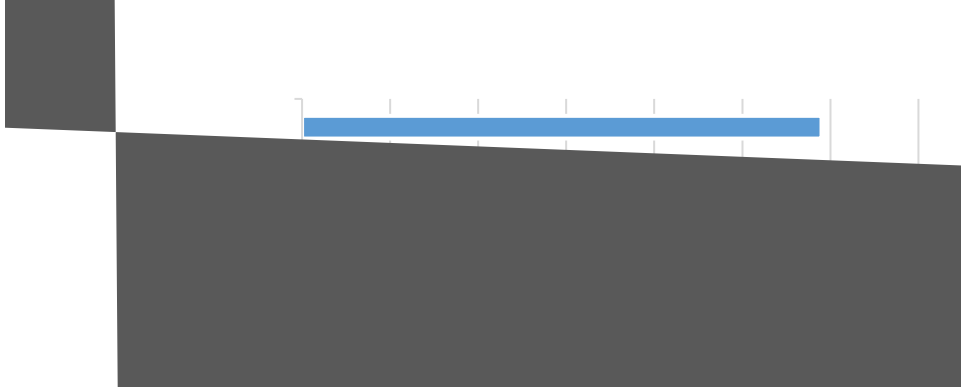
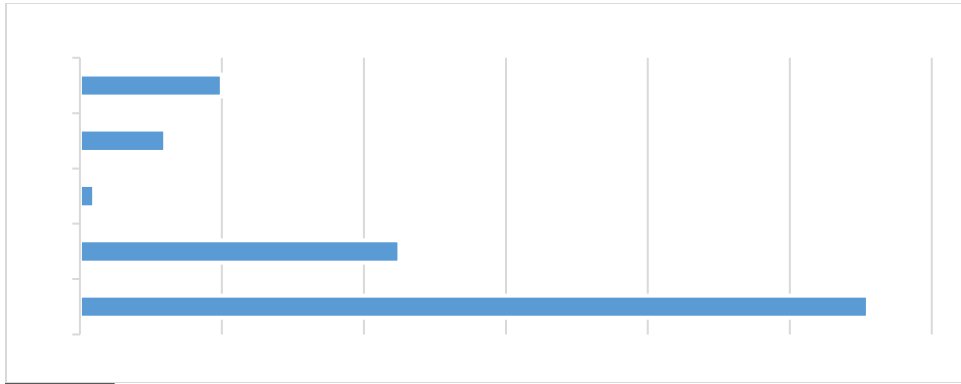
The Ombudsman interacts with all levels of administration including Associate Deans, Deans, the Provost, Vice-Provost (Student Affairs), the Principal and Vice-Principals, University counsel and external lawyers, Student Wellness Services (formerly HCDS), and Campus Security to provide expert advice and recommendations on a wide variety of complex matters related to those and other portfolios. All activities within the Office of the Ombudsman shall be free of influence by any element of University administration, including matters of case/investigation, selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing, or report content.

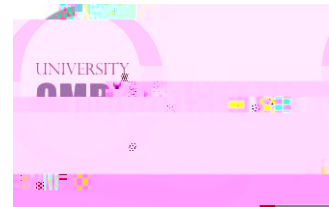


immediate problem and potentially to develop a more adaptive approach to handling issues.¹ Of course, it is important to recognize when someone also might benefit from meeting with Student Wellness Services or other university counselling supports.

Role of the Associate, Policy and Appeals

The Associate, Policy and Appeals is Gail MacAllister. Reporting to the University Ombudsman, the Associate, Policy and Appeals provides a range of confidential advice and support to members of the University community in relation to academic appeals procedures and dispute resolution and is responsible for the co-ordination and administration of grievance and complaint procedures provided for students.

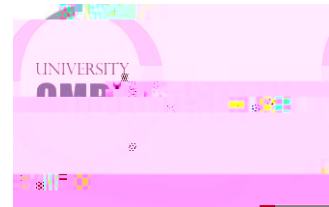




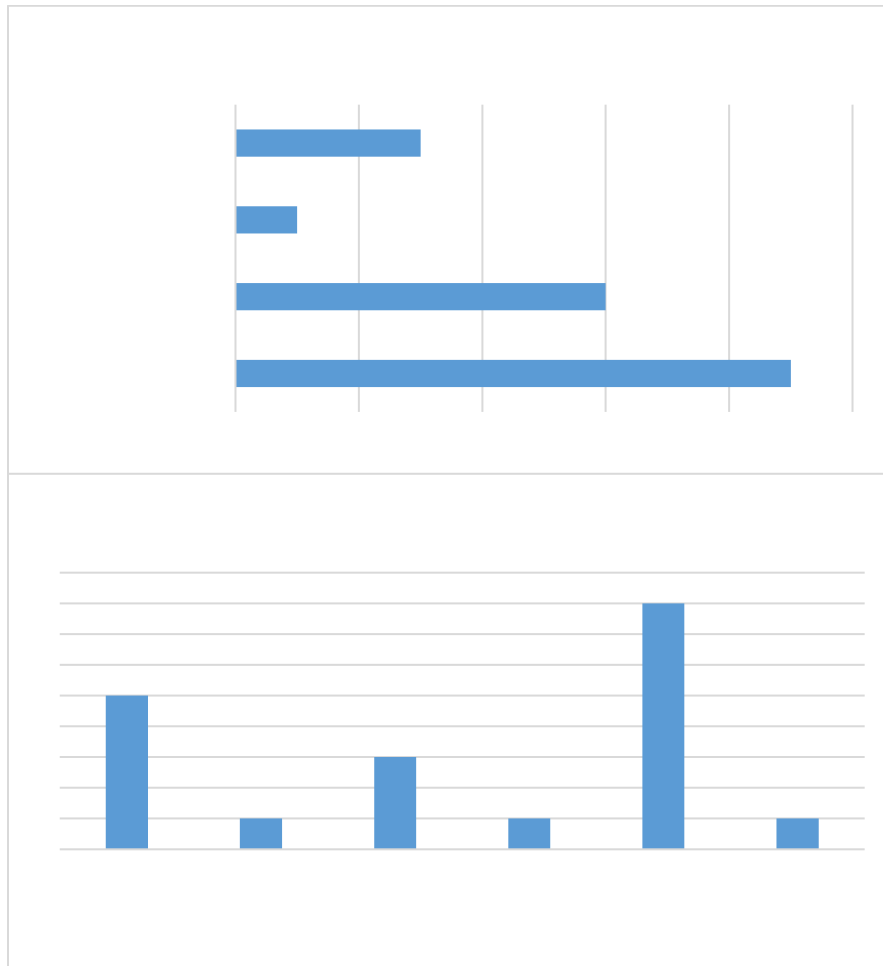
Many student questions or requests for assistance can be addressed within a one-hour meeting, although a follow-up meeting or a review of a draft appeal document/supporting documents is often requested by students. These requests are often accomplished by email. This works efficiently where the issues are relatively straight-forward and the route of appeal is clearly set out. Several cases were more complex and required multiple meetings with the student involved and with related parties in an effort to monitor/manage a situation or to avoid a more formal dispute resolution process.

The Associate, Policy and Appeals also provided policy interpretation and guidance to respondents to appeals regarding the process for the University Student Appeal Board.

Several times throughout the year, parents of students in receipt of a sanction make the initial

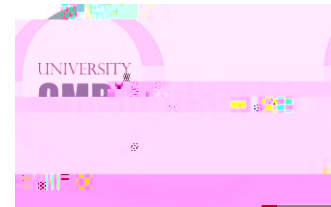


Law) heard 5 cases of which one case was determined to be outside the jurisdiction of the Board and did not go to a hearing. Three cases were withdrawn by the appellants as they chose not to proceed. One case was an AMS matter over which the USAB did not have jurisdiction. The Board reviewed or heard cases from Residences, Nursing, Arts and Science, Commerce, and the Non-Academic Student Conduct Board.



University Dispute Resolution Advisors

There are 6 members of faculty appointed by the Senate to serve as University Dispute Resolution Advisors: Michael Blennerhassett (Health Sciences), Gordon Dueck (Arts and Science), Tony Noble (Arts and Science), Patrick Oosthuizen (Mechanical Engineering), Kate Robotham (Business), and Christopher Ward (Health Sciences). The Ombudsman and Associate, Policy and Appeals provide training to the University Dispute Resolution Advisors



and provide guidance to them on an as-needed basis to aid in the fulfillment of their responsibilities when assisting students.

During the period of this report there were 33 referrals to University Dispute Resolution Advisors and they supported students at Academic Integrity meetings, USAB hearings, Board of Studies hearings, and meetings with Wellness Services (formerly the Disability Services Office).

Subsection 5(b) of the Senate Policy on Student Rights, Appeals and Discipline states the function of the University Dispute Resolution Advisor is:

to provide information and advice to students who are facing adverse academic

Resolution Advisors are invaluable resources for providing students with information and advice on the resolution of academic and non-academic discipline-related concerns by helping students to identify and evaluate options for resolution.

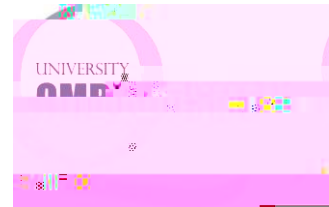
It is the right of the student to have a dispute resolution advisor at any meeting during any stage of a dispute or appeal.

Academic Integrity

The University Secretariat Office initiated a request to the Chairs of Senate Committee on Academic Procedure (SCAP) and Senate Committee on Academic Development (SCAD) that the existing Senate policy on *Academic Integrity* -







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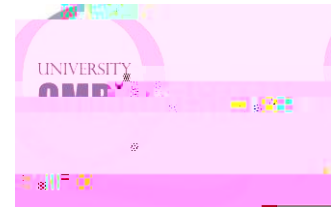
Office through promotion.

In order to access these complaints an ombudsman needs to enjoy the confidence of the community which he or she serves. This necessitates an active and ongoing public education campaign. It is through this campaign that the office will get its casework and it is through this casework that the organization will ultimately be served.¹⁰

During this reporting period, the Office of the University Ombudsman participated in promotions and outreach to improve awareness of the Office and the assistance it provides.

In September 2016, the Office of the University Ombudsman participated in the frosh week sidewalk sale day (September 8, 2016) to increase awareness in the University community of the confidential services offered. Stress balls, pens, carabiners, lanyards, highlighters and magnets with the logo and URL for the Office of the University Ombudsman were very popular promotional items with students.

The Office of the University Ombudsman continued its outreach throughout the academic year by placing notices in

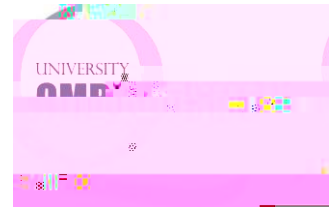


Beginning on September 27, 2016, the Office of the University Ombudsman was featured in a three-part series highlighting the role of the Office for the university community; the articles were published on- result of the three part series on the Office of the University Ombudsman, the Office also received a mention in the Ombuds Blog website.

The Office of the University Ombudsman also provided promotional material for registrants in the Ontario Council for University Lifelong Learning (OCULL), 2016 Annual General Meeting & Professional Development Retreat. The Office used this opportunity to raise awareness of iversity.

The Ombudsman attended meetings of the Senate Committee on Academic Procedure as an observer, the Non-Academic Misconduct Subcommittee, the Non-Academic Misconduct Implementation Team on Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence, and the Policy Advisory Subcommittee.

The Associate, Policy and Appeals participated in Residences Student Conduct Committee discussions



The service of students, staff and faculty, who participated on Student Conduct Panels, and faculty and student Senators who have given their time to participate as members of the University Student Appeal Board, is appreciated also.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry Smith, LLB, MIR, LLM
University Ombudsman