

Ombudsperson Annual Report, 1 July 2016 - 30 June 2017

General

This year brings to a close my fourth year as University Ombudsperson. In addition to attending to individual cases as they arose, I continued sit on the Academic Standing and Admissions Policy Committee (ASAP) as a non-voting observer for all monthly meetings. As in the past, I was privy to all information and communications and actively participated in discussions leading to decisions. I am satisfied that the committee performed its work with fairness and due diligence.

I maintained wider professional contacts with the national and provincial umbrella organizations Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons and Association des Ombudsmans des Universités du Québec. I am a voting member in good standing with both groups.

Case Statistics

Academic (total 37)

- Dishonesty: 1 Bus
- Grades: 6 Soc Sci, 4 Sci, 2 Hum, 3 Bus, 2 Ed
- Must Withdraw: 1 SS, 1 Edu, 1 Hum,
- Medical/Compassion: 3 Sci, 1 Ed
- Program Issues: 4 Hum, 2 Soc Sci, 3 Sci, 1 Bus, 2 Edu

Professor Student Relations (total 12): 4 Hum, 2 Soc Sci, 3 Sci, 1 Bus, 2 Edu

University Life (total 1)

Other (total 1)

Total: 51 Cases

Recommendations

The important policy *Responsibilities of the Academic Staff to Students* requires revision. Minor changes would be to harmonize its language with the updated University Mission Statement and the University policies to which it refers, including, but not limited to, the Code of Student Conduct, Student Accommodations and Accessibility (which needs to be uploaded to the BU website under Administration and Governance as well as under Student Health Services), and the renovated

Harassment Policy. The policy should also refer when applicable to new online practices and communication with students, such as posting class cancellations on MyBU.

In consultation with SRC VP Academic Morgan Gagnon and University Registrar Hans Rouleau, we have come up with a list of the following recommendations:

- Introduce language that limits scheduling course-related events outside of class time without student consent
- Add a clause that Academic Staff shall comply with the regulations set out by Senate to ensure the due administration of course evaluations
- Implement language to clarify that students are entitled to timely feedback on coursework
- Introduce language that students are entitled to receive a substantial portion of their course work (e.g. 30%) and feedback prior to the WP date
- Strengthen and clarify the clause on inappropriate or offensive language in communications with students
- Add a clause that the Ombudsperson is available for consultation regarding the policy

I urge the ASAP committee to review the policy document and present any changes to Senate in the fall 2017 semester.

I would also urge the academic deans to ensure that the Academic Staff comply with regulations set forth for invigilators. There have been problematic cases of students invigilating peers on examinations and impromptu decisions being made to extend examination times. Perhaps the Teaching Evaluation Committee could review the guidelines for invigilators and report to Senate.

Finally, it is to be hoped that the University website will be properly maintained with current information on the various committee compositions. This information can be fairly easily obtained annually from the Faculty Council Secretary and the Secretary General.

I will continue to occupy the position of Ombudsperson for the 2017/2018 academic year and look forward to serving the University in this capacity to the best of my ability.

Submitted respectfully to Principal Michael Goldbloom,
15 August 2016

Shawn Malley, Professor, Department of English