

Office of the Ombudsperson

Annual Review
2014/15

**Preparing students to
prevent,
manage, and resolve
difficult
situations.**



OFFICE OF THE **OMBUDSPERSON**

Highlights of the 2014/15 year

Each Fall, the Office of the Ombudsperson presents a report to the University community outlining the Office's case load and activities. I am pleased to present my sixth annual report as Ombudsperson at Western University, covering the period August 1, 2014 to July 31, 2015.

It was a productive year for Associate Ombudsperson Anita Pouliot, the Office of the Ombudsperson Advisory Committee, and myself. Our priorities were to clarify our role in academic integrity education on campus; review the mission of the Office of the Ombudsperson in student success; and redesign the Office web site.

Academic integrity

In early January, Chair of the Office of the Ombudsperson Advisory Committee Dr Dan Shrubsole, USC VP Internal Emily Addison, and I met with Vice Provost Dr John Doerksen to discuss academic integrity initiatives at the University. The Ombuds Office has always believed the University needs to take an active, centralized role in educating students about why honesty is important in their academics and how students can ensure they are conducting themselves with integrity. The introduction of the School of Graduate and Post Doctoral Studies mandatory academic integrity quiz and the Western 1010 academic integrity module for first year students are steps in the right direction.

Subsequent to our meeting, Western's administration assigned a University staff member to be the official representative on the Council of Ontario University's Academic Integrity Council of Ontario (AICO). With a centrally appointed AICO contact, Western's Ombuds Office has taken a step back from academic integrity education and I am hopeful that by attending AICO meetings, Western representatives will be inspired to replicate initiatives at other institutions.

Renewed mission

In our 2012/13 report, I stated "We're all in this together. Faculty, administrators, students, staff -- we're all contributors to student success." During the 2014/15 year the Advisory Committee and Ombuds staff worked on a descriptive phrase for the Office that clearly states the role the Office plays in student success. That phrase is on the front cover of this year's report: *Preparing students to prevent, manage, and resolve difficult situations*. This phrase is adapted with permission from the University of Washington's Office of the Ombudsperson. We don't solve students' problems. Instead, we help students develop tools they can use to solve an immediate concern and will be able to use in the future.

Website

A highlight this year was the redesign of the Office web site and the introduction of a social media presence for the Ombuds Office. Fourth year Media, Information and Technoculture (MIT) student Taylor King took on these projects for us, going above and beyond the initial task. Our site includes the important information it always has regarding Western's policies, appeals, and deadlines, but now follows the Western brand and includes an appointment request form, making it easier for students to get in touch with us. We hope our new Facebook and Twitter presence spreads the word about our services and provides useful information about conflict management and activities on campus that promote student success.

Going forward

The 2015/16 year will build on the work that this office has been doing for over 30 years. From a reporting standpoint, we will continue to evolve the annual report ensuring transparency in the classification of cases we are seeing but also making sure data is easily understood. Anita Pouliot and I will also continue to reach out to students and establish the role our office can play in their success. In January 2016, Ombudsman Ontario will begin accepting complaints about universities. Our Office has already begun working to ensure there is no confusion over who students can go to on campus to get advice on their concerns.

I hope you enjoy reading this look at our operations over the 2014/15 year and encourage you to contact me if you have information you'd like to see in future reports.

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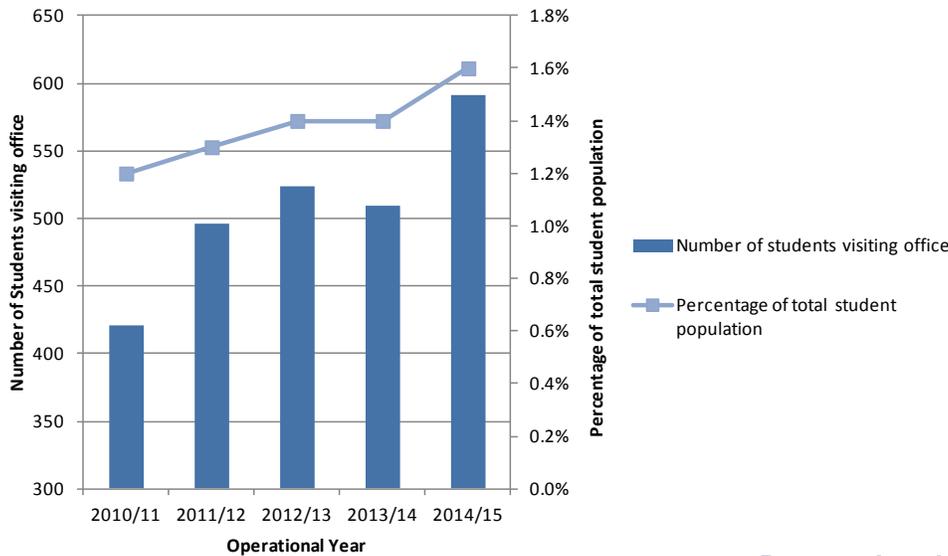
Supporting Students

Associate Ombudsperson Anita Pouliot and I guided students through 591 concerns during the 2014/15 year, representing 1.56 percent of the total student base (including graduate, undergraduate, main campus, Brescia, Huron, and King's University Colleges). The percentage of student population visiting the Office has increased gradually over the past five years, from 1.2 percent in 2010/11. This is in line with other university and college Ombuds offices. We market our services to students through events, online media and paper advertising to name a few vehicles. We also have good working relationships with student groups and associate deans and vice provosts who often refer students in difficulty to our office.

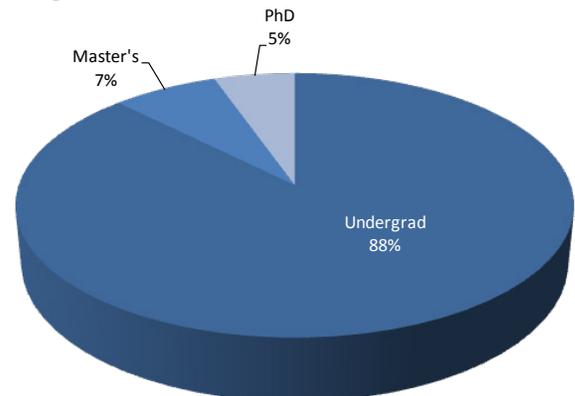
Of the 591 student visitors to the Office of the Ombudsperson in 2014/15, 518, or 88 percent, were undergraduate students from main campus or one of the Affiliated University Colleges. Forty one students, 7 percent, were Master's students; and 32 students, 5 percent, were PhD students. Students from professional programs such as Medicine and Law are included in the undergraduate calculation.

Student visitors over time

(Please note that the scale showing the number of students visiting the Ombuds Office starts at 300.)



Degree level of student visitors



Academic Data

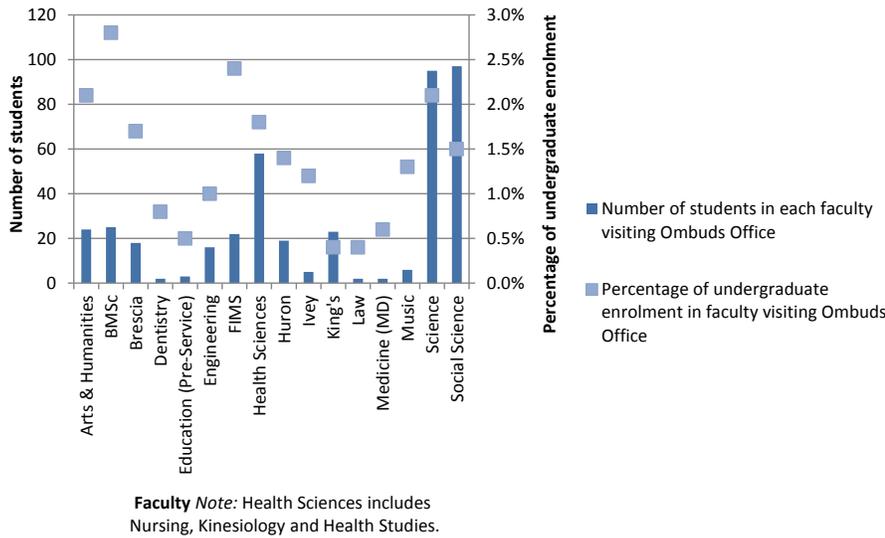
Undergraduate Students

Below, we illustrate the number of undergraduate students visiting the Office of the Ombudsperson in two ways. The first graph is the number of students from each faculty that we provided service to in the 2014/15 year. For example, a student in Social Science may visit us about a concern in Residence. The second is the number of students who raised concerns about a specific faculty. For example, a Science student may raise a concern about a course they are taking in Arts and Humanities.

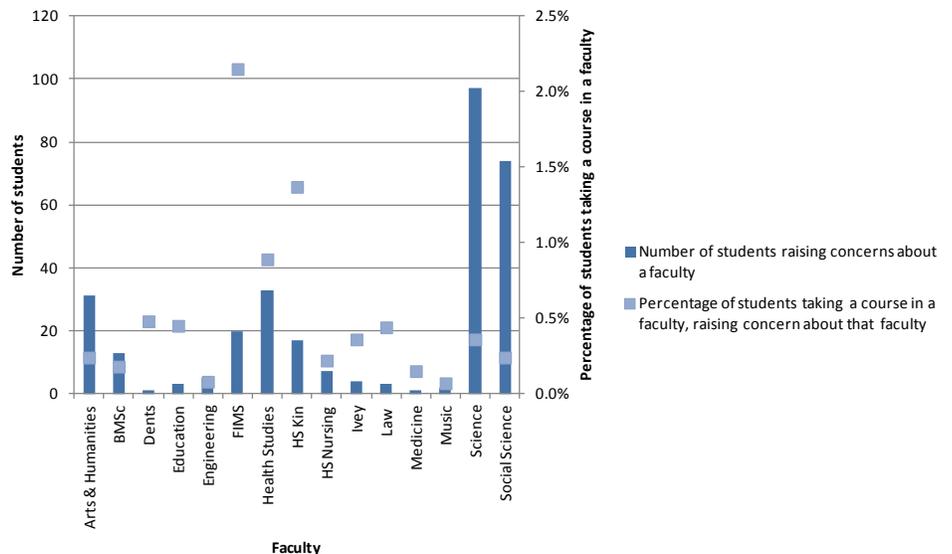
Note that Brescia (15 concerns), Huron (14 concerns), and King's (19 concerns) are not included on this graph because the number of students taking their courses is no commonly available. Also, there were four concerns raised regarding Continuing Studies courses and 39 concerns raised regarding undergraduate courses where the student did not identify the faculty.

For a comparison to past years, please look at previous annual reports on the Ombuds web site at: <http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/reports/index.html>.

Undergraduate Students Per Faculty of Enrollment



Undergraduate Students Per Course Faculty



Undergraduate Concerns - Academic and Financial

The following chart illustrates the academic concerns that were raised by the undergraduate students who visited the Office of the Ombudsperson. For the written report, we are providing a high-level view. For a breakdown within each category, please visit the Ombuds web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/reports/index.html>.

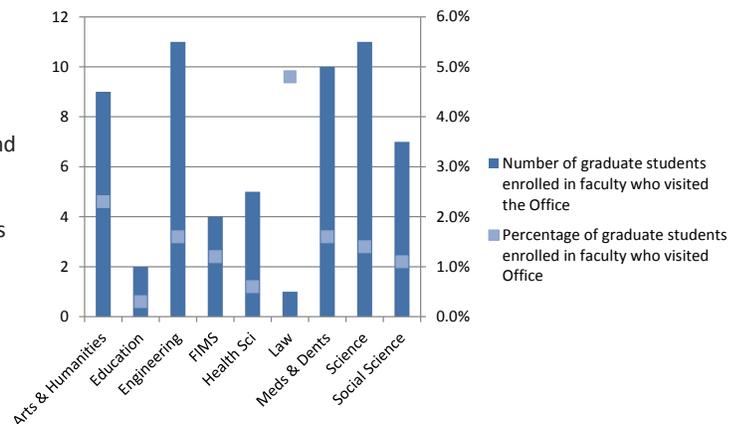
Category of Concern	Occurrences	As a % of total undergraduate occurrences
General academic related (other than appeals)	181	42%
Administrative procedures (other than ac appeals)	171	40%
Scholastic appeals	65	15%
Financial	11	3%

Academic Data Graduate Students

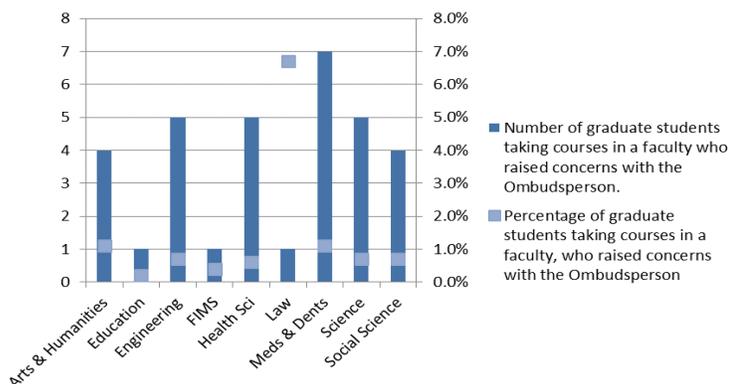
Seventy three graduate students (PhD and Master's) visited the Office of the Ombudsperson in 2014/15 regarding 81 concerns. The area of most concern was supervision at 17.8 percent of concerns raised by graduate students coming to the Office. Progression concerns -- which sometimes can be linked to supervision, were raised 12 percent of the time. It should be noted that no graduate students approached the Office with scholastic offense queries during the 2014/15 year. For a comparison to other years, please visit <http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/reports/index.html>.

Graduate Students per Faculty of Enrollment

Although graduate students are all enrolled in the School of Graduate and Post Doctoral Studies, we record their disciplinary faculty when they visit the Office of the Ombudsperson. The graph at the right shows the number and percentage of PhD and Master's students visiting the Office from various disciplinary faculties. *Notes:* i) Only faculties where students raised concerns are listed. ii) Health Sciences refers to all Health Science graduate programs.



Graduate Concerns per Faculty



This graph represent the number and percentage of Master's and PhD students taking courses in a faculty, raising concerns about that faculty. *Notes:* i) Only faculties where students raised concerns are listed. ii) Health Sciences refers to all Health Science graduate programs. iii) One King's student raised a concern and seven students raised concerns but did not disclose what program they were discussing.

Graduate Concerns - Academic and Financial

The chart below illustrates the academic and financial concerns that were raised by graduate students. For a comparison to other years, please contact the Office of the Ombudsperson.

Concern	Occurrences	As a % of total graduate student occurrences
Academic	36	75.0%
Admissions	4	8.3%
Financial	8	16.6%

Undergraduate and graduate non-academic nature of concerns

The following chart shows the non-academic concerns expressed by undergraduate and graduate students. It is interesting to note that students come to the Office of the Ombudsperson voicing concerns about what could be a harrasment or equity issue. In these instances we refer the student to Western's Equity and Human Rights Services.

Issue	Occurrences	As a % of total occurrences
Conduct	22	22.0%
Interpersonal concerns (including referrals to Equity and Human Rights Services)	13	13.0%
Housing (including on and off campus)	12	12.0%
Non-University related concerns (including OSAP)	9	9.0%
Student Associations	9	9.0%
All other (includes concerns with libraries, parking, referrals to employee group)	34	34.0%

Outreach

Each year the Office of the Ombudsperson participates in events that promote our services to students, faculty, and administrators; assist the Western community in conflict management; and provide professional development opportunities. During the 2014/15 year we participated in the following events:

Booth participation

New faculty orientation
Residence life tradeshow
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Students (SGPS) orientation

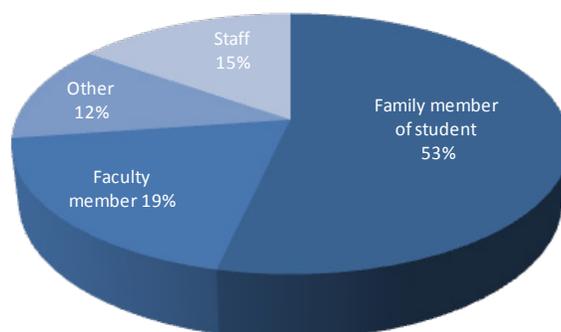
Presentations

First year orientation - conflict management presentation (with Equity and Human Rights Services)
Conflict resolution workshop at Huron University College
Mature and Transfer Student Orientation

outreach continued on next page

Non-Student Data

Seventy three non students contacted the Office during the 2014/15 year. These individuals were parents, faculty members and staff asking about university policy. The Office also fielded calls on occasion from concerned community members. Following is the break down of the categories of individuals who contacted the Office and the reasons they contacted us.



Non-student concerns

Concern	Occurrences	As a % of total non-student occurrences
Academic (Graduate and Undergraduate)	25	34%
Conduct (scholastic and non-scholastic)	9	12%
Registration (inc. admission, readmission, requirement to withdraw, add/drop dates, etc)	8	10.9%
Financial	6	8.2%
Housing (on and off-campus)	5	6.8%
Student Associations	4	5.4%
Other UWO	16	21.9%

outreach continued

Other activities

Regular update meetings with SGPS
Western Scholars Kickoff

Courses/conferences

Association of Canadian Colleges and University Ombudspople (ACCUO) mid-year meeting, London, ON
Association of Canadian Colleges and University Ombudspople (ACCUO) annual meeting, Vancouver, B.C.
Various webinars on student success and conflict resolution
International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Conference, Atlanta, Georgia

Other highlights

Also in the 2014/15 year, the Office co-hosted with Fanshawe College, a meeting of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO). Thirteen members of University and College Ombuds Offices from Ontario and Quebec met in January 2015 to discuss trends in higher education and concerns being raised at our institutions.

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