



Office of the Ombudsman

Annual Report
2018-2019

The Office of the Ombudsman is jointly supported by
Algonquin College and the Algonquin Students' Association

ALGONQUIN
COLLEGE

Algonquin
Students'
ASSOCIATION

1 October 2019

Ombudsman Review Committee (ORC)
Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology
1385 Woodroffe Avenue
Ottawa, ON K2G 1V8

Dear Members of the ORC,

In accordance with section 3, subsection (3.11) of [SA02: Ombudsman](#), Terms of Reference, the Office of the Ombudsman (the "**Office**") presents this annual report of our activities and observations for the period 1 May 2018 to 30 April 2019.

Section I of this report shows the highlights of our caseload in the reporting period.

Section II references the mandate of the Office and the standards of practice that guide our work.

Section III presents the recommendations of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Section IV outlines the statistical overview of the activities of the Office. Overall, **503 files** were opened. Of these, there were **436** student files, **66** non-student files, and **1** file involved an external stakeholder. The **503 total files** reflect an 8% increase from the 2017-2018 reporting period. Similarly, the **436 student files** reflect a 6% increase in our student files from the 2017-2018 reporting period, and a 30% increase from the 2016-2017 reporting period.

In Section V, the case summaries provide insight into some matters that required our involvement.

Finally, but no less importantly, Section VI of the report concludes with an expression of appreciation to the ORC, the College leadership, the Algonquin Students' Association, and the entire College community for the support and collaboration in finding resolutions to the applicable matters we handled, and for advancing the success of our learning and working experience at the College.

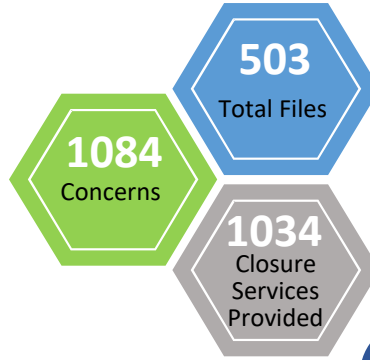
Respectfully,

Office of the Ombudsman, Algonquin College.

Highlights 2018-2019

In this Report

- About the Office of the Ombudsman Page 3
- Recommendations Page 4
- Caseload Distribution Page 5 - 17
- Case Summaries Page 18 - 28
- Appreciation Page 29



Since 2017-2018

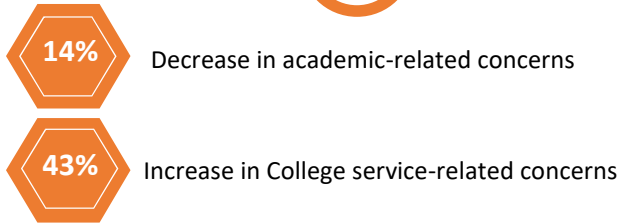
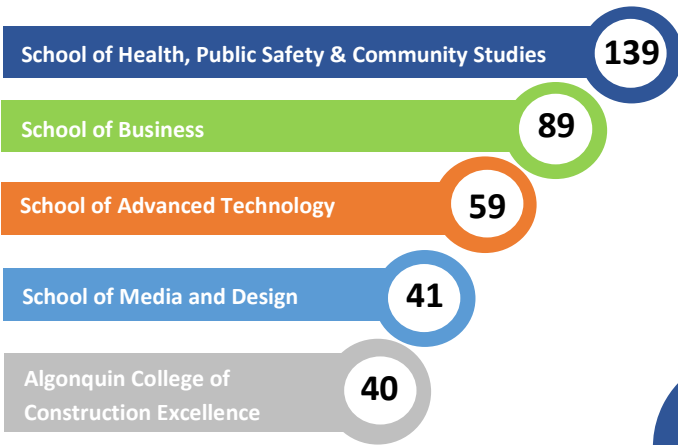
8% increase in caseload

~60% Increase in July and August

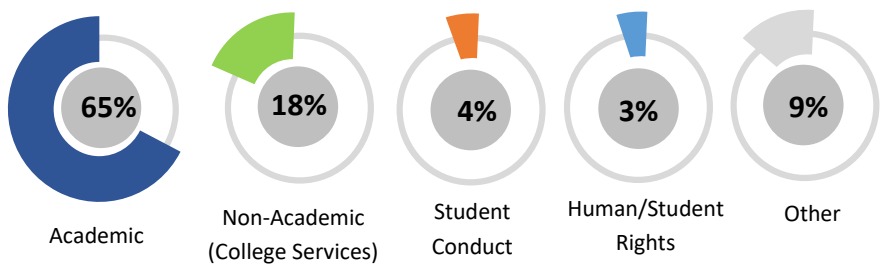
~2x More online students

2x More admission-related cases

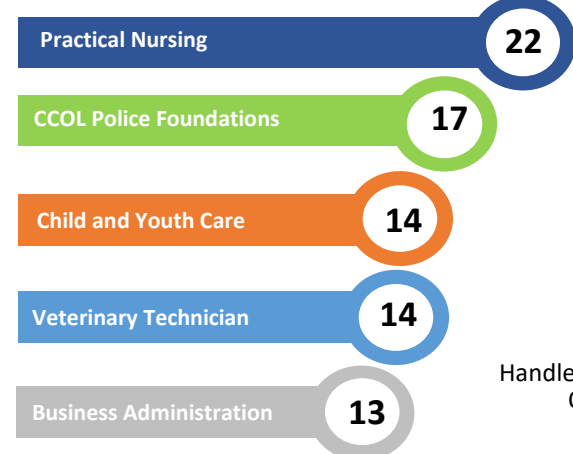
Top 5 Academic Departments in Contact



Concern Types



Top 5 Programs in Contact

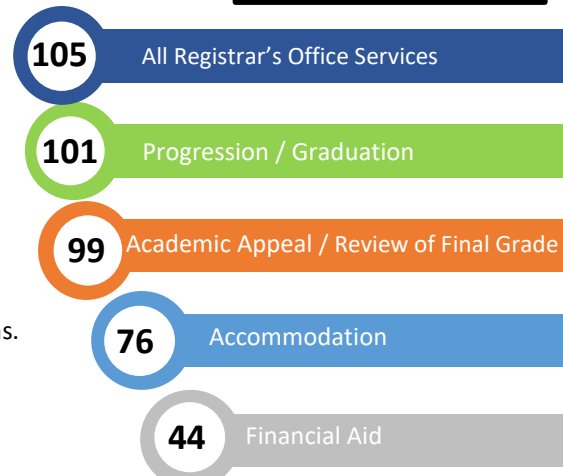


44 Placement-Related Concerns



Handled **48** student conduct-related concerns. Of these, **28** went through formal Student Conduct Board Hearings.

Top 5 Case Topics



II: About the Office of the Ombudsman

Per the Terms of Reference, [SA02: Ombudsman](#), the Office of the Ombudsman is to provide an independent, impartial and confidential process through which students of the College may pursue the resolution of any College-related concern.

Specifically, the Ombudsman has the mandate:

1. To investigate, at the absolute discretion of the Ombudsman, any student(s) complaint about aspects of student life, including:
 - a. academic matters;
 - b. services provided by the College or the Students' Association;
 - c. the operations of the College or the Students' Association;
 - d. the treatment received from other students;
 - e. the treatment received from staff and faculty.
2. To provide information to students on College policies and procedures, the rights and responsibilities of students in College situations, and to provide advice on where and to whom complaints and inquiries are to be directed.

The Office of the Ombudsman adheres to the standards of practice that guide the work of all Ombudsman/persons across Canada and other parts of the world. These standards of practice include the following (see our [website](#) for further information):

- I. Independence,
- II. Impartiality,
- III. Confidentiality,
- IV. Accessibility, and
- V. Informality.

The principles of natural justice, fairness, and credibility are essential to these standards of practice.

In fulfilling our mandate, the Office uses several methods of intervention, including:

- Coaching/Advice,
- Dialogue Facilitation/Mediation,
- Fact Finding/Investigation,
- Problem Resolution,
- Providing information on policies and procedures,
- Referral, and
- Shuttle Diplomacy.

III: Recommendations

The Office of the Ombudsman recommends that:

1. With the goal of providing appropriate, accessible accommodations for our learners, without compromising academic integrity, the College – in collaboration with the necessary stakeholders – review the process for determining, implementing and monitoring academic accommodations, including retroactive accommodations. This review would support all members of the Algonquin College community by identifying gaps, and clarifying roles and responsibilities in the process of accommodation. Such clarity would also help to manage expectations of all parties and reduce the potential for the escalation of accommodation-related matters into intractable and extended disputes.
2. In anticipation of the College’s goal of becoming a leader in personalized education, the College develop a unified approach in the processes and practices to support students; specifically, clear workflows between the Registrar’s Office, the academic areas, and other service areas to effectively manage student-related matters and minimize errors or omissions. This might include: clear communication regarding program transfers and transfer of credit; student understanding of programs of study and when courses are offered beyond one academic term; management of off-cycle students and/or part-time students; smoother transition across programs and learning pathways; and an enhanced communication strategy.
3. In consideration of the College’s strategic focus on experiential learning, and/or related work-integrated learning, the College develop a policy that provides guidance to all stakeholders involved in placements (clinical, practicum, and field/other placements), recognizing the unique needs or challenges of the applicable academic areas. Academic programs that have placements would be well advised to review their processes and policies – or develop these where none exist – to address placement-related matters, including:
 - a) Fairness and perceived fairness in the placement selection processes,
 - b) Evaluation of students’ performance at placements,
 - c) Clearer guidelines for supervising and supporting students at placements,
 - d) Implementation of a robust mechanism for addressing matters that arise while students are at these placements, including disputes arising from differing expectations among students, faculty liaisons, and host institutions, and
 - e) Academic accommodation-related matters associated with placements.
4. The College continues its efforts in line with our first recommendation in the 2017-2018 Annual Report. Specifically, that the College *“ensures the consistent application of the Academic Appeal, Review of Final Grade, Academic Dishonesty, and the Plagiarism policies across Algonquin College.”*

IV: Caseload Distribution

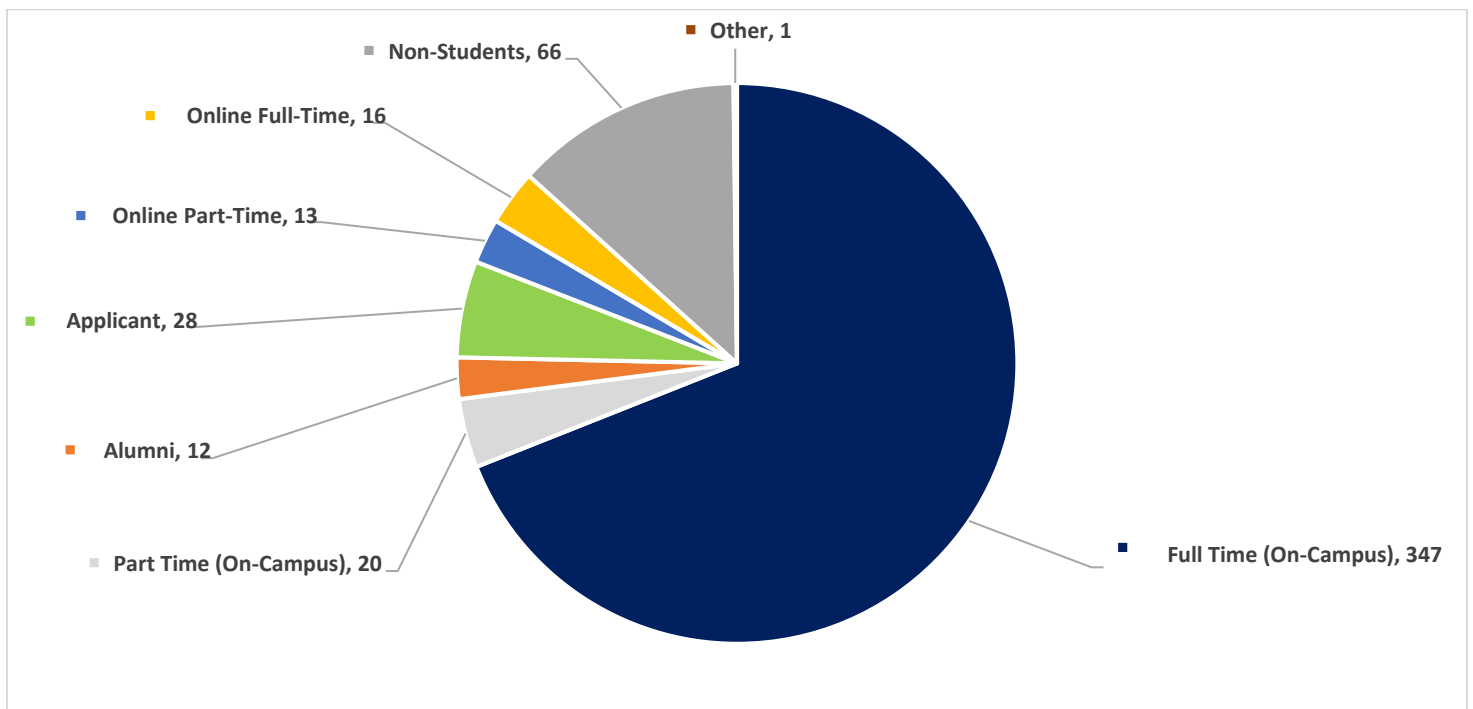
In this reporting period, the Office of the Ombudsman opened **503** files. Of these, **436** were student files, **66** non-student files, and **1** file involved an external stakeholder. The non-student files comprised faculty, staff, administration and the Algonquin Students' Association. All the data in this report include our caseload from the Pembroke and Perth regional campuses, and from AC Online.

Although this report references **503** files, it is important to note that the number of **services offered** exceeds the number of **files handled**, as multiple services may be associated with a single file. Often, each file entails several concerns that require different services. Depending on the nature of a client's request(s) for assistance, and complexity of the issues at stake, the Office provides an array of services within the broader spectrum of dispute resolution. While these services range from informal to formal processes, our processes are mostly informal.

Profile of our Clients

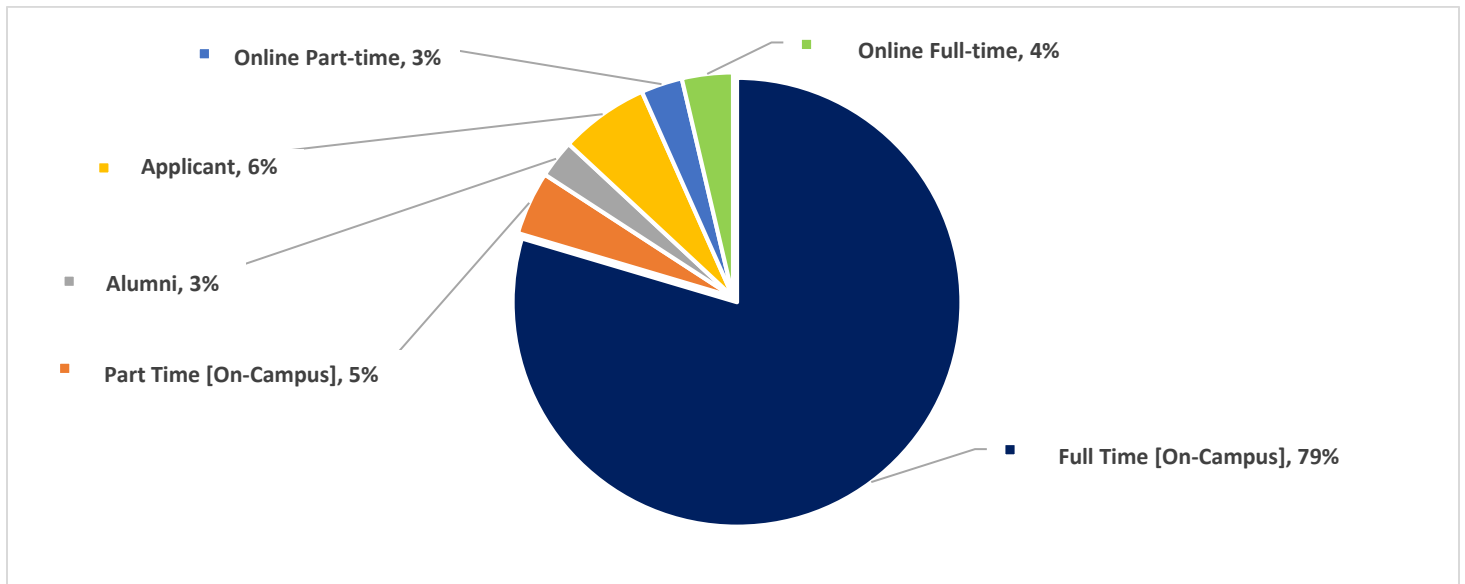
The **503 total files** reflect an 8% increase from the 2017-2018 reporting period. Similarly, the **436 student files** reflect a 6% increase in our student files since the 2017-2018 reporting period, and a 30% increase since the 2016-2017 reporting period. Further details on our client type by **student** and **non-student status** are shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3 below.

Figure 1: Client Type by Status, 2018-2019



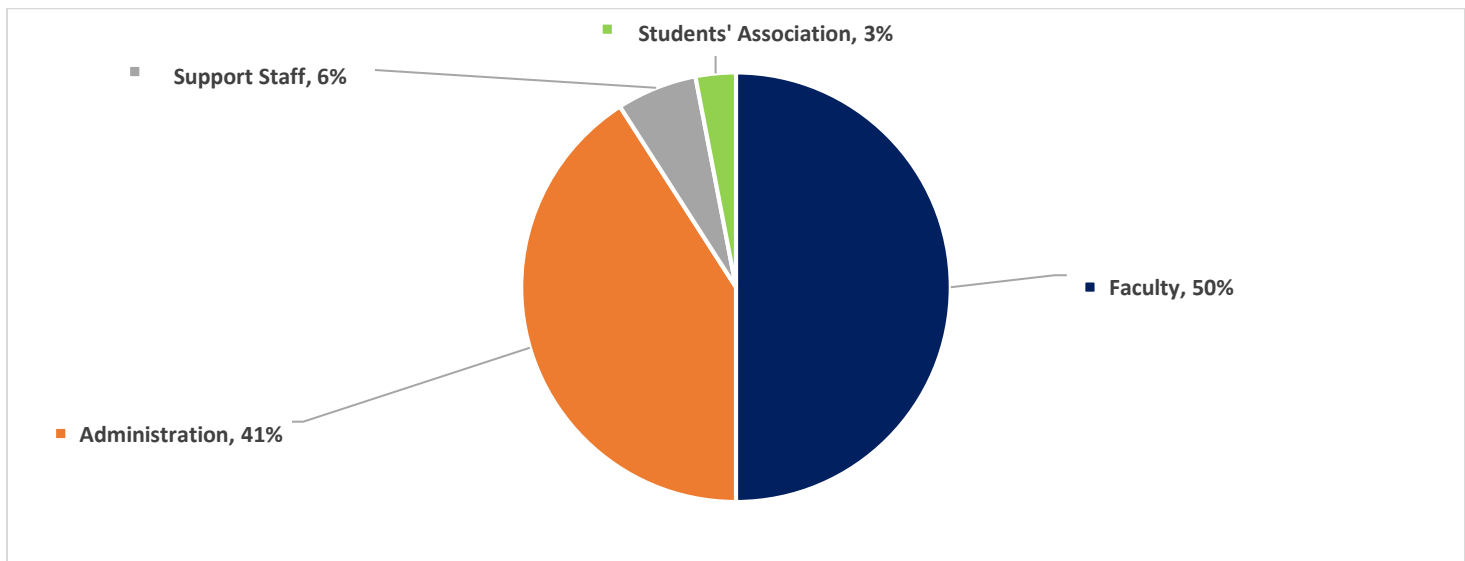
Client Type by Student Status

Figure 2: Client Type by Student Status (Percentage of Total Files), 2018-2019



Client Type by Non-Student Status

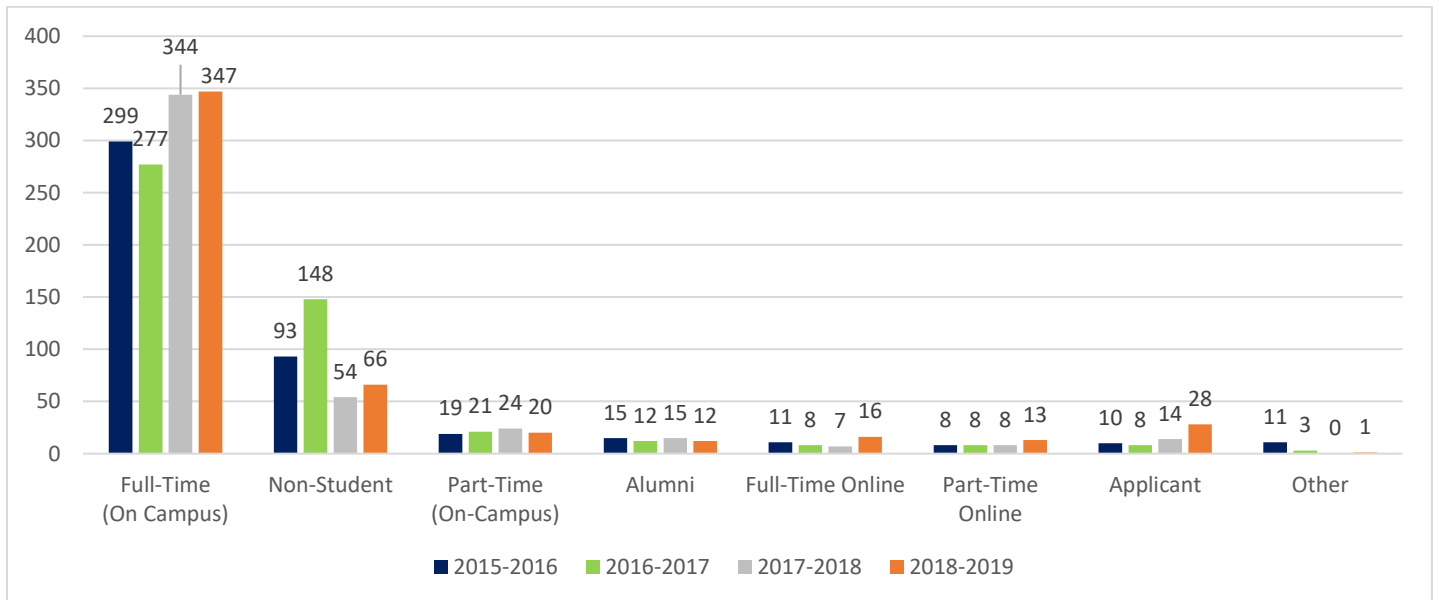
Figure 3: Client Type by Non-Student Status (Percentage of Total Files), 2018-2019



The **non-student** clients comprise faculty, support staff, administration, and the Students' Association who consulted with us on a broad range of student-related matters. This year, the non-student files reflects a 22% increase compared to the 2017-2018 reporting period. However, it reflects a 55% decrease under the 2016-2017 reporting period; we do not know the reason(s) for this decrease but will continue to monitor trends and correlations.

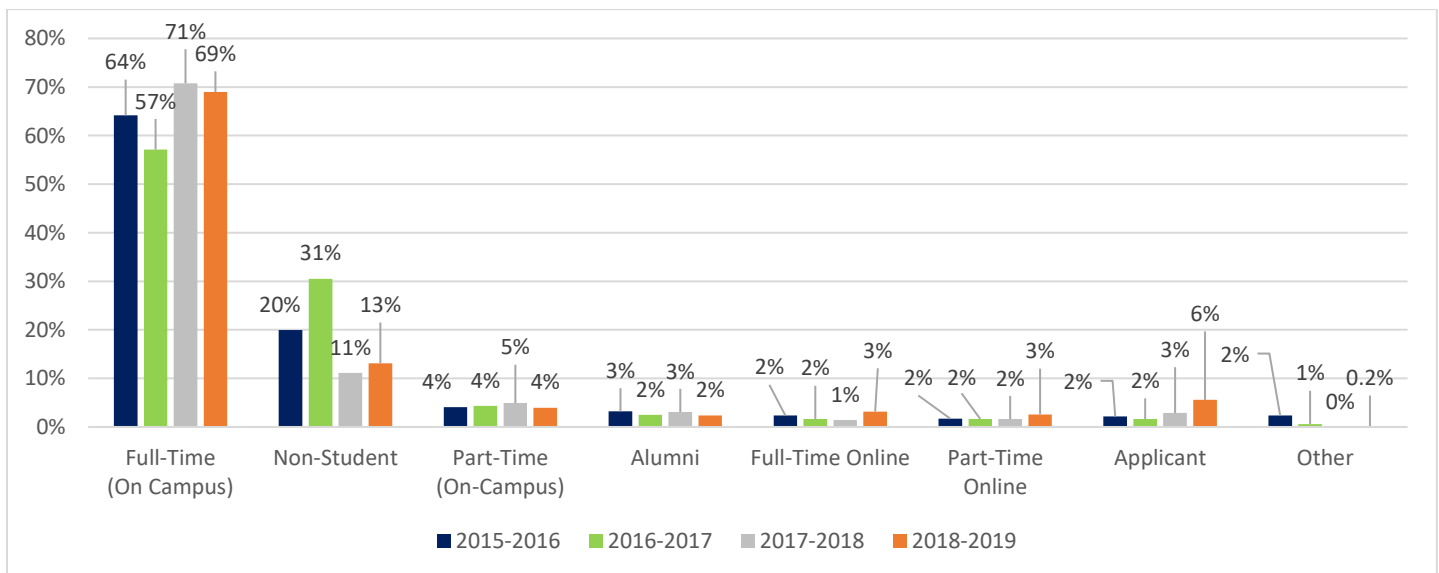
Yearly Comparison of Client Type by Student and Non-Student Status

Figure 4: Yearly Comparison of Client Type by Status, 2015 to 2019



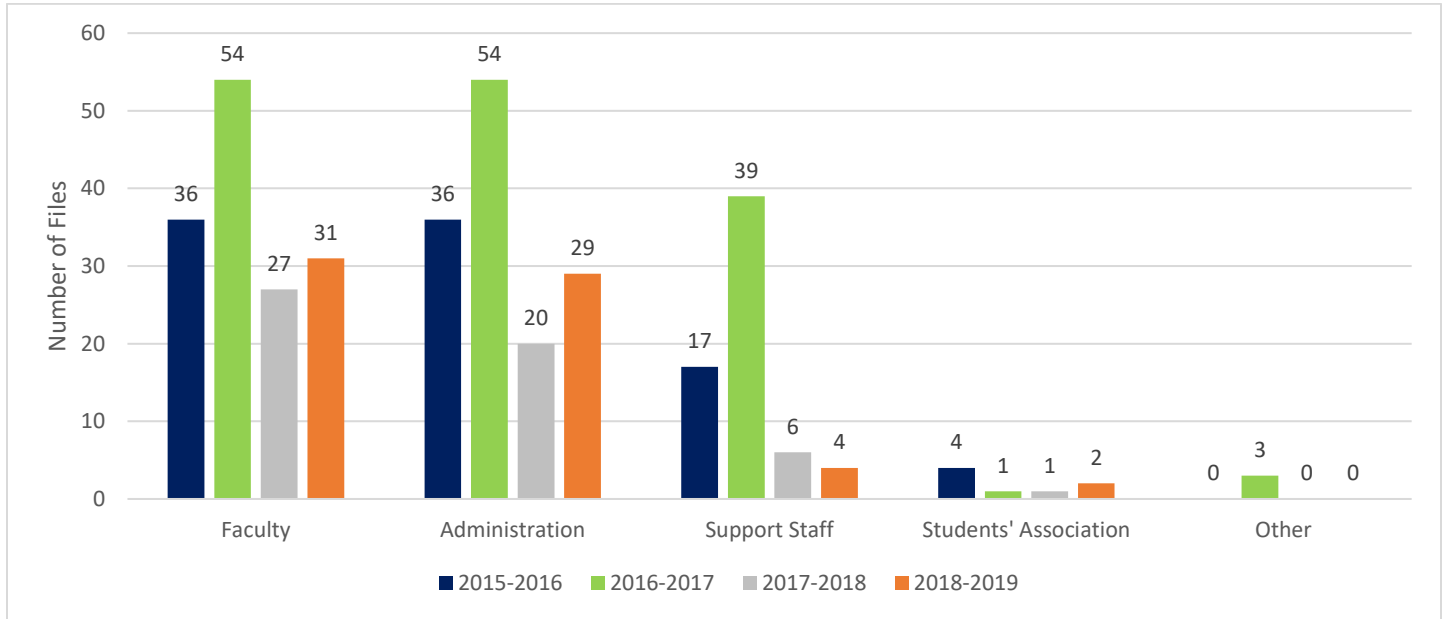
Generally, **full-time (on-campus)** students account for the majority of our caseload by student status, followed by **non-students**, then **part-time (on-campus)** students. In this reporting period, our clientele by **applicant status** – applicants seeking admissions to the College – doubled from the 2017-2018 reporting period. The same applies to our clientele by **full-time online status**, and somewhat to our clientele by **part-time online status**. Proportionally, the increases are statistically low; however, they are important data points that will be monitored in the coming years and reported as necessary.

Figure 5: Yearly Comparison of Client Type by Status (Percentage), 2015 to 2019



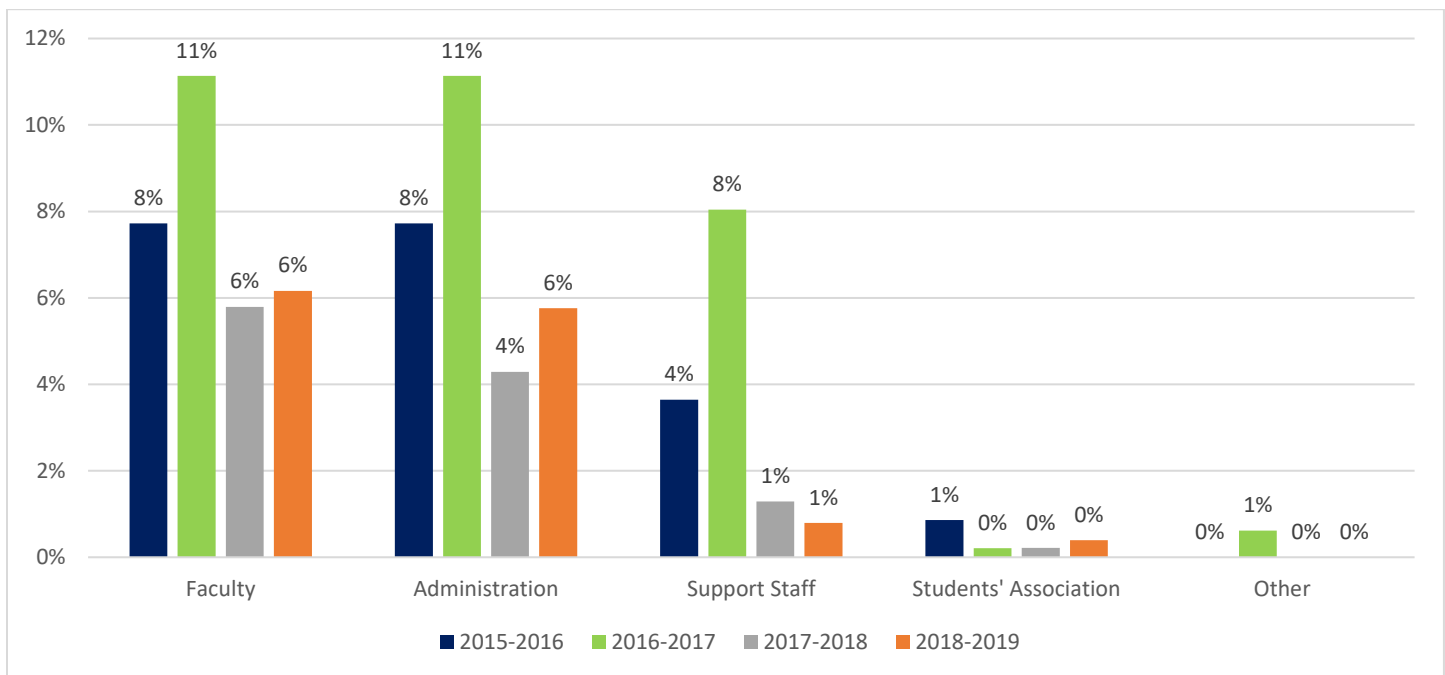
The overall number of **student files** in this reporting period, and the categories of the student sub-groups, is proportionally consistent with our data from previous academic years.

Figure 6: Client Type by Non-Student Status, 2015 to 2019



As shown in Figure 6, on average, faculty members account for most of our non-student clientele, followed by members of the administration including academic chairs, deans, directors and other stakeholders. The Office welcomes consultations from our non-student clientele as it usually helps to mitigate potential disputes and/or contributes to proactive initiatives that prevent potential disputes. Training sessions delivered to faculty and staff is not reflected in our caseload in this report.

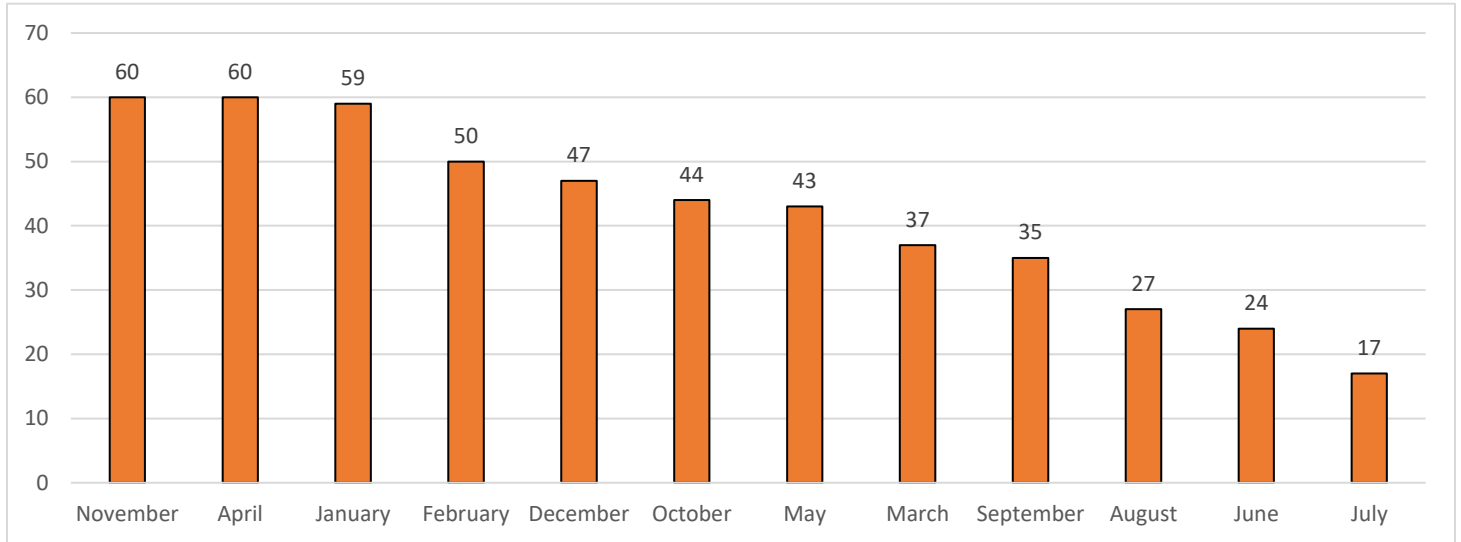
Figure 7: Client Type by Non-Student Status (Percentage of Total Files), 2015 to 2019



The percentages shown in Figure 7 are based on total files (503 for the 2018-2019) reporting period.

Files Opened per Month

Figure 8: Files Opened per Month in Descending Order, 2018-2019



Since 2015, our busiest months have been April, January and September. However, in this reporting period, our busiest months were November, April, January, and February. These four months likely coincide with mid-term evaluations, final evaluations, and academic appeal-related matters.

Usually, students become aware of the results of their Fall mid-term evaluations by November. Our intake in April arises from matters associated with final evaluations of the Winter term. Similarly, our intake in January often pertains to final evaluations of the Fall term, as academic appeal deadlines fall after Christmas holidays due to College closures. Our intake in February coincides with the results of mid-term evaluations of the Winter term.

Typically, the lowest number of new files are opened in June, July and August. May, although the beginning of Spring term, has a number of files associated with academic appeal deadlines arising from the end of the Winter term. However, the number of new files in the 2018-2019 reporting period is significantly higher for Spring term compared to the average over the last three years. July and August, respectively, saw a 70% and 53% increase in files compared to average. We anticipate this trend will continue with the adoption of the year round 14-week term model.

Figure 9: Spring Term (2018-2019) Number of Files Compared to Previous Average (2015-2018)

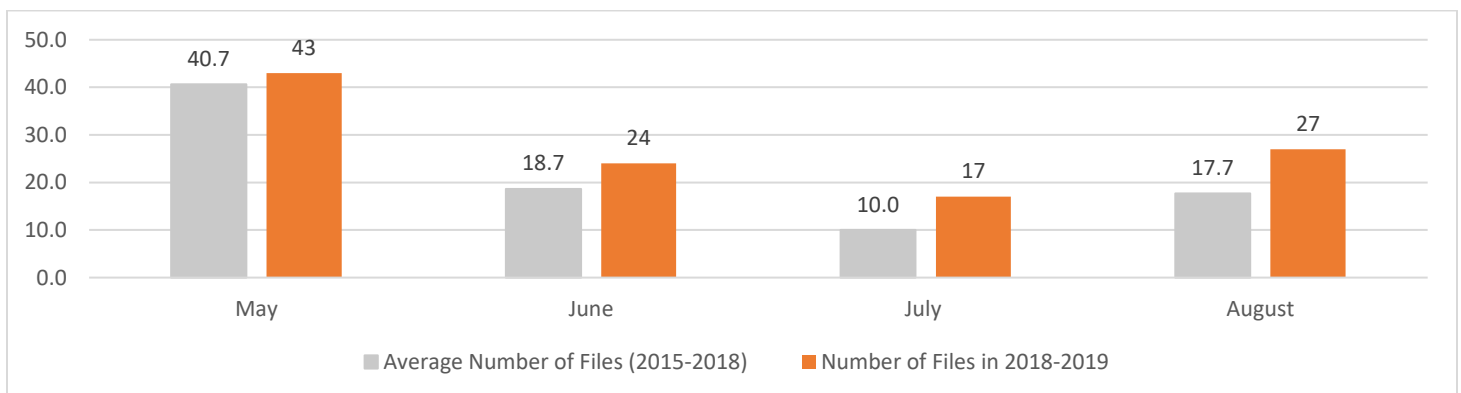
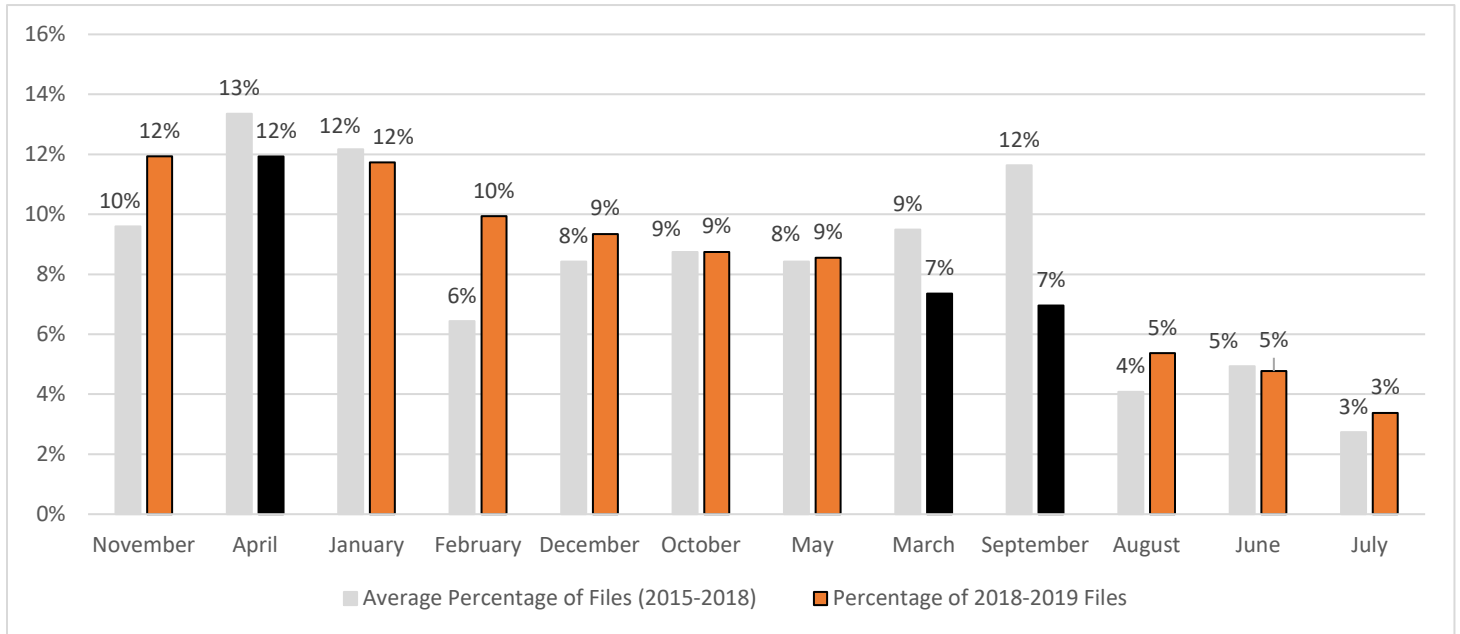
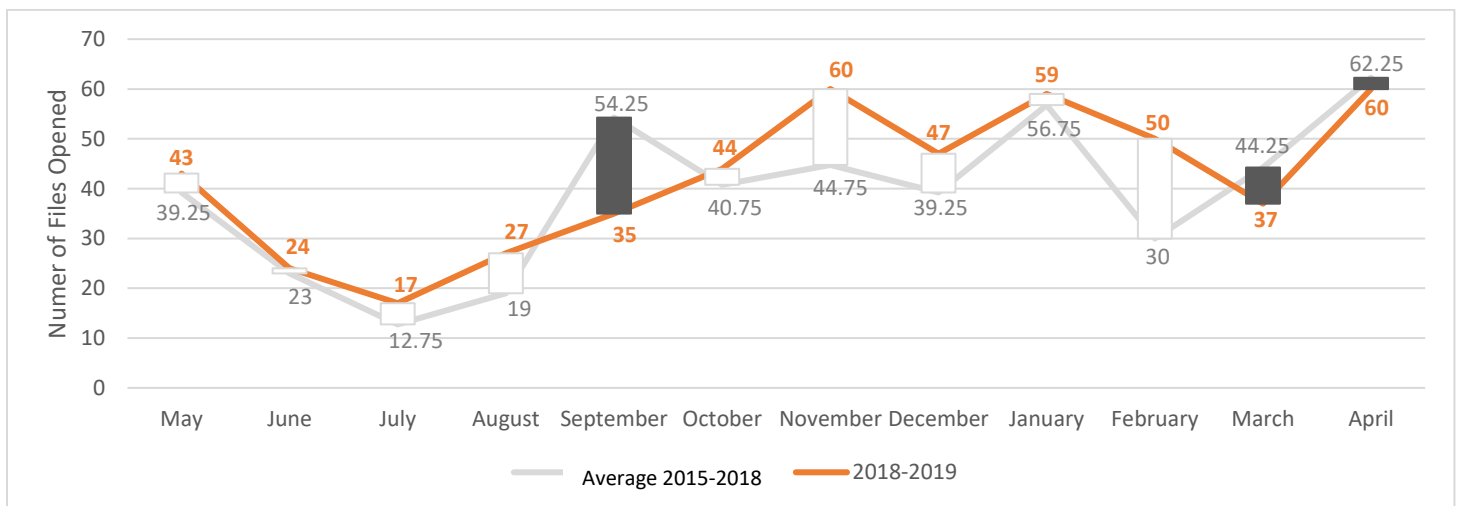


Figure 10: Percentage of Files Opened per Month (2018-2019) Compared to Average (2015-2018)



As shown in Figures 10 and 11, all months – compared to average – remained proportionally the same or increased except April, March and September. Presently, we cannot explain why February had such an increase in files compared to average. Similarly, we do not know why September had a decrease in files compared to average. We will monitor this to see if it reflects a new trend.

Figure 11: Trends of Files Opened per Month (2018-2019) compared to Average (2015-2018)



On average, approximately twenty files were closed per month except in the months of April, May and June, when outstanding and/or carry over files from previous semesters are usually finalized. The timelines for file closures are unpredictable as cases are fact-specific; a more complex and sensitive case may require an elaborate consultation and therefore more time to find a resolution. While our files are not categorized by levels of complexity or sensitivity, anecdotally, we are seeing an increase in the number of files that are somewhat complex and/or sensitive and therefore require more attention and time for closure.

Clients by Affiliated School / Academic Department(s)

Table 1: Profile of our Clients by Affiliated School/Academic Department(s) in 2018-2019

School / Academic Department	2018-2019	%
School of Health and Community Studies	103	21
School of Business	89	18
School of Advanced Technology	59	12
School of Media and Design	41	8
Algonquin Centre for Construction Excellence	40	8
Other: (Admin/Support Staff, Students' Association, Ancillary etc.)	31	6
Police and Public Safety Institute	36	7
Centre for Continuing and Online Learning	34	7
School of Hospitality and Tourism	22	4
General Arts and Science	21	4
Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley – Pembroke	11	2
Algonquin College Heritage Institute – Perth	2	0
Language Institute	7	1
Career and Academic Access Centre	7	1
Totals	503	100

As in previous academic years, it is cautioned that the data in **Table I** not be mistakenly interpreted as academic areas with more files are problematic. It is important to note that academic areas with more students and/or programs, as well as areas/departments with unique program requirements such as placements/work practicum/internships, which invariably involve stakeholders outside the College, are likely to have more interaction with the Office of the Ombudsman than other areas/departments.



Image obtained from <https://www.algonquincollege.com/public-relations/algonquin-college-history/>

Figure 12: Caseload per Academic Department (2018-2019) Compared to Average (2015-2018)

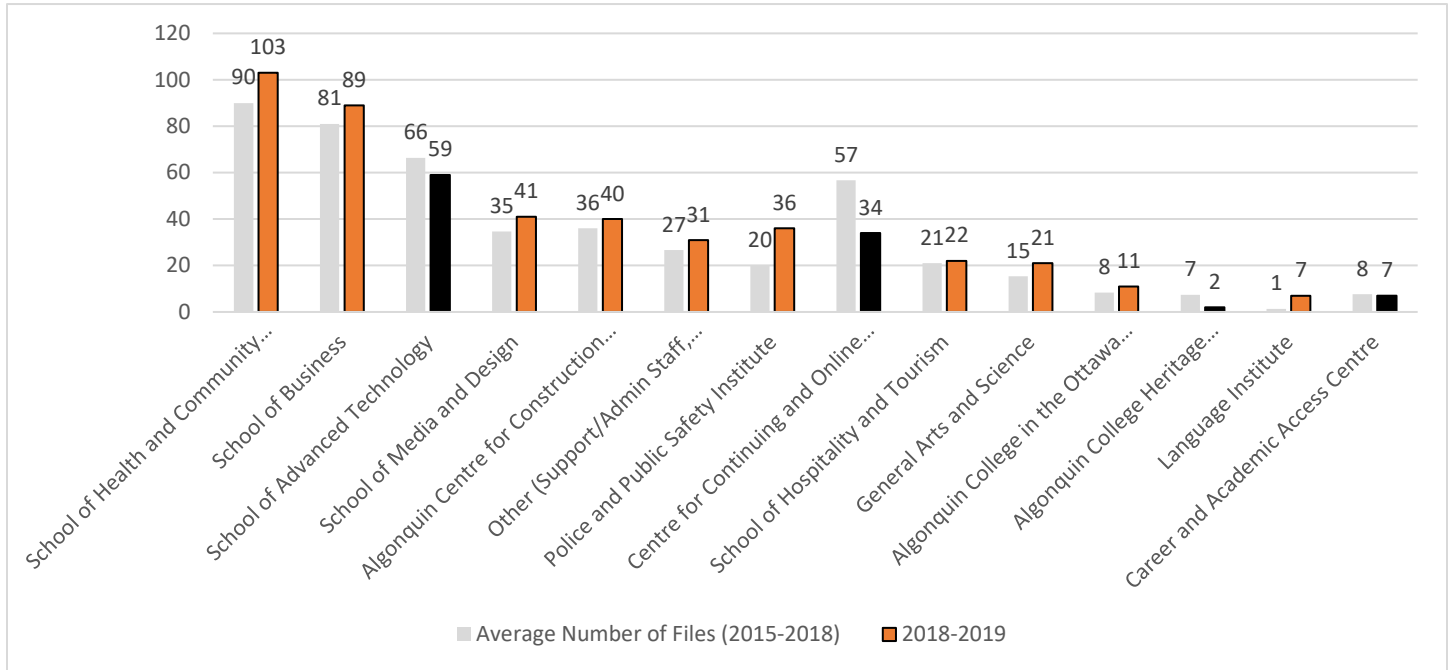
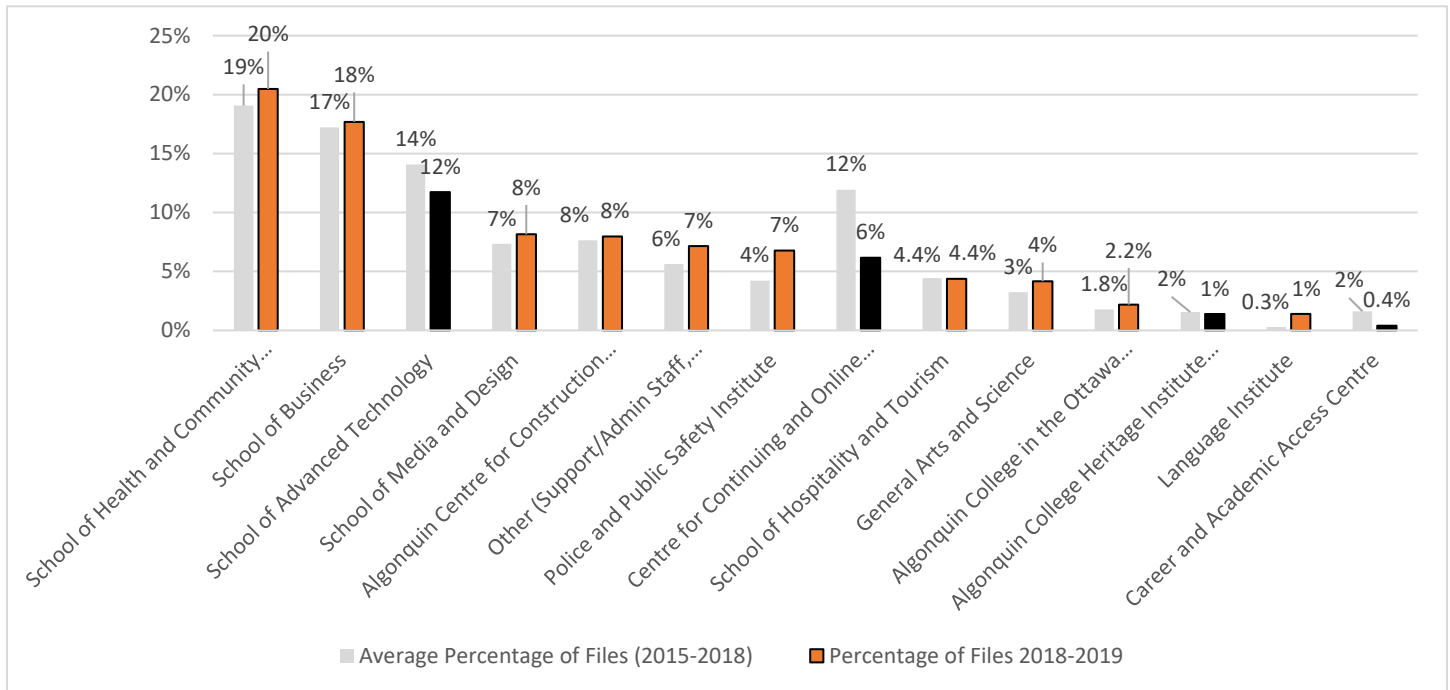


Figure 13: Percentage of Caseload per Academic Department Compared to Average (2015-2018)



On average, our caseload per academic area remained proportionally the same or increased except in the School of Advanced Technology, the Centre for Continuing and Online Studies (AC Online), the Algonquin College Heritage Institute, and the Career and Academic Access Centre. The decrease in our caseload at the Algonquin College Heritage Institute is presumably linked to enrolment. We do not have an explanation for the other decreases so will continue to monitor for trends/correlations.

Types of Concerns

Table 2: Types of Concerns

Types of Concern	Number of Occurrences							
	2015-2016	%	2016-2017	%	2017-2018	%	2018-2019	%
Academic	805	70	845	73	820	74	705	65
Services	124	11	112	10	138	15	197	18
Other (Interpersonal Conflict, External - Landlord/Tenant, Co-op, Notary, etc.)	168	14	139	12	78	7	102	9
Non-Academic Student Conduct	36	3	20	1.7	16	2	48	4
Human Rights / Student Rights	8	1	33	3	15	1	31	3
Algonquin Students' Association	6	1	3	0.3	6	1	1	1
Total	1147	100	1152	100	1073	100	1084	100

It is important not to confuse the **number of files opened** with the **number of concerns (complaints)**. As shown in Tables 2 and 3, the number of concerns exceeds the number of actual files handled, as multiple concerns can be associated with a single file. Often, each file entails several concerns, each requiring different services. A single file may, for example, entail the following concerns:

- an alleged plagiarism in a group project/assignment,
- an ongoing conflict with other group members,
- course management, delivery, and associated policies or expectations,
- a disability or medically-related accommodation that is creating challenges,
- an OSAP-related matter affecting the student's ability to purchase required textbooks, and
- a U-Pass related concern regarding OC Transpo service.

Similar matters are combined under single headings, although they may require distinct attention.

Generally, our academic related caseload are higher than non-academic related. In this reporting period, 65% of the caseload are academic related concerns. Although it reflects a 12% decrease from the 2017-2018 reporting period, proportionally, the actual number of academic-related concerns in the reporting period are higher than the previous reporting period.



Table 3: Types of Concerns (Academic and Services), 2015-2016 to 2018-2019

Academic	2015/16	%	2016/17	%	2017/18	%	2018/19	%
Progression / Graduation	151	19	132	16	113	14	101	14
Academic Appeal / Review of Grades	102	13	132	16	152	18	99	14
Other (Access to information/Confidentiality, Grading/Evaluation, Advising, etc.)	68	9	87	10	103	13	113	16
Accommodation of Disability / Special Allowance	58	7	83	10	66	8	76	11
Course Management - Teaching/Delivery	73	9	78	9	89	11	50	7
Course Management- Professor Bias/Treatment	57	7	56	7	61	7	47	7
Course Management- Course Policies	31	4	49	6	42	5	43	6
Course Management- Pedagogical Support	48	6	49	6	50	6	30	4
Course Management - Course Outline	15	2	41	5	22	3	14	2
Course Management- Classroom Management	48	6	35	4	26	3	24	3
Academic Integrity - Discipline/Plagiarism	59	7	34	4	31	4	39	6
Practicum / Clinical Placement / Field Placement	68	9	31	4	41	5	43	6
Exemptions/Advanced Standing/PLAR/Transfer Credit/Other	17	1	20	2	16	2	3	1
Academic – Examinations	10	1	18	2	8	1	23	3
Total	805	100	845	100	820	100	705	100
Services	2015/16	%	2016/17	%	2017/18	%	2018/19	%
Registrar's Office	74	60	62	55	98	71	105	53
Financial Aid	13	11	27	24	30	22	44	22
Safety & Security	5	4	8	7	2	1	10	5
Residence	3	2	5	4	2	1	5	3
Other (Student Services, Health Services, Mamidosewin Centre, etc.)	20	16	5	4	1	1	20	10
Parking/Lockers	5	4	4	4	4	3	10	5
Ancillary Other - Campus Stores, etc.	4	3	1	1	1	1	3	2
Total	124	100	112	100	138	100	197	100

The “Other” in Table 3 is simply a summation of several caseload categories, which in the interest of space, are aggregated. Progression/graduation related matters accounted for most of the concerns followed by academic appeal and review of final grades.

In this reporting period, we observed an increase in service-related concerns. The increase was primarily associated with support services that required the collaboration of various stakeholders from the academic and non-academic areas/departments across the College. Per our observation, there is an opportunity to improve the overall experience of our learners by having a unified approach in the processes and practices for supporting students. Our Office will monitor this, obtain relevant and appropriate information to assist in this matter, and continue to support the efforts to address systemic gaps to advance the overall experience of the Algonquin College community.

Nature of Services Provided

The Office of the Ombudsman takes the approach of proactively assisting with the resolution of student-related concerns. Nonetheless, the Office works to ensure that existing recourse mechanisms for resolution are reasonably exhausted before we choose to intervene. It is important to note that the number of services offered exceeds the number of files handled, as multiple services can be associated with a single file.

Figure 14: Services Provided, by Percentage of Total Caseload, 2018-2019

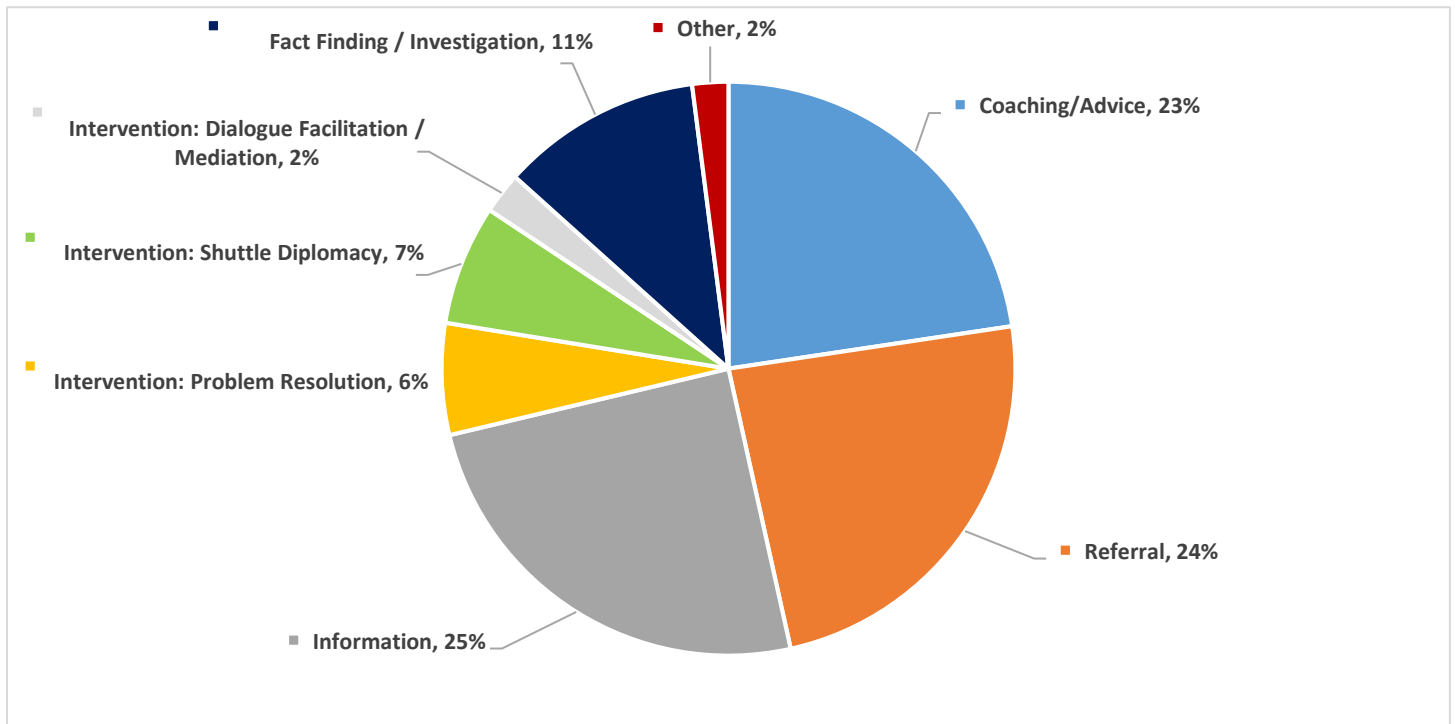


Figure 15: Percentage of Total Services (2018-2019) Compared to Average (2015-2018)

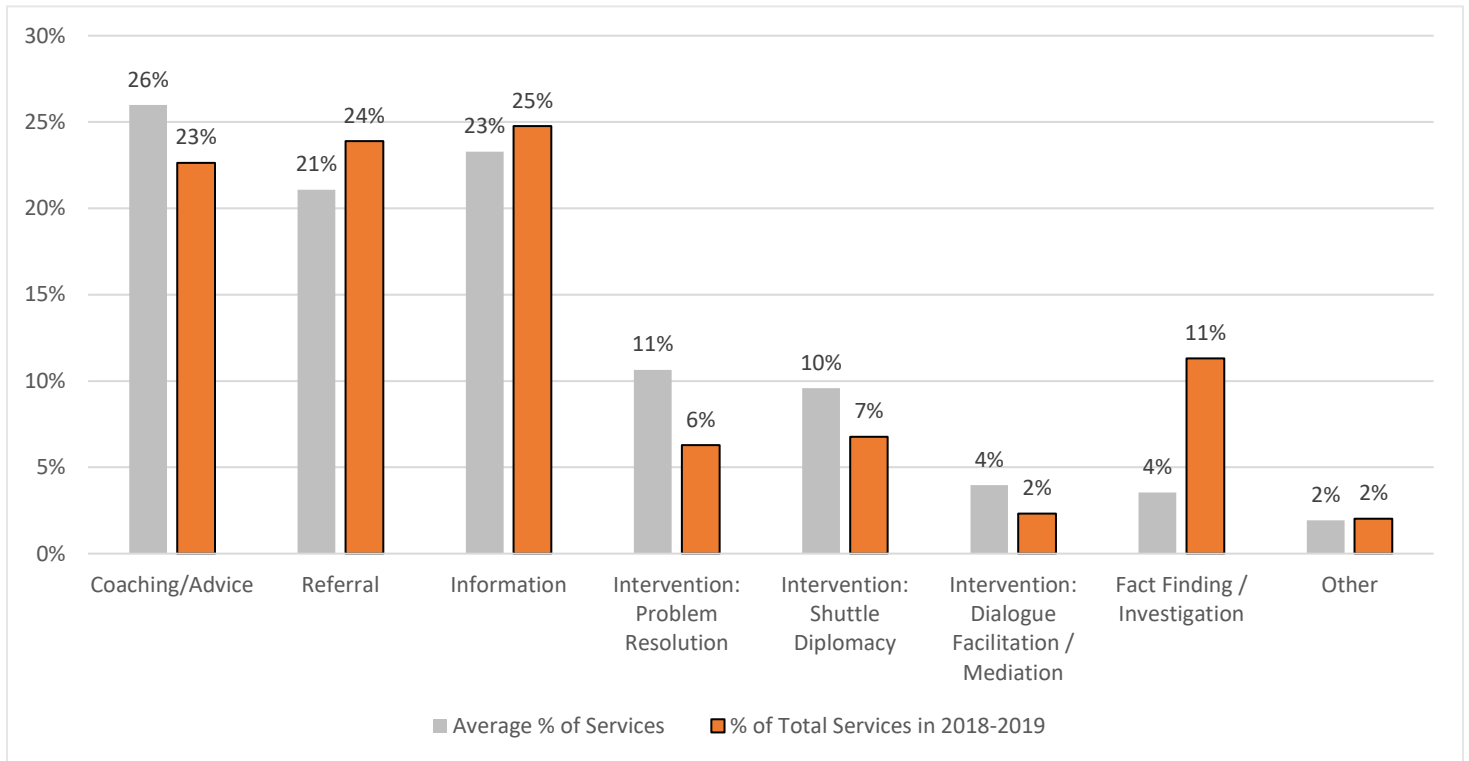
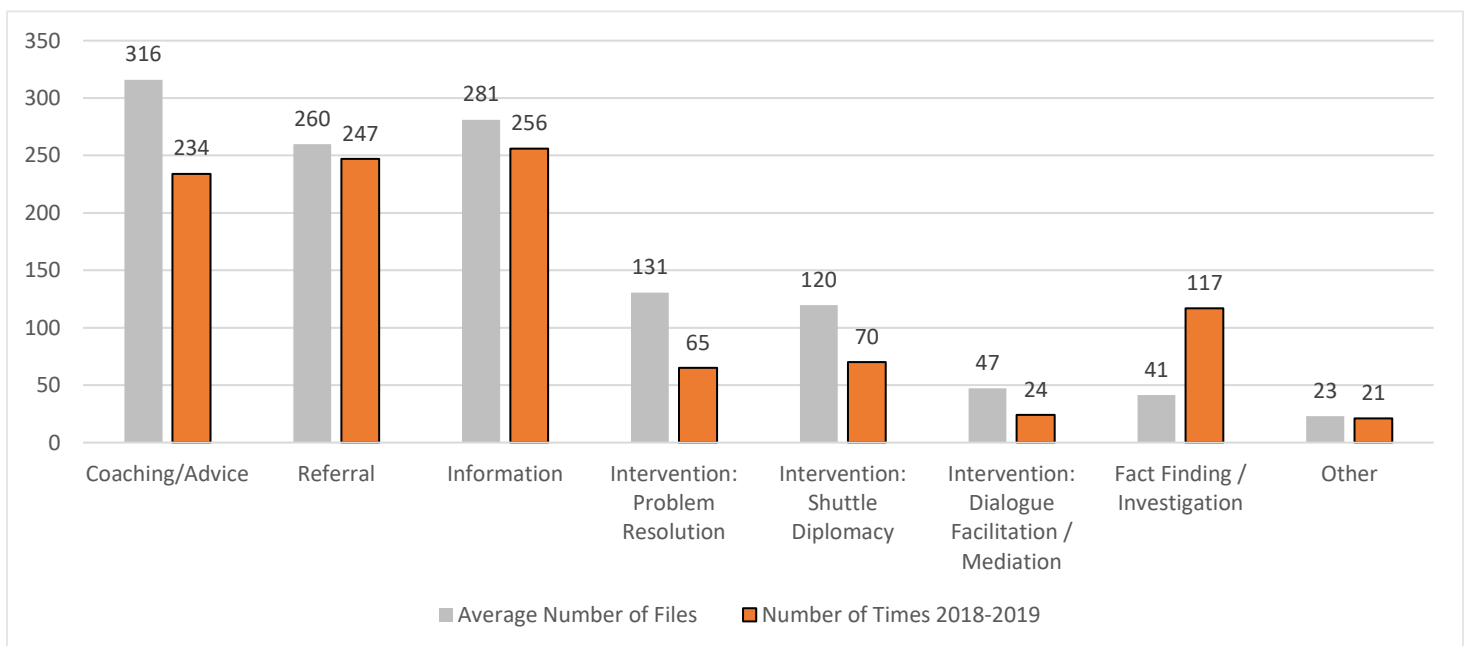


Figure 16: Number of Services Offered (2018-2019) Compared to Average (2015-2018)



With the exception of a few increases and decreases, the services we provided were relatively consistent with services provided in previous years. The increase in fact finding/investigation is a function of the types of cases we handled. All of our services, collectively, require an extensive amount of collaboration with stakeholders within and outside the Algonquin College community.

Often, each file entails several concerns/complaints that require different services. Depending on the nature of the request(s) for our assistance, we provide an array of services within the broader spectrum of 'Dispute Resolution.' Although our services range from informal to formal processes, most of our processes are informal.

As shown in Figures 14, 15 and 16, our services are categorized under eight sub-headings.

- 1. Coaching/Advice** - Listening, understanding a client's perspective on an issue, and assisting the client to explore his/her options for resolution. In most cases, this requires an identification of the bigger picture, in order to help the client make a reasonable decision to address the issue/matter.
- 2. Fact Finding/Investigation** – Responding to issues ranging from an informal inquiry into a situation, to a full-fledged formal investigation. Most services in this category are informal inquiries, and review of relevant documents/files in order to obtain a better understanding of a situation and make the appropriate recommendation.
- 3. Information** - Providing information on policies, procedures/directives, and channels of appeal.
- 4. Intervention: Dialogue Facilitation/Mediation** - Facilitating a dialogue between the parties in conflict and/or for all the stakeholders in a dispute.
- 5. Intervention: Problem Resolution** - Engaging directly with the appropriate authorities and/or parties in a dispute/conflict in order to find a resolution.
- 6. Intervention: Shuttle Diplomacy** - Serving as the intermediary to maintain the lines of communication, when the identified parties in a dispute are unwilling to engage in direct dialogue or when it is not appropriate to engage them in direct communication.
- 7. Referral** - Listening and directing the client to the appropriate authority or office.
- 8. Other** - Addressing any issues that do not fall within the above categories.

One or a combination of the services described above was provided in the cases we handled in this reporting period. In addition to services provided to students at the Ottawa campus, the Ombudsman made monthly visits to the Pembroke and Perth campuses. Additionally, the Office provided services to our students from AC Online.

V - Case Summaries

The following case studies are intended to provide insight into the kind of concerns that are brought to this Office, some of which ultimately lead to the development of our annual recommendations. While confidentiality prevents us from providing the details of specific cases, we hope these examples are useful to a better understanding of the range of issues and the approach that this Office generally takes in responding to them.

Case Summary 1

Approximately three weeks before Sam was scheduled to complete her studies, she received a message from her academic program that she could not participate in the upcoming graduation because she had not taken one course needed to graduate. This was devastating to Sam who was looking forward to graduation and had already notified her family and friends about the upcoming graduation ceremony.

Sam explained that she had always taken a full course load and never dropped or failed a course so could not understand why she was missing a required course in order to graduate. Sam also stated that she completed the first year of her studies online, and then took one year off from school for personal reasons; she resumed her studies going straight into the second year of the Program and switched into an on-campus version. It turned out that in the year she was away, adjustments were made to the program and a course that was normally offered in the second year was moved back to the first year.

When Sam re-applied to resume her studies in the second year, she provided her transcript along with the course outline for all the courses she took in the first year. Somehow, an error was made in the process and the course that had been moved from the second year to the first year was missed; Sam was placed in the second year and registered in what were deemed as the remaining courses for graduation.

The academic department accepted responsibility for the error but noted that Sam could not graduate without successfully completing the missing course. Sam contacted the Office of the Ombudsman for advice. After meeting with Sam to better understand her perspective, the Office of the Ombudsman contacted the academic department to discuss several options to help Sam meet the requirements to graduate. These options included:

1. Taking the missing course in the following term/semester and graduating afterwards,
2. Taking an equivalent course online to meet the graduation requirement. Incidentally, there was a course offering online that Sam could take and be able to finish in time to graduate; however, this would be an exceptional arrangement that required the approval of other stakeholders,
3. An exceptional consideration of a PLAR. However, the feasibility of this option required the input and approval of other stakeholders.

The academic department consulted the necessary stakeholders and together with Sam, a resolution was found for her to complete the missing course, meet the program requirements, and graduate at the appropriate time.

Comment(s)/Feedback:

With the College's commitment to the Learner Driven Plan and personalized education, the need to have streamlined systems that can support flexible in-class and online, co-op and placement, part-time and full-time programs is becoming more and more evident. Equally important is that this responsiveness be timely so that missing credits, pre-requisites and electives can be identified while course correction is still possible. Increasing this challenge is the fact that this flexibility must operate within the framework of external factors, such as OSAP, work permits from Immigration Canada, co-op requirements and a host of other elements that can affect options necessary to student success.

Case Summary 2

In 2016, Jane Doe transferred from the Fair Weather Experimental Program to the Fair Seasons Experiential Program. Both programs have six levels. Jane had no problems with her course registrations in the levels 1 through 3. Jane did co-op and was automatically moved in the registration system to level 4.

However, when Jane was scheduled to start level 4, the system automatically assigned her to level 5. Jane noticed the error and upon contacting the designated people in the program, was enrolled in the required level 4 courses and her timetable was adjusted accordingly. Unbeknownst to Jane, these adjustments did not correct her status in the system as a level 5 student. Jane then did a second co-op.

When she got to level 5, the system automatically rolled her over to level 6, based on her previous level 5 status, although it, too, was incorrect. This time, the error was not discovered early because the tuition deposit payment she made was partially absorbed by a co-op fee that had been incorrectly charged to her student account; hence, her returning status was not flipped to 'returning paid'; She was therefore ineligible for registration. Further, because Jane's tuition fees were not paid until the end of the month just prior to the start of the academic term, she did not have access to her timetable to notice that she was enrolled in level 6 instead of level 5 courses.

When Jane eventually got her timetable and detected the error, she brought it to the attention of her program coordinator who wrote an email for Jane to take to the Registrar's Office and register for the required level 5 courses. The Registrar's Office advised that two of the required level 5 courses were full. These two courses were laboratory based and had strict limits on seats. Additionally, these two courses were pre-requisite courses for level 6 so not taking them this term meant Jane would have to return the next year to take the remaining level 6 courses, offered once annually, in order to graduate.

Jane went back to the program coordinator and was informed that nothing could be done about the laboratory-based courses that were full. However, Jane could take a level 6 general education elective course. Jane appreciated the support of her program coordinator but felt that the consequence of delaying her graduation by one full year was unfair.

Jane contacted the Office of the Ombudsman for advice. Through a meeting with Jane, in which we explained as usual our role as a neutral party, not as an advocate, we sought to understand her concern and perspective. We then contacted the Registrar's Office to obtain their perspective on the matter. After a series of discussions with the Registrar's Office and the academic program, it was agreed that an exception be made for Jane to register in the two remaining courses.

Comment(s)/Feedback:

This Office regularly sees situations in which an apparently simple problem, often arising from an automated process, 'dominos' and creates further adverse impacts, such as: issues with OSAP funding, ineligibility to register for a subsequent semester, delayed enrolment, and the potential for delayed graduation. Often, alongside the error, the learner lacks access to relevant information or has a misunderstanding about the interdependency of systems and departments, which aggravates the situation. The Office of the Ombudsman is only able to assist in unravelling these challenging situations thanks to the continued goodwill and timely assistance of the many academic and non-academic areas of the College.

Case Summary 3

Jayden was admitted to the WXYZ program for which the graduation requirements included the successful completion of a field placement. Although not an admission requirement, the program had specific requirements regarding a Police Record Check. The program website stated that:

“Agencies that provide placement opportunities require students to have a clear Police Records Check for Service with the Vulnerable Sector (PRCSVS). Your acceptance for placement is at the discretion of the agency. If you register in the program without a clear PRCSVS and as a result are unable to participate in placement, you will not be able to graduate. A clear PRCSVS is required annually, and more often if requested by the clinical agencies.”

About two years prior, Jayden had a criminal offence resulting in a conviction. Jayden asserts that within a couple of weeks after she started her studies in the WXYZ program, she contacted the program administrator and disclosed that she had an offence that resulted in a conviction. Jayden explained that although there was a conviction, she had been cleared for the Police Records Check for Service with the Vulnerable Sector (PRCSVS). Allegedly, they discussed the placement requirement to have a clear PRCSVS, which Jayden already had. The outcome of this conversation was inconclusive, as was Jayden’s status in the program.

Due to circumstances, the WXYZ program was unable to start their internal administrative process for determining placement eligibility until two months into the academic term. Jayden provided all the required paperwork for her assessment, including the positive Police record check and the negative (i.e. clear) record check for the vulnerable sector. Her application was approved and she obtained clearance to participate in placement the following term/semester; she paid the associated fee.

A couple of weeks later, the academic department notified Jayden that her placement clearance had been revoked. Essentially, she could neither proceed to placement nor graduate from the program. By this time, it was almost the last week of the academic term. Jayden was frustrated because she had disclosed her circumstances a couple of months prior; had met the PRCSVS requirement; and had obtained the necessary clearance to proceed with placement. Jayden felt that it was unfair to be left with the option to withdraw from the program at that late date in the semester; in addition, she was concerned about the associated financial implications. Jayden had several meetings with people within and outside the academic department. She was then advised to contact the Office of the Ombudsman to assist in finding a resolution.

When Jayden contacted the Office of the Ombudsman, it was clearly explained that the Office was not her advocate but a neutral party. Following a series of meetings with the different stakeholders, it was determined that an exception was warranted considering that Jayden had a clear PRCSVS; had disclosed her circumstances earlier in the semester; had been transparent in the placement clearance process and was approved; and had almost completed the academic term. It was decided that, on an exceptional basis only, the WXYZ program would explore the prospect of a specialized placement arrangement. After a series of contacts, the program found an agency that agreed to present the matter before their ‘internal clearance committee’ for consideration. They subsequently interviewed Jayden, and about a month later, accepted her for the placement considering firstly that she had a clear PRCSVS, and the agency’s long-standing relationship with Algonquin College. Although Jayden’s placement was delayed, she successfully completed it and graduated.

Comment(s)/Feedback:

Work-integrated learning opportunities are important in a student’s educational experience. The arrangements for these opportunities require a critical balancing of competing obligations, without compromising safety. It is essential to continuously review related processes to strike a fair balance of safety and other interests.

Case Summary 4

On 31 August 2018, Camden, a returning student in the ABCD program, sent an email to the Registrar's Office inquiring about his missing timetable. Classes were scheduled to start on 4 September 2018. By the first day of school, Camden had not received a response so he sent a similar email to Tara, the ABCD program administrator. A few hours later, Tara responded that there was no evidence of Camden's registration and asked whether he had deferred his fees. Per Tara's records, Camden had a few more courses to graduate.

On 5 September 2018, Camden responded to Tara's email and stated that his fees should have been paid through the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). Tara quickly responded and proposed a meeting the following week. In the meantime, Tara provided a list of courses Camden ought to be registered in and advised him to go to the Registrar's Office for immediate registration. Camden went to the Registrar's Office and was informed that, because he had changed majors, he was designated in the College records as having graduated. However, in the transition he had effectively lost a semester. The staff member at the Registrar's Office processed his registration in all but two courses; unfortunately, one course was full and the other required a 'substitute code' that was unavailable. Camden was also shown how to defer his fees and told it could have been done sooner. Allegedly, Camden's Financial Aid Officer later told him that a fee deferral was not required as he was an OSAP recipient.

On 7 September 2018, Camden received a response to his earlier email to the Registrar's Office and was advised to find his timetable on ACSIS; he was also advised to contact the Registrar's Office if needed.

On 10 September 2018, Camden sent an email to Tara to provide a status update. Although it seemed as though Camden was asking for help, his email was unclear. By then, it was the second week of classes.

On 13 September 2018, Camden sent a follow up email to Tara asking for a response to his previous email, stating that he did not want to fall behind in his studies.

On 18 September 2018, Tara responded to Camden's email and confirmed that he could not be registered in the two additional courses for the same reasons provided by the person at the Registrar's Office.

On 20 September 2018, Camden sent an email to Academic Chair, Sam, requesting a meeting to discuss his matter. Sam responded immediately that she was not the Academic Chair for ABCD program and referred Camden to Nancy, the designated Academic Chair. Camden sent an email to Nancy requesting a meeting the following week. Nancy responded immediately and scheduled a meeting on 24 September 2018.

At the meeting on 24 September 2018:

- a) Nancy said that the one course Camden needs for graduation was full. Besides, it was now the third week of classes and he would have missed too much course content, and probably some assessments; hence, it would not be fair to Camden or the professor to register him in the course now.
- b) Camden stated that he did not believe he had been treated fairly. If he was not enrolled in this course, his next opportunity to take the course would be September 2019, thereby delaying his graduation by one full year.
- c) Camden inquired about his recourses for an appeal and was advised to contact the Office of the Ombudsman for advice.
- d) Camden contacted the Office of the Ombudsman and an appointment was scheduled on 27 September 2018. In the interim, he was advised to send a summary of his concerns and supporting documents, if any.

At the meeting with the Ombudsman, Camden expressed his frustrations about why he was not automatically registered, as was usually done. He felt that he was getting a run around instead of focusing on his studies. Besides, he was concerned about the implications of delaying his graduation by one full year. Camden disclosed that his Student Success Specialist had advised that he could enroll in a similar course at another institution, and do a credit transfer for an exemption. However, Camden was concerned about the associated cost and his chances of finding an equivalent course at another institution and completing it before graduation.

Given the circumstances, the Office of the Ombudsman contacted the Registrar's Office to obtain their perspective on this matter. The Ombudsman learned that in the previous academic term, Camden was registered in the final level of his academic program. It appears that he changed his major and was therefore required to take a few more courses. Unfortunately, there was a breakdown in the process of adjusting his graduation status. Hence, it was verified that he did not have a returning status for the current academic term, and was mistakenly designated in the College records as having graduated.

Upon realizing this error, and the consequences thereof, the Office on the Ombudsman contacted Nancy, the Academic Chair, for further exploration of options. Nancy contacted the professor of this course who agreed to have Camden join the class, albeit relatively late in the academic term. The professor was willing to help him get caught up in the course, and Camden committed to doing all he could do, as well. Camden was eventually registered in all of the courses required for graduation.

Comment(s)/Feedback:

Supporting students requires the collaboration of various stakeholders, depending on the circumstances. In an institution of this size, it is inevitable that errors would occur. When this happens, it is helpful to explore all reasonable options for a resolution.



Image obtained from https://www.netclipart.com/isee/iiTbJx_collaboration-png/

Case Summary 5

Paulina is a single mother enrolled in an online program. The concept of online learning was very appealing to her because it allowed her to study and to look after her special needs child, whose medical issues meant that she had to be available to drop everything and assist the child at any moment.

Paulina had successfully completed several courses in her program and had enjoyed her learning experience. In the final weeks of completing her studies, Paulina spoke to her proctor about making arrangements for writing an exam through online proctoring; she asked that she be allowed to take a break from the exam if required to attend to her child's very particular and private feeding needs; this could occur with little notice or no warning and would require up to 10 minutes while she attached her child's feeding tube.

The proctor was not receptive to Paulina's request and told her she was not permitted to leave the exam room once the exam began. Paulina managed to have her sister present the day of the exam, but as a mother Paulina felt distracted and anxious during the exam as she could hear the interventions taking place with her child in the other room but was unable to offer the trained support and comfort her child needed.

In a separate and unrelated case, Skylar was a single mother who lived in a remote area and had to commute over an hour to get to class. The daycare near Skylar's residence opened at 7:00 AM. Hence, Skylar felt it was practically impossible for her to arrive on time for 8:00 AM classes. Skylar explained her circumstances to the professor for this 8:00 AM class.

One particular morning, the students in the class, who had worked in different groups on a project worth 10% of their final grade, were scheduled to do their presentations. The professor could call upon any group to present as there was no set schedule for the order of presentations. Skylar had contacted her other team mates to inform the professor that she would arrive at 8:30 AM.

Allegedly, the professor noticed that every group had a missing member when the class began at 8:00 AM. The professor decided to call the groups randomly for their presentations; Skylar's group was called first to present. By the time Skylar arrived at the class, her group had finished their presentation. Skylar was very upset and felt the professor was insensitive to her circumstances. Skylar sent an email to the professor to express her frustration; the professor explained that every group had a missing member at the start of the class so she picked the groups randomly.

Comment(s)/Feedback:

As the composition, needs and expectations of learners change, so must the College be prepared to consider how it can respond, and where and when to negotiate accommodations related to personal circumstances within the scope of its mandate, its vision, and the reality of fiscal constraints. Technology has created opportunities for individualized learning, but there are many challenges, often resource-based, which limit options. The College must be realistic both in managing the expectations of its learners, and in taking proactive steps to equip academic and non-academic departments to respond to a variety of needs. When considering a policy that addresses accommodations, as in our first recommendation (see page 4), accommodation of exams and evaluations should be part of the conversation. Further, in the interest of proactivity and responsiveness in addressing academic accommodations, the Office of the Ombudsman applauds the College's focus on universal design in the Learner Driven Plan, and supports the adoption of universal design based principles and practices, as appropriate.

Case Summary 6

Students Ana, Ben, Cam, Dani, and Ellie were international students who worked together on a group assignment. According to the submission requirements, the group had to submit by deadline a hard copy in person at the start of class, as well as submit an electronic copy online through the Turnitin® Plagiarism Checker.

One group member submitted the assignment online through Turnitin® two hours before the class time when the hard copy was also due. The group also submitted the hard copy of the same assignment in class. According to them, they submitted the hard copy exactly on time; however, the professor asserted that their submission was one minute late.

Consequently, the professor referenced the zero tolerance late submission policy of the course and assigned the entire group a grade of zero. The group felt this was unfair and the professor advised them of their right to appeal the decision. The group understood the online submission to be well within the timeline, and felt that the time stamp of the online submission should stand toward their submission time, as the hard copy was the same work they submitted online. They insisted that the hard copy was submitted exactly on time and in fact wondered why they needed to submit a hard copy at all. For Dani, getting zero on this assignment had significant consequences: not only would she not be able to pass the course given her remaining grades but as an international student, re-taking the course would cost her approximately \$2000. It also meant that Dani would have to extend her studies by an additional semester, extend her study visa, extend her rental lease by approximately four months, incur additional living expenses, and potentially lose income retaking the course instead of starting a job.

In their efforts to seek an informal resolution, the group spoke to the professor at the time of the incident; they then contacted the program coordinator, and subsequently wrote an email to their Academic Chair. The Academic Chair advised them of their right to appeal the decision. The group felt uncomfortable proceeding to a formal academic appeal; coming from a culture where there is deference to authority, some of the students felt it was better to just accept the decision, even though they felt it was unfair. Ana and Ben expressed that they did not want to approach the professor again on this matter nor formally appeal the decision, fearing that it would strain their future relationship with the professor.

The remaining students contacted the Office of the Ombudsman for advice on the appeal process. Some members of the group had the impression that appealing this grade could lead to potential repercussions as the year progressed. The Office of the Ombudsman explained the appeal process and guided them on the next steps. One of the group members later informed our Office that the group had collectively decided not to go forward with the appeal but shortly after, one member of the group decided to appeal independently.

Comment(s)/Feedback:

One of the challenges faced by the Office of the Ombudsman is to ensure that learners are equipped with relevant information regarding the College's practices, policies and procedures, without assuming the role of an advocate or compromising our impartiality. Similarly, even when students approach this Office collectively with a common issue, they do not necessarily share common views or experience, nor can we assume that they face common potential consequences. We routinely encourage students to begin seeking resolution at the lowest and most informal means possible, such as speaking to their professor, or if that has been done, speaking to their Chair, but we also provide information on all relevant options should they not be satisfied with the outcome of these efforts.

Case Summary 7

Jordan, a mature international student still developing his English language proficiency, had difficulties learning the advanced skills in a computer related course. Jordan was clearly determined to succeed, and had been forthright with instructors about his need to graduate and support a young family.

Jordan's instructors were supportive, and in one course that seemed particularly challenging, the instructor advised him to obtain tutoring assistance from one of the stronger students in the class. He followed the advice and began to show noticeable improvement, both in class and in assignments. The instructor praised Jordan for the improvements she saw.

Jordan appeared very anxious leading up to the midterm exam, and when the instructor inquired, Jordan said he was worried about personal matters at home. However, on the day of the mid-term exam, the instructor saw the tutor and a calm Jordan enter the exam room together, and take seats at adjoining benches. Midway through the multiple choice exam, the instructor saw Jordan drop his pencil, retrieve it and then appear to re-order the three separate pages of his exam, lean back in his chair, gently shake his head back and forth, and pull on his ears before resuming writing. Shortly before the end of the exam, the tutor put down his pen, smiled at Jordan and gave a thumbs up sign. Jordan returned the smile, and resumed writing. The instructor remembered that interaction when she noticed that Jordan had done surprisingly well on the exam. When she compared his responses with those of the tutor, she noted that both students had made the same errors in 3 of the 10 "True/False" questions in the final section.

The instructor invited Jordan to her office the following day. She said that Jordan had passed the exam and asked how Jordan had done so well. Jordan said that the tutor had helped. The instructor asked, "Could you have answered these questions on your own?", and Jordan said that he could not have done so well in the exam without the help of his tutor, and that when they had discussed the exam afterward, they realized they had given wrong answers in the final section.

The instructor advised Jordan that this information confirmed her suspicion that Jordan and the tutor had cheated, and that she was going to have to report this to the Chair, where consequences could include anything from a failing grade to removal from the Program. Jordan seemed completely confused and then very upset, and asked the professor if there was anything at all that could be done so that the cheating would not be reported. Jordan reminded the instructor of the family matters causing stress at home, and how crushing it would be to be removed from the program.

Comment(s)/Feedback:

Cases such as these demonstrate that the commitment of truly welcoming an increasingly diverse student body means recognizing the challenges which such diversity may bring, while ensuring that academic standards and academic integrity remain intact. As a College, we will have to be vigilant in ensuring that our values and standards are clearly communicated to our learners, and at the same time be open to different explanations and possibilities in pursuing our processes and remaining focused on student success.

The Academic Chair, during the informal resolution phase of the academic appeal process, is to be a neutral arbiter that seeks fair and reasonable resolutions. Similarly, the Academic Appeal Committee, during the formal phase of the academic appeal process is to be a neutral arbiter that seeks fair and reasonable resolutions.

Students retain the right to appeal academic decisions, as long as they meet the ground(s) for appeal, and keep the designated deadlines to submit their appeal applications.

Case Summary 8

Yee was enrolled in the last remaining course to complete a part-time online program before graduation. Yee's previous three courses were delivered on Blackboard, but this course had been transitioned to Brightspace with which Yee was less familiar. Yee did not find a course outline with a list of upcoming deadlines, as was Yee's usual method for independent online study. Yee found that the assignments had multiple deadlines based on where in the platform you looked; for example, the portal showed different dates than the calendar view. According to Yee, the class received email updates with deadlines for assignments that were not on Brightspace at all. Allegedly, the class received the professor's email about an assignment's due date ten days after it was actually due. Yee also ended up missing two assignment deadlines because there were assignments from module 5, which were listed as due before the assignments in module 3.

In addition to the alleged lack of clarity for deadlines, Yee felt there was inadequate communication from the facilitator. For example, when Yee contacted the professor about broken links in the lessons, Yee asserted that the facilitator gave unclear directions to find the website instead of providing a working link. Yee felt that the response time from the facilitator was too slow; at one point, Yee had not received any feedback on assignments for three weeks. Yee said that, eventually, classmates resorted to responding to one another's answers in forum discussions.

Yee initially contacted the Office of the Ombudsman for support in withdrawing from the course based on the aforementioned challenges. Yee felt that this course would jeopardize chances of his successfully completing his studies so his best option was to withdraw from this course and start afresh with a different facilitator. Yee had not received any grades back so was unsure whether there were penalties for late submission of assignments, not to mention the confusion associated with the conflicting deadlines. The Office of the Ombudsman discovered that Yee's primary concern was to successfully graduate and obtain the designated certificate. Hence, after exploring some options for resolution, Yee reconsidered his decision to withdraw.

The Office of the Ombudsman referred Yee to the designated Program Support Specialist for assistance. Prior to contacting the Program Support Specialist, Yee realized that the facilitator was corresponding through Yee's Algonquin email account, although Yee had updated his ACSIS preferences to use his personal email account. The facilitator addressed Yee's concerns and the matters associated with the conflicting deadlines on Brightspace. Yee felt it was no longer necessary to contact the Program Support Specialist and was hopeful that further communication throughout the remainder of the course would be improved.

Comment(s)/Feedback:

Inevitably, there is a learning curve when changing processes or new technology requires stakeholders to adapt. When communications fail, and learners are struggling, they often see the Office of the Ombudsman as a last resort to get help in extricating themselves from the problem. Having the opportunity and time to truly listen to an issue arising, to seek information and perspective from appropriate sources and to collaboratively identify constructive options is one of the privileges of the Office of the Ombudsman. Learners, often in collaboration with a College official, can usually develop appropriate solutions once they understand what is going wrong, and by taking specific steps can salvage even difficult situations.

Case Summary 9

Jee had just started her fourth semester as a student at Algonquin College. In the first three semesters, Jee had the same locker number – WXYZ. At the start of the fourth semester, Jee continued to put her belongings in locker WXYZ without any issues. At the end of the second month, Jee discovered that her lock had been cut off, her belongings removed, and that she had been assessed a \$25 locker removal fee for using the wrong locker.

Jee contacted Parking and Locker Services to ask what had happened. Jee learned that when she re-applied to renew her locker, she was assigned a different locker in the same building, but one in which, unbeknownst to her, the second character of the four character locker designation had changed. She had been using the old locker for almost two months. Jee asked for a waiver of the \$25 fee, and her belongings returned, because she had made an honest mistake.

Parking and Locker Services agreed to release her belongings but said that the fee would remain as an encumbrance on her student account until it was paid. This meant that while Jee would not be hindered in using her assigned locker or in continuing with her studies; her certificate would not be released upon graduation until her student account was paid in full.

Jee felt it was not fair to be charged the locker removal fee, especially since a row of adjoining lockers in the area were not in use by other students, and she had paid for the use of a locker, albeit was using a wrong locker. Jee contacted the Office of the Ombudsman for advice.

The Office of the Ombudsman considered the perspectives of both parties. When Jee renewed her locker, she was given a receipt that had the new locker number, the information was updated on her ACSIS account, and she was alerted that the old locker had expired. Further, each locker had a sticker clearly stating that an improper use of a locker would result in a penalty; this information also appeared on the website of parking and locker services. Jee had a responsibility to make sure she was using the correct locker. However, the locker number had remained unchanged until her fourth semester, and it was evident that Jee sincerely believed she was using the locker she had rented.

Upon a follow up discussion with Parking and Locker Services, Jee was advised that a one-time only exception was being made to waive the fee as a gesture of good faith, considering the circumstances.

Comment(s)/Feedback:

We frequently see situations such as this where a stakeholder (learner or employee of the College) has inadvertently made an error, or misunderstood a requirement, for reasons that are understandable in the circumstances. Depending on the nature of the circumstances, resolutions may be found by seeking and considering the needs and interests of the parties involved in a dispute.



Image obtained from Brandon Randt, Redhawk Times at <https://redhawktimes.com/2277/news/no-more-school-lockers/>

Case Summary 10

Tom, a second year student in a very competitive program, wrote a mid-term exam where students were specifically instructed to transfer their answers to a scantron answer sheet. It was stated on the front of the exam that 'only answers appearing on the scantron answer sheet provided would be graded.' During the exam, the invigilator continuously reminded students of the time as the exam progressed.

Tom focused on solving the questions in the exam and planned to transfer his answers to the scantron before the exam was over. Regrettably, Tom was unable to transfer most of his answers from the question sheet to the scantron answer sheet. Allegedly, six other students using the same strategy were also unable to transfer at least some of their answers.

At the end of the exam, Tom asked the invigilator for one extra minute to complete the transfer of his answers to the scantron answer sheet; the invigilator refused. Tom felt this was unfair and contacted the program coordinator for a review. The program coordinator did some fact-finding and concluded that Tom was aware of the instructions, and had received repeated reminders of the time remaining as the exam progressed; hence, there were no grounds to support retaking the exam.

Tom contacted the Office of the Ombudsman for advice. Based on our understanding of the matter, the Office of the Ombudsman explained that in the absence of any other information that warranted an exceptional consideration, we could not conclude that the decision of the Program was unfair; besides, making an exception for him would raise other fairness issues concerning the other students who took the exam.

Tom asked about his recourses for an appeal and was provided the necessary information.

Comment(s)/Feedback:

Learners are disappointed at times that the Office of the Ombudsman cannot or will not intervene to resolve a matter in which they perceive that, given an unfortunate outcome, they have been treated unfairly – at times they perceive this means we are “taking the side of the College”. Unfortunately, there are times where faculty and staff members also incorrectly perceive our involvement in student-related matters as “taking the side of learners/students”. This Office is consistently clear in its initial meetings with learners that we are not advocates or representatives for students or staff or faculty or services, but rather that we advocate for fairness as we perceive it.

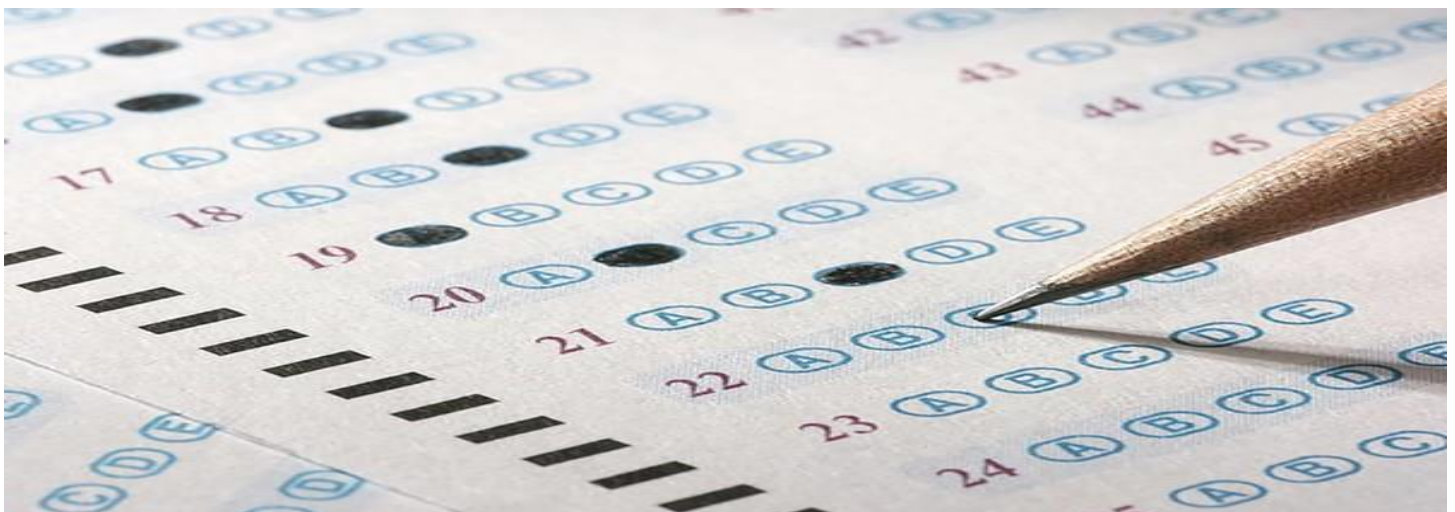


Image obtained from University of Windsor at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/dailynews/2016-10-20/updates-scantron-scanning-software-necessitates-changes-procedures>

VI – Appreciation

The Office of the Ombudsman expresses sincere appreciation to members of the Ombudsman Review Committee (ORC) for their continued support and counsel, when applicable.

To the leadership of Algonquin College and to the Algonquin Students' Association, thank you for understanding the unique role of our Office and for supporting the confidential, impartial, and independent nature of our operations.

Our sincere thanks to those who sought our assistance and trusted us with their concerns. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you, to learn from you and to use your situation/matter, in whole or in part, as a catalyst to improve the learning and working experience of members of the Algonquin College community.

To all the students, faculty, staff, members of the Algonquin Students' Association and other stakeholders within and outside the College, who patiently and professionally work with us to resolve the matters that come to our attention, thank you.

Respectfully,



Office of the Ombudsman
1385 Woodroffe Avenue, Room E112
Algonquin College
Ottawa, ON K2G 1V8
(613) 727 4723 ext. 6835

ombuds@algonquincollege.com


Website: www.algonquincollege.com/ombuds

MEMO

Date: November 13, 2019

To: George E. Cole, Ombudsman

From: Chris Janzen, Acting Senior Vice President, Academic
Laura Stanbra, Vice President, Student Services



Cc: Ben Bridgstock, Director, Student Support Services & Co-Chair, Ombudsman Review Committee
Deijanelle Simon, President, Students' Association & Co-Chair, Ombudsman Review Committee

Subject: Ombudsman's Annual Report 2018-19

This is to acknowledge receipt of the annual report of the activities and observations of the Ombudsman for the period of May 1, 2018 to April 30, 2019. Thank you for providing a presentation of this report to the Algonquin College Executive Team on November 6, 2019.

On behalf of the Executive Team, we would like to thank you and your staff for this report and acknowledge the value of your work in support of the College community, guided by the College's core values of caring, learning, integrity and respect. As always, the Executive Team welcomes suggested proactive solutions to reoccurring issues in the Ombudsman's reports.

In response to your four recommendations:

1. *Review the process for determining, implementing and monitoring academic accommodations, including retroactive accommodations*

We will coordinate and carry out a continuous improvement process review and appropriate counter measures to mitigate barriers to our learners. This will involve using the AC Way process improvement model and incorporating initiatives as appropriate into the Learner-driven Implementation Plan.

2. *Develop a unified approach in the processes and practices to support students; specifically, clear workflows between the Registrar's Office, the academic areas, and other service areas to effectively manage student-related matters and minimize errors or omissions.*

We will coordinate and carry out a continuous improvement process review and appropriate counter measures to improve processes and service delivery to our learners. This will involve using

the AC Way process improvement model and incorporating initiatives as appropriate into the Learner-driven Implementation Plan. In addition, this recommendation will be considered as part of the transition to needs required in a new Student Information System. As this is a large and complex issue to resolve and as such we anticipate this being a multi-year approach to resolving these items.

3. *Develop a policy that provides guidance to all stakeholders involved in placements (clinical, practicum, and field/other placements)*

We will work with Academic Departments to review and update as appropriate department/program-level policies and procedures guiding placements to ensure clear and fair processes. We will establish mechanisms for the clear communication of these policies to faculty and students.

4. *Continue efforts in line with our first recommendation in the 2017-2018 Annual Report...“ensures the consistent application of the Academic Appeal, Review of Final Grade, Academic Dishonesty, and the Plagiarism policies across Algonquin College.”*

The Academic Area notes your continuing recommendation to review and adjust departmental-level practices and operating procedures to ensure consistent application of College policies and procedures. We will renew our efforts to improve the application of these policies.

As discussed at the Executive Team meeting, in future reports we would welcome statistics regarding our International Students' experience.

In addition, two suggested additions to future reports we suggest are:

1. Information regarding the Ombudsman's Oversight Committee (mandate, membership, and their comments on the annual report).
2. Organizational chart of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Once again, thank you for this year's report. It will serve us well as we evolve to our strategic objective of being a more learner-driven organization. Your report, as well as this response will be provided for information, to the Academic and Student Affairs, sub-committee of the Board of Governors, on January 27, 2020.

