



**FOR ENDORSEMENT
AND FORWARDING TO
THE GOVERNING
COUNCIL**

PUBLIC

CLOSED SESSION

TO: Executive Committee

SPONSOR: Meric Gertler, President
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DATE: October 12 for October 16, 2017

AGENDA ITEM: 4(a)

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

2017-18 Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsperson, and the Administrative Response

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Section 5.1 of the *Terms of Reference of the Office of the Ombudsperson* state that the Ombudsperson shall make a written annual report to the Governing Council, and through it to the University community, as well as such other special reports as may be required from time to time by the Governing Council.

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. **Executive Committee [for endorsement and forwarding to Governing Council] (October 16, 2018)**
2. Governing Council [for information] (October 25, 2018)

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

In 1994, the Executive Committee decided that Governing Council should receive the *Report* and the *Administrative Response* simultaneously so that members of the Governing Council could comment on particular issues with full knowledge of both documents.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The *Report* and the *Administrative Response* are enclosed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no implications for the University's operating budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

Be It Resolved

THAT the *2017-18 Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsperson* and the Administrative Response be endorsed and placed on the agenda of the Governing Council meeting of October 25, 2018.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

2017-18 Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsperson

Administrative Response to the 2017-18 Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsperson

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO OFFICE
OF THE OMBUDSPERSON**



2017-18 ANNUAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

The University Ombudsperson is appointed by Governing Council under Terms of Reference established by that body, and reports annually to Council and the University community. The Office of the Ombudsperson has two responsibilities: 1) to respond to requests for assistance from individual members of the University community, and 2) to alert Governing Council and the University administration to those issues of broader significance (systemic issues) that merit review.

In 2017-18 we handled 374 cases, including 351 new contacts who expressed concerns about 399 issues. The total caseload continues the trend of modest annual increases in new cases (n=339 and 316 in the previous two years). Of the 351 new cases, 246 (69%) met the criteria for constituencies under the responsibility of Governing Council, e.g. undergraduate or graduate students, faculty, administrative staff, or alumni whose problems occurred while they were students. Eight of the remaining 105 were family members of a constituent, 4 were students enrolled at a Federated College/University, 3 were members of the public enrolled in continuing education courses, 1 was a member of the public who was a client of a Faculty-run clinic, 2 were student advocates for other students, 3 were inquiries by Ombudsman Ontario, and the remainder had no affiliation to the University.

The only remarkable change from the previous year was a 25% increase in the number of graduate students who contacted us. The types of issues which were brought to us were comparable to those in previous years. The total number of cases from the University of Toronto Mississauga and the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus communities continued to be very low (12 and 20, respectively).

I welcomed the opportunity to meet with the Committee to Review the Office of the Ombudsperson and was very pleased to see its Report was accepted by the Governing Council. Of particular importance was the Committee's recommendation to offer Ombuds services locally on each campus.

My **recommendations** fall into three categories:

I. Investigating Serious Allegations Within an Academic Unit

At present, students making serious allegations (such as bullying, harassment, professional and/or academic misconduct) about professors may be left under the supervision of the professors, while an investigation (which can take many months) is undertaken. I recommend that the University implement measures to protect the students from real or perceived threats while the investigation is under way. I am also concerned about the need for complaints of this nature to be responded to in an expeditious fashion, given the impact on all parties, and students in particular. There may be ways to make the process more efficient.

When an investigation into serious, complex issues is launched at the request of the Ombudsperson, it would be helpful if s/he were provided with the terms of reference given to the investigator, as well as regular progress updates.

II. Responsiveness of Campus Police to our Inquiries

I recommend that Campus Police be instructed that they have a duty to respond to inquiries from our Office. For several years, pre-dating and during my term in Office, Campus Police have been largely unresponsive to our inquiries.

III. Internal Policies of Graduate Departments

I recommend that Graduate Departments review their internal policies, to ensure they have solid and transparent rationale for policies which are more restrictive than those covered by policies of the School of Graduate Studies (SGS).

Plans for 2018-19 include: to finalize the restructuring of the Office, such that Ombuds Services are offered locally on each campus, and a new database is developed; to continue to follow closely the progress in investigating and dealing with systemic issues in one academic unit; to work with the Vice-President, Communications in developing and implementing a comprehensive communications strategy for the Office; to increase outreach activities; and to emphasize the need to relocate the St. George campus office.

Introduction

In October 1975, Governing Council established the Office of the University Ombudsperson, including its Terms of Reference, with a mandate to support the University's commitment to fairness in dealings with its members. The Office is independent of the University administration, and accountable solely to Governing Council.

As mandated by the Terms of Reference, the Office of the Ombudsperson reports annually to Governing Council and through it, to the University community. The purpose of the Annual Report is twofold: 1) to respond to requests for assistance from individual members of the University community, and 2) to alert Governing Council and the University administration to those issues of broader significance (systemic issues) that merit review. In this latter role, the Ombudsperson functions as a catalyst for improvements in University and divisional policies, processes, and procedures.

The Office does not normally intervene in complaints unless regular channels provided by the University have been exhausted, and then only with the written consent of the complainant. The approved Terms of Reference require that, in responding to these requests, the Ombudsperson act in an impartial fashion, neither as an advocate for a complainant nor as a defender of the University. The role is to assist informally in achieving procedural fairness and reasonable outcomes. The Annual Report allows the Ombudsperson to make formal recommendations, but all decisions remain in the hands of the University administration.¹

This Report to Governing Council covers my third year as University Ombudsperson. The Report is presented in four sections:

- I. Who sought our assistance, why they came, and how we assisted them;
- II. Systemic issues and recommendations;
- III. Other activities of the Office, both internal and external; and
- IV. Plans for 2018-19

¹ For more information about the work of the Office, and the approved Terms of Reference for the University Ombudsperson, visit www.ombudsperson.utoronto.ca

I. Who Sought Our Assistance, Why They Came, and How We Assisted Them

In order to give a picture of the workload of the Office, part of this section refers to the Office's total caseload in 2017-18, i.e. both new and continuing cases. To enable tracking of trends over time, another part of this section refers only to new cases opened during the year.

Figure 1 shows the disposition of all cases and inquiries in 2017-18, and Table 1 shows the caseload by constituency. The Office dealt with 374 complainants: 351 new and 23 in progress from the previous year. The total of 351 was a modest increase from the 339 new cases handled by the Office in 2016-17. Initial contacts were made by direct email or submission of the online request for assistance form in 89% of cases, by telephone in 10%, and by either walk-in or letter mail in the remaining 1%. By June 30 the Office had closed 358 cases, leaving 16 in progress.

FIGURE 1

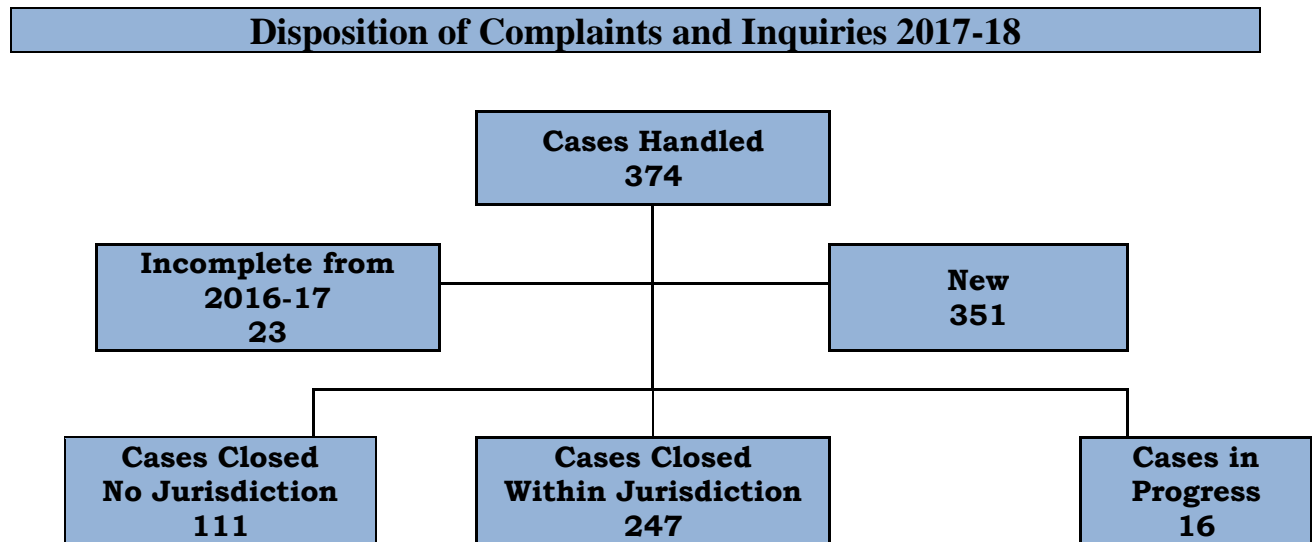


Table 1 - Caseload (New and Continuing) by Constituency¹ 2017-18

Constituency	N
Undergraduate	127
Graduate	94
Specialist program	1
Administrative staff	23
Faculty	19
Alumni	9
NGC ² :	98
Admissions	15
Continuing Education	3
Dental Clinic	1
Family member	9
Federated College/University	5
Student Advocate ³	3
Miscellaneous ⁴	62
Ombudsman Ontario	3
Total	374

¹"Constituency" refers to the individuals who sought our assistance. Some were part of the University of Toronto community, but their concerns were not within our purview.

²"NGC" refers to those individuals who were not within the Terms of Reference for our Office, set by the Governing Council.

³We offered advice to student advocates who were acting on behalf of others, but did not take further action unless the students themselves contacted us.

⁴Includes: complaints about public statements by a professor, trespass issues, social media posts, a rally on campus, queries about scholarship opportunities, perceived inappropriate use of campus facilities, and a wide variety of issues beyond the scope of the Office

The following section describes the students who contacted or continued contact with the Office during 2017-18, and the reasons why they did. Throughout this Report, our statistics reflect what we were told by complainants. We asked for but did not require complainants to complete every item in our Request for Assistance form.

Undergraduate students: Of the 127 undergraduate students, 85 indicated the academic unit in which they were enrolled. Of these, 7 stated they were from the University of Toronto Mississauga, 19 from the University of Toronto Scarborough, and the remaining 59 were from UT St George (39 from Arts & Sciences, 5 from Applied Science and Engineering, 2 each from Medicine, Nursing, Dentistry, Law, Pharmacy, and Architecture, Landscape, & Design, and 1 each from Music, Forestry, and Rotman Commerce).

Graduate students: Among the 94 graduate students, 83 indicated their academic unit. Of these, 11 stated they were from Division I (Humanities), 29 from Division II (Social Sciences), 11 from Division III (Physical Sciences), and 32 from Division IV (Life Sciences). The graduate students came from a wide variety of academic units within the four Divisions. The total is a 25% increase from the 75 who sought our assistance in 2016-17. There were 11 more complaints from Division II (which had 18 in 2016-17), and 9 fewer who declined to give their academic unit. No single academic unit yielded a disproportionate number of complaints, when the size of the unit was taken into account.

In the next section, Table 2 *shows new cases only* and shows the reasons students gave for seeking our assistance during 2017-18. (Describing new cases only allows us to track trends by year.) No remarkable differences were noted in the types of issues in 2016-17 and 2017-18. The great majority of students (85% of undergraduate and 80% of graduate students) each brought a single issue to our Office. As in the previous year, academic issues predominated in the undergraduate group, while academic issues, graduate supervision difficulties, and policy/procedure issues predominated in the graduate group.

Table 2. Student Caseload by Issue

Type of Issue	Undergraduate	Graduate
Academic (concerns about teaching methods, grading)	75	30
Academic integrity (alleged Code violations)	8	2
Accessibility	15	6
Administrative policy/procedure	14	7
Campus life	8	1
Campus Police issue	2	-
Employment/workplace issue at the University	-	3
Environmental Safety Issue	-	1
Fees/financial aid	7	11
Graduate supervision	-	13
Admissions	3	2
Dental Plan opt-out issue	1	1
Noise/classroom environment complaint	-	1
Non-sexual harassment/discrimination	4	10
Termination of graduate candidacy	-	4
Privacy	1	1
Sexual violence/harassment	-	3
Student group issue ²	1	-
Student Conduct issue	-	1
Other	4	4

The following paragraphs describe in sequence, the administrative staff, faculty members, alumni, and non-constituents who contacted the Office. *All are new cases only.*

Administrative Staff: We were contacted by 21 administrative staff members. Four did not indicate the campus in which they worked. Eleven stated they were from the St. George Campus, 5 from UTM and 1 from UTSC. Their reasons for contacting us included allegations of racism, sexual harassment, ethics in the work place, problems with a supervisor, job termination, and improper docking of time off for illness.

Faculty members: Eighteen faculty members contacted the Office. Seventeen were from the St. George campus. None identified themselves as from UTSC or UTM. One did not specify their location. Their reasons for contacting us included intellectual property infringement, academic misconduct, accessibility concerns, discrimination, and research misconduct, and disputes over office space and funding allocations.

Alumni: Nine alumni contacted our Office, concerning problems which had occurred while they were students. Three former students from one graduate department brought multiple serious allegations of harassment and professional misconduct against that department. Others had complaints related to accessibility concerns, a grade change, and graduate supervision. One wished to have a trespass order rescinded.

No jurisdiction: Of the 96 complainants over whom our Office had no direct jurisdiction, 17 were connected in some fashion to the larger University of Toronto community, but they were not within our ability to directly assist (Table 1). These included family members and students enrolled in one of the Federated colleges or universities or in a continuing education course, as well as student advocates. In the case of third party complaints, we asked for direct contacts with the affected individuals, and we referred the others to the appropriate offices. Of the contacts from members of the public, 15 were complaints about admissions decisions (which are not appealable), 1 was a complaint by a client of a Faculty clinic, some were unintelligible or were wholly unrelated to the University, and the remainder were a wide variety of complaints. In almost all cases we could refer the individuals to the appropriate office or agency, and/or explain why we could not be of assistance.

In addition, the Office had three inquiries from Ombudsman Ontario; 2 were in regard to cases we had closed because we saw no evidence of unfairness, and 1 involved a person unknown to our Office, who was subsequently referred to the appropriate University resource. Ombudsman Ontario contacted us just once about each of the three cases.

Table 3 summarizes the types of assistance the Office provided. In December 2017, we opened a multi-faceted inquiry into several major issues in one academic unit. Senior Administration launched an internal investigation, which remains in progress at the time of writing.

Most issues were resolved promptly, while the very complex ones sometimes took months and occasionally have persisted over years.

Table 3. Caseload by Assistance Provided

(FOR 358 CASES CLOSED BY JUNE 30, 2018)

Constituency	Consult /Advice	Coaching	Contacted Persons/Offices	Referral	Information	None²
Administrative staff	9	7	4	9	23	-
Alumni	1	1	1	3	5	-
Faculty	5	4	1	12	12	-
Graduate student	26	29	14	61	73	
Undergrad student	17	30	24	94	109	1
NGC-Continuing Ed	-	-	-	3	1	-
NGC ¹ -Family	-	1	1	7	8	-
NGC-Federated College/University	1	1	1	3	5	-
NGC-Miscellaneous	4	1	3	28	40	3
NGC-Student Advocate	2	-	1	2	2	-
NGC-Admissions	2	1	1	6	14	-
NGC-Dental clinic	-	-	1	-	1	-
Specialty Program	1	1	-	1	-	-
Ombuds Ontario	3	-	-	-	3	-
TOTAL	71	76	52	229	296	4

¹“NGC” is an abbreviation of “Not Governing Council”, referring to those who were not constituents according to the Terms of Reference for the Office, as set by the Governing Council

²Did not respond to our offer to assist

I. Systemic Issues and Recommendations

Investigating Serious Allegations Within an Academic Unit

Several current and former students contacted our Office about very serious systemic issues within one academic unit, including extreme bullying and harassment, and academic and professional misconduct. Some of the allegations also had implications for institutions external to or partnered with the University. After I brought the issues to the attention of senior administration, an internal investigation was launched by the Provost's office. I periodically requested and received progress updates. As of this writing, the issues remain unresolved.

The University has a number of policies and statements concerning violence and harassment:

http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Governing_Council/policies.htm#S. These include the Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment, the Statement on Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment, and policies on workplace harassment and workplace violence. Currently, while bullying and harassment pertaining to staff can be dealt with under established processes, there is no clear analogue in the case of faculty-student relations. At present, students making serious allegations about professors may be left under the supervision of the professors, while an investigation (which can take many months) is undertaken. I recommend that the University implement measures to protect the students from real or perceived threats while the investigation is under way. Such measures seem to be particularly important, given the power differential between faculty and students, and the lasting negative psychological sequelae of bullying.

I appreciate that finding an investigator (internal or external to the University) can take time, in that the investigator must have the appropriate area(s) of expertise and the time to undertake the investigation. Finding the right investigator in a timely fashion is particularly challenging, when the allegations cover a range of issues. But I am concerned about the need for complaints of this nature to be responded to in an expeditious fashion, given the impact on all parties, and students in particular. There may be ways to make the process more efficient.

Finally, when an investigation is launched at the request of the Ombudsperson, it would be helpful if s/he were provided with the terms of reference given to the investigator, as well as regular progress updates.

Responsiveness of Campus Police to our Inquiries

I recommend that Campus Police be instructed that they have a duty to respond to inquiries from our Office. For several years, pre-dating and during my term in Office, Campus Police have been largely unresponsive to our inquiries about, for example, trespass orders. According to Section 3.6, paragraph 2 of the Office's Terms of Reference, "The Ombudsperson shall have such access to all University files and all University Officers as she/he deems necessary in the pursuit of official duties, and Officers are required to provide prompt and full responses to the Ombudsperson's enquiries."

Internal Policies of Graduate Departments

I recommend that Graduate Departments review their internal policies, to ensure they have solid and transparent rationale for policies which are more restrictive than those covered by policies of the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). SGS policies and guidelines often include general statements, leaving departments to make more restrictive decisions. There are good reasons for having a broad policy which provides a framework within which departments may tailor their internal decisions. For example, what is appropriate in a laboratory-based program in the life sciences may be unworkable in a humanities department. However, some variations appear to have little justification, and can be unfair to and pose undue burdens on students. I recommend that graduate departments examine their internal policies, ideally asking for student input, to ensure they are based on sound rationale and are transparent.

II. Other Activities of the Office

Our "Just in Time" slides (included in last year's Annual Report), advertising the work of the Office, continued to be projected on public display screens on all three campuses.

We have been on Twitter and Facebook since January 2017. The relevant links are: (Facebook) University of Toronto Ombudsperson and (Twitter) @UofTOmbuds. We now have approximately 100 followers on Twitter, double that of last year.

In late Fall 2017, I met with the Committee to Review the Office of the Ombudsperson. And I met with the Vice-President, Communications in the Spring, 2018, to begin planning a comprehensive communications strategy for the Office.

The Office also participated in the Association of Canadian Colleges and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO), through its listserv and periodic online meetings. With three Ombuds Officers, I expect we will be more active in ACCUO in the coming year.

In late March 2018, the Ombuds Officer and the Manager of the Graduate Conflict Resolution Centre conducted two joint workshops for faculty, on tips for fair and productive informal discussions between faculty and graduate students.

III. Plans for 2018-19

The major reorganization of the Office will be implemented in 2018-19, as recommended in my previous Annual Report and by the Review Committee for the Office of the Ombudsperson. We will have Ombuds Officers on each of the three campuses. I am optimistic that we will see an increase in contacts at UTSC and UTM, after faculty, students, and staff become aware that there is a local Ombuds Officer on each campus. We will also work with software developers, as the Office moves to a more sophisticated database.

The Office will continue its outreach to opinion leaders, student leaders, student advocates, Accessibility Services, the Graduate Conflict Resolution Centre, and other formal and informal leaders in the University community, to promote our services. Outreach activities will be a focus of each of the three Ombuds Officers, who will be uniquely positioned to educate and inform, using locally appropriate strategies.

The Report of the Review Committee of the Office of the Ombudsperson (<http://www.governingcouncil.lamp4.utoronto.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2018/05/r2017-2018-review-Ombuds-office.pdf>) recommended that the Office continue to work with the

Office of the Vice-President, Communications, in the development of strategies to help raise the awareness of the existence, mandate, and services of the Office of the University Ombudsperson to the University Community. As soon as the restructuring is in place on all three campuses, I plan to meet with The Vice President, Communications again, to continue this work.

I was pleased to note the other suggestions in the Report of the Review Committee, including one about the relocation of the St. George office. Because of its isolation, the present location is far from ideal, both from the point of view of the work day experience and safety of our small staff, and also from the point of view of potential users of our services. Finding appropriate space is always challenging for any large institution with multiple competing demands, but I hope the University can find a more suitable location for the St. George office, in the coming year.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Harvey Botting (Chair) and the members of the Review Committee of the Office of the Ombudsperson, for an extremely helpful Report which captured the challenges faced by the Office and made substantive recommendations to address them.

I am indebted to Sheree Drummond, Secretary to Governing Council, and Anwar Kazimi, Deputy Secretary, for their wise counsel and support through the complexities of initiating and managing the restructuring of the Office.

We are very grateful to the members of the Administration (senior administrators and front line staff), nearly all of whom responded to our requests with good will, alacrity, and an obvious desire to help.

I would like to thank Garvin De Four, the Ombuds Officer, for his diligent and conscientious service before leaving the University in the summer, 2018. Sincere thanks also go to Stephanie Goldner, the Office Secretary, who manages our database, assists with the preparation of the Annual Report, and as always, handles telephone and in-person inquiries with unfailing kindness.

Administrative Response to the *2017-18 Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsperson*

October 2018

Overview

The Terms of Reference for the Office of the University Ombudsperson state that the Ombudsperson shall “make a written annual report to the Governing Council, and through it to the University community.” In addition, the Governing Council requests an administrative response to each annual report from the Ombudsperson. The *2017-18 Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsperson* is Professor Ellen D. Hodnett’s third annual report as University Ombudsperson.

Response

The Administration wishes to express its thanks to Professor Hodnett for her continued service to the University and its community. The Administration has corresponded and met with the Ombudsperson several times over the last year to discuss issues of mutual interest. It continues to value Professor Hodnett’s expertise and sensitivity in handling situations that are often complex and delicate. Her knowledge of and respect for the role of University Ombudsperson are exemplary.

The *2017-18 Annual Report* explains that the Office of the Ombudsperson handled 374 cases over the course of the previous year, continuing a trend of modest annual increases in new cases. Of the 351 new cases in 2017-18, 246 (69%) met the criteria for constituencies under the responsibility of the Governing Council. The Administration notes the 25% increase in the number of graduate students who made use of the Ombudsperson’s services, as well as continued low engagement at the Mississauga and Scarborough campuses. The persistence of this statistic emphasizes the importance of offering Ombudsperson services locally on each campus, as was recommended in the Report of the Committee to Review the Office of the Ombudsperson. The Administration strongly supports the Ombudsperson’s plans to expand services at UTM and UTSC within the coming year.

In addition to providing detailed summary data of the Office’s work, the *2017-18 Annual Report* makes formal recommendations in three categories. Responses to each are listed in turn below.

1. Investigating Serious Allegations Within an Academic Unit

The University treats very seriously any allegations of bullying, harassment and other kinds of misconduct involving members of its community. The case referenced in this portion of the Report is complex and multi-dimensional, and is the subject of an ongoing and thorough investigation. While the Administration cannot discuss the specifics of the matters being investigated, it shares and endorses the Ombudsperson’s perspective that such investigations should move as expeditiously as possible, while preserving a fair process for all involved. As indicated by the Ombudsperson, the Administration has met and communicated with the Ombudsperson on several occasions to provide updates on the process as it unfolds.

As the Ombudsperson notes, the University has a number of policies, procedures and resolution frameworks in place to address incidents of abuse, bullying, harassment and other forms of misconduct, as demonstrated in Table 1 below. This policy environment allows for a nuanced response to situations that may arise. In some cases, the policy environment and/or the University’s general academic and administrative powers and practices allow for accommodations to be made (such as changing faculty supervisors or courses) and interim measures to be set (such as separating the parties), if necessary. The Administration commits to undertaking further education activities through the appropriate channels to create greater awareness of these existing policies among staff and faculty.

Table 1: University of Toronto Policies, Procedures and Frameworks to Address Misconduct

Category of Misconduct	Policy, Procedure or Framework
Workplace violence	Policy with Respect to Workplace Violence
	Workplace violence program
Workplace harassment and uncivility	Policy with Respect to Workplace Harassment
	Human Resources Guideline on Civil Conduct
Discriminatory harassment	Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment
	Guideline for Employees on Concerns and Complaints Regarding Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment
Sexual violence and sexual harassment	Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment
	Guideline on Conflict of Interest and Close Personal Relations
Other behavioural issues or conflict resolution matters	Memorandum of Agreement with the U of T Faculty Association
	Collective agreements with unionized staff members
	Graduate Supervision Guidelines (Student Edition)
	Graduate Supervision Guidelines (Faculty Edition)

In addition to the resources in Table 1, the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) is preparing draft guidelines about the process for complaints involving graduate students and faculty members, which will be shared with students and faculty in graduate units when finalized. These guidelines will define the steps that students should take if they are concerned about their interactions with a faculty member, particularly when those interactions are affecting their academic progress. The guidelines will also describe best practices for graduate units in addressing such complaints, including mediation between the student and faculty member, and accommodations to consider during the conflict resolution process. Also included will be the steps that SGS can take to address complaints that are escalated from graduate units to the School. Interim measures taken by SGS, faculties or departments, such as separation of the parties or changes to graduate supervision, will always depend on the facts of a given situation. The Administration accepts the Ombudsperson’s recommendation that in some cases such interim measures will be necessary. The School of Graduate Studies commits to undertaking further education activities to create greater awareness of the availability of such measures where appropriate and the *Graduate Supervision Guidelines* more generally.

The Administration also agrees, as has been its regular practice, to continue using existing channels to provide the Ombudsperson with updates on the progress made in addressing individual cases at her request.

2. Responsiveness of Campus Police

The Ombudsperson recommends that Campus Police be instructed that they have a duty to respond to inquiries from the Office of the Ombudsperson. Campus Police on the St. George campus strives to respond to all requests in a timely manner. Inquiries from the Office of the Ombudsperson regarding policing matters often require additional consultation with administrative units and individuals before Campus Police is in a position to respond fully and reliably to a request for information, and/or to release any requested documentation.

Going forward, Campus Police on the St. George campus will acknowledge initial receipt of requests from the Office of the Ombudsperson and will advise the Ombudsperson of an expected time for a response, consistent with the obligation in the Terms of Reference, and will provide “prompt and full responses.”

Campus Police looks forward to a cooperative and collaborative relationship with the Office of the Ombudsperson and continues to welcome direct feedback should concerns arise.

3. Internal Policies of Graduate Departments

The Ombudsperson recommends that graduate departments review their internal policies to ensure a solid and transparent rationale for policies that are more restrictive than those covered by the policies of SGS.

It is the Administration’s expectation that graduate departments will continue to review internal policies regularly and comply with any relevant SGS policies that might apply to a particular matter or area. Policies issued by SGS come in different forms. For example, some policies might prescribe certain requirements or restrict certain actions, while others might establish minimum standards. The latter category can leave considerable leeway for graduate departments to set more rigorous parameters that best fit their environment, including the standards of academic excellence in their discipline. Both SGS policies and procedures and the regulations specific to graduate units, including admission standards, program requirements and academic path to completion, are published annually in the SGS Calendar.

Recognizing the importance of transparency to members of the University community, SGS recently launched a data transparency project, through which department-level data in key areas are collected, evaluated and communicated to the public via the SGS website. The ‘Explore Our Data’ portal was created using Tableau software and collects institutional data in three areas:

- Graduate funding, including an automated funding letter template for use by academic divisions and data on per-student funding by department;
- Time to completion for doctoral students by department; and

- Labour market outcomes of doctoral graduates (the 10,000 PhDs project).

SGS will continue promotion of its transparency initiatives and will encourage graduate units to communicate more clearly the rationale for standards that may be higher than SGS minimum standards. SGS has been encouraging graduate units to publish comprehensive student handbooks, which should lay out the policies, milestones and best practices that are applicable to the unit. SGS will continue to promote among graduate units the need for transparency as part of its regular workshops for graduate administrators, and will specifically work towards greater awareness among students regarding the relationships between policies, guidelines and requirements at SGS and in their graduate units. SGS would welcome the opportunity to discuss specific areas of concern with the Ombudsperson in order to explore appropriate follow-up.

Concluding Observations

The Administration is pleased to note that many of the Ombudsperson's plans for 2018-19 reflect recommendations of the Report of the Committee to Review the Office of the Ombudsperson. In particular, the Administration welcomes the Ombudsperson's intention to offer additional services locally at the University of Toronto Mississauga and the University of Toronto Scarborough, and trusts that her office will quickly become as indispensable there as it has been on the St. George campus. Similarly, plans to increase outreach activities and implement a communications strategy for the Office are important and logical extensions of the physical expansion of the Office's services.

The Administration notes the Ombudsperson's request for a different space on the St. George campus. The space currently occupied by the Office of the Ombudsperson was selected and refurbished based on the requests of previous Ombudspersons, who specifically requested an accessible, low-traffic part of campus to protect the privacy and confidentiality of users. If the needs of the Office have evolved, the Administration encourages the Ombudsperson to raise any issues with the Secretary of the Governing Council, who can assist in formulating a space needs request that can be assessed in the normal manner.

In closing, the Administration is pleased to see that members of the University community continue to avail themselves of the services of the Office of the Ombudsperson. The Ombudsperson is an important resource in our community and the Administration commends the Ombudsperson's outreach to and engagement with students, faculty and staff on all three campuses.

The Administration extends its sincere appreciation to Professor Hodnett and her team for their dedication to the University of Toronto and for their continued service to our community.