

(b) to review the effectiveness of the operations of the Office of the Ombudsperson from July 1, 2010; and

(c) to make recommendations concerning the appointment of an Ombudsperson.

The membership of the review committee consists of the following members of the Governing Council:

- Alexis Archbold (Administrative staff governor)
- Aidan Fishman (Student governor)
- Gary Mooney (Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council governor)
- Andrea Sass-Kortsak (Teaching Staff governor)
- Maureen Somerville (Alumni governor, Chair)

Professor Angela Hildyard will serve as an administrative advisor. Ms Sheree Drummond, Deputy Secretary of the Governing Council will serve as Secretary to the Committee.

(b.) Call for Submissions

Members of the University are invited to submit their advice to the Committee on:

- the awareness of the Office by members of the University community across the three campuses;
- the communication of its services on the student portal and in electronic newsletters, as well as through vehicles maintained by the academic divisions;
- the effectiveness of the Office;
- the future directions and priorities appropriate for the Office.

The Terms of Reference of the Office can be viewed at <http://www.utoronto.ca/ombudsperson/reports/termref.html>

The most recent annual report of the Ombudsperson can be found at http://www.utoronto.ca/ombudsperson/reports/reports/AnnualReport_2011-12.pdf

Please send your written advice in confidence to Ms Sheree Drummond, Secretary of the Committee to Review the Office of the University Ombudsperson, by e-mail at sheree.drummond@utoronto.ca.

The deadline for submissions is **Tuesday, February 12, 2013**.

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Systemic Issues	4
International Fee Exemption Eligibility.....	5
Refund of Program Fees	5
Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters	7
Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment:	
Complaints procedures for Students	9
Graduate Supervision	9
Grading Practices Policies	11
Student Health Plans	11
Jurisdiction of the Ontario Ombudsman	12
Handling of Requests for Assistance	13
Other Activities of the Office	14
Appendix 1: Who Approached the Office, and Why	
A. Graduate Students & Postdoctoral Fellows	16
B. Undergraduate, Professional & Continuing Education Students	17
C. Administrative Staff	17
D. Academic Staff	18
E. Others	18
Appendix 2: How the Office Responded	19

Executive Summary

The University Ombudsperson reports annually to Governing Council and the University community. This report is for the academic year 2011-2012.

In the course of the year, the Office dealt with 282 requests for assistance from individuals. In responding to these requests, the Ombudsperson acts in an impartial fashion, acting neither as an advocate for a complainant nor as a defender of the University, but rather assisting in achieving procedural fairness and reasonable outcomes. All matters are held in strict confidence unless the individuals involved provide written consent to talk about their cases with relevant administrators. This report contains statistical information about the users of our services, the kind of matters for which our assistance was sought, the type of assistance provided, and the outcomes.

The resolution of individual complaints is of high importance, not only to the complainants, but also to the institution itself as it strives to achieve excellence as a place for students to learn, and for employees to work. However, beyond that, an individual complaint may reveal a broader problem. A core role of the Office is to identify and address *systemic issues*, those issues that potentially affect many members of the institution, not only an individual complainant. In this way, the Ombudsperson functions as a catalyst for improvements in policies, processes, and procedures. Such improvements are often stimulated through informal discussion without need of formal investigations and recommendations. Nevertheless, on occasion, the Ombudsperson may make formal recommendations in the context of a written report. Such recommendations are not binding on the responsible administrator(s), but they will receive consideration and a formal response.

Systemic issues that engaged us in 2011-2012 included among other things, the need to raise awareness of the international fee exemption for which some students may be eligible, the refund schedule for program fees, the review of the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*, and the development of procedures for the guidance of students with complaints relating to prohibited discrimination and discriminatory harassment. Although student health plans are not a direct responsibility of the University, we also continued to take an active interest in how students who need a reduction in course load as an accommodation for a disability are impacted by the multiplicity of plans for students in undergraduate and professional programs.

We have assisted in the delivery of training courses for new ombudspersons and have also responded to requests for information and advice from new ombudspersons in universities elsewhere, as well as from a district school board considering the establishment of an ombudsperson office. We also continue efforts to ensure as far as possible that members of the University are aware of our services, understand the mandate of the Office, and know how to reach us in case of need.

Report of the University Ombudsperson for the Period July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012

In 1975, Governing Council established the Office of the University Ombudsperson to support the University's commitment to fairness in dealings with its members. The Office is accountable directly to the Governing Council, hence is independent of the administration. It has unrestricted access to all University authorities. Its services are available to individual staff/students/faculty members on any campus.

A core role of the Office is to identify and address issues that potentially affect many members of the institution, not only an individual complainant (*systemic issues*). The Ombudsperson functions as a catalyst for improvement in the University's policies, processes and procedures, whether through informal discussion or formal recommendations. While not bound by the Ombudsperson's recommendations, the Administration does provide a written response to those that are formally presented.

In considering individual complaints, the Ombudsperson acts in an impartial fashion, acting neither as an advocate for the complainant nor as a defender of the University, but rather as a neutral party assisting in achieving procedural fairness and reasonable outcomes. All matters are held in strict confidence unless the individual involved approves otherwise, in writing. The Ombudsperson does not make decisions for the University; these remain with the responsible administrator.

This report contains three sections:

- 1) *Systemic Issues*. Issues that engaged the Office in the past year and an update on the status of recommendations accepted by the Administration in past years.
- 2) *Handling of Requests for Assistance*. Information about the caseload of the Office in 2011-12.
- 3) *Other Activities of the Office*: Professional and outreach activities.

Systemic Issues

Systemic issues are those that potentially affect many members of the institution, not only an individual complainant. In this section, I discuss the main issues that engaged us in the course of the past year. As well, I continue to monitor some matters that do not fall under the direct responsibility of the University, but that I believe will be of interest to governors.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the administrators who have been generous with their time to discuss systemic issues and have worked to find ways to address them to the benefit of the University community. We thank them for their cooperation, without which we could not fulfil the mandate of the Office. Because of the initiatives taken by administrators at an early stage in our discussions, no formal recommendations are brought forward in this report in connection with the issues described.

