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FAIRNESS

IMPARTIALITY

INDEPENDENCE

CONFIDENTIALITY



# LISTENING & LEARNING

ANNUAL REPORT FOR JULY 1, 2015  
TO JUNE 30, 2016 FOR THE OMBUDSPERSON  
AT RYERSON UNIVERSITY

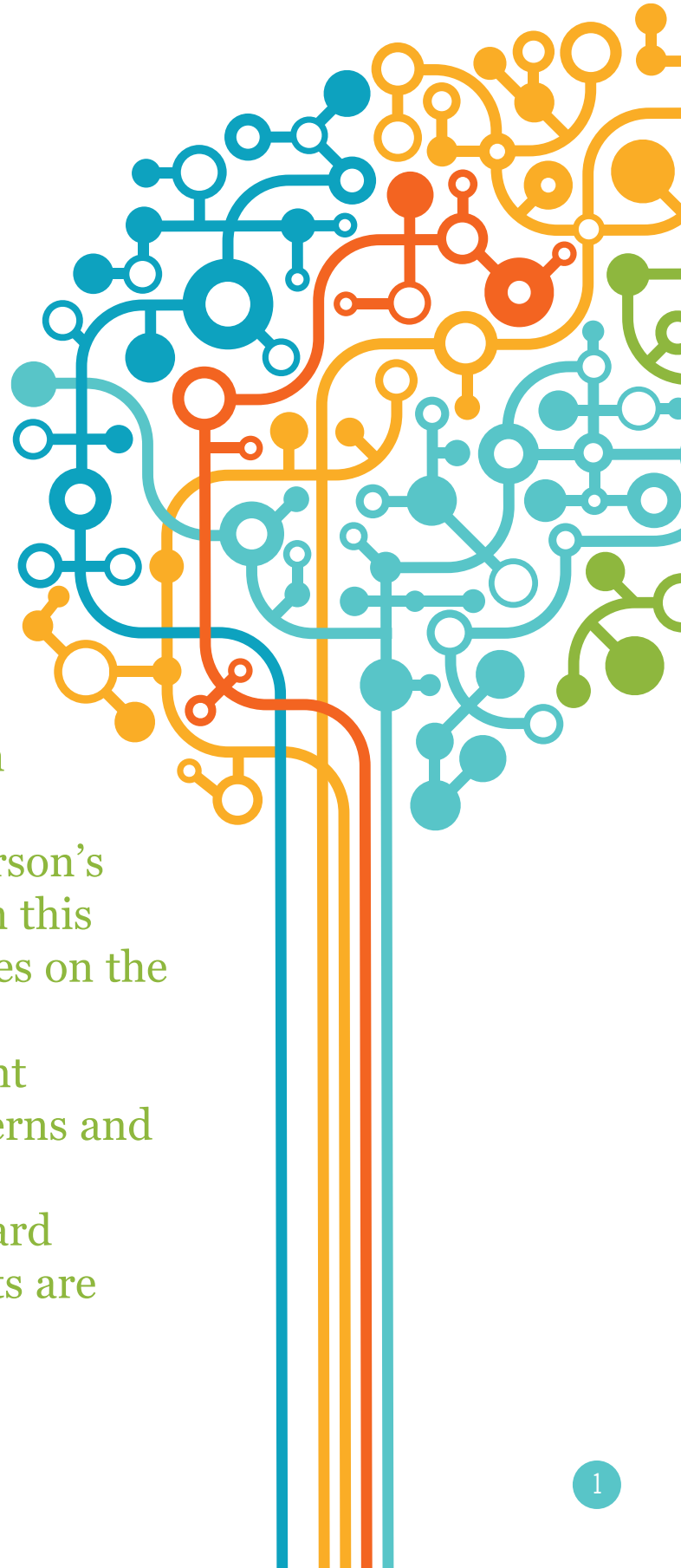
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*Note: The citation style used throughout this report follows the McGill Law Journal tradition.*

# Introduction

This annual report is a measure of accountability for the Office of the Ombudsperson and provides recommendations for system-wide improvements that flow from the discussion of complaints, concerns and the Ombudsperson's research and observations. In this report we also provide updates on the progress made on previous recommendations and present statistics on the type of concerns and complaints received, the constituencies bringing forward concerns, and how complaints are handled on a general basis.



# Essential Characteristics of the Office of the Ombudsperson at Ryerson University

## CONFIDENTIALITY:

All information provided to the Office of the Ombudsperson is kept confidential, unless the Office has explicit permission for names and/or identifying details to be released and the Office considers it to be appropriate to do so.

## IMPARTIALITY:

The Office of the Ombudsperson considers all of the information it receives and collects with the highest degree of objectivity. We strive to ensure that everyone involved believes their perspectives have been understood and considered and that they have been treated **fairly**.

## INDEPENDENCE:

The Office of the Ombudsperson and staff operate independently of the University, including all administrative and academic structures and student government.

## Modus Operandi of the Office of the Ombudsperson at Ryerson University

### INDIVIDUAL CASE WORK

- discussion about concerns or complaints;
- review of relevant options and assist in the assessment of these options so that the student can decide in an informed manner the viable routes available for moving forward;
- assist with 'reality testing' of expectations for a resolution or a response;
- coach people on how to approach the resolution of a dispute in a kind, calm and respectful manner;
- if a student has tried to resolve a problem and not been successful and it appears there is a gap in information or a possible misunderstanding we may call to seek clarification;
- if an opportunity for a mutually satisfactory and fair outcome emerges we may engage in shuttle diplomacy or mediation;
- if it becomes evident there is no other means to resolve the situation and the student has identified concerns that relate to fair treatment, process or outcome, we may initiate a fairness review to investigate what has transpired and determine if the University has acted fairly.

### SYSTEMIC AND SYSTEM-WIDE ANALYSIS

- review concerns and complaints to identify common trends;
- analyze individual complaints to see if they are indicative of a potential systemic or system-wide concern.

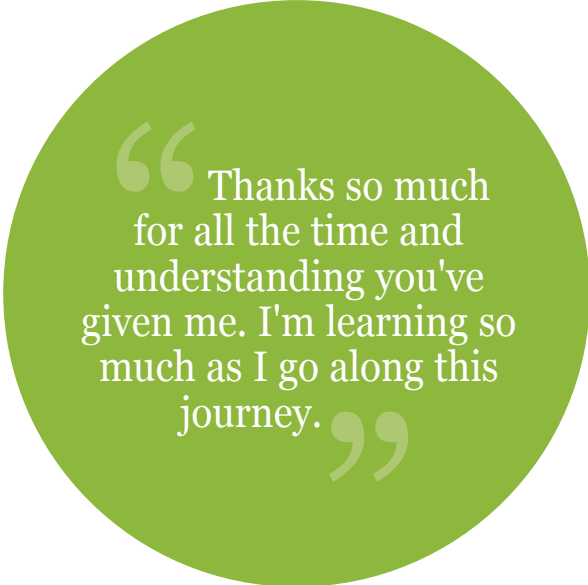
### PREVENTATIVE ORIENTATION

#### *Online presence*

- make detailed information available on our website on how to access policies, procedures and relevant forms along with explanations for the routes available for addressing all manner of concerns and complaints.

#### *Consultation*

- consult on development of policy and procedure;
- consult on University training initiatives and lead training developed and offered by the Office of the Ombudsperson.



“Thanks so much for all the time and understanding you've given me. I'm learning so much as I go along this journey.”

# Progress made on Ombudsperson's Recommendations

Each year in the annual report we follow up on the progress made in implementing the University's response to recommendations made previously. I would like to point out that in previous reports we were following up on recommendations that were accepted as early as 2012. As all previous commitments made by the University have been fulfilled we are following up only on the commitments made in relation to recommendations from our most recent annual report for 2014/2015.

## Follow-up on Recommendations from 2014/2015:

### RECOMMENDATION 1:

'That it is expected, and that the University promulgates this expectation in its policy development and communications that all personnel approach their interaction with students (as well as fellow staff and faculty members) so as to "...relate to each other as cooperating partners in a joint enterprise."<sup>1</sup> This type of relationship is only possible when each of the partners attempts to understand the others' perspectives by demonstrating a high degree of empathy.'<sup>2</sup>

#### **Excerpt from University's response:**

*It is expected that the current review of policies related to course management, examinations, and academic consideration and appeals will continue to include and will elaborate on the University's perspective on this issue,..."That academic judgments by faculty will be fair, consistent and objective, and recognize the need to grant academic consideration, where appropriate, in order to support students who face personal difficulties or events." As part of the implementation of the anticipated revisions arising from the review of these policies, and others the University will continue to communicate these values and expectations to the Ryerson community.*

#### **Action Taken:**

In conjunction with the co-leadership of Marcia Moshé (Interim Vice Provost Academic) and Jacob Friedman (Chair of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering) the University has developed a rigorous and inclusive process for reviewing the Examination, the Course Management and Academic Consideration and Appeals policies for undergraduate, continuing education and graduate students via the *ad hoc* Academic Policy Review Committee (APRC). As a result of reviewing the values document that has been prepared by the APRC as the foundation for this Committee's work it is readily apparent that the policy review group understands the importance of empathy and flexibility to making fair decisions that take into account the differing circumstances of the affected individuals.

### RECOMMENDATION 2:

'That the key foundational document that describes the faculty member's expectations for the student in a course, that being the course outline, be carefully reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the content is consistent with the applicable policies and does not allow for an institutionally sanctioned lack of empathy'.

#### **Excerpt from University's response:**

*The University will continue to improve its efforts to provide guidance to faculty members on the content and format of their course outlines, as well as its efforts to inform Chairs and Directors of their responsibility to review outlines in their schools and departments. The Senate office shall, on an annual basis, remind Chairs and Directors of this responsibility. The University will also explore additional avenues to communicate this information.*

#### **Action Taken:**

I am very pleased to report that a working group has been created, and some funding secured, to look at ways to help instructors create their course outlines. This group's goals are to:

- make it easier for instructors to get their outlines, or perhaps previous versions of outlines, available to students before a class begins and
- increase consistency of outlines across the University and their compliance with University policies

The group's membership represents both academic and technological [i.e., Computing & Communication Services (CCS)] perspectives as technology plays a key role for providing the means for "pre-populating fields" with accurate and up to date information from the Senate office, the Academic Integrity Office, Academic Accommodation Support, etc., and for posting course outlines on D2L and distributing them via email, etc.

In addition, I have been advised that the Secretary of Senate has reminded Deans, Chairs and Directors that Chairs/Directors are expected to review course outlines, especially in cases where deviations from policies were identified. This information will also be sent to all Chairs/Directors for the winter 2017 term via a specific message devoted to this topic.

<sup>1</sup> John Deigh, "Empathy, Justice and Jurisprudence" (2011) 49 The Southern Journal of Philosophy, Spindel Supplement, 73 at p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Please be aware that my views on the benefit of adopting this type of approach have also been influenced by Lorne Sossin's view of the interdependence of the individuals who make decisions and those who request them within an administrative environment as described in "An Intimate Approach to Fairness, Impartiality and Reasonableness in Administrative Law" 27 Queen's Law Journal 809. Please note that Dr. Sossin's definition of intimacy is that of 'inward knowledge' or knowledge that is derived from observation and understanding. (See p. 857 at Footnote 1.)



## Progress Made on Ombudsperson's Recommendations (cont'd)

### RECOMMENDATION 3:

'That a mechanism be put in place such that if a student does not receive an appeal response within the required time line or after a reasonable time frame due to a justifiable circumstance, that the Dean's Office or the Secretary of Senate implements a protocol whereby a replacement decision-maker is put into place immediately. Similarly, provision must be made for interim decision-makers to be appointed when it is known in advance that the required time line is impossible to meet due to research activities, lengthy vacation periods or personal circumstances. In addition, when circumstances arise unexpectedly that prevent the decision-maker from meeting the deadline, the aforementioned protocol should provide for an easily implemented means for providing a back-up person to fulfill this function'.

#### **Excerpt from University's response:**

*The Secretary of Senate has responsibility for the training and monitoring of decision-making for academic appeals, and will continue efforts to ensure the decisions are issued in a timely manner. As part of that process, the Secretary will enhance efforts to maintain the list of decision-makers at the Department/School and Faculty levels, communicate with Chairs/Directors and Deans regarding the status of those designated to respond to appeal on their behalf, and respond to inquiries from students regarding the timeline for processing their appeal. ...*

#### **Action Taken:**

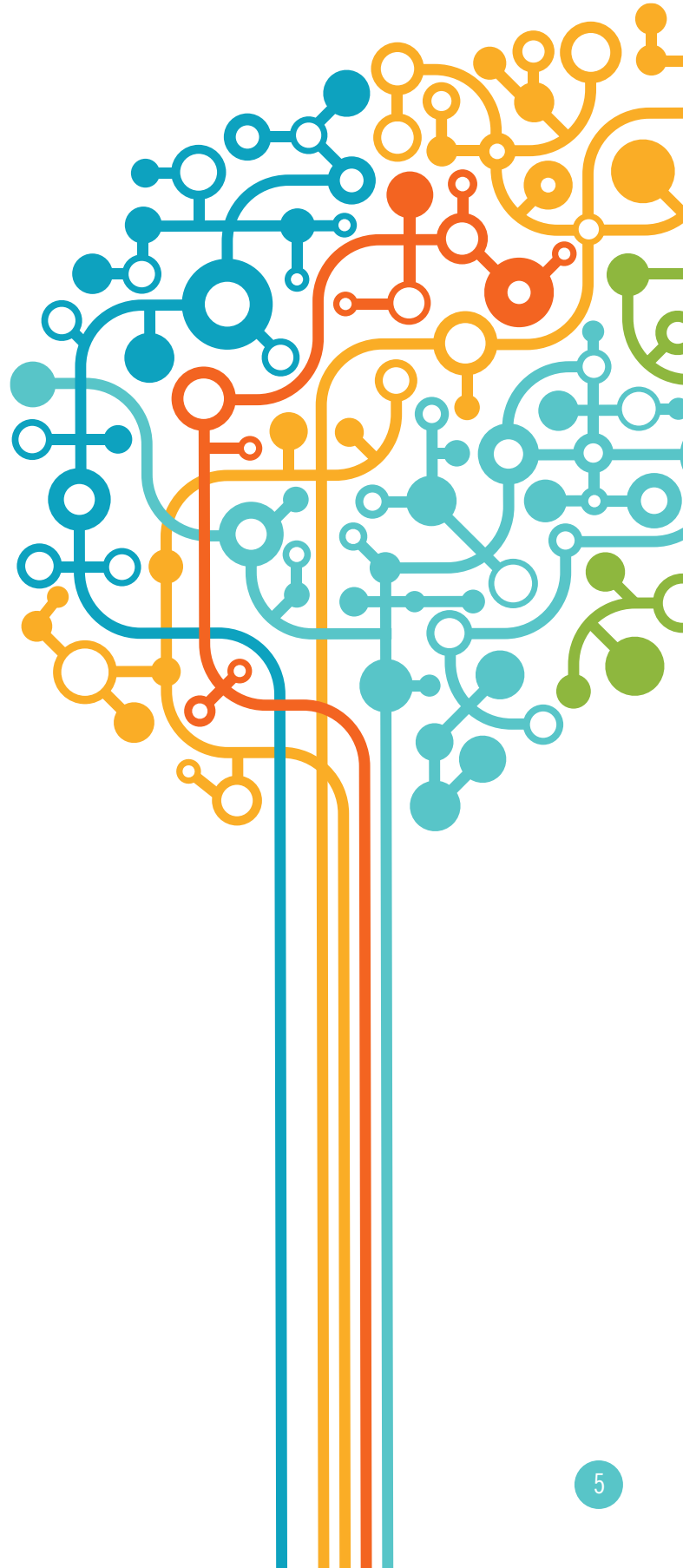
The Secretary of Senate has advised appeal decision-makers, including Chairs/Directors, of their responsibility to issue decisions in a timely manner and in a time frame that is consistent with the expectations laid out in the Academic Consideration and Appeals policies for continuing education, graduate and undergraduate students. In addition, the list of decision-makers has been reviewed and is up-to-date with respect to who is responsible for addressing the situation when decisions are not being issued in a timely manner. Also, the Secretary of Senate has addressed all inquiries from students whose appeal deadlines have not been met by the Department/School or Faculty level decision-maker such that the delay does not continue. I have also been advised that some Senate appeal submissions have been accepted for consideration based on the procedural error that decisions at the Department and/or Faculty level were not issued in a timely manner.

“ You have been very helpful and considerate regarding my case and I appreciate that. ”

# Compliments

The University's decision to use the Mattamy Athletic Centre for final exams for the Fall 2016 term is an excellent alternative to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre for the following reasons: the location of the Mattamy Centre is well known to Ryerson students and is therefore more accessible and student friendly; the Mattamy Centre is in close proximity to other Ryerson facilities, (e.g. the Library, Student Learning Centre, computer labs, RAC etc.) all of which are complementary to students' activities prior to and after exams are completed. In addition, my understanding is that the move from the Metro Convention Centre to the Mattamy Athletic Centre is cost-efficient.

The University's decision to interpret the Examination policy such that students will no longer be required to place their large personal items, (e.g. coats, bags, knapsacks, purses) at the front of an exam room is a major step forward with respect to reducing student stress while writing exams. As a result, students will be able to hang their coats on the backs of their chairs and place their bags, etc. under their chairs, in what is also an inaccessible location. By allowing students to keep these valuable items under their direct supervision they will be able to focus on the examination rather than the safety of their belongings.



# Recommendations Flowing from Concerns and Complaints (2015/2016)

**Nota bene:** Please be aware that in this annual report we do not provide descriptions of the individual cases dealt with by the Office of the Ombudsperson at Ryerson University (RU). The reason for taking this approach is that all Ombuds/man/person work must be undertaken in private so that the complainants' confidentiality is protected. In order to ensure that none of the people we work with conclude that their confidentiality has been compromised, the outcomes of our reviews and any specific recommendations that are made on individual cases are not included in this report. Rather, we report on cases in the aggregate and make only systemic and system-wide recommendations. As a result, the case references are necessarily generic in nature so as not to reveal the identities of those who have raised the concerns and complaints that are the basis for the following recommendations.

In order to provide recommendations that are likely to benefit the whole community we analyze the complaints received for indicators or trends that have systemic or system-wide implications.

## Graduate Student/Academic Supervisor Relationship Issues

This year we have seen a reduction in the overall number of complaints that have been raised by graduate students. While the raw numbers are lower overall we have observed an increase in complaints related to negative interpersonal dynamics typically between students and their academic supervisors which are such that graduate students state that their productivity is seriously compromised. Often, students in this situation do not tell anyone about their experiences, and the effect they are having not only on their academic performance but also on their personal lives, until they are at a breaking point. As a result, by the time these kinds of issues are brought forward, the interpersonal difficulties and the breakdown of a foundational relationship are often long-standing. As the majority of students we have seen in this type of situation have no confidence that the relationship can be improved, and since they have devoted substantial time and money as well as 'blood, sweat and tears' to the endeavour, they often choose to continue in the relationship as it exists despite the negative implications it has for their success. Alternatively, some students conclude that the only viable option is to leave the program. Ultimately, in the final analysis, students advise they are being treated unfairly, as it is impossible for them to learn and progress in this type of relationship regardless of how much time and effort they put forward.

It has been acknowledged by many institutions of higher learning that a variety of approaches are needed in order to support successful graduate student and academic supervisor relationships. Therefore, it is recognized that developing the best environment for

these kinds of intense professional and scholarly relationships to flourish will require dedicated resources and concerted attention. Given the high stakes involved for both the graduate student and the academic supervisor as well as the fact that this type of relationship is usually more than three years in length for doctoral students and may be two years for master's students, by the time these kinds of dysfunctional relationships are eventually brought forward to anyone's attention there is often no easy solution.

In my experience the key to providing the best opportunity for these relationships to be constructive and fulfilling is to set out expectations for both parties early on. For example, to this end, the University of British Columbia Graduate Studies in its orientation for academic supervisors states that: "The relationship a research graduate student has with his/her [their] supervisor is one of the most important factors in the success of their program, and the most positive outcomes for supervisors depend on mutually open, committed, and respectful relationships with their students."<sup>3</sup> My understanding is that the RU Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS) espouses a similar philosophy with respect to the importance of a constructive graduate student/supervisor relationship, and provides training opportunities for academic supervisors that also emphasize the need for mutual respect, open communication and commitment to working together for a common cause. At RU the framework for that kind of ethos is provided via the Graduate Student/Supervisor Discussion Checklist which has been designed to guide the initial discussion for establishing mutually understood expectations early on in the relationship.

Similarly, the RU Graduate Supervision Guide is also a very useful tool for setting expectations and ground rules as it clearly delineates the responsibilities each of the parties to this academic enterprise are expected to fulfill. It also includes guidelines for how to resolve negative conflicts and identifies who is responsible for receiving concerns and addressing them.

Even with these supports in place, relationships between student and supervisor can become fraught with negative conflict. As it can be difficult for some individuals to address concerns directly with one another as they are either 'conflict averse' or the student in particular is concerned about doing so given the differential in power brought to the relationship, it seems logical that YSGS and its academic department partners would explore additional means for identifying interpersonal problems. One example that serves as an early warning system and is in place in other institutions of higher education in Canada while also being considered for

<sup>3</sup> "Supervising Graduate Students" University of British Columbia (UBC) Graduate Studies online at: University of British Columbia <<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/supervision-advising>>.



adoption in others, involves students completing an anonymous or self-identified survey (depending on the student's preference) on an annual basis. The types of questions asked allow for a student to identify if there are difficulties developing with respect to interpersonal communication; the availability of timely and comprehensive feedback and the types of support they need to complete their degrees in a timely manner. At the same time, it provides the ideal opportunity to query why the student is not meeting normally scheduled milestones and/or taking much longer than usual to complete the degree if this information is not evident from the progress report form that is now completed at the end of each semester.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

Therefore, I am recommending that YSGS and its academic department partners explore the introduction of a pilot project whereby all doctoral students have the opportunity to provide input on any obstacles that are impeding their progression on an anonymous or self-identified basis via a carefully constructed questionnaire. As some students may be apprehensive about providing input while they are still in the process of completing their degrees, I'm also recommending that graduating students, as well as those who voluntarily withdraw, be offered the opportunity to participate in an exit interview that would allow them to provide YSGS and its academic partners with specific feedback on their experience, the strengths and weaknesses of the conflict resolution protocol and to solicit their suggestions on useful interventions for addressing the emergence of interpersonal relationship difficulties before they become intractable.

#### **Additional Expectations for Passing a Course**

An issue that has come to our attention this year is an increase in complaints related to academic departments or schools requiring that students must pass the final exam or a mid-term test in order to pass the course regardless of the grade earned overall. In looking at each of the situations that have been brought to our attention there has been no information found within the academic standing or graduation requirement variations approved by the University that authorize this course of action. In some instances the departments or schools have indicated that an external profession accreditation body requires this form of evaluation. I have researched a number of external accreditation bodies' criteria and have not found any indication that having to pass a mid-term or final exam in order to pass a particular course is required.

In addition, an externally imposed criterion of this nature would not be consistent with how course evaluation methods are typically determined within a university context. Please note that I am not offering an opinion on whether the decision of some schools or departments to build in this additional evaluation criterion is right or wrong as I am not privy to the rationale for why such restrictions have been imposed. Rather it seems reasonable to me that the University would be involved in approving (or not) such deviations from normal practice as is done to approve those situations when schools and departments determine that students must achieve a minimum grade, (e.g. C or C+) in particular courses in order to meet graduation requirements. As one aspect of the Academic Standards Committee mandate is identified as the "...review and formulation of policies governing undergraduate curriculum structure..."<sup>4</sup> making use of the expertise of this Committee would be one option for review within the academic governance framework.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

Therefore, my recommendation is that the University determines and then publicizes the route that should be used for approving variations where schools and departments believe it is in their students' best academic interest to be required to pass a particular component of a course regardless of the overall passing grade achieved.

#### **Failing a Required Course Three Times**

*The Policy on Undergraduate Grading, Promotion and Academic Standing* (the GPA Policy) #46 states that one of the reasons undergraduate students will be assigned the academic standing of Permanent Program Withdrawal (PPW) is when they fail a required course three times.<sup>5</sup>

We have received an increased number of complaints related to the assignment of this standing when comparing our data year over year. I have attempted to review University-wide statistics on this topic, as it would be useful for me to know if the increase I have seen in this area is idiosyncratic to the data collected in my Office. However, I have been advised that the University does not track when students are placed on PPW status due to failing a required course for a third time. My understanding is that while it is possible to obtain this information, doing so would be both labour and resource intensive and as there are competing priorities these statistics are not currently available.

<sup>4</sup> Senate Standing Committees. Academic Standards Committee (2016- 2017 Mandate, online at: Senate Ryerson University <<http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/committees/standards.pdf>>.

<sup>5</sup> Senate Policy 46: Undergraduate Grading, Promotion and Academic Standing (the 'GPA policy') Fall 2016, online: Senate Ryerson University <<http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol46.pdf>>.



## Recommendations Flowing from Concerns and Complaints (2015/2016) (cont'd)

The type of complaint that students most frequently bring to our attention relating to this topic is that the student has been told either verbally or via email that once assigned this academic standing there is nothing that can be done. This kind of response is particularly worrisome as when a student is placed on PPW status they are no longer able to continue in their program and in many of the cases brought to our attention the course that has been failed for the third time is the last one or one of the few remaining courses left to complete the degree requirements. Given the severity of the impact of this type of academic standing on a student's academic record, potential career options and time and money invested, it is shocking to be told or receive email correspondence that states that there is no potential for remediation of any kind. It is of utmost importance to note that this belief conflicts with University policy on a number of levels. Specifically, if the circumstances warrant doing so, either a grade appeal and/or an academic standing appeal can be submitted with the student asking for some form of academic consideration on the basis of the grounds that are available to all students. One of the remedies that can be proposed through the grade or academic standing appeal process is for the opportunity to take the course for a fourth time. This type of request must be approved by the relevant Chair/Director or Dean and Registrar, the mechanics of which are outlined in the *Undergraduate Academic Consideration and Appeals Policy* (#134) under *General Regulations IIC2(d)*:

“The Registrar must approve any recommendation by the Chair/Director or Dean to either allow a student to take a course that has been failed more than three times (or fewer as per a Department/School standing variation) or to grant a student a retroactive course withdrawal without academic penalty and any associated financial arrangements”.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, it strikes me that in some settings there is a misunderstanding of the University's policy framework as it relates to the academic standing of PPW, as it would be illogical for there not to be a means by which a student could request some form of academic consideration or submit an appeal given the circumstances that some students have described.

It is also interesting to me that in the vast majority of the instances we have reviewed where the student has failed a required course for the third time they do not actually complete the first and second attempts. Therefore, they did not demonstrate that they could not master the subject matter in their earlier attempts. Often the student was called away to attend to family responsibilities or there were medical or extenuating circumstances which interfered with their focus on their studies, and when they were able to address

their prolonged absence they were too late to either drop the course without academic penalty or to complete the course in the normal fashion. In other cases, some students did not write the final exam or do the final assignments as they ran into unanticipated difficulties at the end of the semester and did not seek assistance from anyone on how to address the situation. In the majority of the cases that we have seen that demonstrate this trajectory, the students did not seek any form of academic consideration for their first or second failed attempt.

Often, by the time students are taking a required course for the third time, especially if it is the last course to graduate, they are highly stressed or even overwhelmed by the potential for another failure as they embark on their final attempt. The level of fear and anxiety that develops with respect to the ability to pass the repeatedly failed course is ironic as we have spoken with many students who have completed the vast majority of the requirements for the degree without difficulty yet they remain stymied by one particular course.

In contrast to students being told there is nothing that can be done to address a PPW standing, my observation is that at least two of the six Faculties have organized a system whereby if students are taking a required course for the fourth time, as a result of a successful grade or academic standing appeal, there is additional oversight provided so as to ensure that these students are in the best possible circumstances to be able to pass the required course the fourth time around. Examples include arranging for regular meetings with the student to check in to see how they are progressing; encouraging them to make use of the various University supports available for improving their study skills as well as referring them to medical, counselling and academic accommodation support services when applicable. This kind of oversight is an appropriate response from my vantage point given the type of circumstances students in this situation often describe.

Another proactive approach, earlier in the students' progression through their programs, that could potentially reduce the likelihood of a third failed attempt is to identify when a student has failed a required course for a **second** time so that in advance of the student embarking on the completion of this course for the third time they are fully apprised of the impact of failing the course again. This identification would also be an opportunity to advise the students on how to make use of all of the resources available to them and the need to devote their best effort to address the circumstances that may have led to their inability to complete the course successfully on previous attempts.

<sup>6</sup> Senate Policy 134: Undergraduate Academic Consideration and Appeals Policy (September 2016), online: Senate Ryerson University < <http://www.Ryerson.ca/senate> >.

As noted earlier, as there is no University-wide data available to demonstrate whether there is an increase in the number of students who are being placed on PPW status due to failing three required courses overall, I cannot determine whether the trend I have observed in my data is reflective of a broader University trend. However, since the consequences are so devastating for those students in this situation I believe it is warranted that attention be paid to determining how to identify these students and the programs they are enrolled in and the required course they are failing repeatedly, so as to better explore the reasons for why students who have essentially met all the requirements to graduate with the exception of either one course or a small number of courses are not able to complete their degrees.

### RECOMMENDATION 3:

Therefore, I am recommending that the University undertake to collect the data that shows the number of students who have been assigned the academic standing of PPW as a result of failing a required course for a third time, as well as the course that has been failed, so that this information can be used to investigate the underlying cause for the repeated failures. If the data reveal that the reasons for the repeated failures are idiosyncratic to the individual student then attention may be paid to developing a means for identifying students who have failed a required course a second time so they can be alerted to the serious situation they will be in if the course is failed a third time along with being reminded of the supports that are available to them.



In the event there are trends observed that may assist with system-wide improvement these data can be provided to the relevant school or department for further investigation to determine if there are system-wide changes that may be useful. In addition, all advising staff should be made aware of the fact that students who are assigned the academic standing of PPW are eligible to pursue either a grade and /or an academic standing appeal or a request for a retro-active drop.

### Level of Difficulty of Make-up Exams

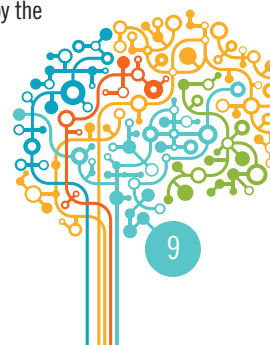
Every year students who deal with chronic medical conditions have been able to demonstrate that they have been advised that make up exams will be more difficult than the original mid-term or final exam. In addition, multiple unrelated students have advised that this warning has been provided verbally during classes. I have discussed the inherent unfairness of such a philosophy and practice in previous annual reports and it has been agreed that penalizing a student for being ill or having to deal with a death in the family is profoundly unfair. My understanding is that this approach is taken and that the professor's rationale is publicized well in advance, in order to deter students from seeking academic consideration when it is not warranted. However, the reality is that the students who are legitimately absent from the original test or exam are the ones who are negatively affected, as they are too ill or are attending to funeral arrangements or some other extenuating circumstance. Therefore, they do not have what may be perceived as additional time to study for the make-up exam. I am aware that all faculty members have been advised of their responsibility to prepare make-up exams at the same level of difficulty as the original exam and I am also aware that many faculty members do abide by this requirement. Nonetheless, the fact remains that outliers continue this unfair practice.

### RECOMMENDATION 4:

Therefore, my recommendation is that the Academic Policy Review Committee analyze and then address this concern when it is proposing new policy related to academic evaluation via make-up exams, so that this unfair means of addressing the potential for some students to misuse the academic consideration process does not continue.

### Access to Academic Advice

As is readily evident in the year over year data collected by our Office, complaints and concerns about accessing academic information and advice easily continue to rise. One of the reasons why it is difficult for some students to get the information and advice that they need is that they report that they are intimidated by the structures that are in place to provide academic advising.



## Recommendations Flowing from Concerns and Complaints (2015/2016) (cont'd)

In other instances, complaints arise as it appears that the individuals who are providing information are not fully up to date on University-wide policy and procedural considerations. In some instances students report that they find themselves in difficult circumstances at the end of their degree as a result of following advice that was not customized to their situation. Sometimes they are told they did not ask the 'right' questions in order to acquire the advice needed. On other occasions, students report that there is simply not enough time devoted to providing them with the kind of information they need in order to make the best decision in their circumstances.

I recognize that the provision of academic advice can be difficult and time consuming, and that many people devote a huge amount of time and effort to providing accurate advice and information all across the University. However, essentially the same theme prevails throughout the complaints received by our Office, in that individual students say when they ask for information they are given very brief responses, or information that turns out not to be correct, or they feel that their concern is not taken seriously and therefore not considered important enough to be discussed. I recognize that easily accessible academic advising is a concern for institutions of higher education in many different locations. In addition, I am aware that as well as the individual advising that is provided to students on a daily basis many attempts are made to provide orientation to all of the University's policies and procedures in other ways, (e.g. at the beginning of the term through course outline discussions and in the students' first semester via various '100 courses' and specialized workshops). However, it is my observation that often this kind of information is not fully absorbed by some students because they have no concept of the complexity of the enterprise that they are about to engage with and it is only when they are confronted with a situation that is time-sensitive, unexpected and is beyond their personal capacity to resolve that they realize that they need expert advice.

As a result the question is: What is the most effective way to organize the provision of expert academic information and advice so that it is easily accessed without students feeling too embarrassed or intimidated to reach out for assistance? I am aware that considerable attention has been devoted to answering this question across the university in a variety of ways. One specific example is the work of the 'University Committee on Student Success' which did an extensive review on academic advising at RU a number of years ago.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "Review of Academic Advising at Ryerson" Ryerson University Committee on Student Success online Office of the Provost Ryerson University <[http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/provost/pdfs/advising\\_report.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/provost/pdfs/advising_report.pdf)>.

<sup>8</sup> 'Our Time to Lead, Academic Plan 2014 – 2019' Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic Ryerson University online: <[http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/provost/pdfs/RU\\_Academic%20Plan\\_2014\\_ExecutiveSummary.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/provost/pdfs/RU_Academic%20Plan_2014_ExecutiveSummary.pdf)>.

This report includes a scan of the academic advising environment in existence at the time and outlined eight issues that needed attention and provided seven recommendations for moving forward. In addition, the following six principles for how academic advising should be offered were set out as student centred; timely; accessible to the student/local; professional; equitable and consistent and clear and transparent.

### RECOMMENDATION 5:

Therefore, my recommendation is that the University review the areas identified as needing attention and the resulting recommendations set out in the report of the Student Success Committee as well as consulting with current relevant parties to define the most effective strategies for arranging for the provision of academic information and advice via a 'user friendly' system that is student centred; timely, accessible, equitable and consistent, clear and transparent.

### What is Fair in this Particular Circumstance?

Many of the issues raised with the Office of the Ombudsperson do not fit easily into one category of complaint or concern and the majority of the time when complaints are raised they can incorporate a number of different areas. For example, often there are administrative and/or financial implications for complaints that appear to be academic in nature, whereas there can also be academic implications for complaints that on the face of it seem to be solely administrative or non-academic in nature. In my experience many of the issues brought to our attention and which are the most time-consuming, and have caused students, staff and faculty the most angst, would have been eliminated if there was an institution-wide understanding of the three dimensional nature of 'fairness' by all Ryerson personnel. As would be expected, the RU Academic Plan makes explicit reference to the importance of fairness in this way: "...the University strives to always manifest fairness, transparency and accountability in its processes of decision-making, administration and governance."<sup>8</sup> However, the phrase 'manifest fairness' can be interpreted in different ways regardless of how well intentioned and well-educated. Hence, one of the ways to address the need for a better understanding of how to make decisions fairly whether they be academic, non-academic or administrative is to use what is known in the dispute resolution field as the 'fairness triangle'. The fairness triangle makes provision for understanding the key elements of fair process and outcome in a clear and concise manner by separating the three categories of fairness, they being **relational, procedural and substantive**, into easily understood definitions.



## Elements of Relational Fairness

- Being approachable
- Listening actively
- Respecting confidentiality
- Being honest and forthright
- Making information clear and easily available
- Providing accessible problem-solving options
- Being clear about what you can and cannot do
- Offering an apology if a mistake is made

## Elements of Substantive Fairness

- Having the appropriate authority to make a decision
- Ensuring that decisions are based on relevant information
- ... are not unjust, oppressive or discriminatory
- ... are not wrong in fact or law
- ... are reasonable

## Elements of Procedural Fairness

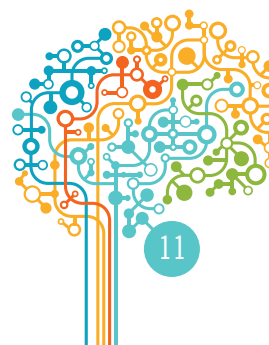
- Providing notice that a decision is to be made along with sufficient information for an affected person to know what is required and what is at stake
- Providing an appropriate forum for an affected person to present their views and to be heard
- Being impartial and unbiased
- Making a decision in a reasonable time
- Providing clear and appropriate reasons for decisions<sup>9</sup>

This conceptual framework is applicable to any and all situations regardless of whether they are administrative, academic, non-academic or tribunal or committee based decision making processes. The overarching premise that applies to all aspects of the fairness triangle is that fairness is always dependent upon context as a fair decision cannot be made if the individual's specific circumstances are not taken into account as part of the decision-making process. In addition, the idea of relational fairness, which is less well known than the concepts of substantive and procedural fairness, is a key component of overall fairness. As the proper and effective application of the relational aspect of the fairness triangle allows for individuals to feel comfortable coming forward in seeking assistance prior to the necessity for a decision to be made, and to engage in respectful discussion as the decision is being made, there is much greater potential for a useful dialogue to ensue throughout the entire decision-making process.

### RECOMMENDATION 6:

Therefore, my recommendation is that every opportunity for orientation for staff and faculty should be taken to reinforce that fairness is a key RU value and that all decision-making should be informed by the expectations described in the fairness triangle for relational, procedural and substantive fairness.

<sup>9</sup> "The Guide to Fairness" The Ombudsperson Office at the University of Victoria" online: The University of Victoria <<http://uvicombudsperson.ca/guides/fairness/>>. This Guide to Fairness has been adapted from the Ombudsman for Saskatchewan Fairness Triangle.



# Interim Provost & Vice President Academic's, and Vice President, Administration and Finance's Response

January 10, 2017

Dr. Nora Farrell  
Ombudsperson  
Ryerson University

## Response to the Ombudsperson's 2015–2016 Annual Report

Dear Dr. Farrell,

Thank you for your 2015–2016 Ombudsperson's report. Please find below our comments and responses to your recommendations.

## Progress on the Ombudsperson's 2014–15 Report

We are pleased that you recognize the progress made on the recommendations in your 2014–15 report.

Regarding your Recommendation 1 from last year: as you note, the ongoing work of the *ad hoc* Academic Policy Review Committee (APRC)—to review and revise five key Senate policies, guided by principles and values consistent with the University's current Academic Plan—is a major undertaking. The committee meets regularly and has held several town halls for faculty, students and staff, while a dedicated email address was set up to receive comments from the Ryerson community. The APRC is inviting input from resource persons on key issues and procedures, and has cast a wide net to learn how other universities in Ontario, Canada, the US, and abroad are dealing with the issues under consideration.

Regarding Recommendation 2: as you also note, a working group has been struck to look at ways to facilitate the creation of course outlines. To date, the group has identified several software systems dedicated to this task, and is exploring their suitability for Ryerson's needs. On 21 December 2016, the secretary of Senate sent chairs and directors a reminder to review their department's or school's Winter 2017 outlines for consistency with Ryerson policies.

Regarding Recommendation 3: as you note, the Senate Office continues to work with appeal decision-makers across the University to ensure that Ryerson's policies and procedures are followed.

Finally, we appreciate your compliments regarding the move of final exams to the Mattamy Athletic Centre (MAC), and the changes to procedures for final exams at the MAC. Both the move and the changes are intended to reduce the inherent stress of exams on students, while maintaining high standards of academic integrity and rigour.

## RESPONSES TO THE 2015–16 REPORT

We have responded to all six of your recommendations in this year's report.

### RECOMMENDATION 1: GRADUATE STUDENT AND ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP ISSUES

*That YSGS and its academic department partners explore the introduction of a pilot project whereby all doctoral students have the opportunity to provide input on any obstacles that are impeding their progression on an anonymous or self-identified basis via a carefully constructed questionnaire. As some students may be apprehensive about providing input while they are still in the process of completing their degrees, I'm also recommending that graduating students, as well as those who voluntarily withdraw, be offered the opportunity to participate in an exit interview that would allow them to provide YSGS and its academic partners with specific feedback on their experience, the strengths and weaknesses of the conflict resolution protocol and to solicit their suggestions on useful interventions for addressing the emergence of interpersonal relationship difficulties before they become intractable.*

The University recognizes the importance of a positive and productive relationship between graduate students and their supervisors. For that reason, the University—including the Yeates School of Graduate Studies—has in the past implemented procedures similar to those you describe, on an *ad hoc* basis, with the goal of establishing and maintaining such relationships. Plans are under consideration for expanding the scope of such procedures in the future.

### RECOMMENDATION 2: ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS FOR PASSING A COURSE

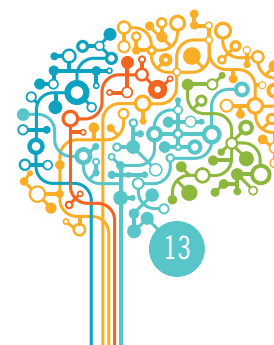
*That the University determines and then publicizes the route that should be used for approving variations where schools and departments believe it is in their students' best academic interest to be required to pass a particular component of a course regardless of the overall passing grade achieved.*

As you note, there may be sound pedagogical reasons for requirements to pass the exam(s) and/or other specific components in some courses. In addition, there are often safety concerns in cases where students need to pass the laboratory component of a course, so that they can progress to other lab-based courses and work safely in lab-based settings both in and outside of the University.

The issue has been brought to the attention of the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) as well as the Academic Governance and Policy Committee (AGPC) in recent months. Both committees are working on developing a process that might include inviting and reviewing the rationale for such requirements from instructors, programs, departments, and faculties. The initial work includes looking at existing policy elements related to this issue, such as the Periodic Program Review (PPR) process described in Policy 126 and the guidelines for curriculum modifications described in Policy 127. This work is timely: both Policy 126 and 127 are part of Ryerson's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP)—currently under review in response to a recent routine audit conducted by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. While program quality assurance at Ryerson is an ongoing process, we trust that the work of the two committees will enable us to address your recommendation directly.

Another part of the process involves the *ad hoc* Academic Policy Review Committee (APRC), due to its review of Policy 145 (Undergraduate Course Management) among others.

Finally, we are considering a further course of action: to address this issue as part of Ryerson's course management guidelines and requirements, which in turn would provide the Academic Standards Committee with a basis on which to evaluate program reviews and curriculum modification proposals under Policies 126 and 127.



## Interim Provost & Vice President Academic's, and Vice President, Administration and Finance's Response (cont'd)

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: FAILING A REQUIRED COURSE THREE TIMES**

*I am recommending that the University undertake to collect the data that shows the number of students who have been assigned the academic standing of PPW as a result of failing a required course for a third time, as well as the course that has been failed, so that this information can be used to investigate the underlying cause for the repeated failures. If the data reveal that the reasons for the repeated failures are idiosyncratic to the individual student then attention may be paid to developing a means for identifying students who have failed a required course a second time so they can be alerted to the serious situation they will be in if the course is failed a third time along with being reminded of the supports that are available to them. In the event there are trends observed that may assist with system-wide improvement these data can be provided to the relevant school or department for further investigation to determine if there are system-wide changes that may be useful. In addition, all advising staff should be made aware of the fact that students who are assigned the academic standing of PPW are eligible to pursue either a grade and/or an academic standing appeal or a request for a retro-active drop.*

The University recognizes that it is stressful for students to be withdrawn from their program for any reason, especially if it is due to failing a course three times when they are otherwise close to graduation. The main purpose of the rule is to help students identify problems early on, and to seek help or readjust their goals well before it gets to this point.

Students find themselves in this position for many reasons. Some are committed to a program that might not be appropriate for them; others reject advice to take time off to deal with their personal challenges, or delay taking a mandatory course because it looks too difficult, or take a failed course the second or third time in addition to a full load, or in a compressed (spring/summer) format.

That said, it benefits everyone if we can find further, underlying causes—whether student- or system-based. Therefore, as you suggest, the University will explore ways to learn more about how and why students are affected by this rule, and to ensure that affected students are aware of their options in good time.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4: LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF MAKE-UP EXAMS**

*That the Academic Policy Review Committee [APRC] analyze and then address this concern when it is proposing new policy related to academic evaluation via make-up exams, so that this unfair means of addressing the potential for some students to misuse the academic consideration process does not continue.*

As you note, Ryerson's policies already state that make-up exams are to be of the same level of difficulty as the original, although they do not necessarily have to be in the same format (e.g., an exam that is originally multiple-choice can have a make-up that requires written answers). Explicit statements and practices to the contrary by instructors can and have been addressed by the University when they are brought to our attention. It is expected that revisions of the policies currently under review by the APRC will continue to include this requirement. The committee will be advised to pay close attention to its wording, with the goal of achieving a balance between avoiding abuse and providing appropriate consideration for students who need it.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5: ACCESS TO ACADEMIC ADVICE**

*That the University review the areas identified as needing attention and the resulting recommendations set out in the report of the Student Success Committee as well as consulting with current relevant parties to define the most effective strategies for arranging for the provision of academic information and advice via a 'user friendly' system that is student centred; timely, accessible, equitable and consistent, clear and transparent.*

The University agrees that appropriate academic advising is a key factor in student success. The 2010 Student Success Committee report provides substantial information on how advising is provided at Ryerson (or at least how it was provided at the time the report was written), as well as recommendations for improvement, some of which are based on procedures already in place at Ryerson and at other universities. There was a follow-up report in 2011, part of which explored and refined the 2010 report's recommendation for the establishment of a "central coordinating function related to academic advising." The result was the creation of a new position – Coordinator, University Academic Advising – which was funded in 2013 and first staffed in January 2014 as part of the Registrar's Office. A major goal of that position is to provide information and training to those who advise students across the University. As the position evolves, more strategies are being developed to achieve that goal.



In addition, academic advising issues have arisen from the consultations conducted by the recently reinstated Curriculum Implementation Committee (CIC). The committee is especially interested in exploring ways to help students learn about and choose elective courses that allow them to delve deeper into their program area, complement that area, or provide breadth that is not directly related to that area. Online tools are now available for Ryerson students, and we continue to look for ways to refine those tools.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:  
WHAT IS FAIR IN THIS PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCE?**

*That every opportunity for orientation for staff and faculty should be taken to reinforce that fairness is a key RU value and that all decision-making should be informed by the expectations described in the fairness triangle for relational, procedural and substantive fairness.*

As you note, the University's current Academic Plan states, under the heading of values (integrity), that it is committed to transparency, fairness and accountability in all of its decision-making, administration and governance. Ryerson will continue to explore ways to communicate this commitment to faculty and staff. Two opportunities stand out: 1) semi-annual "New Faculty Orientation" sessions held by the Learning and Teaching Office; 2) annual training for members of the Senate Appeals Committee (SAC). In both cases, we can work to incorporate a stronger message of fairness and what it means on the ground. Human Resources will also work to reinforce this value in orientation for new staff members and in the delivery of training programs for leaders at Ryerson.

Again, we would like to thank you for your thoughtful submission, and for your commitment to Ryerson University.

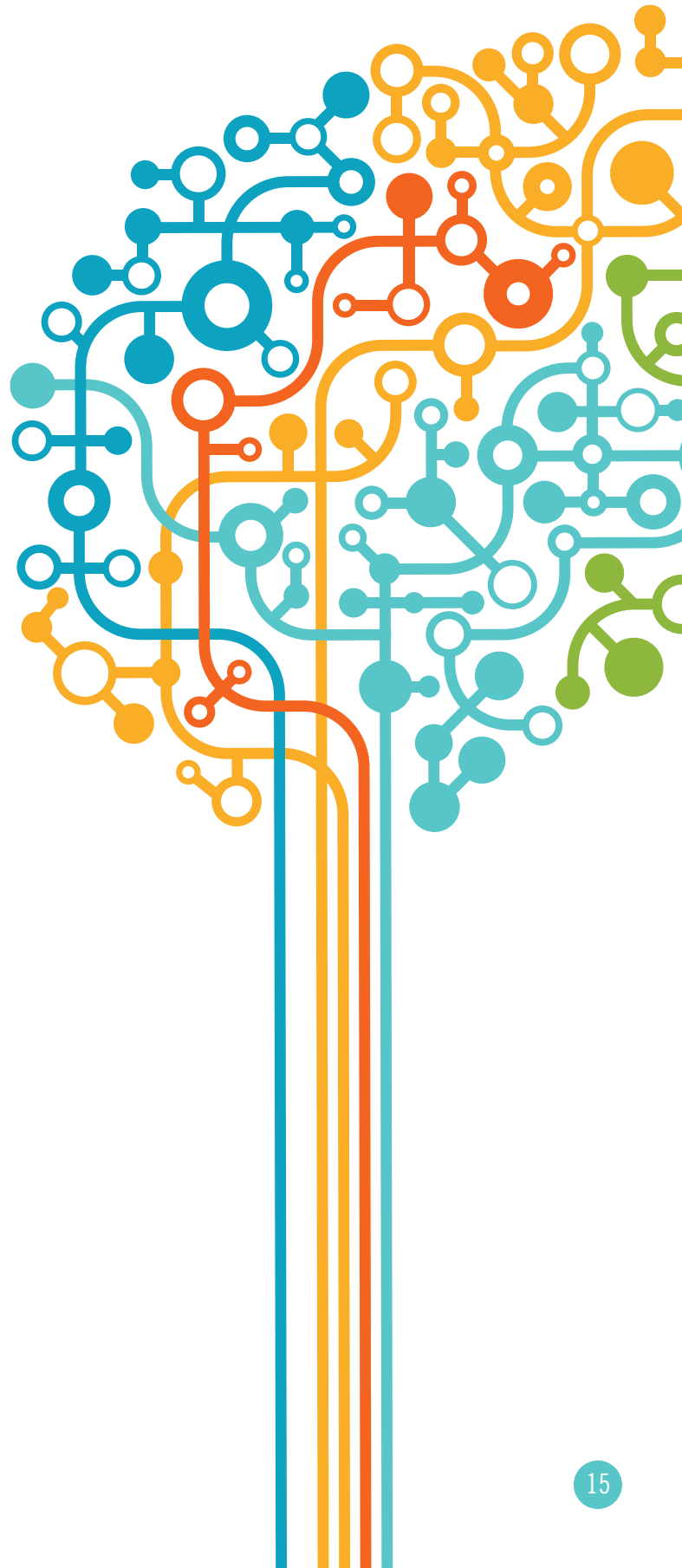
Sincerely,



Chris Evans  
*Interim Provost and  
Vice President Academic*



Janice Winton  
*Vice-President,  
Administration and Finance*



# The Year in Numbers

## Types of Concerns 2015/2016

	15/16	14/15	13/14	12/13	11/12	10/11	09/10	08/09	07/08
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>558</b>
ACADEMIC ADVICE <sup>10</sup>	181	151	133	192	177	138	104	103	92
ACADEMIC APPEALS <sup>11</sup>	85	83	95	102	103	107	169	158	142
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT	36	55	41	49	61	70	65	83	64
ACCESSIBILITY	23	21	18	27	25	33	10	12	11
ADVANCEMENT & DEVELOPMENT	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
ADMISSIONS (UNDERGRADUATE)	11	15	20	20	11	17	10	15	25
ADMISSIONS (GRADUATE)	4	1	3	4	5	4	5	6	5
ANCILLARY SERVICES	2	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	1
CAMPUS PLANNING & FACILITIES	3	0	2	0	3	0	1	0	0
CONDUCT – INSTRUCTOR/FACULTY	54	61	51	62	53	57	78	43	42
CONDUCT – STAFF	12	8	8	8	8	13	14	12	11
CONDUCT – STUDENT	6	3	4	4	8	9	4	7	9
CONFIDENTIALITY	0	1	3	0	0	4	5	1	0
CURRICULUM ADVISING <sup>12</sup>	9	7	4	11	3	7	7	11	18
ENROLLMENT SERVICES	19	23	17	29	45	24	37	41	35
FEES	21	8	27	14	21	7	7	20	24
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	21	24	16	18	20	16	9	15	13
INFORMATION REQUESTS – NO COMPLAINT	0	0	3	1	5	2	7	4	9
LIBRARY	0	0	1	0	4	2	2	1	1
OUTSIDE JURISDICTION	16	14	9	13	13	13	8	13	9
PRACTICUM/PLACEMENT (ADMINISTRATION & AVAILABILITY)	4	22	5	9	11	4	2	7	9
REINSTATEMENT/READMISSION	1	5	6	11	14	27	17	15	26
RESIDENCE	3	1	0	2	1	3	7	4	3
SAFETY & SECURITY	2	2	3	2	5	2	1	2	3
SPORTS & RECREATION	2	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1
STUDENT SERVICES <sup>13</sup>	2	6	6	6	8	4	1	2	2
STUDENT UNIONS/ASSOCIATIONS	3	8	7	5	8	3	5	8	2
TEAM WORK	0	1	0	1	3	1	2	2	0

<sup>10</sup>This category includes concerns regarding not being able to easily access academic advice from a knowledgeable person.

<sup>11</sup>Includes Grades and Academic Standing.

<sup>12</sup>Includes Transfer Credits and Challenge Credits.

<sup>13</sup>Includes the application of the Student Code of Non-Academic Misconduct Senate Policy # 61

## Status of Individuals Bringing Forward Concerns & Complaints

	15/16	14/15	13/14	12/13	11/12	10/11	09/10	08/09	07/08
<b>CONSTITUENCY</b>									
ALUMNAE	15	7	6	11	10	8	11	22	6
APPLICANT	13	10	23	18	13	17	13	25	27
CONTINUING EDUCATION/PART-TIME DEGREE	45	62	79	81	87	76	106	95	82
FULL-TIME DEGREE	348	322	283	401	416	406	368	385	375
GRADUATE STUDENTS	32	58	58	40	49	27	41	25	32
MISCELLANEOUS (PARENTS, STAFF, ETC.)	68	61	34	42	42	37	40	34	36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>558</b>

## Summary of Service Provided

### Information:

Providing information on policies and procedures.

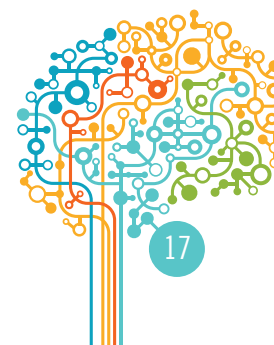
### Advice:

Providing information and discussing possible options with students.

### Intervention:

Taking action to assist in some way to resolve the concern, (e.g. clarifying information, facilitating, mediating, conducting investigations).

	15/16	14/15	13/14	12/13	11/12	10/11	09/10	08/09	07/08
<b>ACTION TAKEN</b>									
ADVICE & REFERRAL	424	397	382	484	511	482	493	471	452
INFORMATION	2	5	10	1	3	1	2	10	8
INTERVENTION – CLARIFYING	38	37	33	48	37	39	42	43	36
INTERVENTION – MEDIATION	1	0	1	1	3	1	0	1	1
INTERVENTION – SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY	37	63	44	43	49	31	25	31	42
INVESTIGATION	19	18	13	16	14	17	17	30	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>558</b>



## The Year in Numbers (cont'd)

### Website Activity

The website of the Office of the Ombudsperson provides information and links to frequently consulted policies, procedures, deadlines and contact points at Ryerson. It is easily accessible, and allows users to acquire the knowledge they need to prevent academic or administrative problems from arising or if they do, to resolve them without ever having to contact our Office directly.

The table below provides a summary of key user information as it was collected from the launch of the new website in August 2014. The 2014-2015 annual report included statistics for the 12-month period from August 2014 to August 2015. For this report we are reporting on the statistics collected from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 as this is our standard service year.

The most frequently consulted webpages during the July 2015 to June 2016 reporting period on an overall basis were the pages providing information to students on how to drop courses and what to do in the case of missed exams or classes. These two topics were also the most frequently viewed pages for each month of the year. We analyze the user data on an ongoing basis including numbers for new and repeat users and found that a total of 56% of users were repeat users.

Year	Total Users	Average number of visitors/month	Months with most traffic (top 3 in descending order)	% increase monthly from previous year
2014/2015 <sup>14</sup>	8,611	718	March, April, January	n/a
2015/2016	15,420	1,285	March, November, April	n/a

We also provide a link to an anonymous online questionnaire where individuals who have interacted with the Office can provide feedback on their experience. I would like to express our sincere appreciation to those individuals who have taken the time to provide their assessment and commentary. We make every attempt to use this input to improve our service to the Ryerson community.

“ While I disagree with the conclusion you have arrived at on a personal basis I very much appreciate the very thorough and objective review. ”

<sup>14</sup>The statistics presented in this cell were collected from August 31, 2014 to August 31, 2015.

# In Appreciation

We recognize how privileged we are to be trusted recipients of the cares and concerns of those individuals who encounter difficulties as it often takes great courage to bring sensitive information forward to a stranger. We also recognize how fortunate we are to also have access to other perspectives on the situations brought to our attention. It is a both a great privilege and a great responsibility to assist individuals to resolve their concerns fairly and we take our obligations very seriously.

We are grateful to all of the RU community members who engage with us in a constructive and open manner so as to ensure that everyone involved has the opportunity to express their views and to work toward the ultimate goal of fair treatment for all concerned.

I would also like to recognize the members of the Ombudsperson Committee for their respect for the impartiality, confidentiality and independence of the Office and their willingness to provide input, advice and commentary in a timely and considered manner.

I would also like to acknowledge the dedication of the staff of the Office of the Ombudsperson at RU:

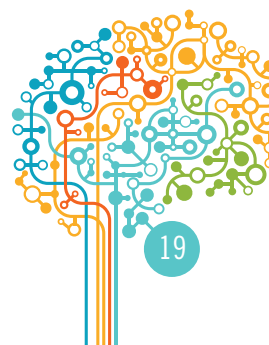
Dr. Katharina Ploss who demonstrated excellent interpersonal skills as well as keen insights into the matters brought forward to her attention and is now employed in the Office of the Vice-President at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) München (Munich) in Germany.

Ms. Gemma Kerr who demonstrated great resourcefulness, kindness and clarity in her work with all members of the University community and is now caring for the most recent addition to her family in Toronto.

I would also like to welcome back Ms. Ayesha Adam who has been on extended leave and is very dedicated to providing high quality service to all concerned.

Respectfully submitted:

Nora Farrell  
Ombudsperson at Ryerson University



# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1:

### About the Office

The Office of the Ombudsperson at Ryerson University was established in 1997 via leadership from a community-wide taskforce.

#### STAFFED BY:

**Nora Farrell,**

Ph.D., LL.M. (Osgoode), M.Ed. (UBC) Ombudsperson

**Ayesha Adam,**

B. Proc., LL.M. (UKZN, South Africa) Assistant Ombudsperson

“Thanks again  
for the high level  
of professionalism and  
the expertise.”

## APPENDIX 2:

### The Terms of Reference of the Ombudsperson

**The role and functions of the Ombudsperson at Ryerson University as defined by the Terms of Reference are:**

- a) To advise and/or refer members of the University student community as needed about all situations and University procedures concerning which grievances may arise; specifically, to advise students of their rights and responsibilities and of the proper procedures to follow in order to pursue whatever business or complaint they may have. Where such information exists in University offices or publications, the Ombudsperson shall direct enquirers to these sources and emphasize their responsibility for initiating the appropriate actions and for returning to the Ombudsperson if not satisfied with the results;
- b) To investigate, in an impartial fashion, student complaints that may arise against the University or against anyone in the University exercising authority. Complaints may be made by any member holding status as a student of the University community, by former members of the student body or by student applicants to the University (dependent on the discretion of the Office of the Ombudsperson), whether accepted or not at the time of the complaint. Investigations may also begin on the independent initiative of the Ombudsperson in respect of anyone of the above entitled to make a complaint....
- c) To bring findings and recommendations to the attention of those in authority by the most expeditious means possible.

**It shall be the special concern of the Ombudsperson that:**

- a) Decisions affecting members of the University student community are made with reasonable promptness;
- b) Procedures and policies used to reach decisions affecting students are adequate and consistently applied and that criteria and rules on which the decisions in question are based are appropriate;
- c) Any gaps and inadequacies in existing University policies and procedures that might jeopardize the principles of fairness and natural justice of members within the University student community be brought to the attention of those in authority. It is not the function of the Ombudsperson to devise the new rules and procedures, but to make recommendations and follow these up to the extent necessary for their formulation and/or improvements; and
- d) The complaints received by the Ombudsperson are analyzed on an annual and multi-year basis to determine trends and identify potential for systemic or system-wide problems.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Terms of Reference for the Office of the Ombudsperson (October 2009), online: The Office of the Ombudsperson at Ryerson University <<http://www.ryerson.ca/ombuds>>.

### APPENDIX 3:

## Information Illustrating the Size of the Ryerson University Community<sup>16</sup>

### STUDENT ENROLMENT, FFTE<sup>17</sup> 2009-2016

Year	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students
2015/2016	30,531	2,048
2014/2015	28,963	1,961
2013/2014	27,369	1,940
2012/2013	25,466	1,931
2011/2012	24,161	1,905
2010/2011	23,237	1,805

### CONTINUING EDUCATION STUDENT ENROLMENT 2009-2016

Year	Continuing Education Students, FFTE	Continuing Education Course Registrations
2015/2016	2,710	66,000
2014/2015	2,673	67,735
2013/2014	3,077	69,549
2012/2013	3,046	68,294
2011/2012	2,213	69,108
2010/2011	2,412	68,532

### TEACHING AND STAFF COMPLEMENT 2009-2016

Year	Tenure/ Tenure Track Faculty	CUPE 1 Part-time and Sessional Instructors	CUPE 2 Continuing Education Instructors <sup>18</sup>	Staff (FFTE)
2015/2016	866	261	524	2,063
2014/2015	856	261	483	1,950
2013/2014	847	250	490	1,905
2012/2013	832	229	431	1,800
2011/2012	808	220	486	1,803
2010/2011	778	228	464	1,718

<sup>16</sup> "University Planning Office, Key Statistics" (2015), online: Ryerson University <<http://www.ryerson.ca/upo>>.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* FFTE stands for Fiscal Full-Time Equivalent. A student's FFTE is the proportion of a full load course load that he or she is taking, e.g. If a program normally includes 20 hours of instruction, a student enrolled in 15 hours of courses would generate 0.75 FFTE (15/20).

<sup>18</sup> Office of Instructor Relations, Continuing Education - The Chang School. These numbers represent the average number of Instructors engaged to teach courses in the Chang School over the Fall, Winter and Spring semesters for 2010/2011 to 2015/2016.

