



Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa

Centre de recherche et d'enseignement
sur les droits de la personne

Human Rights Research and
Education Centre

Excerpt of Evaluation Report of Student Appeal Centre 2008 Annual Report
(Recommendations Section)

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D. The Way Forward

This section sets out recommendations for the University and SAC in light of the issues identified in this report.

Recommendation 1: Conduct an independent assessment to determine whether systemic racism plays any part in the Academic Fraud process.

That SAC cooperate with the University in allowing it to undertake an independent analysis of the Academic Fraud data to identify and address any issues of systemic racism in the Academic Fraud process. All necessary measures should be taken to ensure the preservation of student privacy in the development of the report.

The Fact that the report did not succeed in its methodological attempts does not mean that there is not a problem that should be addressed. The University is bound by its obligations under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and is committed to an inclusive community.

Recommendation 2: Ensure timeliness in the responses of all staff to students and their representatives in matters of Academic Fraud.

The SAC report raised the issue of adequate and timely responses from senior administrative

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staff. All student communications should be acknowledged and the student redirected, if needs be, to the appropriate process or individual. A communications vacuum only serves to compound an already stressful situation and may contribute to further delay. This does not mean, however, that a substantive response must be provided when students chose not to follow the clearly established procedure. It would not be unreasonable for students to receive an acknowledgement of their correspondence within 14 business days.

Recommendation 3: The length of time for resolution of the appeal process by the Senate Appeals Committee should be 30 business days from receipt of all submissions from both the student and faculty.

The length of time for the resolution of appeals is a significant concern. The report was lacking in data regarding what role if any the investigative process and/or requests by the student may have played in any delays. The University should be mindful that not only do delays in the process compound the stress experienced by students but it can also open the institution to claims of procedural unfairness. The 82 days delay is inconsistent with the other deadlines that are now in place. Students have a 15 working day deadline from the decision to submit an appeal. Faculties now have 21 business days to provide their submissions to Senate. The Senate Committee generally meets twice a month. A deadline of 30 business days to be heard by Senate upon receipt of the materials from both the student and the faculty would not be unreasonable.

Recommendation 4: Letters of Admission or the registration package for all students to the University of Ottawa should contain specific reference to the regulations on Academic Fraud and the leaflet entitled “Beware of Plagiarism!” prepared by the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Social Science.

Recommendation 5: Faculty and/or department websites should have materials which explain plagiarism or provide a link to the “Beware of Plagiarism!” leaflet on the portion of the site used by their students.

Recommendation 6: The Student Appeals Centre should have materials which explain plagiarism or provide a link to the “Beware of Plagiarism!” leaflet on their website.

Recommendation 7: International students should be asked to sign a waiver if they do not wish to attend the orientation sessions currently provided by the International Office of the University.

This will clarify the issue of whether they have actual knowledge of the University’s academic expectations in the area of plagiarism.

Recommendation 8: It should be clear that students are entitled to have representation at the Committee of Inquiry and the Senate Appeals Committee. Information should be provided to students about the availability of the SAC services and the Student Legal Aid Clinic by the faculty at the time they are informed of the allegation of Academic Fraud.

Recommendation 9: Consideration should be given by the University to establishing a parallel policy to ‘Policy 110-Policy on Treatment of Graduate Students on Non-Academic and Non-Employment Issues’ for the undergraduate students.

Policy 110 covers the issues identified in the SAC report such as discrimination, harassment and intimidation, fair and equitable treatment and academic misconduct or fraud. The policy provides for the articulation of a process and ongoing discussion about effective processes.

Recommendation 10: That the University and SAC jointly develop a document or FAQs that sets out the principles underlying the Academic Fraud process.

Conclusion:

I share the SAC identification of Academic Fraud as a significant issue. The integrity of our institution and the trust we hold with the public that our graduates are both capable and of good character requires us to meaningfully address Academic Fraud at both informal and formal levels. The ultimate relationship that the University has is not simply to its current student community but also to the public that its graduates will serve and the graduates whose reputations and careers are bound up with the degrees they have received.

I trust that this report will be of assistance.

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