

Student Advisor Fall Term Report – 2008/2009

Introduction

It is important to note that each of the three Advisors independently draft their term and annual reports based on their own experiences serving students. The statistical information provided below does not reflect all students served by the program this fall, but only those that I served directly.

We make every effort to share responsibilities equally among the Advisors over the course of the year, but this often involves bearing relatively increased or reduced workloads at any given time.

In accordance with the criteria for the Term Report set out in the Memorandum of Agreement, please find below an account of the following for the Fall term:

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1. Statistics on number of cases, including a distinction between new and continuing cases
 2. Statistics on types of cases
 3. Statistics on offices to which referrals were made or from which information was provided
 4. Description of follow-up taken
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1. Statistics on number of cases

- 18 cases total
- 18 new cases (2 ongoing)
- 1 continuing/reopened cases (carried over from a previous term)

2. Statistics on types of cases

(Note: total number exceeds number of cases because some cases involve multiple issues)

- 6 cases involved conflicts with a supervisor or faculty member
- 4 cases involved supervisor/program change
- 1 cases involved housing issues
- 3 cases involved potential human rights issues
- 1 cases involved non-discriminatory harassment

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- 2 cases involved intellectual property issues
- 2 cases involved funding challenges
- 2 cases involved TA/RA employment issues
- 1 cases involved possible email harassment
- 2 cases involved a disputed grade
- 3 case involved a conflict re lab responsibilities
- 1 case involved part-time status issues
- 2 case involved medical leave
- 1 case involved immigration issues
- 0 case involved a conflict re use of a listserv

3. Statistics on offices to which referrals were made (including discussed or suggested as options) or from which information was provided

- Dept head/grad coordinator: 10
- SGSR (deans/registrar/staff/website): 6
- Department office/website: 3
- Coordinator of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms: 1
- SGPS: 1
- Human Rights Office: 3
- Health, Counselling and Disability Services: 4
- Student Awards: 2
- Queen's Legal Aid: 2
- Other Student Advisors: 1
- Apartment & Housing Services: 0
- Legal Aid Ontario/Lawyer Referral Service: 1
- International Centre: 2
- Town Gown: 0
- Kingston Immigrant Services: 0
- City Councillor: 0
- Ban Righ Centre: 1
- Chaplin's Office: 1
- Queen's Website: 2
- Government Office: 0
- AMS: 0

Description of follow-up taken:

Most cases involved some or all of the following:

- Online research
- Providing information, strategic advice or communication skills coaching
 - Two cases involved multiple in-person meetings with the student concerned
 - Only one case this term required my direct intervention, requiring a meeting

with department head, graduate coordinator. This case involved a conflict with a supervisor and health issues, resulting in a voluntary withdrawal from the program.

- Three cases are potentially ongoing. One case involves an intellectual property dispute between the parties involved. I am in continued contact with the student as negotiations between involved parties continues. The other case involves a health related issue between student and supervisor. In this case Human Rights has been notified. The third case has involved meetings with the professor, and dept. head involving a grade dispute. In this case I have been acting in a support role for the student.

Several cases have resulted in more than one meeting with students. In two cases the students have withdrawn from their programs/changed programs. The three ongoing cases are near resolution. Most of the cases have involved creating a plan to address issues with their supervisor/department since most of these students had not communicated their concerns to their departments prior to attending the office. Approximately 50% of the students I have dealt with have notified me of their final resolution.

Recommendations:

- **Workplace harassment of graduate students:** In this first term as a Student Advisor, I have had several issues of workplace discrimination stemming from health related issues, requiring further service from Human Rights. All of these issues surrounded work in labs. There are two issues that arise from this. One, there is a direct effect to student's funding if they are unable to function in the lab. Several of the students have hesitated in confronting issues in there earlier part of the term, and were subsequently unable to change their situation without loss of funding. In my experience, thus far, these situations are isolated within the sciences with lab work where funding is more specific to the supervisor, and transferring within the department to another supervisor is not always possible.

While the faculty collective agreement prohibits workplace harassment, its provisions cannot be invoked by students. The failure to protect students from such treatment effectively sanctions the abuse of graduate students. The University needs to develop procedures for addressing and deterring workplace harassment of and by any member of the Queen's community.

- **Intellectual property standards:** Authorship issues remain a major concern for graduate students across disciplines. These concerns remain very difficult to resolve given the lack of standards at the departmental level. Everyone knows that authorship conventions differ by discipline and department, but the uncritical support of faculty members in such disputes by all levels of administration facilitates exploitation of the student/supervisor relationship and potentially undermines the academic integrity of the institution. Graduate students need access to fair, unambiguous, publicly available, written standards of the authorship conventions that apply to their work. I would

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recommend that the SGSR propose a default policy for authorship, and allow each department to opt-out of that policy by promulgating their own written policy.

- **Program Awareness:** Many of the students that I have dealt with have been either referred through faculty, or colleagues that have used our service. The cases that I have dealt with throughout my first term have been from a broad cross-section of faculties, requiring a variety of services. Most of the cases are as a result of communication issues brewing over the term.