

Student Advisor Fall Term Report – 2009

Introduction

Each of the three Advisors independently draft their own term and annual reports based on their experiences serving students. The statistical information provided reflects only those that I served directly.

Please note that in agreement with the past VPG, that I carried over a significant amount of hours from the summer term. Due to staff shortage over the summer, and September I agreed to carry over hours while providing access to an advisor. While every effort to share responsibilities equally among the Advisors over the course of the year is made, 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

- 27 cases total
- 26 new cases
- 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
- 5 cases involved supervisor/program change
- 5 cases involved housing issues
- 2 cases involved potential human rights issues
- 3 cases involved non-discriminatory harassment
- 1 cases involved intellectual property issues
- 12 cases involved funding challenges
- 0 cases involved TA/RA employment issues

SGPS Student Advisor Program

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- 0 cases involved possible email harassment
- 0 cases involved a disputed grade
- 3 case involved a conflict re lab responsibilities
- 1 case involved part-time status issues
- 0 case involved medical leave
- 0 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: 8
- SGSR (deans/registrar/staff/website): 4
- Department office/website: 7
- Coordinator of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms: 2
- SGPS: 3
- Human Rights Office: 2
- Health, Counselling and Disability Services: 6
- Student Awards: 10
- Queen's Legal Aid: 2
- Other Student Advisors: 1
- Apartment & Housing Services: 0
- Legal Aid Ontario/Lawyer Referral Service: 2
- International Centre: 3
- Town Gown: 0
- Kingston Immigrant Services: 1
- City Councillor: 0
- Ban Righ Centre: 2
- Chaplin's Office: 0
- Queen's Website: 4
- 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
 - One case is ongoing, and is near resolution. Three cases this term have involved this same department. All three of these cases have involved students who face expulsion under unclear policies.

In two cases expulsion has been averted, while policies remain unclear and arbitrary.

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The third case is proceeding to the next level. Since there have been three separate incidents involving similar matters within the same department, I am attempting to gain access to any existing policy documents, however this remains difficult due to department autonomy.

This term I have developed a better opportunity for students to provide feedback on my services as an advisor. Each person involved in cases has provided positive feedback of the service, and has reached a satisfactory resolution. The feedback system is an excellent resource.

Recommendations:

- **Funding:** The fall term has seen an increase in the concerns over funding issues for graduate students. Several of the cases involved concern from international students, a lack of funding, and requesting information on improving budgeting skills. Each of these cases was referred to Student Awards for budget assistance and bursary information. Two of these students were referred to the Ban Righ Centre which also provides bursary assistance for mature women students.
- **Non-discriminatory harassment issues:** As mentioned above, three separate cases involved a particular department that facilitate expulsion recommendations based upon peer evaluation. While recognizing that each department is autonomous is certain policies and protocols, the method by which peer groups are able to go about evaluating a colleague, recommending expulsion and contributing to an uncomfortable work environment is of great concern. It is important to note that these cases have not involved human rights issues, but have contributed to a form of non-discriminatory harassment, while the student that is being recommended for expulsion becomes centred out throughout a lengthy peer review process.
- **Program Awareness:** Most students that I have served throughout the fall term have been by referral from other students. I have had contact with several more students who have come to our program in search of assistance for other issues such as academic advice. There seems to be an increasing awareness of our advisory role, as well as our referral service.