



1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd W, H-222
Montréal, QC H3H 1M8
514 848 7474 ext. 7313



CSU Advocacy Centre

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

@csuadvocacy   advocacy.csu.qc.ca



CONCORDIA STUDENT UNION
**ADVOCACY
CENTRE**

At a glance...

Academic Misconduct: 132 cases

Code of Rights and Responsibilities: 11 cases

Complaint: 14 cases

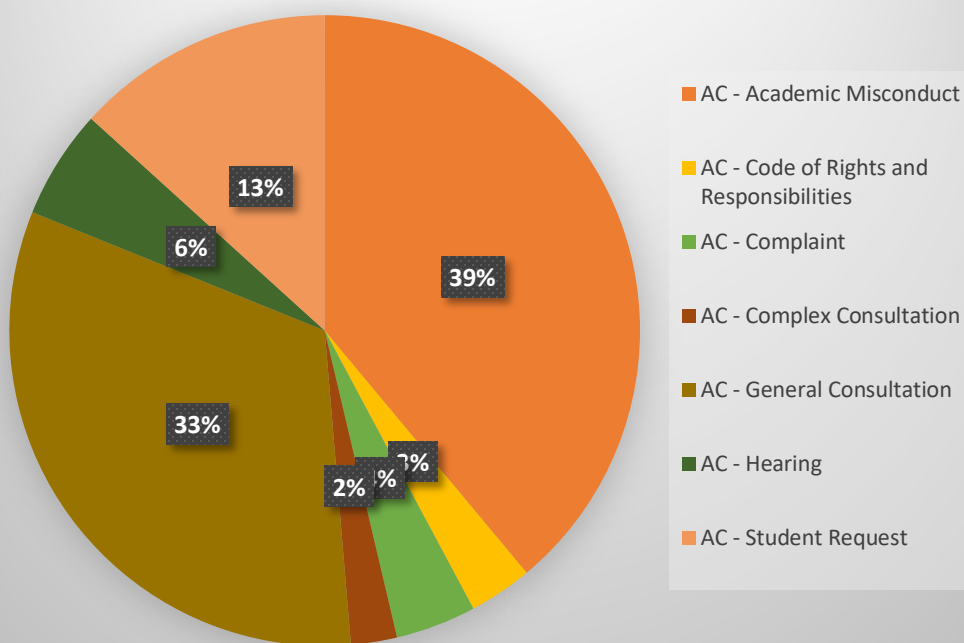
Complex Consultation: 8 cases

General Consultation: 110 cases

Hearing: 19 cases

Student Request: 45 cases

Overall: Case Distribution By Type 2021-2022



339 Cases

WHAT WE DO

The CSU Advocacy Centre is a service provided by the Concordia Student Union (CSU) to support students through obstacles encountered to their academic endeavors.

The CSU Advocacy Centre believes that students should be informed, empowered and supported in exercising their rights both in and beyond their academic environments. We are here to provide assistance to students who feel that they have been treated unfairly on campus or to help students by informing them of University policies that impact both their academic and non-academic pursuits on campus.

In addition, the Centre provides representation services to students as defined under the Academic Code of Conduct or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities. Advocates are here to listen to students and to address their concerns in a proactive manner.

Other services include a free Commissioner for Oaths for undergraduate students (and very affordable for non-undergraduate students), academic information sessions, general consultations and referrals.

The Advocacy Centre team is comprised of the Advocacy Centre Manager, the Advocacy Administrative Assistants and the Student Advocacy Assistants (student advocates). The administrative assistants and the students advocates are full-time students trained by the Advocacy Centre Manager in the services that the Advocacy Centre offers.

If a student is experiencing a problem as a result of the universities policies, regulations and procedures and come see us, we assist and where applicable accompany them in resolving the issue within the most relevant and suitable means available.

As of the 2019-2020 academic, the Advocacy Centre categorizes its registered cases into these following seven (7) fields:

Academic Misconduct
Code of Rights and Responsibilities
Complaint
Complex Consultation
General Consultation
Hearing
Student Request

Mission

The Advocacy Centre's Mission is to help sure students understand Concordia University's policies, regulations and procedures and are informed on what options they have if they encounter any obstacles regarding these. The Advocacy Center is dedicated to assisting students in the resolution of conflicts arising from actions or decisions taken by the University.

Vision

The Advocacy Centre aims to be an easy-to-access, professional and knowledgeable drop-in and consultation resource for all matters directly related to the university and its procedure *as they pertain to students*. We seek to continuously expand our reach and how we can assist students and equip them with the information and options they need to best serve them.

OUR VALUES

Respect Professionalism Accessibility Representation Education

Executive Summary

The CSU Advocacy Centre, experienced high inquiry volumes and staff burnout, exacerbated by COVID-19. The Advocacy Centre experienced record turnover, straining services as remaining staff worked extra hours. Successful fee-levy referenda for undergraduate and graduate students will allow for increased staffing. Ongoing projects include a Self-Advocating Workshop and participation in the Student Service Station, aimed at enhancing student support and resource accessibility. Overall, the report highlights the urgent need for staffing improvements to better serve the student body.

Case Load and Activity

339 Cases and 232 Inquiries for a Total of 571 Consults.

Contact Type →	Grad	Non-Student	Staff Member	Student Organization Staff	Undergrad	Total
	Record Count	Record Count	Record Count	Record Count	Record Count	Record Count
Primary University Faculty						
Faculty of Arts and Science	8	0	0	1	100	109
Faculty of Fine Arts	1	0	0	0	13	14
Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science (GCS) (GCSECS)	43	0	0	0	86	129
John Molson School of Business (JMSB)	7	0	0	0	75	82
N/A or Independent or Individualised Program or Unknown	1	1	1	1	1	5
Total	60	1	1	2	275	339

Highlights

- Inquiry and case volume and case complexity were critically high for both the Concordia Student Advocacy Office (SAO) and CSU Advocacy Centre, so much so that **burnout** has been a significant concern and challenge for staff at both services.
- Due to reduced courseload during the Summer sessions, student advocates can work close to full-time, which is not possible during regular sessions
- The Advocacy Centre experienced its **highest staff turnover to date** with a total of eight (8) advocates, ranging from experienced to newly hired, resigning or going on extended leave of absence between October 2021 and March 2022. Reasons for leaving included job opportunities in desired career path, work-permit delays, leave to complete internship in field of study, Covid-19, desire to work exclusively remotely, focusing on academics and parental leave.

- High turnover caused severe strain on the service and on the staff. Remaining staff worked extra hours Winter 2022 semester until new staff could be hired and trained in Spring after exams and graduation.

COVID-19 Impact on Operations

Operations were entirely remote in Summer 2021, were hybrid in Fall 2021 and Winter 2022, with the Winter 2022 semester being more hybrid than not because of omicron and outbreaks amongst staff and student clients who visited the AC. While operating remotely, the AC has maintained and continues to maintain phone lines via the University IITS FortiClient VPN and Cisco Jabber software and was one of the few services on campus with dedicated, reliable and consistent phone service during operating hours throughout the pandemic thus far.

New Initiatives

Advocacy Centre Fee-Levy Referenda

A referendum for **undergraduate** students increasing the Advocacy Centre fee-levy from \$0.31 per credit to \$0.45 per credit passed in Fall 2021 during the bi-elections. A referendum for **graduate** students increasing the Advocacy Centre fee-levy from \$2.50 per semester to \$3.00 per semester passed in Winter 2022 during the general GSA elections. The increase in the fee-levy will allow the AC to hire more staff for more hours to better assist students and maintain awareness of the services the AC offers to the student body at large.

A referendum for **graduate** students to pay their Advocacy Centre fee-levy directly to the CSU AC instead of to the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) passed in Winter 2022 during the general GSA elections.

The CSU did not have any AC staff sitting on Senate this year – none were available Fridays which consequently was the least staffed day of the week at the AC throughout the Winter 2022 semester.

Support for Graduate Students

The agreement between the CSU and the GSA for graduate students to access services at the AC expires this summer on August 31st, 2022. Following the Advocacy Centre fee-levy referenda passing, graduate students will be paying the Advocacy Centre fee-levy directly to the CSU AC starting in Fall 2022. A final agreement regarding the AC office space at GSA House will be finalised now to conclude proceedings between the CSU and GSA.

Academic Code of Conduct Review

The Academic Code of Conduct was meant to go under review in 2020, however due to Covid-19, this was pushed back again last year. Participating in the review is still an anticipated project for the AC, but there has been no updates or notification from the University so far this academic year either.

Projects

The AC has been sitting on **Concordia's Subcommittee on Academic Integrity for the Advisory Committee on Teaching and Learning** since Summer 2021. The mandate of the subcommittee is to 'propose a university-wide strategy and plan of action that will contribute to inform undergraduate students about the Academic Code of Conduct and the consequences for breaking the Code'.

The AC collaborated with Concordia's **Homeroom Program** to create a Self-Advocating Workshop for the Homeroom Student Facilitators to share with students. The workshop was held on November 26th, 2021, and all parties look forward to future collaborations, especially once the AC's staff turn-over stabilises.

The AC joined Concordia's **Student Service Station** in Winter 2022. The Student Service Station is an excellent University initiative allowing students to be assisted by multiple services at once. The AC highly recommends that Concordia maintain the Student Service Station as a primary resource asset for students.

Future Directions and Conclusion

Looking ahead, the Advocacy Centre aims to stabilize staffing levels and enhance support services to better address student needs. Key initiatives include expanding outreach and awareness of available resources, and fostering partnerships with campus programs to promote advocacy skills. As we navigate the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, a focus on mental health and staff well-being will be paramount. Ultimately, these efforts will strengthen our ability to serve the student community effectively, ensuring that all students have access to the support they need to thrive.