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CSU Advocacy Centre

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

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At a glance...

Academic Misconduct: 109 cases

Code of Rights and Responsibilities: 35 cases

Complaint: 24 cases

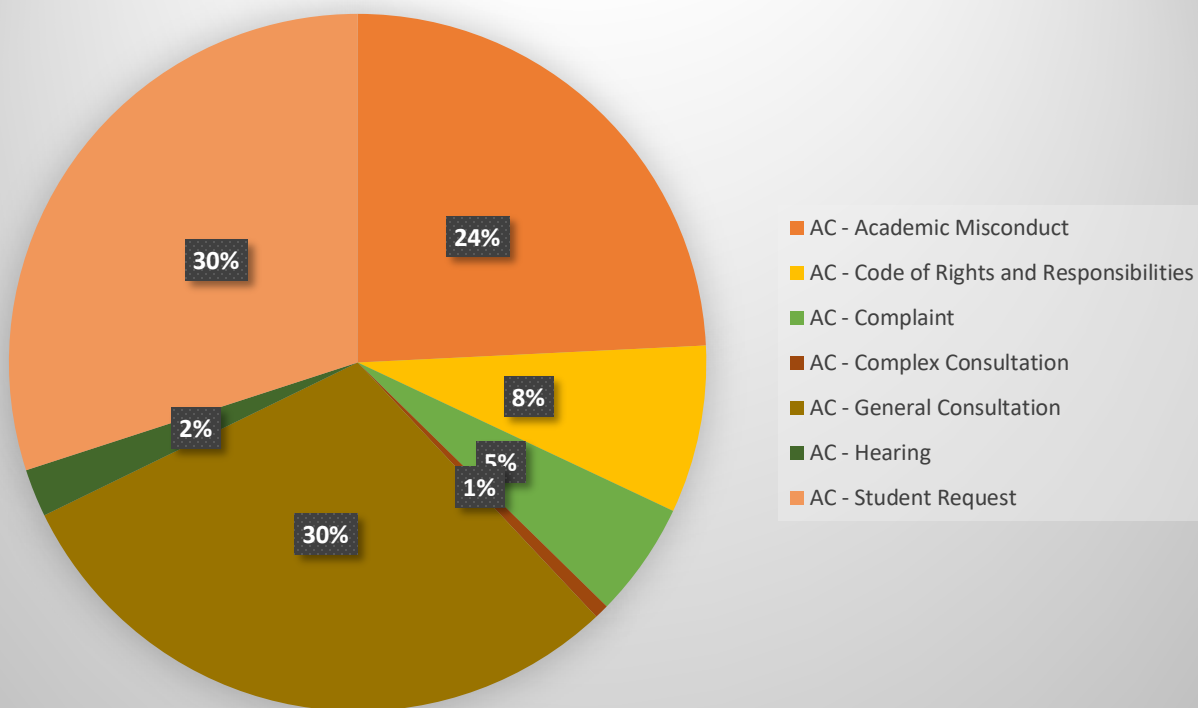
Complex Consultation: 3 cases

General Consultation: 134 cases

Hearing: 10 cases

Student Request: 135 cases

Overall: Case Distribution By Type 2023-2024



450 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

Case Load was exceptionally high at the CSU Advocacy Centre (AC) this year, with Code of Rights and Responsibilities Cases and Complaint cases being especially high compared to previous years. Historical events and incidents on campus this academic year also meant that numbers for these types of cases would be high. The AC remains a confidential service independent of the University, and students with receiving complaints by the University often prefer to be represented by the AC rather than the University's Student Advocacy Office (SAO).

Case Load and Activity

450 Cases and 253 Inquiries for a Total of 703 Consults.

Contact Type →	Alumni Record Count	Faculty Record Count	Grad Record Count	Undergrad Record Count	Total Record Count
Primary University Faculty					
Faculty of Arts and Science	2	1	16	160	179
Faculty of Fine Arts	0	0	3	24	27
Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science (GCS) (GCSECS)	1	0	71	84	156
John Molson School of Business (JMSB)	0	0	2	78	80
N/A or Independent or Individualised Program or Unknown	0	0	0	8	8
Total	3	1	92	354	450

Highlights

- This academic year saw the highest annual case load that the AC has had to date, with 450 cases. Well over 100 cases every semester.
- This was in part because the SAO was understaffed and its management was being reorganised.
- Winter semester, again saw the highest case load that the AC has ever seen in a single semester to date, with 193 cases.
- The AC continues to participate in Concordia Student Service Station, an excellent Concordia initiative that we strongly support.
- The AC has gave 72 classroom presentations this year in classes with 100+ students to inform students about the service. Outreach appears to have been effective.
- The AC continued having staff on Senate this year.

Projects & Student Interest

Advocacy Presence on Re-evaluation of Grade – Revaluation Committee

This year the Grade-Re-Evaluation policy at Concordia that grants students the right to have their work graded again when they believe it to be graded unfairly was being reviewed and updated. The revision committee consists of various members of the University, including a department Chair, the secretary of Tribunal, Vice-Provost, and staff members from OMBUDS and Registrar. The purpose of having a student advocate present for this revision is to bring in the Advocacy Centre's experience and knowledge of such cases. Thus, The CSU Advocacy Centre had one of their Lead Student Advocates on the committee give suggestions and recommendations to proposed amendments as a student representative to represent students' rights.

Change of Policy- Cost of Replacement Degrees

This past year, the AC collaborated with the Student Accounts in changing the policy for Transgender students when applying for replacement degrees. As of September 28, 2023, the replacement degree fee (currently \$100) will now be waived for legal name changes due to either a change in gender or for Indigenous students who have changed from an English name to an Indigenous one.

Presentation for Spotlight and Homeroom

This year the AC presented at the Spotlight Series and Homeroom. The Spotlight Series is these online info sessions designed to help academic advisors get acquainted with their fellow front-line student services staff at Concordia. The CSU's Student Advocacy Centre presented on our efforts to give undergraduate and graduate students access to representation independent of the university and how front-line staff and the Centre can work together to assure that students get the best results for their cases.

The Centre also presented Homeroom facilitators. Homeroom is an initiative developed for new undergraduate students that provides a space for them to connect with others. Through peer-to-peer facilitated virtual and in-person experiences you will meet and bond with other new Concordia students and learn how to navigate the university experience together. The Advocacy Centre staff presented to the facilitators to inform them of the various situations that students use our services for and when it would be best to direct them to our Centre.

Fee-Levy

In the Winter 2024 CSU elections, the AC requested a \$0.10 per credit increase that did not pass. This has attributed this to students' sentiments of the increasing cost of living and tuition in Quebec. However, case load continues to increase and more support hours are needed to continue offering essential services to students.

Article in The Link Newspaper

On April 2, 2024, The Link posted an article about the AC services and how we can help students navigate Concordia's bureaucracy. The article featured the Interim Manager, the Lead Student Advocate and the CSU's Finance Coordinator. The article encouraged students to reach out to the AC as a first resort, dispelled notions of having a student advocate implying that one is guilty, self-advocating and the importance of having services that help students speak up for themselves.

The link to the article is posted below: <https://thelinknewspaper.ca/article/the-importance-of-the-student-advocacy-centre>

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 several times now. 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.

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.