



Annual Report

2023-2024

Human Rights

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A. Student Sexual Violence Supports, Services & Programming

PART I OVERVIEW

As outlined in the University's Respectful Campus Policy and Student Sexual Violence Policy and Procedures, Ontario Tech University is committed to providing an annual report to the Board of Governors on certain information and statistics regarding the implementation of the University's human rights program and data related to human rights-based complaints and consultations. This includes data concerning the University's student sexual violence program, including a compilation of data and information from internal partners that share responsibility for addressing and responding to sexual violence at the University. This is done to assist the Board of Governors and other University Members to understand the state of the University's human rights and student sexual violence programs and identify progress and trends from year to year.

This annual report covers the period between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024. The report will be posted to the University's website and submitted to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

PART II STATUS UPDATE

1. ROLE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE

Ontario Tech University's Human Rights Office (HRO) serves as the cornerstone for overseeing the University's human rights and student sexual violence programs. Through its oversight, it ensures a consistent and equitable approach to addressing human rights issues raised by all members of the University community, including faculty, staff, students, and visitors and plays a pivotal role in upholding and fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity across the campus.

In alignment with the University's commitment to a "Sticky Campus" the HRO administers a comprehensive and accessible dispute resolution program that is designed to effectively address concerns related to harassment, discrimination, sexual violence, micro-aggressions, and related conflict/disputes.

The HRO plays a crucial role in prompting institutional capacity to identify, address, and resolve human rights-related disputes and conflict. It provides confidential advice and guidance to any university member to better understand their rights, obligations or responsibilities related to human rights.

The services offered by the HRO range from de-escalation and facilitated dialogue to formal investigations and tailored training/education programs. This wide array of services is designed to respond to the unique needs of individuals and the University community, fostering an environment where human rights are upheld and respected. Through its

work, the HRO promotes a culture of understanding, accountability, and mutual respect; ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious campus atmosphere.

2. INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

Throughout the 2023-2024 period, the HRO placed a strong emphasis on expanding the reach and impact of its services across the University community. With an overarching focus on enhancing awareness, the HRO implemented several key initiatives aimed at educating and empowering students, faculty, and staff on critical human rights and sexual violence issues. These initiatives not only sought to raise visibility for the HRO's services but also addressed the evolving needs of the University community.

One of the most prominent achievements was the launch of mandatory educational modules on gender-based violence, which were made available to the entire University community. This comprehensive educational initiative marked a pivotal step in equipping students and staff with essential knowledge to recognize and respond to gender-based violence, fostering a culture of respect and accountability on campus. These modules were designed to raise awareness about the dynamics of gender-based violence, providing key resources and support systems to those who may be affected.

In addition to the educational modules, the HRO introduced a new communications initiative aimed at informing students about the role and services of the HRO. Through this initiative, the HRO worked to ensure that students are aware of the supports available to them and how to access them.

As part of its ongoing commitment to addressing issues of student sexual violence, the HRO undertook updates to its website content, specifically related to Student Sexual Violence. These updates were carefully crafted to provide up-to-date, accessible information on resources, support services, and policies, ensuring that students have clear and direct access to crucial information regarding sexual violence prevention and response. Additional information can be found about the University's Student Sexual Violence Programming in 'Appendix A.'

In further support of sexual violence awareness and prevention, the HRO launched broad consultations to review and enhance the Student Sexual Violence Policy and Procedures. These consultations involved engaging key stakeholders, including students, staff, and external experts, to gather feedback and ensure that the policies are aligned with best practices and are responsive to the needs of the University community. This collaborative approach to policy review reflects the HRO's commitment to inclusivity and continuous improvement.

To streamline access to support services, the HRO developed and launched an innovative online tool that allows students and staff to easily book consultations with the Human Rights Office. This user-friendly tool simplifies the process of scheduling

appointments, ensuring that individuals can receive timely and confidential support for any human rights-related concerns.

Together, these initiatives and programming highlights from the 2023-2024 period illustrate the HRO's proactive approach to fostering an inclusive, informed, and supportive environment at Ontario Tech University. Through strategic education, communication, and resource development, the HRO continues to play a critical role in promoting human rights and addressing sexual violence within the campus community.

3. DATA & TRENDS

Aggregate data on the resolution of issues is a key component of this report as it provides an annual snapshot of the human rights issues and concerns brought forward by University Members for resolution. In total there were 240 issues dealt with by the HRO in the last year, a 21% increase over the last reporting period, and likely due to increased education and communications initiatives. This remains below the exceptionally high volume in 2021-2022 attributable to COVID-19 Vaccine issues.

a. Issue Type

There are five (5) issue types that fall under the HRO's accountability: Discrimination, Duty to Accommodate, Harassment, Student Sexual Violence, and issues of a general nature involving Human Rights.¹

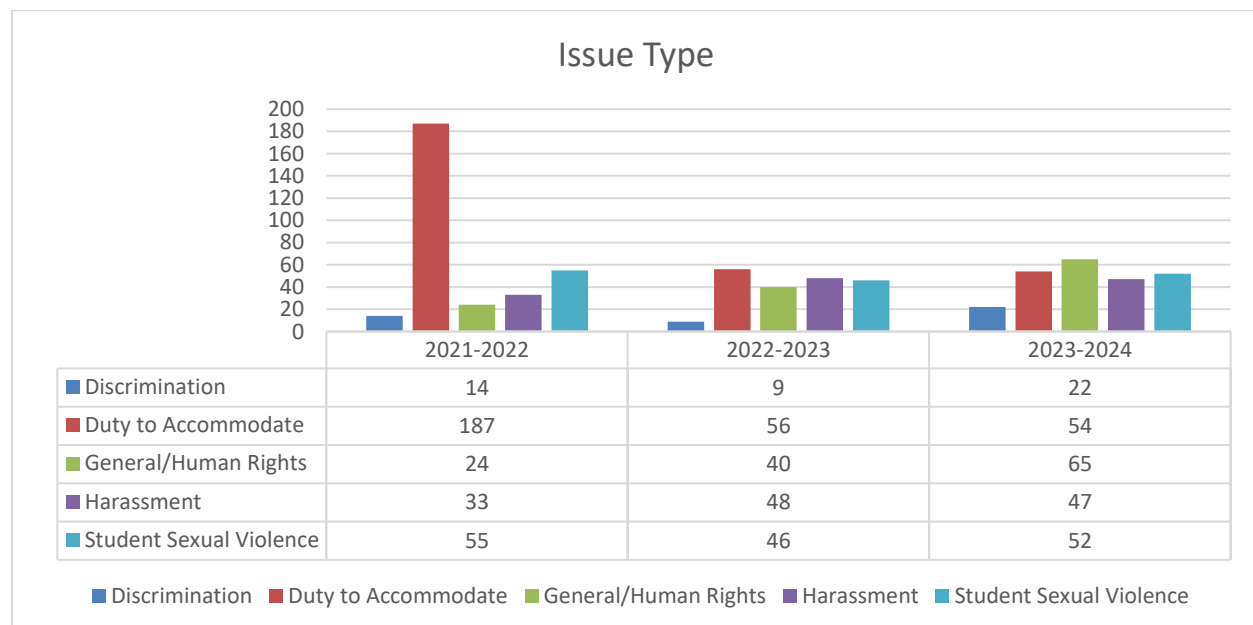


Table: 1

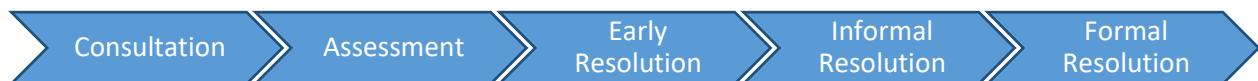
¹ The "General" category broadly includes consultations regarding human rights principles or inquiries of a programmatic nature, e.g. requests to review policy instruments or training materials to ensure human rights compliance, questions about legislative and policy interpretation, procedural inquiries, etc.

There were 52 disclosures and reports of student sexual violence in 2023-2024; an increase from the previous year which saw a total of 46, but a decrease from the 2021-2022 reporting period. An increase was expected due to the actions taken by the HRO to increase education and awareness regarding sexual violence during the year.

The disclosures and reports² were addressed as follows:

- Mental Health Services in Student Life received 41 disclosures. 11 of these incidents were classified as occurring in the last 12 months; 30 were classified as historical. 5 incidents occurred on campus; 36 incidents occurred off campus.
- The HRO received 6 disclosures (1 anonymous) and 4 reports of student sexual violence. Each of the reports were investigated and three of the investigations into alleged sexual harassment found evidence of a breach of policy.
- Residence received 1 disclosure of student sexual violence.

b. Intervention Type



The HRO records six main types of interventions applied to matters received by the office:

1. Consultation: the act of reaching out to the HRO for advice or information.
2. Assessment: An HRO analysis of an issue to determine whether the matter triggers human rights obligations and/or requires intervention.
3. Early Resolution: when the HRO works with parties to resolve complaints prior to a formal complaint, or to assist persons of authority address incidents/concerns in a manner consistent with human rights obligations.
4. Informal Resolution: when the HRO employs a structured process, such as a mediation or restorative justice process, to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the parties in dispute.
5. Formal Resolution: when the HRO ensures an investigation to determine whether a policy violation has occurred.
6. Disclosures: incidents of student sexual violence disclosed to obtain supports and resources.

² The University's Student Sexual Violence Policy and Procedures distinguish between a "disclosure," which is telling a trusted individual about an incident of sexual violence to access support services; and a "report," which is a request that the University intervene to resolve a complaint.

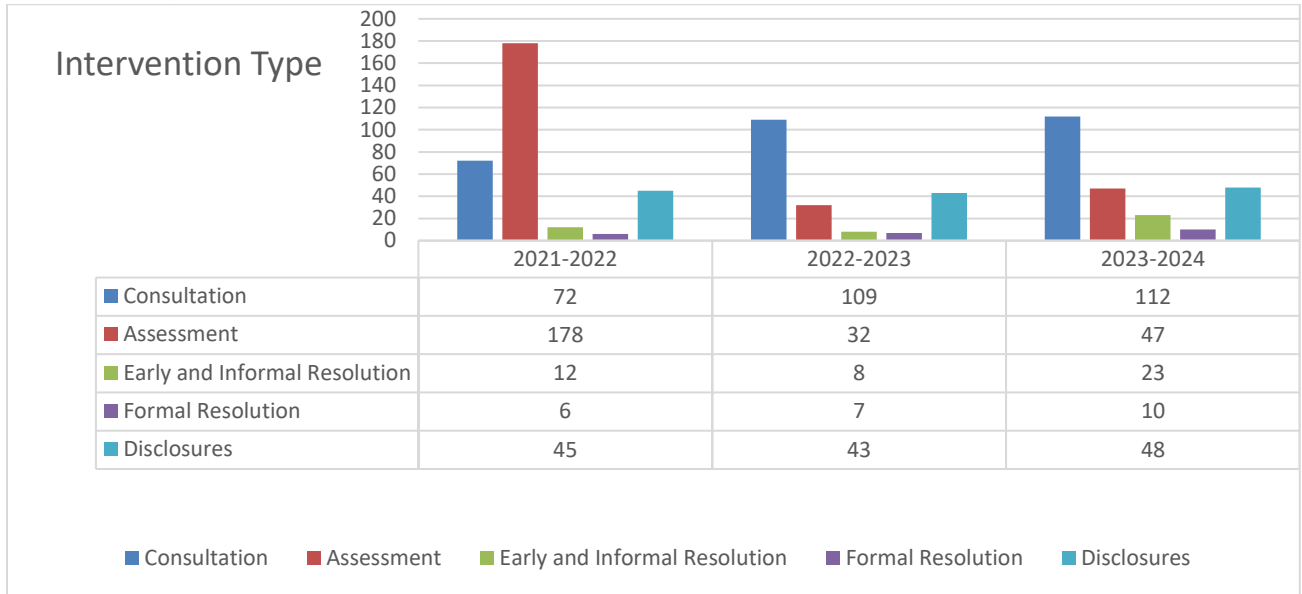


Table: 2

The number of consultations undertaken by the HRO remained consistently high as a percentage of total interventions, indicating the important role the HRO plays in providing support to the university community. This is also reflected in the substantial increase in early and informal resolutions which collectively have seen a year over year increase of 75%. Combined, these trends are reflective of the HRO’s focus on efforts to prevent and resolve issues prior to dispute escalation.

c. Issue Source

The HRO provides services to all members of the University community, including faculty, staff, students, and visitors. The following table shows the source of issues that were brought forward in the reporting year. As a percentage of the total, inquires from the four groups stayed relatively consistent year over year.

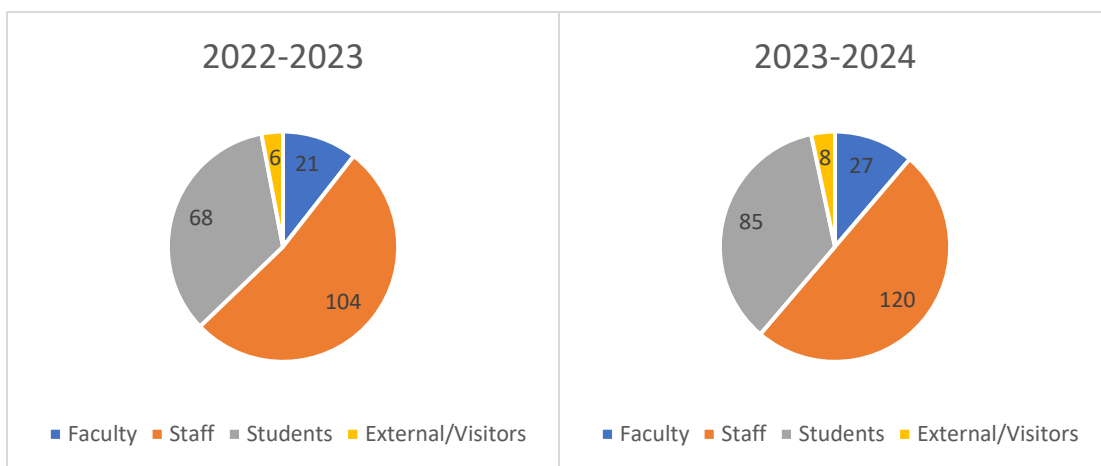


Table: 3

d. Protected Grounds

Protected Grounds are the grounds contained in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* (OHRC) under which individuals are protected against discrimination and harassment. Most, but not all, of the complaints and concerns raised to the HRO cite one or more protected grounds. Additionally, the HRO intervenes to address incidents and complaints that fall under other legislation, but overlap with the OHRC, including the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (Workplace Sexual Harassment) and the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act* (Student Sexual Violence).

A number of consultations completed by the HRO are of a general human rights nature in which no specific protected ground is cited – these are captured in the following table under the “unspecified” column. The HRO is also accountable for addressing incidents of workplace harassment, in which a connection to a protected ground is not required.

It should be noted that the number of protected grounds cited may not correspond directly to the number of cases received. This is because multiple protected grounds may be cited by individuals who come forward in respect of a case.



Table: 4

The spike in creed-based issues in the 2021-2022 year relate to COVID-19 and should be looked at as an anomaly. The increases seen in the protected ground of ancestry and race from last year to this year is partially reflective of the overall increase in racial tensions resulting from world conflicts. There is a steady increase in issues involving disability as a protected ground which is largely resulting from increased awareness and diagnosis of differing neuro-divergent abilities, as well as the related challenges of assessing and accommodating individuals who increasingly present with complex needs. The 3-year increase trend in the category unspecified is reflective of the positive role the HRO plays in providing general advice and guidance to the University community. The HRO will continue to monitor these trends and will direct education supports as needed.

5. CONCLUSION

We conclude by acknowledging the numerous University Members who assist the HRO in our goal to create and reinforce an inclusive campus for all. Preventing harassment, discrimination, and gender-based violence is a collective effort, and everyone at the University has a role to play. We continue to encourage all University Members to act with respect and to call out inappropriate behaviour if it occurs. Together, we can continue to ensure a positive campus environment.

APPENDIX A – STUDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE SUPPORTS, SERVICES & PROGRAMMING³

1. **Advisory Committee on Implementation and effectiveness of the Policy & Supports**

The Advisory Committee on Student Sexual Violence Prevention and Support, established in December 2017, is mandated to ensure that the university's Policy, and the support services, programming and training that sustain these policies, are reviewed on a regular basis and continuously improved upon. This year, the Committee was composed of 6 students, 1 representative from the Ontario Tech Student Union, 8 staff from across the university, 1 community partner and 1 alumnus.

2. **Supports, services and accommodations:**

Support Workers, through the university's Student Mental Health Services, support students who have experienced sexual violence. All counsellors participate in ongoing training in trauma-informed therapy and have experience working with survivors of sexual assault. In addition, an Outreach Worker in the residence works very closely with the Support Workers in providing onsite support for students living in residence.

3. **Awareness and programming**

In 2023-2024, efforts to raise awareness and educate students about the Policy, supports and services were largely driven by the Student Engagement and Equity team in Student Life. Initiatives to raise awareness and educate on sexual violence included:

- **#WeGetConsent Awareness Week:** Once per semester in the Fall and Winter terms, Student Engagement and Equity hosts our #WeGetConsent Awareness Week which focuses on educating our campus community about sexual violence prevention and our institution's sexual violence policy. This year, 107 students interacted at the booths.
- **#WeGetConsent Online Campaign:** The #WeGetConsent online campaign continued this year with several initiatives throughout the year aimed at educating students about consent and sexual violence prevention. Programming included social media posts aimed at continuing the consent conversation online and encouraging students to share their own understanding of consent and ways they can be upstanders should they observe anyone causing harm.
- **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence – Digital Campaign:** From November 25 to December 10, 2023, Ontario Tech hosted a digital campaign for 16 Days of Activism. The campaign helped students, staff and faculty learn more about gender-based violence prevention. The program included an online event and engaging social media content where they asked members of the university community to share what they will do to contribute to ending gender-based violence.
- **Afternoons with SEE: #WeGetConsent edition:** Afternoons with SEE is a weekly event where the Student Engagement & Equity (SEE) office opens its doors to any

³ Sections 17 (7) and (7.1) of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act note that universities are to provide their Board of Governors with an annual report including information about their student sexual violence initiatives and programs.

students who wish to drop in and use the space to hand out throughout the fall and winter semesters. On February 13, 2024, this session was dedicated to promoting the #WeGetConsent campaign. A total of 7 students participated.

- **Women's Abuse Awareness Month:** Student Engagement and Equity is a member of the Women's Committee of Durham Region which is a group of community organizations that work together to bring awareness to women's issues. This year, the committee held an event on campus to educate students about women's issues such as human trafficking, gender-based violence and victim's services. Attendance was not taken.
- **#LetsTalkSex Workshop Series:** A series of sex-positive and sexual health workshops were offered by Student Life to help students feel more comfortable having conversations about consent. These workshops were provided through a collaboration with the AIDS Committee of Durham Region, Durham College and Trent University and included topics such as consent, sexual health and sexuality. A total of 14 students participated throughout the 2 semesters (September - November 2023 and March 2024).
- **Staff and Faculty Training:** Online training modules are available for faculty members and staff to provide information about the sexual violence policies and procedures, and the supports for employees and students who experience, or witness, sexual violence. This training was updated in 2022-2023 and was launched to all employees in May 2023, and all students in September 2023 – the training is mandatory for all University Members.
- **RISE: Sexual Violence Prevention:** The RISE (Respect Inclusivity and Support Equity) program, offered by the Student Engagement and Equity Team, is a series of workshops focusing on the development of by-stander intervention strategies. Students are encouraged to attend these workshops to earn a RISE Certificate officialised by the University. RISE Topics include: two mandatory workshops- RISE: Let's Talk Equity and RISE: First Peoples. As well, seven elective workshops- RISE: Anti-Ableism, RISE: Anti-Racism, RISE: Consent and Sexual Violence Prevention, RISE: Feminism, RISE: Health Equity, RISE: Sexual Orientation, and RISE: Trans Identities. A total of 147 students participated in the RISE workshops in 2023-2024.
- **Trans/Non-Binary Space:** A place where trans and non-binary students can meet one another to have open discussions in a space and build a sense of community at Ontario Tech. This space was offered in September and November of 2023, 27 students participated.
- **Pride Space:** In collaboration with the Ontario Tech Pride Club, Pride Space is a place for all 2SLGBTQ+ students and allies to come together and create a space of belonging within the university community. This space was offered in both Fall 2023 and Winter 2024, a total of 181 students participated.