

Student
Conduct and
Judicial Affairs

2014

Annual Report

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About the Office

The Office of Student Conduct and Judicial Affairs (SCJA) has now completed its second full year of operation. Predictably, the number of student misconduct cases coming to the attention of SCJA has increased over last year, as have requests from faculty and staff for advice on improving their response to lower level student misbehavior.

In September 2014, SCJA assumed responsibility for providing support and policy guidance to faculty when responding to incidents of academic misconduct (cheating & plagiarism) and for record keeping.

SCJA continues to build on its past efforts to:

- Hold students accountable for their behaviour and address violations of the Student Code of Conduct.
- Provide day-to-day support and guidance to faculty and staff on both academic and non-academic misconduct.
- Provide students with education and guidance on appropriate behaviour within a large organizational context, including the policies, rules, and regulations that govern their student participation.
- Support age-related developmental tasks, including the adoption of pro-social behaviour and the acquisition of skills related to problem solving, conflict resolution, and effective communication.
- Support the adoption of behaviour appropriate to future workplaces or other post-secondary institutions, including the adoption of Canadian behavioural norms for students who are unfamiliar with the Canadian context.
- Enable early identification and intervention when health or disability factors impinge on effective behavioural functioning.
- Facilitate communications between the student and other parties when necessary to support the student's academic achievement.

Year in Review - 2014

Academic Misconduct

In 2014, 113 confirmed incidents of academic misconduct were reported, up from 94 in 2013 (70 cheating and 43 plagiarism).

Reduced grades and failing grades on the assignment or exam were the most frequent penalties for academic misconduct in 2014 (27 and 59 respectively). There were 20 warnings/reprimands and 2 course failures on record. The majority of incidents were first offenses (104). Incidents occurred most frequently in December (26), followed by November (20) and March (14). One student was suspended from the College for repeated incidents of academic misconduct.

Of those cases where a student engaged in Academic Misconduct, twelve students requested an appeal. Of those requests, seven were denied, and five went before an Appeal Panel. The Panel upheld the original decision in one case, and substituted a lesser or no penalty in the other four.

Note: The incident numbers mentioned above should not be interpreted as reflecting all academic misconduct occurring on campus. Not all faculty members report incidents of academic misconduct,

and some departments have devised procedures for addressing incidents, independent of the Academic Conduct Policy.

Non-Academic Misconduct

During 2014, SCJA addressed 88 conduct incidents, up from 69 in 2013. Of those cases, the highest numbers of incidents were in the following categories: incivility (17), disruption (16), harassment and bullying (12), and other concerning behaviour (17).

Males were more likely than females to engage in non-academic misconduct. The highest number of conduct incidents arose in January (12), March (14), and October (11), and July (9), roughly mirroring academic cycle.

Like every modern post-secondary institution, Langara regards suspension as last resort dealing with student misconduct. In support of this approach, SCJA addresses student misconduct through corrective interventions and a progressive approach to discipline.

During 2014, sanctions have been relatively modest, with verbal and written warnings being most common (19) followed by Letters of Expectation (11), Restriction of Privileges (6), and Letters of Reprimand (4). A number of cases did not require sanctions but did require continued monitoring (11). Eight students have been restricted from registering in courses or programs until they meet conditions designed to demonstrate compliance with College behavioural expectations. No students were suspended from the College for violating the Code of Conduct in 2014.

In 2014, two students appealed sanctions imposed for violating the Student Code of Conduct. One appeal was denied, and the sanction was revoked in the second.

Consultation and Coaching

Throughout the year, SCJA has continued to consult with individual faculty and staff on a case-by-case basis and to guide, coach and support them in their approach to student behavioural concerns. SCJA has provided direct guidance or coaching on 26 cases that has enabled faculty and staff to address concerns at the lowest possible level.

Training and Education

An effective student conduct process requires efforts to improve incident reporting and to build capacity amongst those who regularly interact with students. Formal training, informal presentations and one-to-one consultation and coaching are the most effective ways to achieve this end.

SCJA presented at over 25 department meetings, orientation sessions, and formal workshops during 2014. Numerous web and paper-based resources have been developed to assist and guide faculty and staff in their response.

Policy Revision

After approximately 16 months of work, the revised Student Code of Conduct was formally approved in April 2014. Key features of the new policy include an expanded outline of prohibited behaviour; provisions for the temporary removal of a student when necessary, an expanded and clarified response procedure, opportunities for a broad range of sanctions including educational and restrictive sanctions, and a clarified appeal procedure.

Academic Misconduct - Examples

Academic misconduct takes many forms. Common examples of cheating during 2014 were copying from another student's exam or allowing another student to copy from an exam, or failing to cite correctly on a paper. Some other forms of academic misconduct occurring this year include:

- Continuing to write an exam beyond the allowed time
- Bringing cheat notes into an exam (e.g.: replacing a water bottle label with mathematical equations; pasting notes to the brim of a ball cap; adding notes to a graphical calculator; writing on skin, clothing, postage-size sheets of paper etc.).
- Unauthorized collaboration during an on-line exams or assignments
- Reviewing notes during a mid-exam washroom break
- Giving completed work to another student who knowingly, or unknowingly, submits the work as their own
- Submitting work previously submitted for a grade in another course
- Cutting and pasting from web-sites
- Having another person sit an exam

Non-Academic Misconduct - Examples

Student conduct management is a complex endeavor that requires a careful balancing of various interests. While statistics provide some information about the activities of SCJA, case examples illustrate the multifaceted nature of the work. The following pages offer case summaries various forms on misconduct.

Note: student names have been fabricated and no identifiers are included.

When students engage in fraud

Example 1 - Huan

While preparing for a student placement test, a faculty member noticed an applicant name that seemed unusually familiar. On scrutiny, the faculty member discovered that Huan, a former Langara student, had written the placement test several times before. SCJA was contacted. Further investigation revealed that someone using the name of Huan had written the test 2-3 times per month over an extended period and that there was a significant variation in handwriting on sample tests.

During an investigation interview, Huan accounted for his repeated test taking by claiming that he wanted to improve his chances of enrollment in other Langara courses. With regard to the handwriting discrepancies, Huan did not know why the handwriting was different but gave assurances that he wrote the tests. Huan denied running a business where he wrote placement tests for paying customers. Despite Huan's denial, the evidence supported a violation of the Code of Conduct. Huan was permanently restricted from writing the placement test, and was restricted from attending Langara for a specified period. Huan was given the option to appeal the decision, but did not.

Example 2 – Janice and others

Students who attend Langara and take a minimum number of courses are eligible for a monthly, reduced-cost transit pass as a result of an agreement between Langara College and the B.C. Transportation Authority. Janice and Michael appreciated the benefit so much they decided to double it. Records showed that minutes after obtaining their Upass from the on-campus dispenser, the students, unbeknownst to each other, approached Student Accounts to obtain a replacement for the “lost” Upasses.

Meanwhile, independent of the others, Sofia and Viktor were confidently attempting to sell reduced-rate Langara Upasses to passing commuters at various sky-train stations. Each student was confronted by Transit Police, who notified Langara College as allowed under the terms of the Upass Agreement. All students met with SCJA and were asked to account for their actions. Aside from various denials, none of the students were able to provide a satisfactory explanation in light of the facts. All four were subjected to a one semester suspension of Upass privileges for violating the Student Code of Conduct.

When students bother other people

Example 1 – Hunter

Nicole came to SCJA to express concerns about fellow student Hunter. Nicole reported that Hunter was approaching her on and off campus, making unwelcome comments about her appearance, and when she told Hunter to stop, he threatened her. SCJA met with Hunter to address the situation. Hunter confirmed that he knew Nicole. When asked why he followed her, Hunter explained that he was drawn to beauty like “a moth to light.” He further explained that he found Nicole so beautiful that he, as an artist, was unable to refrain from remarking upon it. He denied threatening Nicole. He claimed instead, that his comments were exploratory, only made to see what Nicole would do. It was only after considerable discussion did Hunter concede that his behaviour may not be welcome and that he should stop. To ensure Hunter discontinued his unwanted behaviour, he was issued a Letter of Expectation outlining the College’s expectations around student behaviour and was restricted from contact with the Nicole, among other conditions.

Example 2 – Kennedy and Lucy

Kennedy and her friend Lucy attend a College sponsored tour to a local business. On touring the premises, Kennedy and Lucy observed a poster, which they considered sexist. Determined to rectify the situation, Kennedy and Lucy each wrote to the proprietor outlining, in unambiguous terms, their concerns about the poster. The proprietor responded, apologizing for any discomfort felt, and explained that the poster represented family members who were instrumental in starting the business. Kennedy and Lucy were not satisfied with the response and wrote again. In a second email, Kennedy and Lucy became increasingly hostile and accusatory, suggesting that the proprietor was responsible for creating and perpetuating a “rape culture.”

When the department became aware of the situation, Kennedy and Lucy were asked to stop writing to the proprietor. Kennedy and Lucy did not stop, however, and continued to write. In addition, the two students elicited the support of a non-Langara individual, who wrote a demeaning and possibly defamatory email to the proprietor.

The Department contacted SCJA when the proprietor complained of being bullied and harassed by Kennedy and Lucy, and following complaints from other students that they were becoming increasingly uncomfortable with Kennedy and Lucy’s campaign against the proprietor.

On meeting with SCJA, the Department Chair and the instructor, Kennedy and Lucy were at first, insistent on their right to express their views in the way that they did, considering their actions a form of social activism. After some discussion, both of the students acknowledged that they could have handled the situation differently, and appeared genuinely unaware that reporting their concerns to their instructor, the Department Chair or other College officials, would have been the first step. Both students were issued Letters of Expectation clarifying the expectations around civil behaviour and providing guidance on how to bring forward this, or similar complaints.

Example 3 – Andrew

Sarah contacted the security office because she received a series of bizarre and troubling email from Andrew, a student she barely knew. In these emails, Andrew made sexual remarks and seemingly romantic references. Sarah was also concerned because Andrew seemed to follow her from place to place while on Campus. In response to Sarah's concerns, Andrew was told to refrain from further contact with Sarah and to meet with SCJA to discuss the matter. Upon receipt of communication from SCJA, Andrew emailed Sarah again, making bizarre comments and questioning her reporting of the incident. Sarah felt alarmed and threatened by Andrew's behaviour. She expressed reluctance to return to campus. To ensure Sarah's safety, Andrew was temporarily suspended from campus pending the outcome of an investigation.

Investigation did not reveal any previous concerns with Andrew's on-campus behaviour, but did reveal he was connected to external mental health services. Andrew and his mental health professional met with SCJA to review the situation. With the support of his professional, Andrew was permitted to return to campus, on condition that he desist from all contact with Sarah, attend regular meetings with SCJA and receive specific counselling from his mental health professional. Although Sarah was initially uncertain about Andrew's return to campus, he complied with the no-contact requirement and Sarah successfully continued her studies.

When students get angry

Example 1 – Carlos

Carlos was walking through the main hallway and noticed a woman who had a small dog on a leash. Carlos didn't like dogs and didn't think they should be indoors. He yelled at the woman to take her dog outside, and when she didn't respond, he approached and kicked the dog. Not yet satisfied, Carlos approached a security guard. He yelled and swore at the guard, demanding that the dog be removed from campus. When the guard was not sufficiently prompt in responding, Carlos accosted another guard, yelled and swore at him and threatened that the guard better watch out because he (Carlos) was "packing." Carlos then fled from campus.

Security personnel were concerned about Carlo's behaviour and reported the situation to SCJA. During a Student Conduct meeting, Carlos accounted for his behaviour by saying that the small dog on the leash terrified him; that he was allergic to dogs; that guards were supposed to do what students wanted; that he wasn't "packing" that day, and that he didn't threaten anyone or kick the dog. Carlos also acknowledged he had a significant problem with anger and had been in trouble with the police in the past. He said that in "his world," one didn't put up with things. Carlos was unwilling or unable to accept that the behaviour he exhibited was not acceptable in a post-secondary environment, and was not able to give assurances that it would not recur. Carlos was advised that he could not register for more Langara courses until he could demonstrate he had completed anger management training.

Example 2 - Daphne

During a final exam, Daphne's instructor told her to cover her work because it appeared that other students were looking at her paper. When Daphne did not comply, the instructor asked Daphne to move to another seat. In response to this request, Daphne disrupted the exam room by yelling at her instructor, saying he had no right to tell her what to do. She eventually moved seats with much noise and disruption. Following the exam, the instructor called Daphne to meet with him to discuss the matter. During this meeting, Daphne became highly agitated. She yelled at her instructor, swept his papers to the floor, and tore up one of his documents. Security arrived and removed Daphne from the situation.

When Daphne met with SCJA and the instructor to discuss the incident, she was contrite and apologetic. She claimed that the situation was a misunderstanding and that things were not done the same way in her country. She reluctantly acknowledged that she was responsible for her own conduct. She acknowledged that she had a problem with "losing control" and "a bad temper," and had been told before that she needed to manage her emotional reactions. Daphne was required to consult with on-campus counseling services and with International Education to improve her emotional reactions and to familiarize herself with Canadian post-secondary processes.

Example 3 - Stephen

During a mid-term exam, Stephen was struggling to complete the exam on time. As was the instructor's practice, she gave the students repeated warnings as the end time approached. When the instructor eventually called "time," Stephen continued writing. After giving him a few minutes, the instructor approached Stephen and told him that he must stop or it could result in an academic penalty. Stephen ignored the instructor and she reminded him again. Stephen raised his voice and using vulgar language, told his instructor "where to go". Shocked by Stephen's outburst, the instructor moved toward the door. Stephen eventually left in a flurry of expletives, slamming the door behind him.

The instructor was deeply alarmed and distressed by Stephen's verbal assault on her. She felt unsafe around him and was reluctant to have him to continue in her class. Investigation revealed no other concerns about Stephen's behaviour. Because the situation involved both academic misconduct and non-academic misconduct, consultation took place between SCJA, the instructor, and the Department Chair. A meeting took place between Stephen, the Department Chair acting on behalf of the instructor (to address the academic issues), and SCJA (to address the non-academic issues). Stephen took very little responsibility for his actions. He asserted that the instructor had mistreated him and her actions were racially motivated. On further discussion, Stephen conceded that he had no reason to make this claim and eventually acknowledged that his behaviour had been inappropriate and offensive. Stephen received a penalty for academic misconduct and agreed to be withdrawn from the course.

When students don't comply

Example 1 - Noordeep

Noordeep first came to the attention of SCJA following a report from the Department Chair that other students had complained that Noordeep was interfering with their ability to compete team-based projects because he was impaired by cannabis, and behaving irrationally and disruptively. On meeting with SCJA, Noordeep denied being impaired or using controlled substances. He insisted that any complaints made against him were false and made out of malice. Noordeep insisted that other students made these false claims because they were "stressed."

Because the matter arose close to the end of the semester, the Department agreed that Noordeep could complete the semester by doing alternate work. Noordeep received a Letter of Expectation, outlining a number of conditions, including a requirement that he comply with all future direction from his Department Chair.

Despite these instructions, Noordeep came to the attention of SCJA a few weeks later. He had violated several of the conditions. During a Student Conduct meeting, Noordeep first denied any wrongdoing, but later admitted violating the conditions and by-passing direction from the Chair by asking a third party to act for him. Noordeep was allowed to complete the semester with monitoring, and was restricted from registering for other courses until he could demonstrate a willingness to comply with the College's behavioural expectations.

Example 2 - Amara

Amara enrolled at Langara three years ago and sought accommodation through the College's Disability Services Office. Amara came to the attention of SCJA because, despite repeated instruction regarding processes for accessing services and meeting course requirements, Amara missed or was late for over 25 scheduled appointments and classes; had submitted irrelevant material for class assignments; and wrote incomprehensible emails to various campus departments, among other things. Although Amara had taken eight courses over the three-year period, he had not completed any. Faculty and staff were becoming increasingly concerned about Amara's apparent inability to follow direction and the disruptive nature of his interactions with various departments. His current instructor was no longer able to manage Amara's needs and behaviour.

Amara met with SCJA to review the concerns. To ensure he understood the College's expectations, a family member participated in the meeting. During the meeting, it became evident that Amara had a very limited grasp of post-secondary processes or expectations. He agreed to withdraw from his current course and SCJA provided Amara with information about community-based education and support services. Until he can demonstrate an ability to comply with College norms and expectations, Amara has been restricted from further enrollment at the College.

Example 3 - Hugo

Hugo came to the attention of SCJA following concerns that he was accessing areas of the Campus after business hours and that his behaviour was causing faculty to be concerned about their security. A review of Campus Security records showed that Hugo had posed problems in the past, mainly due to repeated and frivolous complaints leveled against faculty, staff, other students, College process, and facilities. Despite several coaching conversations, Hugo was not able to limit his disruptive behaviour. Consequently, Hugo was informed that his complaints would be screened through SCJA. Hugo was also encouraged to consult with College counselling services, but he declined to do.

Hugo's disruptive behaviour persisted. Faculty were increasingly finding that Hugo's behaviour interfered with their ability to perform their job and other students complained that it interfered with their ability to participate in the educational environment. On meeting again with SCJA, Hugo appeared unperturbed by the concerns. He insisted he was the one who was being victimized. During the meeting, Hugo acknowledged that he liked to use intimidation tactics to achieve his aims. Matters came to a head when Hugo disrupted a classroom by yelling at other students and accusing female students of sexually provoking him by sitting cross-legged or looking around the room.

To ensure the safety of the other students, Hugo was temporarily suspended pending the outcome of an investigation. Alternate arrangements were made to enable Hugo to complete his academic work while the investigation took place. Hugo remained hostile and belligerent throughout the process. Hugo was ultimately prohibited from enrolling in future courses or programs at the College until a psychiatric assessment confirmed he was fit to participate.

When students become ill

Example 1 - Damir

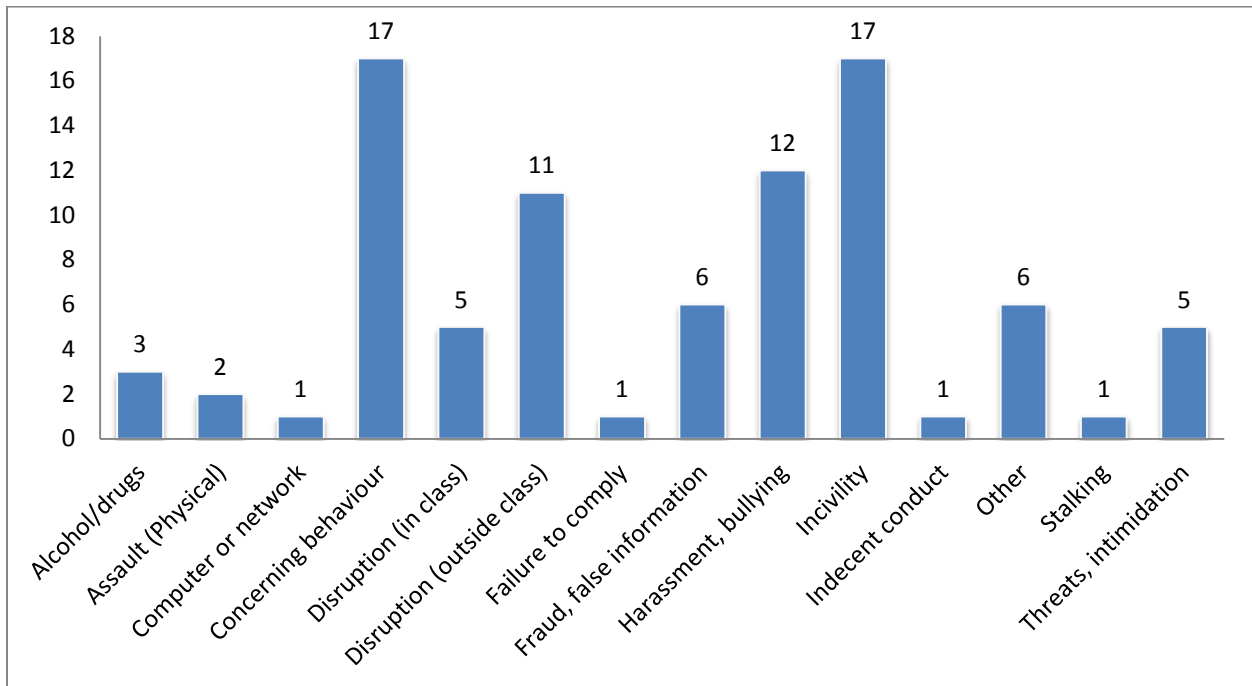
Damir was a successful student in his second year at Langara. Toward the end of the fall semester, Damir was brought to the attention of SCJA for sending bizarre and threatening emails to another student. SCJA asked Damir to attend a meeting to discuss the situation. Before the meeting could take place, Damir sent additional bizarre and threatening emails to some of his instructors. These emails caused concern and alarm.

When he met with SCJA, Damir's behaviour suggested elements of paranoia and delusion. It became clear from other information that Damir had no relationship with the other student. To ensure the safety and comfort of all involved, Damir was temporarily suspended pending the outcome of an investigation. With the cooperation of his instructors, arrangements were made for Damir to finish his schoolwork from home and arrangements were made to coordinate alternate arrangements for Damir's final exams.

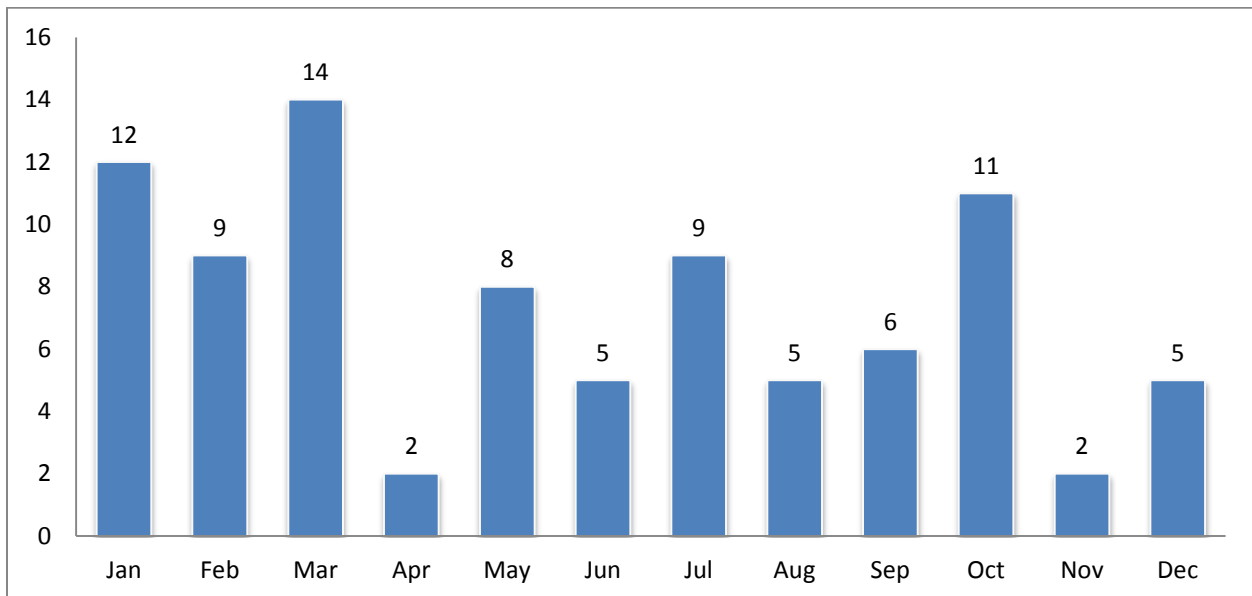
Within days, however, Damir's mental state appeared to deteriorate. He completed one assignment from home, but reported to SCJA that someone was tampering with his computer. His written communication to SCJA became even more bizarre and significantly more threatening. When he wrote alleging that members of the College were foreign spies and telepathically communicating to him to cause harm, law enforcement was contacted. Mental health professionals and the courts eventually became involved. SCJA worked with Damir's immigrant parents to align communications with the various agencies, although Damir himself declined to cooperate with any intervention measures. Further discussions will take place if, and when Damir is deemed fit to return to Langara.

Charts - Non-Academic Misconduct

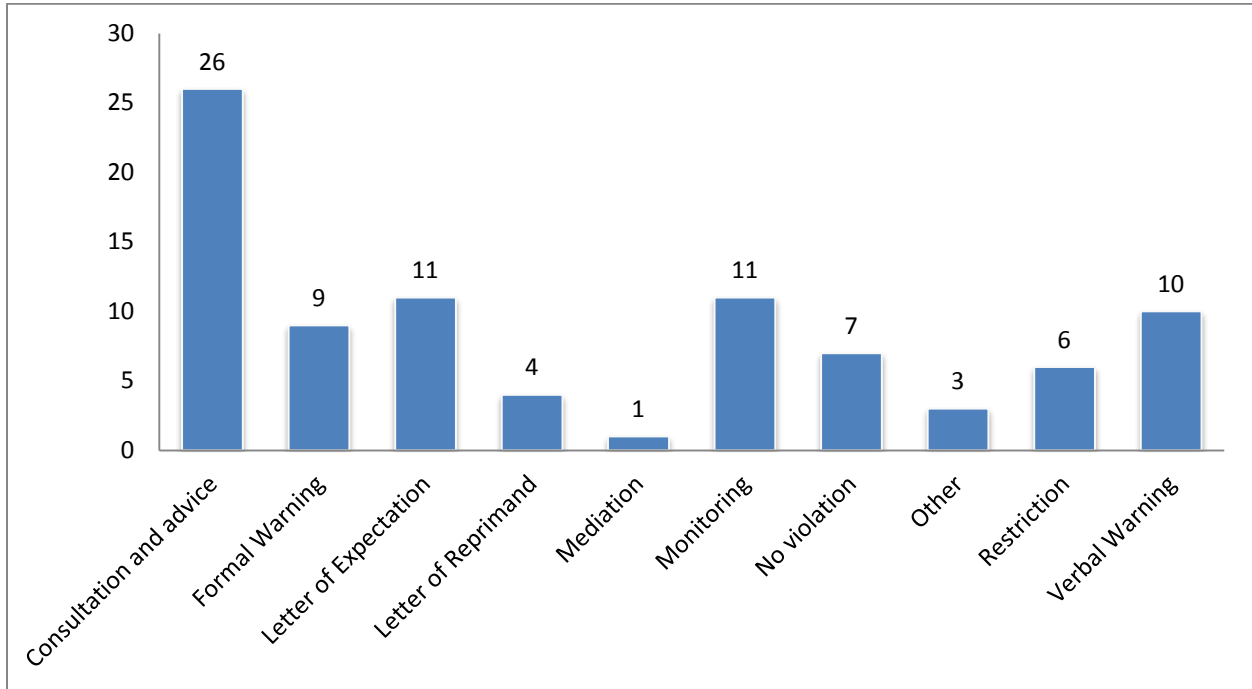
Incidents by type - 2014



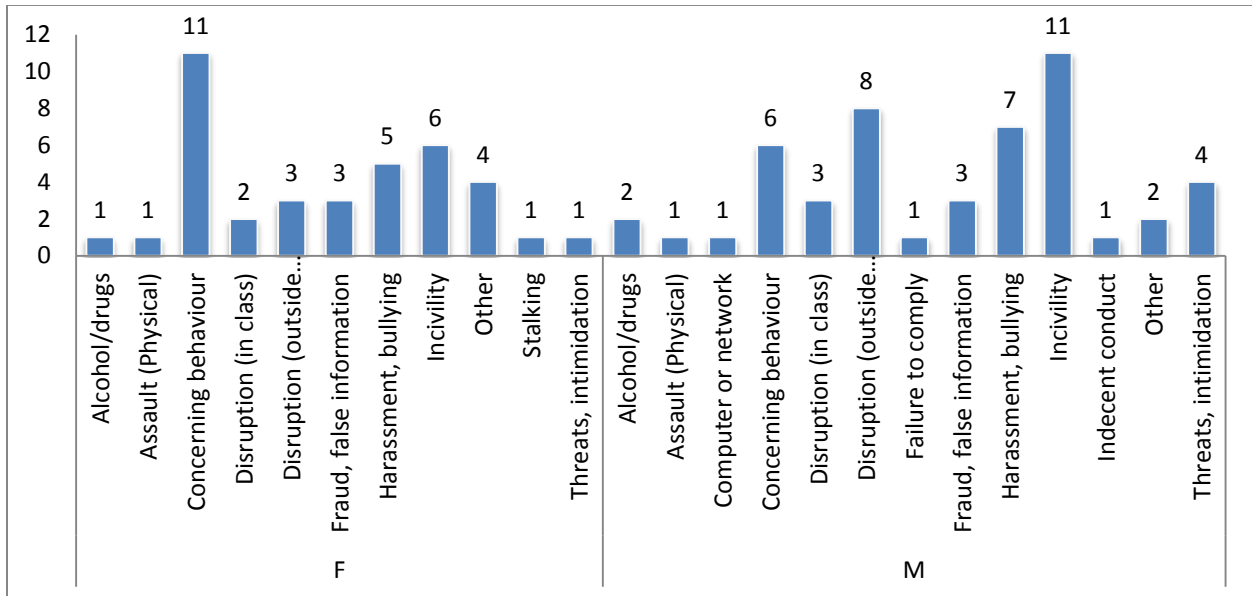
Incidents by month - 2014



Incidents by sanction - 2014

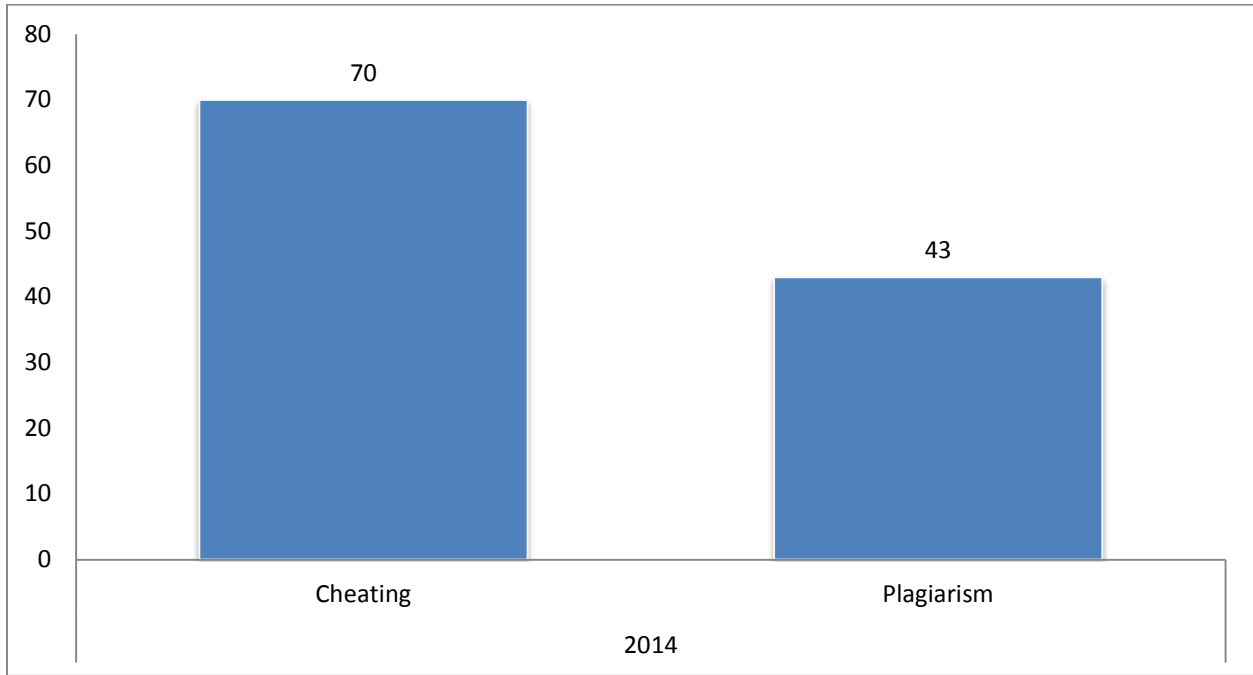


Incidents by type and gender - 2014

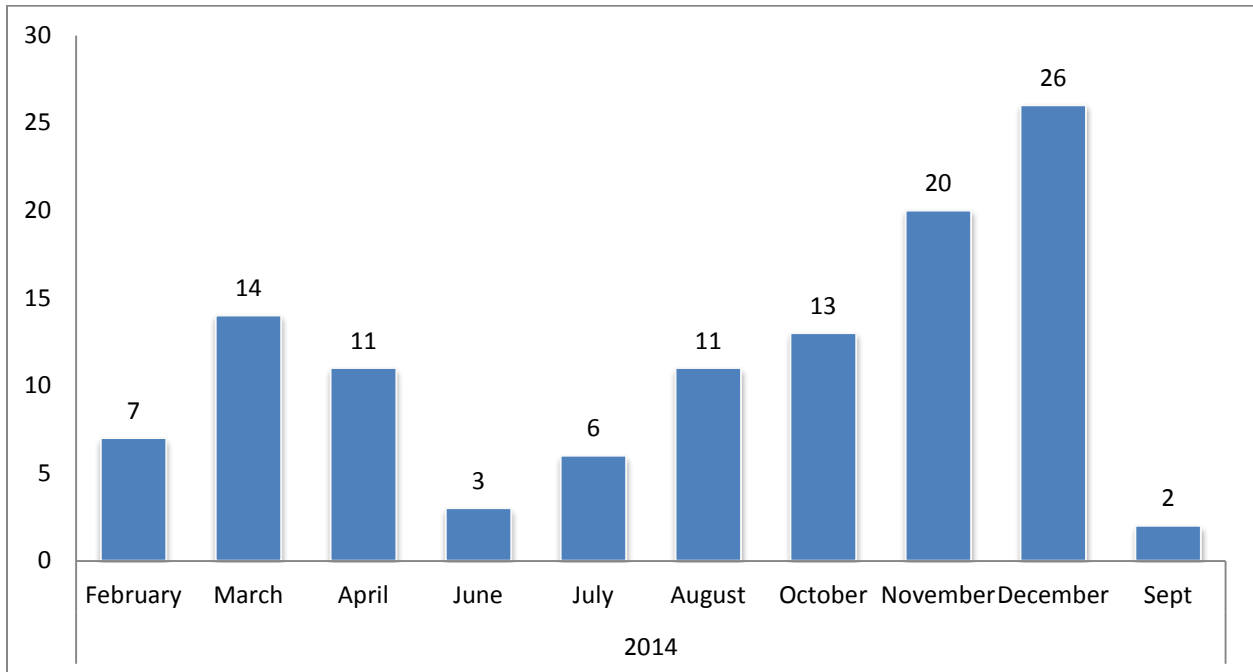


Charts - Academic Misconduct

Incidents by type - 2014



Incidents by month - 2014



Incidents by sanction - 2014

