



Human Rights Advisor

Annual Report:

July 2009 to June 2010

*"We ALL have the Right
to Fairness and Respect!"*

Executive Summary

As required under the institution's Human Rights Policy this report provides an overview of the activities of the Office and the Human Rights Advisory Committee over the past year.

Education & Prevention

The Office maintained ongoing educational programs for students and employees, including mandatory training for new employees, orientation of new students, classroom and departmental presentations as requested as well as organizing educational events, speakers and films which are open to all University members. New initiatives this year include:

- The development of an Accessible Event Planning Checklist as a resource for University members planning any kind of institutional event;
- The development and publishing of a campus map which identifies gender neutral washrooms; and
- Belonging @ VIU storytelling event featuring the struggles, barriers, and supports experienced by three VIU students and providing University members with an opportunity to learn from the experience of diverse students.

Initiatives

- The Transitional Equity & Human Rights Committee developed recommendations for a Diversity & Educational Equity Policy, drafted a Diversity & Educational Equity plan and developed revised Terms of Reference for an Equity & Human Rights Committee and Office. These recommendations will be going forward for review in the fall of 2010.
- A draft policy on Employment Accommodation has been prepared by a working committee with representation from administration, the Human resources department and the three employee unions. The draft policy will go forward for institutional review in the fall of 2010.
- A successful fundraising event was held to endow a Positive Space Award;
- University President and Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Ralph Nilson, signed a Memorandum of Understanding making VIU a community partner in initiatives to enhance inclusion in the Nanaimo community.

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Consultations with the Human Rights Advisor

The final section of the report provides statistical information on consultation and complaints received by the Office. Highlights include that:

- The number of consultations with the Advisor remain constant with the previous year;
- Disability related issues are the most common human rights related reason for consulting with the Advisor;
- The most common non-human rights reasons for consulting with the Advisor are concerns related to conflict and personal harassment.
- Most issues continue to be addressed informally and no formal complaints were filed in the 2009/10 year.

Introduction

The Human Rights Office at Vancouver Island University is responsible for implementing the Human Rights and Personal Harassment Policies and Procedures. The office is staffed by the Human Rights Administrator (Admin, .8 FTE) and the Human Rights Clerk (CUPE, .6 FTE). The Advisor reports to the President on issues related to policy and to the Executive-Director, Student Services on operational matters.

Recommendation for New Mandate

In the fall of 2010 a recommendation will be going forward to the University for the expansion of the mandate of the Advisor and the Committee. If these recommendations are approved the new mandate would include responsibility for enhancing institutional diversity and educational equity. Future initiatives will require modest budget allocations to support the expanded mandate.

The primary roles of the Human Rights Advisor are:

- to provide education on human rights and harassment;
- to advise employees and students of options in responding;
- to assist with conflict resolution; and
- to address complaints filed with the office.

The Advisor provides impartial and confidential assistance to university members. The Advisor does not advocate for any individual but does advocate for the goals outlined in the two policies that guide the Advisor's role; Policy 21.03, Human Rights and Policy 21.05, Personal Harassment.

The Human Rights Advisor works closely with the Human Rights Advisory Committee; an institutional committee with representation from administration, BC Government and Services Employees Union local 702, Canadian Union of Public Employees Union local 1858, VIU Faculty Association, and the VIU Student Union. This committee has shared responsibilities with the Advisor

in relation to organizing educational initiatives and monitoring the effectiveness of the Human Rights Policy and Procedure. The committee also serves as a vehicle for the various University constituencies to bring forward any concerns or new initiatives in relation to human rights issues or initiatives.

Education & Prevention

During the past year the following was accomplished:

✓ **Educational sessions and materials**

Fifty -two educational sessions were offered to 1,364 Vancouver Island University students and employees. New bookmarks on harassment were developed for international students and translated in Japanese and Chinese. An Arabic version is under development.

✓ **Accessible Event Planning Checklist**

A guide was developed and published online for University members to use when planning any kind of institutional event to ensure it is accessible to everyone.

✓ **Gender Neutral Washrooms**

The Nanaimo Campus map has been expanded to provide information on the locations of all of the gender neutral accessible washrooms.

✓ ***Belonging @ VIU* Storytelling Event**

A storytelling event was offered on the Nanaimo Campus, featuring three students telling their story of “belonging” – the struggles, barriers and supports. The goal of the storytelling event was to give University members and the general public an opportunity to learn about the experiences of diverse students. Our storyteller’s backgrounds included living with disabilities and being transgender.

✓ **Campus Presentations by Alden Habacon, Manager of Diversity Initiatives, CBC-TV**

Alden Habacon spent two days on campus making presentations to students and introducing the new CBC production, **Iron Road** in the evening as part of the Worldbridger Film Series. His presentations included a presentation to ESL students about his own experience of being an immigrant to Canada, an open session on why media should consider diversity in the images and messages communicated and a presentation to media studies students on developing webzines. His visit to campus was supported and organized by the Anthropology department, the English Language Centre, the English Department and the Human Rights office.

The Human Rights Office is active in providing opportunities for members of the University community to learn about human rights as well as organizing programs and activities that focus on the prevention of discrimination and harassment. These activities are key components of the institution’s Human Rights and Personal Harassment Policies.

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✓ **Sponsoring of two films as part of the Worldbridger Film Series**

The following two films were shown with a discussion at the end.

- ⇒ ***The Meaning of Life*** - (2008/Canada/82 min/English) – This documentary showcases Kwikwexwelhp, a unique prison located in British Columbia with a First Nations healing model of rehabilitation.
- ⇒ ***Rabbit Proof Fence*** - (2002/Australia/94 min/Aboriginal and English) – Based on the book *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* by aboriginal author Doris Pilkington Garimara, this film tells the tale of Australia’s “Stolen Generation”. It recounts the real life story of the author’s own mother and two other mixed-race Aboriginal girls, who ran away from the Moore River Native Settlement in order to return to their Aboriginal families.

✓ ***Becoming an Ally* Workshop**

A day long workshop was attended by 16 students and employees focused on learning about the various forms of oppression, the privileges we hold and being an active ally to others.

✓ ***Building a Village* Workshop**

This experiential workshop facilitated by Kathi Camilleri Consulting focuses on the impact of residential schools. It was offered both semesters and attended by students from many diverse program areas. Organized by student Steven Levesque and co-sponsored by Aboriginal Education and the Human Rights Office it provided a unique opportunity to learn with the heart.

“This workshop helped me understand the experience of colonization by Aboriginal people – more than any book I have read or lecture I have attended.”

✓ ***Positive Space* Campaign**

The campaign, focused on creating inclusion on campus for students and faculty who are Bisexual, Transgender, Gay or Lesbian, and organized by the Positive Space Alliance, continued to offer orientation sessions, a holiday gathering for employees and students, and special events.

Initiatives

The Human Rights Advisor and the Human Rights Advisory Committee are active in identifying and implementing new initiatives to address identified needs and to enhance equity.

Institutional Diversity, Equity & Human Rights

A Transitional Equity & Human Rights Committee was established to follow-up on the recommendations of the planning day held last year, *Vancouver Island University – Who Belongs? Planning for Equity and Inclusion*. The membership of the Human Rights Advisory Committee was expanded to include faculty and students that could provide insight into the needs and experiences of equity seeking groups. The Transitional Committee:

- reviewed the recommendations from the planning day;
- researched policies and plans at other Canadian universities related to equity and diversity;
- recommended the incorporation of a statement valuing diversity and equity in the draft VIU Vision Statement;
- drafted recommendations for a permanent standing committee on diversity, equity and human rights;
- drafted a Diversity and Educational Equity Policy to replace the existing Employment Equity Policy; and
- is in the process of developing a Diversity and Equity Plan for the University.

The substantial work accomplished by the Transitional Committee will be reviewed by the University's governing bodies in the fall of 2010.

Draft Employment Accommodation Policy

A draft *Employment Accommodation Policy* is ready for review by the governance bodies of the institution. The draft policy was developed in consultation with the three employee unions and the Human Resources department. This policy will ensure that all employees are aware of the University's commitment to accommodate human rights related needs and the process that will be followed to determine appropriate workplace accommodations.

“An environment that fosters equity inspires innovation in teaching, research, scholarship, and service. It enhances wide-reaching opportunities for mentoring. Its diverse communities and varied experiences and expertise will make it a welcoming destination for the best & brightest faculty, staff, and students.”

Valuing Difference: A Strategy for Advancing Equity and Diversity at UBC

Endowing a Positive Space Student Award

Responding to the lack of any student awards specifically for Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual or Transgender students, the Positive Space Alliance and the Human Rights office started the Positive Space Student Endowment Fund. This past year a successful fundraiser was held featuring Dr. Evan Adams as a guest speaker, the AVIVA Womyn's Chorus providing entertainment and a wide array of silent auction items. Dr. Evans spoke about his experiences as a young, gay, Aboriginal man and especially focused on his experience in medical school and on what can be done to make education more inclusive. The Positive Space Student Endowment Fund is now \$1,800 closer to its goal of raising \$10,000.

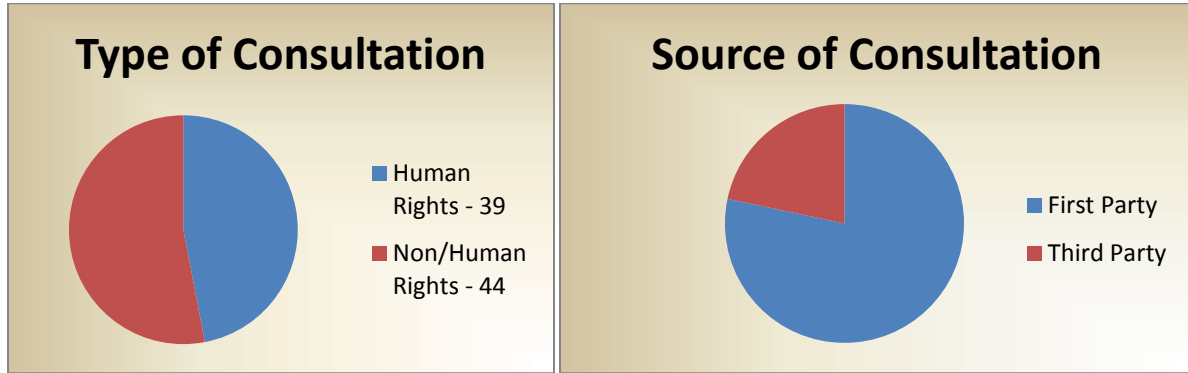
Diversity Partnership: A Community in Action

Dr. Ralph Nilson, President and Vice-Chancellor of VIU, represented the institution in signing a Memorandum of Agreement creating a community partnership focused on enhancing inclusion of diversity in the Nanaimo community. This partnership includes the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society, School District #68, City of Nanaimo, Snuneymuxw First Nation and other community organization. Supporting community initiatives to make Nanaimo a more inclusive community is an important component of ensuring an appropriate climate for our students living in Nanaimo. The Human Rights Advisor represents the University in this community partnership.

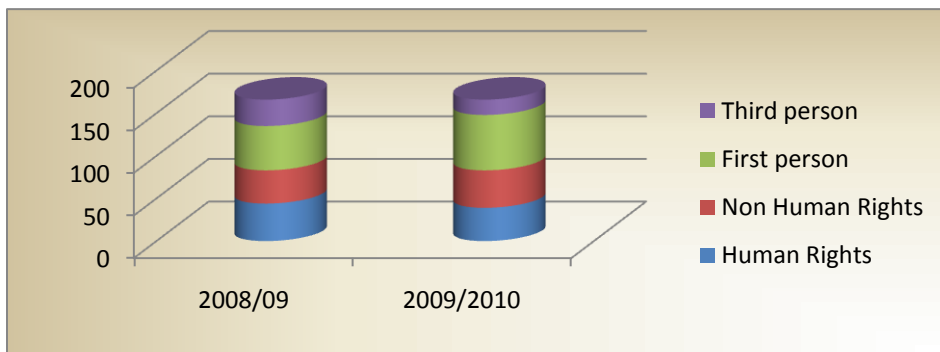
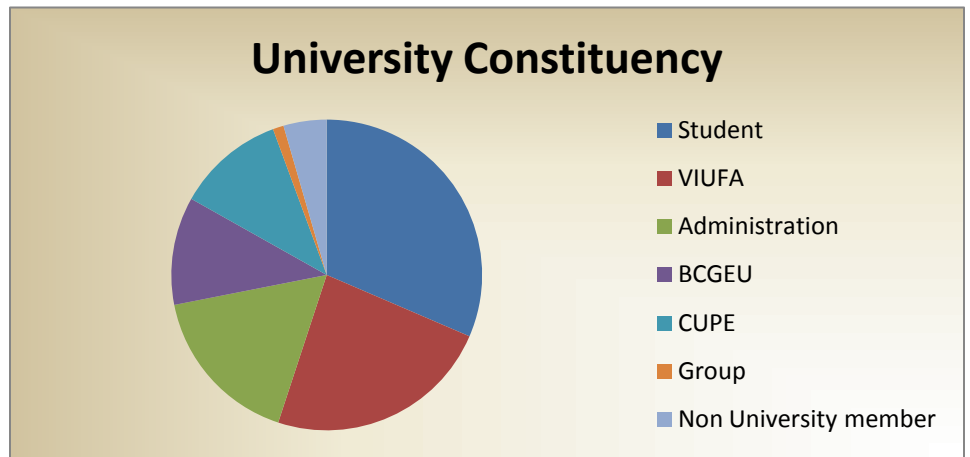
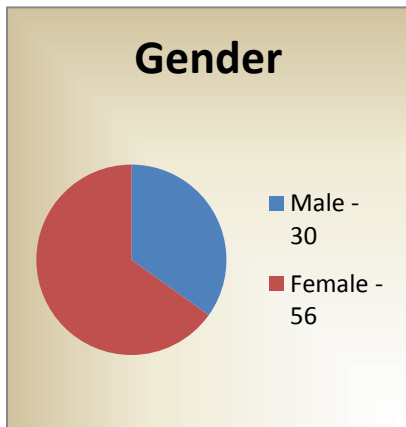
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Overview of Consultations with the Human Rights Advisor

The total number of consultations in 2009/2010 was 83.



The following is demographic information on the persons consulting the Human Rights Advisor.

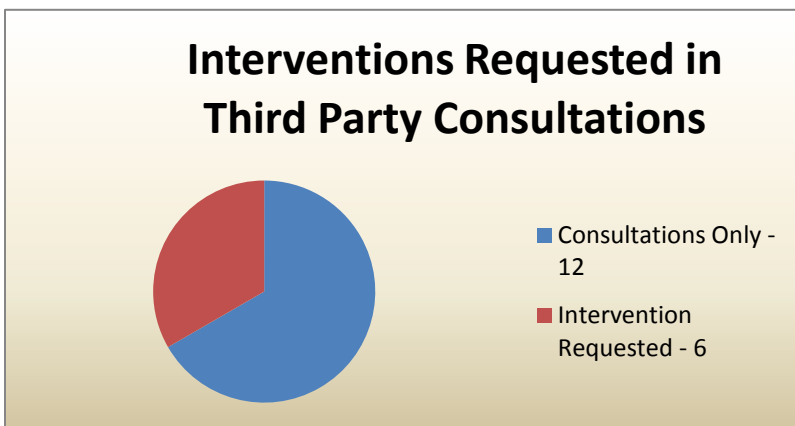


Comparison to 2008/09

The total number of complaints in both years was 83.

Third Party Consultations

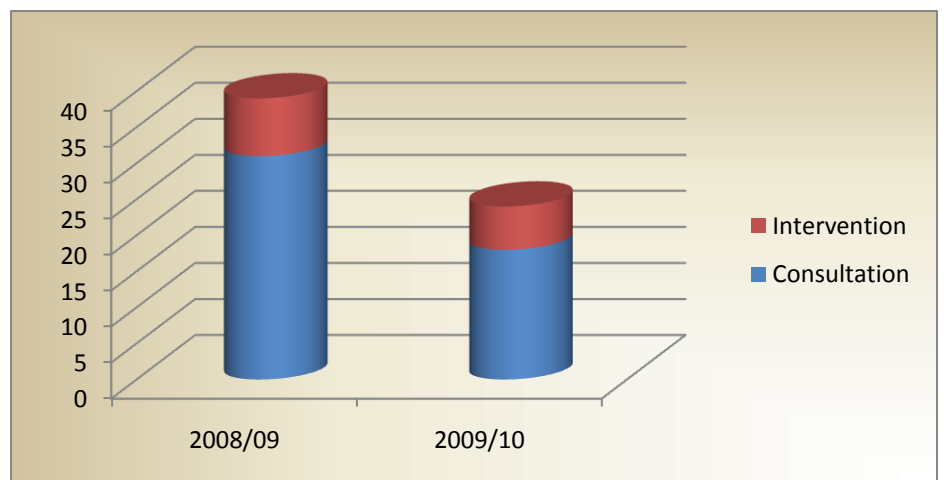
Third party consultations are from individuals who are not parties to the situation but may need to respond. Third parties are often instructors or managers but can also be a family member or friend of one of the parties.



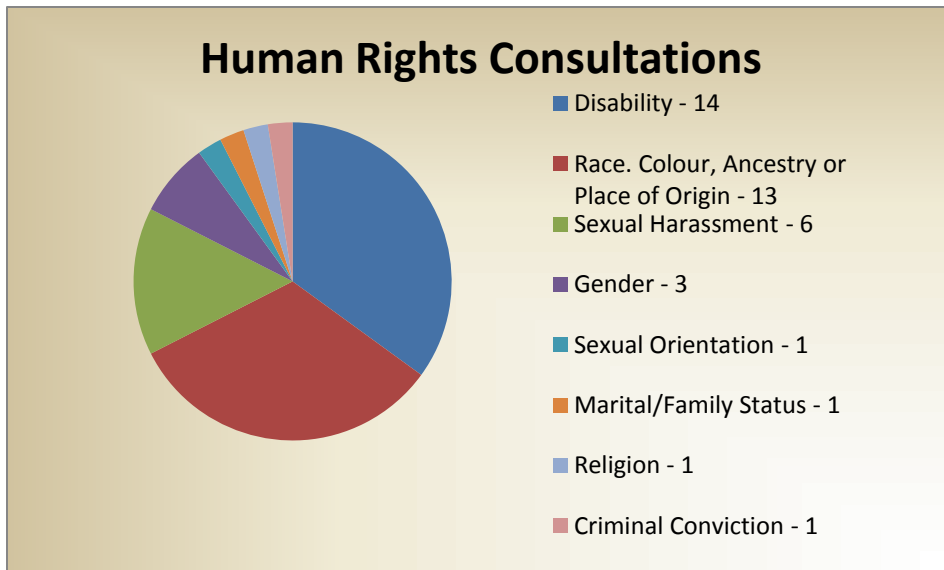
The Advisor is at times asked to intervene directly in the situation; these interventions can include meeting directly with the parties involved, mediation, group consultation, or fact finding and the making of recommendations. During the 2009/10 year the Advisor was asked to intervene in six situations.

Comparison to 2008/09

When compared to the previous year there has been a decline in third party consultations but the number of requested interventions has remained almost the same.



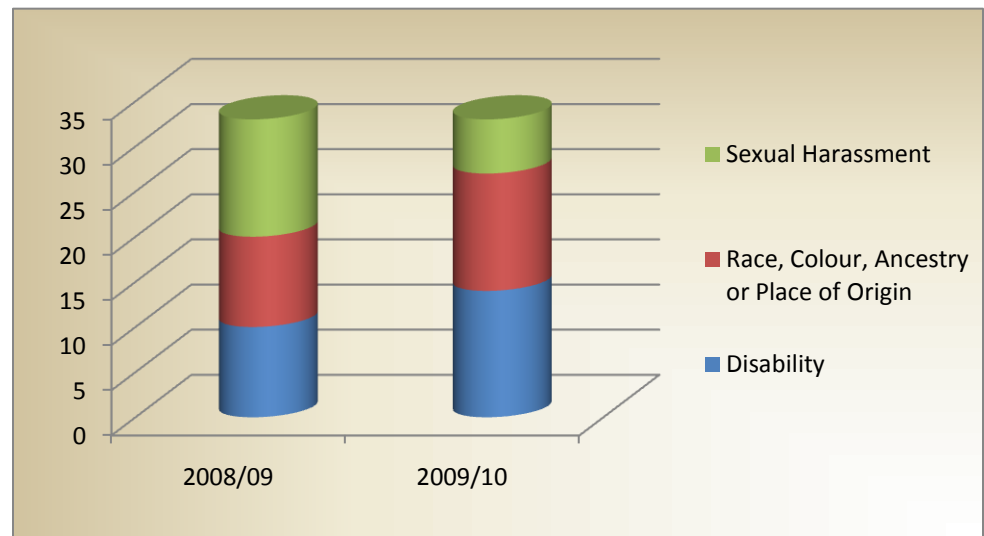
Grounds/Reasons for Consulting the Advisor



The ground of disability was the most common human rights related reason for consulting with the Advisor. Concerns are varied, relating to physical access, fairness of evaluation, and concerns regarding treatment by others.

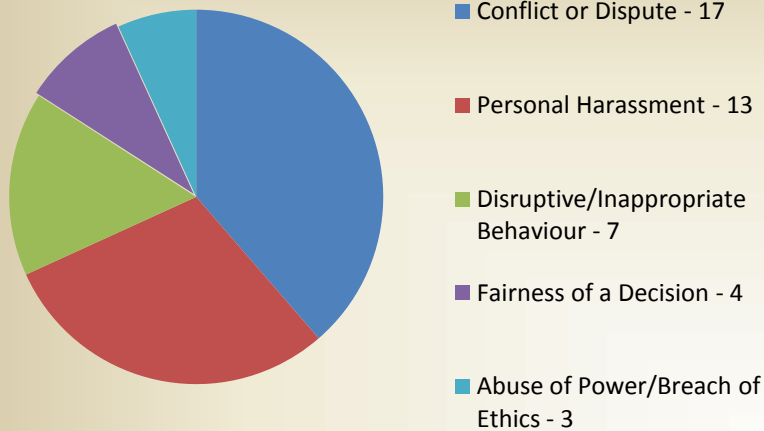
Comparison to 2008/09 – Top Three areas for Human Rights Consultations

As this comparison shows the top three reasons for consulting with the Advisor have remained constant in the past two years and have consistently been the most common areas for concern in the tenure of the Advisor.



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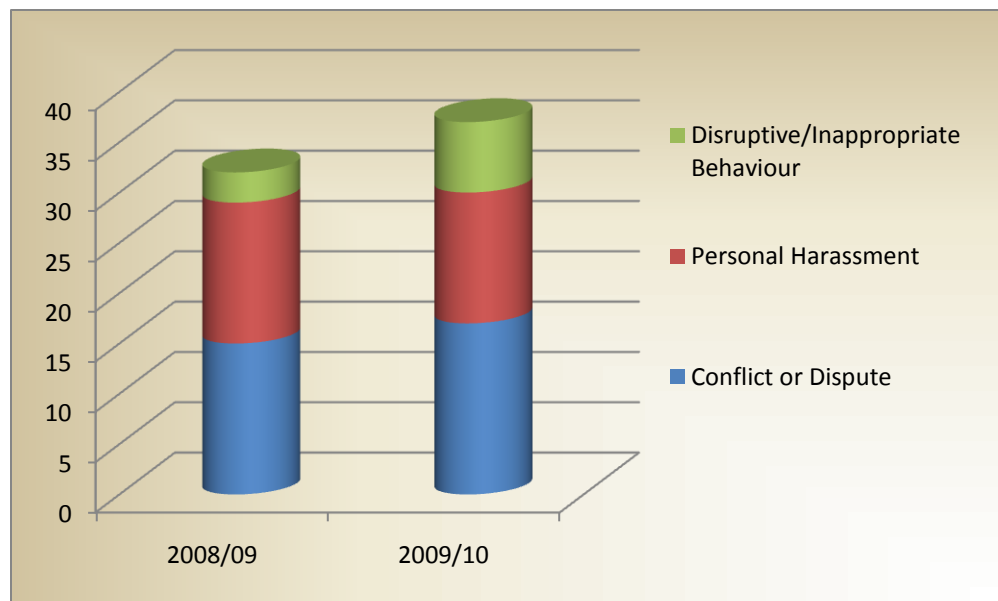
Non-Human Rights Consultations



The two major reasons people consult with the Advisor – conflict and personal harassment – have some common attributes and it can be unclear how to categorize a consultation. In this report consultations have been categorized as “harassment” only if the person described the concern as “harassment”.

Comparison to 2008/09 – Top Three areas for Non-Human Rights Consultations

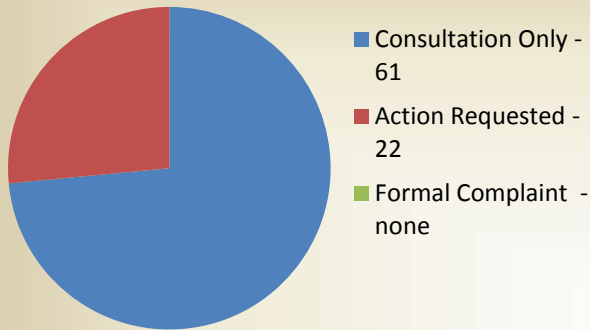
The top three areas for non-human rights consultations have remained unchanged, but there was a slight increase in the number of consultations.



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Complaints/Interventions

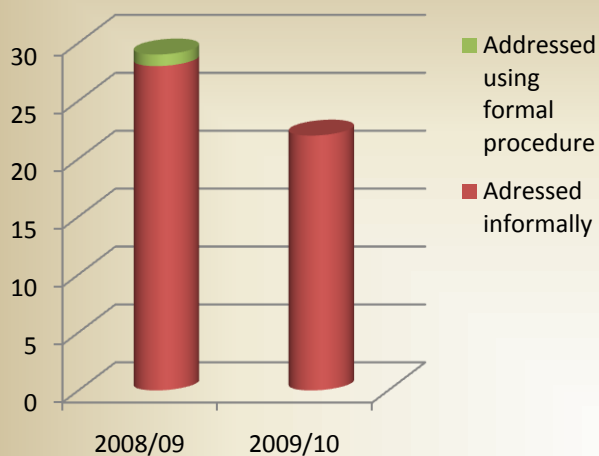
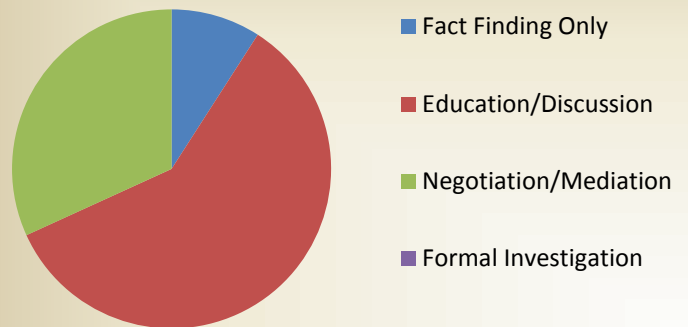
Type of File



Of the 83 consultations with the Advisor, intervention was requested in 22 of the consultations, or in approximately 26% of the consultations. No formal complaints were filed with the Office this past year.

The Advisor's most common intervention was education and discussion (13), followed by negotiation and mediation (7).

Type of Intervention



Comparison to 2008/09

There was a decline in the number of interventions requested of the Advisor, with 28 in 2008/09 and 22 in 2009/10. In 2009/10 there were no concerns addressed using the formal complaint process.