Involvement by Parents and other Family Members

Western is a large and complex institution with many policies and procedures. At times the student in your life may be overwhelmed and need assistance in navigating his/her way. However, there are many resources on campus to help students.

Helping You Help Your Student

Instead of stepping in and contacting the University yourself, encourage your student to find those resources and make contact. You are not helping your student develop independence if you are calling an academic counselor to find out why a student medical certificate hasn’t been accepted, or a department chair to find out when a decision on a student’s appeal will be made. Most of all, you aren’t helping your student if you are advocating for them.

If your student can’t figure out which resource to use, have them contact the Office of the Ombudsperson. Likewise, if you are attempting to guide your student to the appropriate resource and have questions, you may contact the Office of the Ombudsperson. We won’t discuss specific issues relating to your student without that student’s permission, but we will gladly tell you who your student can talk to regarding a specific policy, procedure, rule and/or deadline.

Office Confidentiality

The Office of the Ombudsperson requires written permission from a student to speak to a parent, family member, or other representative. Providing permission to the Registrar’s Office for a third-party to contact the University is not applicable because the Office of the Ombudsperson is independent. While your student may have given us permission to speak with you, this does not remove the student’s responsibility to participate in discussions pertaining to them. Nor does it provide you with the right to speak for the student or prevent the Office of the Ombudsperson or the University from requiring the student to be the primary participant in discussions.

Here are some examples of how the Office of the Ombudsperson works with parents and other family members:

(a) Ms. Stewart calls the Ombudsperson because her daughter, Emily, has been accused of plagiarism.

What the Ombudsperson will do:

- Describe the University’s Scholastic Discipline policy and the procedures for determining guilt, as well as the right to appeal such a finding.
- Recommend Ms Stewart have her daughter come in to the Office of the Ombudsperson to discuss the situation and the appeal process.
What the Ombudsperson will not do:

- She will not confirm or deny having any contact with the student, Emily Stewart;
- She will exclude from discussion any information about this alleged plagiarism incident she may have from Ms. Stewart’s daughter or indeed from any other source.

If Ms. Stewart asks, "Have you seen my daughter? She told me she would make an appointment," the Ombudsperson will explain that she works in confidence, and cannot confirm or deny having seen the student. (Incidentally, the Ombudsperson will say exactly the same thing if the student’s professor or Associate Dean calls.)

(b) A student, Armeen Ahrar, contacts the Ombudsperson to discuss his situation. He has been required to withdraw from the University because his academic performance did not meet the requirements for progression. Armeen plans to appeal for a Dean’s Waiver, citing serious health issues in the second term as the reason for his weak performance. He told his father all about his situation, and gave permission for the Ombudsperson to discuss it with him.

What the Ombudsperson will do:

- Discuss the situation openly with Armeen’s father, keeping confidential only information, if any, which she promised other parties she would keep confidential.
- Ensure Armeen is aware what was discussed with his father.

Useful Resources

The University website (www.uwo.ca) provides access to the University calendars, as well as specific information about rules and regulations, faculties and departments. The site also links to on-campus resources such as the Office of the Registrar, Student Development Centre, Student Success Centre, the Office of the Ombudsperson, and student associations such as the Society of Graduate Students and the University Students’ Council. The Affiliated College websites contain similar information.