



## **MEMBER ADVISORY**

# **IMPACT OF COVID-19 on Faculty Work**

**28 August 2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect all faculty work. Preparing for remote delivery which aims to ensure students have a solid learning experience has created more work for all faculty, but has fallen hard on contract academic staff and on those with disabilities or with dependent care obligations. The Association continues to advocate for the University to acknowledge this work and the uneven impacts it has on faculty, staff and students.

The reopening of schools has now raised new concerns about how faculty can manage remote delivery while balancing dependent care obligations. This *ADVISORY* outlines how faculty may address challenges they face in maintaining a balance between work and life and offers guidance on how to address other pandemic-related impacts on faculty work.

### **Measures to address the Impact of Dependent Care on Faculty Work**

Many faculty have a range of dependent care obligations that may impact their ability to work remotely. The University has announced that full-time faculty can access unpaid leaves which will not be unreasonably refused. Faculty who wish to explore unpaid leaves should approach their Dean and Chair, who will assess each situation on a case-by-case basis. As with accommodation meetings, you are entitled to have a representative from the MRFA accompany you during these conversations. Further, you are welcomed to contact the MRFA's Labour Relation Officer prior to engaging in the conversations.

The Association believes that there are other alternatives to an unpaid leave. Full-time faculty can request, through the Chair, their instructional load be rebalanced over the full academic year. Chairs may also find flexibility in the department average (Article 14.6) to accommodate different workloads. All adjustments are subject to approval of the Dean.

Full-time faculty may also request an instructional load that falls below the minimum SICH specified for their specific work pattern. For example, Article 14.4 states that an Employee on Teaching-Service pattern must teach "no fewer than 336 scheduled instructional course hours annually [SICH], or more than 432 [SICH]" with the normal teaching load being around 384 (the equivalent to about 8 courses). Article 14.5 states that faculty on the T/S/S work pattern shall teach no fewer 240 SICH. Chairs and Deans will assess the impact of these requests on the department average. Exceptions are subject to approval by the Dean.

Finally, lower instructional loads mean lower pay and faculty should contact Human Resources to assess any impact a reduced workload may have on benefits.

Again, as is typical with accommodation meetings, you are entitled to have a representative from the MRFA accompany you during these conversations. Please be advised these changes may have an impact on contract faculty.

If full-time faculty remain unsatisfied with the assigned workload, the workload can be appealed under Article 14.12 at any time. A workload appeal will result in a workload appeal committee being struck. A member appealing a workload should be prepared to nominate a faculty member from the same discipline or academic Unit to sit on the Appeal Committee. The Association will also appoint a representative; the University will nominate two representatives. Article 14.12 contemplates swift resolution to workload appeals; however, given the timeframe, faculty should expect to work until a final decision is reached. Starting to teach does not mean an appeal is settled.

Failing these measures, academic staff have some control over their schedule. The Association encourages faculty to use their MRU calendar to delineate times of unavailability, so they can better balance their dependent care responsibilities. The Association also encourages Chairs to schedule meetings only when necessary and with an eye to those who have dependent care obligations.

### **Measures Related to Student Perception of Teaching (SPoTs) and the Pandemic**

Article 28.4 relates to the administration of student evaluation of instruction. It was temporarily amended in several ways in the *MOU on COVID-19* agreed upon April 27, 2020. The MOU mandated that if Student Perception of Teaching (SPoTs) were administered in the Winter 2020 and Spring 2020 terms, the results are for faculty information and not shared Chairs and Deans unless faculty choose to do so. Aggregate reports for SPoTs were also not reported to the Chair or Dean.

The Association and the University are near agreement on a new memorandum of understanding related to the administration of SpOTS in the current semester. Details will be forthcoming next week but faculty are advised to note how the pandemic has affected their teaching so that they can report this on any SpOTS conducted during this semester.

### **Annual Reporting During COVID-19**

The Collective Agreement requires full-time faculty to submit an annual report to Dean with a copy to the Chair, by the first Tuesday in September. As a result of the move to *Faculty 180* reporting software, the deadline for submission of annual reports for tenured faculty has been extended to October 16, 2020. However, the deadlines for tenurable faculty remain in place (September 1, 2020).

Full-time faculty should note in detail how the pandemic has affected their work (teaching, scholarship, service, and professional activities (e.g. Chair's duties or role within the ADC) since this information will then be taken into consideration for any performance-related decisions, including but not limited to future applications for tenure or promotion.

The Association also reminds faculty that student comments from SPoTs should not be included in the Report. Problems with data migration or software problems that impeded reporting should be reported to [annualreports@mtoyal.ca](mailto:annualreports@mtoyal.ca), with a carbon-copy sent to the Dean and the Association for information. The University is also offering student assistance to help with data migration. Refer to the Vice-Provost's email of August 17 regarding annual reports for more information about support available.

### **Sabbatical Reports and COVID 19**

Sabbaticals (and other professional leaves which require reporting to the Employer) occurring during the 2019-2020 & 2020-2021 academic years will have been impacted by the pandemic. Faculty on sabbatical during 2019-20 should note how the pandemic affected their ability to achieve their planned work. This information will then be taken into consideration for any performance-related decisions, including, but not limited to future applications for sabbaticals.

Faculty now on sabbatical leaves should review their sabbatical plans to assess what, if any, modifications must be made in light of the continuing pandemic. Agreed changes to the plan should be made in writing and approved by the Dean no later than October 31, 2020.

### **Working at Home Expenses**

Faculty working remotely are incurring a range of expenses from Internet charges, equipment for delivering curriculum on-line to the purchase of printer toners and other office supplies. The University does not meet the current criteria under CRA guidelines to support the issuance of the T2200s. However, the University advises that should the CRA guidelines change or should the institution reach the stage where it does meet the current guidelines, the issue will be revisited. Faculty should keep copies of all applicable receipts should expenses be claimed through these mechanisms or should the Canada Revenue Agency change their guidelines and allowances at a future point in time

Meanwhile, faculty can claim reimbursement for such expenses from personal professional development allotments, contract faculty professional development funds, and applications to the Faculty Development Committee. The University is endeavoring to create more consistent guidelines for allocating fall 2020 FDC funds while being mindful of specific Faculty needs.