

Dear Faculty:

I'm sure that many of you are busy marking and helping your students wrap up an exceptionally difficult semester. As the semester winds down and the college remains fully online, preparations for Spring and Fall are well underway. All of you who are teaching should have had your SWF discussions for the Spring semester, and the work you agreed to should have been recorded on your SWF. Any discrepancies, such as the ones discussed below, should be referred to Workload Monitoring Group (and cc the Local). SWFs for the Fall will be out by May 22, and you should be meeting with your chair/director to discuss that work soon.

The next few weeks between semesters

The periods between the semesters are reserved for complementary functions and professional development. Right now is the time that you and your supervisor should agree by mutual consent on the activities you will undertake. The best way to do this is for you to send an email to your supervisor outlining the activities you intend to engage in.

During this time, those activities will likely include the extra work of evaluating late assignments, or re-evaluating students who may need extra help or time to finish their courses. It may also mean an evaluation of what worked and didn't in the emergency methods you employed to get your class online. This may also involve additional research into moving courses online, training in new technologies, or how to apply universal design principles to improve accessibility. Make sure that you are clear about ALL of the professional activities you are engaged in.

The college seems to believe that each of these hours—all 88 hours—will be spent solely in getting your assigned courses online (while also trying to figure out how to cut two weeks of curriculum and still meet the outcomes). Their position is that no time will be spent on the usual activities you undertake in preparing for courses between terms under normal conditions and that they've cancelled all PD activities and meetings during the 11.08 period to free up faculty time. This is largely what College Council has told the Colleges to do, and is a patent misunderstanding of both the work faculty do to ready a course for delivery even under the best conditions, as well as the purpose of the non-teaching or 11.08 period.

While we understand that getting these courses online is the priority and will take up much of your time, there also needs to be clear recognition that your normal work and PD still exist and may be increased due to the change in delivery mode and support for students.

Your SWF discussion

After much pressure from the Local to use the NEW prep factor for your courses, George Brown has decided instead to give every teaching faculty 6 hours of time as complementary functions below the line in order to acknowledge the extra work faculty need to do due to the restrictions imposed during the pandemic. While well-intentioned, this sets very bad precedent for the work required to move courses online going forward. The NEW prep factor reflects the work you do every week to get your course ready for delivery, not the time between semesters, while complementary functions reflect general administrative or committee work (i.e., increased volume of emails involved in teaching online), or other non-teaching activities such as research.

While the Local will continue to engage with the College and press to protect your working conditions, we are only strong when faculty stand together. It is up to you to make sure that what is recorded on your SWF captures the actual work you do. Some of you may have courses that are already online, or that don't require much to move them into an online format right now and that's fine. In those cases, the 6 hours of complementary time might be accurate. For those of you who are engaged in an extensive process of redesign or training or other extra work to get your courses online even in this emergency format, please talk to your chair/director about why you need the NEW prep factor for your courses. If you need help with that conversation, just let us know.

PD Leave

This is also the time of year when academic employees typically engage in Professional Development (PD), and you are still entitled to PD days even now. This is a right under our Collective Agreement in which a faculty member can take up to 10 working days (at least 5 consecutive) for professional development activities. This is also entirely separate from the non-teaching/11.08 periods described above, although you may ask for PD leave during those times. If you choose, have a read of Articles 11.01 H1 to H4 to review the specific language.

To take your PD time, your Local suggests you follow these steps:

- determine your PD plan and when you wish to take it. (This is easiest if it has no added cost that needs approval)
- email the plan to your chair
- via email, discuss the PD plan with your chair
- if your chair refuses to grant the PD have this refusal recorded in the email discussion
- contact your union local on how to proceed with a complaint/grievance against your employer if PD is refused. (The union Local has seen situations where the PD was refused, but then the employee was given overtime pay in lieu of the 10 days PD. This was achieved via a grievance process.)

Please do not hesitate to exercise your right to these days if you need or want them. If there was ever a time when everyone needed PD, it's this year.

Contract faculty update

Currently, the Spring/Summer semester will be entirely online, with no new intakes of students, and some programs not running at all. That said, the Local is continuing to have discussions with the College to determine how we can best keep as many faculty employed as possible. The same is true for the Fall, though the large number of unknowns around government restrictions and COVID-19 itself make this much harder to navigate.

For partial-load faculty, please talk to your supervisor about the likelihood of work in the Fall. If the College is able to issue you a written contract in some form, then you will be able to bridge your benefits for the summer, even if you don't have a partial-load assignment. We are talking with the College to see if there is a way to be flexible about this process, especially since no one has been able to use their benefits--aside from prescriptions--for the past month.

For all contract faculty, if you do not have a contract for the Spring/Summer, please apply for the CERB through the federal government.

When you do receive a contract, let us know if there are any changes to the terms, particularly as they relate to intellectual property or other rights. We want to make sure that the work you do is recognized and protected.

Stay in touch

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Local at opseu556@gmail.com anytime.

Stay safe, stay home, and wash your hands everyone! We hope to see you at the coffee break on Thursday!

In solidarity,

Tom Tomassi