

University of Toronto Faculty Association

Information session on the COVID LOU
and
Updates from Central Health and Safety
Committee

August 31, 2021

AGENDA

1. Welcome, land acknowledgement, sharing of agenda, housekeeping
2. Brief background on SBPW bargaining and COVID LOU
3. COVID LOU presentation with integrated Q & A
4. Brief background on Health and Safety and the work of the Central Health and Safety Committee (with Jeffrey Siegel)
5. Health and Safety Q & A
6. Next steps
7. Closing

Your SBPW Bargaining Team

- Jun Nogami, VP SBPW (Engineering)
- Terezia Zorić, UTFA President (OISE)
- Roy Gillis, VP External (OISE)
- Mary Alice Guttman (Retired)
- Marcin Peński (Economics)
- David Roberts, Chair TS Comm (Geography)
- Harriet Sonne de Torrens, Chair Librarians Committee (UTM Libraries)
- Arjumand Siddiqui (Dalla Lana)

Staff:

- Kathy Johnson, UTFA Executive Director

Legal:

- Reni Chang
- Crystal Doyle

Relationship between COVID LOU and MOA Article 6 negotiations

- COVID LOU settles some of the most urgent issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Some of the items negotiated as part of the LOU have been withdrawn from the list of proposals that we tabled last spring as part of the broad salary, benefits, and workload negotiations.
- Other items under MOA article 6 remain to be negotiated, including:
 - Across the Board increases (ATB)
 - Benefits improvements
 - Permanent policy improvements with regards to workload

COVID LOU

1. Academic review processes
2. PTR Assessment for 2020-2021
3. Workload and workload relief
4. Teaching in 2020-2021 and for the remainder of the pandemic
5. Course evaluations
6. Accommodation guidelines
7. COVID related expenses (CERF)
8. HCSA deadline
9. Vaccinations

1. Academic review processes

- Tenure and other promotion committees have the option of convening virtually until H&S guidelines permit in-person meetings.
- Any member can request a one-year delay in timeline to tenure or continuing status (or permanent status) on the grounds of COVID delays, in addition to the nominal two-year limit on such delays.

2. PTR assessment for 2020-2021

- PTR will be paid starting with the October 2021 pay run.
- UTFA members will receive the higher of two scores:
 - The PTR score resulting from the regular PTR process done in April-June of this year
 - The average of (up to) the previous three PTR scores
- Members will receive information about which PTR scores were used in the determination of their PTR award.

3. Workload and workload relief

- The assignment of workload in 2021-2022 will take into account the extra workload associated with the COVID pandemic.
- Workload relief for teaching during 2020-2021
 - As a minimum standard, anyone having taught six or more unique half courses, or having taught an aggregate of 1000 or more students during academic year 2020-2021 will receive one half course release to be taken during the next three academic years.
- This entire clause is to be reviewed and possibly extended if pandemic conditions continue.

4. Teaching in 2021-2022

- There will be a continuing series of meetings at the Central Health and Safety Committee concerning the safety of work on campus during the pandemic.
- 4.2 the University will not require any individual faculty member or librarian to deliver any one section of a course both remotely and in-person ("dual delivery") By "dual delivery" and/or "hy-flex" we refer to the activity of fully presenting the course material concurrently in two different modes, such as delivering the course in-person and then separately recording course material for remote delivery.

On Teaching (member questions)

- How does the university want to handle syllabi expectations given that anyone involved in the class might fail UCheck on any day? Since everyone needs to be accommodated and we don't want anyone ill in class, I presume that means in person instructors de facto have to offer an asynchronous online option for every in person class taught for the entire fall term despite UTFa negotiating that no professor is required to teach dual delivery courses?
- Will online teaching be permitted until everyone can submit proof of mandatory vaccination which might be a little later than Sept. 23 if Ontario's govt refuses to implement a vaccine passport?
- Will instructors not to be penalized for suddenly teaching online on any given day if they fail Ucheck? The ordinary pre-pandemic expectation is that professors teach in person regardless of being ill or sick as long as we are mobile.

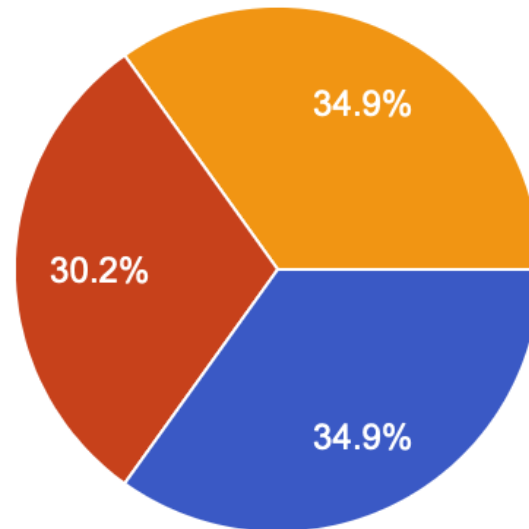
On Teaching (member questions cont'd)

- I will be teaching in person, and I am receiving emails from students who are abroad due to visa and personal issues asking whether there is a way for them to take my courses remotely beyond the first two weeks. What are the guidelines for responding to these students?
- In fall courses at all levels, can we arrange take home exams to minimize possible pandemic disruptions to in-person exams? Can these be scheduled during the final exam period to help students feel less pressured? Do professors have the right to opt out of using take home exam invigilation spyware?

Results of a snap poll of engineering faculty.

If you were given the choice of one of these three delivery modes for courses in the fall, which would you choose?

129 responses



- Fully in person. (Plan A) with all classes of larger than 200 students online.
- Fully online with limited exceptions such as labs where all possible safety precautions are carried out. This would follow the practice done last year, aside from the fact that multiple time zone a...
- Fully online for lecture and tutorial materials, but in person midterms and final exams. Under this scenario, FASE would work with space management t...

5. Course evaluations

- Any course evaluations for the period starting March 16, 2020 can be set aside for the purposes of PTR or promotion at the option of the UTFA member.

7. COVID related expenses (CERF)

- There is a separate fund set up for reimbursement of expenses associated with the shift to remote work during the pandemic.
- The maximum reimbursement is \$750 per member, not prorated for part-time members.
- The expense should be associated with either teaching or in the case of librarians, professional practice.
- Examples: office furniture, microphones, cameras, ring lights, and computers.
- Expenses previously reimbursed from grants or PERA are not eligible.
- Expenses incurred between March 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021 are eligible.
- Application deadline is March 31, 2022.

8. HCSA

- Funds deposited into a member's Health Care Spending Account (HCSA) expire after two years.
- In order for members not to leave money on the table, they will be reminded that these funds can also be used to reimburse health care premiums paid.
- Members with single coverage have premiums that are quite low; they are reminded to set their HCSA settings so that items such as drug co-pays and other out-of-pocket expenses are automatically covered by any balance in the HCSA.

9. Vaccinations

- The University of Toronto and the University of Toronto Faculty Association encourage all eligible faculty members and librarians to get a COVID-19 vaccine. All employees will be permitted to take paid time away from work to obtain their vaccination, whether scheduled or at a mobile clinic.
- Note that this language in the LOU has been superseded by the more recent language concerning a vaccine mandate for all UTFA members.

6. Accommodation guidelines

- “Guideline for Requests for COVID-19-Related Flexibility and/or Accommodation” will be shared widely with both administrators and UTFA members. See the [LOU](#) itself for more details.
- Faculty members and librarians who wish to request an accommodation related to medical conditions, illness or disability should contact the Health & Well-being Programs & Services Office.
- Faculty members and librarians who require information and guidance with respect to potential requests for flexibility or accommodation related to childcare or eldercare may contact the University’s Family Care Office.
- Faculty members and librarians may also contact their Dean’s Office or Divisional Human Resources Office for advice on a confidential basis.
- The guidelines give a list of potential accommodations.
- A shift to part time status (with a loss of income) is regarded as a choice of last resort.

On accommodations (member questions)

- I would like to know what the rules are around who decides who is allowed to work on campus and who does not.
- I would like to know more how it works as I think those who are vulnerable or prefer not should not be forced to be on campus during the pandemic and those of us who prefer to work a day or two should know what the process is around that
- Can we teach online all semester without medical or other form of exemption proof?
- The Office of Health and Well-Being has not approved my request to teach online. Apparently, an Occupational Health physician has deemed that more information is needed, despite the medical note I provided, confirming that I should not be teaching in person due to my medical condition. What should I do?

UTFA Central Health and Safety Committee

- Terezia Zorić, UTFA President
- Paul Bozek (Dalla Lana)
- Adria Giacca (Medicine)
- Jun Nogami, UTFA VP SBPW
- James Scott (Dalla Lana)
- Jeffrey Siegel (Civ/Min Engineering)

General Background on Health and Safety Concerns

- We want to return to campus as soon as it is safe enough to do so.
- The minimum standards for a safe return to campus have not yet been met—see the [Checklist](#) on our website.
- Many U of T classes, especially on the St. George campus, are now scheduled at 100% occupancy in contravention of provincial step 3 occupancy and physical distancing limits, with the COU lobbying to exempt universities from such limits.
- U of T senior Administrators are not taking reasonable steps in multiple domains (including ventilation, filtration, masks, and testing/tracing) to protect the health and safety of the U of T and broader community, in keeping with [U of T H&S](#) policy that requires the **“University [to] strive to exceed the legislated requirements by adopting the best practices available to protect the University community....”**

Health and Safety Q & A

1. Vaccines
2. Masks
3. Ventilation, Filtration, and Flushing
4. Occupancy
5. Congestion
6. Office Hours
7. Work refusals

Background on Vaccine Mandate

Vaccines are necessary but not sufficient:

Despite the UofT Administration's announcement of a vaccine mandate, vaccines alone are insufficient to protect the community from COVID-19 and must be used in conjunction with several other mitigation strategies (i.e., the [Checklist](#))

Vaccines (member questions)

1. How is proof of vaccine being administered, and how is classroom attendance of unvaccinated students prevented?
2. There is no way of knowing or monitoring whether students joining a class are vaccinated or not. How are we to determine this, especially in the case of classrooms that do not allow for the requisite distance between people?

Masks (member questions)

1. How is U of T monitoring mask use in common areas (I keep seeing people wearing masks under their noses-there needs to be more education)
2. Question re: mask policy, accommodations, and enforcement: I have been told by my department that I will have to accept students who do *not* wear a mask in my lab course, where I will work with students in person in close proximity, if they have an accommodation. I have told my department that I will refuse to do so on the basis of safety. I am also concerned about maskless students being a risk to other students. Further, I have been told that if students (no accommodations) do not wear (or remove) their masks, I will have to remind them of the rules, then notify my department, and so on with gradual escalation. I have told them that instead I will require students to leave if they do not adhere to mask rules. Hopefully students are cooperative. However, I am concerned about enforcement if it does become an issue.

Ventilation, Filtration, and Flushing (member questions)

1. How I might find out if the building in which my department is located has actually made changes to improve the ventilation and air filtration system in place? From what I can tell, nothing has changed so far. Has the Administration decided that certain buildings already have adequate air flow and that no alterations are therefore necessary?
2. What evidence is there that the classroom or building where I will work has improved ventilation- I work in Med Sci building- historically that building only got 10% fresh air per day- people used to complain- how to I find out what the ventilation levels are in my building?
3. Will there be a gap between classes so that the room can "air out" - also, so as to prevent traffic jams with students entering and exiting all at the same time. (As far as I can see the classes are scheduled back to back as usual.)

Occupancy (member questions)

For all of my in-person teaching my department has booked rooms that, based on course enrolment numbers, would greatly exceed the 'Covid-19 capacity'.

I have asked my director of undergraduate studies and our administrative team to help me book rooms that will allow me to teach in-person with the appropriate social distancing, but it sounds like our DUS and admin team are waiting to hear from FAS about what to do still. There has been no action as they are waiting to hear about classroom bookings from FAS for over a week.

Congestion (member questions)

On the University's website, I haven't come across any measures regarding how the Administration is planning to deal with congested hallways, elevators, and stairwells during the time slots between classes.

Beyond the fact that those spaces are not properly ventilated, who is going to monitor the people crowded around elevators or going up and down stairs?

Office Hours (member questions)

If the current public health guidance continues, I presume professors & TAs who work in small windowless offices will be allowed to do office hours online due to insufficient space to social distance?

Work refusals (member questions)

If my request to teach online is denied, even though I have provided medical justification/documentation, what can I do? I do not believe it is safe for me to teach in person.

The science is not yet clear on how well vaccination protects against a person carrying the virus and infecting others, while not getting ill themselves. The university is rushing to 'normality' and is putting the health and safety of its employees and their loved ones at risk.

Given the many unknowns for the fall, can I refuse to teach in person?

Discussion



Next Steps?

1. Ongoing public advocacy with GTA University Coalition amplifying public health science + Checklist on Safe University Re-opening.
2. UTFA poll of the membership—see Jun’s Engineering example.
3. Concerned members should write emails to President Gertler; their deans and chairs; copy UTFA—and request a written response.
4. Attend the upcoming H&S panel on September 9th, 7-9 PM.

Is it safe enough to return to campus? What do public health scientists say?

*An interactive expert panel discussion
followed by a Q&A.*

September 9th, 2021 at 7-9 PM



ORGANIZED BY THE TORONTO INTER-UNIVERSITY COALITION

