



UTFA Information Report

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THE NEW WORKLOAD ARTICLE FOR FACULTY AND LIBRARIANS: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Introduction

The final piece of the mediation/arbitration for July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2011 took the form of a new workload article for faculty and librarians at the University of Toronto. This article is Schedule B of the award and is available on the UTFA web site in the “Workload Issues” section.¹

For those just coming to this issue, the word “workload” does not precisely convey the multi-faceted nature of the underlying problem and issues at stake. In some ways the issue is really the protection of quality: quality of life for our members, but also quality in teaching, and quality in research and scholarly activities. Faculty and librarians have consistently reported that the escalation of graduate and undergraduate enrolments, the decline in administrative staff complement, the eroding fiscal foundation of higher education, and the unparalleled professional expectations at this institution were all combining to present unwelcome trade-offs. For some, these are trade-offs between work and life away from the university, undermining personal and family time. For others, however, it is just as much a trade-off between the *quantity* of work we do and the *quality* of that work. Moreover, these quantity and quality trade-offs threaten student experiences. Our teaching conditions are our students’ learning conditions.

The new article is aimed at addressing these unwelcome trade-offs. It establishes procedures and governing principles for managing individual workload for faculty and librarians. In addition, it provides for unit level (typically but not only meaning Departments) policies which establish workload norms, ranges or standards appropriate to that unit. And it creates a new mechanism for resolving workload-related disputes brought by individual faculty and librarians who believe that their workload assignment runs counter to the unit level norms or workload principles.

For those exemplary departments and units in which workload pressures are less acute and where workload issues are already addressed in a manner consistent with the principles in the new workload article, little may be required here beyond formalizing existing practices. We learned through our outreach that many units in fact have already, acting collegially, come up with innovative ways of ensuring equity and fairness while trying to offset threats to quality in teaching and research.

This article comes on the heels of our earlier mediated agreement to add workload to the so-called “bargaining article” of our special plan: Article 6 of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), making workload negotiable with mediation and arbitration (if necessary) in the future.

This report provides answers to some questions members may have about the origins of the new workload article, why it is needed, how it is intended to work, and what changes or impacts it may lead to. We hope this report will be a resource for members who seek to understand and make use of the mechanisms included in the new article. However, we also welcome all questions and concerns members have in implementing the award.

¹ See <http://utfa.org/content/workload-issues> .

Look for UTFA Council members and Executive members to be active in assisting members in the implementation of this award in the months ahead.

Why Was This Necessary? What Is the Problem This New Article Is Intended to Address?

Our new workload article originated in the commitment and determination of UTFA members to effect a fundamental change to make workload negotiable and subject to mediation and arbitration. That could not have happened without the support, engagement, and patience of members.

More generally, the workload article arises from an accumulation of evidence that something had to be done. The Administration and UTFA both conducted surveys which dealt with workload between 2006 and 2008, while UTFA held extensive focus groups with faculty and librarians on all three campuses to document how and why workload was becoming a challenge. As we reported previously on several occasions,² the general indications from these exercises pointed to a growing and disconcerting workload problem for faculty and librarians at the University of Toronto. For example, members may recall that close to 80 percent of respondents to the 2008 UTFA workload survey indicated that workload is negatively affecting the quality of education at the university. UTFA workload focus groups reported that the proliferation of teaching and administrative duties posed threats not only to the quality of teaching, but also to the quality of research and professional activities, and to the availability of time to undertake these activities.

That said, at no point did faculty and librarians express any desire for restrictions on time for scholarly and professional activities. Rather, they urged UTFA to negotiate ways of limiting the proliferation of administrative and teaching duties which undermined not only the quality of teaching but also the capacity to undertake scholarly and professional activities. UTFA negotiators took these concerns seriously. In this respect, the “workload” article is really intended to protect our members and the university by helping restore a better balance in the distribution of efforts, and by allowing members to take more direct control of their working lives in order to ensure that quality in teaching and research may be upheld and even enhanced.

How Does the New Workload Article Work?

The new workload article has several distinct, major elements.

One of these elements is a set of general principles to guide the establishment of norms and ranges as well as the assignment and management of individual duties, with particular emphasis on teaching and administrative responsibilities. These principles include fairness, transparency, flexibility and equity. We also placed considerable emphasis throughout the design of the document to ensure that our approach to workload embraces and enhances real collegiality and shared governance. This is reflected in the principles section in which explicit commitment is made to “[c]riteria for workload allocation that have been developed in accordance with collegial governance, including the opportunity for members of the unit to contribute reasonably to their development and review. In this regard, workload allocation should respect academic freedom and a reasonable degree of professional autonomy.”

The principles section also crucially makes explicit that workload assignment and management must reflect that academic appointments – whether they be teaching stream, tenure stream, or librarian stream – feature *three distinct areas of activity and expectations*. For faculty, these are teaching, scholarly and professional activities, and service. For librarians, these are professional practice for the libraries, research and scholarly contributions, and service.

A second element of the workload article lays out a collegial process for establishing unit level policies which will give rise to norms, standards or ranges that are intended to guide the distribution of duties to individuals

² See for instance Bargaining Bulletin #2 for 2009-2010, released March 11, 2009, for a synopsis of UTFA research and outreach on the workload issue, available at <http://utfa.org/content/bargaining-updates>.

within units. This entirely new process will involve members representing their unit working together with their unit head to gather information necessary to create the policies. The article specifically requires that unit workload committee membership reflect the membership of the unit, and that all members of the unit have a reasonable opportunity for input into the development of workload norms. These policies are in turn subject to approval by the Dean, with any decanal rejection subject to independent review by the Grievance Review Panel (GRP) on grounds of arbitrariness, irrationality, or bad faith. This process should give rise to the formation of unit level workload policies beginning in mid-February 2012.

The article also regularizes and makes more explicit the processes by which duties are assigned to individuals within units, taking into account not only the unit level norms, ranges and standards, but also characteristics of the individual faculty member or librarian in question. Again, the emphasis here is placed on the assignment of teaching and administrative duties by Chairs, Directors, and Deans. The intent is not only to protect quality in the aggregate, but also to respond to widespread concerns about a lack of equity and transparency in the way these duties are presently assigned.

The third element of the article involves specific provisions pertaining to teaching and service that are intended to guide the formulation of norms within units. For instance, a list of factors must be taken into account in determining norms in teaching duties, such as the number of graduate supervisory committees, the size of classes, and course coordination and other teaching-related duties that do not involve in-class teaching. The article contains a similar set of guidelines in the establishment of service norms. While comparable work must be weighed in a consistent manner between individuals, the article does not prescribe *how* units must take the specific factors in teaching and service into account in formulating norms nor in assigning individual duties; it only requires that they do so.

A fourth element of the article involves specific provisions pertaining to the teaching, librarian, and tenure streams respectively. More detail is provided for teaching stream and librarian appointments owing to issues largely unique to members in these smaller streams. But we do expect to develop additional language specific to the tenure stream in the future. Members of the teaching stream will take specific note of language which makes explicit the need for adequate time for scholarly (including professional/pedagogical development) activities in considering workload for members of the stream. UTFA negotiators were responding to widespread concerns that teaching stream appointments are being mishandled in some units by overloading individuals with too much teaching and service, effectively turning teaching-intensive faculty positions into teaching-only positions. There is also language tying teaching stream service loads to tenure stream service loads within the unit.

For librarians, again, we fought to achieve language that will respond to widespread concerns that time for professional development and research activities is being eroded in the libraries. We share the concerns librarians have repeatedly voiced that undermining the professional and scholarly (i.e., academic) character of librarian appointments threatens the institutional capacity for research more generally by, for instance, preventing the necessary time and effort required to renew and develop collections in our vast and internationally recognized University of Toronto Library system. This perspective was not reflected in the Administration's frankly dismissive disposition toward librarians throughout the negotiations; however, UTFA negotiators viewed librarians in many ways as our "canaries in the coal mines" when it comes to the unwelcome trade-offs between quantity and quality in workload.

Finally, the workload article features a new dispute resolution mechanism for individual faculty and librarians. This mechanism is specific to workload and is intended to facilitate rapid resolution of disputes in part through the deployment of an independent Workload Adjudicator.

Why the Devolved Approach to Establishing Unit Workload Policies?

We followed the lead of several other faculty associations at research-intensive and comprehensive universities – including UWO and Queen's – in relying on unit-level workload committees. We also took our cue from direct dialogue with members who told us they wanted mechanisms that would allow for the development of

norms reflecting local diversity within different scholarly and teaching settings. The emphasis on unit level norms, standards and ranges embraces and institutionalizes collegiality and shared governance.

Won't Implementing This Article Perversely Make for More Work?

There is no doubt that implementation, particularly the initial implementation, will take some additional administrative work at the unit level. But we were determined to develop policies reflecting local norms and practices. Moreover, no problem as vexing as the quality/quantity trade-offs presented by escalating workloads can be addressed without some effort. At the same time, we pushed hard for a system that requires transparency, direct participation and equity, again based on the important principles of shared governance and collegiality that should define the role of faculty and librarians at the University of Toronto. These terms (shared governance, collegiality) are often thrown around loosely as characteristics of the institution. The workload article – an entirely UTFA initiative – actually enshrines and institutionalizes these terms with concrete provisions to empower and enable members in their own governance.

How Will This Affect Research, Scholarly and Professional Activities?

The intent throughout the negotiation was to develop language and provisions which would protect – not restrict – these activities, as a reading of the article reflects. Again, we operated from the premise – provided by member input – that a proliferation of teaching and service responsibilities was undermining quality in teaching and research and eroding time for research.

How Will This Affect My Teaching?

The intent of the article is to make teaching-related workload more equitable and fair, responding to widespread concerns that it is not. In many units, already existing best practices to respond to unevenness in teaching responsibilities (e.g., course reductions for teaching large service courses or retaining large graduate supervisory responsibilities) will simply be enshrined. But we do hope that the article can be a resource in enhancing the quality of teaching and thus of the student experience. These are goals we all share.

What Role Can I Expect to Play in Implementing the Award?

This depends on whether you are a unit head or not, and whether you are asked to serve as a representative of your colleagues on the Unit Workload Committee. If so, you will play a central role in collecting and analyzing the information necessary to create the necessary norms, standards and ranges. This will be an important job. But in some units, this may primarily entail formalizing and documenting existing practices. Through our outreach and particularly in the workload focus groups, we heard about many good and innovative ideas for dealing with workload pressures, for protecting time for research and scholarly activities, and for making sure there is transparency and equity in workload allocation. For example, some units already circulate information on individual teaching and service assignments in the unit, which helps members to understand how their own situation compares to others. In assigning individual teaching duties, other units factor in not only the number of courses but also the different kinds of teaching that members undertake. These are exemplary practices born from collegial innovation at the local level. One of UTFA's goals in this exercise is to facilitate wider learning from these important existing initiatives.

Is This Really Going to Reduce Workload and Increase the Quality of Teaching and Research? What Other Impact Might It Have?

The underlying structural reasons why workload has been escalating remain unchanged. These include the long-term decline in provincial support for higher education, coupled with rising graduate and undergraduate enrolments. This agreement cannot change those structural constraints, but it can help better and more equitably distribute workload within units. Specific measures such as requirements for making more information available and provisions specific to cross-appointed faculty will put tools in the hands of our members that will make their

working conditions better and will allow them to better achieve their goals in teaching and scholarship. We certainly feel that the design of the workload article will help better manage workloads at the unit level while also enhancing shared and collegial governance.

Is The Workload Article Enforceable? If So, How?

All of the language in the workload article is enforceable. The first and most effective mechanism for enforcement is familiarity with and use of the provisions by faculty and librarians. In addition, we negotiated a specific dispute resolution mechanism to deal exclusively with individual workload complaints in order to give force to the agreement. We will also be able to make use of our existing (and recently improved) independent third party grievance mechanism at the GRP to resolve more general workload-related disputes.

What Are Some of the Outstanding Issues and Challenges?

Clearly, no problem as complex as the workload issue will be solved all at once. This article is a first step. We will all learn from the experience of making use of these new tools and will look to refine, add to, or replace them in future rounds of negotiation. UTFA member input and feedback will be crucial to any future changes we make to the workload article. This is one of the reasons it is so important that workload is now subject to mediation and arbitration. That change to our MoA protects UTFA's right to negotiate workload in the future in a rigorous and fair way based on what members tell us works well, and what they tell us needs to be changed.

Among the most important remaining challenges we face is dealing with inequitable workloads between the St. George and the east and west campuses. This is an issue particularly severe at the UTSC campus. UTFA proposed but was unable to secure strong measures to deal with these issues. One proposal, for instance, involved restrictions on the assignment of duties that would require members to be on more than one campus within a prescribed period. However, the Administration was not willing to engage with us constructively on these matters.

We did manage to negotiate language (see 2.7 of the article) encouraging unit workload committees to consider norms in cognate units, including those on other campuses. Moreover, we secured language (see 11.1) that re-affirms a need to prevent "significant discrepancies in workload between the same departmental/disciplinary areas across the three campuses". *And we have established a tri-campus joint committee to carry out examination of workload matters for faculty and librarians at UTSC and UTM.* This committee will be crucial in informing our approach to tri-campus workload issues in the future.

What Role Will UTFA Play in the Implementation?

UTFA's leadership (including Executive and Council) is always available to assist UTFA members. That is our job. This Q and A is intended to provide assistance. And UTFA will participate in direct dialogue with individuals and groups in the coming months regarding questions and concerns pertaining to the new workload agreement. At any time, if you have questions, please write to workload@utfa.org so that we can provide advice and support. We have also created a new web page dedicated to workload issues at <http://utfa.org/content/workload-issues>.

Thank you for your support of the Association's work. We are and will always be as strong as our members make us. All best wishes as the winter term winds down.

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Phone 416-978-4596 Fax 416-978-7061
Email faculty@utfa.org Website www.utfa.org