Terms of Reference
DFA Council of Representatives

As a result of the revival of past practice, DFA currently has a representative in many of Dalhousie University's departments, schools, and units. This document provides a formal structure for this body, henceforth called the 'Council of Representatives', clarifies the responsibilities of representatives on the Council, and establishes a subcommittee of the Council, the 'Membership Chairs Committee' to act as leads for the Council at large, and from among a Council Chair will be elected.

The Council of Representatives provides a forum for discussion of issues of concern to DFA M/members and can engage with DFA's Executive Committee to take action thereon. Beyond their role on the Council, Unit Representatives are responsible for ensuring the flow of information to and from the larger M/membership. Ultimately an informed and engaged M/membership is required to protect the Collective Agreement and ensure the DFA is responsive to the M/membership. Unit Representatives can play an important role in helping to gather information on violations of the Collective Agreement and ensuring that all M/members are protected. They can help organize and mobilize support for campus-wide initiatives that aim to push back against breaches of the Collective Agreement and the erosion of DFA M/members' rights. The success of such initiatives depends on an active and representative Council of Representatives that can help bring the broader DFA M/membership together.

Purpose of Council of Representatives

- The Council of Representatives provides a standing forum for discussion of issues of concern to fellow DFA M/members and engage with DFA Executive members to take action thereon.
- The members of the Council support an informed and engaged M/membership in helping maintain and strengthen the rights of DFA Members under the Collective Agreement.
- Beyond their role on the Council, Unit Representatives are responsible for supporting the flow of information to and from the larger M/membership. As such, they are a vital link between the union and the M/membership.

Composition and Structure

- The Council shall normally consist of at least one DFA M/member from every Department, Unit, and School across Dalhousie University.
- When a position is not currently filled, Unit Representatives will be chosen by election, using simple majority vote, or consensus and acclamation, by their department, school, or unit. The Council will aim to fill vacant positions on the Council within three weeks.
- Appointments to the Council, and role of Unit Representative, will normally be for two academic year terms, with renewal permitted following election or acclamation by the relevant unit.
- The Council shall elect its own subcommittee of Co-chairs, the 'Membership Chairs Committee', composed of nine members of the larger Council, subject to the following requirement: the nine co-chairs will be selected from different Faculties to ensure a cross-representation of the DFA M/membership. If the Committee decides further representation is necessary, an additional two M/members may be selected from Faculties or Units not already represented. The 'Membership Chairs Committee', will appoint one member to act as chair of both meetings of the Council of Representatives and meetings of the Membership Chairs Committee. These meetings will not be governed by Robert's Rules of Order, unless the current chair deems this necessary for advancing the business of a meeting of the Council. If votes are required, these will take place by

way of simple majority; alternatively, the Council of Representatives may make decisions by consensus.

- The DFA President shall serve on the Council of Representatives and Membership Chairs Committee, ex officio.

Responsibilities of Unit Representatives

The Unit Representatives play a vital role in building a stronger union. They help to ensure that provisions of the Collective Agreement are followed. They connect M/members to each other and to the DFA and act as important bi-directional conduits of information.

To fulfill this role Unit Representatives shall:

a. Serve as a primary point of contact for M/members in their Unit.
b. At a DFA M/member's request or as appropriate, bring M/member concerns to the attention of the Council of Representatives, the Membership Chairs Committee, or the Member Services Officer.
c. Attend meetings of the Council of Representatives and the DFA Annual General Meeting as well as endeavour to attend any special General Meetings. When a Unit Representative is not able to attend a meeting, they may provide a written report on matters in their Unit to the Membership Chairs Committee in advance of the meeting.
d. As requested by the Council of Representatives, Membership Chairs Committee, or the DFA Executive, canvass the M/members in their Unit for information and opinions on various topics and distribute specific information to M/members in their Unit.
e. If a Unit Representative is unable to complete their term, notify the Membership Chairs Committee immediately, and assist with recruitment for their Unit if possible.

Mandate and Activities of the Council of Representatives

As a shared forum, the Council of Representatives will facilitate this role while also providing a broader deliberative context for Unit Representatives to discuss issues of concern to DFA M/members and undertake efforts to advance engagement across the broader membership. Activities that the Council of Representatives may undertake include, but are not limited to:

a. Engaging in discussions during regular Council meetings to identify areas of common concern for DFA M/members, especially with regard to future bargaining.
b. Identify and flag issues related to the Collective Agreement and the rights of DFA M/members.
c. Support the advancement of other DFA Committees/Caucuses in both the context of Faculty-level councils and the University Senate.
d. At the direction of the Membership Chairs Committee, supporting events aimed at cultivating broader M/membership engagement across the DFA.

Reporting

- Upon approval of the DFA Executive, the Council of Representatives is a committee of the Executive. It may therefore make recommendations to the Executive.

- The Council of Representatives members should be listed as per Article 10 of the By-laws. The Membership Chairs Committee shall also provide an annual report to the DFA M/membership, providing information on its activities and ongoing issues.