DFA
Dalhousie Faculty Association

August 2026

Considerations for Developing Workload Policies

This document concerns the new Article 20.10 in the Collective Agreement: "By December 1, 2026, all faculties shall develop a workload policy for faculties and libraries to be approved by faculty council. The policy should provide a process for accessing overload stipends under Article 20.09 (b) and 20.09 (d) and should address high service workloads for equity-deserving faculty Members. Any disputes arising from the application of a workload policy may be subject to the grievance procedure."

Composition of the Committee

1. The task of drafting a workload policy for approval by Faculty Council may be assigned to an existing Faculty Council committee with revised terms of reference or a new committee with its own terms of reference; hereafter this committee is referred to as the WPC (Workload Policy Committee).
2. The WPC should report directly to Faculty Council and should not be a sub-committee of a standing committee. The WPC should elect its own chair.
3. The WPC should be comprised of members of the Faculty who are also in the DFA bargaining unit. (Non-DFA employees are governed by other policies or collective agreements.)
4. Employees in other groups may, however, be consulted by the WPC. Committees are particularly encouraged to consult with CUPE3912 members on any norms established for teaching (e.g., class sizes) and to seek DFA advice on questions related to the DFA/Board Collective Agreement.
5. The WPC terms of reference and the membership of the committee (i.e., who will serve on it) should be approved by a vote on a motion by Faculty Council.

Policy Essentials

The workload policy must "provide a process for accessing overload stipends under Article 20.09 (b) and 20.09 (d) and should address high service workloads for equity-deserving faculty Members." It should therefore establish norms of service, counting internal and external professional and academic service, as well as define a process for compensation for work that falls under 20.09. Note: this is a new pathway for 20.09 and will not be covered in any prior workload policy.

The workload policy should refer questions of outcomes (publications, grants, teaching evaluations, etc.) to the relevant parts of the collective agreement. 20.10 is concerned with work time, not results. (A comparator here would be article 11.17: librarians conduct research as well but their workload is defined by hours, not publications.)

The workload policy should provide an efficient dispute resolution or appeals process within the Faculty, with referral to the DFA for grievance as a final step if the matter remains unresolved through the Faculty process.

The workload policy should include language ensuring that the policy is regularly reviewed (say, every three years) and that it can be revised as needed while recognizing fixed timelines for assigning workload. E.g., "workload for a particular academic year shall normally be determined under the workload policy that is in place on December 1st of the previous academic year." Faculty may consider

including a process for revisions, to ensure that changes are carefully deliberated (e.g., requiring a notice of motion, at least a month in advance of the relevant meeting, for any changes).

General Considerations for the Policy

Granularity, especially in the larger faculties, may be inefficient and ultimately inequitable as well as structurally challenging. The purpose of the workload policy is to promote transparency and the equitable distribution of work assignments, not to create an additional administrative burden on faculty that takes away from research, teaching, and academic administration.

The workload policy may draw on existing or recent norms and policies. It needs to be flexible enough to accommodate the range of contractual terms at Dalhousie, including secondments, cross-appointments, reduced workload arrangements, and appointments with specified workloads as well as variable circumstances (say, offsetting graduate supervisions with a small undergraduate class). Rather than defining what constitutes 100% of a workload, therefore, it should focus on creating a framework for comparing units of a workload.

Workload policies might include: classes taught, supervisions of students (any level), committee assignments, general academic service obligations (e.g., attending department meetings), external service, and so on. Further suggestions:

> Research: Research time should be protected by balancing other kinds of workload, not by an effort to quantify research work.
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> Teaching: What constitutes an "average" three-credit-hour class and what makes a class lighter or more intense than the average? Considerations might include TA support, class size, kinds of grading (from bubble sheets to essays), new prep for a faculty member, etc.
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> Academic service (internal): Faculty workload policies may wish to create similar classifications of university administrative work, e.g. "minimal" "average" and "intensive," to support the even distribution of this work. A committee that meets for 6 hours per term and reads about 50 pages of documents might be "minimal" while serving on a committee that meets monthly and requires reading hundreds of pages per term (e.g., FGS Council, Senate, DFA Executive) may be termed "intensive."
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> Academic service (external): for many, this may be a low simmer most years (peer review of articles and grant applications, e.g.) with periods of a rolling boil (e.g., conference organizing, serving on an adjudication committee for the Tri-Agency, consulting for government, presidency of a scholarly association, etc.). This may be best handled by focusing on departures from the norm rather than establishing norms.

Recommended Process

1. Strike a committee or assign the work of developing a policy to an existing standing committee of the Faculty Council, with membership drawn from the DFA.

2. Establish a general sense of Faculty norms on teaching load and service expectations, recognizing that there will always be variability in actual workload assignments (e.g., e-mail Chairs/Directors and ask for a brief outline of those norms).
3. Draft a policy that reflects general consensus on those norms and what is feasible. This is also an opportunity to address any significant problems that have arisen in the Faculty. Circulate the draft for feedback and revision.
4. Propose a motion at Faculty Council to approve the workload policy. We caution against significant amendments from the floor: if there are significant concerns, then the motion should be defeated with direction to the committee on revisions so that a revised policy can be proposed at a later meeting. (Amendments from the floor may not have been thoroughly considered in relation to intersecting requirements in other documents, for instance.)

N.B. Perfection should not be allowed to be the enemy of the good. These are inaugural policies and they will not address everything. Because these policies are the responsibility of a collegial body, they can be changed by faculty through normal processes of motions and approvals. Over time, these policies may become more detailed and even change in their fundamentals.