



Dalhousie Faculty Association

April 20, 2020

Dr. Teri Balsler
Provost & Vice-President Academic
Dalhousie University

Dear Dr. Balsler:

RE: Terms and conditions of employment of DFA Members

As the Dalhousie community struggles to respond to the many issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the DFA is concerned about the working conditions of our bargaining unit Members and the growing impact on their health and well-being.

We understand the administration's need to address academic issues with some urgency, resulting in exceptional decisions such as creating new practices for students to appeal final grades on compassionate grounds, and the move to offer only on-line courses for the spring and summer sessions.

Despite these extraordinary circumstances, decisions must continue to respect existing policies, procedures, and collective agreements. Many of the administration's recent decisions have been primarily centered on undergraduate students, which is understandable given their numbers and the nature of the early impacts (residence closures, for instance). Now that the initial emergency stage is over, however, there is more time for thoughtful planning and attention to due process. The DFA/Board Collective Agreement, which defines the rights, privileges and responsibilities of academic staff, must be foremost in the minds of academic leaders as the university community considers how to deliver academic programs, as well as conduct research and collegial governance, in the coming weeks and months.

As the bargaining agent for our Members, we are particularly concerned about the well-being of academic staff as they confront the lack of certainty and information about the coming academic year. Of particular concern is the emerging expectation that they plan not only their courses but also for the delivery of their courses in multiple possible scenarios, while they are still wrapping up this term's courses and dealing with various impacts of the pandemic on their work. Our Members are understandably concerned that the teaching assignments, which were concluded by the March 1 deadline stipulated in our Collective Agreement, may be altered or transformed in terms of the scheduled term and the delivery format.

Furthermore, it is not clear what supports might be available to support the migration of courses from an in-person to an online delivery mode should the instructor agree to such a change, including the extra time required to develop materials for a very different pedagogical context. We have heard concerns that courses normally offered in person or in a particular term may be changed without the agreement of the academic staff member responsible for their delivery, and that enrolments for courses moved to online delivery may remain at in-person levels or even be raised, despite the challenges we all face—including students who may need more, not less, individual support from their instructors because of the pandemic

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and disrupted Winter terms. Changes to the assigned teaching workload cannot be unilaterally imposed on individual faculty members without their agreement. Such changes, including teaching during evening hours or weekends, must include the agreement of the Member concerned.

Academic staff have a right and obligation to participate in the collegial governance of the university. We expect that academic leaders will respect and welcome the expertise and advice of academic staff in determining how best to provide the courses under their responsibility, as well as their assessment of the implications of any changes to course delivery for program integrity and quality as well as workload. As senior administrators consider workload and other conditions of employment in the days ahead, we urge them to remain cognizant of the various provisions of the DFA/Board Collective Agreement so that the appropriate working conditions of our Members are upheld.

As always, the DFA will remain focused on protecting the rights and working conditions of our bargaining unit Members, and recognizes the importance of the Collective Agreement's provisions on workload, collegial governance, and other matters to the high quality and integrity of academic work at Dalhousie.

Sincerely,



Julia Wright
DFA President

- C. Deep Saini, President
 Kevin Hewitt, Chair of Senate
 Candace Thomas, Chair of the Board of Governors, c/o Susan Brosseau
 Laura Neals, Director, Academic Staff Relations
 David Gray, Dean of Agriculture
 Frank Harvey, Dean of Arts & Social Sciences
 Andrew Rau-Chaplin, Dean of Computer Sciences
 Benjamin Davis, Dean of Dentistry
 John Newhook, Dean of Engineering and Acting Dean of Architecture & Planning
 Marty Leonard, Dean of Graduate Studies
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 Camille Cameron, Dean of Law
 Donna Bourne-Tyson, Dean of Libraries
 Kim Brooks, Dean of Management
 David Anderson, Dean of Medicine
 Chris Moore, Dean of Science
 Dianne Tyers, Dean of Continuing Education