



Dalhousie Faculty Association

DFA Fall Teaching Format Survey Spring 2021

Summary of Results

Prepared by:
Dr. Tara Perrot
DFA President 2021-2022

May 21, 2021

dfa@dal.ca
dfa.ns.ca

Follow us on Twitter/FaceBook/Instagram @dalfacultyassoc

Teaching Format Survey Summary

May 21, 2021

Of 968 invitees, 551 people responded (~57% response rate). Respondents were 70% professoriate, 27% instructor, 0.6% librarian and 3.2% preferred not to answer (this would include LTAs). The majority of respondents were part of the Faculty of Science (21%) with high representation from members of the Faculties of Health (15%), Arts and Social Science (14%), and Engineering (10%). There was representation from all Faculties.

Throughout the summary, general themes that were identified are indicated in bold. Representative quotes follow bullet points.

Of those that responded, at the time they responded, 91.5% had been assigned their teaching workload for 2021-22. Just over 20% of respondents indicated that the timing of their teaching workload assignment was different from prior (pre-Covid) years.

For 63% of respondents, the format of their courses had been decided at the time of the survey, leaving 21% who indicated format had not yet been decided and another 16% who chose to answer 'other'. Looking at the comments for this question, it is clear that, for some (likely those that answered 'other' and possibly some that answered 'no') there are some courses for which format has been decided and some courses for which it is still up in the air. Other comments indicate that, while format may have been decided, they anticipate that it could change (e.g., "Yes, but with an eye to possible change if public health guidance changes"). The majority of the comments for this question indicate significant **uncertainty and conflicting messages from administration**.

- we were told first online, then told face-to-face, and now the message is unclear again
- I hear conflicting messages about this.
- President's message felt like it blindsided many. We did our best to respond.
- We have been asked for in-person only delivery, but our team is planning for all variants of delivery as we feel the call for in person only delivery is very uncertain.
- I still don't know exactly when or where I am supposed to teach: I assume that I have my normal 2.1 load but I don't even know that for sure.
- So far, the decision is unclear. We were first told that lectures are online and some tutorial could be in person. We were then told that everything would be in person and asked for timetabling preferences. Right now, I do not know what the plan for the fall will be and my Dean and Department Chair just keep indicating that it will be up to the Provincial public health guidelines, which does not allow me to prepare.
- I hear the administration (president, dean) saying we should go back to in-person but then the head of the department says we can choose to do remote if we feel that's needed. I'm not sure if that is the case, because the messages I get from head/dean/president are not the same.
- I have had to initiate all conversations/communications regarding course delivery in the upcoming academic year, at each stage of the (very slow) release of information from upper campus (since February). No one seems to have any desire to make decisions or considerations, it's been just go with the flow and do what the University tells them.... When I

pose these practical questions (how will a class with 90 students function in a classroom with a maximum occupancy of 92 people? What are the contingency plans if/when an instructor gets sick? How can we ensure students aren't coming to class with symptoms when they're supposed to be isolating according to Public Health parameters?) the response is always "I hadn't thought of that ..." ... I haven't seen whatever "plan" the University has for safely operating at full capacity in September. ... I have expressed these concerns within my Department but as the youngest faculty member, I don't see these concerns being taken seriously.

For 27% of respondents, there was *no* consultation regarding teaching format for 2021/22 and 55% of those have been told they will teach in a format that is *not* preferred.

Of the 73% of respondents that had been consulted about their preference for course format the majority of those (54%) were consulted by their unit chair/head/director. Another 10% were consulted by the unit undergraduate/graduate program coordinator and 7% by the Dean directly. Most indicated that this was the person that normally consults about teaching and that they had felt 'very comfortable' (65% of respondents) or somewhat comfortable (18% of respondents) with stating their preferences for course format during consultation. But almost 20% of respondents that were consulted felt 'somewhat' or 'very uncomfortable' stating their preferences.

Of the 52% of respondents who indicated that they will be teaching courses in a non-preferred manner, over 20% feel 'somewhat uncomfortable' and 14% feel 'very uncomfortable' with that format. Some of the comments for this question indicate that respondents felt **pressure to accept the proposed format and/or were afraid to voice their concerns**.

- If my needs are not considered I do not know what I can do without it impacting my job and livelihood. Our leadership has created a toxic workplace, so I am not very comfortable sharing opposing views.
- I felt pressured into agreeing to the face-to-face format for 2 of my larger courses.
- While I have agreed with my chair as to my course load and method to deliver, the Dean's office is interceding in an attempt to force me to deliver face-to-face
- There are no options for change available. Dalhousie is fear mongering from day one and inflexible regarding the format for courses.
- I do not feel comfortable fighting for my choice.
- I told the chair that this is very risky for me. But the chair said that the dean told them FTF is the way to go and that there is no choice.
- I feel like there is no choice.
- Do not have a say. We were told.
- We were given the choice initially and then felt pressured to reconsider.
- I don't feel I have a choice, hence feeling very uncomfortable.
- I don't see anyone listening to my objections.
- In case you have not realized, we do not work under a democratic administration.

It's important to note that 23% of respondents indicated that they require accommodations for the 2021/22 academic year. Only about 20% of those had requested those accommodations at the time of the survey.

When asked what assurances our members would want for the Fall 2021 academic term, 83% indicated 'mandatory quarantine policy for people arriving outside of NS' while 80% indicated 'safe levels of ventilation'. While the first of these is outside the direct control of Dalhousie, the second is certainly within the scope of what can be controlled and needs to be addressed immediately in order to determine classrooms that will be deemed safe. Other assurances that were selected by a large proportion of members, such as 'confirmation of a rigorous cleaning protocol in classrooms' (62% of respondents), 'safe levels of physical distancing inside the classroom' (72% of respondents), and 'more time before and after class to help with physical distancing in the hallways' (58% of respondents) require that Dalhousie develop protocols that will need to be put in place ahead of the start of the semester to ensure they are operational. Respondents also heavily favoured, 'masks worn by all students' (72% of respondents), which, if implemented will be difficult to enforce. Discussions about who will do that enforcing will need to be had. Over 25% of respondents indicated 'other' when asked about assurances they would want to see in place for Fall 2021 and those were shared in comments.

- no office hours
- A delay to fall term to allow for both quarantine and vaccination efficacy. I'd also like to see more faculty hired, even if on an LTA basis, in order to break down large classes to avoid the gigantic numbers of students who congregate before classes
- On site rapid testing available EVERY DAY at multiple campus access points- at least one location per campus site
- myself get vaccinated before Sept
- fully vaccinated as the educator
- the ability to decide myself whether I need to switch to online learning. for example, I have children and if lockdowns occur and schools get cancelled, I will have no childcare. The ability to tell students who are sick to leave the classroom
- Allow online option to faculty and students who prefer it next academic year.
- Restricted classroom sizes
- Online classes but in-person invigilated exams if possible
- private microphone
- enough space between students and I so I don't have to wear a mask while teaching.
- my family members and I are fully vaccinated (2 weeks after second dose)
- I would like to be respected in my choice of online teaching
- Clear sick-leave policy for both teachers and students
- Hand sanitizer provided at the entrance and exits of classrooms; entrance only and exit only doors to prevent excessive co-mingling before and after class.