



QUFA VOICES

Your Queen's University Faculty Association Newsletter

March 2017

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PRESIDENT'S VOICE

Budget-Model Task-Force Report Nears Completion

QUFA's task force to review the activity-based budget model will release its findings in a report soon.

By Lynne Hanson
President, QUFA



In fall 2015, QUFA established a task force to review the activity-based budget model (also known as the University New Budget Model (NBM))

in response to Members' concerns about how that model has affected our academic mission. The purpose of this task force was critically to evaluate the successes and problems associated with the use of the budget model since its inception three years ago.

To that end, Professor Emeritus and former QUFA President John Holmes was engaged in January 2016 to research the use of activity-based budgeting in various university contexts. This project is now concluded, and the report will be released soon.

Holmes's report begins with a review of the literature on activity-based budgeting, while subsequent sections take a closer look at how activity-

SAVE THE DATE

QUFA Spring General Meeting

The QUFA Spring General Meeting will take place at the following time and location:

Thursday 20 April 2017

1.15 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.

The Auditorium, Ellis Hall

All Members of the Bargaining Unit represented by QUFA are welcome to attend. Those who have signed a Membership form have a voice and a vote. You may complete a Membership form online (<http://qufa.ca/member-services/membership-form/>) or at the meeting.

All materials are e-mailed to Members in advance, beginning two weeks before the meeting, and are not provided in hard copy at the meeting.

based budgeting has played out at Queen's, based on data collected from relevant documents as well as extensive interviews with both the former and current provost, deans, finance directors, and department heads. The University NBM allocates revenue and costs to faculties and schools (Law, Business, Education, Engineering and Applied Science, Arts and Science, School of Policy Studies, and the three schools comprising the Faculty of Health Sciences: Nursing, Rehabilitation Studies, and Medicine).

Queen's approach to activity-based budgeting is unusual in that a modified version is driven down to the departmental level in two of the three departmentalized faculties: Arts and Science, and Engineering and Applied Sciences. Holmes refers to

these as "revenue attribution models," since most shared service costs are not charged to individual departments, so that it is not truly activity-based budgeting. He notes that this approach is relatively rare, observing that, save for a few large research-intensive institutions in the United States, activity-based budgeting in the university sector is "almost never forced down to the level of individual academic departments."

In 2015, then Provost Alan Harrison established a committee and engaged the services of Huron Consulting to review the new budget model. The Huron Consulting report was submitted in 2016, but it was never released publicly. However, drawing extensively on the Huron report, the

provost's review committee recommended only minor modifications to the University NBM. Perhaps most importantly, the review committee and the Huron report only looked at how the University NBM allocated revenue and costs to faculties and schools, and it did not review the effectiveness of the new budget models in Arts and Science, and Engineering and Applied Science, where revenue attribution had been driven down to the departmental level.

QUFA initiated this review in part because many department heads (who are our Members) had expressed serious concerns about the negative impact of the model on the quality of education. The data presented by Holmes in his report supports this conclusion, particularly in relation to Arts and Science, where the primary source of difficulties stems not from the University NBM *per se*, but from how the new budget model is being implemented within Arts and Science.

Based on his interviews with department heads, Holmes observes that critical and negative comments far outweigh the positive ones. Heads felt that budgetary goals trumped academic concerns and provided no incentive for research. They also noted increased stress among Members and a negative impact on morale. Some perceived an erosion of quality alongside the increase in blended, online courses, and the failure immediately to refill vacant



file photo

Professor Emeritus and former QUFA President John Holmes has researched the use of activity-based budgeting in university contexts, and will release his report soon.

positions resulting from retirements or resignations. Finally, heads have observed that the need under the budget model for departmental self-interest has diminished interdisciplinary cooperation. Generally, deans reported a more a positive experience with the new budget model at the university level, and especially with the new process for setting the budget, as they found that it improves transparency and encourages innovation.

When the report is released, it is our hope at QUFA that the current administration will take steps to address these very serious concerns. We all share a vested interest in the

promotion of academic excellence in teaching and research at Queen's, and the budget model must be reconfigured if it stands in the way of achieving those goals.

Finally, we owe a great debt of gratitude to John Holmes for his substantial contribution to the literature in this field. His extensive research and data collection on the ground-level functioning of the budget model will be an invaluable resource for us here at Queen's and for universities across Canada.

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QUFA Voices publishes QUFA-related news and information for QUFA Members and provides QUFA Members with a forum to express their QUFA-related ideas and opinions. We want to hear from you! Please send your QUFA-related story ideas, news items, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, photographs, and other submissions to the editor.

QUFA Voices is edited by Robert G. May. He can be reached at mayr@queensu.ca.

FYI

QUFA Comment on Biennial Merit

QUFA Members, including some department heads, are expressing concerns about the new biennial system's implementation.

By Elizabeth Hanson
Co-Chair, JCAA, QUFA, and
Chief Negotiator, QUFA (2015)



In the 2015 bargaining round, QUFA and the University agreed that merit assessment would occur biennially rather than annually for Members who

hold tenured or continuing appointments. The purpose of this change was to reduce the labour that was poured into merit evaluation each year by unit heads and deans. It was intended to be neutral with respect to salary costs for the University and for the distribution of merit to QUFA Members over time. In fact, this merit season has been especially fraught with difficulty, and the QUFA office has received many calls from Members and department heads, decrying what they describe as a "points scarcity."

Before discussing a possible remedy, I want to comment on how the Queen's-QUFA Collective Agreement (CA) provides for merit, and how it intersects with the forms of "merit practice" that determine our expectations.

The salary model we use, devised in 1983, is designed to move Members' salaries along a curve over the course of their career. To that end, we receive each year a "progress through the ranks" (PTR) increment. The increment is determined by a formula set out in the CA in Article 42.2.2.

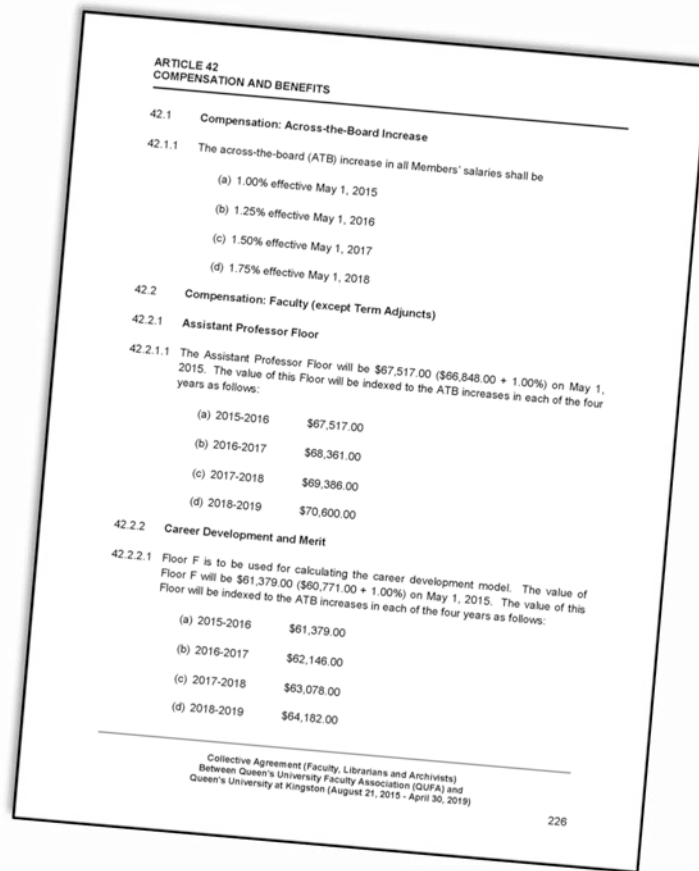
However, this PTR mechanism, which is designed to move all salaries up the curve, also serves to differentiate them, using an allocation of "merit

points" to determine the size of the increment. The modal adjustment, intended to shape the normal salary curve, is based on a merit score of 10 for faculty, and may be increased by junior increments and reduced by senior abatements, which are designed to shape the curve so that it is steeper in early career and flatter later. However, in recognition of especially meritorious performance, a faculty member may receive extra merit points that produce a larger increment. Although we speak of "merit scores" of 10, 12, 15, and 20, it would be more accurate to call 10 "PTR," and then refer to merit awards of 2, 5, and 10 on top of that.

The University informed QUFA during bargaining that when the University calculates annual salary increases, it adds the PTR (10) amount, and then

adds the junior increments or subtracts the senior abatements from that amount before adding any award based on extra merit points. In that sense, no one's "merit" is ever "clawed back" by senior abatements, although PTR is diminished by them as the salary model intends.

"Merit" as it is provided for in the CA is a tricky business, at once relative and absolute. Because the CA dictates that 10 is modal, were the entire Queen's faculty to win Nobel Prizes one year, it would have to take something more than a Nobel Prize to get a 12. Moreover, because there is a ceiling on the number of points available, merit is inevitably determined through comparison. At the same time, however, the CA's provision for a band of available points to be allotted rather than a



QUFA

"Progress through the ranks" (PTR) increments are set out in section 42.2.2 of the Queen's-QUFA Collective Agreement (CA).

fixed number (see Article 42.2.2.8), acknowledges that in some years faculty are more meritorious than others, that the value of “very good or excellent performance” (42.2.2.10) should not be diminished just because there is more of it than usual among the faculty. (It’s worth knowing that QUFA negotiated this band in 1999 to end an earlier system that required heads to give a score below 10 for every one above 10—in other words, to find “donors” to generate the points to award the meritorious.) This absolute dimension of merit is also reflected in norms that have developed in units about the value of certain achievements, such as the 15 that typically awards the publication of a book. These norms are what I call “merit practice,” and are valuable to the culture of the University, saving energy, preventing purely invidious distinction, and keeping everyone on the same page. Nevertheless, it is this tension between the relativizing and absolutist demands of the system that make merit a misery, especially for heads.

This misery may be compounded by the necessary heterogeneity of the modal category 10, the perception that it harbours performances that might justly deserve a 9 and those who rightly deserve 11. (It should be underscored that the purpose of that modal 10 is to protect against the temptation to find points by punishing some Members.) The tension is also compounded, however, by the fact that the University typically brings the merit exercise to rest in the middle of the band of available points, no doubt to protect against “merit inflation,” but with the effect of diminishing the intended elasticity of the system.

This year, as unit heads confronted the first biennial assessment, this tension between the relativizing effects of this restriction on available points and the absolute imperative of recognizing certain achievements, such as the publication of books and the winning of teaching awards, is

more extreme because there are, at least in theory, double the number of these absolute achievements to consider, along with ongoing forms of excellence that typically have garnered scores of 12.

When QUFA proposed biennial reporting, we had several ideas about how it might be implemented. The University countered that the simplest thing would be to keep everything constant and simply shift to a two-year reporting period. They asserted that people tend to receive a consistent merit score from year to year. Specifically, the University asserted that, because individuals receiving scores of 12 tend to do so consistently, switching to a two-year cycle would have little consequence for merit distribution. As chief negotiator for QUFA, I regret letting this description of current merit distribution pass. While it may be true of some disciplines, it is clearly not true of others, including my own, where major publications often follow long incubation periods leading to more “spiky” merit patterns. Double the number of those spike-producing absolute achievements in any merit cycle (and double the value of them to the Members who receive the awards) and points must migrate from the steady 12s, and anyone on the cusp of 12 must be rounded down. In other words, the effect of the new system is a concentration of merit that neither side intended.

The proper response in the short term is for the University to use fully the discretionary points available to it, and in the next round of bargaining, the parties should redesign the scheme of possible scores, perhaps so that there are 11, 13, 14, and 20 as the possible awards.

Please send any comments or concerns you have about this issue to qufa@queensu.ca.

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ON THE WEB

QUFA Online

QUFA Members can interact online with QUFA in many different ways!

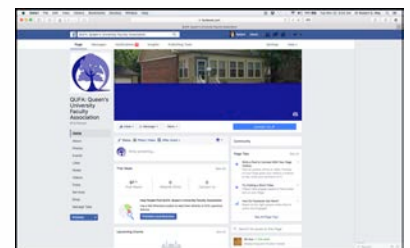
QUFA’s online resources contain a wealth of information about your faculty association, including upcoming events, information about the Collective Agreement, news items of interest, and more!

1. QUFA Web Site



www.qufa.ca

2. QUFA on Facebook



www.facebook.com/qufapage

3. QUFA on Twitter



www.twitter.com/qufatweet

QUFA OPINIONS

Why Is International Women’s Day of Importance to Us?

Librarianship remains a predominantly female profession, and women are disproportionately active in QUFA.

By Amanda Ross-White Health Science Librarian

Librarianship remains a predominantly female profession. In 2016, 73% of academic librarians were women. The figures are higher for my own area of specialty: medical librarians are 87% women. Having gendered expectations around the work we do means that librarians are often not paid as well as similarly educated professionals and are often not invited to the table when discussions are had about areas that affect us.

For example, despite often

contributing significantly to the intellectual output of a systematic review (we design and execute the method), librarians are not always given authorship status, and are sometimes not even acknowledged. Or when changes to the IP ranges are made by Information Services staff at our partner hospitals, the library isn’t told even though our resources are IP controlled, and many librarians have taken graduate-level courses in information architecture or database management. We still have to fight to be included in decision-making bodies, both internal and external to the library.

However, our gender differences are one reason librarians are disproportionately active in QUFA. We make up less 0.5% of the Membership, yet we have a much larger number sitting on QUFA committees. We’ve fought to get to where we are and are prepared to keep fighting!

For International Women’s Day, give a

thought to the gendered professions of librarianship, nursing, and teaching, and think about what role gender plays in how we view our colleagues in these professions. What are your thoughts on how gender influences career decisions, salary expectations, and role responsibilities?

Notes

1See CAUT Almanac: https://www.caut.ca/resources/almanac/academic-staff

2Corcoran, Kate, ed. MLA Compensation and Benefits Survey. Chicago: Medical Library Association, 2012.

3Ross-White, Amanda. “Librarian Involvement in Systematic Reviews at Queen’s University: An Environmental Scan.” Journal of the Canadian Health Libraries Association 37.2 (2016). http://dx.doi.org/10.5596/c16-016

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QUFA VOICES Voice Your Views!

If you have an opinion about anything you read in QUFA Voices, send us a letter to the editor!

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ANNOUNCEMENT Graduate Student Award from CAUT

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) offers one doctoral fellowship to a student in any field at a Canadian institution.

More information can be found here:

http://stewartreid.caut.ca/English/default.htm



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Thank-you!

