

FAQ: Voluntary Phased Retirement Program

Eligibility Questions

Q What's the significance of age 65? Why can a member be deferred before age 65, but not after age 65?

A Age 65 is the normal date of retirement: all Members are entitled to retire with an unreduced pension at age 65. A Member applying to the Program who is under age 65 can be deferred for one year to allow for unit or departmental planning, if needed. That Member could not be deferred a second time if they have a feasible plan. Once a Member reaches age 65, they cannot be deferred, as they are eligible to fully retire at any time.

Q Can a Member be refused or only deferred?

A Members can be deferred for one year to aid in unit or departmental planning (see above), but they can only be deferred once if they meet all criteria. However, a Member's plan must respect the guidelines of the program and be workable in the unit (e.g., a Member can't teach a fraction of a course), and a Member could be refused if they did not submit a feasible plan.

Q Does the application period begin 1 July 2020?

A Yes. If a Member meets the age eligibility requirements (see the Infosheet and PowerPoint for more information), the first application

period begins this 1 July. If you wish to begin a phased workload 1 July 2021, you must submit your application this year. The application form is an appendix to the letter of agreement.

Academic Leave Questions

Q If a Member is applying for voluntary phased retirement that includes an academic leave, how detailed does the academic leave application need to be several years out? Can it be updated closer to the date?

A A Member may need to apply for the academic leave several years in advance. As the date comes closer, the Member can update their academic leave plan.

Q If a Member has 1.5 years of academic leaves accrued, can the entire time be taken under voluntary phased retirement?

A Academic leaves count as 100% of workload, and therefore the Member would need to evaluate if there can be enough reduction in the other years to make it feasible, recognizing minimum workload requirements that enable the teaching of one 0.5 FCE.

Q When a Member takes an academic leave, it's possible to take some salary as a research

grant? How does that affect voluntary phased retirement?

A These arrangements are called University Research Grants (URGs). The URG converts part of someone's salary to a research grant. The research grant is paid directly to the faculty member (not put into a research account). Instead of being paid as T4 salary, the research grant is paid as a T4A income. It is up to the individual faculty member to claim research related expenses on their personal tax return against the T4A income. If their expenses are less than the grant, the faculty member pays income tax on the balance. So, in the end, if they don't spend all the grant money, they just end up paying tax on it. In terms of the Program, the Member would continue to have pension contributions on their full regular salary (T4 + T4A).

Q Does the Member still accrue academic leave credit?

A Yes, if the Member maintains a workload of 50% or more, they earn academic full-leave credit.

Financial Questions

Q Does taking academic leave at a lower rate of salary immediately prior to applying for voluntary phased retirement affect the value of the supplement?

A No, the supplement is based on regular salary, which is not

impacted by reductions for academic leaves.

Q By counting the 75% supplement and working the maximum of 200% over three years, does that mean that over three years the pay is 275% out of 300% of regular salary?

A Yes and no. The supplement payment is calculated on regular salary in the year you begin the phased period. Your regular salary will increase of the three years by across-the-board increases or merit increases, so the “75%” will not be accurate on salary levels in year 2 and 3 of the program. In rough terms, though, yes, you could earn about 275% of a possible 300% salary.

Q Can a Member retire early—for example one year into voluntary phased retirement?

A Yes, a Member can retire early. However, the supplement would be prorated according to the number of months the Member participated in the plan. Also, this Program cannot be combined with early unreduced retirement, so if the Member retired before reaching age 65, they would also have to pay penalties on their pension.

Q Does entering the program affect professional expenses?

A No, Members are still eligible for full annual PER.

Workload Questions

Q Is there an expectation or process for negotiating workload with the head before applying other than the usual collegial discussions?

A The Program letter of agreement does not establish a consultation process, so this will depend on the unit or faculty.

Q The program is irrevocable. Are the percentages of work and how it’s allocated also irrevocable?

A Ideally, yes. The university is looking for a firm commitment and ease of planning.

Q Can a Member stack the various responsibilities by year so as to have all research or all service in one year, for example?

A No. Teaching, research, and service must be kept in proportion and distributed across the three years during times when the Member is not on academic leave.

Q In a unit with a standard expectation of 1.5 full course equivalents as the teaching load, 150% work over 3 years would equal 4.5 half courses. Does the Member have to round up to teach 5 half courses?

A Yes. A Member can’t teach a fraction of a course unless that is permitted in the unit already, and so would normally need to round up. Also, in such a unit, the minimum workload in any one year would be 33% to permit teaching a 0.5 FCE, and a prorated proportion of research and service.

Other Questions

Q At what point is the decision irrevocable?

A The decision is irrevocable once the dean has approved the application.

Q How long is the program expected to be in place?

A It is incorporated into the collective agreement. It is subject to the parties (Queen’s and QUFA) agreeing to renew or withdraw it at each round of bargaining.

Q What happens if a Member goes on sick leave during the plan?

A If a Member becomes ill during the phased period, they would take sick leave as usual and be considered to be continuing in the plan at whatever rate of work they were working when they became ill. After 6 months of sick leave, the Member normally converts to long-term disability (if they are approved and are under age 65). They may continue on long-term disability (LTD) until age 65 when they would cease to receive benefits on the principle that they could activate their pension and retire from work. At the point the Member exited the Program to take LTD, they would be paid a supplement payment proportionate to the number of months in the program. A Member who is already age 65 or older would not qualify for LTD after 6 months of sick leave and would have to retire. They would also receive a prorated supplement payment for their time in the Program.

1 June 2020