



# QUFA VOICES

Your Queen's University Faculty Association Newsletter

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### PRESIDENT'S VOICE

## Benchmarking Student Experiences

The Administration spends a lot of time thinking about what students bring to the University, but do any of them consider what students get out of it?

**By Mary C. (Cella) Olmstead  
President, QUFA**

When I was interviewing for my current position at Queen's, I heard the same refrain at each meeting I attended. Everyone from the Dean to the Head to my future colleagues assured me that "Queen's gets the best students in Canada." I didn't need to take their word for it. An enthusiastic undergraduate chair provided the evidence, reciting incoming class averages at half a dozen U15 institutions with Queen's firmly at the top for both the entire first-year cohort and for students in the Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS) (my own faculty). Please see Figure 1.<sup>1</sup>

I was amazed that anyone had bothered to keep track of these statistics and disillusioned that they could be rattled off so quickly. It is not that I doubted the numbers or even questioned their value in setting out an institution's academic plans. But after two solid days of hearing how impressive our incoming students

### QUFA IMAGES

## QUFA Summer Hours



Robert G. May

Please be advised that the QUFA Office will close on Fridays throughout the summer from 28 June 2024 to 30 August 2024. The Office is also closed on statutory holidays in July, August, and September. The Office will also close for two days on 16-17 July 2024 for reorganization and staff professional development. Please feel free to e-mail staff during those times, and we will respond when the office reopens. Out-of-office e-mail messages will indicate who to contact when people are away from the Office for longer periods.

were, I asked the obvious question: "And what about when they leave?"

I thought our obsession with marks of incoming students had passed until I learned that one of the rationales for creating admission categories in FAS is that we no longer attract the highest quality students. Apparently, some applicants can be admitted to BSc

programs with a high-school average of only 80%. Perhaps we should be more concerned with when they arrive and face instructors who are burnt out and demoralized from dealing with a top-down imposition of austerity measures. Larger classes, fewer staff, and more administrative tasks are detracting QUFA Members from activities, including personal

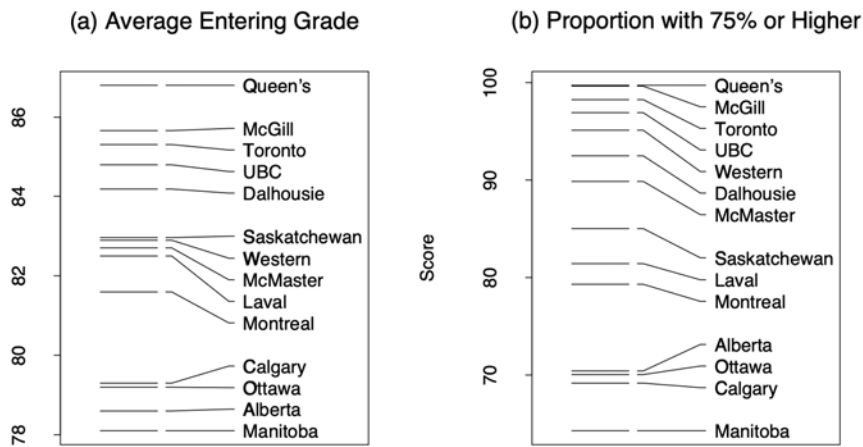


Figure 1: Maclean's Ranking of Canadian Universities

interactions during teaching and mentoring, that enhance student experiences. It certainly makes it more difficult to support our students in becoming the “global citizens” we purport to produce.

Meanwhile, the administration is caught up in “renewing” Queen’s by benchmarking our activities against “the industry standard.”

*Benchmarking* is the act of measuring services and processes so that institutions can compare what is happening in their organization with those that are doing “better,” however that is defined (I am guessing “cheaper”). In any case, striving to emulate our comparators will certainly move us further away from the “unique experience” that once attracted students to Queen’s. I scoured the NousCubane Uniform survey for any sign that student experience would be improved (or even considered) in the outcome metrics that are likely to be generated by our responses. Students did not complete this survey or any other benchmarking measure in the Renew project and, as far as we know, NousCubane has not met with student groups to discuss their experiences. One category of survey questions asked faculty to comment on “supports for marketing and student recruiting services,” presumably to help us attract those

elusive high-quality students. The only other section related to teaching asked for input on “Services that provide support for teaching administration,” but given the variability in how respondents interpreted these questions, it seems doubtful they will yield any meaningful data. What *is* clear is that recommendations arising from the NousCubane Uniform survey will “allow leaders to make quick decisions about staffing changes” (i.e., layoffs). These are the measures most likely to have a direct and immediate impact on student experiences. Ask any student who regularly receives automated e-mail replies that begin, “Due to a high volume of e-mail....”

I go back to my interview conversations every spring when I see moving vans being loaded in the university district. Many of those packing up this year had their lives thrown into disarray by COVID-19 just as they were about to experience one of the few shared rituals in our society. If they had a high-school graduation at all, it probably happened on Zoom or with social distancing in a parking lot, a rare opportunity to see friends face to face. We persuaded these students to come to Kingston, then left them isolating in front of screens for close to two years as we struggled to meet the demands of unpredictable and

ever-changing work directives. So, it seems particularly poignant to wonder what this cohort is taking away from their time at Queen’s, and what we can do improve the experience of our next class of graduates.

Thankfully, all is not lost. The Faculty of Health Sciences made a bold and unprecedented decision this year to use a lottery system to select eligible candidates for medical-school interviews. And a small group of faculty members in FAS have taken it upon themselves to explore ways to bring value-based decisions into curriculum planning for undergraduates (Meetings in May and June from 9.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. in Room A309, Macintosh-Corry Hall).<sup>2</sup> Only by recognizing that problems require engagement with more than what is easily measured, can we start to imagine workable alternatives for the future.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>N. Heckman, R. White, W. Wang, and H. Wong. “Maclean’s Ranking of Canadian Universities.” *UBC Statistics Department Technical Report*, 1999, p. 189, fig. 1.

<sup>2</sup>The practical aim of the working group is to develop terms of reference for a Special Committee of Faculty Board, to be proposed at its next meeting (September 2024), and to develop a plan for how that committee's work could proceed over the coming academic year via grassroots brainstorming and discussion across the whole FAS community. Meetings are open to everyone. if you are interested in either the working group or the Special Committee, complete the online form here: <https://forms.office.com/r/NLvmQw0zWw>.

**Mary C. (Cella) Olmstead can be reached at [olmstead@queensu.ca](mailto:olmstead@queensu.ca).**

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S VOICE

### Supporting Queen's Unionized Workers

QUFA Members can and should show their solidarity with other unions on campus in a variety of ways

Queen's unionized employee groups have had a tough time of it over the last five years.

Most campus unions had to negotiate one or more collective agreements under the aegis of Bill 124, the Ford government legislation that enforced a wage increase cap of 1% for three years. You may recall that QUFA Members were extremely fortunate to avoid that fate because we had already signed the 2019-2022 agreement before the legislation came into effect in 2019, and we concluded the last agreement (2022-2025) after the legislation was declared to be unconstitutional and of no effect in late 2022. Not so for many other Queen's workers who, in the context of very high inflation in 2022, have lost significant purchasing power and are struggling to make some of this up in the current round of negotiations.

Add to these woes the uncertainty of budget-driven reorganization, reduction of services, and the threat of job losses, and it's no surprise that tensions are high as our colleagues prepare to bargain their next collective agreements this year.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### Jordan Morelli Named QUFA Chief Negotiator for 2025



supplied

The QUFA Executive Committee voted to appoint Jordan Morelli (Department of Physics, former QUFA President) to be the Chief Negotiator for 2025. The QUFA Council of Representatives affirmed this decision this past Friday. People who are interested in getting involved in the next round of bargaining should reach out to QUFA Executive Director Leslie Jermyn ([qufaed@queensu.ca](mailto:qufaed@queensu.ca)) or QUFA Associate Executive Director John Rose ([qufaed@queensu.ca](mailto:qufaed@queensu.ca)). We are actively seeking Members to join the bargaining team and the job-action committee. We will be starting to think about setting a mandate in the fall and want as much Member engagement with that process as possible. If you've got ideas for that, please contact us or an elected Executive Member.

And, if all of that were not enough, Queen's has invited the Nous consultants on to campus to conduct an audit of shared services in order to

"benchmark" Queen's staffing and management of these services against sector norms and ... well, no one knows exactly what Nous will

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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](mailto:mayr@queensu.ca).

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### Bumping Rights

#### Teaching Fellows and Term Adjuncts

With the University's austerity measures targeting the employment of Term Adjuncts at Queen's University, it is possible that your unit will "bump" Term Adjuncts in favour of appointing a Teaching Fellow.

A Teaching Fellow (TF) is a graduate student outside the QUFA Bargaining Unit and a member of the PSAC 901 union.

TF bumping of Term Adjuncts can only happen under certain conditions found in Article 32.2.2(a) of the Collective Agreement. Here is what QUFA Members need to know:

- Teaching Fellows have no right to bump Term Adjuncts with a General Right of Reappointment, nor can TFs bump Continuing Adjuncts.
- Teaching Fellows can bump Term Adjuncts with a Specific Right of Reappointment on condition that the Teaching Fellow "would not otherwise have an opportunity to teach as part of their graduate education" (Article 32.2.2a).
- If a Teaching Fellow has already had such an opportunity to teach as part of their graduate education at Queen's University, they are not eligible to bump a Term Adjunct with Specific Right of Reappointment.

If Term Adjuncts in your unit are being bumped by Teaching Fellows, please contact QUFA Member Services Officer Doug Nesbitt at [d.nesbitt@queensu.ca](mailto:d.nesbitt@queensu.ca).

conclude or recommend. One thing is certain, they will recommend change *whether or not* it's needed, because otherwise their services would be viewed as a waste of money and their prospects of future work, here or elsewhere, would diminish. So, there are many pressures on our campus colleagues and their bargaining teams.

QUFA Members have asked what they can do to help their staff colleagues now, and what QUFA could do if one or more campus unions had to resort to job action, including going on strike, to protect the value of their work or their jobs.

At the risk of sounding as if I'm trivializing the situation, I urge QUFA Members to express their concern and support for other campus workers they encounter.

Demonstrating our understanding of the difficult circumstances they're working under with respect, appreciation, and patience will not increase their wages, but it will make their working lives easier to manage. More concretely, stay tuned for announcements of opportunities to demonstrate your support publicly. QUFA will share requests for support and bargaining updates from our fellow unions as we receive them.

We can also express our honest appreciation of shared services in any Nous surveys or interviews. When Nous results are announced, we can apply our skills of critique and analysis, and exercise our academic freedom to assess the validity and value of any Nous recommendations for change. We may not be able to prevent changes from happening, but we can ensure that if they are not based on actual data and reasoned analysis, we will make sure their weaknesses are known on campus and beyond.

If any of our colleagues have to resort to withdrawing their labour to achieve fair deals this year, we can picket with

them, bring food and beverages to their picket line, and show support when coming to work or passing their picket lines. QUFA has not negotiated the right to not cross the picket lines of other unions, so QUFA Members would have to continue to do their jobs as outlined in Articles 15 and 41 of the Collective Agreement.

Depending on what other union was engaged in job action, some additional academic tasks may fall to QUFA Members. This additional work should be tracked and must be accounted for in a Member's overall annual productivity. If, in these circumstances, Members experienced significant overwork, they should reach out to QUFA staff right away. Members should also be very alert to any health and safety concerns for themselves or their students that arise as a result of the absence of a group of Queen's staff. These issues should be brought to the attention of the QUFA Health and Safety Representative for your area right away, and may result in having to stop certain activities for the duration of the strike.

In the event of one or more strikes, QUFA's Solidarity Policy will enable us to offer financial support to every one of our campus unions, and we'll make sure to pass on any other appeals for monetary support to QUFA Members. In addition, should it look like one or more of our fellow unions is going to be locked out or initiating job action, QUFA will endeavour to provide more tailored advice as to what QUFA Members can and cannot be expected to do.

Of course, we hope that we won't need to do any of these things. We hope that those in authority will prioritize and value the employees, academic and non-academic, who make Queen's work.

***Leslie Jermyn can be reached at [qufaed@queensu.ca](mailto:qufaed@queensu.ca).***

FYI

## The Latest Budget News from the Board of Trustees

QUFA Members should be aware of a number of developments following the 10-11 May 2024 Board of Trustees Meeting

### By the QUFA Finance Budget Review Committee

At the Board of Trustees meeting on 10-11 May 2024, presentations to the board from the Provost and VP Finance provided new details about the 2023-2024 finances (which closed on 30 April 2024) and the upcoming 2024-2025 budget. This includes several developments that QUFA Members should be aware of:

- The University is now projecting a \$36.4 million operating budget surplus.<sup>1</sup> This is owing largely to projected returns of \$69.8 million from the university's Pooled Investment Fund (PIF). The University has argued that, because of the volatility of investment returns, PIF investment income should not be used to fund operations (please see the January issue of *QUFA Voices* for a discussion of this decision<sup>2</sup>). Therefore, as described in the report, the administration has decided that all but the arbitrary sum of \$5.2 million of these returns "will be allocated to the general capital reserve to fund priorities in support of the University's academic and research mission, and to cover future PIF investment losses" (p. 33). When PIF investment returns are excluded (as is the University's practice), the projected deficit for 2023-2024 is now at \$28.2 million, a reduction from previous projections.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

## Health and Safety Volunteers

We are looking for a QUFA Member from the Faculty of Law to serve on the Administrative Services Joint and Safety Committee for 2024-2025. If you are interested, or have any questions related to Health and Safety, please contact QUFA Health and Safety Representative Nicolas Hudon at nicolas.hudon@queensu.ca.

- The 2024-2025 budget deficit is projected at \$35.7 million (for reference, the 2023-2024 projected deficit opened at \$62.8 million). The university plans to address this deficit (should it materialize) through the draw-down of carry-forwards.<sup>3</sup> The budget document states that the hiring freeze will continue next year, and outlines ongoing work on the Queen's Renew project as well as exit incentives for faculty and staff (p. 82). As noted in the *Queen's Gazette* article published on the budget, this projected deficit includes a contingency fund of \$16.8 million, which is unallocated.<sup>4</sup> Without these funds, the projected deficit would be \$18.9 million.
- The administration does appear to be making some adjustments in how willing they are to utilize investment income on the revenue side and to reduce transfers to capital on the expense side. The proposed 2024-2025 budget increases the amount budgeted for from investment returns by \$10.3 million and reduces transfers from the operating budget to capital reserves by \$4.2 million (p. 84). However, these appear to be temporary measures, as the projected amounts are reduced

### ANNOUNCEMENT

## Funding Deadline

The Fund for Scholarly and Creative Work and Professional Development (Adjuncts) spring and summer deadline is 3 June 2024. Please find the application and information here:

<https://www.queensu.ca/facultyrelations/qufa/research-fund>

back to prior levels in the 2026-2027 projected budget. It should also be noted that the narrative description of the budget document states that the increase in budgeted use of investment income is linked to the presence of the contingency fund given the administration's description of uncertainty in both the need to use the contingency fund and of investment returns (p. 81).

Please feel free to contact the QUFA Office if you have any questions or concerns about these information items.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>See the Board of Trustee's 10 May 2024 meeting agenda (p. 33): <https://queensuniversity.civicweb.net/document/248195/>

<sup>2</sup><https://qufa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/115-QUFA-Voices-Jan-2024.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>See the Board of Trustee's 10 May 2024 meeting agenda (p. 73): <https://queensuniversity.civicweb.net/document/248195/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/queen-s-projects-2024-25-operating-budget-deficit>

## KNOW YOUR CA

# Deferred and Accommodated Exams

QUFA Members should familiarize themselves with their workload rights vis-à-vis deferred and accommodated examinations

**By James Stotz  
JCAA Co-Chair, QUFA**

As final exam season has passed and marks have been submitted, the focus for many of our Members turns away from teaching and towards research, scholarly, and creative activities.

However, some teaching responsibilities from the winter term echo into the spring in the form of deferred and accommodated examinations. While such exams provide students with the ability to complete their courses following unplanned circumstances, the extra assigned teaching load exists outside of your normal time planned for teaching and presents a conflict for Members who are planning to pursue other activities.

The Collective Agreement (CA) speaks to assigned teaching workload in Article 37.2.6(b):

In assigning teaching and service activities, the Unit Head shall only assign teaching duties to Members for two (2) four- (4-) month periods, except [if a Member requests or agrees to additional teaching duties].

For Members in the School of Rehabilitation Therapy, please see Article 37.2.7.

For a Member to be assigned to perform deferred teaching duties in the form of deferred exams or assessments outside of their normally assigned four-month periods, the CA provides guidance regarding how this should be handled.

## For Full-Responsibility Members

Article 37.1.6(f) stipulates that:

The Workload Standard for each Unit shall include mechanisms for dealing with extraordinary tasks related to teaching, such as academic accommodation responsibilities carried forward from a previous term that may impact the Member's research responsibilities.

This is new language from the last round of bargaining, and many Workload Standards do not include such a mechanism. Rather than fully reopening your Unit's workload standard and the extensive process that entails, the JCAA and the Workload Standard Review Subcommittee are discussing a potential streamlined process. For those Units that are currently updating their Workload Standard, please remember to include such a mechanism. For others, please consider and discuss with your colleagues what type of mechanism may work in your Unit so that it can be implemented swiftly once a process is agreed upon.

## For Term Adjunct Members

Additional work performed outside the dates of your contract is governed by Appendix Q. In particular, the bottom of Table A states:

Compensation Rates for other duties (e.g., conference planning, community outreach, and academic accommodations that extend beyond the terms of the Member's contract):

Compensation for 2024-2025:

- Hourly Rate: \$64
- Half-Day Rate: \$256
- Day Rate: \$512

## ANNOUNCEMENT

# Constitutional Review Committee

The QUFA Executive Committee and Council of Representatives have established an ad-hoc Constitutional Review Committee and are seeking Member participation. This Committee is tasked with reviewing QULA (Queen's University Librarians and Archivists) and QUFA governance documents to make recommendations to the Executive and Council regarding necessary changes to the QUFA Constitution, by-laws, and policies to regularize the relationship between QUFA and QULA.

QUFA needs four to six Members knowledgeable about the operations of QULA, QUFA, and/or governance principles. At least two members will be drawn from the Library and Archives membership. The Committee's work will begin in spring 2024 and is expected to conclude by October 2024 so that any recommended constitutional changes can be brought to the Fall General Members Meeting in December.

Please contact QUFA Executive Director Leslie Jermyn at [qufaed@queensu.ca](mailto:qufaed@queensu.ca) if you are interested in serving in this important capacity or would like more information.

Of course, as with any additional work, Term Adjuncts must discuss compensation with their Head as outlined in Appendix Q. If you are already assigned to assess accommodated exam or assessments, please discuss this with your Head.

**James Stotz can be reached at [jstotz@queensu.ca](mailto:jstotz@queensu.ca).**

## GRIEVANCE CORNER

# Harassment and Discrimination

QUFA seeks input from Members who have reported workplace harassment or discrimination

By Karen Sisson  
Grievance Officer, QUFA

It is well established that employers have a duty to provide employees with a safe work environment where employees are protected against harassing and/or discriminatory conduct or policies. As a component of fulfilling that duty, employers must have accessible policies and procedures that provide a mechanism for employees to report incidents of harassment, and for the employer to investigate or otherwise respond to reports and complaints. Such policies must be administered with care, including ensuring they are applied with consistency, transparency, and predictability, and in a manner that does not conflict with other commitments contained in collective agreements.

The requirement that employers apply appropriate reporting and investigation procedures is outlined in Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act. Further duties of the employer are grounded in the protections against discriminatory conduct contained in the Ontario Human Rights Code. In organized workplaces, such protections are also typically enshrined in the collective agreement.

QUFA Members are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the University's Harassment and Discrimination Prevention and Response Policy,<sup>1</sup> and Articles 20.3 and 21 of the QUFA and Queen's University Collective Agreement (CA). Article 21 of the CA describes the parties' commitment to a working and learning environment at Queen's that is free from harassment and

discrimination. Article 20.3 provides a description of the investigation procedures that are applicable in the event a report or complaint causes the University to "reasonably believe that a situation exists that could warrant discipline measures against the Member."

QUFA Members who are required to participate in a workplace investigation are entitled to QUFA representation through that process. QUFA support typically includes meeting with the Member to provide advice respecting anticipated processes in accordance with applicable policies, feedback respecting the Member's preparation for meetings and interviews, and the accompaniment of a QUFA representative at investigation interviews and meetings with the University.

In recent years, QUFA has observed an increase in the frequency of costly and drawn-out third-party workplace investigations being initiated by the University. The reasons specific to Queen's for that increase are not clear, but it is generally recognized that the demand for third-party investigations has steadily increased at many workplaces across Ontario.

QUFA has gathered data respecting potential concerns about the University's methods when administering the Harassment and Discrimination Prevention and Response Policy. Most of that data has been collected from situations where QUFA Members have been named as respondents to a complaint. To further inform the analysis respecting QUFA's response to these observations, the Association is now seeking additional input from Members who have reported observing harassment or discrimination, and from members who have complained about experiencing incidents of harassment and/or discrimination first-hand

## ANNOUNCEMENT

# Creating a Teaching Dossier

The Centre for Teaching and Learning will present a workshop on developing a teaching dossier, facilitated by Andy Leger.

**Wednesday 19 June 2024**  
**10.30 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.**  
**Room 333, Ellis Hall**

More and more, universities are requiring candidates to submit teaching dossiers when they apply for positions, or as part of their package for renewal, promotion, or tenure.

This session will introduce and provide examples of the nature and structure of teaching dossiers, which are a valuable summary of accomplishments, strengths, and directions as a teacher.

<https://www.queensu.ca/ctl/programs-and-events/programs-all/creating-teaching-dossier>

(including reports concerning systemic discrimination).

We are interested in hearing about the method and timing of the university's response to such reports, including notices that a complaint will not be investigated, and the reasons provided. If you have relevant information to share, kindly reach out to me directly so that we can arrange for a confidential consultation.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup><https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/harassment-and-discrimination-prevention-and-response-policy>

**Karen Sisson can be reached at [ks233@queensu.ca](mailto:ks233@queensu.ca).**