

QUFA Bargaining Mandate 2025

Introduction

The 2025 QUFA Bargaining Team is comprised of the following people:

Jordan Morelli (Chief Negotiator; Physics, Engineering Physics & Astronomy)
Alicia Cappello (Library)
Megan Edgelow (School of Rehabilitation Therapy)
James Stotz (JCAA Co-Chair; Physics, Engineering Physics & Astronomy)
Ayca Tomac (Global Development Studies)
Bradley Weinberg (Employment Relations Studies)
Micheline Waring (QUFA Staff)

The current Collective Agreement expires on June 30th, 2025, and we expect to give *Notice to Bargain* in mid-April with the intention of beginning meetings in late May with Queen's University to negotiate a renewed Collective Agreement. We anticipate bargaining through the summer with a goal of reaching a negotiated agreement by early September. It is anticipated that in late-July we will request that a Conciliator be appointed, and that bargaining will be facilitated by the Conciliator in August and beyond. If bargaining extends past the first week of September, we will request that the Executive call a *Strike Vote*. If bargaining is not nearing completion by the end of September, we will request a *No Board Report*, enabling possible job action shortly after the fall term reading week. This plan is consistent with the *Bargaining Timelines* that the Executive has approved.

The University's Bargaining Team has not been announced but we expect that Dan McKeown (Associate Vice-Principal Faculty Relations) will be their Chief Negotiator.

Bargaining Context

There are broad social and political factors conditioning this round of bargaining, including:

- Austerity measures being implemented (non-uniformly) across the University;
- Economic inflation; and
- Pandemic-related exhaustion and changing work expectations.

Austerity measures the University has implemented have had a demoralizing impact on staff and faculty, and have resulted in increased administrative service work being placed on QUFA Members.

Economic inflation has reduced the purchasing power of Members' income over the duration of the expiring Collective Agreement.

Pandemic-related exhaustion and changing work expectations that have arisen from the pandemic experience have resulted in rising levels of employee discontent in many sectors, including our own. There is a notable lack of basic hygiene on campus as common areas, including washrooms,

are not being cleaned adequately to say nothing of QUFA Members' offices. The lessons of the pandemic concerning basic sanitation have quickly been forgotten, or perhaps they have just been cast aside for the sake of cost savings. Either way, the Queen's University campus is steadily deteriorating to the point where many Members are uncomfortable being there.

This is the second round of bargaining since we voted to join the University Pension Plan (UPP) in 2019, and since we transitioned our dental and extended medical benefits to Manulife in 2020. Having moved to the UPP means that we no longer bargain the terms of the pension plan locally: changes are negotiated centrally among UPP member universities. Having recently completed a large-scale benefits review with other Queen's employee groups that culminated in the move to Manulife, we do not plan to bargain benefits (with one exception) in this round. QUFA is monitoring how the Manulife plan is operating to consider areas to explore and improve with the other employee groups in the future. QUFA will attempt to bargain for a Health Care Spending Account (HCSA) at a minimum for all Adjunct Members, but ideally for all QUFA Members.

The previous round of bargaining, which began under the constraint of the *Bill 124 – Wage Restraint Legislation*, QUFA took as an opportunity to do a “deep dive” into the terms and conditions outlined in the Collective Agreement. Reports from various working groups assisted the bargaining committee to determine many of the terms and conditions to consider negotiating in that round, and several of those remain outstanding; we will bring them back to the bargaining table in this round.

QUFA represents Members across six faculties and in the Library & Archives; it represents people with full-time, full responsibility portfolios as well as those who are part-time, limited term and/or limited responsibility. Conditions across campus have changed over the long and short term, and these changes need to be acknowledged and addressed. For example, Queen's reliance on Term Adjuncts to carry out teaching has grown such that, in either Fall or Winter terms, QUFA membership includes approximately 500 Members working on limited term and limited responsibility contracts. That reliance has measurable effects on both the working lives of our Term Adjunct colleagues and on the service burden experienced by full responsibility Members. In response to the austerity measures Queen's has implemented, including the voluntary retirement incentive program and the hiring freeze, QUFA Members have seen their workload, especially their service responsibilities, dramatically increase. This needs to be addressed in this round of bargaining.

Member Consultations

QUFA has made several announcements to Members (through QUFA Voices and QUFA Digest) offering for Units (and also Faculties, Schools, and the Library and Archives) to request bargaining consultation visits. The Bargaining Team welcomes such Unit visits and will continue to meet with Units upon request throughout the winter term 2025. We also welcome consultation meetings with Employee Resource Groups and QUFA caucus groups. Individual Members have also been encouraged to submit their concerns to qufa@queensu.ca, or to speak directly with the Chief Negotiator. Surveys such as ones related to Research Infrastructure, Equity Issues, and Adjunct Issues have been conducted.

Proposed Bargaining Principles

Based on the current bargaining context, and what we have heard from Members, we have generated the following Bargaining Principles. These principles aim to broadly reflect the concerns of the QUFA membership while considering what we can pursue under a Collective Agreement while maintaining the need for some confidentiality with respect to strategy and tactics. Some of these matters have been concerns at least as far back as 2015. We intend to bring them to the table, and while we cannot guarantee that we can ‘solve’ each problem over the upcoming round of bargaining, we hope to make significant progress.

1. Fairness for Adjunct Members

As the most precarious employee group among our ranks, improving Adjunct Members’ working conditions would undoubtedly improve overall working conditions for all QUFA Members.

Teaching has grown in complexity in recent years, with larger class sizes, a proliferation of academic accommodations, generational shifts in student behavioural norms, the emergence of generative AI, and the ongoing effects of pandemic era disruptions to teaching. These impacts are disproportionately felt by Adjuncts who shoulder high proportions of the teaching workload across the University. Minimum teaching stipends have not kept pace with inflation, coupled with the ballooning time demands of teaching, mean that Adjuncts’ real wages have dramatically decreased in recent years. As teaching supports and resources have been cut back and continue to atrophy, the burden on Adjuncts grows. Additionally, many Adjuncts do not have access to extended health benefits or to the pension plan, further reducing their real compensation and standard of living. For Continuing Adjuncts who do eventually gain access to the pension plan, many first spend up to a decade working towards permanence as Term Adjuncts and will be missing those years of pension contributions, potentially never accruing enough years of service to become eligible for a full pension.

Pathways to permanence

Many barriers exist that keep Term Adjuncts from reaching continuing status. Increasingly, Term Adjuncts are not assigned full responsibility for courses, meaning that they are never able to achieve the first step toward job security, *Specific Right of Reappointment* (SRoR). When a Term Adjunct does attain SRoR, often their progress to *General Right of Reappointment* (GRoR) is impeded and they never attain continuing status or they need many additional years to do so. The precarity of Term Adjunct work hurts all faculty members, as these colleagues are not able to reliably share the teaching load or contribute to service. Further, when Term Adjuncts are prevented from progressing to continuing status, Unit and department Heads must spend time recruiting, hiring, and training Term Adjuncts term after term.

Realistic promotion standards

Although paths to promotion technically exist in the current Collective Agreement, barriers exist for Adjuncts to be evaluated solely on the work that is in their contracts, which is primarily teaching. An expectation that Adjuncts perform unpaid research to be considered for promotion

keeps many Adjuncts from advancing their careers, despite many years of positive contributions to the University. Simple changes to promotion criteria would ensure a more equitable path to promotion for Adjunct Members.

For Adjunct Members who do perform research, the expanding demands of teaching often limit their ability to hold external research grants that make them eligible for teaching release to support their research. The internal Fund for Scholarly Research and Creative Work and Professional Development (Adjuncts) is greatly appreciated by our Adjunct Members and is often the only research funding they have access to.

Opportunities to participate in service

Managing service requirements is becoming untenable without adding colleagues to share the burden. Adjunct Members have varied experiences across campus, from being barred from unit governance to being included but unremunerated and unrecognized for their participation. Although Appendix Q (compensation for additional duties for Adjunct Members) exists, it is unevenly applied or sometimes used to prevent Adjuncts from making service contributions, further increasing the service burden for other Members.

Among the Adjunct Members who responded to our survey, we have over two dozen individuals who served in various major administrative roles (including as Heads and Program Coordinators). Similarly, the overwhelming majority of Adjuncts who responded reported that they are not compensated for additional duties such as student accommodations.

2. Sustainable Workload

Members have expressed very clearly that their workloads have increased considerably over the past few years, and that the rate of increase has accelerated with the austerity measures that the University has imposed in the past year and a half. Members are experiencing a ballooning of administrative service tasks such as those related to purchasing, submission of expense claims, personnel matters, and course and grade management, along with technological platforms such as multifactor security requirements; none of which Members are trained to carry out, and most of which fall within the scope of work of other campus unions. Faculty workloads have been dramatically impacted by the sharp increase in work associated with managing student accommodations compounded by ever-increasing class sizes; made all the worse with the recent austerity measures. To be clear that there is, of course, widespread support for student accommodations; the problem is with the lack of administrative support for the ever-increasing workload being downloaded onto QUFA Members. With all this additional work, full responsibility Members report the very unfortunate result that their most flexible time commitment (their research) is the one that ultimately suffers. For Adjunct Members, this work must often be done long past the end of their contracts.

Full responsibility Members have told us that managing the service requirements of their Units is becoming untenable without adding colleagues to share the burden. We are also aware that the service burden is typically heavier for women and for Members of other equity-deserving groups and that personnel processes often add insult to injury by undervaluing service in assessing performance. The service burden is also typically heavier in Units that have a high proportion of

their teaching carried out by Term Adjunct Members. We know that Term Adjunct Members have varied experiences across campus, from being barred from Unit governance (a practice that is inconsistent from Unit to Unit) to being included but unremunerated and unrecognized for their participation in collegial governance. This is especially unfair given the considerable fraction of the total teaching load carried by Adjunct Members. Continuing Adjuncts are similarly unfairly not consistently recognized across campus for their service contributions. In some instances, they are denied opportunities to contribute because the University refuses to compensate them for it, resulting in increased workload for full responsibility faculty despite the availability of Continuing Adjuncts who would like to be assigned this work. In other instances, Continuing Adjuncts are doing the work as unpaid volunteers, essentially being exploited for their commitment to the University. We are committed to a Collective Agreement that recognizes service as a valued and essential contribution to the University. We need a Collective Agreement that provides equal supports to Members across campus, and one that compensates them fairly for their unique, varied, and vital service contributions. This is necessary to enable all Members to fully engage with Unit and university affairs, and to provide the highest quality teaching and learning environment possible.

3. Striking a Better Wage-Effort Balance

The austerity measures implemented by the University have increased the administrative workload of QUFA Members in all aspects of their work: research, teaching/professional practice, and service. This trend will only be exacerbated moving forward if Members who opted for the early retirement are not replaced and if class sizes continue to grow. Members should reasonably expect to be compensated for this additional work. We will seek to obtain fair compensation increases due to the added burden brought about by a smaller full-time, full responsibility Member complement and continued reliance on limited-responsibility Term Adjuncts.

Under the current Collective Agreement, minimum stipends for Term Adjuncts, even with adjustments for years of teaching experience, class size, and benefits, are less than the cost of an equivalent tenure-track or tenured faculty Member. This disparity incentivizes the hiring of Term Adjuncts into precarious positions, rather than ensuring the University has sufficient tenure-track or tenured faculty Members. We will seek to reduce this disparity by increasing Term Adjunct stipends so that these Members are compensated fairly for such precarious work.

We have also heard widespread dissatisfaction with how merit is assessed and awarded. In the expiring Collective Agreement, QUFA and the University agreed to the formation of a Compensation Working Group. This Working Group has been meeting regularly over the past year, but no consensus has yet emerged from these discussions. We will seek to address compensation model concerns of the membership with a particular focus on increasing transparency and equity.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation in Canada has risen at rates not seen in decades. While some aspects have leveled off in the past year, the inflation of many items (such as groceries) continues to rise regularly, making the dollar worth less and less. In addition, there is the expectation of higher-than-normal inflation as a result of the dismantling of free trade agreements across North America. While QUFA Members were not caught in the Bill 124

nightmare, our annual increases have not kept up with inflation. We will seek to address this issue during this round of bargaining by making sure our full compensation packages are fair and competitive.

4. Defending Fairness in the Academic Workplace

Members are being squeezed in every direction from the hiring freeze to increased technology demands and continued pressures for efficiency and revenue generation. Likewise, there are a number of threats to collegial governance that are arising by stealth and by creep. Some of the Collective Agreement issues and processes we will attempt to amend and improve are:

- Concerns over the hiring freeze with an ever-increasing weighted student/faculty ratio;
- Technologies that subvert Members' control of their data and communications including the rise of AI;
- The proper recognition of work by QUFA Members;
- Employment Equity Processes;
- The value of service in the evaluation of Renewal, Tenure and Promotion and Renewal, Continuing Appointment and Promotion Processes (RTP and RCAP);
- Appointment types, processes, and committees;
- Term Adjunct hiring processes;
- Spousal Hires;
- Process for Workload Standard denials by Deans;
- Work demands that interfere with Members' ability to fully participate in the governance of the institution;
- 'Market' demands that encourage subversion of good governance (sidestepping Senate, suspending admissions, programs and people outside proper unit structures, etc.); and
- Low numbers of QUFA and/or Faculty representation on university committees, including on hiring committees for senior administrator positions.
- Greater transparency of administrative committees and decision making, including requirements for consultations prior to decisions being made.

These elements do not lend themselves to easy contract 'fixes', but they deserve our attention at the bargaining table. We intend to open dialogue with Queen's and will continue to engage Members on how best to reassert and protect these rights and responsibilities.

5. Housekeeping

As is to be expected, there are several Articles in the Collective Agreement requiring QUFA's and the University's attention. For example, some items include codifying best practices already in use while other areas have gaps in the current language that need to be addressed.

Summary

The Bargaining Team understands its mandate for this round of bargaining to be the improvement of Members' working lives with particular emphasis on improving **fairness** across job categories and across campus, and bringing greater transparency and Member control to processes and decisions that impact the mission of the University. Emerging from the pandemic, we need to ensure that Members' workloads, particularly service, become **sustainable**; they currently are not.

Next Steps

Once we have secured approval of this Bargaining Mandate, QUFA will signal our intention to bargain a renewal Collective Agreement and begin to meet with the University Bargaining Team. We will keep the Executive, Council, and Members apprised of our progress with regular bargaining bulletins.

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