

Report of the 2015 Lecturers Survey

In association with ongoing revisions to Policy 76,¹ a new FAUW committee was created focused on the concerns of lecturers.² This committee consists of eight lecturers drawn from all six faculties, along with several non-Lecturer members of the FAUW Board and the Policy 76 Revision Committee. It soon became apparent that the job descriptions of faculty members in lecturer positions varied widely across this campus. To capture this diversity, a survey was administered (November 13–20, 2015) to explore five main topics:

- terms of appointment – the nature of lecturer positions and the hiring process
- teaching loads
- experience with the “option to have at least one term in six be non-teaching”
- service – understanding of eligibility for and participation in various service roles
- proposed new titles and ranks for lecturers at UWaterloo

The response rate to the survey was impressive, with 83% of 180 lecturers participating. This level of support, consistent with the very well attended, lively meeting of lecturers held by FAUW in summer 2014, shows the level of engagement of this group. Every question provided an option for clarification, and respondents provided abundant feedback.

I. Terms of employment

Lecturer positions at UWaterloo are relatively long-term, with 68% of lecturers in their positions for four years or more, and 28% here for more than 10 years. The majority of lecturers (73%) competed for their positions in open searches, but some were hired after working as sessionals or after less formal screening processes. While sessional teaching was a common background for lecturers, other paths included transitions from research track and staff instructor positions.

With respect to promotion to the rank of continuing lecturer, a recurring theme was lack of clarity. The process had been discussed with 41% of respondents, but 55% indicated that process had not been discussed or that they were unclear on it. Many lecturers were unaware of the possibility of promotion, had been given conflicting information or experienced a process that was disorganized and poorly defined. Responses to this question varied significantly, indicating the lack of a consistent process across campus.

The ratio of the components defining lecturer positions (teaching / research / service) varies greatly. While the most common appointment was 80% teaching / 20% service, a substantial proportion of lecturers (28%) have large service components (50–70%). These service tasks included administrative appointments such as associate dean, associate chair and program director.

¹ This policy defines appointment categories and hiring procedures for faculty at the University of Waterloo.

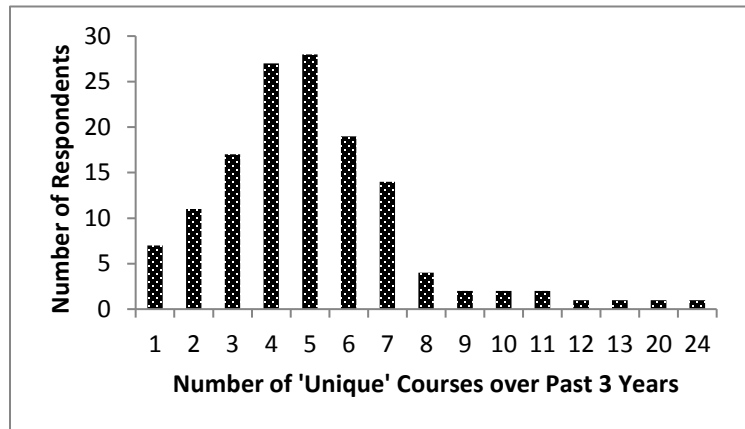
² FAUW officially represents all lecturers, both continuing and definite term. Sessional instructors and certain other non-regular appointments are not recognized as being represented by FAUW.

Of the 17% of lecturers with research components, 60% teaching / 20% research / 20% service was the most common appointment. Eight respondents commented on research. There seemed to be variation with respect to both opportunities to engage in research and how it was viewed in consideration of merit. Several respondents indicated that research was discouraged in their unit (three respondents) and/or not recognized and rewarded (two respondents).

II. Teaching load

While the most commonly reported course load per *calendar year* was six (33% of respondents), 15% taught more, and 15% taught three or fewer. Per *term*, three courses was the most commonly reported load (58%), but this was also highly variable across terms and between units. Lecturers are responsible for a broad range of course types; the vast majority (84%) of respondents deliver core or required courses, but they also deliver online courses (22%) and graduate courses (28%).

Shown at right are number of “unique” courses taught over the previous three years (*i.e.*, delivering the same course twice per term or per year would count as “one”). While 85% of respondents had taught two to seven distinct course preps over the past three years, 10% reported teaching more than that. This information was consistent with comments on earlier workload questions indicating that they were often tasked with new course preps and courses that were offered infrequently.



It should be noted that there are several factors that make it difficult to quantify course load, including the variability in the weights assigned to team-teaching, and teaching tasks other than conventional 0.5-credit lecture courses (*e.g.*, online courses, labs, practicums, placement courses). Lecturers often serve as coordinators of large courses and/or teams of TAs, which is difficult to quantify. Also, the weight assigned to teaching multiple sections of the same course within the same or different terms varies across units.

Consistent with the large service components reported earlier in the survey, 12 respondents reported that they had received course releases for particularly demanding department- or faculty-level administrative roles.

Several respondents indicated that they felt overloaded. Examples of overload included a high proportion of new course preps, and additional tasks including extensive guest lecturing, “extra” online courses, and serving as course coordinator, undergraduate advisor or program director.

III. Non-teaching term

Most lecturers (70%) teach three terms out of three. Of these, only 34% have ever had a non-teaching term. Of the remainder, 27% believed they were ineligible, 10% were not even aware of the policy and 28% thought they were eligible but had never been offered a non-teaching term.

Stated reasons for not taking a non-teaching term included:

- being told that the department was unable to spare them,
- the belief that asking for it would reflect negatively on their commitment to teaching,
- being unaware of the policy or unclear about their eligibility for it, and
- being required to teach their full annual load over two terms if they did take one.

Indeed, the majority of lecturers (78%) who had taken a non-teaching term did have their teaching loads redistributed to other terms. Several lecturers expressed dissatisfaction with this arrangement, indicating that having to teach two terms of four courses each, or three courses per term plus a high service load was difficult or impossible, and/or negated the value of the non-teaching term. Many lecturers felt they were deprived of opportunity for professional development.

In general, activities pursued during the non-teaching term were chosen by the lecturer, although a few respondents indicated that they submitted a plan to their chair. For those who have had a non-teaching term, the main activities were increased service (64%) and course/program development (60%). Examples of other types of activities included research (pedagogical and disciplinary), publishing (textbook revision, pedagogical research), participating in courses and workshops, and sabbaticals involving overseas visits or returns to industry.

Overall, the comments indicated that lecturers deeply valued their non-teaching term as an important opportunity to engage in professional development, and report that these terms are typically even busier for them than teaching terms.

IV. Service roles

Nearly all (97%) of respondents attended and voted on issues arising in departmental meetings, but the results indicate confusion and inconsistency regarding the eligibility of lecturers for many service roles. For example, 21% had served on hiring committees, but 54% believed they were not allowed to participate in this process. While 21% had served on graduate student advisory committees and/or (co)supervised graduate students, 55% and 61%, respectively, believed they were ineligible for these two roles. It is clear from this question that eligibility for service roles is not well defined or communicated, and departments are therefore unsure of how to proceed.

Lecturers hold many service roles beyond those listed in this survey question, including serving as academic advisor, departmental TA coordinator, teaching fellow, graduate program director, associate chair, interim director of a school, associate dean, and on committees concerned with admissions, curriculum, examinations and standings, student appeals and undergraduate affairs.

Lecturers are also participating above the faculty level such as serving on the FAUW Board of Directors or on associated committees, and representing the university at OCUFA.

V. Titles

Lecturers were asked to rank the following four options in order of preference:

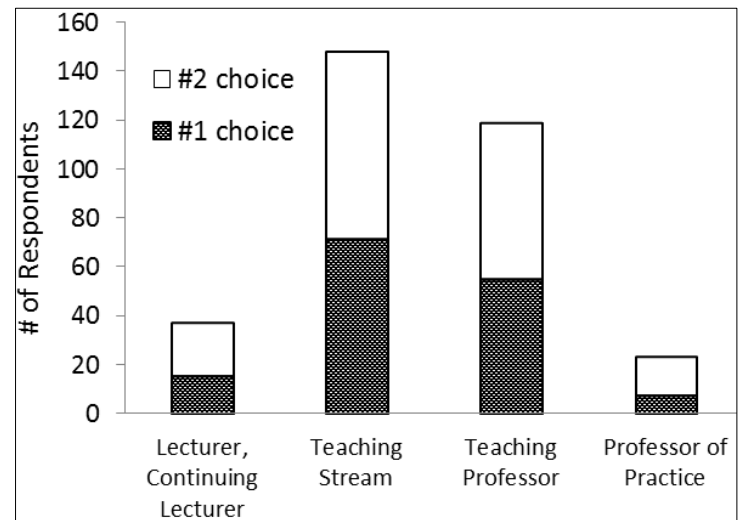
- *Lecturer, Continuing lecturer*
- *Assistant Professor / Associate Professor / Professor, Teaching Stream*
- *Assistant Teaching Professor / Associate Teaching Professor / Teaching Professor*
- *Assistant Professor of Practice / Associate Professor of Practice / Professor of Practice*

Shown at right are the first and second choices for all respondents. The designations most preferred were:

- *Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream*
- *Associate Professor, Teaching Stream*
- *Professor, Teaching Stream*

The next strongest preference was for the following designations:

- *Assistant Teaching Professor*
- *Associate Teaching Professor*
- *Teaching Professor*



General comments from lecturers

The survey ended with an opportunity for lecturers to comment further on issues raised in the survey, or to express any other concerns they wished to raise with FAUW. As stated at the beginning of this report, 83% of University of Waterloo lecturers responded to this survey. Of those, 66 (44% of respondents) took advantage of this opportunity to provide further feedback.

Further comments on survey questions:

Titles, ranks and career path – There is a strong desire to make a change in title nomenclature, and to develop a clear, consistent advancement process. There was strong support for titles that included the word “professor.” Conversely, a few respondents were content with the current title, and two expressed reservations for conferring a “professor” title to those lecturers without a PhD. It was suggested that the transition to continuing status should parallel the tenure process more closely.

Non-teaching term / professional development time – Teaching load should be reduced in a year with a non-teaching term, otherwise lecturers are unable to cope with the workload in the other two terms. Lecturers are dissatisfied with the inability to engage in professional development as well as take their full vacation allotment.

Eligibility for service – Lecturers seek clarity and consistency with respect to their eligibility for service roles.

Topics not addressed in this survey:

Compensation – Lecturers are dissatisfied with the size of the income gap and/or different thresholds that exists between lecturers and research faculty.

Respect for the position – There is a pervasive feeling of being treated like a second class citizen. Many lecturers feel they are not valued by their units.

Short-term and “less-a-day” contracts – There is a clear urgency to eliminate abusive practices such as reiterative short-term appointments and “less-a-day” contracts.

The very high response rate and abundant feedback received on this survey indicate not only the high level of engagement of lecturers at UWaterloo, but also that there are serious concerns about the working conditions of lecturers within this institution. The 2015 lecturers Survey has provided a way for these issues to be communicated to the Faculty Association, to policy drafting committees, and to UW administration. The Lecturers Committee hopes that the contents of this survey report will stimulate discussions that result in changes in policies and procedures to better meet the needs of this group.