

Report from lecturers' town hall meetings, December 2016

On December 7, 2016, the Faculty Association (FAUW) Lecturers Committee hosted a meeting open to all lecturers, to gather information on the challenges and concerns of lecturers at Waterloo. The session was attended by 27 people plus the Lecturers Committee and other FAUW representatives. A second session was held on December 19 to accommodate a conflict for a number of lecturers in the Faculty of Mathematics. That session was attended by 15 lecturers plus members of the committee.

This report is an integrated summary of the discussion at both meetings. The [slides presented at these sessions](#) are available on the FAUW website.

Faculty Association

After introducing the [Lecturers Committee](#), **Heidi Engelhardt** (committee chair) provided background on FAUW and the role of the [FAUW Board of Directors](#). FAUW currently represents definite-term and continuing lecturers with terms of one year or longer. It does not represent those with shorter terms, including those commonly referred to as sessionals. The FAUW board, which has representation from all faculties, provides a conduit for issues going to the Faculty Relations Committee (FRC), which has equal representation from Administration and FAUW. FRC provides a forum for ongoing negotiations of all aspects of working conditions except salary. Both groups meet every two weeks.

The FAUW board also creates its own committees and invites participation from the FAUW membership. A meeting of lecturers in July 2014 demonstrated a need for more input from lecturers. The Lecturers Committee was established in spring 2015, both as an outcome of that session, and to support the review of Policy 76 (faculty appointments). The committee, individually or as a group, is now being approached and consulted on a wide range of issues affecting lecturers. The committee consists of lecturers from all Faculties, as well as non-lecturer members who maintain links with other key groups. Lecturers interested in becoming involved should watch for an announcement in the spring of each year.

Policy 76 (faculty appointments) review

George Freeman (FAUW past president and Policy 76 review committee member) provided an update on [Policy 76](#) and the current mission to revise it. This important policy deals with faculty categories, appointments and progression through the ranks. When originally drafted, the policy dealt only with tenure-track (research) faculty. Lecturers were added in, albeit rather poorly; the Lecturer position is not well defined and the policy does not reflect the tremendous increase in the number of teaching-track positions.

The policy currently states that Continuing Lecturer appointments are *“understood to be unusual and offered only in special circumstances.”* The reality is that lecturers now make up ~15% of faculty at this university, with ~44% of them in continuing appointments. Attempts to define the term *“regular faculty”* lead to circular referral between Policy 76 and the [Memorandum of Agreement](#). In addition to addressing the issues raised by lecturers at the 2014 meeting of lecturers and in the [2015 Lecturers Survey](#), there has been discussion of broadening the scope of Policy 76 to establish principles that should apply to *all* academic appointments, from one-term sessionals to full professors.

A concern first articulated at the 2014 meeting, quantified and explored in the 2015 Lecturers Survey, was the need for a clearly defined career path for lecturers with ranks and appropriate titles. Reiterative short-term (e. g. one-year) contracts were an issue of concern, particularly in certain units. **Sally Gunz** (FAUW President) commented that the career path issues within Policy 76 were regarded as high-priority. She indicated that particularly in difficult economic times, we need to protect our teaching professoriate. She cited the recent example at Western, where 45 new tenure-track (research) positions were created by eliminating teaching-track positions and increasing class sizes.

Another issue consistently raised is time for professional development. Policy 76 currently states that assignment of duties for lecturers *“must take into account the distinctive feature of university teaching, that instruction is provided by scholars who are expected to remain current in their field and maintain their scholarly competence regardless of whether a separate rating for scholarship is part of the Lecturer’s performance review.”* Arguably, this could be achieved by the “one non-teaching term in six” clause already enshrined in Policy 76. However, the 2015 survey showed continuing inconsistencies across and even within units on how (and whether) this is implemented.

Although falling outside the purview of Policy 76, there is a need for a transparent process for determining “normal” loads for both research- and teaching-track faculty, and oversight to ensure that this is not exceeded. Another non-Policy 76 issue is that of compensation – concerns were raised via survey comments and at the 2014 meeting. There are very different salary thresholds for teaching- versus research-track faculty that impact on lifetime incomes. The Lecturers Committee continues to push on both these fronts.

Sally Gunz pointed out that progress will be slow and incremental; defining workload is challenging even within departments. Similarly, ensuring non-teaching terms will be difficult when the onus is on individual administrators (i.e. chairs) to ensure equitable workloads and smooth scheduling. However, **George Freeman** commented that the mood of the committee revising Policy 76 is optimistic. He also pointed out that they do

not want to build policy so rigid that it prevents people from doing the job they want (i.e. some lecturers may want the flexibility of reiterative short-term position).

Lecturers in the Faculty of Mathematics

There is a significant subset of Math lecturers, in the Centre for Education in Mathematics & Computing, who have a heavy commitment to math education at the high school level and are often weighted as service-intensive (50:50) positions. However, a substantial part of this so-called service is math education and outreach, which could still be considered teaching.

Open Discussion

Merit: At least in some units, lecturers feel they are systemically discriminated against; indeed in one year, merit scores for all lecturers in that unit – but not other ranks – was reduced by 0.25. Lecturers have been long under-represented as recipients of Outstanding Performance Awards (OPAs) in that unit; OPAs are supposed to recognize teaching, not just research. Anyone requiring assistance with these types of issues is encouraged to take them to AF&T. *The merit template is inappropriate for lecturers: Could a separate form be developed?*

Parental leave: A lecturer was told, seemingly by an HR directive, that the teaching expectations upon returning from parental leave are different for lecturers versus professorial ranks. **Bryan Tolson** (FAUW vice president) indicated that is certainly not the case, and that language in Policy 14 (also under review) may need to be clarified to ensure that it clearly applies to *all* faculty.

Professional development: Professional allowances may cover part of one conference per year, beyond which personal money must be used. With access to research grants not a realistic option for most lecturers, could there be a provision for additional support? Would such support entail a research component to the Lecturer position? *A broad definition of research / scholarship should be applied.*

Possible mandatory scholarship/research component: The Policy 76 committee is considering whether the development of a professorial teaching-track that parallels the research track should include a minimum 10% research weighting. The rationale is that if scholarly activity is (or becomes) a requirement, there should be credit for it. This notion was put up for discussion.

Some attendees (e.g. 80:20 positions without a research component) felt that this would have a negative impact on their merit scores. Few lecturers are currently hired with research as an intended activity. One member pointed out that *presenting* research (versus publishing) was particularly important in their discipline (CS), and it was difficult to fit conferences around teaching.

Lecturers have differing experiences with weights – some felt they were “locked in” by their contracts, others considered them more flexible. There was a suggestion that the 10% research component be made available on a year-to-year basis, depending on the Lecturer’s teaching and service loads. *Again, the need for a broad definition of research was expressed at both sessions.*

Lecturers without PhDs: Particularly if a teaching professor stream paralleling that of research faculty is developed, requirement for a PhD will inevitably be raised. Current lecturers would be grandfathered in to whatever new rankings are established. However, for future hirings we need to consider that the PhD may not be the terminal degree for all disciplines. In some fields, a professional degree rather than a PhD is often required (e.g. Pharmacy, Optometry, Architecture). For language and math instruction, the Masters level may be more realistic and even more appropriate. Many lecturers in Math do not have PhDs and are discriminated against even now.

Promotion to Continuing: As has been raised before, there are discrepancies on procedure and timelines. There is a need to ensure clear communications with administration (chair and dean) to ensure a consistent, fair process. Jason Grove (Chemical Engineering) and a member from Math provided personal examples. In those cases, stages in the (lengthy) process were more or less defined, but there were examples of PhD lecturers in Math who have been here for many years without Continuing status.

Scheduling: Not knowing your teaching schedule until six weeks before the term makes both professional and personal planning difficult. The final exam schedule comes out so late that arranging vacation time in the gaps between terms is nearly impossible, particularly if there is a need to coordinate with family members. While these are issues facing all faculty, *lecturers teaching three terms out of three are more frequently affected by these scheduling issues.*

1- or 2-year ‘less a day’ contracts: These types of contracts, which have been raised as an issue at the FAUW board, have serious implications with respect to benefits (see: [benefit eligibility based on Policy 23](#)). Faculty on contracts of less than one year (even by a day) receive no benefits. At one year, faculty members are eligible for extended health and life insurance, but not pension, dental, or the Employee and Family Assistance Program. It is only after two years that eligibility for full benefits kicks in. This is a major budgetary challenge for departments that rely heavily on sessionals and short-term contracts. There needs to be a balance between basic human fairness for professionals looking for stability, and remaining open to people looking for short-term work who would rather not pay into benefits plans.

Service roles: As was raised in the survey, it is unclear which service roles lecturers are eligible for. Relevant policy statements are unclear, and some units have lecturers on key department committees when policy

seems to state that they are ineligible (and vice versa). This speaks to the ambiguous wording that has been recognized in several policies currently under revision, and also to the need to clearly communicate this information to all unit administrators.

Workload: As raised in the survey, there are many discrepancies across units in weightings for teaching and how it is measured, consideration of resource allocation for courses (e.g. teaching assistant support for lecturers versus research-track faculty), recognition of the development and delivery of online courses and recognition of the effort that goes into course development in general. Some lecturers expressed the view that lecturers are assigned the courses that research track faculty do not want to teach.