



Representing Faculty, Librarians,
Veterinarians & College Professors

June 10, 2021

MEMBER UPDATE

On Monday, June 7, the UGFA was contacted by many faculty members in a particular college who had requested to teach their course using remote delivery. They had just received an email from their Dean's Office that mentioned an (arbitrarily-set) "institutional goal to offer in-person instruction or learning activities at least once per week in 60 percent of course enrolments across all year levels and degree programs." They were asked to reconsider "your delivery" mode of "your course," and were asked to submit any changes by the very next day, described as "the last opportunity" to change the schedule. Members understood from this email that they continued to have the ability to choose their mode of delivery, despite what they saw as inappropriate managerial pressure. In addition, we are aware that the list of modes of delivery from which members have been asked to choose was not consistent across colleges. In some cases, remote delivery was not even given as an option. The Senate meeting later that day was an opportunity for the Provost to provide some clarity, but she didn't take it. The Provost's update was part of the last regular agenda item and, by her own admission, her Fall 2021 planning update was relegated to only "her last minute or so."

On Tuesday, June 8, all faculty members received a memo from the Provost announcing that Deans would identify the courses to be delivered face-to-face, and that a "significant proportion" of course offerings would be taught this way. The impending release of this memo was not mentioned at the Senate meeting of the previous day. This memo states that those with concerns about teaching face-to-face might be allowed to teach remotely, dependent upon factors such as their vaccination status, their inclusion in and/or cohabitation with someone in a high-risk group, their being hearing impaired, and the potential closure of public schools. Otherwise, members with concerns, including for their mental health, are at the mercy of their Dean, who can force them to teach face-to-face.

The Administration waited for months before agreeing to begin negotiations on a Fall 2021 Letter of Understanding (LOU). They came in on day one with the notion of compelling faculty to teach face-to-face despite members' reasonable health concerns. They have never found any reason to adjust their position: not in UGFA's bargaining submissions, not in things they have heard from Chairs and Directors, not in questions submitted to Dr. Mercer, not in the results of and comments in the joint survey of UGFA members, and not even in comments made in the chats at Senate meetings or their Town Halls.

The UGFA's position (strongly supported by member input) has remained that members with health concerns should not be compelled to teach face-to-face. If the Administration addresses in a clear and transparent way the conditions they control (safety protocols, traffic flow on campus, compliance with relevant protocols, ventilation, allowances for absent students, etc.) and if their optimistic vision of the state of the pandemic materializes, a sizeable number of members would choose to teach face-to-face. The Administration would reach their (arbitrarily-set) 60 percent threshold without threatening to force members with health concerns to teach face-to-face.

The Provost's memo of June 8 demonstrates that the Administration has now abandoned the project of a jointly-bargained Letter of Understanding. They cannot send out this memo while still pretending they are engaged in bargaining.

The Administration's abandonment of negotiations of an LOU means that the Fall 2021 semester will operate under the provisions of our Collective Agreement (CA). In the context of the Provost's memo, this update will discuss relevant aspects of the CA.

Modes of Course Delivery

The following table summarizes the four possible situations involving face-to-face and remote instruction.

mode of delivery requested by member	mode of delivery requested by Dean	UGFA Comments
Face-to-face	Face-to-face	Everything seems to be okay.
Remote	Remote	Everything seems to be okay.
Face-to-face	Remote	The Dean cannot compel a member to teach using a mode of delivery that is not part of our CA. Members in this situation should contact the UGFA.
Remote	Face-to-face	In this situation, the Dean seeks to compel a members who may feel unsafe to return to campus. Members in this situation should contact the UGFA.

Our Collective Agreement includes no notion of a “hybrid” mode of delivery. Members teaching face-to-face have the Academic Freedom to decide how they teach as long as they have the appropriate number of hours of lectures and labs as per the calendar. They can choose to post materials on line, record themselves, or livestream themselves. **None of these options can be imposed.**

The Administration has capped course sections at 250 students. The Provost’s memo did not provide details on how this would be accomplished. In response to our request for further information, the Administration has told the UGFA that members who had as a teaching assignment a course with more than 250 students will now have one section of that course with, at most, 250 students as that teaching assignment. It is unclear to the UGFA whether these additional sections will be taught by sessional instructors, offered to UGFA members as overload teaching, or if the Administration will find another solution.

We urge you to contact the UGFA at facassoc@uoguelph.ca

- if the Administration wants you to teach face-to-face when you requested to teach using a remote mode of delivery or vice-versa;
- if the Administration is trying to compel you to teach using a “hybrid” mode of delivery;
- if the Administration asks you to teach a class or class section of more than 250 students;
- if the Administration is pressuring you to include in your teaching the posting of materials, recording or livestreaming of your lectures;
- if you are a Chair who has been pressured by the Administration to make members comply with any of the above; and
- if the Administration asks you to meet with them, particularly if you anticipate a problematic discussion. Indeed, we are aware of requests for a phone call discussion with the Dean or an Associate Dean; it is advisable for members to respond that they will instead gladly attend a meeting with the Administration with an UGFA representative present

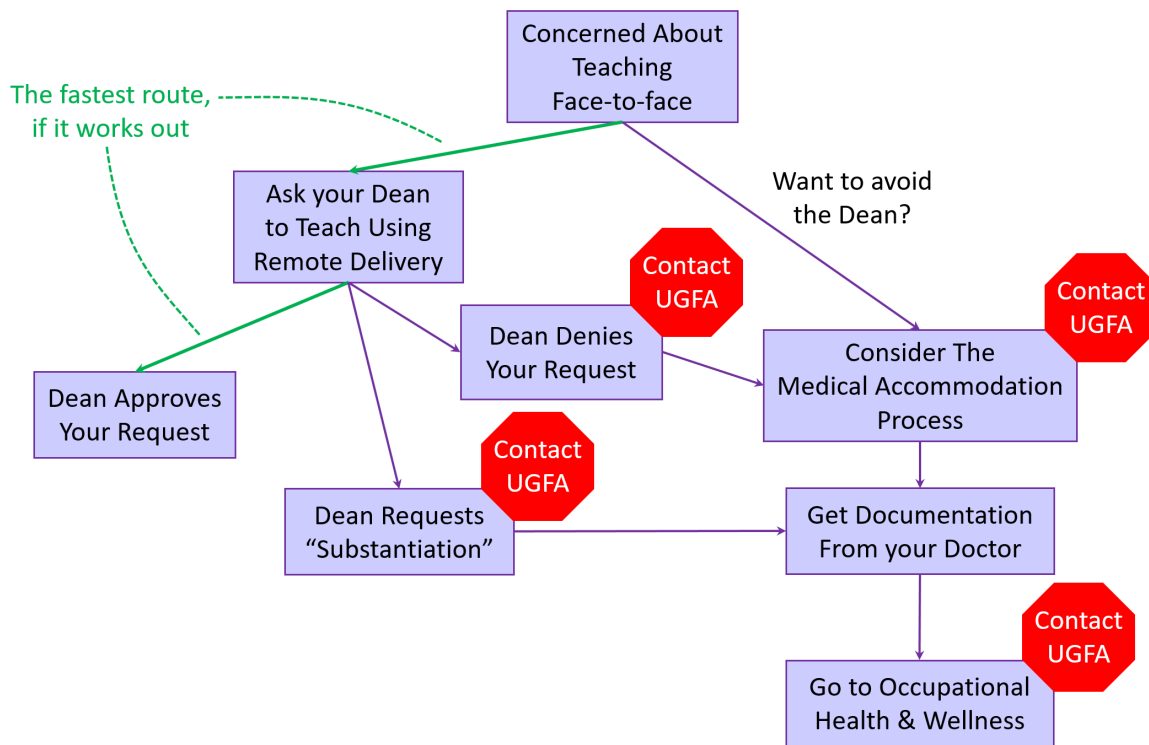
Accommodation

The Provost's memo suggests that certain concerns might be "accommodated" at the discretion of the Dean. For purposes of clarity, we would like to highlight the distinction between a medical accommodation, as defined by our Collective Agreement, and an "accommodation" as contemplated by the Provost's memo.

If you are concerned about teaching face-to-face in the fall, you can submit a request to your Dean to teach using a remote mode of delivery. You should do this as soon as possible. Please know that no Dean or other academic administrator has the right to your private medical information.

The Dean may indicate that you need to seek a medical accommodation through the Occupational Health and Wellness Office. Or, you may prefer not to speak to your Dean at all, and to go directly to the Occupational Health and Wellness Office. The accommodation process can be confusing, so we recommend that you contact the UGFA before proceeding. If you intend to seek a medical accommodation, you should make an appointment as soon as possible to speak with your family doctor, as documentation will be required. While there is no deadline for seeking a medical accommodation, you may be compelled to return to campus before the accommodation is put in place. For this reason, it would be best to initiate the process as soon as possible.

Here is an illustrated road map of possible paths to follow:



If you have children at home at the beginning of (or during) the Fall semester because schools are closed, you may be eligible for an accommodation based on family status.

We urge you to contact the UGFA at facassoc@uoguelph.ca

- if you would like an UGFA representative to be part of a conversation with your Dean;
- if you feel that the Dean has unfairly denied your request to teach remotely;
- if you want assistance in navigating the accommodation process; and
- if you need information on Sick Leave.

As always, contact the UGFA (facassoc@uoguelph.ca) if you have any other concerns.