



Representing Faculty, Librarians,
Veterinarians & College Faculty

RESULTS OF THE UGFA WORKLOAD SURVEY

11/25/2016

What impact has the increase in workload had on Faculty, Librarians and Veterinarians?

The workload of Faculty, Librarians and Veterinarians at the University of Guelph has increased over the past 5 years.

The workload of Faculty at the University of Guelph has increased over the past 5 years, according to the survey conducted by the UGFA in October. For 11 out of 19 questions regarding specific components or aspects of Faculty Members' professional duties, greater than 50% of respondents indicated that their workload has increased somewhat or increased significantly. For no question did more than 7% of respondents report a decrease in workload.

As the UGFA's "Workload Impact of the Administration's Financial Decisions" suggested in February, the reality of fewer Members combined with more students along with increased pressure for scholarly production and service duties is having a profound impact. The Workload Survey results provide data on how this impact has been experienced.

Where has Faculty workload increased? In all parts of the DOE

The survey revealed specific concerns within each area of the Distribution of Effort (DOE) for Faculty Members. With regard to per-course workload in Teaching:

- 67% of respondents indicated their workload has increased for out-of-class student time (office hours, e-mails, consultations, reference letters, etc.);
- 58% indicated a workload increase for technology related to teaching;
- 56% indicated a workload increase for marking and assessment.

For Scholarship:

- 69% of respondents indicated an increase in workload related to graduate students and undergraduate research students;
- 65% indicated a workload increase for preparing funding applications.

The survey results regarding Service are even more telling:

- 81% of respondents indicated increased workload dealing with information technology;
- 73% indicated a workload increase in preparing for T&P / Biennial Performance Assessment;
- 73% indicated increased workload due to the downloading of administrative tasks on to Faculty;
- 68% indicated increased workload related to committee work;
- 67% indicated an increase in workload involving the completion of financial reimbursement forms.

Why has Faculty workload increased? Fewer Faculty Members; rising class size; escalating pressures to secure funding; new administrative burdens; imposition of new technologies

As well as asking Faculty Members how their workload has changed, the survey asked them which reasons or factors contributed to these changes. The results for these questions, along with the written comments submitted by many respondents, provide compelling evidence on why workload has increased and how this is affecting Faculty Members. With regard to reasons contributing to increases in Teaching workload:

- 61% of respondents identified insufficient numbers of Faculty Members;
- 67 % identified the assignment of new courses;
- 69% identified increased student stress;
- 69% identified increased class size.

One of the comments referring to increased class size describes its impact not only on workload, but on career progress:

We are pushed to advise more students, but there is no more time. I'm expected to teach writing skills to a class of 500 that isn't about writing and no longer has seminars. Frankly, the bulk of my time goes to e-mail and meetings. There isn't enough of me to go around, and I am getting little time to write and to do research. I fear for my tenure goals.

As for reasons behind increased workload relating to Scholarship:

- 58% identified higher student enrolment;
- 59% cited insufficient funding for graduate students;
- 76% identified the increasingly challenging external funding climate.

A Member describes how the relentless pursuit of funding affects workload and academic life generally:

We now need multiple grants to get one project off the ground, we are delayed by animal care and bio-safety and now NSERC internal reviewers, we have no secretarial help and technicians are difficult to afford and undervalued. In the 15 years I have been here the workload has increased exponentially. There is no time for creative thinking and reflection. Looking forward to change or retirement.

This comment also suggests how the imposition of new or changed administrative or bureaucratic burdens has been a major factor. In questions covering every area of the DOE, Faculty respondents cited this as a reason for increased workload:

- 70% for Teaching;
- 76% for Scholarship;
- 73% for Service.

Many of the comments expressed frustration with this factor:

Please reduce the number of forms we have to fill out and increase administrative support for faculty.

Workloads have increased and are poised to continue increasing due to the addition of many small administrative tasks motivated by good intentions, but considered and implemented independently of one another. These added demands are making universities centres of small ideas. There is little time for deep thinking.

I have been at U of G 25 years and the big change is lack of admin and tech support. It seems there is always a new system being added. It is not good value to pay faculty to fill out forms instead of to do the jobs we are trained to do, which in the end will generate more money for the U of G. They seem to have lost sight of that, and there seems to be less respect for what faculty actually bring to the equation.

The amount of reporting and admin work that has been downloaded on us is excessive, and has impacted morale of faculty and performance.

Another factor which the survey reveals has had an impact on every area of the Faculty DOE is the imposition of new information technologies:

- 72% of respondents identified this as a reason for an increased workload in Teaching;
- 62% cited it for Scholarship;
- 81% identified it for Service.

Many comments expressed concerns regarding this factor:

One of the biggest time sinks is learning new software all the time to do various tasks.

Stop the 24-hour-a-day e-mail culture at U of G. It has “gutted” the university experience for students.

A significant contributor to the increased workload is the ridiculous OVC-SAS system. At no point did the OVC admin ask for help in developing the process. The system was put in place and, once developed, faculty and staff are asked for feedback to adjust the system. This is mind boggling. I have not heard a single person (faculty or staff) praise the system and point to its efficiency. Instead they universally note the increased time to do the work. The only thing that it has done is to give central admin the ability to monitor and control what is going on, which fits totally in line with their obsession to control and manipulate all things in the college.

The impact & future of the Sedona e-CV

While Faculty Members’ comments expressed concern regarding multiple different information technologies and systems, that which appears to have contributed the most to increased workload is the Sedona e-CV. The survey asked Members about their satisfaction with the Sedona e-CV:

- 69% of respondents indicated that the amount of work required to prepare their T&P / Biennial Performance Assessment submissions using this system is unacceptable;
- 71% indicated that the amount of work to prepare submissions has increased since the introduction of the e-CV;
- 72% did not think Sedona’s presentation of their performance information is of a high quality;
- 83% did not like the system design and interface;
- 88% experienced some frustration using the system.

Beyond gauging satisfaction with the system, the survey included a poll on the future of the Sedona e-CV at the University of Guelph:

- 41% of respondents voted to return to the pre-2014 system;
- 25% voted to try a new e-CV system;
- 34% voted to continue using the Sedona e-CV.

The fact that a majority of those who preferred using an e-CV system favoured continuing with Sedona might seem strange, particularly given the many comments criticizing the system and insisting that any e-CV must be compatible with the Canadian Common CV used by NSERC and SSHRC. Our interpretation of this result is that, while they continue to have serious concerns regarding Sedona, Members have legitimate worries that a new e-CV system could be worse and create even more work.

Following the Sedona system’s inability to allow Members to submit their material during working hours in August, which forced Management to extend the submission deadline, the UGFA contacted the Provost to formally request that the University abandon this failed experiment. Management’s response was to inform us, at the beginning of November, that they recognize the problems with the

Sedona e-CV and that they intend to replace it with a new system. Finding and implementing a new e-CV (or “performance management system,” as Management calls it) will take time. In keeping with our Members’ concerns revealed by the survey, the UGFA will continue to monitor Management’s plans to impose yet another system and the implications for workload.

Workload of Librarians & Veterinarians has also increased

The survey results indicate that the workload of Librarians and Veterinarians has also increased. While facing different circumstances and pressures, the workload of these Members has risen for similar reasons to those affecting Faculty: in particular, a decline in the number of Members, and the imposition of new administrative and bureaucratic burdens.

Of the Librarians responding to the survey:

- 88% indicated that their workload has increased for the creation / design of new library services;
- 78% cited an increase of committee work;
- 75% indicated increased workload for faculty outreach;
- 62% indicated an increase in referral to other teams and departments;
- 62% cited increased workload for student consultations.

Regarding the reasons for the increased workload:

- 80% of respondents indicated an insufficient number of Librarians;
- 90% indicated a decrease in support staff time;
- 80% indicated new or changed administrative or bureaucratic burdens.

As for Veterinarians:

- 78% of respondents indicated that the complexity of cases assigned has increased workload;
- 70% indicated increased workload for committee and extension work;
- 38% cited the number of cases assigned as increasing workload.

As for the reasons behind these increases:

- 55% of respondents identified the insufficient number of Veterinarians;
- 44% cited the decrease in clinical / support staff;
- 70% identified new or changed administrative or bureaucratic burdens (including the OVC-SAS).

Declining Morale & Quality of Life: a “Distinctive University Culture”?

Increases to workload have a significant impact on Members’ morale and their quality of life, and the survey included questions on these issues. When asked to estimate how many hours they spent on University-related work in an average week during the past year, *60% of respondents indicated that they spent more than 50 hours*. The survey also asked Members to characterize a series of quality of life indicators at the present moment: *less than 50% of respondents registered that any of these were better than satisfactory*.

Members' responses to subsequent questions on how changes in their workload over the past five years had affected these same quality of life indicators were even more revealing:

- 50% of respondents indicated that workload had worsened their work - family / life balance;
- 66% indicated that it had worsened their work-related stress;
- 40% cited worsened mental health;
- 56 % indicated that workload had worsened their morale.

The evidence from the written comments submitted as part of the survey, however, demonstrates that some Members are satisfied with their existing workload and pleased with their overall situation at the University of Guelph:

Hey, things are pretty good. We have great jobs, great colleagues, flexible hours, and more than adequate compensation.

I am VERY happy as a faculty member at U of G. My department functions exceptionally well with excellent colleagues and a superb and helpful chair. I tap-dance to work every day.

While the UGFA is delighted that these Members are content, we are also deeply concerned by comments which suggest that other Members are not merely unhappy but overwhelmed due to increased workload:

My overarching sentiment is that over the past 5 years workload has increased and quality of life has decreased.

In my experience it is not possible to accomplish all of the tasks required - and get positive comments in promotion and tenure - working less than 50 hours a week. About 55 hours a week is needed to advance one's career.

I'm exhausted, I'm frustrated, I'm pissed at a university that seeks to support the wellness of its students but seems to care less about its faculty. Unless I get a doctor's note and submit with Occupational Health annually, which is in itself a stigma, I am busy supporting more students without any real HUMAN support.

The work never stops in my Department: we routinely joke about how meaningless DOEs are - it doesn't matter how much one works, the DOE can only ever equal 100%.

Are such observations, which are in keeping with the overall survey results, compatible with the Central Administration's triumphal invocation of "Nurturing a Distinctive University Culture" as part of its new Strategic Framework? The UGFA believes that workload increases have not only harmed its Members' morale and quality of life, but have undermined the University's academic mission.

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Any Member wishing to see the complete Workload Survey results should contact the UGFA Office at Ex. 52126.