



Representing Faculty, Librarians,
Veterinarians & College Professors

Dear UGFA Member,

On the afternoon of Wednesday, June 16, all UGFA members in one College received an email from their Dean addressing the request of some faculty members to teach their course(s) in Fall 2021 using a remote mode of delivery.

This Dean wrote that members who “for the [medical and family status] reasons [listed in the June 8 memo from the Provost] cannot meet with students in person [...] will need a medical accommodation” in order to teach using a remote mode of delivery. Furthermore, the Dean wrote, “For Fall 21 only, we are using an expedited accommodation process in which faculty members write to the Dean’s office ([CCing the Dean's administrative assistant]) and explain the need for accommodation. Please do not send medical documentation to me.”

While the Administration has written many memos saying how much they recognize the importance of mental health and wellness; the strain of the past year or so, particularly in terms of workload and work-life balance; and the concerns you have about Fall 2021, the message at “crunch time” is that you must teach face-to-face this Fall. Only government, public health, or family status measures will stop them from forcing you to do so. This memo makes clear that the Administration's expressions in recent years of caring about the mental health of UGFA members were and are nothing more than virtue signaling, empty of any real compassion.

The UGFA has communicated to the Provost's Office our objection to ingredients of the passages we quoted above from this Dean’s memo:

the Dean's Office has no right to have a faculty member’s medical information, not just their medical documentation;

the Dean should not request that any such private details or information be conveyed by email; and

the Dean should not request that this private information be shared with a staff member.

In fact, given the sensitive nature of these matters, members should be reassured that their Dean will make time to sit down and discuss their options with them and, following the Collective Agreement, should the member so desire, an UGFA representative. The Dean can make a decision with no record of or risk of release of any information a member might choose to share. From the UGFA’s perspective, it is important to know what sorts of decisions Deans are making across campus since the Collective Agreement includes the overarching principle that the decisions of the Administration must be fair and equitable.

The UGFA has requested that this Dean be asked to send a clarification to the UGFA members in that College and that other Deans planning similar communications take these matters into account.

Finally, we must reiterate that the Dean's memo and the Provost's earlier memo include a misuse of the term "accommodation." According to our Collective Agreement, accommodation happens through the Occupational Health and Wellness Office, not through a request to the Dean. These memos should not call the Dean's decision-making process an "accommodation" or an "expedited accommodation," as this breeds confusion. For example, your Dean might ask you to respond to such a memo by a certain date; this date may be the Dean's deadline, but members may access the processes in the Collective Agreement (accommodation, Sick Leave, etc.) at any time. We had hoped that Deans, for reasons of compassion, might allow faculty members who are worried about teaching face-to-face in Fall 2021 to teach using a remote mode of delivery. It does not seem that this will be the case.

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

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Herb Kunze, UGFA Vice-President