

This communication is intended to provide guidance to assist YUFA members in navigating and managing work during the COVID-19 crisis. The information provided is drawn from regular and ongoing discussions YUFA is having with the employer via the Joint Committee on the Administration of the Agreement (JCOAA).

## **The Pandemic and York University**

From the outset of the pandemic here in North America, the employer made a decision, as did many other universities, to remain operational to the extent we can in order to not unduly disrupt the studies of students and the work of faculty and staff. The COVID-19 pandemic is recognized as a crisis that has produced extraordinary circumstances to which we are all being asked to adjust. As such, the circumstances we find ourselves in and the agreements reached between the employer and YUFA are considered unprecedented and without prejudice.

## **Decision Making regarding Operations**

York University is following guidelines put forth by all levels of government, particularly the provincial government. Government guidelines are premised on health directives as based on the latest information regarding health and safety measures. As we near the fall term, the employer is planning to engage in direct consultations with public health authorities to discuss health and safety measures for a phased-in campus reopening.

## **Pandemic Impact on Equity Issues**

YUFA has communicated with the employer that some of our members are far more negatively affected than others due to the current pandemic situation. Women for the most part carry the responsibility of being caregivers, to children home from school, elderly family members as well as those who are ill. Those living with (dis)Abilities can be particularly vulnerable to the threat and impact of COVID-19. Racialized, Indigenous and LGBTQ members must continue to navigate marginalized existences in accessing proper services and supports.

The employer's response to date has been to address the array of equity-impacting concerns on a case-by-case basis, urging members struggling to maintain their work demands to communicate such with their respective chairs and Deans. Additionally, the employer is hoping to make space on campus available to work at should the home environment not be conducive to your work tasks. We will be asked to fill out and submit the access to campus forms to make such arrangements, health directives permitting.

## **Shift to Remote Teaching, Service and Research**

Because of its easy accessibility, the employer has contracted Zoom as the video conferencing platform to enable us to carry on with all aspects of our work. All faculty have access to the Zoom account and the platform is embedded in Moodle to further assist with remote teaching. Zoom is increasingly being used as the platform to carry on a wide variety of service meetings so

that service tasks continue uninterrupted. Also, Zoom is but one platform that can be utilized for many research purposes among other platforms and software.

We are being assured the system will be able to sustain the demand as it did at the end of the winter term. IT supports have been increased exponentially at YUFA's urging over the past number of weeks to assist those teaching in the summer and we are currently in the process of continuing to advocate with the employer to ensure even more is made available over the summer in preparation for the fall.

As indicated in the April 6 [FAQs](#), YUFA was successful in arranging the option for stop-outs for pre-tenure faculty and arranging for the option to exclude student course evaluations for winter 2020 and year-long 2019-20 courses from their files. This option also applies for summer 2020 and fall 2020 course evaluations.

YUFA is alert to the increased workload incurred as a result of shifting to remote teaching and we use every opportunity to inform the employer of this. If your course delivery involves CUPE instructors, the employer is in regular talks with CUPE 3903 as well, thus the issue of preparing them for remote teaching is being taken up in that forum in addition to our continued discussions on this issue. If TAs are to be part of your course(s), include training hours in a TA's workload assignment and consider your options regarding Marker Graders.

### **Home Office Expenses**

This is an ongoing issue JCOAA is discussing with the employer. We have asked repeatedly for funding to assist with home office costs and the employer has directed us to use our PERs. We have an ongoing disagreement regarding this, but YUFA will continue to try to address it. Also, the T2200 tax option is also on the table and the employer is committed to continue to consider this as an option, which YUFA is monitoring as the pandemic continues.

### **Summer Teaching**

At YUFA's urging, the employer has now put in place extensive IT supports and resources in the Teaching Commons to assist faculty in summer teaching.

### **Fall Teaching**

York's decision for fall courses to be delivered largely by online/remote methods is based on provincial health standards. Even if circumstances change, protecting health and safety will be primary for the entire York community (students, staff and faculty) and will be determined by official health directives. The employer is aware of our protected rights in this area in our Collective Agreement and will respect our decisions, either to teach physically (if permitted within class size thresholds and according to government stipulated health standards) or to teach remotely. A declination to teach (physically and remotely) will result in owing the course.

There may also be an option to move a course to the winter term, although this would be on a case by case basis.

Both the employer and YUFA advise that all course preparation include a remote component to the extent the course can be taught remotely. YUFA encourages faculty to be creative, innovative and flexible in preparing their courses for remote teaching that preserves academic integrity and meets students' learning needs. Having your course(s) prepared for remote mode will serve as an important backup, even if your class is small enough to teach physically, as students may not feel safe attending, international students may not be in the country and be in a different time zone and a 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of the pandemic may force us all to retreat to remote teaching delivery at any time.

### **Remote Teaching and Pedagogy**

With an increase in IT and Teaching Commons supports for remote teaching, YUFA is now communicating your concerns to the employer regarding the pedagogical limitations of teaching remotely. YUFA is urging that more attention be placed on these concerns and the Teaching Commons has begun to do more in this regard. The challenge for us all is to recognize these are truly extraordinary times, to do the best we can under health directives and to maintain to the extent we can academic integrity in unusual circumstances.

### **'New Normal'**

We have been hearing much concern regarding whether the transition to remote teaching and service work will become the 'new normal' representing the future direction of York University. YUFA's communications with the employer indicate that this is definitely not the case. The employer and YUFA are anxious for all of us to return to a physical existence on York's campuses, as we have emphasized, and we both recognize, the impact this pandemic is having on student life, academic integrity and how we all relate to one another as a research and learning community.

In our ongoing talks with the employer YUFA will uphold our labour rights and academic freedoms and continue to ensure that Collective Agreement protections and guarantees remain in force.