

Dear UGFA Member,

One concern expressed by UGFA members who are scheduled to teach in Fall 2021 has to do with requests from students who ask to do their work remotely when required class components are face to face. Perhaps because the UGFA has brought this concern to the Administration on numerous occasions, the Provost wrote in her June 7 memo, “Students signed up for in-person [face-to-face] classes are **expected to attend in-class**” (bolding in Provost’s text). The Provost’s memo goes on to explain that accommodations in Fall 2021 will include the “usual” Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and “ill students” accommodations, plus those for international students arriving in Canada a bit late. The memo specifies that accommodation for these international students will be handled by the Administration, explicitly stating that “recording and posting of lectures is also optional.” We feel that the Administration is betting that most instructors will choose also to accommodate other student requests arising outside of the “usual” SAS and “sick note” accommodations. Members have the freedom to decide to do so, but, as the Provost’s memo implies, should not feel required to do so.

The SAS website has recently been updated to include information about “Remote Learning for Courses On-Campus.” There is much here that is potentially misleading. For example, the website tells us:

When there is a request for remote learning in a course that is otherwise offered on campus, it might be tempting to quickly respond with: “no that’s not possible.” However, responding too quickly may not fulfill our procedural duty to accommodate. That is to say, before concluding that an accommodation is impossible, we need to carefully consider the problems it might present and ensure we’ve exhausted all possible remedies.

“We” do not need to carefully consider problems and exhaust all possible remedies — that is the job of the Administration. The UGFA expects that the Administration will always recommend accommodations that do not affect the integrity of our courses, do not violate our Academic Freedom and intellectual property rights, and do not increase our workload. The UGFA affirms that the University’s duty to accommodate does not negate the rights of UGFA members under our Collective Agreement. It should also be kept in mind that while the University has a “duty to accommodate” students with disabilities under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, this duty does not extend to students who simply prefer not to come to campus. Any suggested accommodation that raises your concern should be brought to the UGFA’s attention.

With respect to intellectual property, the SAS website tells us, “While instructors have a right to protect their intellectual property, this must be done while also providing accessible course content.” Please be reminded, as the Provost wrote, that you have NO obligation to record or live-stream your class for students who are not present. Should you feel pressured to do so, please contact the UGFA.

Students will be made aware of how a course is to be delivered when they register. If you will be delivering components of your course face to face, you are not obliged to create ad hoc accommodations for students who tell you that they cannot be present. These students can be

directed to SAS and/or to their program counselling office, where appropriate arrangements can be made.

We sincerely hope that you will have some time to relax and enjoy the summer.

Mary DeCoste, UGFA President
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