

Dear UGFA Members,

The Administration has provided the UGFA with preliminary versions of a “COVID-19 update for faculty members and other instructors.” Over the past two full days of work, we expressed to the Administration our concerns over the content of these drafts. We now understand that the Administration will be communicating with you later today.

In the event that a public health emergency is declared and social distancing is recommended, the Administration may choose to cancel in-class course delivery and in-person exams. The Administration will ask members to consider how they will respond to such a scenario. As of now, the Administration has communicated to us the options of:

1. using grades for work completed to date in order to calculate a final grade after deciding how to handle any outstanding assignments
2. choosing to deliver remaining course material in another way, including numerous “technology-enabled” modes
3. choosing to deliver their final exam in some other way

The Administration’s second and third suggestions conflict with your rights under the Collective Agreement: your Academic Freedom rights include determining the mode of delivery of your teaching and exams.

Of course, during a crisis, all of us want to be team players, and the UGFA expects that individual members may feel compelled to choose options 2 and/or 3 despite the impact on their workload, their Academic Freedom, and their Intellectual Property (as the Administration can use your posted materials in perpetuity). To be fair, the Administration has verbally indicated that they would waive their rights to use materials posted during this period.

There is a long-term risk to the collectively bargained rights of all UGFA members if a large number of members choose to switch from “traditional” modes of delivery to the other “technology-enabled” options the Administration proposes. In recent rounds of bargaining, the Administration has made many very aggressive proposals designed to strip UGFA members of what we see as fundamental rights. For these reasons, the UGFA is encouraging its members who have traditional modes of delivery planned for their courses to choose option 1, and only option 1.

While in-class course meetings are still occurring, any member who wishes to avoid this setting due to their personal health concerns and who now wishes to use an alternative mode of course delivery should consult with their Dean.

The UGFA recognizes that members will have concerns about the possible implications of the Administration's decisions in the coming days, and we will do our best to ensure that the Administration considers the health of our members in these decisions. We encourage you to monitor the website of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (<https://www.wdgpulichealth.ca/your-health/novel-coronavirus-covid-19>) for information about the virus.

We know you will appreciate that the situation is changing minute by minute. We will communicate with you further after the Administration has sent out its final update.

As you know, the UGFA continues to try to work collaboratively with the Provost's Office, but this remains a significant challenge. This is highly unfortunate in this time of crisis.

Sincerely,

Herb Kunze, UGFA President

Mary-Michelle DeCoste, UGFA Vice-President