



UPEI At Issue #1
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THE ROLE OF SESSIONAL INSTRUCTORS AT UPEI

Sessional instructors are important members of the teaching and learning community. While some sessional instructors have careers outside the University in areas such as government, education, and business, others focus their time solely on university teaching. In both cases, sessional instructors are valued partners in education at UPEI.

The University continued to address support for sessional instructors in 2020 through an increase in stipends that was proportionately larger than that offered to faculty and staff. In our current bargaining, the University has [proposed](#) further supports for sessional instructors that include

- ensuring that sessional instructors on the Sessional Roster have priority to teach courses over faculty members requesting overloads,
- including language to limit the number of overloads that faculty can teach during an academic year, thus ensuring more opportunities for sessional instructors,
- proposing that faculty members who have been approved for course release, including administrative leave, or sabbatical for any portion of the fall, winter, and summer semester, not normally undertake overload teaching during these semesters,
- adding a new Step 4 in the payment scale for sessional instructors who have taught at least 24 credit hours since achieving Step 3,
- increasing the significance of three-year recurring contracts by ensuring sessional instructors with these contracts (and those at Step 3 and 4) are given the opportunity to interview for vacant term positions,
- offering an alternative course should the course associated with the three-year recurring contract not be offered in any year of the three years,
- increasing funding for the pool of research grants to \$15,000 and adding the ability to spend research grants at any time during their three-year appointment,
- increasing the funding for Professional Development Travel Reimbursement to \$30,000 and maximum claims to \$500/semester, and
- maintaining access to Library resources and University email as long as sessional instructors are on the Sessional Roster.

The Faculty Association has taken a different and, to the University's knowledge, unique approach by proposing the conversion of all sessional instructor appointments to 0.2 full-time equivalent faculty members (1/5 of a full-time faculty position) for each three-hour credit course taught.

Under the [UPEI FA's proposals](#), there would be no more sessional instructors at UPEI. Instead, a 0.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty member would be required to

- commit to one full day per week of teaching, research, and service for an entire year when they are contracted to teach a single course as Article A-8 (on page 6 of the [Collective Agreement](#)) would now apply to them,
- hold a terminal degree in their discipline, normally a PhD,
- do research and contribute to service,
- not engage in external employment in direct competition with existing services provided by the University such as teaching at another institution while teaching at UPEI, and
- reduce existing outside employment to part-time to meet the limits on external employment set out in the collective agreement.

The University has resisted this unprecedented approach because it will have the following consequences:

- With the elimination of sessional instructor roles in favour of 0.2 FTE faculty, community members, especially professionals with expertise in much needed content areas, will be shut out of sessional appointments and current sessional instructors' positions will be jeopardized.
- UPEI departments and faculties that normally hire few to no sessional instructors will be unfairly disadvantaged.
- The cost to convert a sessional instructor to a 0.2 FTE faculty member will result in the inability to hire additional tenure-track faculty in growth areas such as the faculties of Science and Sustainable Design Engineering. The University's estimate of the cost of this proposal is \$19,730,212 in years 1 to 3.
- The minimum UPEI FA-proposed cost for 0.2 FTE faculty members will be more than double the cost for current sessional instructors, and the maximum will be over \$30,000.
- It will become increasingly difficult to replace faculty members who leave or retire.
- Retired faculty members who are hired to teach a course will be required to do research and provide service.
- Retired faculty members will be paid a portion of their retiring salary, likely \$30,000 or more to do the work.
- Members of other UPEI unions will no longer be able to teach courses as they will not be able to meet the obligations of providing one full day per week for the entire year for each course that they teach as part-time faculty members. In some cases, this would require them to provide three or more days per week in addition to their current duties.
- Sessional instructors will have a direct on-ramp to tenure-track positions; however, they may not have the required expertise and/or interest in obtaining a terminal degree/PhD and other requirements for tenure.