

Letter of Understanding

COVID-19 CONTINUING MEASURES

June 1, 2022- May 31 2023

**Between St. Francis Xavier University
(hereafter referred to as the University)**

and

**St. Francis Xavier University Association of University Teachers
(hereafter referred to as the StFXAUT)**

The provisions of this Letter of Understanding are retroactive to June 1, 2022 and will remain in force until May 31, 2023 unless extensions or modifications to this agreement are agreed to by both parties in advance of the expiry date or specific dates that are identified within particular clauses of the LOU. In addition, either party may, no later than November 30, 2022, indicate their intent to renegotiate this Letter of Understanding. In this case, the provisions of this LOU will expire on December 31, 2022.

Both parties agree this LOU was created to respond to the pandemic and all terms are without prejudice and are on a non-precedent setting basis with respect to the operations of the university under normal circumstances.

Guiding Principles

Both parties recognize that the ongoing pandemic state due to COVID-19 continues to present uncertainties and difficulties that have impacted members' capacities to perform expected work in teaching, research, and service and may result in decreased professional opportunities. This is recognized without prejudice to any member.

While both parties acknowledge that it is anticipated that the 2022-23 academic year will resemble a more normal state of operations, they also acknowledge the cumulative and ongoing impact of uncertainties and difficulties faced by members since March 2020.

Reporting

Nova Scotia Public Health has the responsibility of managing and reporting cases of COVID-19. The University will not inform the Campus Community of confirmed cases of COVID-19 on campus unless directed to do so by NS Public Health.

1.0 Overarching

1.1 Effective July 6, 2022, Nova Scotia Public Health is no longer requiring individuals to self-isolate if they, or an individual they live with, have symptoms of COVID-19. Despite this, the University strongly encourages Members in this situation to remain outside of the workplace until such time as they, or the individual they live with, have recovered.

1.2 Student (office) hours shall be offered as stipulated in Article 2.1.9: 1.5, Article 4.0: 3.0 c), Article 5.0: 2.0 d) and Article 8.1: 2.0 e). However, virtual office hours may be employed at

the Member's discretion and shall be considered equivalent to in-person office hours for the duration of this LOU. Students shall be provided with the option to meet with the Member in person in the Member's office should the student wish. Members shall inform students of this in both their syllabus and on any course website (i.e. Moodle).

- 1.3** Members are to inform their Chair, Coordinator and/or Director with copy to Human Resources (hr@stfx.ca) and the Dean in situations where they are isolating because they, or an individual they live with, has symptoms of COVID-19. Where possible, the Member is expected to transition in-person classes to online, in order to maintain continuity of teaching until such time as the Member returns to campus.
- 1.4** The Employer shall not record or transcribe online activities, including but not limited to classes, labs, tutorials, and office hours without permission of the Member. In the event that a Member is unable to deliver scheduled lectures, labs or skills either in person or remotely as a result of COVID-19 illness or isolation, the employer shall not use any course materials created by the Member and provided through the StFX computer network without the Member's written permission.
- 1.5** Meetings will typically be held in person. The ability to participate electronically may be made available to attendees who are unable to attend due to COVID-19 related issues. The University will continue to follow the advice of Nova Scotia Public Health as it relates to these practices.

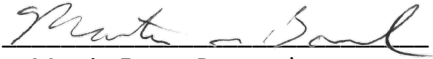
2.0 COVID-19 Leaves

- 2.1** In cases other than self-isolation or self-quarantine related to COVID-19, should a Member have flu-like symptoms, the Member who is unable to continue to perform their work from home will be approved for sick leave without the need for medical proof of illness. Collective Agreement or employment policy requirements that Members provide medical documentation to receive benefits will not apply to those Members subject to self-isolation or self-quarantine for the duration of the COVID-19 public health concerns or to those with flu-like symptoms. To be approved for sick leave under this clause, the Member must comply with Public Health recommendations regarding COVID-19 testing in place at the time of illness and notify their Chair/Coordinator/Director, Dean and HR if they are requesting sick leave due to flu-like symptoms, are isolating or in quarantine.
- 2.2** The Leave of Absence Article 2:10; 9.1 will be extended allowing Part-time Academic Instructors to be absent for six (6) teaching hours per course in each of the fall and winter terms for Members who are isolating because they, or an individual they live with, have symptoms of COVID-19. In such cases, Part Time Academic Instructors are to inform their Chair, Coordinator and/or Director with copy to Human Resources (hr@stfx.ca) and the Dean. Where possible, the Member is expected to transition in-person classes to online instruction in order to maintain continuity of teaching until such time as the Member returns to campus.

The University will sign, upon request, a Form T2200 Declaration of Conditions of Employment in compliance with CRA regulations.

The parties agree that the Appendix "Guidelines for Evaluation Committees" from the September 30, 2020 Memorandum of Understanding COVID-19 Continuing Measures (attached) remains in effect.

Signed at Antigonish, Nova Scotia this 28th day of July 2022.



Dr. Martin F. van Bommel
For the StFXAUT



Dr. Amanda Cockshutt
For the University

Letter of Understanding COVID-19 CONTINUING MEASURES

APPENDIX 1 – Guidelines for Evaluation Committees

The pandemic crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 prompted significant changes to higher education beginning the spring of 2020 and is expected to influence our academic practices through much of the 2020-21 academic year. The University, in its decision to transition to online learning in the spring of 2020, recognizes that the preparation for the completion of the academic term had potential repercussions on the effectiveness of Members of the StFXAUT in their teaching, professional practice, scholarly pursuits and service to the university and broader academic community. The efforts in the spring and summer of 2020, including the participation in professional development workshops offered by the *Preparation for Online Teaching* taskforce may have similar impacts on Members' activities.

Members who are scheduled for an evaluation should make effort to itemize within their dossier the potential impacts they experienced due to the pandemic response. Evaluation committee members have the responsibility to give due consideration of such extenuating circumstances in each area of academic responsibility in their deliberations and arriving at recommendations.

PART I – Program and Departmental Evaluation Committees and Rank and Tenure Committees

The parties agree that the following guidance shall be offered to Program and Departmental Evaluation Committees (DEC) and Rank and Tenure Committee (RTC) as they conduct reviews of members, be it for purposes of probationary renewal, consideration for Rank & Tenure or promotion, or as part of formal evaluative cycles.

The following are examples of the more common potential impacts on Teaching, Research and Service and is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

TEACHING

1. The majority of StFX academic staff are trained primarily for in person interaction, which deviates from online interactions. Similarly, face-to-face delivery may be detrimentally impacted by COVID-19 health protocols, such as physical distancing and mask-wearing.
2. Since students may be unfamiliar with online learning environments, faculty members and course instructors may need to take additional class-related time to help create the pedagogical conditions for their students to become proficient with the tools available to them in this modality.
3. Students may experience learning environments, as described in items 1 and 2 above, that differ from what they expect or are familiar with and as such may express their overall learning experience through student evaluations of courses. Members have the right to choose whether a set of course evaluations are included within their dossier. No negative conclusions will be drawn based on the absence or presence of course evaluation questionnaires in this situation.

4. Classroom visitations (either online or in person) provide for significant formative development of probationary members, contract faculty and academic instructional staff. However, class visits in either of these environments may look different than in previous years and in some cases may be new to the instructor and foreign to the DEC member(s).
5. In order to support a comprehensive understanding of the teaching environment, faculty members are encouraged to share their Learning Management System (Moodle) pages with DEC members. The review of course organization and pedagogical approach to delivery and use of discussion boards and other learning resources provide significant insight into one's teaching philosophy, in the absence of other forms of teaching effectiveness such as course evaluations

RESEARCH

6. Faculty members on sabbatical leave may have been impacted starting in the spring of 2020 and been unable to complete all of the activities that comprised part of their sabbatical research plan.
7. Publishers and publishing houses have been impacted by the pandemic and noticeable delays have occurred in the processing of manuscripts and monographs. Members of the DEC and RTC must consider information provided by researchers, such as emails or notifications from publishers, that decisions on submissions have been delayed.
8. Conferences scheduled for the spring 2020 and throughout the 2020-21 academic year have mostly been cancelled or scheduled online. Online conference proceedings and presentations bear equal weight to those presented in person.
9. Internal research funds have had their deadlines extended. Similarly, tri-council agencies have offered extensions in specific cases to grant holders. However, the transition to remote work may have reduced the research capacity for those members who rely on physical research space (labs) or access to fieldwork.
10. Faculty members whose research is supported by undergraduate research assistants, honours thesis students or graduate students may have been negatively impacted when students were forced to leave the university. While internal and external student scholarships continued to be honoured during the spring/summer of 2020, the effectiveness of remote research must be given due consideration by the DEC and RTC.

SERVICE

11. While service to the University transitioned online during the pandemic, the ability to participate by some members of faculty may have been compromised due to poor internet connectivity.
12. Service to the broader academic community (e.g. editorial boards, granting panels, scientific organizations) may have been impacted by pandemic-related closures.

Part II – University Librarian and Librarian Evaluation Committee (LEC)

The parties agree that the following guidance shall be offered to the University Librarian and Librarian Evaluation Committee as they conduct reviews of members, be it for purposes of annual performance review, probationary renewal, or consideration for promotion or permanent appointment.

The following are examples of the more common potential impacts on Professional Practice, Academic Service, and Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity, and is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

1. Library functions impacted by COVID-19 health protocols, such as library closure, physical distancing and mask-wearing, have impacted Members' ability to interact effectively, and to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the Librarian's position based on standard practice.
2. The move to online learning environments has impacted the ability to instruct students and faculty on library services and information literacy.
3. COVID-19 health protocols have restricted the use of many of the methods in Article 3.2.1: 2.3 for evaluating effectiveness of professional practice of a Librarian.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

1. While service to the Library and University transitioned online during the pandemic, the ability to participate by some Librarians may have been compromised due to poor internet connectivity.
2. Conferences scheduled for the spring 2020 and throughout the 2020-21 academic year have mostly been cancelled or scheduled online. Online conference proceedings and presentations bear equal weight to those presented in person.

RESEARCH, SCHOLARLY, AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

1. Librarians on sabbatical leave may have been impacted starting in the spring of 2020 and been unable to complete all of the activities that comprised part of their sabbatical research plan.
2. Publishers and publishing houses have been impacted by the pandemic and noticeable delays have occurred in the processing of manuscripts and monographs. Members of the LEC must consider information provided by Members, such as emails or notifications from publishers, that decisions on submissions have been delayed.
3. Conferences scheduled for the spring 2020 and throughout the 2020-21 academic year have mostly been cancelled or scheduled online. Online conference proceedings and presentations bear equal weight to those presented in person.

PART III – Lab Instructor Evaluation Committees

The parties agree that the following guidance shall be offered to Departmental Evaluation Committees as supplemented by Lab Instructors for the purpose of the Performance Evaluation of Lab Instructors, as well as to supervising course instructors when asked to evaluate the performance of a Lab Instructor.

The following are examples of the more common potential impacts on Lab Instruction and Service and is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

INSTRUCTION

1. The majority of StFX academic staff are trained primarily for in person interaction, which deviates from online interactions. Similarly, face-to-face delivery may be detrimentally impacted by COVID-19 health protocols, such as physical distancing and mask-wearing.
2. Since students may be unfamiliar with online learning environments, lab instructors may need to take additional lab-related time to help create the pedagogical conditions for their students to become proficient with the tools available to them in this modality.
3. Students may experience learning environments, as described in items 1 and 2 above, that differ from what they expect or are familiar with and as such may express their overall learning experience through student evaluations of labs.
4. Classroom (lab) visitations (either online or in person) provide for significant formative development of lab instructors. However, lab visits in either of these environments may look different than in previous years and in some cases may be new to the lab instructor and foreign to the DEC member(s).

SERVICE

1. While service to the Department and University transitioned online during the pandemic, the ability to participate by some Lab Instructors may have been compromised due to poor internet connectivity.

PART IV – Nurse Educator Performance Evaluation Committee

The parties agree that the following guidance shall be offered to the Nurse Educator Evaluation Committee as it conducts reviews of members.

The following are examples of the more common potential impacts on Teaching and Clinical Supervision, Scholarly or Professional Development, and Service and is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

TEACHING AND CLINICAL SUPERVISION

1. Instructional activities may be detrimentally impacted by COVID-19 health protocols, such as physical distancing and mask-wearing.
2. Students may experience learning environments that differ from what they expect or are familiar with and as such may express their overall learning experience through student evaluations.

SCHOLARLY OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

3. Conferences scheduled for the spring 2020 and throughout the 2020-21 academic year have mostly been cancelled or scheduled online. Online conference proceedings and presentations bear equal weight to those presented in person.

SERVICE

4. While service to the Rankin School of Nursing and University transitioned online during the pandemic, the ability to participate by some Nurse Educators may have been compromised due to poor internet connectivity.
5. Service to the professional community may have been impacted by pandemic-related closures.

PART V – Coady Executive Director and Coady Promotion Committee

The parties agree that the following guidance shall be offered to the Coady Executive Director and the Coady Promotion Committee as they conduct reviews of members, be it for purposes of performance evaluations or consideration for promotion.

The following are examples of the more common potential impacts on Teaching, Research, Partnership and Capacity Building, and Service and is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

TEACHING

1. The majority of StFX academic staff are trained primarily for in person interaction, which deviates from online interactions. Similarly, face-to-face delivery may be detrimentally impacted by COVID-19 health protocols, such as physical distancing and mask-wearing.
2. Since students may be unfamiliar with online learning environments, faculty members and course instructors may need to take additional class-related time to help create the pedagogical conditions for their students to become proficient with the tools available to them in this modality.
3. Students may experience learning environments, as described in items 1 and 2 above, that differ from what they expect or are familiar with and as such may express their overall learning experience through student evaluations of courses.
4. Many Coady in-person programs were forced to be cancelled, impacting the opportunities for members in teaching.

RESEARCH (KNOWLEDGE BUILDING)

5. Coady Members on research leave may have been impacted starting in the spring of 2020 and been unable to complete all of the activities that comprised part of their research plan.
6. Publishers and publishing houses have been impacted by the pandemic and noticeable delays have occurred in the processing of manuscripts and monographs. Members of the Coady Evaluation Committee must consider information provided by researchers, such as emails or notifications from publishers, that decisions on submissions have been delayed.
7. Conferences scheduled for the spring 2020 and throughout the 2020-21 academic year have mostly been cancelled or scheduled online. Online conference proceedings and presentations bear equal weight to those presented in person.
8. Coady members whose research is supported by undergraduate research assistants, honours thesis students or graduate students may have been negatively impacted when students were forced to leave the university.
9. Opportunities for capacity building through site visits and in-person meetings were limited.

SERVICE

10. While service to the Institute transitioned online during the pandemic, the ability to participate by some members of faculty may have been compromised due to poor internet connectivity.
11. Service to the broader academic community (e.g. editorial boards, granting panels, scientific organizations) may have been impacted by pandemic-related closures.
12. The transition to fully online teaching has limited the time available for service commitments.

PART VI – Learning Skills Coordinator and Learning Skills Instructor Evaluation Committee

The parties agree that the following guidance shall be offered to the Learning Skills Coordinator and the Learning Skills Instructor Evaluation Committee as they conduct reviews of Members, be it for purposes of performance evaluation.

The following are examples of the more common potential impacts on the work of a Learning Skills Instructor and is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

1. The majority of StFX academic staff are trained primarily for in person interaction, which deviates from online interactions. Similarly, face-to-face interaction may be detrimentally impacted by COVID-19 health protocols, such as physical distancing and mask-wearing.
2. Since students may be unfamiliar with online learning environments, Learning Skills Instructors may need to take additional meeting time to help create the pedagogical conditions for their students to become proficient with the tools available to them in this modality.
3. Students may experience learning environments, as described in items 1 and 2 above, that differ from what they expect or are familiar with.
4. Opportunities to deliver workshops and their effectiveness may be limited by COVID-19 health protocols.

PART IV – Dietetic Educator Performance Evaluation Committee

The parties agree that the following guidance shall be offered to the Dietetic Educator Performance Evaluation Committee as it conducts reviews of members.

The following are examples of the more common potential impacts on Teaching, Intern Supervision, Scholarly or Professional Development, and Service and is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

TEACHING

1. The majority of StFX academic staff are trained primarily for in person interaction, which deviates from online interactions. Similarly, face-to-face delivery may be detrimentally impacted by COVID-19 health protocols, such as physical distancing and mask-wearing.
2. Since students may be unfamiliar with online learning environments, faculty members and course instructors may need to take additional class-related time to help create the pedagogical conditions for their students to become proficient with the tools available to them in this modality.
3. Students may experience learning environments, as described in items 1 and 2 above, that differ from what they expect or are familiar with and as such may express their overall learning experience through student evaluations of courses. Members have the right to choose whether a set of course evaluations are included within their dossier. No negative conclusions will be drawn based on the absence or presence of course evaluation questionnaires in this situation.
4. Classroom visitations (either online or in person) provide for significant formative development of probationary members or contract academic staff. However, class visits in either of these environments may look different than in previous years and in some cases may be new to the instructor and foreign to the DEC member(s).

SCHOLARLY OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

5. Conferences scheduled for the spring 2020 and throughout the 2020-21 academic year have mostly been cancelled or scheduled online. Online conference proceedings and presentations bear equal weight to those presented in person.

SERVICE

6. While service to the Department of Human Nutrition and to the University transitioned online during the pandemic, the ability to participate by some Nurse Educators may have been compromised due to poor internet connectivity.
7. Service to the Dietetic Educator's professional community may have been impacted by pandemic-related closures.