



MRFA Lunch and Learn Workload Taskforce Report

Presented by Lee Easton (December 7, 2023)

Session Overview

The purpose of this session was to provide a general overview of the Final Report of the Joint Committee on Faculty Workload and Appointments, to discuss its origins, the process of its development, and its implications, and to identify what the implications are going forward.

Workload Taskforce Report FAQs

1. Whose Report is this?

The final document resulted from a year of dialogue between the representatives of the Board of Governors and the MRFA. The Report has been submitted to the Provost and the MRFA President. The Report is not owned by the Association or University.

2. What is the purpose of the [Workload Taskforce Report](#)?

The report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of faculty workload issues and potential solutions which can be considered in collective bargaining and which can be actioned, where appropriate, outside of bargaining. To facilitate bargaining workload provisions, the report explores potential means for workload adjustments where there was agreement on both sides and it delineates each party's positions and rationale where there was not agreement.

3. Why was the Workload Taskforce Report created?

The report originated from the last Collective Agreement ratification package (signed off in 2022) that included the creation of the taskforce. Lyle Kanee, who was involved in IFB training and mediation processes for that round of bargaining, served as the mediator. The taskforce engaged in joint discussions to address workload issues with the aim to submit this report to the Negotiating Teams in advance of the next round of bargaining (beginning in Winter 2024).

4. What are the key takeaways from the report?

Some key points include the University's acknowledgment of the existence of specific workload issues, workload increases due to increased accommodations, lack of clarity on scholarship and research workloads, and the challenges in addressing workload disparities. The report also sheds light on the differences between MRU and MRFA positions.

5. How does the report address the changing nature of instructional workloads over time?

The report acknowledges the evolution of instructional workloads since 2006 and emphasizes the need for a more holistic approach to faculty workload. It suggests considering three-year work plans but ultimately recommends maintaining the current collegial workload assignment process at the academic unit level.

6. Why did the Taskforce focus on SICH (Scheduled Instructional Course Hour)?

SICH is an MRU measurement used to account for faculty workload. It is considered flexible, adaptable to various teaching modalities, and offers a consistent approach across different disciplines. The following is the definition of SICH in the CA:

“Scheduled Instructional Course Hour (SICH): any officially scheduled 50-minute class requiring the Employee to be present and teaching, without assistance, a group of students. Credit for other forms of teaching, including but not limited to practica, open laboratories, studios, directed study, computer assisted instruction, team teaching, rehearsals and productions shall be assigned by the Chair in consultation with the members of the Academic Unit, and is subject to the approval of the Dean.”

This definition captures only a portion of what a scheduled instructional course hour measures. SICH also captures the other elements of teaching including preparation, evaluation and course administration.

7. How can SICH be understood and applied across different teaching modalities?

SICH is calculated as $1 \text{ SICH} \text{ which includes lesson preparation, course administration and student evaluation/assessment} * 16 \text{ Weeks of instruction} * \text{number of hours}$, allowing flexibility for faculty to balance preparation and evaluation within the allotted SICH for a course.

The report recommends accurately defining SICH in the Collective Agreement (CA). Increased clarity in CA language will help reduce potential misunderstandings and will help faculty better adjust their assessment practices to ensure that their workload for individual courses, regardless of mode of delivery, remain within the allocated SICH.

8. Are there specific recommendations for addressing workload related to online or hybrid course delivery?

While SICH is considered a robust measurement, the report acknowledges the need for better education on its application, especially for online or hybrid courses. The Association aims to educate members on using SICH effectively for different teaching modalities.

9. Is there a plan to address concerns regarding Senior Lecturers' workload?

The report addresses disparities in workload, including Senior Lecturers, and the Taskforce explored pathways to tenure, removing caps on senior lecturer positions, and providing guidance through a forthcoming handbook. There was not agreement to a general workload reduction.

10. What is suggested in the report regarding research workload?

The MRFA emphasized the need for clarity on scholarship workload expectations in the Collective Agreement, potential related workload reductions, and the need for infrastructural support for research. There are opportunities for ongoing discussion about incorporating research-related matters into the Collective Agreement and Members are encouraged to attend collective bargaining town halls and express their priorities regarding research workload at the [February 2 Winter Series PD Session](#).

11. How did the taskforce address the issue of higher workloads due to increased student accommodations?

The report highlights the fact that the growing number of student accommodations has increased faculty workload; however, the Taskforce did not come to agreement on this item as the University was disinterested in responding to this issue and refused to provide a testing centre to reduce accommodations related workload. The MRFA recommended providing supports for faculty to manage the significant workload associated with accommodations. The University is required to accommodate students, but the University also, therefore, needs to provide the required supports for faculty to engage in this significant amount of additional work.

12. Is there a plan to adjust the academic calendar to 13 weeks of instruction?

The report clarifies that discussions about adjusting the academic calendar are within the purview of the GFC (General Faculties Council). The CA will maintain 16 weeks to ensure consistent compensation for delivering course content.

13. Without formalizing service workload in the CA, what role does the MRFA see for itself in guiding new faculty on service workload norms?

The MRFA is exploring ways to communicate informal information and advice about service workload norms without formalizing constraints in the Collective Agreement. This may involve incorporating guidelines into handbooks.

14. What is the benefit of the report and its non-binding recommendations?

The report provides clarity on the University's acknowledgment of workload issues and their proposed solutions. Non-binding recommendations offer suggestions for addressing workload disparities and improving faculty workload management.

It is beneficial to have the University acknowledge at least the particular circumstances where they perceive there to be workload problems; however, they think they are best positioned to fix the workload problem. The mediator directed them to go away from this report to write something to this effect.

15. What happens next with the report?

The report is considered useful for the upcoming round of bargaining, as it clearly outlines the positions of both the MRFA and the University. It serves as a foundation for further discussions in collective bargaining on workload-related issues.

16. How can members stay informed about the report and its implications?

Members are encouraged to review the [full report](#) and attend collective bargaining town halls or events in the [Winter PD Series](#) to discuss concerns and priorities. Moving forward, the Association will consider ways to educate members on using existing workload mechanisms and department averages to manage workload.

For more detailed information, refer to the full [Workload Taskforce Report](#) and stay tuned for updates from the MRFA.