Article 16 – Performance of Duties (Teaching Hours)

At current, there is no language in our collective agreement that protects members from teaching schedules that are outside normal operating hours of the University. While members that are willing and able often volunteer to teach before 8:30 am, after 4:30 pm, and on weekends, URFA’s position is that predictability in teaching schedules and appropriate rest in between classes leads to better work-life balance, improved mental health of our members, and more effective and engaging teaching of our students.

To address our member’s concerns surrounding teaching hours, we presented the following proposal when we opened Article 16 in April 2018: 

*An academic staff member shall not be required to teach outside of the hours of 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday without the explicit approval of that academic staff member.*

This language was included in proposals handed over on three subsequent bargaining sessions (June 26th, August 16th, and September 19th). On each occasion, the University rejected the proposed language outright. It was not until October 10th that the University responded to our language with a proposal. At that session, the University proposed that two committees be struck to address members’ concerns surrounding mandated teaching outside of regular hours; one committee to study the challenges surrounding impacts of disrupted work-life balance on mental health and the other to assess the availability of administrative support during teaching outside regular work hours. On November 14th, URFA rejected that proposal. We feel that more study surrounding this issue would not serve our members as well as explicit boundaries in the collective agreement surrounding teaching schedules.

To that end, URFA responded with new language on January 21st. We proposed that members be given eight months’ notice for scheduling of teaching classes that begin outside of 8:30 am and 4:30 pm. As well, members shall be scheduled such that they have 12 hours’ rest between the end of the last class of the day and the start of the first class of the next day. Because we respect our members’ ability to choose to work outside of normal hours, a member would be able to waive the rest period.

On January 31st, the University rejected the language mandating a rest period on the basis that it would be difficult for some courses (such as field courses and condensed courses) and some Clinical Instructors in a hospital environment. However, the University did not propose alternate language. The University also rejected an eight-month notice period in favour of a four-month notice period. Since schedules are entered into DCU well in advance of four months, we are uncertain on how a four-month notice period would work.

The University also rejected our definition of classes outside of standard hours, instead defining classes outside of standard hours as “early morning and evening classes”. After receiving the University’s proposal on January 31st, URFA expressed concern that early weekday and evening definitions are subjective. The University contends that hours of normal operation are defined in
the Class Scheduling policy and that should suffice. While URFA agrees with the current definitions in the Class Scheduling policy (8:30 am to 4:30 pm; https://www.uregina.ca/policy/browse-policy/policy-OPS-040-015.html), we disagree that the policy should suffice because the University has sole control over changes to the Class Scheduling Policy. Without explicit hours defined in the collective agreement, early morning and evening definitions in the Scheduling Policy could change without notice.