

## **Letter of Understanding COVID-19 CONTINUING MEASURES**

**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 will remain in force until May 1, 2021 unless extensions or modifications to this agreement are agreed to by both parties in advance of the expiry date or specific dates are identified within particular clauses of the LOU.

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 continuing pandemic state due to COVID-19 presents many uncertainties and difficulties that have impacted members' capacities to perform expected work in teaching, research, and service and resulted in decreased professional opportunities. In particular, the parties acknowledge the changes in work required in preparation for teaching, with training required for moving to online delivery or a possible transition to online delivery. This is recognized without prejudice to any member.

The Letter of Understanding, *COVID-19 EMERGENCY MEASURES*, agreed to by both parties on June 17, 2020 remains in force, where relevant, and complements this Letter of Understanding.

### **Reporting**

Nova Scotia Public Health has the responsibility of managing and reporting cases of COVID-19. To the extent possible and allowable by NS Public Health, the University will inform the Campus Community of confirmed cases of COVID-19 on campus.

### **Self-Isolation Support for New Hires**

If requested, the University will assign a support person upon arrival of a new Member to Antigonish who originates from outside of the Atlantic bubble. The support person(s) will assist the Member during the period of mandatory self-isolation.

## 1.0 Overarching

1.1 The Parties recognize the necessary flexibility in mode of course delivery, given the unusual circumstances, specifically:

1.1.1 Synchronous online instruction and/or classroom, lab, or tutorial contact hours and virtual learning experiences, as well as online testing and examinations, shall be considered equivalent to traditional in-person contact hours and learning experiences.

1.1.2 Asynchronous online instruction shall be considered equivalent to the traditional method of instruction for the given instructional unit.

1.2 Student (office) hours shall be offered as stipulated in Article 2.19: 1.5, Article 4.0: 3.0 c), Article 5.0: 2.0 d) and Article 8.0: 2.0 e). however, virtual office hours shall be considered equivalent to in-person office hours. Members can include office hours beyond the expected period of 8:15-5:15 to other times of the day if more suitable for students in different time zones.

1.3 Should a Member be advised to self-isolate by Nova Scotia Public Health either because they are symptomatic or reside with an immediate family member who must self-isolate, they are to inform their Chair, Coordinator and/or Director with copy to Human Resources ([hr@stfx.ca](mailto:hr@stfx.ca)) and have approval of the Dean. Where possible, the Member is expected to transition in-person classes to online or transition to working from home, in order to maintain continuity of teaching until such time as the Member is cleared to return to campus.

1.4 A Member scheduled to deliver a course, laboratory, skills, or performance sessions online due to classroom or laboratory space and COVID-19 physical distancing limitations will have the option to divide the course, lab, or tutorial into two sessions to be delivered face-to-face. Extra sessions will be given one-third the credit of an equivalent traditional course, lab, or tutorial session. Such a division must be made only at the request of the Member with consultation and approval by the Dean.

1.5 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.

1.6 Meetings will be conducted through electronic means whenever possible. For meetings that occur in person, the ability to participate electronically must be made available to all attendees. The University will continue to follow the advice of Nova Scotia Public Health as it relates to these practices.

1.7 The ability for Faculty members and Librarians holding probationary appointments to request an extension of their appointment, as described in the LOU *COVID-19 EMERGENCY MEASURES*, extends to members who start before July 1, 2021. Members must advise the Academic Vice President, their Chair and their Dean or Head Librarian no later than June 30, 2021 if they will be taking a one-year extension of their probationary appointment.

1.8 No student evaluations for courses, labs, skills or tutorials offered during the Fall 2020 academic term will be used without the Member's prior approval, for the purpose of annual evaluation, tenure, and/or promotion.

1.9 Both parties recognize that classroom visitations for evaluation purposes during the pandemic may be different than in previous years. The Parties also acknowledge the benefit of in-class visits (either online or in-person) for the development of probationary and contract faculty. However, classroom visits will be conducted only at the request of the Member being evaluated and will be conducted for the 2020-2021 academic year based upon a modified series of guidelines agreed to by both parties (APPENDIX 1).

1.10 Specialized equipment or software required for the purpose of remote teaching due to COVID-19 may be provided, or funded in whole or in part, on a case-by-case basis in consultation with and approval by the respective Dean.

#### 1.11 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Training (Article 1.8: 3.1)

Both parties recognize that the circumstances of COVID-19 has limited the training opportunities the University may be able to offer. Despite the recognition of the importance of EDI training, Members are exempt from the requirement to complete a minimum of four (4) hours of training in topics related to EDI for the 2019-2020 Academic year. Further, members are not required to report completed training to Human Resources in 2020 but may elect to do so and have the training recorded on file as completed.

## 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 and notify their supervisor, 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. The Member must notify their Chair/Coordinator/Director 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 term, in the event that self-isolation is required under the direction of NS Public Health. In such cases, Part Time Academic Instructors are to inform their Chair, Coordinator and/or Director with copy to Human Resources ([hr@stfx.ca](mailto:hr@stfx.ca)) and have approval of 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 is cleared to return to campus.

2.3 If a child of a Member is required to self-isolate due to a COVID-19 cluster in a School, the Member will advise their Chair, Coordinator and/or Director with copy to Human Resources ([hr@stfx.ca](mailto:hr@stfx.ca)) and have approval of the Dean. Where possible, the Member is expected to transition in-person classes to online instruction, or working from home, in order to maintain continuity of teaching until such time as the Member is cleared to return to campus.

### **3.0 Faculty and Librarians**

#### **3.1 Departmental Evaluation Committees**

The parties agree to extend the deadline of the Departmental Evaluation Committee (DEC) evaluative report to November 16<sup>th</sup> for the 2020-21 review cycle for both probationary members and those seeking promotion and tenure.

#### **3.2 Recognition of Chairs**

Both Parties recognize the essential role that Chairs of Departments, Coordinators of Inter-disciplinary Programs, and the Director of the School of Nursing provide during this crisis. The Deans will write a letter upon request indicating such and place a copy into the personnel file of each of these individuals.

#### **3.3 URPTA**

In recognition that the pandemic has resulted in research and publication slowdowns, the parties agree that applications for the 2021 URPTA will be accepted until June 1, 2021. Application due dates for the 2022 URPTA will revert to those agreed upon the 5<sup>th</sup> Collective Agreement.

### **4.0 Part-Time Academic Instructors**

4.1 For the 2020-2021 academic year, the assessment of a Part-Time Academic Instructor by the DEC will be conducted only at the request of the member being evaluated. The lack of evaluation will not impact the Part-Time Academic Instructor's placement and position of seniority on the part-time roster.

4.2 If a Part-Time Academic Instructor is scheduled to teach a course in the 2020-2021 academic year that is subsequently cancelled, that Member shall not lose their seniority and shall not be removed from the Part-Time Roster. Similarly, if a Part-Time Academic Instructor elects not to accept a contract for teaching a course for which they have seniority, based on concerns related to personal or immediate family health or related matters that may be negatively impacted by COVID-19, the Member shall not lose their seniority and shall not be removed from the Part-Time Roster.

4.4 No Part-Time Academic Instructor will be expected to act as a substitute instructor without compensation. A Part-Time Academic Instructor asked to fill in for another instructor who must be absent due to COVID-19, the instructor shall be paid by the University a prorated stipend until the primary instructor returns.

### **5.0 Nurse Educators and Dietetic Educators**

5.1 Nurse Educators who are scheduled for a performance evaluation this year may choose to defer the evaluation for one year by writing to the Dean by November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Should a member who is on a probationary contract choose to defer an evaluation, their probationary period will be extended by one year.

5.2 Dietetic Educators who are scheduled for a performance evaluation this year may choose to defer the evaluation for one year by writing to the Dean by November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Should a member who is on a probationary contract choose to defer an evaluation, their probationary period will be extended by one year.

**6.0 Lab Instructors**

6.1 Lab Instructors who are scheduled for a performance evaluation this year may choose to defer the evaluation for one year by writing to the Dean by March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Should a member who is on a probationary contract choose to defer an evaluation, their probationary period will be extended by one year.

**7.0 Coady Institute – Program Teaching Staff**

7.1 The existing elements that constitute the responsibilities of Program Teaching Associates or Staff in the areas of teaching, knowledge building, partnership/capacity building and service, and contribute to work planning, workload and evaluation of members, will be expanded to include professional development activities that enhance innovative pedagogy, online teaching effectiveness and enhanced research capacity.

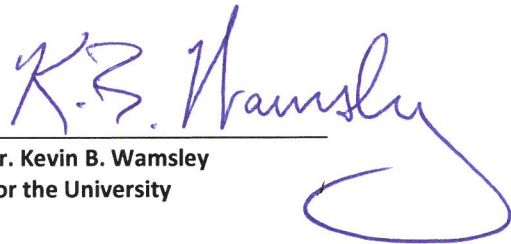
**8.0 Other Provisions**

Given the necessity for some Members to work from home, the University will sign, upon request, a Form T2200 Declaration of Conditions of Employment in compliance with CRA regulations

**Signed at Antigonish, Nova Scotia this 30<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2020.**



**Dr. Martin F. van Bommel  
For the StFXAUT**



**Dr. Kevin B. Wamsley  
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.