

SAFAGRAM

President's Message

By James McWilliams



Performance Reviews (PR)—for many of us probably the most dreaded two words in our organizational handbook. No one really likes them. Instructors, for the most part, despise them. Supervisors break into a cold sweat at the very thought of discussing or implementing them. Yet, Employee Services supports the necessity for the document to be completed accurately, thoroughly, and thoughtfully. In many cases, the Performance Review document stays dormant in the Academic Chair's (AC) file until late March or early April when it is retrieved from its seclusion and glared at with much trepidation. Maybe this is not the best method of preparing and planning. Yet more significantly the PR document

is a crucial and mandatory process for the evaluation of all full-time teaching Faculty. That said, then a certain degree of readiness on the supervisor's part, but more importantly on the part of the instructor, is essential to the effectiveness of the communication and dialogue at the PR meeting.

For many, the PR process feels very much like one has just ticked off another box, whereas the process should be the vehicle by which Faculty can be reassured that, at least, hopefully a good conversation with the AC happens once a year. Although the Performance Review is a required procedure for all full-time Faculty at this institution, the reliance of a once-a-year meeting does not always have a favourable outcome for a Faculty member. Often the PR meeting leads to a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of what has been discussed and what was assumed achievable goals from the prior year's Performance Review.

The practice of having more than one Performance Review meeting a year has value for both the supervisor and the instructor. Any problems, issues, or concerns related to the instructor duties can be addressed and a consensus can be reached. Should there be a minimum and a maximum number of meetings scheduled throughout the academic year? Perhaps four meetings would align with the required SIRs for the year? Does the Performance Review process get "ground down" in determining behaviours rather than good two-way communication, constructive feedback, information seeking, and clarity around goals and aspirations? Are Faculty equipped with the necessary tools to engage in constructive feedback, goal setting, and career improvement?

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Editorial Board

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SAFAGRAM is published by the SAIT Academic Faculty Association (SAFA) five times a year usually closer to the end of the months of October, December, February, April, and June. Deadline for submissions is the 10th of the month preceding publication. Send submissions to SAFAGRAM, care of the SAFA office, N201 or e-mail submissions to kathie.dann@sait.ca. Please keep submissions under 300 words, double-spaced. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length, or content.

SAFAGRAM editorial policy, as approved by the SAFA Executive on June 14, 1995, is as follows:

1. The Editorial Board has the final say as to what is included or deleted from the newsletter.
2. Editorial Board decisions about newsletter material must be agreed to by consensus.
3. The newsletter will include a disclaimer stating that the views expressed in its content do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or SAFA.
4. All material included in the newsletter must
 - be signed by the author when submitted to the editors, but anonymity may be requested and granted for printing.
 - be based on "reasoned argument" if personal criticism is used.
 - not involve name-calling.
 - not include sexist, racist, or homophobic comments.
 - be related to SAIT, although this will be interpreted broadly.

The views expressed in SAFAGRAM do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or SAFA.

<http://www.safacalgary.com/>

Labour Relations Officer (LRO) Report

By Al Brown, LRO



Q and A

(Responses to your Questions)

- 1. “I was off sick for a week and now my AC is asking about ‘making up’ missed classes. Do I have to ‘make up’ these classes?”**

The classes that were assigned while you were sick should have been assigned to substitution and taught at the time they were scheduled—not postponed until your return. If you teach these classes now, in addition to your regular workload, I would expect that they should count as overload—assuming you’re fully loaded.

- 2. “If I miss time due to illness, will it affect Overload?”**

Any Class Contact Hours (CCH) that are missed while on sick leave *after* you’ve reached your Unit Standard Load (USL) will be *deducted* from your overload. Any CCH missed while on sick leave *prior* to reaching your USL will have *no affect* on overload.

- 3. “I’ve been assigned 23 CCH per week and my annual load is 608 CCH. Can this be done?”**

Yes, but only if you agree to it. The reference for this is Sec. 36.11 in the SAFA Collective Agreement (CA). Specifically:

36.11 (b) Class contact hours shall not exceed the following unless agreed to by the instructor:
(i) The greater of twenty (20) hours or three percent (3%) of the applicable class contact hours, in any given week averaged over a sixteen (16) week period.

The calculation works like this: 3% of 608 = 18.24. But wait! Remember, it’s averaged over a 16-week period even though you may teach a 15-week semester, so, 18.24 X 16 = 294.81. Now divide that to get how many hours you could be assigned in a 15-week semester, 294.81/15 = 19.456. Since 20 is greater than 19.456, you can be assigned 20 CCH per week without asking your permission. Any load in excess of that, requires your permission and could end up being paid as overload.

- 4. “So if I work these extra CCH, does that mean I’ll get paid overload?”**

Maybe. Keep in mind that overload doesn’t happen until you’ve worked your Unit Standard Load—in this case 608 CCH—in an academic year. For instance, if you work in excess of 20 CCH per week for the fall semester but end up being under loaded for the winter semester with the effect that you don’t exceed the 608 CCH threshold for the academic year, this means no overload.

- 5. “OK, but I’ve been assigned load in both semesters that will put me into overload for sure. When do I get paid for it?”**

At the end of the Academic year each excess contact hour shall be paid on the basis of your annual salary in force at the conclusion of the current academic year, divided by eight hundred

and fifty (850). This means that hours worked as overload back in the fall don’t get paid out until July. *Ref. Sec. 50 SAFA CA.*

- 6. “I routinely take work home on the weekend. Shouldn’t I be paid overtime?”**

Section 49 in the SAFA Collective Agreement (CA) states that you will be compensated for overtime at 1.5 times your regular hourly rate for all *authorized* hours worked in excess of 40 hours in a week—in the case of Instructors—and 36.25 hours in a week in the case of Librarians and Education Counsellors. The operative word is “*authorized*.” If you’re working in excess of the normal weekly hours of work without authorization—and it should be written authorization—then you will not be paid for it later.

- 7. “May I ‘bank’ my overtime to use in conjunction with my annual vacation?”**

No. Overtime is to be paid in the month following the month in which the overtime was reported. However, if you are a Librarian, there are provisions that allow for limited banking of overtime. For a detailed explanation, please refer to Section 35.02 in the SAFA Collective Agreement.

- 8. “Is PD money taxable or not?”**

Professional Development (PD) funds are a *non-taxable* benefit. *Ref. HR Policy HR.2.2.2.*

- 9. “May I carry my PD money past 24 months?”**

Yes, but with restrictions. You may request a carryover of professional development funds to be used during July and August, after June 30 of the second year. However, approval must be obtained from the Dean/Director and forwarded to Finance, prior to June 30 of the second year. Although commonly referred to as “SAFA PD,” this fund is not administered by SAFA. I believe this misconception arose because it is an entitlement to academic staff members that comes from the SAIT/SAFA Collective Agreement—Section 14 Professional Development. The correct name for this is “Professional Development Fund—Academic Staff.” *Ref. HR Policy HR 2.2.2.*

- 10. “I’m on a temporary salaried contract until June 30. Can I use PD funds?”**

Yes, as long as you are not on probation. If you are on a temporary, *part time* salaried contract, the PD money will be prorated. *Ref. Sec. 14.04 (b) SAFA CA.*

- 11. “Why do I have to sign my PPR if I don’t agree with some of the comments/assessments?”**

Your signature is *only* acknowledging that you have reviewed the PPR document. It is not an indication that you agree with the contents. If you disagree with the PPR appraisal or comments, you may respond in writing and that response will be attached to the performance review in your personal file. This provides you with the opportunity to have your opinion included for future reference in your personal file. *Ref: SAFA Collective Agreement Sec. 18.01.*

- 12. “I’ve been assigned to some training during the summer vacation period. Do I use vacation days for this?”**

No. You are not required to use vacation days for in-service training and other professional development activities except by mutual *written* agreement. *Ref. Sec. 39.03 SAFA CA.*

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13. “Our school is hosting an Industry Night Thursday evening and my AC has an ‘expectation’ that I will attend. Normally, I have no problem volunteering for these events but I have other commitments that conflict this time. Do I have to attend and will there be repercussions if I don’t?”

No and no. If the event was before 6 p.m. on a weekday—Monday thru Friday—your AC could expect you to attend as an assignable duty. But if it is *after 6 p.m. or on a weekend*, then it is entirely up to you to participate or not. There should be no repercussions and you should not have it as an “expectation” by your AC that you volunteer for anything—otherwise it’s not volunteering. In my opinion, your AC should have asked if you were able to attend instead of simply expecting that you would. I’ve found most people appreciate being asked and are more likely to help out than if they’re taken for granted. Of course, recognizing them in a positive way for this “above and beyond” behaviour, results in people being more giving of their personal time.

As always, if you have any questions, please stop by the SAFA Office N201 in the Burns Building, contact me directly at Ext. 4067, or e-mail al.brown@sait.ca. ➡

Library Report

By Alison Hart

How does the Library support scholarly activity?

As SAIT expands to offer four-year degree programs, some of our Faculty members are expected to engage in scholarly activity as outlined by the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) Program Assessment Standards. The Reg Erhardt Library can help you get started with sharing your scholarly work:

1. *Knowing what’s going on in your field.*

Our Library staff work with you to perform literature searches. These searches can reveal recent developments, new areas of investigation, and ensure that you avoid duplicating existing research.

2. *Choosing a publishing model.*

Subscription journals require readers (or their libraries) to pay for access to articles which limits how people can access and share research. Open access removes these barriers and allows for “unrestricted access and unrestricted reuse” (PLOS, www.plos.org/open-access/). Although critics might associate it with low-quality research and unethical practices, high-quality open access journals have very transparent processes so it is easy to vet their quality. If you’re interested in finding some open access journals in your field or learning more about open access, contact the Library.

3. *Identifying a “good” journal in your area.*

It is best practice to use quality indicators rather than whitelists or blacklists. Whitelists and blacklists are created using particular values that may not match up with your own. Your Library liaison team can help you to identify high quality and high impact journals in your field.



You're invited
to the SAFA BBQ

Great Food, Great Company!

Celebrate the end of another year.

4 Nines, John Ware Building
Thursday, May 14, 2015

50/50 and Raffle
No cost Taxi Chits

4. *Brushing up on your research skills.*

Library staff can help recommend free tools for managing your citations, keeping current in your field, and more! You also have access to a wide range of databases.

5. *Finding more information on the Library’s Faculty Research Guide (libguides.sait.ca/scholarly).*

Library staff have collected some great resources to help you learn more about research support and publishing.

Once you’ve published, the Library will showcase your work in our Faculty Publication Collection! ➡

President's Message
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For the most part, the Performance Review process is guided by the Institution's Strategic Plan (SP). Within the process each Department/School aligns itself with reachable goals sequestered from the SP. Historically, the May and June period of the academic year is reserved for department planning and initiatives. This time period is an opportunity for collaboration and team building outside of the daily classroom activities.

It is recognized that Academic Chairs/Managers are often overburdened with administrative duties and can habitually be oblivious to the dynamics and concerns of the instructional outlets; for example, the labs/classroom. Frequently good note-taking and Faculty recognition through the Academic year becomes vague and unpredictable, resulting in disengagement and pessimistic feelings from the instructor. Not to lay all the blame on ACs, Faculty also need to be responsible for their own Performance Reviews, keeping data on their expected duties, classroom management, and all related department activities. The Performance Reviews should never be taken lightly. It is incumbent upon Faculty to engage their AC through the year on any concerns that could be conjectural or inaccurate on the PR document. An overall assessment of "Requires Improvement" on a Faculty members PR will result in the loss of their annual increment—a grid step. In the eyes of the Faculty Association, this can be considered grounds for

a Grievance. The Grievance process can have a psychological and emotional impact on a Faculty member and is never a guarantee that there will be a favourable outcome. Being proactive in discussing and clarifying areas within the PR with one's supervisor throughout the academic year will help in eliminating any miscommunications or assumptions that either or both parties may have had. ⇄

TEACHER: Why are you late?

STUDENT: Class started before I got here.

TEACHER: Glenn, how do you spell 'crocodile?'

STUDENT: K-R-O-K-O-D-I-A-L'

TEACHER: No, that's wrong

Maybe it is wrong, but you asked me how I spell it.

TEACHER: Harold, what do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?

STUDENT: A teacher



Congratulations to Steve Janz and Cynthia Maier, recipients of the 2014 Scholarship and Teaching Award from the Alberta Colleges and Institutes Faculties Association (ACIFA). They have been invited to present their research into the student tool PeerWise at this year's ACIFA Conference at beautiful Chateau Lake Louise from May 24–26, 2015, hosted by Portage College.

Searching for a Cartoonist

The Board of the SAFAGRAM is looking for a cartoonist who is creative and has the ability to draw, even simple figures or sketches. You should provide your audience with amusement and good humour while avoiding malice. The cartoons may involve comments in the balloons over the heads of characters or simply stand on their own as a humorous or political statement without comment.



A sense of humor and imagination is essential to bring ideas and sketches to life as people look at them. You should know what interests our readers and how to work on ideas with other people.

If you are a visual thinker who can communicate using few—or no—words and are able to rapid-fire idea generators that make political points or tell jokes using only one compelling picture, you are the cartoonist for us. Please contact the SAFA Office, N201 or e-mail Kathy Dann at kathie.dann@sait.ca.

AGM

Please join us for your
Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, June 10, 2015,
4:00 p.m.

Orpheus Theatre