

SAFAGRAM

President's Message

By Doug Spurgeon



As the summer vacation approaches and the final pieces are put in place for this academic year, there are still a few important pieces to remember:

1. SIR II Evaluations. These are being looked at again. Although Question 40 is not supposed to be the be all and end all, we all know that it is what triggers a SIR II action plan, aka “Instructor Remedial School.” When you take a look at Question 40, a lot of individuals believe it to be the overall evaluation of an Instructor’s performance. I have said in the past that it is not a true measurement of performance but that the whole SIR II survey is only one tool. Also, if you look closely at Question 40, you will see that it is totally subjective. It instructs students to “Rate the quality of instruction in this course as it **contributed to your learning**.” The problem here becomes a basis of subjectivity and what happens to the Instructor when a student believes that they already knew it all. For example, if I were to be a student in a basic networking course, I would not be able to say that the teaching contributed to my learning as I teach advanced networking and, therefore, would have to rate it low (1 or 2). This, however, does not mean that the Instructor was not good or that he/she was unable to get the material across. The Instructor may actually have been extremely good at getting the material across to the students, but it was just that I already knew the material. I have been told that my average for the last round of SIR II evaluations was 4.98. Does this mean that I am a good Instructor? **NO**. What it tells me is a vast majority of my students have agreed that the instruction they received contributed to **their learning**. While the heading might be “Overall Evaluation,” it is not an overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the Instructor. The new Collective Agreement has a Letter of Understanding (LOU) that refers to the SIR II not being the sole criteria. Perhaps as this academic year closes, more will be looked at than just a SIR II subjective evaluation. Hopefully this will be the last time I have to discuss this use of a subjective question to determine the effectiveness of an Instructor.

2. Minister’s Letter of Expectation. For those who have read the “letter of expectation,” there are a couple of things to take away from it. First, I am able to only compare from the last annual report which is nearly two years old. When comparing these, it looks like a \$2 million drop in base funding while the expectation for apprentice funding looks to have doubled from less than \$6 million to more than \$12

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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/>

LRO Report

By Al Brown, LRO



Well, we are in the annual performance review season, and although I covered it in the April issue of the SAFAGRAM, I would remind you of your rights under the Collective Agreement. Performance reviews are covered in the SAIT/SAFA Collective Agreement in Section 18.

You have a couple of entitlements in this section. On an annual basis, your supervisor will review your performance with you. 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. Assuming your overall performance is determined to be satisfactory, you will advance one step on the salary grid.

However, in the event your overall performance is deemed to be less than satisfactory—“requires improvement”—Section 18.01 (b) of the SAIT/SAFA Collective Agreement entitles you to receive the reasons in writing and to appeal through the grievance procedure. The reason is that there is a significant financial penalty attached to a “requires improvement” performance review. If your overall performance review results in a “requires improvement” evaluation, you may not receive your annual salary grid step increase. Keep in mind your “long service allowance” is also tied to a “meets expectations” performance review.

However, there are time limits you need to be aware of: Section 20.05 (a) *requires that an academic staff member must submit the grievance within ten (10) days of the date upon which you had the first reasonable opportunity of knowing that a grievance had allegedly occurred.* In the case of a performance review, I would think that would be the date you signed the PPR document acknowledging you have been advised of the contents. So, it’s very important that you contact the SAFA office or me directly if your overall performance is deemed “requires improvement” as soon as possible following the PPR meeting with your supervisor.

Recently I attended the Annual Accommodation Law Conference in Edmonton. There were many topics covered: Family Status, Workplace Policies, The Duty to Accommodate, etc. One area that I would like to discuss is returning to work after a lengthy absence. This occurs at SAIT when an Instructor is returning after a lengthy illness that required General Sick Leave (GSL) and/or Long Term Disability (LTD).

The duty to accommodate process depends on effective communication between SAIT, the Instructor, and the Association. Typically, the return-to-work process begins when the Instructor expresses an interest in returning to work. You should be prepared to provide medical documentation from your doctor indicating that you’re able to return to work and detailing any limitations or accommodations that may apply. SAIT has a return-to-work coordinator who effectively “blinds” them to any medical information not required for formulating a return-to-work plan. What they are entitled to know is how your restrictions and any accommodations required are connected to your illness.

Once SAIT has become aware that you intend to return to work, they will make enquiries of your department about the

types of suitable work that is available. The Association has a role to play in facilitating the accommodation process. Often the Instructor may feel more comfortable communicating through the Association, and, of course, the Association should be at the table during a return-to-work meeting.

Once you have returned to work, the responsibilities of the parties continue. SAIT must monitor you to ensure there are no issues with the return to work; it may be necessary to re-evaluate the work as you progress with the return-to-work plan. You will be expected to communicate any issues with the work so that SAIT has an opportunity to adjust the plan. The Association is still engaged in the event you require representation.

A return-to-work plan after a lengthy absence may require time for SAIT to prepare. In addition to understanding your capabilities and restrictions, SAIT has to ensure there is productive and suitable work. This can cause tension—SAIT will be going through their due diligence process to prepare for the return to work—while you will want to get back to work as soon as possible, especially after a long absence as there is a real need for income.

The longer the absence the more time it may take for you to return to work. This can be complicated if there are delays in getting medical information from your doctor or if assessments are required, such as ergonomic assessments and reports. However, once SAIT is made aware of your desire to return to work, they need to take steps to commence the process. At the early stages, SAIT may simply make inquiries and seek information. If you can demonstrate via the requested doctor’s opinion, etc. that you are ready and able to return to work, SAIT must continue with the return-to-work process.

A return to work can be stressful. You may have feelings of anxiety as you are re-integrated into the workplace. SAIT may suggest a graduated return-to-work plan with reduced hours in the beginning building toward a full workload. In some cases, it may be beneficial for you to visit the workplace to be re-oriented with practices, procedures, or the general environment.

As a result of the normal stress associated with returning to work, you may make mistakes, take longer to complete assigned work, or be less productive in the early stages of the return-to-work plan. You may even initially feel unwanted and consider quitting because of the stress and anxiety associated with returning to work. Your Academic Chair and your Dean need to have patience as you progress toward a full integration back into the workplace. They should focus their efforts on ensuring you have a supportive environment that is conducive to a successful return to work.

The key to much of this is getting the Association involved early so that we can stay in the loop as effective communication at the early stages of the return-to-work plan will help make it a success. So please alert us at SAFA if you are going on General Sick Leave, Long Term Disability, or are returning to SAIT on a return-to-work plan.

As always, please stop by the SAFA office, N201, in the Burns Building or contact me directly at Ext. 4067 or via e-mail at al.brown@sait.ca if you have any questions. Have a great summer! ♦♦

President's Message
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million. In this letter, the Minister tried to also weigh into the bargaining, which is technically outside of his purview, as we do fall under and bargain with the SAIT Board of Governors, not the ministry. However, there was an interesting piece. It was written that the payment of performance bonuses would be seen as irresponsible of the Board; of course, the Minister didn't say that bonuses could not be paid. Guess time will tell if responsibility is maintained.

3. Workload Study Team. Our team will be meeting with the members of SAIT Management to try to come up with a resolution for workload that both the Faculty and SAIT can ratify and move forward with. Our team includes Donna Campbell (ICT), Earl Simpson (M&A), Richard Thompson (Const) and Roger Duckworth (Bus). Both Al and I will be acting as resource people for this group. SAIT will be represented by Lee Haldeman (Assoc. VPA, Dean Bus), Tom Bornhorst (Dean, H&T), Allen Billy (Dean, H&PS) and David Rouberge (Dean, M&A). More details will follow after the groups meet. I have asked our team to keep Faculty updated as things progress. The SAFA Executive should be getting frequent updates as well as a regular column in the SAFAGRAM to update all members. Look for this in September. A preliminary meeting is scheduled to take place on June 25 with the hope of being able to hit the ground running once the fall comes. Join me in wishing our team well as I believe we have assembled a very good team that has the diversity to address workload issues that are common to all. Thank them for their help when you see them, and I'm sure if you have workload concerns of your own any feedback both good and bad will help. I believe we know a fair bit of the bad workload stories and would welcome any good ones as they may be able to be used to help bring forward a workable solution for ratification.

4. PPRs. These are being signed off now. Remember that if you do not agree with your rating you have the right to submit a rebuttal or to have a clarifying letter attached to the PPR. My advice to members has always been to submit a letter if you disagree, believe something needs to be clarified, or just want to add something that both you and your Chair had missed. This advice is also typically given with writing on the PPR that you will submit something and give a time frame such as two

weeks, or if you are going on vacation right away, then upon your return. This is particularly important if you are rebutting anything within the document--you don't want to write when angry but you do need to write. Only a PPR that has been rated as "Needs Improvement" can be grieved, and if this has happened, then you need to get in touch with the SAFA office right away. SAFA views this rating as disciplinary as it prevents step increments and can remove any long service allowance that you may receive.

5. Education Allowance. Yes, long-time readers of my articles might have guessed the "Kearney Award." It should now be concluded. The Appellant Judge has dismissed the case and thereby leaves the arbitration and judicial review in SAFA's favour. While these allowances do not form part of the salary, they do form part of the monthly pay. Under position abolishment, members receive their monthly pay. I will be meeting with Employee Services in July to go over the list of just over a dozen instructors since the Kearney case first was filed.

There has been no more news on the budget front so hopefully that also means that abolishment season this year will be light or non-existent. At the time of this writing, I have not heard of any.

It appears that next year will be a very hectic time with the workload study and PPR guidelines being established as joint teams of both SAFA and SAIT Management. On a positive note, our new President has been very visible around the campus.

There is a lot of work for next year, but in order to be able to do this work, you, as Faculty need to re-energize. Take this summer, if you are able, to get some honest down time and perhaps try something you have been putting off.

Once again thanks to all Faculty for the help and assistance you have given me, and I look forward to serving you for another year as my term nears completion.

I hope to see everyone return in the fall. I will be around campus tying up loose ends until the middle of July. If anything comes up over the summer, please call or e-mail the SAFA office. ☛



SAIT— It's in my Blood

by Eugene Blanchard

In the mid 70s, I graduated from Champlain College in Quebec with a Pure and Applied Science Diploma. I felt that going to college was like banging my head against the wall. It just didn't teach me what I wanted to know. It was interesting but not practical.

In 1979, I made the decision to move to Calgary and go to SAIT to take the Broadcast Electronic Technology. What a difference in education. Here was an institute that was providing current relevant hands-on training in a field that I was truly interested in. What a revelation! I wished that I had known about SAIT five years earlier!

During the 80s, I came back to SAIT and took a few evening courses on microprocessors and computer networking. In the 90s, I came to SAIT for the one year full-time fast track Area Network Technical Analyst Certificate. After graduation, I started to teach at SAIT in the Electronics/Electrical Department.

But it doesn't end there, as my brother-in-law Wes Hall decided (based on my experience) that he would come to SAIT and take the Industrial Electronics Engineering Diploma Program. My sister, Annette, decided that while her husband Wes was at school, she might as well take the Business Management Program at SAIT. Little did we know it, but my older sister's future brother-in-law, Lawrence Fryk, was taking his journeyman machinist courses at SAIT. A picture of him working on a drilling press was posted in the Thomas Riley Building for almost 20 years!

My nephew, Ben Humphreys, took his heavy duty mechanic journeyman training at SAIT and is graduating this month with his automotive mechanic journeyman training! My other nephew, Calvin Hall, has just finished his first year of Aircraft Maintenance Engineer and is loving it! Even my wife, Susan, has been involved as she taught at SAIT in the mid 1990s! My daughter, Mariah, spent many summers taking SAIT's summer camps and loving it.

I haven't even mentioned my nieces' husbands or my many friends who have attended SAIT. So SAIT is in my blood and my family's blood, and I'm sure that many of you have similar tales to tell. 🐞

SAIT's ALIVE

SAIT's ALIVE is an organization of **retired and former SAIT employees** and their spouses. The organization maintains a relationship with SAIT through various activities, and members enjoy four social gatherings each year. The next social function will be a BBQ on September 11, 2013.

For more information, please check the website: <http://sites.google.com/site/saitsalive/home> and contact Caren DeMille at caren.demille@sait.ca if you are interested in joining (\$10 annual fee).



SAVE THE DATE FOR TROJANS 101

- Dates:** Wednesday, October 9, 2013, or Wednesday, January 22, 2014
- Time:** 12:00 – 12:50 p.m. – Lunch will be provided
- Why:** To raise awareness of the Trojans Athletic Teams to SAIT Instructors
- Location:** Trojans Boardroom (V206) Campus Centre
- RSVP:** Closer to the dates to Erin Schwab at erin.schwab@sait.ca

Train Like A Trojan

SAIT Trojans Summer Camps for youth:

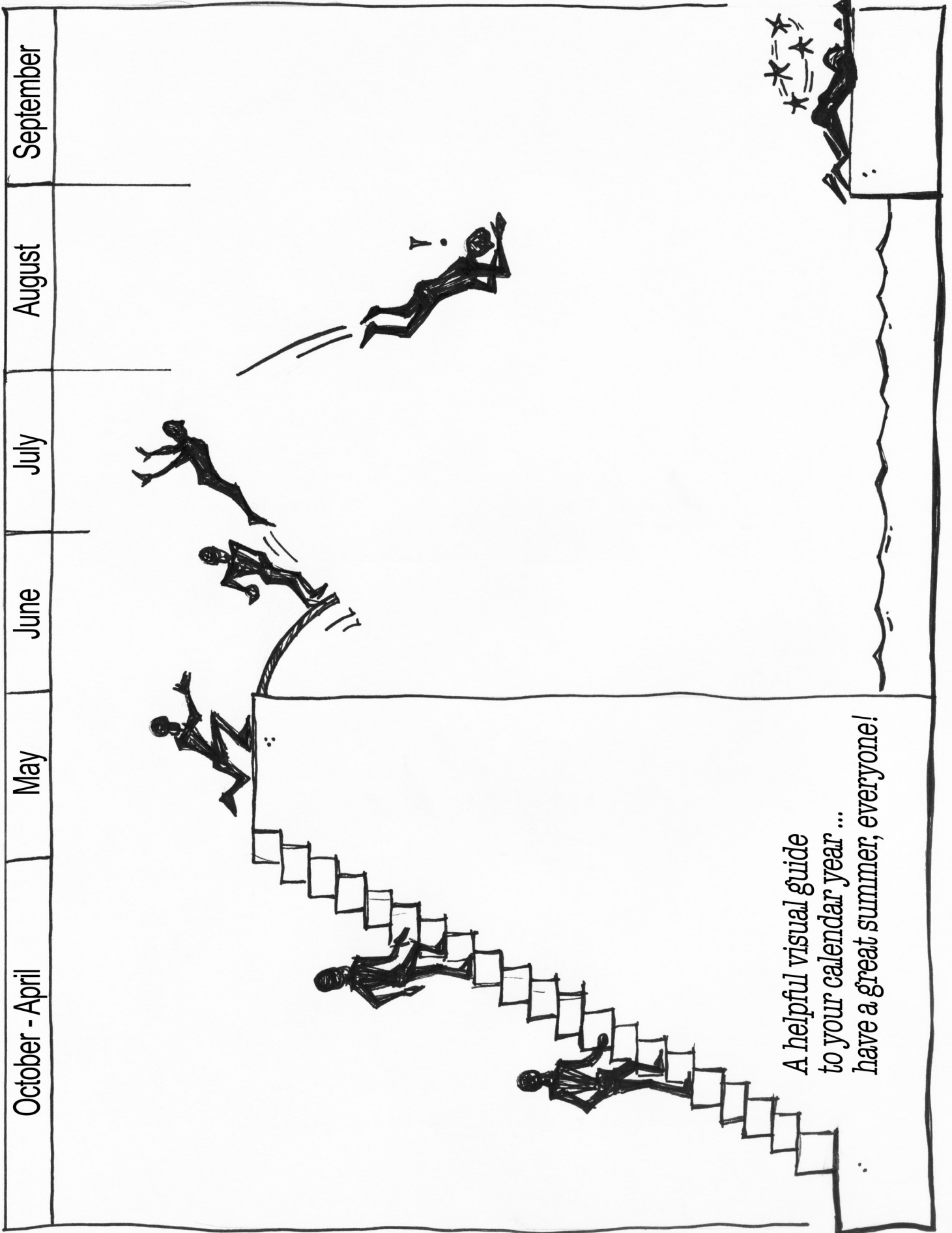
Hockey, Volleyball, and Basketball

Lunch program available

SAIT Discount – \$20 discount for children of a SAIT student, staff, or alumni

Visit www.sait.ca/trojans for more details





*A helpful visual guide
to your calendar year ...
have a great summer, everyone!*