SAFAGRAM

President's Message

By Blair Howes

Hello Faculty,

Well it's hard to believe, but we're in the home stretch now as the full-time daytime programs wind down with the final exams. There will be one last apprenticeship intake for the 2018/19 academic year.

The April election brought in a new government with a long road of recovery ahead for the next four years. I wish them the best of luck with the task ahead of them and thank all those who choose a life of political service.

There have been many changes this year for both Faculty and management; notwithstanding our third-year wage reopener that is about to ramp up in May.

As a reminder the following is the language from the Collective Agreement:

Section 2 – Effective Date and Term Three-year collective agreement commencing July 1, 2017 (retroactive) and ending June 30, 2020.
- July 1, 2017: 0% cost of living adjustment with no change to the current salary table
- July 1, 2018: 0% cost of living adjustment with no change to the current salary table
- July 1, 2019: Wage re-opener on salary table only, with dispute resolution to be compulsory interest arbitration with a prescribed timeline

Negotiations to start no sooner than May 15, 2019 and, if there is no agreement at the bargaining table, either SAIT or SAFA may refer the dispute to binding arbitration no sooner than September 30, 2019.

So SAFA and the negotiations team are ramping up for bargaining this spring.

Also new is the end of the SIR II. A new student evaluation tool will be ready for the next academic year. I look forward to the end of this era of evaluations and a new beginning.

In this Issue

Labour Relations Officer (LRO) Report

By Al Brown, LRO

Well, soon we will be in the annual performance review season. I would like to remind you of your rights under the Collective Agreement and to review the provisions that are new to this Collective Agreement. Performance reviews are covered in the SAIT/SAFA Collective Agreement in Section 15.

You have a couple of entitlements in this section. On an annual basis, your Academic Chair 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 the opportunity to have your opinion included for future reference. Assuming your overall performance is determined to be satisfactory, you will advance one step on the salary grid—unless you are at the top of the salary grid.

However, in the event your overall performance is deemed to be unsatisfactory ("requires improvement"), you will receive the annual grid step as above BUT you will have one year to improve in the areas outlined in an "improvement plan" agreed on by you and your Dean (or designee).

If improvement has not occurred after the year, then you will not advance by one grid step.

Section 15.01 (c) of the SAIT/SAFA Collective Agreement entitles you to receive the reasons in writing and to appeal through the grievance procedure – Section 17. 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 satisfactory performance review.

However, there are time limits you need to be aware of: Section 17.05 (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.

I'm hopeful there will be few, if any, positions abolished this year; however, I want to touch upon the changes to Section 13 – Position Abolishment.

An instructor may have his/her position abolished as a result of a decrease in enrollment in the instructor's area of instruction or the discontinuation or cancellation of a course or program. The SAFA President is notified by SAIT at least 10 days prior to any notice to impacted employees. During this time frame, a consultation process will convene, and the SAFA President will be provided with the specific school, number of impacted positions, reason for abolishment, and rationale for abolishment.

A new provision allows for Corporate Training, Continuing Education, and other such instruction to be used with mutual agreement to reduce the number of permanent, full-time, or part-time positions declared redundant if:

a. The combination of such instruction can be combined to create an annual workload comparable to those found in Section 36.01; and

b. The impacted Instructor has the qualifications and the demonstrated ability to instruct these classes.

Except in circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the instructional unit, the following shall be considered prior to any permanent positions in the program being impacted: First, SAIT will release Casual, Temporary, and Probationary employees; then, SAIT will make use of a Voluntary process. An instructor may **volunteer** for position abolishment. If more volunteers than positions for abolishment occur, in conjunction with skills, abilities, and operational teaching requirements, the final factor for consideration shall be years of service. Finally, if there is still a need to abolish a position, SAIT will use the position abolishment rating template to determine whose position is abolished.

Regardless of whether you volunteer for position abolishment or are selected, you will receive three (3) months' working notice or pay in lieu of notice (if your position is to be abolished effective immediately). In addition to such working notice or pay in lieu, you will receive severance pay in the amount of one (1) month's pay for each full year of service to a maximum of twelve (12) months, plus any earned but not used vacation pay.

Another new provision is the vesting period during which an instructor, whose position has been abolished, is vested with the right to be appointed to the first available comparable position through competition. This competition is limited to instructors who had their positions abolished, increased to twelve (12) consecutive months commencing with the first day of the month following the release of the instructor. SAIT has to notify those instructors of all such available positions.

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

Costly Typos

More costly typos.

THE BIBLE PROMOTES PROMISCUITY

The damage: $4590 (and eternal damnation)

Not even the heavenly father is immune to occasional inattention to detail. In 1631, London's Baker Book House rewrote the 10 Commandments when a missing word in the seventh directive declared, "Thou shalt commit adultery." Parliament was not singing hallelujah; they declared that all erroneous copies of the Good Book—which came to be known as "The Wicked Bible"—be destroyed and fined the London publisher 3000 pounds.

Work Smarter not Harder!

By Eugene Blanchard

When I first started teaching at SAIT, I was in panic mode. I was preparing for class and marking until midnight every night and working through the weekends. I made extensive tests, assignments, and labs to access the student's abilities, all of which required hours of marking.

For lab assignments, I had the students provide short and long answers to questions and each question was graded accordingly. Some were worth 5 marks, some 2 marks, some 3 marks, and so on. Reading each lab assignment, grading, and adding up the marks took a lot of time!

So I changed my grading to an "in lab class" grading. The student started with 100%; each wrong answer resulted in a deduction of 5%, and if a student reached 85%, they had to go back and do it over again. This reduced the amount of grading dramatically, and the students had a better learning experience with the expectation that they would do well. However, I still had to take in the lab assignments, review the answers, and record the marks. Surprisingly, the grades the students received were very comparable to the previous method.

For my theory courses, I used pen and paper assessments (tests and assignments) which required hours of reviewing and marking in the evenings and weekends. Doesn't this sounds familiar? Then I was introduced to my first online question bank which allowed tests to be taken and marked instantly. That changed my life dramatically! ***Today my day at SAIT finishes as soon as I leave the campus.*** I haven't taken any work home to be marked in over 10 years. How did I do that? SAIT has provided me with the tools to reduce my workload and it is called Brightspace (formerly D2L).

Brightspace Assessments

All of my assessments are created and marked through the Brightspace Assessments: quizzes, tests, discussions, and assignments. I create online tests either within Brightspace or by importing existing tests (Word docs, etc.) using the Respondus program (SAIT has a site license). It doesn't take any longer to create a test using Brightspace than by creating one using pen and paper method, but the difference is that you don't have to grade the test—Brightspace does it for you. You can create question banks for each topic and choose to select a random number of questions from the question bank to appear for a unique assessment for each individual student.

Randomization

In addition to question banks, Brightspace provides a few tricks to discourage cheating. The first is requiring the students to use the Respondus lockdown browser. This interface locks down the student PC so that the only interface that works is the browser connected to Brightspace.

Assessments can be limited to the number of questions that appear per page on the display. I usually limit the number of questions to 3. Question order can be randomized; for example, student A's question 1 on page 1 is student B's question 5 on page 3. The order of the question's answers can be randomized so that student A's answers are in a different order than student B's. All of this is done by simply enabling check boxes.

Rethinking Pen and Paper Assessments

I used to teach a programming course and had to really rethink my assessment methodology and what I wanted to assess. In the old days of pen and paper, I would ask the students to write code to produce a certain output which then required a long time to analyze and grade. Since then I've separated the assessment into assignments (where students have to write code), and into online tests that assess theory and analyze the code structure, commands, and output. This allows the test to be created and marked using Brightspace.

For my former long answer questions, I found that most could be broken down into multiple smaller short answer questions or a sequence of assessments. The question types available in Brightspace can be multiple choice, true/false, matching, multiple answer, fill in the blank, put in order, short answer, long answer, etc. It really comes down to what you want to assess and which question type can work for you.

Submission Views

Through Submission Views, you can allow the student to immediately see their mark upon completion of an assessment and to optionally see the complete graded assessment with answers or portions thereof. I don't recommend allowing the students to see the complete test. In the past, students have printed out their submission view with answers and passed it on to others which then compromises the question bank. I suggest to allow only viewing the incorrectly answered questions.

Scheduling

You schedule the assessments by date and time through the Restrictions menu, and you can also configure a password for security purposes. You can add Release Conditions before an assessment is released. For example, I've separated my labs into the practical lab portion and the lab quiz. When the student achieves a pass on the practical lab portion, the lab quiz is then and only then enabled. The student must do the lab in order to do the quiz.

I've also created a release condition so that a scheduled theory quiz will not be released until the student has achieved a pass on a homework assignment. This motivates the students to do the homework assignments.

Assignments

For assignments, I use the Brightspace Rubric tool. At first, it seems intimidating but the hardest part is figuring out exactly what you want to assess. The rubric allows you to create multiple "criteria" and grade it on a number of levels (e.g. Excellent, Satisfactory, Needs Work, and Unsatisfactory). For each criteria and associated level, you decide on what constitutes an acceptable requirement.

Shells and Crosslinking

A Brightspace shell is a CRN course that is populated with one section (cohort) of students. You might be teaching many sections and have a separate shell for each CRN, or you might be teaching one section of many with a shared course with other instructors. This makes it difficult to synchronize multiple shells as a change to one may need to be duplicated on all the other shells, and unfortunately, there will always be changes and corrections to assessments, content, news, etc.

The solution is to crosslink the courses into one shell. This combines multiple sections into one shell. You can sort the students by sections or view all users. The advantage is that there is one place to make a change and all sections are updated. For a course that has 9 instructors teaching 11 sections, each can select only the section to view for attendance, grading, etc. while all are sharing the same content, assignments, and tests. One change to the shell updates all 11 sections.

Groups

Brightspace allows sorting students into groups. My sections typically have one theory class with all students and then are divided into two lab groups: A and B. I've created a lab group for each lab to make it easier to sort the students for grading and attendance.

Course Masters, Shells, and Instructor Roles

The Course Master is a shell that is not populated with students and not assigned to a class CRN. It is a temporary work area where you can modify without affecting student grades. The basic cycle, to start, is to create the course in the Master. Then at the beginning of the semester, Educational Technology Services (ETS) will load the Master into your section's working shell with a class list. As the semester progresses, you will modify and correct the working shell for content and assessments. At the end of the semester, the working shell should be rolled over as the new Master for the next semester. In this manner, the Master is continuously updated with the latest content and so are subsequent semesters.

Just a note: At the end of the semester, you should not modify the working shell as it is already associated with a class list. Modifications may inadvertently affect the students' grades. To modify a Course Master, you need to be designated as a Designer. To modify a working shell, you need to be an Instructor. If another instructor is required to view a working shell, they can be designated as a Hidden Instructor.

Shells are created based on instructor scheduling and CRNs. Usually, the main working shell is the theory CRN. If other instructors are teaching the lab classes (different CRN), they may not be able to see the theory working shell. The lab instructors can be designated as Hidden Instructors to work with the theory working shell. This allows one working shell for both theory and lab instructors.

History

Brightspace keeps every working shell that you have ever taught for access at any time. There is no fear of suddenly losing the content from the Master or past content—it is all there. I can access all of the working shells since I started working with Brightspace back in 2010.

Other Tools

This is a brief overview of the Brightspace capabilities. There are many other tools available: the Attendance module, the Calendar, the Discussions, and more.

In summary, spending the time to utilize Brightspace now will save you lots of time in the future and allow you to reclaim your evenings and weekends. ❧

Costly Typos

More costly typos.

PASTA GETS RACIST

The damage: $20,000

A plate of tagliatelle with sardines and prosciutto would typically only be offensive to a vegetarian's senses. But an unfortunate blunder in The Pasta Bible, published by Penguin Australia in 2010, recommended seasoning the dish with "salt and freshly ground black people." Though no recall was made of the books already in circulation, the printer quickly destroyed all 7000 remaining copies in its inventory.

MIZUHO SECURITIES SELLS LOW—LIKE, REALLY LOW

The damage: $340 million

In December 2005, Japan's Mizuho Securities introduced a new member to its portfolio of offerings, a recruitment company called J-Com Co., nicely priced at 610,000 yen per share. Less than a year later, one of the company's traders made more than a simple boo-boo when he sold 610,000 shares at one yen apiece. No amount of pleading to the Tokyo Stock Exchange could reverse the error.

Also new is the end of the paper-based PPO/PPR documents for Faculty and the implementation of a new process online. It will be accessed through the "people now" portal. The new systems will see the end of the three old categories: "needs improvement," "expected performance," and "role model" ratings. The new system will take a bit of "getting used to," but I have worked with a talented group of individuals in Employee Services since October of last year to get the system ready for rollout in the new academic year. The new system goes live July 1, 2019, and will give everyone the opportunity to experience the system first hand.

There have been several offerings of training through Employee Services (ES), and there will be more opportunities for Faculty training in May and June this year. Watch for e-mails from me or ES for the dates.

Also new for this year is the workload appeal process. Most daytime, full Faculty have already had discussions about next year's loading. As the apprenticeship programs wind down, a discussion about next year's loading should be happening. If anyone needs help or clarity about this new process, please contact Al Brown or me for assistance.

The new Class Contact Hours (CCH) numbers come into effect in September, and with the reduction in loads, there will possibly be more than a few Chairs who will think there is more time for "other duties." On a case-by-case basis, there actually may be, but either way it will be an opportunity for discussions with your Chair in the fall.

I would also like to remind everyone of the SAFA election and the AGM in May.

Always, in service of membership. ❧