



## RECOMMENDATIONS

# COVID-19 and the impact on staff at post-secondary institutions

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) undertook a survey of staff at post-secondary institutions to understand the impact of COVID-19 on their working lives. The survey shows that the pandemic has amplified long-standing issues in the post-secondary education sector. Here are our recommendations to address the issues facing post-secondary teachers and staff, which have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

## Recommendations for institutions

### Health and Safety

- Involve workplace Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC) and academic staff associations in decision-making around campus re-opening in the fall.
- Work closely with academic staff association, other campus unions, and the JHSC on a comprehensive workplace safety plan until the risks from exposure to COVID-19 are contained, and the workplace and community can resume normal activities.
- Reduce the risk posed by COVID-19 by: establishing recommended physical distancing protocols in classrooms, residences, libraries, and other spaces on campus; enhancing sanitation protocols and enacting measures to properly train and protect staff who conduct the cleaning; identifying appropriate and effective personal protective equipment (PPE) to be used by students and staff; and establishing criteria and protocols in the event that a student or staff member is diagnosed as or suspected of being COVID-19 positive.
- Provide paid sick leave measures for all contract academic staff.
- Provide access to extended health benefits for contract academic staff and ensure coverage in between contracts.
- Improve mental health benefits for all staff.

## Workload

- Academic staff, and in particular contract academic staff, should be properly compensated for additional preparation or instructional time that may be required as a result of a continuation of temporary remote teaching. In all cases, academic staff should be provided with sufficient time and resources to further develop skills in remote teaching.
- Accommodate staff with disabilities or dependent care appropriately, which may include additional teaching assistants, smaller class sizes or teaching release.
- Consistent with principles of collegial governance, the appropriate academic governance body should be responsible for all decisions about class cancellations, modifications, or the temporary continuation of remote teaching or blended instruction.
- Negotiate any changes to instructional methods and mode of delivery with the academic staff association. The principle of academic freedom as well as specific collective agreement language provide academic staff with the right to select course materials, determine the pedagogical approach, and choose methods and modes of instruction and assessment within their assigned courses, subject to institutional policies as developed by relevant academic governance bodies.
- Provide explicit protections to prevent data sharing, surveillance, and recording of on-line classes and the retention of intellectual property rights relating to the content of those courses.
- Provide access to technological resources, and library and archival access to assist with the move to remote teaching, for all staff, including contract academic staff.

## Job Security

- Academic governance bodies are to consider proposals around course offerings, program consolidation, departmental changes, class size, or changes to the academic calendar and regularly communicate decisions to all staff.
- Strengthen job security language for contract academic staff.
- Develop a written formal procedure with academic staff associations and other campus unions when faced with financial exigency, that includes information disclosure, the consultation process, and the timeline to be followed.
- Collect and publicly share data on workforce by employment status and demographic data to monitor equity outcomes of any workforce changes.
- Provide academic staff associations' timely information about government funding, student enrolment, other revenue sources, and detailed revenue and expenditure projections.

## Recommendations for governments

- Develop a national strategy that provides adequate, stable public funding to support quality post-secondary education, with enhanced federal funding through a dedicated education transfer. This plan should address issues of affordability, accessibility and decent work.
- Provide interim funding to post-secondary institutions facing financial exigency as a result of COVID-19. This will support the continuation of quality education and protect jobs in the same way that the federal wage subsidy provided support to businesses and private education institutions.

- Commit to standardize and expand data collection on the post-secondary education workforce and student population.
- Enhance research funds to accelerate research in Canada that has been stalled or lost as a result of the pandemic.
- Increase student grants for low and middle-income Canadians while reducing tuition for all as part of a national strategy.
- Improve employment and labour standards to ensure equal pay for equal work, regardless of part-time or full-time status. Require employers to give first access and choice to part-time workers when it comes to the creation of additional jobs in the workplace, rather than creating additional part-time positions to fill needs. Require that employers first consider temporary workers currently filling a given position when it becomes possible to make that position permanent.
- Include mental health in occupational health and safety legislation and standards.
- Ratify the International Labour Organization Violence & Harassment in the Workplace Convention.
- Develop national standards for mental health service provision.
- Expand child care service availability, improve its affordability, and address quality issues, largely by tackling child care workforce issues.

