

Special Issue:

On OCADU's "Financial Sustainability Plan"

What is the "Financial Sustainability Plan"?

Consistent with the overall lack of transparency surrounding OCAD's financial decision making, no cohesive plan has been shared with OCADFA. What we know from President Serrano's latest message to all faculty and staff (on May 15, 2024) is that the plan includes a 3% "portfolio-based budget reductions" for the next two years, continuing with the next phase of Flow (although the reevaluation of Flow never seemed to have happened), and staff vacancy/hiring deferrals for the next year. What was not mentioned, is that the plans rests on significantly increased faculty and academic staff workloads.

President Serrano's message failed to mention three things Program Chairs have been directed to implement on the academic side. After months of scheduling and course offerings were almost finalized in February, Chairs were asked to redo all of this work within a three-week turnaround to adjust for the following: **(1) another round of class size increases; (2) slashing elective courses; (3) more large-format classes, including studio classes; and (4) double-credit courses – which count as 1.0 credits (with double tuition paid) for students, but only a 0.5 credit towards the faculty members course load.** Program Chairs and GPDs are OCADFA Members, and they are not responsible for these cuts.

How do these cuts impact OCADFA Members?

These academic cuts will harm OCADFA members across all labour categories.

For **Sessionals**: this will have a similar impact to the last time OCAD significantly increased class sizes during the COVID pandemic, meaning that many of our Sessional members will see a loss of work (at least partial) at OCAD University. While the Right of Reappointment should offer some protection for those who have it, OCAD will surely once again be losing talented educated people who make immeasurably valuable contributions to our community. For those who do get contracts, similar to their non-Sessional colleagues, they'll be working heavier workloads for the same pay.

For **non-Sessional** faculty: inevitably, the teaching component of your workload will again be intensified with larger classes and double-credit courses. The pressure to supervise independent studies and field placements will likely grow as electives become unavailable and as students become more dissatisfied with larger classes.

For **Technicians**: the current gaps in the delivery of curriculum will likely widen, as will the demands on Studio Technicians to fill those gaps as their faculty colleagues do all they can to cope with unsustainable pressures to do more with less.

While there'll likely be more TA contracts, the demands on **Teaching and Research Assistants** will likely also intensify as they support overworked and burnt-out faculty.

We haven't even mentioned the impact on the student learning experience, which we can surmise will be once again sacrificed.

ACADEMIC CUTS:

Class Size Increases

Slashing Elective Courses

More Large-Format Classes

Double-credit courses

(1.0 Tuition for 0.5 Credit)



Accountability.

Isn't this the rainy day?

Wasn't that \$8 million to be used to sustain us financially?

These are questions OCADU's leadership needs to answer.

Is the Financial Sustainability Plan Necessary?

The administration has **not** been forthcoming with a detailed financial picture of the university, so we need to preface whatever we say by acknowledging the lack of transparency means we don't have an abundance of information.

We also need to acknowledge that there are some serious financial constraints faced by the university, principally the potential impact on international enrolment caused by the federal governments restrictions on study permits, frozen tuition fees, and the impact woeful funding the post-secondary as a sector receives from our provincial government (last in Canada on a per capita basis).

That said, there is also little reason to take the administration's projection of a \$2.58 million deficit next year, as communicated in President Serrano's latest message, at face value.

- According to the audited financial statements released by OCAD since the COVID pandemic, the university has realized an accumulated surplus of nearly **\$33.5 million** since 2020. Over that time, they have projected (via approved budgets) an accumulated deficit of nearly **\$1.5 million**. Those extremely divergent figures mean there is simply no reason to believe the university's projections, which are being used to justify the devastating cuts pushed through in the "Financial Sustainability Plan" with extremely little collegial input or oversight.
- Even if we take-out capital gained from the sale of real estate, OCAD has still accrued over \$20 million in surpluses since 2020 and has put away \$8 million into a "financial sustainability fund". I.e, a "rainy day" fund. **Isn't this the rainy day? Wasn't that \$8 million to be used to sustain us financially? These are questions OCADU's leadership needs to answer.**
- We've been told to do more with less for years. We need more from OCAD's leadership this time.

We need to remember that budgets are political documents. Budgets reflect priorities. Since 2020, OCADU's administration has consistently prioritized non-academic spending over academic spending. **Non-academic spending has grown by a considerable 36% over that time, while academic spending has increased by a marginal 6%.** These are not OCADFA's numbers, the figures are derived from OCADU's official, and audited, financial statements. You can find those statements here: <https://www.ocadu.ca/about/accountability>

Why non-academic spending has drastically outpaced academic spending we don't know, but it doesn't appear to be going towards hiring more of our OPSEU colleagues that support us.

Instead of making drastic cuts that exacerbate already stretched faculty and academic staff workloads, and that harm the student learning experience, we call on the Administration to change their priorities.



What can we do about these cuts?

Chair's and GPD members of OCADFA have written a collective letter to OCAD's leadership in opposition to the cuts they've been directed to enact. OCADFA needs to take over that baton. OCADFA is working with our legal representatives to explore all our options, but we can detail a few things we can do about this: **bargaining and grievances**.

Addressing **workload** was identified as a top priority by members for our current round of negotiations to renew our Memorandum of Agreement, so we already have several proposals aimed to [Raise the Bar!](#) at OCADU which could mitigate the effect of these changes. These proposals would:

- Increase TA availability to support faculty and students;
- A large class premium for Sessional faculty to recognize the increased workload demanded of such classes;
- Stipends to compensate Sessionals for all the non-course related work they are increasingly asked to perform for students;
- And to redefine course loads to:
 - Eliminate “contact-hours” and define course load in terms of credits
 - Recognize the workload associate with graduate supervision
 - Address inequitable distributions of total student load

We need the Administration to accept these proposals now, in recognition of the unsustainability and unviability of further intensifying teaching workloads!

Workload Grievances

We can also wield the power of grievances. At the end of the day OCADFA is its members. **You are OCADFA**. One of our strongest avenues to address workload is through grievances, and we need members to grieve.

Know our **Letter of Understanding re: TA Assignments** found at the end of the [Memorandum of Agreement](#). Achieved in our last round of bargaining, this Letter of Understanding establishes minimum Tutorial Leader and Marker/Grader assignments based on class sizes. **If any class you're teaching does not have a TA assigned to these minimum requirements, request more TA support from your Dean**. If your request is denied, OCADFA can grieve.

Full-credit Courses

News that OCAD University will be introducing full-credit courses for students that will be worth only a half-credit in calculating the faculty's course load may also be addressed via a grievance. The concern shared by many is that either (1) the student will be paying a full-credit worth of tuition for a half-credit worth of education, or that (2) the faculty member will be credited with only teaching a half-credit while delivering a full-credit worth of curriculum. What will likely happen is somewhere in between these scenarios, meaning both the student and the faculty member will once again be bearing the brunt of the latest budget squeeze. Or it could also mean, problematically, that Technicians will be compelled to bridge the gap in curriculum delivery.

If you are a Sessional instructor assigned to a double-credit course but are being paid the value of a single credit contract, let us know, and we can grieve on your behalf.



What can we do about these cuts? (continued)

Course Load Complaints

If you are a **non-Sessional faculty member**, it is important to know what to do if you have a course load complaint, such as being assigned a double-credit course that you know will require more work than a single-credit course, or if you have substantially more students assigned to you than normal.

Our [Memorandum of Agreement](#) defines course load in terms of “student contact hours.” For Tenured, Probationary, CLTA, and Continuing faculty a maximum load is normally **7.5 hours per week**, averaged over the academic year. This typically correlates to five half-credit courses over a year. For Teaching Stream faculty, the course load is either **10.5 or 9 student contact hours per week**, depending on where you teach, which typically means six or seven half-credit courses over a year. (See article 26.1.1.5 of the MOA).

There are other factors that are supposed to be considered in determining your specific course load. These include class size and total student load, other course-related responsibilities (such as supervision), whether courses are new, etc. You can find a full list in Article 26.2.

In any event, your total Teaching & Teaching-Related Duties should normally comprise **40% – or 70% for Teaching Stream** – of your overall workload (see Article 27.4). If you’re concerned your assigned course load will upset that balance, it needs to be addressed.

The procedure for disagreeing with your course load can be found in Article 26.3 of the MOA. Essentially, you’re supposed to address those concerns with your Dean of Faculty, and if that doesn’t bear a resolution, you can appeal the matter in writing to the VPAP. If you’re still not satisfied, OCADFA can grieve on your behalf.

Before approaching your Dean, or if you have any workload concerns, reach out to OCADFA and we can assist you through this process. Contact either our Executive Director (greniers@ocadu.ca) or one of our Grievance Co-Chairs (rhunt@ocadu.ca or aqadeer@ocadu.ca).

In particular, we strongly encourage any faculty member assigned a 1.0 credit course, with only a half-credit towards your total course load, to reach out to us.

Lastly, for **Continuing, Probationary and Tenured faculty members**, if there “significant changes” to your teaching assignments, your Dean of Faculty is supposed to have “timely consultation with individual faculty directly affected” (Article 23.2.2). If you’ve seen a significant change in your teaching assignments, and your Dean did not consult with individually prior to that change, let us know!

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