

# Examiner

Holiday Issue 2020



COLLEGE  
FACULTY

**Local 240**

*So long 2020!  
(not) sad to see  
you go...*



## **In this Issue**

- Prez Says Zoom Meeting Security Ten Ways to Spend Your PD Days Why Students Prefer In Person Classes Partial Load Seniority and more...

# Prez Sez

by Heather Giardine-Tuck, President, OPSEU Local 240

Hello Local 240 Colleagues,

The unbelievable events of 2020 have challenged us in ways we never imagined. As the year draws to a close, I want to wish you the best as we finish the semester. You have persevered and through your dedication to teaching, allowed our students to continue with their studies. You have provided stability, support and care at a time it was much needed. For our non teaching faculty, your tireless commitment to serving our students has been unwavering. Thank you all. I hope

that you will soon take a well-earned break to recharge and safely relax with your family and friends. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays! Here's to 2021 bringing the very best.

Take care and stay well,

Heather



## Non-Full-time Faculty: How to Build Seniority and Earn Step Increases

by Rebecca Mills, Partial Load  
Steward, OPSEU Local 240



As the Partial-load (PL) Steward for the Fennell Campus, I often get questions about the PL Registry, the PL Seniority List, and the different classifications of non-full-time faculty (NFT). Since the pandemic started, being registered and having seniority have never been more important. Combined the two lists determine who gets work and who doesn't. To build seniority and to earn step increases, the key is to register every year and, whenever possible, to accept PL-teaching contracts instead of Part-time (PT) or sessional contracts.

Follow these steps to build seniority and earn step increases:

**Step 1:** Make sure to sign up to the PL Registry List annually (Article 26.10 D). ADs are supposed to check the registry first before looking at the PL Seniority List when offering teaching contracts. Please note that seniority is course-based, so if there is a college "need," hiring is to prioritize registered PL faculty who have previously taught a course in a given department (Article 26.10 E).

**Step 2:** If possible (and it's not always) only accept PL-teaching contracts. The chart below outlines the three classifications of NFT faculty, but only one, PL faculty, can earn seniority units while teaching (Article 26.10 C). Thus, PT and sessional faculty can't earn seniority units if they accept this type of contract because PT and sessional faculty are not CAAT members...yet.

Category	Teaching Hours	Seniority Earned while Teaching	CAAT Members
Part Time	6 or less	No	No
Partial Load	7-12 Yes	Yes	
Sessional	13 or more	No	No



**Step 4:** Faculty should check for their names on both lists annually. The PL Registry is usually published in November, while the PL Seniority List is published in January of each year. If there is an error (and mistakes do happen) contact HR right away to get it corrected. If HR is slow to respond, Local 240 stewards can help, too.

**Step 5:** After their initial placement on the step grid, the only way for PL faculty to move up a step level is to earn seniority units. For every 10 seniority units, PL faculty are eligible to receive one step increase. The only way to earn units is through a PL-teaching contract. Once faculty believe they have logged 10 units, they need to contact HR to ensure they receive their new step. Don't assume HR will do it automatically.

**Step 6:** Finally, in order to stay up-to-date on union matters, faculty ought to register with Local 240. At the moment, PT and sessional faculty can't earn seniority credits or build those up for step increases, so accepting those types of teaching contracts now may cost faculty in gains later, both in terms of money and in relation to how work is allocated. This is particularly true in relation to sessional contracts which offer more money in the short term, but prevent faculty from earning seniority. Since the pandemic started, enrollment has decreased, class sizes have gone up, FT-faculty SWFS have been maxed out, and there have been fewer courses offered to NFT faculty. Being registered and having seniority have never been more vital, and missing out on building up more seniority units may come back to haunt faculty members in a later semester. There are definite benefits to being PL faculty and being a member of the union; moreover, it is the only way in which to earn more seniority and to climb the step grid.

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## Ten Ways to Spend Your Ten PD Days...

by Robert Soulliere, Communications Officer, OPSEU Local 240



**D**id you know that all faculty have 10 days of Professional Development they may use each year? It is in our Collective Agreement under Workload (Article 11). 11.01H covers teaching faculty while 11.04B covers non-teaching faculty. The sections are almost identical and include the same provisions. Below is the section covering teaching faculty, found on page 16:

**11.01 H1** The College shall allow each teacher at least ten working days of professional development in each academic year.

**11.01 H2** Unless otherwise agreed between the teacher and the supervisor, the allowance of ten days shall include one period of at least five consecutive working days for professional development.

**11.01 H3** The arrangements for such professional development shall be made following discussion between the supervisor and the teacher subject to agreement between the supervisor and the teacher, and such

agreement shall not be unreasonably withheld.

**11.01 H4** The employee may be reimbursed for costs associated with such professional development, as approved by his/her supervisor or other body established by the College to deal with allocating resources made available for this purpose.

Let's analyze a few of the key statements. The first seems self explanatory, but it is important to note that it indicates that college shall allow faculty to take 10 working days. It does not mean that the faculty must take the days. In other words, it is up to the faculty to use the days they are given. If faculty do not use them, they lose them for that year.

Article 11.01 H2 provides an allowance of 5 consecutive days. This may be essential to ensure the faculty has time to attend longer professional events such as conferences. 11.01 H3 may be the one which might

be open to some interpretation and negotiation. It lets us know that we must discuss the PD leave with our supervisor before taking the PD days. This may be daunting for some faculty depending on the relationship with your supervisor, but do note that the request should not be unreasonably withheld. 11.01 H4 does provide some provision for funding of our PD activities. However, given budgetary constraints funding is often more difficult to get. It often depends on whether the PD activity was initiated by the faculty or the supervisor and how much the activity is directly related to the current responsibilities of the faculty.

Considering tight budgets, There are a number of ways to use your PD days which are free or low cost. Remember that the purpose of Professional Development is to gain knowledge, experience, or personal enrichment to benefit your employer as well as yourself. I have categorized PD activities into four different categories: Research, Training, Personal Growth and Professional Networking. These aren't exhaustive so don't limit yourself to only these suggestions.

## Research

In some cases research time may already be given to you, however usually not at Mohawk. In Academia, research is essential. Most of it should be done during the work hours and not during vacation time.

### 1. Visit your local library to do research

Visit the Hamilton Public Library (public) or McMaster (university) to find books which may not be available at other locations. This could be a one day activity given travel time. Given the current Covid restrictions visiting these locations may not be possible, but you could still browse the online catalogues and request items in some cases.

### 2. Read books or articles on a specific topic in your field

College should want you to keep up with the latest in your field. You may use a day to read the book you found in a library or read a book in your collection. Or you can read more than one book!

### 3. Online Research in your field

Online research is critical to keep up with the latest in your field. In almost all areas technology changes

rapidly, and online research provides a great way to keep up with the latest trends and keep up with your students.

## Training

### 4. Take an online course

Perhaps learn a new skill in an official course or unofficial youtube course on a topic which will allow you to work more effectively.

### 5. Volunteer in your field

You need to know how your field is changing. Keep in touch with your community and social issues. Find out what current students will experience in the working world.

### 6. Learn a new skill or software or technology

Learn new software or technologies such as video editing, virtual reality, programming language, etc.... Stay fresh and expand your horizons. Moreover, there are many tutorials for the absolute beginner so don't be afraid or intimidated to learn something from scratch.

## Personal Growth

### 7. Reorganize your documents, or workspace, or calendar

Keeping well organized can sometimes be difficult during the peak times of the year. Sometimes you need to take a day to reorganize to be more efficient and effective during the busiest times. This one might be the most difficult stretch to ask for a PD day, but emphasizing how this improves efficiency will speak to managers.

### 8. Mindfulness Retreat/Day

The College does not host personal growth PD events like they used to have. Moreover, Covid-19 realities will prevent the college from hosting in-person options. Thus, we need to manage this ourselves. Hourly mindfulness is not enough for a true mindfulness experience. Psychological health is critical and you need to ensure you take time for yourself to escape the pressures of work life for a day. It is important to note that everyone is different so your method of meditation/finding peace might not be the same as others.

## Networking

### 9. Site visit to another college or to a company

Sometimes it is nice to find out what your competitors are doing at other colleges. It might also be an opportunity to find out what employers need by doing a site visit. This should be an easy sell to your manager as a PD opportunity, or should be considered part of your work perhaps?

### 10. Attend a Professional Conference in your field

This is the most traditional use of PD days. Networking with colleagues in your field is always critical. These days physical conferences may be impossible, but online options might be available, giving you an opportunity to network on a global scale. I should

point out that there may be a conference which isn't exactly in your field of study but could be beneficial to yourself and the department. Keep an open mind as you look for conferences to attend.

Timing is important when requesting PD days. The best time to request them is during your yearly PMP meetings with your supervisor. That meeting is an opportunity to indicate your needs to succeed in the goals you set during your PMP. Linking PD days to goals will make the request much easier. Also getting the PD requests in early and approved will be an easier sell than requesting them at the last minute. In short, it is up to you to request your PD days and decide how you will use them. If you are ever unsure about an idea or how to raise the topic with your manager, consider reaching out to your Steward or the Union Local Executive Committee (LEC) to get suggestions.

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# Zoom, Zoom, Zooom!

by Shelley Rempel, Chief Steward,  
OPSEU Local 240

I am sure the last thing you want to read about these days is an article on Zoom. However, several of you contacted me about your concerns with privacy, confidentiality and security relating to all of the Zoom sessions expected of faculty. Early on in the pandemic you may recall there were some rather shocking high-profile issues identified and these have continued. Here are a few samples of the headlines and you know there are dozens and dozens more.

USC, school districts getting 'Zoom-bombed' with racist taunts, porn as they transition to online meetings – New York Times, March 25, 2020

Racist comments made during university Zoom lecture hack – CTV Kitchener News, October 2, 2020

Elementary students 'Zoom bombed' with porn – KVUE (abc), September 11, 2020

To help answer your questions I contacted the College expert on Zoom, Brian Gould, Manager, Online Learning & Development, Academic Quality. Below I share my questions to Brian and his responses.

**Me:** Some faculty have expressed concern that the Col-

lege can monitor Zoom calls. Is this possible? For example, meetings between faculty or a faculty teaching a class?

**Brian Gould:** Mohawk's Zoom administrator has access to all accounts, account activity, and cloud recordings. However, this is no different than any other college system such as email, wherein the system administrators have access to all accounts and activities, as needed.

By this, I mean that if I go digging, I can see who has meetings scheduled, past meetings, meeting titles, cloud recordings, etc. In order to monitor a call, I would need to join the meeting and would be present as an attendee – just like anyone else – so there is no way of doing so in secret. Having said that, I have no interest or time in doing so, and I also view that type of activity as a breach of the trust that has been bestowed upon me in the role of administrator.

**Me:** There was also concern expressed about the College recording Zoom calls, without the knowledge of faculty or students. Is this possible?



**Brian Gould:** There is no way for me or the 'college' to record zoom meetings without the knowledge of the host and/or attendees. Every time a recording starts, the record icon appears within the meeting and one must be designated as a Host, Co-Host, or Alternate-Host within a meeting in order to initiate the recording function.

**Me:** The third question is about archiving. Can the College record and archive meetings and zoom lectures for future use?

**Brian Gould:** All recordings made to the Zoom cloud are viewable and retrievable by the Zoom system administrator. Once deleted, zoom cloud recordings are retrievable for up to 30 days from the trash folder by both the person who initiated the recording and the system administrator. Once removed from the trash folder, recordings are no longer retrievable by anyone at Mohawk.

Effective September 22nd, 2020, all Zoom cloud recordings are auto imported into both Panopto and Kaltura and so administrators of those systems will

also have access to Zoom cloud recordings created on or after September 22nd, 2020 unless deleted by the creator from all three systems.

The College does not have access to Zoom recordings that are saved locally (i.e. to your local hard drive), unless the user was to record to a mapped network folder (e.g. Y drive) or to a Microsoft OneDrive folder as these systems are maintained by Mohawk IT and therefore discoverable and retrievable by the IT server administrator.

The College has provided numerous resources to help faculty use Zoom effectively including avoiding the problems experienced in the headlines above. These a few of the links I found helpful.

<https://mohawkcollege.zoom.us/#instructorResource>  
Live Zoom Demonstrations  
Best Practices for Securing your Zoom Meetings

Please send your comments and questions. I am not an expert on Zoom (probably the farthest from that term when it comes to Zoom) but I can try to help you find answers to your questions.



SO, CAN THE COLLEGE MONITOR AND ACCESS YOUR ZOOM MEETINGS?

WELL RUDOLPH, IT'S COMPLICATED..

# 7 missing pieces: why students prefer in-person over online classes

by Joanne Ong, et. al.

*This article was first published in University Affairs on December 2, 2020*

We are a group of undergraduate and graduate students from York University connected with each other through sociology professor Cary Wu's research methods courses. Led by Dr. Wu, we recently came together as a virtual group to discuss what makes in-person classes unique and different from online-learning. Through this productive discussion, we were able to determine what it is about in-person classes that we long for. Here, we share with you seven main themes that emerged in our conversations.

## 1. Community and friendship

The physicality of in-person classes presents a sense of community that can easily be lost online. Students note that in the classroom they can make personal connections with like-minded peers who share their scholarly interests. This kind of bonding experience is not easily replicated online, as most students rarely converse with each other during and after an online class.

When you are all in the same physical setting, making connections feels natural and it is unquestionably easier to reach out to classmates and professors alike. In-person classes lead to organic discussions where students can bounce ideas off of one another. For remote classes, by contrast, the on-screen dynamic we have been thrown into is impersonal and largely anonymous. "There is no sense of friendship or relationship between the students that would usually be built in traditional in-person classes," says one student. "I feel like it is a missed networking opportunity."

With regard to peer support, options are especially limited for students in online classes. Generally, when

students have questions about course directions, university processes, Moodle, and so on, they will reach out to their peers. However, now that virtual classes have deprived students of the opportunity to build rapport with others, some of them do "not feel comfortable emailing a stranger."

Graduate students are hit especially hard. One such student indicates that, "As a graduate student, we often don't have much spare time for hobbies and seeing friends. Class time, group meetings, etc., provide us with what is often our only social interaction during a given week. The loss of this, I believe, is causing a lot of loneliness and grief that should not be understated."

## 2. Presence of social cues

Social cues are often missed in online classes, and when we fail to pick up on these cues, we misunderstand people and situations. Students observe a missing "human aspect" in online interactions. "It feels as if I'm speaking to myself or filming myself rather than engaging in a conversation."

Exacerbating the issue, students may turn off their cameras during an online class and, without these visual cues, they may not feel safe during classroom discussions and find it difficult to "develop a sense of trust and familiarity" toward their peers who, against the backdrop of faceless learning, feel more like "strangers."

## 3. Sense of motivation

"I like seeing other people studying in the library

because it gives me a sense of motivation and comfort,” observes one student. Without the option of studying in the library or other shared study space, students feel their motivation to complete their assignments and prepare for tests ebbing away. Indeed, the library seems to be a place that nurtures resilience and provides a sense of comfort and solidarity among students. Another student observes that seeing other students study makes them realize that they are not the only one struggling, and this drives them to do their best.

Graduate students also mention that staying after classes to meet with their professors allows them to connect with their professors in ways that additionally benefit their learning. “Sometimes it’s not only about learning the material. Establishing a good relationship with a professor allows me to connect with them in ways that makes me more eager to ask more questions and seek more answers.”

#### **4. Staying focused**

Engagement and focus are vital to the learning process, but are in poor supply under the regime of online learning. “Without in-person interactions with professors and classmates, some students can struggle to focus during class and refrain from asking questions.” More directly, online classes are rife with ready distractions, including “online notifications, chat functions on Zoom and other household or neighbourhood distractions that cannot be controlled.”

Just the belief that they would do better if schooling were done in-person may subliminally drive a self-fulfilling prophecy among students in which they feel that they are not well-equipped to study online and subsequently, care and work less. “Obviously, students have lectures, tutorials, assignments, tests, quizzes and exams they must do. However, there are more chances for you to push it off to another day because you do not have to be at the location personally.”

Graduate students are in the same boat. “The act of going into a specific space to study, with a group of people who can also be interacted with before and after, or during breaks, helps [them] to remain focused and interested in the topic of the class.”

#### **5. Privacy**

At home, but no privacy? Yes, this has become the reality for many students. Virtual meetings in one’s home does not afford the same level of privacy that in-person and closed-door meetings do. More likely than not, family members will be home due to the pandemic, and hence, students may forgo making appointments due to privacy concerns, depriving them of human interaction.

Similarly, some students cannot talk about their issues from home because they do not wish to have anyone else listen in on what they have to say to their academic advisors. Students also tend to feel more supported and comfortable when they talk to their academic advisors and counselors in person.

#### **6. Sense of routine**

Perhaps the cornerstone of high achievement is discipline. Online schooling, however, lacks structure, and this can affect a student’s grade and experience of the course as a whole. One student says, “Being at home has taken away this sense of routine because there is no necessity to wake early to commute or be somewhere at a given time.”

More troubling are the opportunities for procrastination that asynchronous classes afford. Indeed, without scheduled times, reminders by the professor and regular conversations with classmates in the lecture hall, it is almost guaranteed that students will fall behind on course readings, content and lecture material.

This lack of structure can also cause a blurring of boundaries between home and schoolwork. “I work hard at school so I can relax at home,” but “being home, there are a lot of things that can distract you from starting work whether it be family who are also staying home, or other things.”

Staying focused is especially hard for students who do not have their own proper learning space to study at home. “It is hard to focus because I have no space in my room to put a table to study and in the living room there is so much noise going on. My only solution is to do my work and study at night when my family goes to bed.”

## 7. Just being on campus

The simple act of being on campus makes for a positive educational and social postsecondary experience. Campus provides a sharp distinction between work and home, rather than the nebulous space students are finding themselves in at present. “I envision my home to be a safe place, a place that I don’t have to stress in, where I simply relax and forget about the day.”

Campus also provides a necessary common ground for students who live far away from each other to meet and connect. Perhaps most importantly, campus provides the right kind of learning atmosphere to study, concentrate and complete assignments. One student notes, “I go to York every day, even when I don’t have class. I’d arrive at York every day at 7:00 in the morning and just study till my class started – most of my classes were in the afternoon and I would stay at York even after all my lectures and tutorials were done till around 5:00. York was the place where work got done.”

“Even thinking about how long we are going to have to put up with online schooling is scary ... Is this going to be the new reality of learning for university students?” Thus, for undergraduate and graduate students alike, online schooling seems to hinder both educational outcomes and social experiences. “Even thinking about how long we are going to have to put up with online

schooling is scary ... Is this going to be the new reality of learning for university students?”

Students struggle to remain focused, motivated, committed, and there is no longer a sense of familiarity and community among students and professors. This is not to say that online learning can only produce negative outcomes, but rather, to acknowledge the difficult challenges it poses for all students.

Yes, the global pandemic has given students the opportunity to contemplate their educational experience and truly appreciate the physical space and face-to-face interactions they have had with their peers and professors on campus. In the midst of the global pandemic, we are experiencing what it is like to be left to our own devices both figuratively and literally, and the consensus view among students is that meaningful social interaction stems from campus.

Contributors to this article include:

Joanne Ong, Rebecca De Santo, Jagdeep Heir, Edmund Siu, Nirosa Nirmalan, Martin B. Ofori, Abiola Awotide, Okeida Hassan, Raquel Ramos, Taha Badaoui, Victoria Ogle, Christian Saad, Esteban Sabbatasso and Susan Morrissey Wyse are all students at York University.

Cary Wu is a professor of sociology at York.

FROM ALL THE STEWARDS AND OFFICERS OF YOUR FACULTY UNION, HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND THE VERY BEST FOR 2021!



## OPSEU Local 240 Mohawk College Faculty Area Stewards September 1, 2020 - August 31, 2022

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