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Non-Full-Time Instructors at Ontario Universities

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There is a growing body of research demonstrating that there have been major changes in the work and working conditions of university teachers in many countries over the last few decades. In some cases this has led to the increasing employment of non-full-time university instructors, and questions have been raised, especially in the United States, concerning the working conditions of part-time faculty and the implications of these changes on educational quality. The number of full-time faculty at Ontario universities has not increased at the same pace as the massive growth in student enrolment, raising questions about whether universities have employed non-full-time faculty in larger numbers and whether the balance between full-time and non-full-time instructors is changing. However, very little empirical research has been conducted on non-full-time instructors in Ontario. This study offers a preliminary exploration of the issue by addressing four key questions:

a) What categories of non-full-time instructors are employed by Ontario universities?

b) What are the conditions of employment for non-full-time instructors?

c) Has the number of non-full-time instructors employed by Ontario universities changed over time?

d) Has the ratio of full-time to non-full-time instructors employed by Ontario universities changed over time?

The research method focused on the collection and analysis of publicly available information through a detailed review of collective agreements and related documentation, and the analysis of institutional data on employment. Most institutions do not report data on non-full-time instructor appointments.

What categories of non-full-time instructors are employed by Ontario universities?

Each Ontario university is an autonomous corporation with the ability to make independent decisions related to employment. Faculty members at most universities are unionized, and there are major differences in employment categories and arrangements between institutions. Non-full-time instructors can be categorized into three broad groups: sessional instructors, who are usually employed on a per-course basis; graduate student instructors, who are graduate students with independent responsibility for teaching a course; and other instructors, a category that includes a wide range of quite different types of appointments where it is difficult, if not impossible, to compare across institutions. Our analysis focused on sessional instructors and graduate student instructors.

What are the conditions of employment for non-full-time instructors?

The conditions of employment for non-full-time instructors vary by institution. Salaries ranged from $5,584 per course (half-course) at Nipissing University to $7,665 at York UniversitY(r i)-5(n)4(g)-9(ed)4(f)-q(f)-1000] TJ ET (th)-8c0 1

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The “Other” University Teachers: Non-Full-

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The province of Ontario is home to 20 provincially funded universities, each of which offers undergraduate arts and sciences curricula combined with a distinct set of professional and graduate research programs. Each university has a distinct legislative act that establishes it as an autonomous not-for-profit corporation. As such, each institution is responsible for hiring employees and determining the conditions of their

more than one university. The unique nature of these “other instructors” appointments by university makes comparisons between institutions very difficult. With this reality in mind, the next sections of this report will focus on the conditions of employment for two of these three categories of non-full-time instructors: sessional instructors and graduate student instructors.

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This section addresses our second research question regarding the conditions of employment for sessional instructors. Our main source of data on conditions of employment is the relevant collective agreements and it is interesting to note that the 20 universities included in our analysis can be neatly divided in half in terms of how sessional instructors are represented (see Table 2). At ten universities the faculty association represents both full-time and part-time faculty, and therefore the conditions of employment for sessional instructors are governed by the same agreement that governs the full-time, tenure-stream professoriate. At the other ten universities sessional instructors are represented by a separate union. In the case of the University of Toronto, teaching appointments involving contracts of less than one year are covered by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) local, while appointments of one year or more (even if they are part-time) are represented by the University of Toronto Faculty Association. Our analysis of conditions of employment focuses on the agreements with the associations identified in Table 2 (see the appendix for a detailed list of documents), as well as some supplementary materials provided to us by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. These conditions are based on information for the 2012-2013 academic year, though it is important to note that employment conditions change subject to bargaining and that we can only

4.1 Salaries

There is considerable variation in the salary arrangements for sessional instructors employed by Ontario universities. A summary of salary arrangements is presented in Table 3. The lowest salary for a sessional instructor is $5,584 for teaching a three-credit course (the equivalent to one semester in length) at Nipissing University, while the highest salary for new sessional lecturers can be found at York University, which pays $7,665 for a half-course. While it is possible to roughly compare salaries by institution, detailed comparisons become confounded by specific institutional arrangements. Some institutions pay a common rate per course (half course or full course), while others have different rates for different levels of seniority, or different categories of appointment associated with promotion. In other words, the salary may vary depending on experience or standards of performance as demonstrated by promotion to a higher rank. Salaries may be adjusted to address issues of class size or to compensate for additional work after the academic term.

Interpreting these salary levels in terms of equivalent full-time salaries is also quite difficult because there is no common definition of a full-time teaching load across universities. Ryerson University notes a full-load equivalent salary of sessional instructors ranging between $58,090 and $76,518. The Lakehead University agreement (Article 19.03.02) indicates a maximum teaching load of 10 half courses per year (six in regular session and two in the spring and summer sessions) suggesting a maximum salary of between $64,000 and $71,000 depending on level. An individual who teaches five full courses at the University of Toronto or York University will earn more than $75,000 per year. There are certainly sessional instructors who teach more than five full courses; in fact one can find sessional instructors employed by a number of universities on the Ontario salary disclosure list with total incomes of over $100,000. In contrast, the OCAD University memorandum specifies a maximum teaching load for sessional instructors of five studio half courses or three half courses in the liberal arts or sciences within each academic year.

However, these analyses tell us little about the salary levels of the average sessional instructor (since we do not know the average number of courses taught by sessional instructors). What is certainly clear from these data is that salary levels for sessional instructors in Ontario are roughly double the level of remuneration cited as average in the United States by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (2012).

Table 3: Sessional Instructor Salaries at Ontario Universities

University	Salary (2012/13) including vacation pay	
Algoma	3-credit course	$5,760
Brock	Half-course	$6,067
Carleton	Half-course	$6,483
Guelph	Minima Maxima	$6,880 $9,000
Lakehead	Level 1 (30 or fewer HCE[1]) Level 2 (31-60 HCE) Level 3 (more than 60 HCE)	$6,450 $6,750 $7,100
Lauren tian	Establishment[2]	$6,600
McMaster	3-credit course	$6,514.75
Nipissing	Per three-credit course: -	

Source: OCUFA, 2013
Notes:

1. HCE: half-course equivalent
2. Establishment status for particular course on third appointment within six years; for retirees may include two occasions as regular full-time assignment.
3. Right of first refusal threshold: course taught three times in 72 months (not necessarily consecutively). Course count begins May 1, 2001.

4.2 Health Plans

Sessional instructors employed at some Ontario universities have access to some form of supplementary

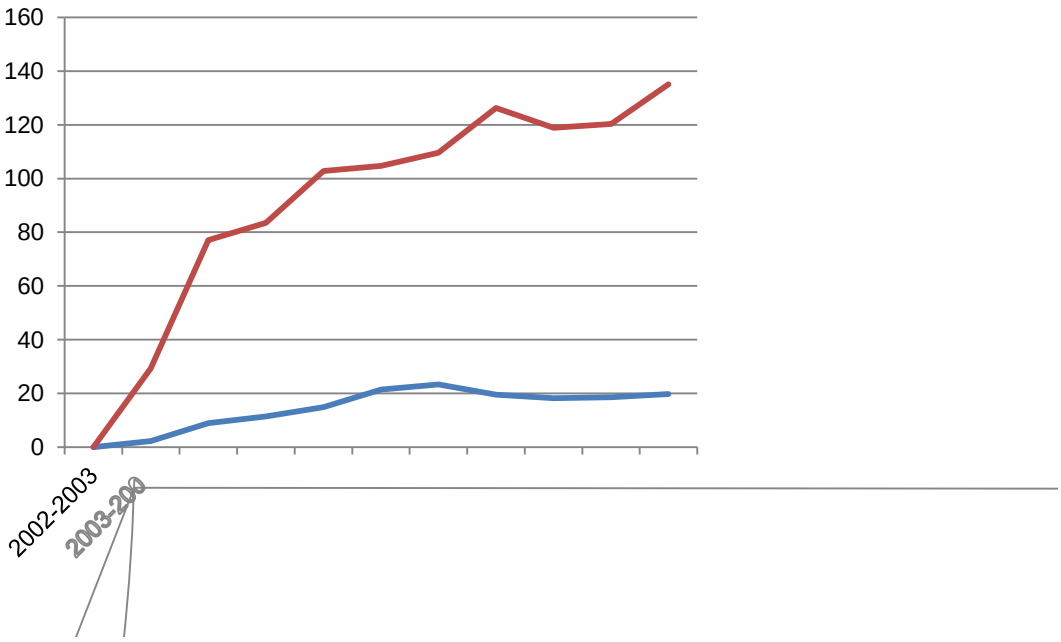
Graduate student instructors employed at these three universities are eligible for a range of benefits. Each university offers a health plan. At York University graduate student instructors are eligible to enrol in a pension plan. Instructors at all three institutions also have access to sick leaves, family leaves, compassionate leaves, jury duty leaves and leaves to conduct union activities. Queen’s University offers a reservist leave for students who need time away from work to serve in the armed forces. The University of Toronto offers a leave for students who require gender reassignment surgery.

5.2 Training

Graduate student instructors at all three universities are eligible for training and/or professional development related to their teaching activities. Gradu

The Parties agree that the educational mission of the University can be carried out only if most credit courses are taught by full-

Figure 4: Percentage Change of Sessional Instructor As signments vs. Tenure -Stream Faculty Appointments, 2002 -2013



Data source: York Institutional Factbook (2013)

York University also provides information on the number of course director assignments by faculty, summarized in Table 11. Over the past ten years, the largest number of sessional instructor assignments has been in what is now the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies. It is interesting to note that there are major differences in employment trends by faculty and that the balance between full-time faculty and sessional instructors may vary tremendously by academic unit within the university.

The “Other” University Teachers: Non-Full-

We were also able to obtain the number of graduate student instructors who were employed at the University of Toronto as of October of each year from 2007 to 2012. There were 204 graduate student instructors employed in the 2007-2008 academic year and 252 in 2012-2013 (an increase of 24%), though it is important to note that the number of appointments has moved up and down during this period.

The number of sessional instructors and graduate student instructors employed by the University of Toronto has increased over the last decade, but this increase is roughly comparable to the increase in the number of tenure-stream faculty and less than the growth in teaching-stream appointments during this time period. Once again, it is important to note that these data count the number of sessional instructors and graduate student instructors rather than the number of courses that they teach, so the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty (tenure-stream and teaching stream) may have actually increased during this period.

6.3 McMaster University

In 2010 the McMaster University Factbook began to report the number of sessional instructors. The three years of comparative data are presented in Table 13, as well as corresponding data on student enrolment and the number of tenure-

Table 16: Number of Courses Taught by Tenured/Tenure -Stream Faculty and Sessional Faculty at Carleton University, 2010 -2013

	Course s taught by tenured/ tenure stream faculty*	-	Courses taught by sessional instructors

In terms of the balance between full-time tenure-stream appointments and sessional faculty, the situation seems to be quite different at different Ontario universities. The growth in the number of sessional instructor assignments at York University has far outpaced the growth in the number of full-time faculty appointments. The same appears to be true at McMaster, though data are only available for three years. The growth in sessional instructors roughly parallels the growth in tenure-stream faculty at the University of Toronto, where the growth in teaching-stream faculty has outpaced the other two categories. The number of full-time faculty at Nipissing has grown, while the number of sessional instructors has remained relatively stable. The collective agreements at four universities establish a maximum percentage of courses that can be taught by sessional instructors in an attempt to prevent a shift in the balance of teaching between full and part-time faculty.

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This study provides a preliminary exploration of the employment of non-full-time instructors at Ontario universities by addressing four key questions through a detailed analysis of publicly available documents, reports and data. A summary of the findings related to each question will be presented, followed by concluding observations and suggestions for further research.

7.1 What categories of non -full -time instructors are employed by Ontar io universities?

Each Ontario university is an autonomous corporation with the ability to make independent decisions related to employment. The faculty at most universities are unionized and there are major differences in employment categories and arrangements by institution. Non-full-time instructors can be categorized into three broad groups: sessional instructors, who are usually employed on a per-course basis; graduate student instructors, who are graduate students with independent responsibility for teaching a course; and other instructors, a category that includes a wide range of quite different types of appointment where it is difficult if not impossible to compare across institutions. Our analysis focused on sessional instructors and graduate student instructors.

7.2 What are the conditions of employment for non -full -time instructors?

The conditions of employment for non-full-time instructors vary by institution. At ten of the 20 universities, sessional instructors are represented by the same association as full-time, tenure-stream faculty, while at the other ten there are separate unions or associations. Salaries ranged from $5,584 per course (half-course) at Nipissing University to $7,665 at York University in 2012-2013. It is challenging to calculate the full-time equivalent salary since there is no agreement on a full-time load at most universities, though the collective agreements at some universities specify a maximum teaching load ranging from three half-courses in the liberal arts and sciences at OCAD University to ten half-courses at Lakehead University.

Sessional instructors have benefits guaranteed under collective agreements including, at some institutions, pensions, health plans, leaves, etc. Access to (often shared) office space and technology is also guaranteed under most collective agreements. While some collective agreements provide some form of job security related to seniority or promotion, it is very clear that sessional instructors do not have anything close to the level of security associated with tenure.

Graduate student instructors have conditions of employment that roughly parallel those of sessional instructors.

7.3 Has the number of non -full -time instructors employed by Ontario universities changed over time?

Most Ontario universities do not report the number of non-full-time instructors, but relevant data are available

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