

Bargaining Meeting Minutes
Union of Graduate Student Workers and Post Docs (PSAC 60550)
March 9-10, 2022

UGSW Local Members Present: Ramin Shamsdini, Ehsan Kianfar, Mona Jazinaninejad, Sarah Durham, Quinn Carvey

PSAC Representative Present: Raphaëlle Valay-Nadeau

Key:

Highlighted sections refer to:

Recommendation for the CA

Action

Question

General

- Include a preamble to the collective agreement
 - Contact UNB's indigenous liaison to ask if there is someone to help with this
 - Can share Queen's Uni CA
- Share all the changes to the CA we are proposing with the members prior to bringing them to UNB
 - One at a time: non-monetary then monetary
 - These need to be ratified
- Common issue table: 1-2 members per bargaining team
 - Discuss this as a group first
 - Keep other members looped in in real time
 - Specific days for common issues?
 - Common issue: language that should be the same in both CA (grad students and post docs)
- Need to ID a person from each team to take notes at all meetings
 - Grads and post docs
 - In caucuses (so we can reexplain our rationale); meetings with employer
 - Make sure interpretation of language is clear (both parties)
 - Especially important for grievances
 - Can prove our interpretation of the language
 - Helps for future bargaining sessions
- Concern for post doc bargaining
 - Low engagement
 - Only one post doc on our executive team
 - May be repercussions for participating
 - Ramin S's contract ends in April; there is a chance of a few month extension
 - Quinn C will send Ramin S the contact information of the post doc in their lab
- **Can only have post docs on the bargaining team!**

- **Need to recruit post docs**
- Mobilization committee
 - Work closely with the bargaining team
 - Get members from each department or sector
 - PSAC can fund some mobilizing events
 - Approve funding at GMM for those involved in this
 - TAs may get paid but post docs could get unpaid leave (still get their salary)
- Incorporate a hybrid option for bargaining meetings
 - This is a possibility but most should be in person

Timeline

- Queen's: 6 months of bargaining
 - We hope have a CA by December
- Contentious articles and unmotivated members can increase the timeline
- Roadblock: call in conciliator (call impasse); provincial labor board
 - It's not a binding process
 - Third-party recommendations
 - 5 days – 2 months
 - Usually this occurs after exchange monetary
- If conciliator isn't successful: strike or lockout
 - Can't vote on strike possibility until after call in a conciliator
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Expenses covered for bargaining team

- Loss of salary (post docs have to take leave)
- TA/RA are paid for all hours worked at the bargaining (at the salary rate); same for post docs
- Accommodations, per diem, travel
- \$50/day per diem when traveling
- Inform our supervisor that we will be in bargaining
 - This is our union right, so there can't be any issues
 - If there are issues, let Raphaelle know
- Financial membership portal:
 - Create an account and enter expenses

Survey results (post doc)

- Post docs: 16 respondents
- **Question**: actual break down of all members: international, Canadian, PR
- **Flagged issue**: parental leave pay is for base salary and not actual salary
- Request for a disability audit for staff and students
 - Not sure what this means
- Joint employment equity committee for faculty

- o Not for post docs
- Equity survey (in post doc CA)
 - o UNB should have provided employment equity survey results within 90 days of ratifying the CA
 - o Queen's university included a new article with regards to employment equity (stronger than our current language)
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 - o **Action item**: follow up with HR to see if this was ever done
- Issues for international students
 - o Several students having issues with healthcare
 - o Contract renewal
 - o Specific issues raised:
 - Lack of orientation (**recommendation**: add this to the CA)
 - No health care on maternity leave (**action item**: find out if they should still have had health benefits?!)
- Half of respondents have kids
 - o Average cost: 10,000
- Contract length variable
 - o Ramin S had a 10 month
 - o There are some extremely short term contracts (this could be an issue); **raise this in CA**
 - o Most 18+ months, many 1 year
- Equal reps: one research PI and with industry partners
- Why did some students say timely processing of paperwork was not well (2), or satisfactory (5)
 - o Ramin S stated UNB has taken advantage of timelines for paperwork; UNB claimed need two months before the start date of their position (after graduating)
 - Don't have official reps with the union for this problem (between contracts)
 - o **Clarify language in CA??** (states at least 60 days before start of new contract right now); can we avoid UNB delaying position starts because of paperwork?
 - Want to protect people who need this time but also make sure can timely hire
- Main issues: longer contracts, timely processing of paperwork, increased job security
 - o Secondary: access to paid training, fair hiring, outlining job duties
 - o Specific issue raised: university access to software/licenses
 - **Ask for specific funding?**
- Most members aren't tracking their work hours
 - o Those that do, most are within, but some are not
- Specific issue: **yearly pay increase should match the national inflation value**
- **Pay out unused vacation**
- Many not sure if their supervisor is knowledgeable of their CA
 - o **Increase time for our members to get training sessions on the CA**
 - o **Increase supervisor training in CA**

- o University ensures that supervisors are knowledgeable; can't use the argument ("I don't know"; ex. taking vacation time, PTO, etc.)
- Office space: most happy but specific issue with no shared spaces (break rooms)
 - o What are the obligations of the employer for remote work?
- Issues with cleanliness and heat
- Out of pocket costs: average \$800 (includes zeroes; those that do 2-3,000)
 - o Queen's University asked for research and professional expenses (funds for training; asked 35,000; increased yearly); these funds are jointly managed
 - Employer adds funding; then a committee assesses demand that is joint
 - Add a similar provision
 - o Career development rated as important
- Access to office supplies/print
- Look into a better package of benefits: beyond health and dental, EEI
- Is it clear in the contract: benefits come out of the salary that is advertised to post docs
 - o Check the language; MOA (needs to include this memorandum in the CA)
- Question: is there long-term disability insurance?
- Question: family related leave (sick kids/school closures/etc.)
- Leaves: most interested; get 10 days paid leave for these categories
 - o Maternity leave
 - o Sick leave
 - o Domestic violence leave
- Interest in new leaves:
 - o Child care (Queen's initial package had some language on this, can reference)
 - Ask faculty if we can see what language they are using around this
 - o Mental health support
 - o Increase the vacation pay carryover (ie., two weeks rather than one)
 - o Specific request: medical leave (so don't need to use vacation time); get sick days, can we modify the CA language to use hours for appts?
- Question: maximum post doc contracts you can hold?
 - o Is income-averaging a possibility for post doc?
- Mental health resources: look at what Queen's got and specify demands
- Address remote work (but don't necessarily link this to COVID)
 - o Increases expenses: desks, energy, internet
 - o Need to see if this is worth it; this can be a roadblock issue so need to be cautious
 - o Formalize the right for working from home; is this a "right"? is this an available choice of the employee?
 - o Working from home issues: mental health, ergonomics, expenses
 - o Extra expenses: cameras/computers, internet, childcare
- If students don't feel like they have adequate PPE, safety measures, should contact the union to discuss this at the JOHS committee
- Two university orientations (September and January): this is in the CA now, but isn't happening
 - o Enforcement
 - o We need to ask the university; if this is denied we can grieve

- Contact the people who were interested in getting more involved (answered this in the survey) about joining the bargaining committee
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Survey results (Graduate Students)

- 3 members have children
- Averaging 90 hours per TA
 - Full time is considered 130 hours
 - Biology department considers full-time 104 hours; can UNB just decide this? Should we
- Students aren't making enough money; but can't work outside hours
 - Can we increase this to 20 hours per week (campus jobs)?
 - Often not enough jobs, so hard to increase the number of hours, but could increase the pay
 - Increase in hours worked is beyond just TA
 - Limitation in hours is implemented by UNB (not in our CA)
 - International students can work unlimited hours on campus and up to 20 hours per week off campus (study permit visa; Canada)
 - UNB sets an additional limit
 - Question: graduate student employment; where is the official policy for limiting research-based students to 10 hours per week?
 - Is this based off our CA? This shouldn't be the case; doesn't apply to non GSTA/GSRA hours
 - Fight for increased wages and increased hours
- Funds for textbooks
- Specify in the article 15.02: ensure duties are included
 - Use language for job posting for this
- Appendix B1
 - Is this the employer's responsibility?
 - Train supervisors
 - AUNBT: have a discussion with this union to fix these problems
 - Joint committee to streamline the B1 process
 - Also inform students that they shouldn't sign forms until they are filled out with duties
 - Also inform department admins: so they can answer prof questions
 - What is the point of the B1 form:
- Process for hiring Tas is different between departments
- Mobilization:
 - Have beginning meeting: did you fill out your B1 form?
 - Action activity: fun!
 - 20 days later: did you get your feedback
- Interest in contracts:

- o Guarantee of contracts
- Question: are contracts specified in the hiring letter?
 - o Does this guarantee funding?
 - o “When this is offered as a part of the hiring” this is guaranteed; but how many students get this as part of their hiring financial package?
 - o How are the TAships allocated if they aren’t in the hiring package?
- Problematic: TA positions are allocated so differently among departments
 - o Understand how/why this varies
- Ability to do job:
 - o Want materials to do do job
 - o Want training relative to their position
 - o Mental health
 - o Right to disconnect
- On average, out of pocket expenses
 - o Average 1,000
- Some of the worst responses was how well UNB deals with issues of wages/benefits
- Does your financial package cover your living expenses
 - o 75% no
 - o Half do part-time work
 - o Average deficit \$614 (question: see distribution of these; is it skewed towards one high?)
- Almost half of students are skipping meals and having inadequate nutrition
- Of 20 answers: most underpaid or not paid on time
 - o Language in the CA, penalty for late pay (if not the students)? Have specified recourse for students to get immediate rectification;
- Most students not using leaves
- Top issues: Mental health, right to disconnect, quarantine/covid leaves are important
 - o Existing mental health issues exacerbated by covid (20); highlighting ongoing support needed
- Issue: marking takes over 10 hours per week; deadlines should reflect this weekly hourly requirement
 - o The collective agreement does state that employees may not work more than 15 hours without their consent
 - This part is in the memo at the end of the CA that “isn’t binding”
 - Article 15.07: edit to include “written consent”
 - o Should we include something about not working in weekends?
 - Reasonable timelines for turnaround (marking, etc.)
- Separate issue: if scholarship recipients can be unionized
 - o This is not apart of our CA; this would be a union drive
- Most desired:
 - o Mental health support and equipment
- Most people satisfied with UNB’s covid response
- Action item: more regular surveys to check in with members
 - o Find problems that we can help with
- If there is a resurgence of covid, we should follow up about the concerns raised

- o Access to ppe, desks with barriers
- Problem: most members are not familiar with website/us this is something to address
 - o Have an event
 - o Send an email
 - o Hardship funding, apply via the website
- Only two grad students want to be more involved

Collective Agreement (Graduate)

- 6 TAships worth of funding and \$2,000 (post doc funding) is sufficient
- Missing language to explain what “Employment Equity” is
 - o Common issue: put forth an article to address this
- Clarify that it is the task of the supervisor to fill out the duties of the B1
 - o Add that the duties of the TA should be filled out (marking, etc.)
- Discussion point with UNB: discrepancy between full-time TA in the CA and what is considered full-time with the dept (104 hours)
 - o Discuss then come up with possible CA edits
- Edit the language about grievances for harassment
 - o Extend the window to 1 year to report
- Include domestic violence leave
 - o Common issue: 10 days leave
 - o UNB may negotiate this differently for
- Info bulletin about our rights
 - o Did you know you have the right to: conference leave
 - Don't forget to ask!
- Summary page for the CA (not negotiated part)
- Question: what happens to banked benefits if you have a break in your contract?
 - o I.e., don't work for a semester
 - o If skip a semester, keep banked leave for one year if reasonable expectation of a renewal
- Remove (27.04) option for pay up to 30 days
- Duration of CA; we decide this after we know what the language will be
 - o If we gain a lot; want a longer contract
 - o Typically ask for 3 year; UNB typically asks for 5
- Wages
- Mobilization campaign:
 - o Opt in phone campaign
 - o Users can answer questions
 - o We can use the data we get for more specific mobilization campaign

Collective Agreement (post doc)

- Increase minimum salary (Dal)
- Common issue: streamline B1 contracts
 - o Discussion: electronic option for these?
- Have UNB send dues reports to our local directly (not cc'ing us on their email to PSAC)

- Question: can we get the post doc emails in their contract? Their UNB ID?
- Add: the link to our website and email address to us (they can contact us with questions about their benefits)
- Increase money to us for PDFS
 - Relative to inflation?
 - 10% of the base salary of the post doc
- Article 7: employer shall convene at least two orientations in each calendar. Union rep gets at least 15 mins to provide an overview on the role of the union
 - Common issue to grads and post docs: “employer shall convene”
- Article 8.1: check if we need to change these addresses/contacts
 - People and Culture
- Article 9: common issue: add language about process for harassment
- Need to have a link to outlined benefits (AND COSTS ASSOC with them) in the hiring letter; currently just provides an email for questions
- Add truth and reconciliation day (official holidays)
- Add: vacation (unused) should be paid out
- Provisions for post doc couples (parental leave)
- Parental Leave: 6 months/full year? Dal got 26 weeks at 100%
 - Salary determined by supervisor (get rid of provision about base salary)
- MOA: health and dental for gaps: need to modify language around the plan
 - Currently only signed one memo
- Article 34: funds for training (administered by both parties jointly; Carleton and Queen’s)
 - Common issue
 - Amend article 34 for post docs
 - Grads: no article (would be new)
- Wages: increase based on research
 - Possibly start with 45,000 (tried this last time) with 3% annual increase
 - Also increase 3% annually for post docs not getting base
 - Question: How does university evaluate their work?
 - Dal secured \$38,000
 - Danger in dictating how they set individual wages; want to ensure we don’t limit the potential earnings
 - Consider: language setting a min base salary or the average of the dept (whichever is higher); not sure this language is what we want, think more on this
- Can we request the university to publish average salaries in each department
 - Help students make informed decisions about accepting offers
 - Increase transparency
- Add a formal equity statement in the CA; not just the memo at the end
 - AUNBT-UNB has an employment equity committee
 - Ask for our local to have a seat at this table

Call Hub

- Hand out flyers: text a number with a keyword
 - Need to design these

- We will get a phonebook which stores everyone's data ("Local 60550")
 - Gives it to us in an excel file
 - We will need to add this to PSAC's system
- Rented a local number for people to text
 - Keyword: UGSW
 - Will try to get a short number to text (ex. 67070)
- No fees for people to text this
- Once campaign is done, we need to migrate it to USave (PSAC can pay for leave for us to do this transfer, from call hub)
- Automated prompts
- We are live!
- We can access Call Hub through Raphaelle
- We can set up campaigns where we answer people specifically (reach out campaign vs opt in campaign)
 - But more work for us
 - If we have a specific campaign this could be good (bargaining)
 - Can do personalized messages (first name) in reach outs
- Ehsan K asked about personalized emails (first name)
 - Option: mail chimp?
 - Previously used a service that was \$100/mo

Mobilization

- Bulletin with updates/bullet points on the CA
- Ratification of the proposal package meeting (end of March/beginning of April)
 - General members meeting
 - Only topic can be the bargaining: review the proposed CA
 - Presentation of the package proposal: Wednesday, April 13th : need to inform members ahead of time
 - Two meetings: SJ at lunch FR at dinner; have Raphaelle in person for both
 - Purpose: questions, comments, recruit for mobilization (get dept. liasons)
- Notice to bargain to UNB on March 31st
 - 20+ days then to have our first meeting with UNB
- PSAC may be able to cover pizza at the package proposal meeting
- Swag?
 - Who can print this? Unionized shops
 - Mobilization plan from PSAC's budget
 - Check the office for existing swag
- Ulink: can update member info (address; phone number; emails)
 - This is something one of us will get paid to do
 - Be careful because this is the official database!
 - Only executives can have access; preferably choose two executives per local (question now if we can get regular members to do this work; pay them)

Next steps:

- Swag

- Review the CA (bargaining committee) and send Raphaelle and additional feedback
- Raphaelle has 1st draft to us by the 24th of March; we review this prior to sharing with the members
- Meet with members (April 13th)
- Finalize package and share with the employer; also share with members
- After each round of bargaining we will have an info lunch or an email update
- (Get to May-June); pause for summer
- September: bargaining update event; recruit new students