

FAST FACTS



MARCH 7, 2019

President's Letter: Joint committee report tough on metrics, but admin refused language protecting Members

Hello Everyone,

I'm writing you today with an update on our agreement with Administration on Research metrics, contained in Appendix H of the Collective Agreement.

The agreement was to strike a joint committee to study research metrics, including bibliometrics, and have the committee determine whether to adopt additional proposed language into the collective agreement (also found in Appendix 'H'). That language would give each individual Member the right to choose whether or not metrics would be used to assess their work. Administration and UMFA each appointed three members to the committee, and four or more votes were needed to officially adopt the language in

the CA.

Following an investigation of the existing research on bibliometrics, the working group unanimously agreed to several principles, including:

- Regular assessment and evaluation is important for both guidance and career progression;
- The h-index and its relatives do not indicate the quality of the work of an individual researcher;
- Bibliometrics alter the focus of research in undesirable ways when maximizing one's bibliometric rankings becomes a goal;
- Components of bibliometrics are gender-biased;
- Databases used to calculate bibliometrics are not well-correlated at the individual level; and
- There are currently no metrics that suit the criteria for usability in the evaluation of individuals.

The UMFA Members of the committee devoted incredible time and energy to this work. Please join me in the thanking our UMFA appointees in particular: Fletcher Baragar (Faculty of Arts), Colin Garroway (Faculty of Science), and Sherri Vokey (Health Sciences Libraries). Julie Gibbings (Faculty of Arts) also contributed.

Despite this strong indictment of research metrics, however, the three administration appointees voted against the inclusion of the language in Appendix H due to disagreement "centred around the specific language being proposed". That collective agreement language would:

1. prohibit criteria for promotion, tenure, continuing appointments, and performance evaluations that include a standard or expectation based on a quantitative measure or research metric;

2. prohibit requiring research metrics and other quantitative measures for performance evaluations, tenure, promotion, and continuing appointments;
3. only allow use of research metrics if personally and voluntarily submitted by the Member being evaluated or assessed, and;
4. prohibit anyone from penalizing or making adverse inference about a Member or their performance for non-submission of research metrics.

Given the report's indictments of research metrics, we were disappointed with the administration's refusal to give Members the right to decide when, if ever, metrics could be used to assess their own work. No details regarding the disagreements with these proposals were provided in the report. So, we sought clarity from the administration.

We requested a president's liaison meeting in April 2018 pursuant to Section 5.4 of the collective agreement. After much back and forth, we finally met with the president's delegates, not the president himself, on October 26, 2018. We argued that the language in Appendix H did not prohibit members from submitting research metrics, but protected members from effectively having inappropriate and biased metrics imposed upon them.

This was an opportunity for UMFA and UM to demonstrate to our members and the community that we can work together collaboratively. The language would have helped to ensure that evaluation at our university is fair, accurate, and based on a full consideration of research quality. Our stand on performance metrics, and this language, drew support from faculty associations all over the world during our strike. We would have welcomed seeing UM take a leadership role in promoting academic freedom, protecting members of equity-seeking groups, and helping ensure academic assessment continues to be based on rigorous peer evaluation.

We had originally asked to hear the administration's answer by November 16, 2018. The administration asked for several extensions and we checked back with them several

times over the intervening three months. We finally said that if we heard nothing by February 13, we would have to assume that they are rejecting our proposal and proceed accordingly.

We received their response on the day of our deadline. While we hoped otherwise, we were not surprised that administration rejected our proposal to incorporate the appendix H language. They have instead suggested that we bring the committee back to work on alternative language that can serve as a headstart in our next bargaining round.

This is not a workable solution: the language in Appendix H was the compromise language, produced after months of negotiations. It was accepted by both parties because it responded to each side's respective concerns by leaving the question up to the discretion of each individual member rather than the administration or the union. It was to be adopted if the committee concluded that metrics were problematic, and the committee *did* conclude that metrics were problematic. We're incredibly disappointed that the administration has rejected language that in 2016 they agreed could reasonably resolve the issue.

We encourage all of you to read the report (see below). We all serve on promotion, tenure, grant, and award committees, so it is essential that we understand the problems with research metrics, many of which are also applicable to the use of SEEQ's. It is also important that we educate our graduate students as future faculty members of the dangers of research metrics. They need to be trained to perform rigorous, fair peer evaluation, and need to learn how to explain the significance of their contributions to people inside and outside their discipline without resorting to the use of research metrics.

While we were not successful in persuading UM administration to protect vulnerable members from the imposition of research metrics, we did gain language in the 2016 bargaining round that gave each of us the power to improve the situation by protecting each other. Sections 20.C.2 and 19.D.5.2, adopted in 2016, allow promotion and tenure

committee members to report concerns about procedural defects to the chair of the tenure committee, the dean/director (or University Librarian in the case of a committee for an academic librarian), the VP Academic, Staff Relations, or to UMFA. **If, as a committee member, you feel that the committee failed to do an assessment based on a full review of the quality of the member's contributions, and that research metrics were used as a substitute for a more comprehensive assessment of quality and quantity, please speak up.**

An even more powerful way to prevent the incursion of bibliometrics into our academic lives is through your unit's promotion and tenure guidelines. In 2016, we won far greater control over their development: guidelines will be produced by an advisory committee elected by members. The dean ensures that the promotion/tenure criteria are fair and appropriate for all disciplines, consistent with the CA, university policies and the law: as long as this is the case, your dean/director must adopt the guidelines if the majority of members vote for their adoption. Therefore, **the language on research metrics proposed in 2016 can form part of your unit's tenure and promotion guidelines even if they are not in the collective agreement: have the advisory committee incorporate them and the members voting to approve them.** You'll find details on how to do this in a document that I'm circulating with this letter.

The collective effort of improving our working lives doesn't end in bargaining, but continues as we exercise the rights that together we've won. Please read through not only the report, but the attached description of how to revisit and revise your tenure and promotion guidelines. Understanding and exercising your rights is one of the most powerful ways to extend and improve them.

In solidarity,

Janet Morrill
UMFA President

Report: The Collection and Use of Metrics for Assessment and Evaluation

The collective agreement signed in 2016 provided for a joint committee that would 1. address the question of research metrics and 2. vote on including new articles about metrics into the CA. While the administration voted against incorporating the language, we can all ensure that the protections are adopted for members of our units by pushing for, and voting for, guidelines that include them.

For a description of the guideline-writing process and the language you should include, see our latest edition of "[Know your CA](#)". For a fuller understanding of why that language is important, read through the [Committee's report](#). In it, you'll see that the Committee unanimously agreed to several principles, including:

- Regular assessment and evaluation is important for both guidance and career progression;
 - The h-index and its relatives do not indicate the quality of the work of an individual researcher;
 - Bibliometrics alter the focus of research in undesirable ways when maximizing one's bibliometric rankings becomes a goal;
 - Components of bibliometrics are gender-biased;
 - Databases used to calculate bibliometrics are not well-correlated at the individual level; and
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KNOW YOUR CA

Know your CA: Tenure and Promotion - Creating Fair and Effective Guidelines

Articles 19A, 20A, and 20B

(Also available on the [UMFA website](#))

As a member of UMFA you have significant input into the development of Tenure Guidelines and Promotion Guidelines: the collective agreement mandates Members be elected to an advisory committee that will prepare guidelines for their respective Faculty, School, or College. Members also have the right to vote on the final draft recommended by the committee.

Below is a plain language description of how the process should unfold. While similar to the process for drafting and voting on teaching workload guidelines, there are some important differences.

You'll also find some language that, if included in your guidelines, will give individual Members alone the right to choose whether or not to submit research metrics with their tenure or promotion application and be evaluated by means of those metrics.

Developing Your Tenure Guidelines and Promotion Guidelines – two processes

Each Faculty, School, and College must develop its own Tenure Guidelines and Promotion Guidelines in two separate processes: while all UMFA Members in a unit are affected by promotion guidelines, tenure guidelines only apply to the professor ranks.

Part of the strength of this CA language is that to draft these guidelines not only must Deans and Directors involve Members in an advisory committee, but Deans and Directors must also

present these draft documents to Members for approval via a vote. We recommend it be by secret ballot.

Who's Eligible to Participate?

Every UMFA Member in your faculty, school, or college who has tenure or is eligible for tenure is to be part of the Tenure Guideline process. This excludes the lecturer and instructor ranks. Associate Deans/Directors who either hold tenure or are eligible for tenure are also to be part of the process. While the Dean/Director can't vote, all UMFA Members and Associate Deans with tenure or eligible for tenure are eligible to vote on draft Guidelines.

In the Promotion Guideline development process, Deans and Directors must hold an election for an advisory committee from all UMFA Members and Associate Deans in each unit, and allow all UMFA Members and Associate Deans to vote on the Guidelines. This includes the professor ranks, instructor ranks, and lecturers. Deans/Directors are not to vote.

In the Academic Librarians' Promotion Guideline development process, the University Librarian must hold an election for an advisory committee from all UMFA Members in the Libraries and Associate University Librarians, and allow all UMFA Members in Libraries and Associate University Librarians to vote on the proposed draft Guidelines. The University Librarian is on the advisory committee, but cannot vote at meetings of eligible members called for the purpose of voting on final drafts.

Tenure Guidelines and Promotion Guidelines – Step by Step

While the two sets of guidelines have to be developed by separate processes, the same steps must be followed in each. Your Dean, Director (or the University Librarian, in the case of Promotion Guidelines for the Academic Librarians) must do the following:

1. Oversee the election of an advisory committee:

- The Dean/Director has to call a meeting of all eligible Members and Associate Deans/Directors (see above) in your Faculty/School to elect an advisory committee that

will prepare the draft Guidelines for the Faculty/School. It's important to note that this is not a meeting of faculty council. This is a special meeting that is to only include the eligible Members and Associate Dean/Directors. Deans/Directors do not get a vote.

- In the case of the Faculty of Health Sciences, each College will elect two eligible Members to the Faculty Advisory Committee

2. Call meetings of the advisory committee:

- The Dean or Director must hold meetings of the elected advisory committee to prepare (or in the case of existing Guidelines, to revise) Guidelines for your Faculty/School. The Dean or Director will serve as the chair of the committee, or will assign a designate.
- The Dean or Director is to ensure that the criteria and weightings in the new or revised Guidelines are fair and appropriate for all disciplines in your Faculty/School, and are consistent with the CA, University policies, and the law. If not, the draft document must be further considered by the advisory committee.
- When the criteria and weightings in the draft Guidelines are in compliance, a majority of advisory committee members must recommend the draft before it is put to a vote of all eligible members meeting in committee. Committee members' dissenting views of the guidelines must also be presented to eligible members before a vote of all eligible members is held.

3. Call a meeting of eligible members to vote on a final draft:

- Once a draft is in compliance with all applicable rules and a majority of advisory committee members recommend that draft, the Dean/Director must call a meeting of all eligible members for the purpose of voting on the draft.
- If a simple majority votes in favour of adopting the draft Guidelines, they shall be adopted. If a majority is not obtained, the guidelines shall be returned to the advisory committee for revisions. **NOTE:** the Dean/Director/University Librarian cannot cast a vote.

- If a majority of votes is not obtained after two consecutive votes, your Dean/Director will then decide whether to keep the existing tenure or promotion guidelines or to adopt the most recently recommended draft Guidelines. Your Dean/Director must provide written reasons for their decision to all UMFA Members in your Faculty/School. They must also communicate the guidelines to all Faculty Members (or all UMFA Members, in the case of Promotion Guidelines). It's **important to make sure this process is properly followed** for two reasons: (1) If it isn't followed, you diminish your ability to affect what Guidelines are put in place, and (2) the Central Administration or the Association can challenge and potentially overturn the outcomes produced by an improper process.

Metrics and Tenure and Promotion

A Joint Committee on Metrics, composed of three UMFA Members and three administrators, has written a report based on literature reviews, experts, and participating in seminars. Among other things, the report concludes that metrics aren't fit for the evaluation of the work of individual academics.

While the three administrators on the committee refused to add the following language to the collective agreement, including it in your tenure and promotion guidelines will create rights for you and your colleagues in regard to how you're evaluated:

- No tenure/promotion criteria shall require the submission of a research metric, nor shall they include any standard or recommended expectation based on a quantitative measure.
- Research metrics will only be used as part of evaluation and/or assessment when such metrics are personally and voluntarily submitted by the applicant.
- There shall be no penalty or adverse inference to any applicant for the non-submission of research metrics as part of the tenure/promotion application.

- In the CA research metrics are defined as “the product of the application of quantitative analysis and statistics used to assess the quality of a body of work (eg: h-index, citation index, bibliometrics).” Any evaluation and/or assessment of a Member’s research has to be based on a full review of the quality of their contribution to research, scholarly work, and other creative activity, and research metrics can’t be used as a substitute for a more comprehensive assessment of quality and quantity. To ensure that metrics aren’t imposed on Members, including the above in your tenure and promotion guidelines is essential.

Where to look for more details

For the Faculty tenure guideline process, see **19.D.1.5** of the CA (pages 62-65)

For the Faculty promotion guidelines process, see **20.A.1.3** of the CA (pages 71-73)

For Librarians’ promotion guidelines processes, see **20.B.1.3** of the CA (pages 77-79)

You can find the Collective Agreement at www.umfa.ca:



Collective Agreement

New hires Manual

Knowing & Using Your
Collective Agreement

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President's Letter: An open search for
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If you have information or an event that you'd like to share in an upcoming issue, please email the item to umfa-communications@umfa.ca for consideration.

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