

TO ALL APUO MEMBERS

New practices implemented in faculties regarding annual vacations and other absences from campus have created some confusion and problems for our members. It therefore seems necessary to clarify the issue in light of the relevant sections of our collective agreement.

Annual vacations

The collective agreement states, under section 28.1.5, that “A member may take vacation leave at any time(s) provided: (a) she notifies her dean in advance of each vacation period; (b) the vacation will not interfere with the member’s assigned duties as included in the member’s workload pursuant to article 22”, i.e. the article on workload. There is therefore no problem in filling out a form to notify the dean in advance of the period during which the member will be on annual vacation. It needs to be understood that the goal is to inform the dean, not to ask for an authorization.

Absence from campus

Several APUO members have recently brought to our attention that many faculties are now demanding that any absence from campus has to be approved in writing and in advance by the Dean. In some cases, it is argued that this authorization is in accordance with article 28.4 (*availability and authorized absence*) of the collective agreement. This interpretation of article 28.4 is flawed.

Nowhere in this article (or anywhere else in the collective agreement) is there an obligation for members to make a written (or oral) request to the dean for an absence to perform her/his professorial duties, such as empirical investigations or research meetings, providing this absence does not interfere with her/his teaching activities (including the supervision of graduate students), or administrative responsibilities (see specifically articles 28.4.3 and 28.4.4).

The collective agreement, in the same article, also stipulates that a member ***is not required*** to be on campus to fulfill her/his workload obligations, whenever another location is more appropriate and her/his absence does not interfere with teaching activities and administrative responsibilities.

The right (not the obligation) of a member to request an authorized absence, as stipulated in article 28.4.6, only applies to extended leaves (of up to 60 calendar days and renewable), during a period when a member must have no obligations as described in 28.4.3 (a) and (c), no teaching activities, and no administrative responsibilities. Unsurprisingly, this type of situation is extremely rare.

As a result, there is no obligation for a member to request an authorized absence with every travel arrangement. As long as the member makes sure, through the appropriate means, that her/his absence does not negatively impact her/his teaching activities and administrative responsibilities (see article 28.4.3), she/he is free to do so at her/his discretion.

Since this new practice is on the rise in all faculties, and therefore is an issue for all of our members, the APUO filed an association grievance on 14 March 2013, in order to resolve this issue with the employer. It was not possible to reach a settlement with the employer at the Step One Meeting held on 5 November 2013, and we are now waiting for arbitration dates from the employer. We will of course keep you apprised as the matter progresses.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,

The APUO Executive Committee.