

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

JANUARY 27, 2016

Location: Courtyard/TownePlace Suites Toronto Northeast/Markham (formerly the Holiday Inn), Woodbine Ave, just north of Steeles. 7095 Woodbine Ave, Markham, ON L3R 1A3

Directions: <http://tinyurl.com/kogyxpg>

Refreshments at 5:30, meeting begins at 6:00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. 2016 Budget Approval
2. Contract Faculty Update and Mobilization discussion
3. Elimination of the Gen Ed Literature Requirement
4. College Standards

Free parking, childcare and eldercare reimbursement, refreshments.

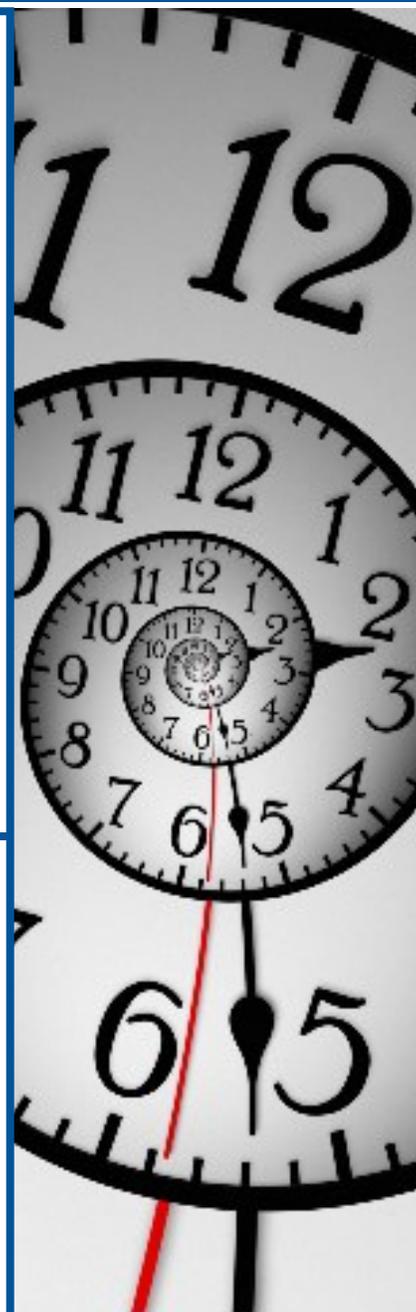
Is Seneca College Violating Ministry Standards?

A look at instructional hours of Seneca programs

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities publishes system-wide program standards for all types of programs at Ontario postsecondary education institutions, indicating amongst other things their required vocational standards, essential employability skills, and general education requirements. The distinctions between standards for various levels of academic programs (e.g., diploma, degree, certificate) and the expectations for each type of credential are outlined in the 2010 Ontario Qualifications Framework, available at <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/programs/oqf/oqf.pdf>

One element of the standards for each program is the number of instructional hours required by the province for each particular credential. Given that several programs have seen cuts to instruction hours in the last year (under the auspices of V.P. Academic Joy McKinnon), and in light of rumours of further cuts, it is appropriate to

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compare the number of instruction hours provided in Seneca College's various programs to the instructional hours dictated by the Ministry in the Qualifications Framework.

To begin with, the Framework stipulates that the "typical duration" of an Ontario College Diploma program is "four semesters or 1200-1400 equivalent instructional hours". Let's do the math to calculate where Seneca's diploma programs fall in that range of instructional hours.

The Seneca website lists weekly teaching hours for all required courses in all of its programs (including General Education options) for the 2014/15 school year (although curiously, it fails to do so for the current academic year). From these numbers we can arrive at a total of the hours of instruction for each semester.

To do so, we multiply the number of weekly instructional hours associated each each course in a semester, multiply that number by the 13 weeks in which classes are held each semester, and then add two instructional hours per course for exam week.

Looking at the popular International Business diploma program, we can see that, upon graduation, students are expected to have taken a total of 22 courses, with a cumulative total of 73 weekly instructional hours (or average of 18.5 instructional hours per week).

Multiplying the weekly hours by the 13 weeks of classes per semester plus exam week, it appears that students of the International Business diploma program receive the following total instructional hours:

Semester One:	16 hours x 13 weeks + 10 exam hours	= 218 instructional hours
Semester Two:	21 hours x 13 weeks + 12 exam hours	= 285 instructional hours
Semester Three:	18 hours x 13 weeks + 10 exam hours	= 244 instructional hours
Semester Four:	19 hours x 13 weeks + 12 exam hours	= 278 instructional hours

The total is **1025 instructional hours** -- **15% below the minimum** number of 1200-1400 instructional hours for Ontario College diploma programs specified in the Framework.

The 2014/15 curriculum for another diploma program, Police Foundations, saw students taking a total of 22 courses (with a cumulative 65 weekly hours of instruction) over the four semesters, for a total of 845 scheduled classroom hours plus 44 hours of exams... a grand total of **889 instructional hours, or 26% below the minimum** 1200 instructional hours specified in the Ministry's Framework.

Moving on to Advanced Diplomas, the Ministry's Framework outlines that the typical duration of an Advanced Diploma program should be "Six semesters or 1800-2100 equivalent instructional hours".

Seneca's website indicates that, in the 2014/15 academic year, students in the Business Administration – Entrepreneurship and Small Business program were required to take a total of 33 courses (with a cumulative 104 weekly hours of instruction) over six semesters. This would result in a total of 1,352 classroom hours plus 66 exam hours, for a grand total of 1,418 instructional hours over six semesters –

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21% or 382 instructional hours below the 1800 minimum stipulated for Advanced College Diplomas by the Ontario Ministry of Colleges, Universities and Training.

Caveats abound: students in co-op programs or field placements receive additional instructional hours, and students in highly technical programs often receive additional hours, whether in a lab or on a shop floor. Additionally, these figures assume an average of 2 hours per course for final exams, which may not be the case for all classes.

However, there are additional causes for concern: students whose classes fall on Mondays receive fewer instructional hours, whether due to holidays or, more recently, "Experience Seneca".

It is somewhat difficult to identify the precise causes for Seneca's apparent failure to comply with Ministry directives regarding typical instructional hours for diploma programs. It may be driven by a misguided notion that providing *less* instructional time for students to learn new material from professors will somehow *improve* retention and student success.

But the examples above, if correct, suggest that students in several Seneca College programs are denied instructional hours that are deemed appropriate by the Ministry. Several Seneca diploma programs appear to offer students literally hundreds of hours fewer than the Ministry's Framework directs. These are hours to which we believe students are entitled.

The facts and calculations presented in this article are true to the best of our knowledge and based on information provided on Seneca College's website. The publishers invite you to send feedback to union@opseu560.org. We will be happy to publish any necessary corrections in our next edition of The Local.

Seneca Follies

More smoke and mirrors from management. We're not sure if they're sincerely deluded or fruitlessly trying to put something over on a group of highly educated people. They keep telling us that massive ERP systems like i3 are fraught with problems and difficult to implement. That rings hollow to the many technical faculty who have developed and deployed such systems with success, encountering far fewer problems than we're seeing with i3. The claim is that i3 was delivered "on time, on budget". It's easy to do that when necessary fixes are deferred to the more costly post-deployment maintenance budget, and usability is given a low priority.

There also seem to be numerous policy changes that have been prompted by i3 in the mistaken belief that changing people is easier and cheaper than changing the system. When faculty were surprised by grades being revealed to students prior to promotion committee decisions last term — an i3 glitch that Chairs knew about but generally didn't bother to communicate to faculty — the reason given for allowing students to view their interim grades was: "Students may continue to enroll in courses and should be able to see their grades as they do." If this was a valid principle, it would have been in effect long before i3.

We think it's irresponsible to allow students to make enrollment and course selection decisions based on information that could be subject to change. So is blindsiding faculty who were left to contend with student emails complaining about unfinalized grades, without ever having been told those grades would be visible to students.

i3's Effect on Employees

The human cost of i3's many failings isn't being tracked on any spreadsheet, but manifests in multiple people having to get involved to solve problems that shouldn't occur in the first place. In business, that's the definition of



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Management's Latest Attack on Union Rights

(or How Management's Decisions could Affect your Union Dues)

As you likely know, your elected Union Local representatives do many things in addition to their duties as faculty members: they participate in committees devoted to issues like Workload Monitoring or Employment stability; they help to organize grievances when managers violate the Collective Agreement (such as our grievance against the conversion of partial-load positions into part-time); they help protect the rights of faculty during any discipline process; they assist with accommodations and Return to Work needs; and they respond to hundreds of faculty e-mails, amongst many other things.

The officers of Local 560 receive no additional pay for doing this work, and in order to provide them with the time to complete their Union duties, historically, the work performed by Union members on College committees was included on their SWFs. In addition, for the remaining responsibilities of Union officers, our Collective Agreement permits the Union to purchase the officers' teaching hours, reducing their teaching load and freeing up time for their Union work.

And indeed, that has been the process that has worked smoothly for many years: the Union selects a number of teaching hours to purchase for officers, those teaching hours are removed from their SWFs, and the officers are therefore able to attend to the needs of both their members and their students.

Unfortunately, this semester, management disrupted that system. Participation in College committees like the Workload Monitoring Group is no longer included on the SWFs of all Union participants, perhaps with the assumption that such committee work by Union members is to be treated as unpaid, unrecognized overtime. The Union maintains that this violates the Collective Agreement and forces the Local to purchase teaching hours for committee members, where no purchase was previously necessary (as the committee work was reflected on their SWFs).

To compound matters, the College has additionally disrupted the Local's effort to purchase teaching hours for its officeholders (i.e., elected officers and committee members). In November, the Local informed management of the teaching hours to be purchased for each officeholder, and those hours were removed from the SWFs as usual. However, for the first time in the history of the SWF at Seneca College, management *then added* teaching hours back onto the SWFs of three officeholders. In effect, Seneca management will charge Local 560 for a portion of those officeholders' salaries in exchange for a reduction of teaching hours, *while not providing that reduction*.

This tactic of Seneca management is unprecedented, and the grievance process has already begun. However, that grievance is unlikely to be heard by an arbitrator for several months, long after the damage has been done.

In the short term, this leaves three of your Union officeholders with teaching loads that interfere with their ability to participate in College committees or to do the necessary work as your Union representatives.

In the long run, if the College management's strategy is upheld by an arbitrator, it would force Local 560 to radically increase the number of teaching hours purchased, in order to secure the necessary reductions in its officeholders' teaching loads. By way of example, if a Union officer were to be assigned a SWF with 37 total workload hours, then according to management's new logic, the Union would be obliged to pay for *all* of the workload hours between 37 and 44, before paying for any teaching hours to actually be reduced. In other words, *to get a reduction of one single teaching contact hour, the Union would need to pay for four*: three teaching hours to bring the SWF up to 43.51 total workload hours (after applying a factor of 2.17 workload hours to the back of the SWF per teaching hour purchased), and then a fourth to finally actually remove a teaching hour.

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The consequence of this policy would be to dramatically increase the costs of the Local to purchase time for Union officers and committee members, which is already the single largest expense in the Local's budget. This, in turn, would have other financial implications: a diminishment of our fund for strike pay, for example, or a potential increase in Union dues.

This is the central issue: management's choice to interfere with Local 560's ability to purchase time for its officeholders has a direct and profound financial impact on the Local and, in turn, its dues-paying members.

2016 will see the first steps toward negotiations for our next Collective Agreement, and members should understand that one of the most fundamental issues at the heart of any Collective Agreement is the ability of Union officers to enforce it and grieve violations of it. Currently, Seneca management is taking unprecedented steps to make it more difficult and costly for your elected Union officers to do just that, and as the negotiation process is renewed, we hope that members will consider this vital issue and its immediate effects on the finances of their member-funded Local.

Seneca Follies, continued

inefficiency. One of the latest involved a faculty member returning from LTD after a serious illness, with accommodations adjusting her workload including her teaching schedule. She checked her timetable on i3 a number of times and it appeared to meet the requirements of her accommodation. Great was the professor's surprise on discovering that the i3 schedule report was completely wrong, defaulting to the last term she taught classes instead of the current semester. Chalk it up to an abysmally poor interface, non-intuitive controls, and poor choice of defaults, but this added unnecessary stress on a recovering professor who showed up on the wrong day and time for the class. In a sensitive matter like this, it took a few people to sort out the problem and determine what went wrong.

Shut Down a Program at the Last Minute but Don't Tell the Students

We get a constant barrage from the college Marketing folks and the Associate Vice President about being welcoming to students and making the college experience a positive one. But there are some students who have found the experience anything but positive.

We recently were contacted by OPSEU head office, forwarding some emails they received from Seneca students concerning the closing down of the ESM program (Environmental Technician - Sampling and Monitoring) at Newnham. It is clear from the emails these students are not happy with the way they were treated by the college; they were apparently not informed of the decision to close the program, and found out only when they tried to register in early December for the January intake [some of the students are existing Seneca students transferring from related programs]. It also appears they were offered very little explanation of the decision to cancel the program intake for January.

We have spoken to some of the faculty who have been involved in this program. They were told only recently that the program was closing and were subsequently assigned other courses. But they do not appear to have been told why the program was closing, either, except that it was not low student numbers. Nevertheless, one student who pursued this all the way to the Premier's office and the Office of the Minister of Colleges and Universities, reported he was told by the program Chair that low enrollment numbers were a reason for shutting down the program. No explanation was given for not telling other students about this, nor do we yet know the real reasons for eliminating the program.

The Educational Potemkin Village

The college buys itself the title, yet again, of one of the GTA's top Employers. Too bad no one asked former partial-load faculty about what a great employer Seneca is. Too bad the award editors didn't note that the various things the college bragged about as a benefit for employees, such as gym facilities and snack bars, are provided primarily to serve students, or that employee benefits were not graciously awarded by college managers, but won via hard bargaining of collective agreements by OPSEU.

Book Review—Good Soldier Schweik

By Larry Olivo, Chief Steward

Jaroslav Hasek, The Good Soldier Schweik Illustrations by Josef Lada (A. Synek, Prague, 1923)

You may wonder why I am bothering to write, and we are bothering to print, a review of a satirical anti-war novel that is nearly a century old. The reason is that I have found myself recently having to advise faculty who are dealing with exceptionally bureaucratic, harsh, insensitive, pigheaded, self-aggrandizing, pompous and/or poisonous college managers to develop strategies for dealing with such creatures. And on several occasions I have suggested to them that they have a look at this book, as it is almost a guide for how to survive when having to work with some of the college managers and the college bureaucracy they are embedded in.

Hasek was a Czech writer, drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War at a time when Czechoslovakia [as it later became] was a rather unwilling part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Czechs were similarly unwilling participants in the slaughter that was WWI. He recounts the story of Schweik, a ne'er-do-well amiable rascal and seller of dogs of questionable pedigree — as he is drafted into the army, recounting his many adventures and tussles with the state and army bureaucracies. Reading the novel, even taking into account the exaggeration that flows from satire, and Hasek's contempt for the Austro-Hungarian state and its bureaucrats, it is not hard to see why the Austro-Hungarian Empire foundered and collapsed by war's end, with a leadership that was out of touch, strangling on its own idiotic procedures, mightily blowing its own trumpet, and being overly rigid to the point of being sclerotic.



To some of you who work here this may sound like familiar territory; it certainly does to me. And it is worth knowing how Schweik handled it all. His method was reasonably straightforward—he presented as being an amiable, simple minded soul, polite and agreeable, acknowledging that he was an imbecile, noting that he had previously been discharged from the army for that reason. He carried out the orders of his superiors precisely and literally, with typically hilarious results, leaving officers and other jacks-in-office spluttering with rage, but often unable to deal with him. If they confronted him, he was always polite and explained his way out of some mess by noting that he had been diagnosed as an imbecile, or saying that he had tried to do as asked, but some unforeseen event disrupted things—nothing to do with him, of course. One example: being posted to the front, he misses the train, and is ordered to take another, but manages to get into a conversation in the station bar, and drinks up the funds to pay his fare, which leads to him being arrested and detained. He freely admits his error, but as a result manages not to get sent on to the front, so focused are his superiors on jailing him for his actions, and not realizing they are actually doing him a favour.

In reading this tale, one can quickly learn some tricks for dealing with the occasional self-inflated manager: cooperate to the letter, smother them in responses to queries, reply in copious detail, ask lots of clarifying questions, tell them to clarify stuff that you don't understand, smile and be pleasant, profess loyalty and cooperation, carry out orders literally, and confirm you have done what you were told to do. Bury them in paper [or the e-version of it]. And if you feel like bursting into laughter as you unfold these scenarios, have the good grace to not do it in front of managers.

Unless you are Czech you will need an English translation that captures the pithy, working class slang and vernacular. A particularly good translation is one by Cecil Parrott. Copies abound on Amazon and places like that. Enjoy.