Who’s Listening to Your Lectures?

Glean and other digital technologies allow students to record and transcribe lectures and other classes, but there are numerous privacy, intellectual-property, and other implications.

The QUFA Political Action and Communication Committee (PACC) hosts an event each spring as part of our Annual Lecture series. This year, PACC is working to host a panel discussion about the implications (good and bad) of the emergence of recordings (both audio and video) in the classroom. As you know, there are all sorts of classes: lectures, seminars, laboratories, etc. What might be acceptable in one type of class could be incredibly problematic in other types of classes. In addition to the potential intellectual property and copyright implications that come with recordings in the classroom, there is also the real threat that a sound or video clip from a recording can be taken out of context and used to harass and intimidate instructors and students who might have been recorded (with or without their knowledge).

At some point this term, you may have received a Letter of Accommodation for a student in your class that lists “Permission to audio record lectures” as one of the accommodations the student is entitled to. In each case, without fail, I have seen this accommodation followed with several bullet points, including one that indicates “Note-taking through Glean.” If you’re like me, this will have been the first time you ever heard of Glean. Glean is an application that digitally records lectures in high-quality audio to the cloud. The Accommodations Office has recently adopted this technology as an allowable form of accommodation for some students.

So, if you have a student in your class with “Note-taking through Glean” as an accommodation, it is very likely that your class has been recorded and transcribed throughout the term, whether you know it or not. And it is not just you, the instructor, who may have been recorded, but every student in your class who asked a question or participated in a
discussion may have been digitally recorded and transcribed.

Now, one might argue, given the widespread availability of smartphones and other technology, it would be foolhardy to assume you are not being recorded at any given time. However, our classrooms are meant to be safe spaces where students can express themselves freely without fear that anything they say might be recorded and potentially used against them in another context.

You would be well advised to include a statement in your course syllabi outlining your policy on recordings in your classes. It is unfortunate that the University has not provided template language for this, and there is absolutely no specific University policy to refer to.

Upon learning about Glean, QUFA immediately engaged with the University, and they have committed to developing a concrete policy on recordings in the classroom. Furthermore, as a result of QUFA’s interventions, Queen’s Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) has agreed that an instructor may opt out of the “Note-taking through Glean” accommodation and instead have a traditional note-taker assigned to meet the accommodation needs of the students. However, this arrangement must be done on a case-by-case basis and must be requested explicitly by the instructor.

Jordan Morelli can be reached at morelli@queensu.ca.

GET INVOLVED!
Nominations Are Open

The Nominations Committee is chaired by QUFA Vice President Laeeque Daneshmend. The committee consists of Elizabeth Hanson, Susan Lord, Brad Weinberg, Dan Cohen, and Leslie Jermyn as staff support.

The Executive positions up for election this year are:
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Chair of the Grievance Committee
- Joint Chair of the Committee to Administer the Collective Agreement
- Equity Representative
- Continuing Adjunct Representative
- Member at Large (one of two positions)
- Library and Archives Representative (appointed by QULA)

In addition, the position of QUFA Vice President is currently open. It would normally be filled in odd years for a two-year term of office leading to the Presidency. Last year, Laeeque Daneshmend agreed to step in as interim VP, but he cannot continue past this year and will not be taking up the Presidency in 2023. We are seeking a candidate who is interested to serve as VP for a year and who would then continue on as President of the Association.

As the Spring General Meeting will be held virtually, the Policy for Executive Committee Elections in Virtual Meetings applies, and statements of interest are due by Wednesday 13 April 2022 at 12.00 noon. They should be sent to VP Laeeque Daneshmend and Executive Director Leslie Jermyn.

If you are interested in standing for election or you know of people interested to serve, please get in touch with Laeeque Daneshmend (laeeque.daneshmend@queensu.ca) or Leslie Jermyn (jermynl@queensu.ca).

Note
FOLLOW-UP
Sick Leave and LTD FAQ
More QUFA Member questions and answers about sick leave and long-term disability

By Peggy Smith
Grievance Officer, QUFA

We ran a special issue of QUFA Voices in February explaining how incidental sick leave, short-term disability, and long-term disability work for QUFA Members. A couple of additional questions arose in conversations with Members, and we are pleased to answer them here.

Q If LTD payments cease when you are eligible to collect a full pension at age 65, when do you stop paying the premiums?

A Your deductions for LTD stop six months before you are eligible for the pension (at age 64.5 years). That’s because short-term disability coverage would ensure that you are fully paid during these six months until you reach age 65, when you can trigger your pension and retire from work. For clarity, people over age 65 who are still working do not have LTD coverage and could expect to go on unpaid leave at the end of a six-month sick leave if they couldn’t return to work. They should not see LTD deductions from their salary.

Q How much does LTD pay?

A The calculation is as follows:

• 68% of the first $1,000, or $680, plus
• 60% of the next $833.33, or $500, plus
• 50% of the rest, to a maximum of $5,000 per month.

Most full-responsibility, full-time Member salaries would result in a maximum payment. This payment is tax free because you paid the premiums.

This amount is adjusted for cost of living the first January after you have received LTD benefits for 12 months. The adjustment will be based on the Consumer Price Index for the 12-month period ending 31 January and is capped at 3%. It is important to note that this benefit does not insure your income beyond the capped amount (roughly $113,000). If you need to insure income above this amount, you are advised to pursue independent income insurance.

Peggy Smith can be reached at smithpe@queensu.ca.
GRIEVANCE CORNER
Spotlight on Mental Health

QUFA Members are encouraged to make their mental well-being a priority as the academic year draws to a close

By Peggy Smith
Grievance Officer, QUFA

The Balls in the Air

It has been a challenging two years. Waves of COVID-19, evolving public-health directives, new ways of teaching, and new ways of learning. Mandatory vaccines, ventilation, and health and safety. Temporary offices set up with little regard to poor ergonomics. Multiple Zoom meetings a day. Balancing family and work under one roof. Protecting our most vulnerable family members. Student accommodations on the rise. Faculty accommodations at an all-time high. A rising cost of living under a provincial wage freeze. A war in Ukraine that has everyone concerned and distracted. Balancing all of these balls in the air can take a quiet and progressive toll on your mental health, impacting both your professional and private lives.

Asking for Help

As the QUFA Grievance Officer, I often feel like the captain of a ship sailing through a storm with not quite enough life jackets. When a QUFA Member reaches out for assistance, my ability to help is restricted by the legal box in which I work. I cannot diagnose your health; only your healthcare provider can do that. If you do have health information to share, I can only promise to assist you in getting a reasonable accommodation as determined by the University Accommodations Office; it is very seldom that I can get you your preferred outcome.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has prepared a resource devoted to self-care and resilience, which includes a mental-health continuum checklist. You can download it from their Web site: https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/tim_self-care-resilience-guide_0.pdf

I can direct you to some negotiated tools in the Collective Agreement, such as the right to request various leaves in Article 33, access to scheduling priority, additional TA support, or other adjustments to your academic duties, but each of these actions will take time to execute. That time is the biggest limitation to my ability to assist you. Too often, by the time Members realize that they need help, they are in crisis mode and out of my reach.

A Valuable Resource: A Self-Care Checklist

Recently, I was fortunate to be able to attend a mental-health workshop that introduced me to a self-care mental-health checklist developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The experience surprised me: a quick scan identified that I was wading from the “orange” zone to the “red” zone. When I announced my pending burnout to my family, they weren’t surprised. They had all noticed my mood shifts and lack of patience; even the dog had given up trying to get me out the door for our scheduled early morning walks! Moving back towards “green” has taken some discipline, but the longer days are helping, and I am almost there.

You can find the checklist on the Mental Health Commission’s Web site.¹ I encourage you to print out and post this checklist at home to review as part of your morning routine. Before you schedule another Zoom call into an empty space in your calendar, stop and consider. Scan the checklist. Unless you are operating in the “green” zone, perhaps it would be better to schedule a walk, or go for a coffee with a friend. Time for yourself and self-care is a priority that only you can set and protect.

Your voice is important. I look forward to hearing from you about your own experience using this checklist, and how we at the QUFA Office can assist you in moving back to “green” this spring!

Note


Peggy Smith can be reached at smithpe@queensu.ca.