

## **Questions and Answers: University Degrees and UWOSA Members**

### **What is the issue?**

The University is placing increasing emphasis on degrees for UWOSA positions. We are seeing more and more postings which list a degree as a minimum qualification, and have been told by UWO officials that this is a trend which will increase over the next 5 to 10 years.

### **Why is the University placing so much emphasis on degrees?**

This question would be better addressed to your supervisor, or to the Human Resources Department. Some of the reasons which have been given UWOSA include market conditions, that staff need to have had the experience of being students, and that degrees are an easy way for the University to ensure applicant's have certain skills. See the next question for what UWOSA thinks about this.

### **What does UWOSA think about this?**

Under Article 3.01(e) of the Collective Agreement, the UWO has the right to set the qualifications for all positions at the University. While we may have a different opinion about what those qualifications should be, the UWO has the legal right to determine them.

It is important to state that UWOSA does not endorse increased reliance on degrees in the hiring process. We believe that many other things than degrees demonstrate the skills UWO is using degrees to measure. However, in light of UWO's current position, we feel it is our responsibility to make our members aware of the trend, and to communicate the potential impact on them.

### **Does the UWO really want every person to have a degree?**

Probably not – there are some jobs which require other post-secondary qualifications (Community College, etc.), and some which may never require specific education or certification. The best source of information about your specific position, and those in your Department, is your supervisor.

### **Can the UWO require a degree for any position without justification?**

No – under Article 22.10 of the 2004-2006 Collective Agreement, the UWO cannot require a degree unless it is "reasonable" to do so. The word "reasonable" is subjective, and it will take some time to fully explore what it means. If you are aware of a position with a new degree requirement, or see a questionable posting, please call the UWOSA office and let us know!

### **Can I be terminated because I don't have a degree?**

Under Article 22.10, you cannot be terminated from your current position simply because you do not have a degree. It isn't a situation where every person must have a degree by a certain date, or be terminated. The issue is about limited possibilities if you leave your current position

(whether because you want to apply for other jobs, are displaced, or the position is eliminated through restructuring).

### **What are my chances of promotion without a degree?**

With increased reliance on degrees by Western, your chances may not be very good. If the minimum qualifications for a position list a degree, you may not be competitive without one. Of course, a department may choose to hire you without a degree (because of other qualifications you have).

### **What if a degree is added to my job description?**

Under Article 22.10 of the 2004-2006 Collective Agreement, the addition of a degree requirement does not apply to an incumbent who assumed the position before the degree requirement was added.

### **What is the issue about position elimination?**

If your position is eliminated, one of your options is displacement ("bumping"). However, in that process, you must have the "skills, abilities, and qualifications" for a position in order to displace into it. If you don't have a degree, but one is required for the position, you will not be able to displace into it. As more and more jobs require degrees, this will become a larger and larger problem.

### **What if I'm displaced?**

This happens when someone with more seniority displaces you, and you enter the displacement process yourself. The same problems as those created through position elimination arise (see the last answer).

### **What is paid by Western if I take courses?**

Under the contract, tuition will be paid in advance by Western, for degree credit courses taken at UWO, to a maximum of the tuition for a course in the Faculty of Arts. In addition, textbooks are covered to a maximum of \$100 per course (this amount is reimbursed after the course is successfully completed – keep your receipts!). If you do not pass the course, or fail to complete it, the funds advanced for the course must be repaid by equal monthly installments by payroll deductions to UWO. Under the Collective Agreement, Term employees do not have access to Educational Assistance.

### **When can I take courses?**

You are generally expected to take courses on your own time. However, your Department is now required to give you time away from work to complete any course required by your program which is only offered during your working hours. Many Departments are more flexible than this, and UWOSA encourages you to discuss your plans with your supervisor.

### **I want to investigate getting a degree, where can I get information?**

For academic information, the Centre For New Students is the best first contact. They can be reached at extension 83898. For additional information about how educational assistance works, contact Human Resources at extension 82194 or the UWOSA Office at 83028.

**UWOSA is providing information on degrees, doesn't this mean it supports this agenda?**

No! It does, however, mean that we feel a responsibility to provide information to those who are considering a degree, and to communicate to you about the potential impact this issue may have on you.

**I'm not happy about this, who can I talk to?**

If you would like to talk more about these issues, contact your area rep, or anyone at the UWOSA Office.