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Academic Continuity and a Potential CUPE Strike

FAQs: Academic Continuity and Frequently Asked Questions for UTFA faculty members and librarians regarding a potential CUPE Strike

- Do I have to continue working during a CUPE strike?
- Do I have to show up to work, even if that means crossing a picket line?
- Can I move my class online or off-campus?
- Do I have to perform the work of striking workers?
- Do I have to make changes to my courses because of the strike?
- I'm a Chair / I'm a Director. Am I required to perform the work of striking workers or redesign courses in my department/unit?
- I'm a Chair / I'm a Director. Am I required to "assume responsibility for all essential administrative activities associated with the course" or "when appropriate, identify an alternate instructor"? [wording in the Academic Continuity Policy]
- What information can I provide to my students about the strike?
- How can I support CUPE 3902 and CUPE 3261?

Do I have to continue working during a CUPE strike? YES

Do I have to show up to work, even if that means crossing a

picket line? YES – unless you have a safety concern

- You are required by law to make reasonable efforts to perform your work.
- …but you are not required to do anything out of the ordinary to perform your work and you should not put yourself in an unsafe situation in order to do so.
- If you have a safety concern that prevents you from entering your building or performing your work, you should move to a safe place nearby and call your unit head (Chair, Director) or supervisor, and Campus Safety in urgent cases at 416-978-2222.
- You should expect delays and make reasonable efforts to plan for delays in accessing the workplace.

Can I move my class online or off-campus? Probably not

- It is unclear whether UTFA members have the sole right to alter their mode of course delivery (e.g., online vs in-person) and there may be workplace liability considerations if you teach off campus. The Administration might possibly ake issue with you changing the location of your class.

Do I have to perform the work of striking workers? NO

- You need to do your job. You are not required to do anyone else's job.
- Your workload is supposed to be set in consultation with you, in keeping with a Unit Workload Policy determined collegially within your unit, and captured in your annual workload letter, and cannot be increased unilaterally by the Administration.
- If you feel pressured to perform the work of striking workers, UTFA recommends that you first ask for clarification. For example, you might ask, "Is this a suggestion, or is this a directive?" If the response you receive is that it is a suggestion, you might say, "That's an interesting suggestion. I need some time to think about it." If the response you receive is that it is a directive, you might say, "Could you please put that directive in writing? I would like to seek advice." If you are facing undue pressure and are not sure what to do, please contact UTFA at advice@utfa.org.

Do I have to make changes to my courses because of the strike? NO

- UTFA members are within their rights to refuse to alter their syllabi, courses, assignments, grading requirements, or professional practices due to a CUPE (or any) strike.
- Academic freedom, set out in multiple University policies, protects you from interference, restriction, or coercion in your work. It enshrines your right to maintain the academic integrity of your courses and/or programs as you designed them.
- If you are directed to make changes to your course, UTFA recommends that you ask the person demanding the change to put the directive in writing, and that you then contact UTFA at advice@utfa.org for individual advice.

I’m a Chair / I’m a Director. Am I required to perform the work of striking workers or redesign courses in my department/unit? NO

I’m a Chair / I’m a Director. Am I required to “assume responsibility for all essential administrative activities associated with the course” or “when appropriate, identify an alternate instructor”? [wording in the Academic Continuity Policy] MAYBE

- If you are an academic administrator and the Administration declares that “a state of disruption” has occurred (thus invoking the Academic Continuity Policy), you might be asked by a Dean or other senior Administrator to take “proactive measures” to ensure academic continuity.
- These proactive measures should not include asking faculty or librarians to alter their courses or to perform the work of the striking workers (or any other work outside of the workload assigned in their workload letters).

What information can I provide to my students about the strike? See below

- CUPE strike FAQs for undergraduate students
- Look out for CUPE bulletins with updates on the strike

How can I support CUPE 3902 and CUPE 3261? MANY WAYS

- Add your name to CUPE’s e-action.
- Join a picket line.
- Talk to your colleagues and students about the issues at stake.
- Talk to your colleagues about their right to maintain academic integrity and exercise academic freedom.
- Tell Teaching Assistants (TAs), postdocs, and any members of CUPE 3261 you interact with that you support them. Here, it is important that you do not ask what they think about the strike, or what they will do in the event of the strike. You can simply say, “I support you” or “I support your actions and I hope you win!”

For more details, see the following relevant policies and

agreements:

- Policy on Academic Continuity
- Workload Policy and Procedures For Faculty and Librarians, and
- Memorandum of Agreement between The Governing Council of the University of Toronto and UTFA (MoA), especially “Article 5: Academic Freedom and Responsibilities,” “Article 8: Workloads and Working Conditions,” and “Article 9: No Discrimination”

Please contact UTFA at advice@utfa.org should you have any further questions.

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