



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
faculty ASSOCIATION

Published on *University of Toronto Faculty Association* (<https://www.utfa.org>)

[Home](#) > Academic Continuity and a Potential USW Strike

Academic Continuity and a Potential USW Strike

September 7, 2026

Academic Continuity and a Potential USW Strike

USW 1998 will enter a legal strike position on Tuesday, September 8, 2026. This does not mean that USW will be on strike as of Tuesday, as the USW negotiating committee may agree to continue bargaining past the strike deadline.

However, in the event of a strike, UTFA has prepared the following FAQ for faculty members and librarians.

Bear in mind that any measures to be taken will depend on the circumstances and the duration of a potential strike.

Do I have to continue working during a USW 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 unlikely that 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 take issue with you changing the location of your class. If you want to change the location of your class (either online or off-campus), you should discuss this with your Chair and seek prior approval.

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.
- The University's [Academic Continuity Policy](#) clearly states that faculty members and librarians are not required to carry out the duties of any University employee engaged in a legal work stoppage, and shall not be subject to any discipline or reprisal as a result of the refusal to carry out this work.
- 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? Probably not - unless required by the Academic Continuity Policy

- UTFA members are within their rights to refuse to alter their syllabi, courses, assignments, grading requirements, or professional practices due to a USW (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.

- Should USW strike and you are considering making modifications to your course(s), you have the right to make those changes consistent with your right to academic freedom, in consultation with your unit head to help ensure academic continuity
- You must make reasonable accommodations for students who are unable to attend classes or complete academic requirements as a result of a disruption. If you have questions about what is required to reasonably accommodate a student, please consult with your unit head.
- Consult the [Academic Continuity Policy](#) for a list of other considerations you ought to take into account when deciding whether to alter a course (this list is found in the section titled “Instructors are responsible for”).
- 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. What are my responsibilities during a strike?

- 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 perform the work of the striking workers (or any other work outside of the workload assigned in their workload letters). Faculty or librarians may consider altering their courses consistent with the provisions of the [Academic Continuity Policy](#).
- You may also be asked to “assume responsibility for all essential administrative activities associated with [a] course” only if the instructor is not available during the disruption.

How can I support USW 1998? MANY WAYS

- 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 lab assistants, program coordinators, and any members of USW 1998 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.

Source URL (modified on Sep 7 2026):<https://www.utfa.org/content/academic-continuity-and-potential-usw-strike>