



8888 University Drive, Burnaby, BC
Strand Hall, Room 3000
Canada V5A 1S6

TEL: 778.782.5731

vpacad@sfu.ca
www.sfu.ca/vpacademic

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Tom Nault, Registrar and Executive Director, Student Enrollment	DATE	March 19, 2025
FROM	Peter Hall, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Academic	PAGES	5
RE:	Proposed Agenda Item for Senate Meeting on April 7, 2025		

I am writing to request the following agenda item for the Senate meeting on April 7, 2025:

Update on Guidelines for Students and Instructors in the Event of a Labour Dispute

Senate approved a set of revised “Guidelines for Courses in the Event of a Labour Dispute” (S.23-111) in September 2023, which updated previous guidelines from January 2000 that did not reflect current context, notably the existence of the SFU/SFUFA Collective Agreement and improvements in procedures for academic concessions. Senate discussion also highlighted the need for additional work and consultation on the revised guidelines.

Since that time, revised drafts of the document now entitled “Guidelines for Students and Instructors in the Event of a Labour Dispute” have been reviewed by SCUS, SGSC, and SCUTL and others. The purpose of this agenda item is to provide an update to Senate on the latest version of this document (see attached), which has been finetuned based on consultation feedback received to date.

cc: Dilson Rassier, Provost and Vice-President Academic

Carla Deresh, Executive Director, Office of the Provost
Mary Holmes, Director, Strategic Projects and Analysis, Office of the Provost

Guidelines for Students and Instructors in the Event of a Labour Dispute

Purpose and Scope

In the event of a labour dispute, such as a legal strike, lockout, or other labour disruption, the university will assess the situation and determine whether it is feasible to maintain its operations. To the extent possible, all credit and non-credit courses and examinations, and access to important and core services, will continue as scheduled.

The university respects the right of a Union and the right of the Union's members to engage in lawful strike activity, including establishing legal picket lines. The university also respects the right of students and employees to choose whether to cross a legal picket line established by a Union at the university.

These guidelines provide information for students and instructors in the event of a labour dispute, including their responsibilities when choosing to cross or not cross a picket line of a Union of which they are not a member.

It is important to note that these guidelines are not intended to provide information on context-specific issues that may or may not arise in the event of a particular labour dispute. In such cases, the university will endeavour to provide timely communications to address these developments, should they occur.

SFU is committed to providing a healthy, safe, and respectful learning, teaching, research, and work environment in which bullying and harassment are neither acceptable nor tolerated, consistent with the Bullying and Harassment Policy ([GP 47](#)).

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of these guidelines, definitions of terms are as follows:

"Chair" means the senior-most academic administrative position of an academic unit, that is the Chair of a Department, Director of a School, or Dean in a non-departmentalized Faculty.

"Instructor" refers to someone with teaching duties at the university, which includes but is not limited to faculty members, sessional instructors, and teaching/laboratory assistants.

"Instructor of Record" refers to the Instructor with overall responsibility for a particular course, which includes but is not limited to faculty members and sessional instructors, but does not include teaching/laboratory assistants.

"Union" means "trade union" as defined in British Columbia's *Labour Relations Code*.

Student Responsibilities

This section applies to students in the event of a labour dispute.

Note: In some cases, students are also employed by the university and are members of a Union whose collective agreement with the university may contain provisions about picket lines. While recognizing that these individuals have a dual role at the university, as both student and employee, this section applies with respect to their status as a student.

Where a student does NOT cross a legal picket line and the relevant course, lab or tutorial proceeds during a labour dispute, the student has the following responsibilities:

- To fulfill all course requirements.
- To follow the established procedures for missing a class, lab or tutorial as defined for the course in the course syllabus, course materials, or conveyed by other means.
- To follow the established procedures for contacting the Instructor of Record for their course, lab or tutorial to request an academic concession in cases where they are unable to complete graded work or miss a test or examination, which includes contacting their Instructor of Record as soon as possible. Academic concessions are normally granted at the discretion of the Instructor of Record and/or in accordance with established departmental or Faculty policies and procedures.
- *In the case of a graduate student:* To inform their supervisor as soon as possible in cases where they will not be attending their scheduled thesis defence or other scheduled activities, such as a supervisory committee meeting, candidacy examination, etc.

If concerns arise related to grading, students should follow the guidance provided in the Grading and Reconsideration of Grades Policy ([T 20.01](#)), which includes efforts to resolve such matters first with their Instructor of Record and then with the appropriate Chair.

See also the **Academic Concessions** and **Communications with Students** sections below.

Instructor Responsibilities

This section applies to Instructors with teaching duties at the university, which include but are not limited to faculty members, sessional instructors, and teaching/laboratory assistants.

Where an Instructor does NOT cross a legal picket line of a Union of which they are not a member, they have the following responsibilities:

- *In the case of a faculty member:* To inform the Dean of their decision not to cross a legal picket line (as soon as possible and no later than the timeframe specified in the applicable collective agreement or policy).
- *In the case of a sessional instructor:* To inform the Department and/or the Chair (or the Dean in the absence of the Chair) of their decision not to cross a legal picket line (as soon as possible and no later than the timeframe specified in the applicable collective agreement).
- *In the case of a teaching/laboratory assistant:* To inform the Instructor of Record (or the Chair in the absence of the Instructor of Record; or the Dean in the absence of the Chair) of their decision not to cross a legal picket line (as soon as possible and no later than the timeframe specified in the applicable collective agreement).
- *In the case of others with teaching duties not listed above:* To inform the Department and/or the Chair (or the Dean in the absence of the Chair) of their decision not to cross a legal picket line (as soon as possible and no later than the timeframe specified in the applicable policy, agreement, or collective agreement).

Instructors of Record¹ (Instructors with overall responsibility for a course) have the following responsibilities with respect to academic concessions and communications with students:

Academic Concessions

- To determine whether **academic concessions** will be granted to **individual students** (e.g., extensions of deadlines, alternate assignments or exams, etc.), and to grant or deny them consistently and equitably to students in their course who request such concessions. It is important to note that academic concessions are different from academic accommodations.²
- To determine whether academic concessions will be granted to **all students in their class, lab or tutorial** (e.g., reasonable and supportive changes to the basis and/or schedule of assessments) after consulting the Chair in cases where such changes would alter the structure or weighting of grading stated in the course syllabus in a manner consistent with the Grading and Reconsideration of Grades Policy ([T 20.01](#)).
- In exceptional circumstances, to recommend granting **flexibility in program requirements** for individual students at their request, after confirming the student's status and progress in their program:
 - *In the case of an undergraduate student:* Instructors of Record may submit such recommendations to the Chair who will consult with the Office of the Registrar prior to approving the recommendation.
 - *In the case of a graduate student:* Instructors of Record may consult the chair of the relevant graduate program followed by submitting such recommendations to the Vice-Provost and Dean, Graduate Studies for approval.
- In exceptional circumstances, to recommend granting **flexibility in degree requirements** for individual students at their request, after confirming the student's status and progress in their degree:
 - *In the case of an undergraduate student:* Instructors of Record may consult the Chair and obtain the support of the Faculty Dean before submitting such recommendations to the Registrar for approval.
 - *In the case of a graduate student:* Instructors of Record may consult the chair of the relevant graduate program before submitting such recommendations to the Vice-Provost and Dean, Graduate Studies for approval.

Communications with Students

Instructors of Record¹ should provide clear and timely communication to students regarding their expectations in the event of a labour dispute, including but not limited to the following:

- What method(s) the Instructor of Record will use to communicate with students in the event of a labour dispute, ideally through multiple means such as verbally in classes, labs or tutorials, and in writing via class slides, notices in the learning management system, email, etc.

¹Refers to Instructors of Record who are not on strike at the time.

²**Academic accommodations** refer to the university's legal duty under the British Columbia *Human Rights Code* to accommodate students with disabilities. This legal duty is reflected in SFU's Accessibility for Students with Disabilities Policy ([GP 26](#)) and Human Rights Policy ([GP 18](#)). Instructors have a legal responsibility to accommodate students with a disability. The university requires students with a disability who are seeking accommodations to register with the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL). Instructors are asked to keep the CAL office apprised of changes in courses that affect students as a result of a labour dispute.

- What method(s) a student may use to let the Instructor of Record know that the student will not be crossing a legal picket line to attend the scheduled class, lab or tutorial.
- Whether the class or associated labs or tutorials will proceed as scheduled if the campus as a whole or building location is behind a legal picket line.
- Whether the Instructor of Record's previously prepared teaching materials, simulated labs or tutorial exercises will be used in place of a cancelled class, lab or tutorial.
- Whether the timing of assessments within the established course schedule will be adjusted. All changes to the schedule should be communicated to students with sufficient notice.
- Whether [academic concessions](#) for missed work will be granted if the class, lab or tutorial does not proceed as scheduled and/or students choose not to cross a legal picket line. The decision whether to grant an academic concession normally rests with the Instructor of Record for the relevant course and/or in accordance with established departmental or Faculty policies and procedures.

See also the **Academic Concessions** section above.

Assignment of Grades

In the event of a labour dispute, assignment of grades should follow established grading practices as much as possible. If the duration of a labour dispute renders it impossible to assign grades using the established grading practices for the course (or through the Chair, Dean or other designate of the Dean), the university may enact extraordinary measures to ensure students are able to complete their courses.