

MSVUFA Strike FAQ for Students

We know that talk of a strike can cause a lot of anxiety, so below, we answer some of the questions that arise when talk of a strike is circulating.

Most importantly, remember that **no one wants to go on strike at the Mount**. You can rest assured that the MSVUFA is working as hard as we can to achieve a fair and equitable deal. The Bargaining Team of the MSVUFA and representatives from the Board of Governors are still negotiating and will be doing so until a settlement is reached. Negotiations will continue even during a strike or a lockout.

Who is bargaining?

There are two groups that are currently negotiating: The MSVUFA is made up of full-time faculty, librarians and lab instructors. The Board of Governors (BoG) is a group of community members and senior Mount administrators who oversee the financial dealings of the university.

Remember: The Board of Governors does not 'own' the university. Students, librarians and archivists, staff, lab instructors, and faculty comprise the heart of the Mount. You might hear the BoG refer to themselves as "the university" in opposition to "the faculty" during these negotiations. They are not the university. We all are.

What is the timeline?

Normally, and in past negotiations, the MSVUFA and the BoG meet throughout the summer months. During this round, in spite of repeated attempts by the MSVUFA team to set meeting times, the BoG refused to meet during the summer. Since bargaining began in September 2023, negotiations are not proceeding as productively as they should, with very few issues agreed upon. Due to a lack of meaningful participation from the BoG, the MSVUFA filed for conciliation last semester. Third-party conciliators facilitated three meetings in January to try and help both parties find agreement.

Both parties are at an impasse after three conciliation meetings, so the conciliators have filed a "no board" report, which means that no agreement was reached, on January 26th. The filing of the report starts the clock on a 14-calendar-day "cooling-off" period.

Should the two sides not have reached a tentative agreement by the end of the cooling-off period, MSVUFA is in a legal **strike position** and the BoG is in a position to **lock out** members of the MSVUFA. Neither of these things happen suddenly: The MSVUFA has to provide the BoG with a **48-hour notice** that we are going on strike. Similarly, the BoG has to provide faculty with a **48-hour notice** that they are locking us out.

What are the issues?

Because we are currently bargaining, we can't discuss the details of the issues. However, we can share MSVUFA's priorities during this round of bargaining:

- Decolonizing the Collective Agreement
- Improve supports and resources for academic & professional duties
- Transform the Collective Agreement through Indigenous-informed practices
- Advance flexible and responsive workplace practices for members throughout the various stages of their careers
- Integrate feminist perspectives into the Collective Agreement
- Address systemic disadvantages faced by equity-deserving, under-represented, and under-served members
- Strengthen FA complement language to ensure member diverseness, growth, & renewal
- Recognize and value a wider range of scholarly, professional, and service activities
- Secure a fair and reasonable compensation package

What happens if there is a strike?

All classes and labs taught by members of the MSVUFA will be cancelled. Courses offered by contract faculty will continue. This means students may have none, some, or all of their classes cancelled. Some contract faculty may waive (at their discretion) penalties for not attending classes if students would prefer to support MSVUFA on the picket line.

During a strike, MSVUFA members will withdraw their labour from the Mount. Labour includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Teaching, supervising, and advising students
- Service to the university
- Research
- Professional duties
- Counselling work

It is key that faculty, librarians and lab instructors withdraw our labour from the university in order to motivate the employer to bargain and offer a fair deal. You will see pickets lines at the university entrances to campus. These picket lines will not prevent access to the university grounds. Please feel free to stop and chat with MSVUFA members on the picket lines. If you want, you can even join us!

Could I still contact my professors at this time?

MSVUFA members will not access MSVU email accounts, Moodle, or any other form of communication housed operated by MSVU during a strike.

Should I still do my course work?

Course expectations may change depending on how long a strike or lockout lasts. Your instructors will not expect you to carry on with course work as normal, and you will not be penalized for not doing class work while classes are cancelled.

You can certainly keep up with your reading or assignments that have already been given during any time that classes are suspended, though you will not be able to submit work or get feedback from your instructor

Can my supervisor still write reference letters?

MSVUFA will not stand in the way of any MSVUFA members writing reference letters for any of their students. Reference letters are not an obligation under the collective agreement, and many consider this an ethical obligation to help their students. Ultimately, it is up to each individual instructor/supervisor. If you are worried about reaching your references in the event of a strike or a lockout, get in touch with them now to make arrangements for alternate contact information.

How long will it last?

The length of the possible strike will be determined by progress at the bargaining table. It is hard to say how long a strike will last, but generally speaking, strikes in the post-secondary sector can last a week or two. It is unusual (but not unheard of) for strikes to last longer than that.

What happens when the strike ends?

Strikes can end or be averted quite suddenly, so it is important to stay connected through the various communications portals that are available. The bargaining teams will continue to bargain throughout a strike and will announce when a tentative agreement has been reached. This doesn't mean the end of the strike: the agreement has to then be taken to the membership for a vote. This vote generally happens quite quickly and once the agreement has been signed by both sides, classes will resume almost immediately.

What happens to my term?

Faculty want to make sure that you complete your course work and earn your credits. At the end of the strike, there will be an agreement about any changes to the university's schedule. Individual faculty members may make adjustments to their course requirements and the exam schedule may need to be revised.

How can I support MSVUFA?

- Share your support for MSVUFA on Twitter/X. Tag us @MSVUFA and help share our messages.
- Follow the MSVUSU accounts for student-focused information.

- Call or email MSVU President, Dr. Joel Dickinson, at 902-457-6115 or joel.dickinson@msvu.ca and ask that they take every possible step to prevent the strike by negotiating a fair agreement.
- Join the picket line! If a strike occurs, information about picketing and other strike-related events will be posted regularly on the MSVUFA website.

Can I join the picket line?

Yes, by all means! Our members would appreciate your support. If a strike occurs, information about picketing and other strike-related events will be posted regularly on the MSVUFA website.