



PSAC 610 Strike FAQ (as of April 19th)

Q: How did we get to this point?

PSAC Local 610 is negotiating a new four-year collective agreement with Western University after the previous one expired August 31, 2023. Eight collective bargaining meetings have occurred since the first round of negotiations on October 30, 2023, including Conciliation on March 20th, where the provincially-appointed Conciliator was asked to submit a 'No Board' Report. In a further mediation session on April 10 both parties walked away from the table and the GTA's announced they would be on strike beginning April 11th, at 12:01pm.

Q: How does strike affect me as a faculty member?

More than 2,000 employed GTAs act as proctors and markers for exams and assignments. With the exam period aligning with strike, the withdrawal of their labour will be a large disruption. Faculty Members may feel pressured to take on work normally done by TAs such as grading, proctoring, or running labs and tutorials, help sessions, etc. You should strongly resist this pressure. Members may be approached by undergraduate students expressing concern or anger. Please direct these students to your Associate Dean and/or the Provost (see below).

Q: Do I have to keep working?

Your employment rights and obligations under your collective agreement do not change during a job action by another union. Unless you are in a lawful strike position, your collective agreement requires you to report to work and do your job. If there are voluntary elements of your job you can choose to discontinue those (e.g., convocation events).

Q: What do I do if I show up to my exam and there are not enough proctors?

If you feel that the academic integrity of your exam is at risk due to an absence of qualified proctors, UWOFA will defend actions you take such as delaying or canceling the exam. More broadly, UWOFA will defend members subjected to discipline for exercising their collective agreement rights. Senate has an "Administration of Exams" policy which details proctor requirements [here](#).

Q: What is wrong with Western asking Professional and Managerial Association staff to take on proctoring shifts and inviting GTAs to continue working if there is a strike?

Asking the GTAs to cross their own picket lines and hiring PMA staff as replacement workers is strikebreaking activity which UWOFA condemns. It takes advantage of the most vulnerable graduate students and undermines labour solidarity. The more work that the Employer can cover with 'scab' labour, the less impactful the strike will be. Nobody should threaten anyone with reprisals (loss of future positions, etc.) for withdrawing their labour during a strike, and anyone in your Unit is asked to do so, please [contact UWOFA immediately](#) and make it clear that this is not acceptable.

Q: Do I have to take up the work (e.g., marking and proctoring) which they would have done for my course(s)?

Faculty Members should strongly object to any request to take on any work normally done by TAs such as grading, proctoring, or running labs and tutorials, help sessions, etc. Members should not do work set out in the Duties Specification Agreement (DSA) as work of TAs. This is not your work. If the Employer insists that you take on GTA work you should comply or risk insubordination under the common practice of 'work now, grieve later'. In this event, [contact UWOFA immediately](#) and make it clear that you are only complying under protest.



Q: Should I alter my exam content or change the format of my final exam?

Should a Dean or any other representative of the Employer tell you to alter your course and/or grading requirements as a result of a labour disruption, you are likely within your rights to refuse such a request on grounds of Academic Freedom and Workload. As faculty, it is not our responsibility to alleviate the challenges of a labour disruption, but it is our responsibility to maintain academic integrity in our courses. Pedagogical decisions were made, and altering them due to logistical constraints could compromise the exam's content validity.

Q: I won't be able to meet the grade submission deadline if the GTAs continue to be on strike unless I do the marking on my own. What should I do?

If the absence of grading that would normally be done by GTAs seems likely to delay the final submission of course marks, you should inform your Chair, Director or Associate Dean about these delays. You are not obliged to carry out the work of striking employees to meet these deadlines. It is the Employer's responsibility to find appropriate and legal solutions, which include seeking a fair and timely settlement with PSAC 610. If the Employer insists, you must comply or risk insubordination, but [contact UWOFA immediately](#)

Q: My undergraduate students are asking me a lot of questions and they are worried about their exams and final grades. What should I tell them?

- You can explain that the TAs have a legal right to strike and this is a normal activity as they try to negotiate a better employment contract.
- You can explain that replacement workers are being hired to do the work of striking GTAs and this is the reason why the University is able to continue exams.
- You can explain that the Faculty Association does not support the hiring of these replacement workers and tell them what you plan to do at your exam.
- You can explain that grading final papers, assignments, and exams are part of the contractual duties of our GTAs and that Faculty Members will not do this work. Faculty will not be able to assign final grades until the labour disruption has ended and the TAs have a contract and complete that work.
- You can remind them that they can voice their concerns with their Dean and the University Registrar
- You can remind them to join the TAs on the picket line and to talk to them about their financial concerns and why they are striking

Q: My course does not have exams, should my GTA work more now to get their duties done before a strike deadline?

No. You should not expect nor encourage GTAs to work more or faster than is normally stipulated in their contract. This violates their contract and undermines the power of their potential labour action. If assignments and exams are not marked and there is a strike, the grade submissions will have to be delayed. It is the Employer's responsibility to find appropriate and legal solutions, which include seeking a fair and timely settlement with PSAC 610.

Q: What should I do if the Administration hires replacement workers to do the marking of striking GTAs?

UWOFA Members should strongly object to replacement workers taking on any work normally done by TAs such as grading. If the Employer insists, you must comply or risk insubordination, but [contact UWOFA immediately](#). UWOFA supports Members who object to supervising the duties of GTAs while their union is on strike



Q: What should I do if my TA is continuing to work during the strike?

You can remind them that they have a right to strike and that their union and fellow GTAs are stronger if everyone is withdrawing their labour. Clarify that you are not asking them to continue working. Encourage them to speak to their union. UWOFA encourages Members in this situation to refuse to accept any grading work from strike-breaking GTAs until the labour disruption is resolved.

Q: What do I do if one of my graduate students asks me for advice about signing up to cross any potential picket line and keep working?

We understand that this is a very hard situation for GTAs. We strongly urge you to tell your student(s) that you do not support that decision and to discuss their concerns and challenges with their PSAC Local 610 representative. UWOFA supports Members who object to supervising the duties of GTAs while their union is on strike. [Contact UWOFA immediately](#) if the Employer insists.

Q: Who can I talk to if I have concerns about the impact of the strike on my work?

We are here to support you as we navigate a potential PSAC 610 strike. We encourage you to direct questions and concerns to your Chairs, Directors, Associate Deans, and Deans. You can always reach out to us by [email](#) or by phone (519) 661-3016.

Q: Do I have to cross any picket line?

Members must continue to fulfill their academic responsibilities in the event of a GTA strike. We encourage you to honour the picket lines of our colleagues by entering campus at locations other than those being picketed. You may choose to work remotely, if you are able. Please note that the London Transit Commission workers will not cross picket lines so the buses will be rerouted around campus. When crossing a line, you should respect the picket lines by waiting patiently, taking leaflets, and listening to the information provided. We encourage you to join the picket lines or engage in other acts of solidarity. "Solidarity picketing" is done on a Member's own time but we suggest adding it to your PE/BRR report as service to the Association. You may also wish to get together a group of colleagues to picket together. It is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate to the Administration that we support efforts to negotiate a fair deal for Teaching Assistants. [Sign up here](#) or contact UWOFA if you would like help in joining a solidarity picket or just show up on your own. Always report to the Picket Captain when joining a line.

Q: How can I help?

You can express your support for PSAC Local 610 by sending an email to [President Alan Shepard](#), Provost [Florentine Strzelczyk](#), and AVP (HR) [Jane O' Brien](#) calling for a fair and timely settlement. Talk to your colleagues and undergraduate students about why it is important to support PSAC's bargaining demands. Help spread the word about the important issues that our TA's at Western are fighting for. Follow and share their stories on Instagram and Twitter @psac610. If you are out on the picket line please share your photos and tag @uwofa1 @[sac

Q: How can I stay informed?

Continue to check the UWOFA website and your email for updates from UWOFA. You can also follow our socials:

Twitter/Instagram: @UWOFA1



Facebook: UWOFA