

## Work-to-rule and Bargaining FAQ for Students

*Dear Students,*

*As you may be aware, faculty (academic employees) at Ontario's 24 colleges, represented by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), and the College Employer Council (CEC), on behalf of the province's colleges, have been working to negotiate a new collective agreement, which expired on September 30, 2021.*

*The purpose of this 'frequently asked questions' (FAQ) document is to provide you with an update on contract negotiations. If you have further questions, contact one of your professors or your college's faculty Union Local, or visit [collegefaculty.org](http://collegefaculty.org).*

### **Q. What is the back story on this? How did we get here with these negotiations?**

In response to escalation on the part of the CEC, college faculty held a strike mandate vote in December. A majority of faculty voted 'yes' to authorize the faculty Bargaining Team to engage in labour action—up to and including a strike—if necessary. Nonetheless, faculty left open an offer to return to the table or settle remaining issues through binding interest arbitration.

Unfortunately, the CEC and college management have chosen to impose terms and conditions of work on college faculty, rather than agreeing to extend existing terms while the faculty and employer bargaining teams negotiate a Collective Agreement.

This has left College faculty with no choice other than to engage in labour action, in this case a work-to-rule campaign.

### **Q. Does the 'yes' vote to a strike mandate mean there will be a full strike for sure?**

No, there are options available, such as the current work-to-rule. Other options are targeted strikes, rolling strikes, etc. Work-to-rule *is* a form of strike action, to be clear. But, unlike a full strike, faculty have not entirely withdrawn their labour (more on that below).

### **Q. What exactly is 'imposition of terms and conditions'?**

The imposition of terms and conditions is the exact opposite of negotiating an agreement in which both the voices of the employer and employees are heard. It is toxic for labour relations because the terms of work are imposed on employees. It is generally considered a 'union-busting' tactic. The Ontario Colleges are the only employer in Ontario history to impose terms and conditions twice.

And it means the voices of faculty – the educators in post-secondary education – are completely ignored when it comes to the College system and student learning conditions.

**Q. What are my professors and other faculty (librarians, counsellors, instructors) doing now, and why?**

Faculty are now engaging in a labour action known as ‘work-to-rule’. The purpose of this action is to pressure College management and hold it accountable for the consequences of its decisions, which right now are harmful for both students and faculty.

Work-to-rule means that faculty will do their jobs to the letter, following their exact job description. They will not engage in additional unpaid activities that often assist administration in managing the Colleges.

**Q. How does work-to-rule affect me as a student?**

The goal is to minimize the impact on students. Faculty will continue to focus on supporting students, within the parameters of the time that they are provided by the Colleges to do so. They will continue to teach their courses and work with students. The work they are not engaging in (what’s known as ‘struck work’) will largely impact College management. Students are not the direct targets, and if students wish to receive assistance that faculty are unable to provide under work-to-rule, they should reach out to their program chairs or other managers

Talk to your professors about your concerns. It’s important for faculty and students to communicate at this time.

**Q. Will classes run as scheduled under work-to-rule?**

Yes, they will. Again, check with your professors for any information you need about your courses, but they will run as scheduled.

**Q. What are faculty fighting for?**

Faculty proposals are modest but much-needed, and would improve working conditions, student learning conditions, and the stability of the College system.

The workload formula for full-time faculty hasn’t changed since 1985 (no, that’s not a typo).

Right now, that formula gives faculty 5.4 minutes per week to grade the work you submit. Faculty are asking that this be increased to 7.2 minutes.

Yes, we are asking for more time to grade your work. The Colleges for some reason are claiming that we are asking for a reduction in workload—a 40% reduction! This is simply false. We do not know why they are making this claim or where such a number comes from, but it is simply not true.

Faculty are also asking for a revised workload formula that would acknowledge the prep time for an online course (remember that the current workload formula was created before the Internet and before the revolution in online and hybrid learning).

The Colleges state these are proposals they can never consider. Why? Again, you will have to ask them to explain.

Another key issue: about 70% of all faculty who teach you are employed on short-term contracts -- usually for only one semester at a time. They have been doing their jobs for years, and so we are seeking greater job security and a chance at a full-time position for more faculty.

More faculty with stable jobs isn't some great luxury. This would be better for the sustainability of the College system and for the student learning experience—and surely dedicated long-time teachers have earned a right to a bit of security.

**Q. Why won't the Colleges agree to binding interest arbitration or continue to negotiate?**

We don't know, to be honest. Remember—faculty have offered to refer all these issues under dispute to binding interest arbitration. What the Colleges are currently doing is disruptive for all students and faculty, but it doesn't have to be this way. The CEC is a separate corporate entity with its own CEO, so we don't know what their agenda might be.

This is why it's important for students to make their voices heard and to ask the Colleges about these things directly (see more on that below).

**Q. What can I do to support my professors and other faculty?**

You can make it clear that you would like management to resolve all this bargaining stuff without any disruption. The College presidents direct the CEC, so you can let your College president know how you feel by writing them directly.

Write to your College president here:

<https://www.collegefaculty.org/write-your-college-president/>