



# *Teaching Support Staff Union*

## **Marking For Education not Administration Frequently Asked Questions**

**September 24, 2015**

This document covers frequently asked questions, if other questions arise, members should contact:

TSSU office: 778-782-4735

TSSU Helpline: 604-652-6202

Email: [tssu@tssu.ca](mailto:tssu@tssu.ca)

### **The Background: Why do we need to increase the pressure now?**

TSSU has been without a collective agreement for over 17 months. SFU Administration has shown no willingness to come to the table to negotiate on our core issues, despite our previous job action. We know from bargaining the 2010-2014 collective agreement that SFU Administration needs to feel significant pressure from the TSSU membership and the campus community to bargain in a meaningful way.

In November 2012, once we had a member of SFU's Senior Administration with the authority to make changes in the room, we negotiated the majority of our agreement in 48 hours. UBC was willing to negotiate a deal with their TA's in a matter of 3 months, from start to commencement. At the onset of bargaining our committee was optimistic that negotiations would proceed differently this time. It is clear that we need to take further collective action to emphasize that we want a collective agreement that improves our working conditions sooner rather than later.

The TSSU is fighting for:

- Seniority for experienced Sessional Instructors
- Access to SFU's standard benefit package for Continuing Language Instructors in the ELC/ITP program
- Protection from overwork/underpay for TA/TMs and improved access to TA/TM work for graduate students
- A fix to the childcare bursary to get money into the hands of parents
- Compliance with BC law, on issues such as Health and Safety and payment of wages

### **Why is withholding the marks from Administration a good option?**

Our greatest strength as workers is that our labour is essential to the operation of the University, and we have complete control of withdrawing that labour. Withholding marks provides pressure but has a lower impact on students than the cancellation of classes that would result from a picket line. This job action also ensures that members continue to be paid while putting significant pressure on the Administration.

During the withholding of marks, teaching work will carry on, students will learn, feedback will be provided, and the student-teacher relationship can actually be strengthened due to increased interaction. We recognize this will cause more work for members, but this extra work results in no lost wages unlike a picket line.

### **Can I be fired for withholding grades as part of a strike?**

No. Under the BC Labour Code, TSSU members can not suffer any retribution, intimidation or any discipline for participating in an official job action. The Strike Committee has declared that all members must withhold grades, so



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all members are now protected by the law. In the past, a limited number of TSSU members experienced intimidation and coercion from bosses and managers. Please report any intimidation, coercion or bullying immediately to TSSU so we can put a stop to it.

## **Will I still be paid if we're withholding grades?**

Since you are still completing your work, you must continue to be paid. In the event TSSU members choose to withdraw services (e.g. set up a picket line) then SFU Administration is allowed to deduct money from your pay.

## **Why are we doing this for a second semester?**

Despite over 70% of undergrads having at least one final grade not reported, SFU's Administration has yet to come to the table in a meaningful way. They recently tabled a 'comprehensive package' that was full of concessions that affect both our members rights and their rate of pay. Our members voted 86.2% NO to accepting this package and we need to continue to show our determination to reach a fair collective agreement through collective action.

## **Why don't we just ask the Administration to be more reasonable?**

The Contract and Strike Committee have made multiple requests for the SFU Administration to come to the table to bargain a Collective Agreement. In response, SFU Administration has repeated that they will not address any of our core issues in this round of bargaining, despite TSSU significantly narrowing their package to only address the core issues our members face as a clear indication of where the deal lies. It is clear from the behaviour of SFU Administration and our experience in 2012 that significant pressure is required to get them to bargain. In 2012, it took several picket lines and over a month of Marking for Education not Administration to get a senior VP to the table. An agreement was then reached within 48 hours.

## **What about marking that is supposed to be done online?**

You must not enter grades into any electronic system that is available for access by employees of SFU who are not TSSU members. You may enter feedback (e.g. comments, hints, alternative ways to approach the problem, etc) onto an electronic system, but numeric and letter grades must not be entered. For unusual circumstances, please contact TSSU via the means listed above. What if I have already put some marks on assignments and my course supervisor is asking for those assignments?

## **What if I accidentally put numbers on some assignments**

In the event that some marks have been put on assignments or exams, record the grades on a separate spreadsheet and use a sharpie or white-out to obscure the grade on the page. You may also add a TSSU sticker on top, or any other method as long as the mark cannot be made visible to students.

## **What if my class involves participation marks or "i-clickers" and I have concerns about withholding grades under those conditions?**

Please contact [tssu@tssu.ca](mailto:tssu@tssu.ca) for specific assistance with these problems or call 778-782-4735 or 604-652-6202.