

Student FAQ

August 1, 2025

Faculty members understand the pressure that a possible interruption of classes puts on students and their families. The DFA is doing its best to get back to the table and negotiate an agreement. In the meantime, we know you have questions and we have done our best to answer them here. If there are other questions you have, please send them along to 2025.strike.dfa@dal.ca and we will do our best to answer them.

Are the DFA and Dalhousie Board of Governors still at the bargaining table?

The DFA has asked the Board repeatedly to come back to the bargaining table. So far, the Board has refused to bargain more than a handful of times. The last meeting took place July 16 and the Board has been unwilling to come back to the bargaining table since then to try and negotiate an agreement.

DFA President Dave Westwood contacted Dalhousie President Kim Brooks on June 28 in an attempt to get the two sides back to the table. President Brooks was unable to accommodate a meeting due to her busy summer schedule.

Both sides are scheduled to meet with the conciliator on Monday, August 11 to try and reach an agreement before any job action is taken.

Are faculty members going to strike? And if so, when would it happen?

When talking about “job action”, it is important to note the difference between a strike and a lockout.

A **lockout** is a situation where an employer temporarily closes a workplace or suspends work to pressure employees or their union to accept specific employment terms: equally importantly the employer stops paying the workers. It's a form of employer-driven leverage in labour disputes.

A **strike** is a work stoppage where employees collectively refuse to work to exert pressure on their employer during contract negotiations: the employer would stop paying workers during a strike. The purpose of a strike is to disrupt normal business operations and compel the employer to meet their demands.

For students, the end result is same – work by DFA members stops.

The DFA has no intention of triggering a strike in August. We want students in classes this summer to continue their studies uninterrupted. We also want students coming for the fall term to have chance to move in and get settled.

Any work stoppage in August will be the result of the Board choosing to lockout DFA Members. If the Board decides to make that move, the earliest you could expect job action is August 12.

What is the DFA asking for?

There are many issues that have not been agreed to at the table, the main ones are:

The Board wants to change the collective agreement to allow more teaching to be done by precarious sessional and contract instructors. Sessional and contract faculty are paid far less than full-time positions and they do not receive the same benefits, and most of them do not conduct research.

The DFA is asking for reasonable salary increases, in line with what other universities pay their teachers, scholars, and librarians. The Board is demanding that DFA accept wages below inflation, which amounts to a wage cut.

Salary that does not keep pace with inflation, and an increase in classes being taught by sessional and contract faculty will continue to chip away at the academic mission of Dalhousie. We know our working conditions are your learning conditions and we want to keep Dalhousie strong. To do that the DFA is asking for a fair contract for its members.

To learn more about the DFA's bargaining positions, read [Student Update #2](#).

If there is a work stoppage, how long will it last?

In the last four rounds of bargaining (2021, 2017, 2020 and 2022), the DFA and the Board reached agreement in conciliation. (Conciliation is a common part of the bargaining process where a provincially-appointed conciliation officer works with both sides to try and find an agreement. If conciliation fails, either side can initiate job action – a lockout by the employer, or a strike by the union.) We are hopeful that we can reach agreement without work stoppage again this year.

The Dalhousie Board has never locked out faculty. For Dalhousie to do so this year would be an unprecedented move among the leading 15 research-intensive universities in Canada. If they do indeed initiate a lockout, we have no idea how long they would keep us locked out.

The DFA has not been on strike since 2002. The strike lasted almost four weeks. In Canada's post-secondary sector, the average length of a strike is three weeks.

If labour disruption occurs, it could jeopardize the fall term depending on how long it lasts.

If there is a work stoppage, what activities will be interrupted?

The list of activities at all campuses that will be interrupted includes:

- All in-person and online classes taught by approximately 1000 DFA professors, instructors, librarians and professional counsellors would be cancelled;

- Access to course materials, tests, grading, and communication with students on academic matters would be cancelled;
- Senate will be suspended;
- Supervision of research students (both undergraduate and graduate) will be paused;
- Thesis defences, other presentations, and access to librarians will stop;
- There will be reduced access to some counselling services.
- Internships and practica may be disrupted depending on the specific details and supervisory responsibilities.

Can I cross the picket line?

There will be picket lines at various places around campus in Halifax and Truro. To get to the campus you may have to cross the picket line. Our faculty members will not prevent you from doing so.

How can students keep their studies moving forward?

If a lockout occurs this summer, and you are taking classes, we suggest that you treat the temporary cessation of classes like a “working study break” and continue reading, studying, learning, writing papers, etc. Ask your professor or instructor for specific examples of what you can do to prepare for job action. **Do this before August 11, the earliest date faculty could be locked out.**

If you will not be in class until the fall semester, the best thing you can do is monitor the situation by checking our social media platforms (see below) and our website <https://wearedal.ca>.

When classes resume, faculty will try to work out a revised completion of courses that is fair and reasonable. If work stoppage occurs, it could jeopardize the fall term depending on how long it lasts.

If I am travelling to start the fall term, should I still come to Halifax/Truro?

DFA urges students to keep informed on how the situation is unfolding. Our picket lines will not prevent you from moving into residence although there could be delays while the picket lines are operating (Monday to Friday, 730 am – 400 pm).

If there is a lockout that begins in August, there is a high probability that the start of the fall semester will be delayed so you might want to plan your travel to campus accordingly. **If you are considering changing your travel plans to Halifax, we advise sharing this information with Dalhousie’s student services leaders as this could encourage a faster resolution to the work stoppage.**

As a student, is there anything I can do to help avoid labour disruption?

The Dalhousie Student Union is considering a motion for academic amnesty to the Senate for those students who might feel uncomfortable crossing picket lines to attend classes that may be held by sessional instructors.

We encourage you to voice your concerns to the Vice-Provost of Student Affairs Rick Ezekiel via email rick.ezekiel@dal.ca or Assistant Vice-Provost Student Engagement and Success Quent Adams via email quenta.adams@dal.ca

If work stoppage occurs, and you see our DFA members walking the line, you are always welcome to show your support and join them on the picket lines. We have no idea how long a lockout would last, and the more support we have on the picket lines, the stronger we will be.

Please also follow us on social media, like and share our posts. We are active on Instagram and X (@dalfacultyassoc), on Bluesky (@dalfaculty.bsky.social) and on Facebook (Keep Dal Strong). We also post updates and information on our site <https://wearedal.ca> under the Student Info tab.