

Labour Relations Advice

FSA COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT AND UNION WEDNESDAYS

The FSA / BCIT Collective Agreement (CA) is, in many ways, an oddball. We have robust language when it comes to collegial governance and academic freedom as well as intricacies around professional development, salary placement and related processes. One tremendously beneficial aspect of the CA, at least from a union organizing perspective, comes in Article 2.1.8.

“Each Employee shall be entitled, at no loss of pay, to a total of three (3) hours per week during regular hours of operation of the Institute, for the purpose of participation in Union activities... The three (3) hours for participation in Union activities shall be scheduled during the Wednesday break period (1430 – 1730), unless the Parties mutually agree to another time or times which allow greater participation by

the Employees while minimizing interference in the operation of classes.”

In plain language, BCITFSA members have three hours each week set aside for union activities, scheduled on Wednesday afternoons. We have had language like this in our CA for about 50 years now. The language is both uncommon and useful. It means that we have time set aside during the workweek to gather as FSA members to build collegiality and conduct union business. This is why General Membership, Tech Rep, and Board meetings—as well as Departmental Rights presentations—are generally on Wednesday afternoons. This is our time.

Yet Wednesday afternoons are arguably under-utilized. For members holding no elected FSA positions, there

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Your placement on the salary scale at hiring will significantly affect your take-home pay, lifetime earnings, and, eventually, pension. Your placement should reflect your knowledge, experience and abilities. In this sense, the placement should apply equally to any person applying for and successfully attaining a technological faculty or staff position.

The placement process itself weaves through several groups. Selection committees play an important role in a new employee’s salary (Collective Agreement Articles 5.2.3.3.5, 11.2.1, 11.4.1, and 11.6.1), recommending initial salary-scale placement. When working on a selection committee, FSA members need to exercise this language and recommend the step at which new employees sit at hiring, preventing

management alone from making that decision. Under the FSA Collective Agreement, the Dean or equivalent will then review the new employee’s placement on the salary scale (Articles 11.2.5, 11.4.3, and 11.6.4). If disagreement occurs, the Dean or equivalent is required to provide a rationale.

It is imperative new workers pay attention to their initial placement. This can be accomplished by an analysis of where you have been placed on the salary scale, details of which should accompany your appointment letter via the placement form for your respective job classification. Examine your placement form closely and question anything you think is incorrect. There is a six-month time limit from the date of appointment to appeal your initial



are only three General Meetings—October, January, and April—that consistently occupy that time.

Over the years, union representatives have had to fight to retain the three-hour Wednesday break. In 2013, for example, the FSA exercised our Union rights to reject scheduling that conflicted with our Article 2.1.8 language. Importantly, nothing within the contract language in Article 2.1.8 stipulates that union events during this time cannot be moved to other times, so long as there is agreement between the FSA and BCIT. Where a Wednesday afternoon union break cannot be honored due to conflicts with scheduling, the Department members affected should receive another union break *in lieu*. The FSA and BCIT signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MemAg) in 2008 which

states in part that although “circumstances may arise which prevent a Department from scheduling the Three Hour Break between 1430 and 1730 hours... the parties agree to meet and to agree on alternative Break Period arrangements for that Department.”

How would you propose to use your Union Wednesdays to improve things for FSA members? Please reach out to your Member Engagement Officer.



placement (Articles 11.2.6 for Faculty, 11.4.4 for Assistant Instructors, and 11.6.5 for Technical Staff), so act quickly if you believe a mistake has been made. Contact your Human Resources Advisor to have your placement reviewed.

If you are not satisfied with the response, please contact the FSA and remember that you have the right to appeal to the Institute Placement Committee (IPC) for review.

As you progress in your time at BCIT, so too, generally speaking, does your salary. Full-time members advance an additional step on their anniversary date each year. Part-time employees advance on the first of the month following the completion of the equivalent

of an annual workload of a full-time regular faculty member. Additional steps may be granted for external achievements, including obtaining a Master’s degree, professional credential or instructor’s diploma. BCIT also awards a step increase to members for bringing recognition to the Institute. This could be through one’s professional activities, research, publishing and/or community profile.

New FSA members should apply as soon as possible to the IPC if they wish to appeal their initial placement, or if they believe they qualify for a step increase due to additional education or other achievement. Do not delay, and encourage new colleagues to examine their placement!