

In the event of a QUFA work stoppage FAQ for graduate students

These answers are paraphrased from a meeting between SGPS executive members and Dr. Brenda Brouwer, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

Q: What would student status be if a work stoppage occurs at the beginning of fall term?

A: It would be the same as if there were no stoppage, e.g., full-time, on-campus

Q: Would student visas be affected?

A: No.

Q: Would funding be affected?

A: No. Because all students will be registered for the fall term, QGA, OSAP, and all external funding will still be processed.

Q: Would scheduled defenses go forward despite a work stoppage?

A: This kind of concession would be part of the negotiations between QUFA and the University, so no information is available at this time.

Q: Would students who are due to defend their theses this term but must return for another term to complete their degrees pay tuition fees for that additional term?

A: No tuition fees will be charged for students who have completed all work and who must return to defend in a subsequent term due to a work stoppage, as long as that defense is successful. If more work beyond the defense is required, tuition fees could be charged.

Q: How would students who cannot defend this term negotiate with other universities or with employers who have accepted them contingent upon receipt of their degrees?

A: The SGS would inform other institutions about a labour disruption. However, it will be each individual student's responsibility to acquire a letter from the SGS explaining that final degree requirements are pending resolution of the labour dispute. These letters would also be available for those who have completed all degree requirements but whose paperwork has not been processed.

Q: Given that graduate students depend upon course work, supervision, access to librarians, and referees for grant applications, would they be expected to pay tuition fees?

A: It's too early to say, since the answer to this question is wholly dependent

upon the length of a labour disruption, and whether the SGS deems the term recoverable.

Q: Would TA contracts be honoured?

A: Yes. Students would not be penalized for not being able to carry out TA duties. All negotiated contracts would pay out. If your contract has not been negotiated, you should contact SGS to resolve the matter. TFs should refer to the PSAC/Queen's collective agreement.

Q: Would RA contracts be honoured?

A: Yes. All negotiated contracts must be honoured. Many faculty grant holders have an alternative signatory who can ensure that funds remain available, so this could be a case-by-case basis. Contact your RA employer/supervisor to sign off on expected funding immediately. Contact SGS if your contract is not in place in the event of a disruption.

Q: What about other funds that students receive from their supervisors' grants, such as travel advances for conferences?

A: If you have an upcoming conference, arrange with your supervisor to sign off on approved expenditures now. An alternate signatory on grant funds can ensure funds remain available. If your funds come from the SGS allocation, these would be processed as usual.

Q: What would happen with grant applications?

A: OGS has changed its requirements this year: all applications are collected by graduate assistants and verified for completion, then they are sent directly to SGS, so there is no departmental ranking necessary.

However, referee letters remain an issue. The online forms should be released soon, and the SGS is encouraging faculty to write letters as soon as possible.

The SGS would communicate any labour disruption to granting agencies, and the final decision to extend deadlines will rest with those agencies.

Q: Most paperwork must be signed by our supervisors, professors, and graduate chairs. Would this paperwork be processed without these signatures?

A: It depends on the form. Status change forms available through the SGS website (e.g., from full- to part-time, from on- to off-campus) can come straight through the SGS and would be processed, with the understanding that there will be delays. Departmental forms likely would not be processed. Add/drop forms would not be applicable, since a work stoppage will mean no courses will be offered. All students are encouraged to make an appointment to meet with the Associate Deans to discuss any process that is not straightforward.

Q: What would students whose research depends upon ethics approval do?
Would Research Ethics Boards (REBs) operate without faculty?

A: The SGS is unable to answer this question, as it falls under the purview of the Office of the VP Research.

Q: Will research requiring ethics approval go ahead without supervision?

A: This is a matter for the VP Research. There is currently no information available about how operational research activities would be, especially in instances where the Principal Investigator must supervise or sign off on activities.

Q: What will a disruption mean for students who work in labs and whose own research is integrally linked to their supervisor's work?

A: This question falls under the purview of the Office of the VP Research. Students would be expected to continue to carry out their own work, so long as their continued participation in research and lab activities does not pose a hazard to their health and safety. Students would not be expected to take on additional responsibilities to those with which they are regularly assigned.

Q: What should students do if they feel unsafe crossing picket lines?

A: There is a picket hotline. Call 613-533-6464 to request an escort across picket lines.

Q: If we extend the notion of health and safety to include the long-term relationships that students must have with their supervisors, how can students negotiate crossing picket lines and jeopardizing that relationship?

A: After a successful agreement has been reached, students who feel their relationship with QUFA members has been compromised should contact the Associate Deans at SGS to request student/supervisor mediation.

These answers may raise even more questions for you, and there are several for which you may wish further clarification, or more nuanced follow-up. Please contact Anne-Marie Grondin, SGPS VP Campaigns and Community Affairs at vpcca@sgpa.ca for more information.

For those who are also members of PSAC Local 901, there is more information about labour action at Queen's available here:

<http://psac901.wordpress.com/>