

2021 Unit 1 Strike Mandate Primer

Why we strike

The University of Toronto (U. of T.) is Canada's richest, largest University, and it expands this power at the expense of its most precarious workers. U. of T. hires an army of lawyers, consultants, and well-paid bureaucrats specifically trained in diluting the ideas we bring to the bargaining table, and sowing divisions between members of the U. of T. Community. The power we have—and you have—to combat this is unity with our fellow workers, and the ultimate expression of that power is a collective work-refusal, or **strike**. The University will never agree to our demands—no matter how reasonable or necessary—unless they know that we pose a **credible strike threat**.

Why you need to vote “yes” for a strike mandate

The best demonstration of our unity and willingness to strike is the **strike mandate vote**. If thousands of us participate in this vote, and an overwhelming majority are in favour of a strike mandate, U. of T. will see that we are united and determined to pose a credible threat to their bottom-line. **A majority “yes” strike mandate vote doesn't automatically trigger a strike**, but it does give your Local's Executive Committee the mandate (or right) to declare a strike when strategically necessary. Learn more about this mandate, and the overall timeline, [here](#). Without this strike mandate, your bargaining team will have virtually no power to win important gains from the employer.

Here's how you can build solidarity before a strike

Although the strike mandate vote is a defining expression of our solidarity, it isn't the only way we can show U. of T. that we're serious about bargaining. You have the critical responsibility to let all your coworkers and students know that bargaining is underway, and that we will only achieve our aims through mass, unified action. We regularly update a list of actions you can take, and other ways you can get involved, [here](#).

And you can gain the following by voting YES and joining with thousands of others in collective action (see our full platform [here](#)):

- Regular, predictable workloads (including standard working days)
- Mental health crisis first-responders (that aren't campus police)
- Paid training on equity and accessibility
- Increased job security (especially after funding runs out)
- More transparent and fair hiring practices
- Improved leaves

What a strike can look like during the pandemic

Now that most of us are working remotely, job-action will look very different from past rounds of bargaining. If a strike is called, we will still organise **in-person pickets**—these are demonstrations at building entrances and other strategic locations that ideally block workplace access. Due to the pandemic, however, in-person pickets will be smaller than in previous strikes, and they will adhere to public health guidelines, employing physical distancing and relevant protection. As a result of the reduced scale of in-person, on-campus pickets, more members will instead participate in **alternate duties** such as phone-banking (calling members), leafleting relevant neighbourhoods, remote peer-support, and pressuring University donors and other targets.

How to talk to your students about bargaining and the strike

Undergraduate students have suffered tremendously from the pandemic, whether through increased social isolation, intensified workloads, or being required to pay full tuition despite learning remotely. It is thus very possible that the U. of T. will be more aggressive than usual in attempting to turn our students against us as strike actions mount, and they become further inconvenienced. To counter this, **you can emphasize that most of us on strike are students too**: we are exploited not only as Unit 1 workers, but also as students who pay tuition and have our own often unrealistic academic demands. If **all students band together** for a better Unit 1 Collective agreement, **then the strike will end sooner**, and we will all have better work-lives as students *and* educators!

U. of T. has some of the best guarantees for Graduate Students in Canada; these rights were won through almost 40 years of union struggle! You have gained the following (and much more) by members like you voting YES for a strike mandate:

- Mental health coverage through the Greenshield Top-up Plan
- Increased wages
- Paid leaves
- Funding Packages
- Financial assistance funds (Such as the Trans Fund and Unfunded Student Assistance Fund)
- Guaranteed subsequent appointments