



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK STRIKE POLICY

The School of Social Work recognizes that for students in placement in a unionized environment, a strike during placement is a possibility. Students who are applying for a placement in a unionized environment are encouraged to speak to the agency about the potential for a strike and the agency's policy around students in placement during a strike. In the event that a strike happens, the following policies will be followed:

Students who are on placement in a site where the Field Instructor or other professionals engaging in social work practice are on strike should not cross the picket line in order to perform duties associated with their practicum.

The School of Social Work recognizes that strikes are a reality in the social work profession and therefore sometimes part of the social work practice experience. While it is acknowledged that students are not employees of the placement agency, a strike situation provides an opportunity for learning, albeit a different kind of learning.

Students in placement during a strike are expected to undertake learning opportunities associated with the effects or influences of the strike on their learning. Possible activities that can be undertaken include participating in strike activities, writing a reflective paper, journaling, writing and circulating a letter of support, or a research project related to field experience. It is acknowledged that pursuing these learning opportunities will require negotiation between the student, the Faculty Advisor and the Field Instructor. The strike may result in a shifting of responsibilities between the student, Faculty Advisor, Field Instructor, and the practicum office. This shift in responsibilities is indicated below. Any changes in the student's learning objectives should be documented in the learning contract and the revised learning contract submitted to the student's Faculty Advisor.

There is a limit as to how many placement hours could be devoted to the kind of learning that could happen during a strike. A suggested limit is fifty (50) hours in an undergraduate placement and thirty five (35) hours in a graduate placement. If the strike has not been resolved within two weeks, the practicum office will work with the student to negotiate further arrangements and/or find a new placement. It is important to note that every case is unique and the number of hours that a student has already completed will be taken into consideration when determining the most appropriate option for the student. Students should also be aware that the process of finding a new placement may delay their graduation date.

Responsibilities in Cases of strike

1) Field Instructor

- To inform the student of the strike as soon as possible, be sure to give the student the contact information for the union/unit/agency and the names of any of the strike representatives.
- If possible, before or during the strike, discuss with the student and/or Faculty Advisor what types of learning opportunities might be available (i.e.: does the local unit want student participation, could the student get a sense of the issues for a paper, and so on).
- It is not the responsibility of the field instructor to supervise or advise students during a strike.

2) Student

- To inform their Faculty Advisor and the Field Office of a strike at the practicum site, forwarding any contact information.
- To meet with their Faculty Advisor to revise and renegotiate the learning contract, devising new learning objectives that pertain to the strike.
- To seek supervision and advice from the Faculty Advisor for the duration of the strike.
- Will not cross the picket line or seek to perform regular practicum duties outlined in the original learning contract with the agency.
- If the strike continues for more than two weeks the student should meet with the practicum office to negotiate further arrangements and/or to find a new placement. However the student can begin to look for a new placement in collaboration with the Field Office at the start of the strike, if they wish. The student would discuss this with the Field Office beforehand. The student should be aware that the process of finding a new placement may delay their graduation.

3) Faculty Advisor

- To contact the union/unit/agency to determine what learning opportunities associated with the strike are available to the student, ensuring new learning opportunities do not involve crossing a picket line (either physically crossing the picket line or completing related placement activities from home).
- To collaborate with the student in determining learning opportunities. Some possible opportunities include participating in strike activities, journaling, writing and circulating a letter of support, writing a reflective paper, or undertaking a research project related to field experience.
- To incorporate new learning opportunities into a revised learning contract with the student, and to sign off on the new learning objectives.

- To supervise the student for the duration of the strike, this means at least one, one hour supervisory meeting per week.

4) Field Office

- To support the Faculty Advisors through the process of renegotiating the learning contract.
- To meet with the student to negotiate further arrangements and/or to find a new placement in cases where the strike lasts longer than two weeks or at the student's discretion.
- If they are the first to be informed of the strike, they will inform the students and Faculty Advisors who would be affected by this strike.

[Strike policy revised and approved by Faculty on June 11, 2012]