

# POOLING SICK LEAVE: HOW IT WORKS AND WHY IT MATTERS

## Preamble

The Collective Agreement enables FSA members to pool sick leave to assist colleagues whose personal sick leave banks have been depleted or are nearing exhaustion, as detailed in Article 9.3.9 (pp. 46–47). Through this provision, members within a Department may allocate a portion of their unused sick leave to support another member—either within the same Department or another—who requires additional time away from work due to illness or injury.

This mechanism serves both a practical and collegial purpose: it prevents the unnecessary loss of accrued sick days for members who have already reached the maximum 250-day cap, while offering tangible support to coworkers during periods of extended illness. Some Departments make regular use of this provision; others do so only occasionally.

The FSA generally recommends pursuing pooled sick leave before borrowing against future sick days, as pooling provides a more equitable and sustainable solution for both the affected member and the broader community of FSA members.

## Authority and Approval

- Members of a Department determine whether and how to implement a pooling system.
- Final approval must be obtained from the Dean (or equivalent administrator).

## Eligibility, Timing, and Restrictions

Pooling may only be initiated when an employee's personal sick leave:

- Has been fully exhausted, or
- Is expected to be exhausted in the near future.

## Additional considerations:

- Pooled sick leave becomes active only once the member's personal sick leave balance reaches zero.
- Pooled sick leave may be used only for illness or injury.
  - It cannot be applied toward pre-retirement leave, financial payout, or any other purpose.
  - It cannot be used to repay borrowed sick leave.



- The total duration of sick leave available to a member—including regular, borrowed, and pooled leave—may not exceed six months.

## Further Considerations

- Participation in pooling arrangements is entirely voluntary and requires Departmental approval.
- Once approved, pooled sick leave functions as an extension of regular sick leave and is subject to the same reporting and eligibility requirements.

## Pooling in Practice

How the pooling of sick leave is accomplished is left to the discretion of the Department. Larger Departments with longer-serving members may pool as many as four or more times in an academic year, should the need arise.

We recommend an inclusive process in which all FSA members in the Department are invited to participate and contribute. Members in Departments looking to establish their own best practices around pooling may contact FSA Member Engagement Officer, Matt Greaves.

## Conclusion

Article 9.3.9 is a useful tool for member solidarity and support. Practically, the pooling of leave allows members experiencing illness or injury to continue along the road to recovery without being prematurely forced back to work. As a right of members, it embeds solidarity and support within the Department. Unlike other rights granted to FSA members, pooling leave—both the process and its effects—embodies the best of trade-union values.

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Pooling sick leave allows members to demonstrate solidarity by supporting colleagues who have exhausted—or are about to exhaust—their own sick leave entitlements.

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