

NEW MEMBER HANDBOOK



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The BCITFSA and its members' workplaces are located on unceded Indigenous land belonging to the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

WELCOME TO YOUR UNION

Welcome to the BCIT Faculty and Staff Association (FSA)!

You're now part of a union representing over 1,800 members—including faculty, researchers, assistant instructors, technical staff, and even some student employees—working together across BCIT.

The FSA is a democratic, member-driven organization guided by three core principles: **representation**, **negotiation**, and **advocacy**—the pillars of this handbook. Whether you're a new rank-and-file member, an elected representative, or a staff member, we all play a role in building a stronger workplace. Together, we work every day to improve working conditions, uphold member rights, and, during bargaining, fight for better compensation and benefits.



Colin Jones

PRESIDENT



Matt Greaves

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

WHO IS THE FSA?

You Are the FSA!

As a member of the FSA, you are part of a diverse and dynamic union made up of employees from across BCIT. Our members—educators and education professionals—are united in their commitment to delivering an exceptional learning experience for BCIT students and fostering a supportive, high-quality working environment for each other.

The FSA's work is guided by its members. The focus of our collective-bargaining demands, the social issues we engage, and the education programs offered by our representatives are all shaped by input from the membership, in consultation with FSA staff and the Board of Directors.

The FSA's Board is comprised entirely of elected members from our union, including the President, Vice-President, and Treasurer. Our ten Board members, who serve two-year terms, are responsible for setting the union's strategic direction, developing policy, and ensuring legal and financial accountability.

Tech Reps (FSA shop stewards) play a vital role in our democratic structure. Elected by area, Tech Reps serve as vital liaisons between members, the Board, and staff. Through their contributions, Tech Reps help strengthen FSA policy, amplify member voices, and ensure the union remains responsive to ongoing changes at BCIT.

The FSA is also guided by a range of internal committees and caucuses; we appoint members to serve on BCIT committees as well as FSA-affiliate committees, such as those run by the BC Federation of Labour. For over 50 years, our union has relied on the dedication of member-volunteers, who help shape and drive a wide variety of FSA activities, to strengthen the FSA.

Our day-to-day work is supported by a team of professional staff who carry out the organization's strategic direction and policies, providing expertise in areas such as labour relations, strategic leadership, communications, data management, member organizing, and operational support.

At its core, the FSA exists to improve your working life. Together—with your voice and involvement—we will continue to build a strong, inclusive, and member-driven union.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE FSA

By Phone: 604.432.8695

By Email: fsa@bcit.ca

Web: bcitfsa.ca

BCIT FACULTY & STAFF ASSOCIATION

SE16-116 3700 Willingdon Avenue
Burnaby, BC V5G 3H2

SEVEN QUICK ACTIONS FOR NEW MEMBERS

1. **Review your Collective Agreement (CA):** You can find it anytime at bcitfsa.ca.
2. **Verify that your starting salary is correct:** Check your salary placement against Article 11 of the CA. If something doesn't look right, reach out to fsa@bcit.ca.
3. **Locate your Tech Reps (FSA shop stewards):** an up-to-date list of FSA Tech Reps and the areas they cover is available in the Members Portal area on our website.
4. **Attend a general membership meeting:** These meetings happen three times a year. Check the Calendar page on our website for dates. Email your Member Engagement Officer if you have not received an invitation.
5. **Join a caucus or committee:** The FSA and its affiliates offer many committees and caucuses on which to serve. Visit the Get Involved section of bcitfsa.ca to learn more.
6. **Read the BCITFSA Voice newsletter:** Find it under the News menu on our website. The Voice features member profiles, updates from your President, and labour relations advice.
7. **Access the members-only portal:** Log in at bcitfsa.ca/members-portal/.

WHAT CAN THE FSA DO FOR ME?

Members contribute 1.85% of their gross salary—tax deductible—to the union, and in return they receive significant value. According to Statistics Canada, the median unionized worker in Canada earns \$7 more per hour than their non-unionized counterpart. Beyond securing fairer wages, the FSA is dedicated to ***representing, negotiating, and advocating*** for members' interests.

Representation

FSA staff and representatives act on behalf of the membership in a range of areas, most notably in negotiations with Institute management concerning the terms of the CA. More routinely, however, they advocate for individual and collective member interests in meetings with the employer. The FSA Labour Relations (LR) team addresses issues related to the interpretation and application of the CA. LR staff also provide guidance on navigating related labour agreements between the FSA and the Institute, as well as on potential breaches of Labour Relations Code by the employer.

Representation may take various forms and involve multiple individuals. The numerous committees and caucuses available to members foster inclusive and comprehensive representation, enabling the organization to address a wide array of labour-related and labour-adjacent concerns. The FSA is proud to support a range of representational opportunities for members.

Negotiation

The FSA engages in contract negotiations with BCIT every few years to establish a new Collective Agreement, which governs the working relationship between members and the Institute. This agreement encompasses a broad spectrum of topics, including terms of employment, compensation, benefits, and professional development. While public-sector collective bargaining traditionally occurs between the employer and the union, in British Columbia the process is further influenced by the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC), which sets bargaining mandates for public-sector employers such as BCIT. Despite these complexities, the FSA has achieved significant success at the bargaining table.

The FSA's Collective Agreement Committee (CAC)—comprising members, the Executive Director, and supported by staff—conducts thorough research to identify member priorities, which are then translated into formal proposals. The Bargaining Team, also consisting of both members and staff, leads the negotiation process with the employer based on these proposals. The Bargaining Communications Committee (BCC) and Job Action Committee (JAC) support the Bargaining Team by organizing communications, member activities, and logistics beyond the bargaining table.

Advocacy

The FSA champions its members beyond the Institute. We collaborate with other unions and organizations to advance better workplace standards, post-secondary education, and safety regulations. FSA representatives, registered as lobbyists with the provincial government, actively engage with elected officials—including the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills and the Premier—to advocate for positive change on behalf of our members.

SEVEN RIGHTS AND BENEFITS

1. You have the right, along with other Department members, to democratically determine your Department's day-to-day functioning, including ***workloading, selection committee composition, and vacation scheduling.***
2. There are roughly 20 different kinds of ***leave*** distinguished by your CA, including sick leave, bereavement leave, and leave to run for public office.
3. Allotment for ***vacation*** varies for FSA members in different job categories. Faculty, Assistant Instructors, and Technical Staff, for example, have between 25 and 43 days of annual vacation allotted by the CA. All employees can carry over a maximum of 10 vacation days per year. See ***Article 9*** for more information.
4. Entitlements like ***maternity benefits and leave, parental benefits and leave, and adoption*** are detailed in your CA.
5. Regular employees are entitled to over \$1400 annually in ***professional development funds.***
6. Our CA governs your initial wage placement. You have six months following your initial appointment to appeal your ***wage-scale*** placement if you feel you belong at a higher wage step.
7. The provincial Labour Relations Code, Employment Standards Act, Workers' Compensation Act, Human Rights Code, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms ***protect*** FSA members, like all workers in BC, irrespective of citizenship.

FAQS

Are my conversations with the FSA private?

You can contact the FSA in confidence to explore your specific concern. There are strong protections in place to ensure that management cannot retaliate against a member who seeks union advice.

What is Collegial Governance?

It is the right of members to participate in the decision-making and administration of their Departments and a cornerstone of our CA. Among other areas, our members hold rights in hiring, Departmental planning, breaks, and vacation scheduling.

Is my Program Head my manager?

No. Your Program Head (or PTS Coordinator) is not a manager to you or any other FSA or BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU) member. They are your colleague. In our CA, we categorize Program Heads as Departmental Administrative Positions (DAPs).

What's the Month Free of Teaching or MFOT?

Just what it sounds like. The CA gives teaching faculty one month "...free of teaching and student evaluation (examination, marking and marks review) duties."

How can I get involved?

Our website lists the different ways that you can support your fellow members to make BCIT a better place to work. Please do not hesitate to contact us! See page three of this handbook for contact details.



