

# NEW MEMBER HANDBOOK



## Table of Contents

Welcome	1
Seven Quick Actions for New Members	2
Who is the FSA?	3
How to Communicate with the FSA	4
What can the FSA do for me?	5
Representation	5
Negotiation	6
Advocacy	6
Rights & Benefits	7
FAQs	8

The BCITFSA and its members' workplaces are located on unceded Indigenous land belonging to the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

# WELCOME TO YOUR UNION

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

You have joined a union of over 1,800 faculty, researchers, assistant instructors, tech staff, and even some student employees at BCIT.

Unions are democratic, member-driven organizations, and the FSA's work rests on three core principles: representation, negotiation, and advocacy—the themes of this handbook. Rank-and-file members, elected union representatives, and staff all work together to make the FSA an organization that, day-in and day-out, strives to achieve better working conditions, benefits, and compensation for the membership.



*Colin*

**Colin Jones**  
PRESIDENT



*Matt Greaves*

**Matt Greaves**  
MEMBER ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

# SEVEN QUICK ACTIONS FOR NEW MEMBERS

- 1. Review your Collective Agreement (CA):** Available on [bcitfsa.ca](http://bcitfsa.ca).
- 2. Check your initial salary placement:** Compare your salary placement against Article 11 of the CA. Is it correct? Contact [fsa@bcit.ca](mailto:fsa@bcit.ca) if you think it isn't.
- 3. Find your Tech Reps (which are like FSA shop stewards):** An up-to-date list of FSA Tech Reps and the areas they cover is available at [bcitfsa.ca/tech-reps](http://bcitfsa.ca/tech-reps).
- 4. Attend a general membership meeting:** General meetings occur three times a year, with dates available on the 'Calendar' page of our website. Email your Member Engagement Officer for an invitation.
- 5. Join a caucus or committee:** The FSA and its affiliates have dozens of committees and caucuses for members to join. See the 'Get Involved' menu on [bcitfsa.ca](http://bcitfsa.ca).
- 6. Read the most recent newsletter, the BCITFSA Voice, at [bcitfsa.ca/newsletters](http://bcitfsa.ca/newsletters).**  
Among other things, the Voice contains profiles of members and staff, reports from your President, and labour relations advice.
- 7. Register for our website** at [bcitfsa.ca/members-portal/](http://bcitfsa.ca/members-portal/) or email [fsa@bcit.ca](mailto:fsa@bcit.ca).

# WHO IS THE FSA?

**You** are the FSA! What social issues the union confronts, the direction of collective bargaining, and the labour relations problems that representatives emphasize are all decided by the membership, in consultation with staff and your Board of the Directors.

You are now part of an organization of BCIT employees from across the Institute. Our members are educators and education professionals dedicated to providing a quality learning environment for BCIT's students. FSA representatives are equally **committed** to providing our members with an excellent working environment.

The job of FSA union representatives—elected and hired—is to make your working life better in a variety of ways. The **FSA Board of Directors** is comprised exclusively of our union members. Ten Board members are elected for two-year terms, including the President, Vice-President, and Treasurer. The Board sets the strategic direction of the union, reviewing and establishing policy, and exercising our legal and financial responsibilities.

**Tech Reps**, like shop stewards, are representatives elected in each Department. They provide an essential and personal link between FSA Board, staff, and the membership. Representation is a core function of the FSA and Tech Reps are a vital part of membership consultation. Tech Reps' contributions allow the FSA to improve our policies and respond effectively to ongoing changes at BCIT.

We have our own FSA **committees** and **caucuses**. We also appoint members to BCIT committees and organizations with which we're affiliated, like the Canadian Association of University Teachers. From the beginning, the FSA has depended on member-volunteers to direct a broad range of union activities.

The FSA has professional **staff** to support the operations of the union. Staff members implement the direction and policies of the organization through work in the areas of strategic leadership, labour relations, data management, communications, member organizing, and operational support.

## HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR UNION REPRESENTATIVES

**By phone:** 604.432.8695

**By email:** [fsa@bcit.ca](mailto:fsa@bcit.ca)

 [@BCITFSA](https://twitter.com/BCITFSA)

 [BCIT Faculty & Staff Association](https://www.linkedin.com/company/bcit-faculty-staff-association)

**Web:** [bcitfsa.ca](http://bcitfsa.ca)

### **BCIT FACULTY & STAFF ASSOCIATION**

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

# WHAT CAN THE FSA DO FOR ME?

Members contribute 1.85% of their gross salary (tax deductible) to the FSA. You get a lot for that money. Statistics Canada's data shows that unionized workers earn on average over \$4.50/hr more than non-unionized workers. For female-identifying members that number is over \$6/hr. Yet the FSA does a lot more than fight for fairer wages. Our mandate is to **represent, negotiate, and advocate** on your behalf.

## Representation

FSA staff and other reps act on behalf of the membership in a variety of areas, most notably in negotiations with Institute management over the terms of your Collective Agreement (CA). More frequently, however, we represent individual and collective member interests in meetings with the employer. The FSA **Labour Relations (LR) team** handles problems arising in the application of the CA by the Institute. LR staff can also assist in navigating related labour agreements signed by the FSA and the Institute, as well as potential violations of the BC Human Rights and Labour Relations codes by the employer.

Representation may take a variety of forms. The FSA appoints members to dozens of different committees and caucuses, wherein you can represent your union siblings. The diverse orientations of these committees and caucuses encourage comprehensive representation.

## Negotiation

A **CA** governs your working relationship with the Institute. It covers a range of topics like the terms of your work, benefits, pay, and professional development. CAs are traditionally bargained between the employer and the union. In BC, however, the provincial government interferes in this relationship through its Public Sector Employer’s Council, which sets bargaining mandates for public-sector employers like BCIT.

The FSA has nevertheless made tremendous gains at the bargaining table, including significant enhancements to our members’ benefits in the last round of bargaining.

The collective bargaining arm of the FSA strives to represent membership desires at the bargaining table. The Collective Agreement Committee (CAC)—comprised of members, the Executive Director, and resourced by staff—conducts extensive research of the membership to determine what proposals are given to the employer. The Bargaining Team—members and staff—conducts negotiations with the employer after the CAC has translated member priorities into proposals.

OUR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT:



## Advocacy

The FSA advocates for its members outside of the Institute as well. Where prudent, we join with similar unions and organizations looking for improvements in areas like workplace standards, post-secondary education, and safety regulations. We also advocate on our members’ behalf to elected officials like the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training and Premier to bring about positive change.

# SEVEN RIGHTS AND BENEFITS

1. There are roughly twenty different kinds of **leave** distinguished by your CA, including sick leave, bereavement leave, and leave to run for public office.
2. You have the right to **refuse unsafe work**.
3. **Vacation** days vary for different categories of FSA members. 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. 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.
5. Maternity, parental, and adoption **entitlements** are detailed in your CA.
6. You have the right to employment **free from discrimination**.
7. There is language in our CA that governs how your wage is determined. Within six months of your initial hiring, you have the right to appeal your **wage-scale** placement.

For more information, consult your CA or contact the FSA office through [fsa@bcit.ca](mailto:fsa@bcit.ca).

# A FEW FSA FAQs

## **What happens when I contact the FSA?**

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.

## **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 or administrative positions.

## **What's 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."

## **What is Winter Break?**

Winter Break is a time between terms where attendance for work on campus is not required. It is not considered vacation, however, and employees must be available for remote work or to visit campus should a need arise.

## **How can I get involved?**

Our website lists the different ways that you can support your union to make BCIT a better place. Please do not hesitate to contact us! See page 4 of this handbook for contact details.



**BCITFSA**  **BC INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
FACULTY & STAFF ASSOCIATION**  
**REPRESENTATION | NEGOTIATION | ADVOCACY**

