

FAQ – University Restructuring and Our Collective Agreement

What is a collective agreement?

A collective agreement is a legally binding document that lays out the terms and conditions of employment for unionized employees. The terms of our Collective Agreement are negotiated through the formal process of collective bargaining, with the university's administration representing the Board of Governors (the "Employer") and AUFA representing faculty ("Employees"). Under the Trade Union Act, both parties are legally bound by the Collective Agreement until its agreed-upon expiration date. It cannot be changed unilaterally by either party.

How long does our collective agreement remain in effect?

The current (17th) Collective Agreement was signed in October of 2025 and expires on June 30, 2028. Negotiations for the subsequent (18th) Collective Agreement should begin in May 2028.

Where can I find the most recent Collective Agreement?

Every Collective Agreement between AUFA and the Board of Governors is available in three locations:

1. on the AUFA website: <https://www.acadiafaculty.ca/agreements/>
2. on the Acadia University Archives website (with searchable full-text): <https://digital-archives.acadiau.ca/collections/acadia-university-faculty-association-aufa-collective-agreements>
3. in the Acadia University Library's Special Collections (print version)

What is the restructuring that the university Administration is proposing?

The Administration has put forward four distinct versions of a proposed restructuring of the academic sector since April 6, 2026. The most recent version was circulated via email by President Hennessy on June 9, 2026 (Subject: "Academic Restructuring Proposal - Version 4"). The university webpage explaining the restructuring is here:

<https://www2.acadiau.ca/about-acadia/leadership/reimagining.html>. This version proposes reorganizing current Academic Units into two Faculties with three Schools each. Each School would be composed of two to nine current Academic Units or programs.

Are there similarities across the four restructuring proposals?

While there are significant differences across the four proposals, there are also some similarities. Looking at these similarities can give us a sense of the Administration's priorities in this process. One similarity is a significant reduction in the number of Academic Units. At a March 2026 meeting, the Board of Governors mandated a reduction of Faculties from three to two and a reduction in the number of Academic Units (no number specified). The current proposal envisages reducing the current three Faculties to two and reduces the number of Academic Units from almost 30 to six. A second commonality is the disappearance of Departments and Heads. All six of the new units will be Schools led by Directors.

Will this save the university money?

The Administration provided no costing analysis for the first three proposals. Proposal 4 anticipates operating cost-savings of \$1.34 million dollars annually, although analyses done by some AUFA members suggest that actual savings might be lower. Most of these savings would be the result of dramatic job loss among administrative assistants (from 21 positions to 14), spending less on stipends for academic administrators, reduced hiring of full-time faculty as former Deans and Directors return to the complement count, and reduced hiring of PCAs as fewer full-time faculty members are provided with course releases for academic administrative work.

What are the implications of changing to a structure with just a few "Schools"?

There is limited information in the current proposal about how this would work in practice. We do know that under the terms of the Collective Agreement, Directors, unlike Heads, are outside of the AUFA bargaining unit. And members of Departments have more say in the election and review of Heads than is the case for Schools and Directors. It is also worth noting that having several distinct disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs clumped together in a single unit makes the proposed "Schools" quite different from current Schools at Acadia. Many program-related responsibilities that are currently done by Heads and Directors would likely be devolved to "Assistant Directors" (proposed for some but not all programs) or faculty committees. "Assistant Directors" are not defined in the current Collective Agreement.

What's at stake with this restructuring beyond obvious changes to faculty working conditions?

Anything that shifts faculty working conditions will impact student experiences and the quality of education at Acadia. AUFA has always sought to preserve high-quality education at Acadia, as it is what makes our work here meaningful.

To give one example, being in a School that houses several distinct programs would not only dramatically change our working conditions, it would also likely impact important elements of the student experience. As educators, we have seen the benefits for students of a high-touch academic environment. Acadia students currently enjoy strong relationships and contact with faculty, student community including strong student societies, accessible support from Unit administrative assistants and Heads, accessible and personalized academic advising, and more. Many students feel a strong sense of attachment to and belonging in their programs, and it isn't clear if that can be effectively sustained if those programs are melded into significantly larger administrative blocks.

Our Collective Agreement is an important tool for protecting both the quality of the work we do and the education our students receive.

Hasn't the Administration consulted faculty about the proposals?

There have been a number of consultation sessions, but consultation is not the same thing as collegial governance or collective bargaining. The restructuring process was initiated as a unilateral process that did not involve the Senate or consultation with AUFA.

Consultations that have occurred have been opaque and do not have the same transparency, engagement, or democratic character as established structures and processes, including collective bargaining. Thanks to pressure from faculty, the Administration is now bringing its proposal to Senate, which is an important part of collegial governance. However, AUFA considers Senate to be integral to the process of *developing*—not simply rubber stamping—“educational policy” and restructuring proposals. The Administration still appears to be unwilling to wait until collective bargaining starts in 2028.

Do the restructuring proposals put forward by the Administration violate our Collective Agreement?

The four restructuring proposals that have been circulated by the Administration are just proposals and, in this sense, do not violate the 17th Collective Agreement. Also, because

they are proposals that include very few details beyond organizational structure, it is impossible to know the full implications of these proposals for our Collective Agreement. But, because the changes implied by these restructuring proposals are so significant, it is likely some of the implied changes would conflict with the 17th Collective Agreement.

For example, many processes, bodies, and structures of representation defined in our Collective Agreement are organized through Faculties and Academic Units. If the number of Faculties changes, or if Academic Units are eliminated, these changes could conflict with the Collective Agreement.

I've heard people describe the proposed restructuring as an attempt by the Administration to "bargain with faculty away from the table." What is meant by that?

As members of the AUFA bargaining unit, the terms and conditions of our employment are laid out in our Collective Agreement, which was negotiated through a formal and clearly defined collective bargaining process. As unionized employees, this is the process through which changes to our terms and conditions of work should be determined.

The proposed restructuring plans we have seen so far would likely make significant changes to our conditions of employment. Different drafts have proposed changes to key structures that shape our work including, for example, the organization and number of Faculties and Academic Units, and the character of managerial and supervisory roles.

The Administration has asked AUFA members to respond to the restructuring proposals and envision major changes to Acadia under short time frames and conditions of duress, without key contextual information, and without important information about how (and why) decisions are being made. Members have repeatedly raised concerns about whether this restructuring will follow the established processes for academic program change, and the principles and policies of collegial governance.

In combination, the dramatic character of the proposed changes, the compressed timeline, the ambiguity about process, and the sense of urgency might suggest that the Administration is seeking to make changes to our conditions of work outside the formal process of collective bargaining.

What's wrong with bargaining away from the table?

Collective bargaining is a formal and clearly defined process. When employers attempt to bargain away from the table, it is often piecemeal, ambiguous, and difficult to track what is happening and what the implications are for workers' conditions of work.

But most importantly, as a union, our strongest leverage to protect and improve our working conditions is our ability to refuse employer demands by withholding our labour (striking)—a right that is legally protected under certain conditions within the collective bargaining process. If the employer tries to make changes to our conditions of work outside the formal process of collective bargaining, AUFA would not be able to legally strike as a way to resist these changes.

In other words, not only is bargaining away from the table untransparent, but it also denies us the leverage that comes with the legal right to strike.

Can the Collective Agreement be re-opened before it expires to accommodate the proposed restructuring?

The terms of the Collective Agreement are generally only negotiated through the formal process of collective bargaining and remain in place for the life of the contract. It is possible to re-open the Agreement before it expires to make specific changes—generally by developing a memorandum of understanding—if both parties agree. Normally, MOUs deal with things like clarifying ambiguous contract language rather than substantive changes.

Didn't we recently re-open a Collective Agreement?

There was a “salary re-opener” in the final year of the 16th Collective Agreement. The terms of the 16th Collective Agreement were imposed in 2022 through binding arbitration after a long and difficult round of collective bargaining, a strike, and failed mediation. The imposed terms included a provision that the two sides should try to negotiate salaries for the final year of the contract (2024-25). It also stipulated that if the two sides couldn't come to an agreement during the re-opener, they would go to binding arbitration. It was important to have arbitration as a backstop during the re-opener, since AUFA had no recourse to a legal strike if we didn't accept the Employer's final-year salary proposal. This re-opener was also distinct from the current moment because it was integrally connected to the collective bargaining process.

What are the next steps in this process?

The restructuring proposal will be brought to Senate for a vote on June 17. It will be presented to the Board at a retreat June 18-19, and brought to the Board for a vote in July. Any elements of the restructuring that conflict with the current Collective Agreement would need to be approved by AUFA, either through a MOU or when we negotiate the 18th Collective Agreement in 2028.

What can we do?

If you have concerns about the proposed restructuring, it's important to make those known, particularly to those who have some formal power to intervene in the process. Contact members of [Senate](#), members of the [Board of Governors](#), your unit head, and/or your [unit's AUFA representative](#).

Importantly, our struggle to protect the future of this institution, the quality of education offered here, and our working conditions won't end if the plan is approved by Senate and the Board of Governors. Ensuring that any restructuring is implemented in a way that protects quality of education will require AUFA and our membership to remain vigilant and engaged over the coming months and maybe years. You can contribute to this collective effort by attending AUFA meetings, getting to know your unit rep, or joining a committee. This process has mobilized AUFA members and it will be important to maintain that energy both for our own collective bargaining timeline and for the broader context within which this is happening: the provincial government's Bill 12 and broader cuts to the public sector.

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