



Daniel Lee Kleinman, Associate Provost for Graduate Affairs

One Silber Way
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
T 617-353-2230 F 617-353-6580
www.bu.edu/grad

April 25, 2024

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

I write to provide an update on concluding the semester in the face of a strike by our graduate students. To date, a small number of our courses have been affected by the strike. Most are meeting normally, and in most cases, faculty and teaching assistants and fellows will grade students as usual at the conclusion of the semester.

As the academic year comes to an end, we have witnessed an increase in the level of misinformation provided to some faculty by members of BUGWU. We will not allow these misrepresentations to disrupt final assessments and grading. I cannot respond to BUGWU's claims point-by-point, but many of you have asked me about two of the union's assertions, and these demand clarification.

First, recent communications from BUGWU have advanced the falsehood that the University has a practice of not paying graduate students during the grading period. This is not correct. In fact, BU has already paid our teaching fellows and teaching assistants in advance for their work in May. At the request of previous graduate students, BU agreed to ensure continuous pay for student workers during the winter vacation, even though graduate students in teaching roles had no responsibilities during this period. BU now provides advance payment to graduate students over winter break (when they are not working) for the work expected to be done in May. This provides the teaching fellows (TFs) and teaching assistants (TAs) with continuous income over the winter break. This payment process is longstanding, not new.

Second, we have been careful and thoughtful in the way we are going to provide grades to students whose TFs and TAs are on strike. Specifically, we have sought people with expertise to step in. We have, by necessity, made curricular and other changes in some of these cases. However, contrary to BUGWU's assertions, we will not have people without appropriate training grade our students. Additionally, the union's assertion that we will simply have students grade themselves is a mischaracterization of our recommendation that instructors consider [ungrading](#). This is a research-supported and pedagogically progressive approach that has been advocated by many of our [faculty colleagues](#).

As I am sure we all agree, we have a responsibility to our students. If we do not provide grades for all of our students for all classes, our students may be adversely affected. We must ensure that they are able to graduate, use transcripts while seeking employment, and be able to continue to receive federal financial aid. Again, while we all want negotiations to lead to a fair contract between the University and BUGWU, those of us who are teaching this semester have an obligation to complete assessments of our students in a thorough and timely way.

Thank you for all you are doing in this challenging moment.

Sincerely,

Daniel Kleinman, PhD
Associate Provost for Graduate Affairs