

1) What is a steward?

The steward is the face and representative of the union in the workplace. It's the steward's job to turn the contract (collective agreement) into a living protection of members' rights. Stewards see that the contract's provisions are honoured. They enforce it when they find violations. She/he is a resource if you have questions about the union, is your communicator or voice with management and also deals with grievances if necessary. We are also your link to your local and the larger union membership, conveying your interest and concerns in union meetings/conventions.

2) How can a steward help me if I have a concern/complaint/issue in the workplace?

A steward will first listen and document your concern/complaint/issue. They will discuss your options and offer you a context to decide what you want to do next. One option they may raise is that of filing a grievance if appropriate.

3) What is a grievance?

A grievance is a formal complaint against management that rights under the collective agreement have been violated. There are three kinds of grievances:

- **An individual grievance** (a unionized staff person believes their rights under the collective agreement has been violated);
- **A group grievance** (a group of unionized staff believe their rights under the collective agreement have been violated in the same way – and so they sign the grievance as a group); and
- **A policy grievance** (the union believes that management is misinterpreting the language of the collective agreement).

4) How and when do I contact my steward?

If you need to reach a steward, you can approach the steward in person, send an email or leave a voice mail. The steward will talk to you at their first opportunity about your concerns, often outside work hours, at breaks or before or after work. They will also discuss how the matter relates to the collective agreement.

5) What does a steward not do?

A Steward's role is to oversee the collective agreement and to support unionized staff in enforcing the collective agreement. If an issue arises that is not covered by the terms and conditions outlined in the collective agreement, the steward may indicate they do not have a role. It still is valuable, however, to alert the steward to these issues so they can determine their role, if any.

6) How can I become a steward?

If you are interested in becoming a steward, talk to one of your current stewards and they can assist you through the process.

7) Do stewards work for the Union?

Stewards are volunteer representatives of the Union who represent your concerns as members. They are your voice and link to management when enforcing collective agreement terms.

8) What if I have a complaint about my steward?

There are a series of stewards in your workplace. It is your right to choose a steward that best meets your needs and with whom you are most comfortable. If you find you have a complaint about a particular steward that you have not been able to resolve, you can raise this issue with your staff representative.

9) Will Management know if I go to my steward?

Working with the stewards is confidential. Management will only know that you approached the Union if you ask the steward to act on your behalf.

10) Where can I get more information about OPSEU?

Speak to a steward. You can also go to www.opseu.org (for general information on unions and specific member discounts and benefits).