



 Graduate Teaching
Assistants at Laurier
An HR Perspective

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Introduction

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AGENDA

- Responsibilities
- Feedback and Performance Management
- Applicable Legislation
- Contacts
- Introduction to PSAC

Responsibilities

Graduate Teaching Assistants can have a broad range of responsibilities which may include:

- Providing informal and formal advice to students.
- Assisting in the grading of tests, papers, lab reports and final exams.
- Assisting faculty in course development and/or course renewal.
- Conducting tutorial or lab sessions.
- Presenting one or more lectures in a class.
- Supervising field trips.
- Proctoring final examinations (expected for courses that have a final examination scheduled by Enrolment Services).
- A GTA is expected to work an average of 10 hours per week or a maximum of 130 hours per term.

**Assistantship functions do not include clerical, technical or administrative work not related to teaching.

Responsibilities Cont'd

- Responsibilities of Faculty Members with Graduate Teaching Assistants supporting their courses include:
 - Clearly outlining their expectations.
 - Advising on what can/can not be changed (syllabi, handouts, course policies, etc.).
 - Being available for questions.
 - Providing feedback and evaluating performance.

Responsibilities Cont'd

- Teaching Assistants need to know what their supervisor expects of them in terms of work habits and communication.
- It is much easier to develop a positive, productive relationship if these are clear.
- While supervisors need to be clear on their expectations, Teaching Assistants also need to have a sense of what they expect from their supervisor and the role.

TA Expectations

Feedback

Communication

Time

Supervisor Expectations

Feedback

Communication

Time

Planning

Skills

Reviewing work

Consultation

Before classes begin:

- It is important to have a meeting or conversation with the faculty member who is the instructor for the course prior to it starting
- This meeting should:
 - Clearly convey the position goals, expectations, workload, responsibilities.
 - Review the course syllabi, relevant materials, and information pertaining to the students and expectations for learning and performance.
 - Outline how feedback and performance evaluation will be shared.
 - Review the Graduate Teaching Assistant Job Responsibilities Form.

Before classes begin: Cont'd

- The Graduate TA Job Responsibilities Form should be discussed in detail.
- The form addresses areas such as:
 - Marking breakdown for assignments
 - Preparation and Training
 - Office Hours
 - Meetings with Course Instructor
 - Proctoring Midterms and Final Exams
 - Communication with students
 - Lecture
 - Marking
 - Tutorial/Labs
- If there are any areas that are unclear, clarification should be sought.

Before classes begin: Cont'd



If your faculty member has not contacted you prior to classes starting, you are encouraged to be proactive in contacting them and clarifying their expectations – and yours – before the course begins.

Once classes begin:

- It is important that Teaching Assistants continue to have regular meetings with the faculty member throughout the term.
- Regular “check in” meetings are part of the employee/employer relationship.
- These meetings allow Teaching Assistants the opportunity to ask questions and seek feedback about their work or new ideas they may have.
- Faculty members can provide updates and support, and answer any questions.
- Teaching Assistants can also expect the faculty member to follow up with them at other times if needed, particularly if there are areas of concern.
- These meetings do not need to be long and could be done over the phone or even email if there are no pressing issues.

Feedback and Performance Management:

- Situations may arise when a faculty member feels it necessary to provide constructive feedback, or begin the performance management process.
- Constructive feedback is important as it allows the TA the opportunity to reflect on their work and make changes.
- Performance management will typically begin if feedback and/or coaching has been provided but no corrective action has taken place.

Feedback and Performance Management Cont'd:

- If the faculty member has concerns with an aspect of the Teaching Assistant's work, and feels that coaching and feedback have not had the desired result, they may request a meeting.
- TA's at Laurier are represented by PSAC therefore, depending on the purpose of the meeting, the TA may have a PSAC representative attend the meeting with them.
- In the meeting the faculty member should explain the following:
 - The situation giving rise to the meeting;
 - Why the action/behaviour is not appropriate or acceptable;
 - What is expected going forward; and,
 - The consequences of repeated incidents.
- The TA should be provided with the opportunity to respond.
- The meeting may be followed up with in writing.

Feedback and Performance Management Cont'd:

- Sometimes Teaching Assistants have difficulty with their supervisor and need direction/guidance.
- Concerns could be related to lack of responsiveness on the part of the supervisor, inconsistent direction, interpersonal conflict, etc.
- In these situations, Teaching Assistants are encouraged to reach out for support.
 - Try connecting with the supervisor; if that is not possible then,
 - Graduate Coordinator; if that is not possible then,
 - Senior Administrative Officer in FGPS
 - PSAC Representative

Applicable Legislation

- The following legislation is applicable to employees at Laurier:
 - Employment Standards Act, 2000
 - Human Rights Code
 - Occupational Health and Safety Act

Graduate Teaching Assistants at Laurier certified to unionize in December 2019 and are now represented by the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). Negotiations for the first collective agreement are starting this month.

A representative from PSAC will do an introduction following this meeting.

Applicable Legislation

- The Employment Standards Act, 2000 (ESA) provides the minimum standards for most employees working in Ontario. It sets out the rights and responsibilities of employees and employers in most Ontario workplaces.
 - Minimum wage
 - Hours of work and overtime
 - Public holidays
 - Vacation time and pay
 - Termination notice and pay
 - Leaves of absence:
 - GTAs are entitled to take Personal Emergency Leave – 8 days total per year; 3 for personal illness, 3 for family responsibility, 2 bereavement

Applicable Legislation

Ministry
of Labour

Employment Standards in Ontario

The *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (ESA) protects employees and sets minimum standards for most workplaces in Ontario.

Employers are prohibited from penalizing employees in any way for exercising their ESA rights.

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What you need to know

Minimum wage

Most employees are entitled to be paid at least the minimum wage. For current rates visit: Ontario.ca/minimumwage.

Hours of work and overtime

There are daily and weekly limits on hours of work, and rules around meal breaks, rest periods and overtime. For more information visit: Ontario.ca/hoursofwork and Ontario.ca/overtime.

Public holidays

Ontario has a number of public holidays each year. Most employees are entitled to take these days off work and be paid public holiday pay. For more information visit: Ontario.ca/publicholidays.

Learn more about your rights at:

Ontario.ca/employmentstandards
1-800-531-5551 or TTY 1-866-567-8893

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Vacation time and pay

Most employees earn vacation time after every 12 months of work. There are rules around the amount of vacation pay an employee earns. For more information visit: Ontario.ca/vacation.

Leaves of absence

There are a number of job-protected leaves of absence in Ontario. Examples include pregnancy, parental and family caregiver leave. For more information visit: Ontario.ca/ESAGuide.

Termination notice and pay

In most cases, employers must give advance written notice when terminating employment and/or termination pay instead of notice. For more information visit: Ontario.ca/terminationofemployment.

Other employment rights, exemptions and special rules

There are other rights, exemptions and special rules not listed on this poster including rights to severance pay and special rules for assignment employees of temporary help agencies.



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Applicable Legislation

- The Ontario *Human Rights Code* is a provincial law that gives everybody equal rights and opportunities without discrimination in areas such as jobs, housing and services.
- The *Code's* goal is to prevent discrimination and harassment because of race, sex, disability and age, to name a few of the 17 grounds.
- All other Ontario laws must agree with the *Code*.

The Office of Dispute Resolution and Sexual Violence Support is available to support individuals who feel their Human Rights have been violated.

- Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook/PSAC Collective Agreement
- University Policies on:
 - Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination
 - Workplace Violence Prevention Policy
 - Gendered and Sexual Violence Policy and Procedures
 - Safe Disclosure
- University policies can be found on the Laurier website under *Governance and Leadership*.
- Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook is available on the Laurier website under *Working at Laurier/Faculty and Staff Resources/Employee Handbooks and Collective Agreements*.

Who to contact:

- For guidance related to the course or class:
 - Faculty member supervisor/course instructor, or
 - Graduate Program Co-ordinator or department chair if the faculty member/course instructor is unavailable, or if such a meeting is not possible
 - The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
- If you have concerns of a confidential nature and are not sure who to talk to, contact any of the following:
 - The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
 - The Office of Dispute Resolution and Sexual Violence Support
 - The Dean of Students Office
 - Graduate Student's Association
 - Human Resources/Payroll
 - Union Representative

Contact Information

- Faculty Member
- Graduate Coordinator/Department Chair
- FGPS: ext 3127
- Office of Dispute Resolution and Support: ext 2938
- Dean of Students Office: ext 3318
- GSA: ext 3501
- Human Resources/Payroll: ext 2007

QUESTIONS