



Teaching Assistant's Manual

WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES

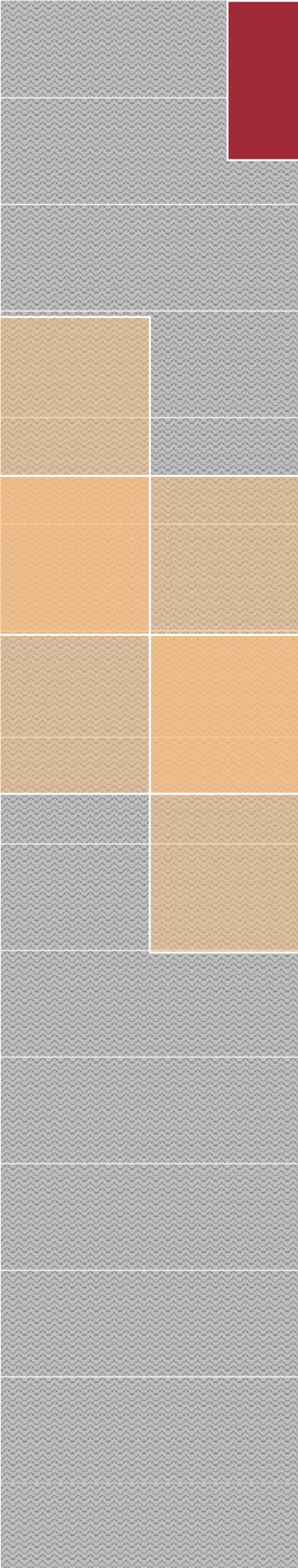


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Teaching is a critical part of your experience as a graduate student. The process of engaging in and creating an environment where people exchange/construct ideas, theories, knowledge, and applications is based on a complex set of political, social, and cultural relations. Learning how to teach is a skill that requires practice and training. We hope this manual will give you some insight into your role in this academic endeavour. The university's teaching mandate is only possible because of the work done by Teaching Assistants (TA). Remember, you are an employee of the university protected under a collective agreement that outlines your rights and responsibilities. This manual highlights aspects of this collective agreement and insights to help you navigate your role as a teacher.

General Information

Union [CUPE 4600]

All Teaching Assistants are members of CUPE 4600. A copy of the collective agreement can be found at: https://46c48b87-bc54-493e-9b51-b730c64ed982.filesusr.com/ugd/b510f3_f8b760d43d664f46a2ac83dbceab9a2c.pdf

The agreement details your rights and responsibilities. It is important to be aware of what the contract says. For the most up to date information about the collective agreement or union news go to: <http://www.cupe4600.ca>

Getting Paid

To get paid, you must be added as a payee by Human Resources. If you are a first time TA, you will need to present your student number, Social Insurance Number, proof of date of birth, and a blank 'void' cheque to set up a payroll account to allow for your pay to be deposited directly to your bank account. You will be required to complete a Personal Information Form and other applicable tax forms, all of which can be found under Payroll Forms here: <https://carleton.ca/hr/payroll/forms/>. If you have been a TA previously, you should already be registered for payroll. If any of the important information mentioned before has changed, you must notify Human Resources right away to avoid any missed or delayed payments. The Institute Administrator can also help answer any questions and/or direct you to the appropriate contact person.

Training

TAs are required to complete basic training and have optional additional training opportunities. According to your collective agreement, you are required to engage in 5 hours for pedagogical training, paid at the regular hourly rate. Remember to have your training hours documented to ensure you get paid for that time.

TAs must also complete compliance training modules mandated by Ontario legislation. Human Resources will provide you with documentation for each completed training module. Please remember that you are compensated for completion of these mandatory modules as well.

You can find all this information and more here: <https://carleton.ca/tasupport/ta-training-starter-kit/>

Roles and Responsibilities

Your major role is to assist the course instructor in delivering the course material assigned to you. Your specific duties are determined by the course instructor and can vary by instructor and specific course. Typically, for WGST TAs, key duties include conducting tutorial sessions, meeting with students, grading and proctoring examinations. According to the collective agreement, full-time TAs can work (on average over the term) no more than ten hours per week. This includes the time you spend preparing for and conducting tutorials, attending lectures, office hours, meetings with the course Instructor, proctoring and grading. You should keep a clear record of your work hours and discuss any potential time constraints that may arise (e.g., completion of your own course assignments) with the Instructor as soon as possible to ensure effective course management and limited disruption of your own employment obligations. If you experience difficulty negotiating appropriate work hours, please contact the WGST Graduate Advisor. Remember, together you form a teaching team, and your shared understanding and effective communication is key to enhancing the learning experience.

First Steps

You should receive an email notification when your TA assignment is updated. Enter Carleton Central (using your MC1 credentials) to find out about your TA assignment. The system will indicate the course(s) you have been assigned and the name and contact information of the course Instructor(s). If you do not have an assignment and are entitled to a TAship OR if there is a conflict between your TA assignment and your own course assignments or other personal demands, contact the Graduate Director immediately for reallocation. Once you have accepted your assignment, contact the course Instructor(s) and set up an appointment to meet and discuss your course responsibilities.

Ideally you should meet with the course Instructor before the first class. This is important because the tasks surrounding due dates and grading activities may involve negotiation. For example, if class papers are due around the same time as your graduate assignment deadlines, it is possible that the course Instructor could have some flexibility on the amount of time allotted for marking and returning the students' assignments. **Please be advised that your collective agreement indicates timelines regarding your work and the work assigned by the course Instructor for marking. You should familiarize yourself with your collective agreement; do not expect the course Instructor to know the relevant clauses of *your* collective agreement.**

During your initial meeting, the course Instructor will discuss with you the specific task requirements and their respective time allotments as outlined on the **Assignment of duties form (found on Carleton Central)**. This form specifies how your TA hours and work responsibilities will be distributed. These are average expectations, and you should compare your actual performance against the recommended time allotments to check your time management and efficiency. After you and the course Instructor discuss the duties and times, you will need to sign-off on the form to register your agreement.

The Assignment of Duties is NOT A CONTRACT. It details the various tasks and time allotments for each of those tasks as discussed. The CUPE 4600 Collective Agreement is ONLY contract you have is with the employer. The employer is Carleton University, not the course Instructor. The course Instructor is the supervisor of the course you are assigned to.

TIP: It is IMPORTANT to keep track of how many hours you are working. If you find you are running out of hours, it is ESSENTIAL to let the course Instructor know immediately so both of you may adjust your schedule to rectify this situation.

Below are descriptions of some key tasks that might be assigned to you and issues that may occur in any courses. Reviewing these will help you in planning for your TAsip. The issues are common but remember that each course Instructor has a slightly different approach. It is critical to have frank dialogue with course Instructors around course/TA expectations and communicate your questions and concerns as soon as they arise. This manual is a guide and your first step should always be to contact the Instructor first and involve the Graduate Advisor if you are struggling to find a solution together.

Tutorials

Course Instructors decide the course goals/objectives and your specific role and duties for the successful delivery of the course. Your course instructor can be a mentor and should be a source of teaching and learning support over the duration of the course. You should also draw on your co-TAs in the course and cohort to form a community of shared practices.

Tutorials are the most common duty assigned by Instructors in every course. Have a clear discussion with your Course Instructor as to their expectations of you during tutorial sessions. How often are tutorials held? What is the purpose of tutorials to the overall course structure (discuss the readings, summarize course materials, assignment guidance, etc.)? You also need to discuss whether you should prioritize certain readings or attempt to generally cover all the materials around a common theme. Are you able to give them short exercises or examples of your own creation to help clarify material or do you need to 'stick to' a specific format? In other words, how much autonomy do you have over the tutorial, topics of discussion or the material you provide? Will you be required to track attendance? What about latecomers or "no shows"? How should you deal with conflict in the classroom among students or with you? There are just some questions to guide the conversation and you should feel comfortable asking them at any point during your TA'ship.

You will also need to know how to handle questions that 'cross over' into the course Instructor's responsibilities. For example, when marking papers or examinations, ask for guiding principles or rubrics if you would find them useful, as well as clear descriptions of each grade band/category. For example, can you give higher grades to those who draw on material from news media or demonstrate creativity?

N.B. Classes at Carleton (including Tutorials) are scheduled to allow students 10 minutes between classes. So, for example, rather than beginning at 13:30 and going to 14:30 – a Tutorial would run from 13:35 to 14:25. It is important to start and end your tutorials on time.

Tutorial Grades

You need to know if your students will receive grades for attending and participating in the tutorial sessions. Please remember, if grades are assigned for the tutorial, you will need clear guidelines on how those grades are to be allocated and you will need to keep records of attendance and participation for each tutorial. You should also ask about specific course

policies, such as are there opportunities for bonus marks for missed tutorials or assignments? How will the instructor resolve discrepancies between TA and students' self-records of attendance?

Conducting Successful Tutorials

Conducting tutorials is the task most often associated with the role of a Women's and Gender Studies TA. How you manage the Tutorial group is a complex mixture based on who is in the group (think intersectional identities), the different ways in which people learn (e.g., visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, etc.), the issues at hand, and your own personal communication and learning style. It is important to be reflective on what is happening and to make small adjustments if you or the students are not satisfied. You may find that you will have to use a variety of different approaches depending on the topic and student sensitivities. This is especially true when the topics are difficult, such as discussions of racism and homophobia that can trigger strong and negative emotional reactions or experiences of abuse, sexual assault, and incest.

N.B. It may be useful after the third or fourth week to give the students some time at the end of the tutorial to write down anonymously their thoughts and ideas about the tutorial and how they think it is going. This exercise may give you a sense of where the students experience confusion over course material and how you might help them improve.

Classrooms, Anti-oppression, and Intersectionality

We talk a lot about valuing differences in WGST. Putting these words into action is an important part of being a TA. Differences in the classroom includes ability, age, culture, ethnicity, race, religion, and sexuality among other markers of identities. We also must consider differences in terms of students' backgrounds and how each student can best learn in the classroom setting. Appreciating and managing differences in a classroom requires continual reflection and adaptation. Be patient with the students and be patient with yourself.

To build an anti-oppression classroom based on intersectional approaches is not an easy task and you will face challenges. Begin by establishing guidelines or terms of reference about respect and recognition of differences based on positionalities and experiences. While we strive to build an anti-oppression space, achieving those conditions can be difficult especially when students are being introduced to ideas that are new and challenging for them. You can assist them in their development by doing three key things. Begin the tutorial with a short summary of the topics and issues under discussion. Next, listen to what is being said and address comments calmly. Be respectful here — even and especially if the student remarks seem to reflect ignorance and/or are “under-thought”. While you do have to address the issue, you need to do so in a way that does not make the person who made the comment feel shamed or harmed. Remember that the student is trying to engage and participate. Third, summarize the discussion at the end by bringing up the key points and linking them back to the initial purpose of the tutorial session.

Managing the Discussion

A big challenge in managing the discussion can be getting the students to talk. There are a variety of techniques available for doing this but perhaps the simplest is to have the students discuss the topics in small groups. You can begin with groups of two and then have

those groups come together into groups of four and exchange ideas. In so doing, you need to monitor the discussions to ensure that people are being respectful and staying on topic. Then, have all the small groups report back to the whole tutorial group so that everyone benefits from the discussion. This requires planning for a topic and an effective small group design, as well as managing your flow among the groups to offer help and assistance. While getting students talking is important, silence can also be useful. Don't rush things if your students don't respond immediately; just be patient and wait (someone will break the silence eventually).

Switching Things Up

As you think about motivating your students to engage in the tutorial sessions, consider having a variety of different activities or ways of communicating the material. If you employ these activities as part of the tutorial grades, you need to clear the activities with the course Instructor. If the course has multiple TAs, it can be a good idea to have all the TAs share these same techniques. Listed below is a summary of basic tutorial activities:

- Prepare questions for discussion in advance. Put the students in small groups to discuss the question. Have each group report on their discussion.
- Provide information to assist the discussion — examples include reports on current events or images related to the topic. Popular culture examples are useful for showing that the issues discussed in class are current and important to discuss; it can also be used to show how different media 'slant' stories.
- Use different formats for generating discussion among the students — small group discussions, short writing assignments, and so forth.
- Have students take time to write short reflections on the issues where they can also raise questions.

Office Hours (online and/or in person)

You may be expected to hold frequent office hours to respond to student queries. One of the challenges with office hours is that they are not well attended. Discuss with the course Instructor if it is reasonable to hold office hours every week or if you should be scheduling them as needed or at peak times, such as just before assignments are due and just after they have been returned. Often, students make contact through email. Rather than answering each email as it arrives (this may lead you to spending an inordinate amount of response time), it may be more effective to hold 'email office hours.' You may also want to create 'chat' groups through Brightspace where course topics of interest may be examined and discussed among you and numerous students. You may be surprised at the insight and creativity expressed when students think you aren't 'listening.'

Assignment Due Dates and Late Policies

Ask the Instructor for clear guidance on handling assignment deadlines, extensions, and late submissions and associated penalties. Do you have the authority to give extensions? If you are allowed to give extensions, ask the course Instructor for guidelines for assessing acceptable reasons for such extensions and what types of extensions you can grant. If you don't have the authority to grant extensions, refer all such requests to the course Instructor. Keep your own record of these requests and make sure to follow-up with the course Instructor so that you know whether the extensions were granted and when you should expect the paper or assignment to be submitted. Are you permitted to negotiate make-up exams, assignments, and tutorial attendance (if graded)?

Grading

Grading and returning assignments are often some of the most stressful aspects of a TA's job. This can be somewhat easier if you remember that grading involves more than just generating a mark on an assignment or paper; it provides feedback for student learning and improvement. It is essential to give students constructive feedback on their papers tell them how they can improve for their next submission. Each assignment is an opportunity for them to learn and do better – they rely on you for guidance on how to achieve success in the course. Remember to ask yourself if you have been fair and balanced in assigning grades. There are several things that can be done to make the grading process easier and less stressful with the most important first step being clear communication with the Course Instructor.

- Use Grading Guidelines or a Rubric. Ask the course Instructor to provide you with grading guidelines or a rubric that charts the criteria on which the assignment will be marked. You will also want to discuss the goals of the assignment and clarify from the course Instructor what type of comments you will make to assist students in improving their work.
- Grades need Instructor approval before they are returned. Once the assignments are graded, course Instructors often review the TAs' grades, so it is essential not to return assignments or tell students their grades until you have the permission of the course Instructor. Final examinations, however, are not returned to students. Refer all requests to review final examinations to the course Instructor.
- Returning the Assignments and Responding to Students' Questions. After the course Instructor has given permission to return the assignments, be sure to return them promptly. Once they are returned, you can anticipate that some students will want to talk to you about their grades. It is best to have the students make an appointment to discuss their paper or assignment. When you hand the assignments back, advise them about the grade review process and how to set up an appointment. It is important for the student to re-read their assignment and to read all the comments before they talk to you. This will provide a sound basis for the discussion and will keep the focus on their work rather than on their feelings. It may be wise to tell students that it takes time to process comments so you will not discuss their concerns for at least 24 hours so they can reflect upon them before you meet. Be creative and open with the Course Instructor and work together to develop course policies.
- Make sure you feel comfortable with accessing assignments, assigning grades, and providing feedback (e.g., uploading feedback files, writing comments, etc.) on Brightspace. Ensure the students know that you have posted the mark and ask them to check and make sure there are no errors or omissions.

N.B. All grades are confidential. Never post grades publicly, even if you only use student numbers, some students may know this information about another student. Do not share grades or class progress with anyone that is not the student in question or a member of the teaching team.

Grading Standards

One of the biggest challenges for new TAs is giving grades for assignments. This is made much easier if your course Instructor provides you with a clear, detailed, and well-explained grading rubric or some criteria to establish benchmarks and consistency. Make

certain you understand how long assignments should be and the Referencing style required. It is a good idea to work with your co-TAs to discuss best practices and coordinate your approaches. It is likely that they will come across many of the same issues. Work as a team and trouble-shoot together with the course Instructor.

Instructions and your questions need to be concrete, such as “Do I stop reading after I’ve reached the maximum number of pages?” Ask your course Instructor to provide an estimate on how long it should take to complete the grading on each assignment. What typically happens is that it takes longer for the first few and then, as you continue, you will find it takes less time to complete. Check to see how Instructors would like you to check-in about your grading progress. Find out from the course Instructor how to deal with papers when you are not sure what grade should be assigned. What is the course policy for grade contestations from students? How long should students wait after receiving their grade for the assignment to contest it or ask for it to be graded again? There is more detailed information on grading below.

N.B. If you have a case of suspected plagiarism, refer it immediately to the course Instructor who will follow the steps necessary to resolve this issue. Carleton has a specific policy for managing instructional offences. It may be found at: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Review of Grades

You need to know if you are expected to review grades on assignments when students have concerns or if you are to refer the students to the course Instructor. If you are responsible for assignment reviews, the course Instructor should provide you with guidelines on when and why grades should be changed and the time you are expected to dedicate to this task.

Managing Grades

You need to know how grades will be managed for the course. You should provide the course Instructor with an electronic copy of grades and retain a copy for yourself.

TIP: When compiling grades, REMEMBER to note when assignments have NOT been submitted. This can save a lot of stress and frustration at the end of term when you are trying to compile the final marks.

Plagiarism

You need to know the guidelines for what constitutes plagiarism and how to respond to it.

The Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

You need to familiarize yourself with this policy and share it with your students before each assignment is due. It is also necessary for you to know what you should do if you have a suspected case of plagiarism. The first thing is NOT to discuss the alleged plagiarism with the student — take your concerns to the course Instructor.

You will need to DOCUMENT the passages that you think were copied and to provide the original source. HIGHLIGHT the copied material in both the student's paper and the original. You also need to know what to tell the student when the paper is not returned with the others. Again, discuss this with the course Instructor. Normal practice is to tell the student (in confidence) that you have given the paper to the Instructor and to direct the student to talk to the Instructor. According to university regulations, statements regarding plagiarism appear on all course outlines. Refer the student(s) to this statement if they persist in questioning you on the issue.

Other issues to consider

Working with Your Students

Most graduate students report that working with undergraduate students is the best part of being a TA. There are several things you can do to make your engagement with students successful. Some techniques that will assist you are outlined below; however, the overall key is good communication. To establish a rapport between yourself and your students, you will need to approach them professionally. Professionalism is based on establishing trust and setting boundaries. A professional approach is especially necessary in Women's and Gender Studies because the students are encouraged to talk about sensitive issues in the tutorial framework. Your job is to provide a space that is inclusive, open, and respectful for everyone, including yourself.

Conflict of Interest

You must disclose any conflict of interest issues you encounter in your role as TA. A conflict of interest is a situation where you have a previous or current personal or financial relationship with a student in your tutorial group. In this case, you are not permitted to grade their work. You must let the course Instructor know about this conflict of interest. Moreover, a conflict of interest can develop during a semester if a personal relationship (even a friendship) is established. It is imperative that you disclose this information with the course Instructor. Please note that the course of action taken will entail that you will be removed as the TA of record for the person with whom you have a conflict of interest.

Setting Boundaries

Setting boundaries is an essential part of being a TA, especially in Women's and Gender Studies where we deal with issues of personal trauma and growth. You will find that students often share their feelings, thoughts, and experiences with you and that they sometimes will ask you for advice and support. In this regard, you need some clear boundaries to do your job effectively and to provide your students with proper training and care. One of the problems WGST TAs often face is that they become close to their students and then the students feel betrayed or let down when they don't get the grade or outcome they want. You therefore must maintain a professional distance. The general guidelines listed below will help you establish a healthy relationship with your students. First some general "DON'Ts":

- Don't 'friend' your students on social networking sites such as Facebook.
- Don't communicate with your students using your personal email address.
- Don't give students your home or cell phone number.
- Don't provide students with advice on personal issues.

This last one can be the most challenging because when someone talks to you about an issue that is distressing, you may want to help. You can be supportive without offering advice; you can comfort them and show them sympathy. Remember, however, that you are NOT a counsellor; refer students to professional supports (see list of the University Support Services with their coordinates and other key information at the end of this manual). If you believe it necessary (e.g., a student is in crisis), you may walk the student to the appropriate office and assist them in obtaining assistance.

There are also many things you can do to support students while maintaining a professional boundary.

- Provide students with information on support services on campus.
- Refer students to the course Instructor when they have questions about the material or about deadlines or other issues that you are not able to answer.
- Remind students about due dates, deadlines from the University calendar, and of the course policy on late assignments, extensions, and other regulatory matters.

Communicating with Students

When you communicate by email with students, University policy requires that you communicate through their Carleton email account. Your students may tell you that they have another address that they would prefer you use. Let them know the policy and tell them that they can forward their mail from their Carleton account to their regular mail if they so wish.

You may also be communicating with students through Brightspace. There are options for group discussion groups and for posting information. It is essential to ensure that all communication is professional in tone and that any course information that is posted is cleared by the course Instructor.

Challenges Specific to Teaching in WGST

There are some specific challenges that accompany teaching in Women's and Gender Studies. The list below is not intended to be comprehensive but rather give you some idea of what to expect. Remember to always consult and discuss with your teaching team to support each other.

Dealing with Difficult Topics

In Women's and Gender Studies, perhaps more than in any other discipline, TAs must deal with difficult topics that intersect with students' trauma and personal issues, and at times, with insensitive or offensive reactions that some students have to these topics. How can TAs deal with such traumas in the classroom?

Set the Stage

Let students know in advance when difficult/sensitive topics will be discussed and advise them about the potential impact, especially on issues like sexual orientations, gender identities, and forms of violence. Don't hesitate to ask the Course Instructor

to add this to their course policies and announcements during the course. Students should know that:

- Talking and reading about these issues can be triggering and traumatic
- The impacts are not universal — they depend on where and how people are located.
- Tell students that when others share their experiences, they need to be very respectful.

Working with Paul Menton Center (PMC) Students

Carleton has a policy on Academic accommodation. You will find the policy at <https://carleton.ca/pmc/legal-policies-and-responsibilities/accommodation-policy/>

This policy provides some general information that is useful for TAs in working effectively with students with disabilities. Here are some key facts to know:

- The University is required by law to accommodate students with disabilities and other special needs. The PMC determines the type of accommodation each student requires for each course. The course Instructor is informed by the PMC of what accommodation the student requires and the course Instructor will provide you with this information.
- Academic accommodation is assessed and provided on an individual basis. You can expect different accommodations for different students.
- It is essential that you maintain confidentiality about accommodations.
- The course Instructor is the TA's key resource for receiving guidance on how to best accommodate students. You can discuss concerns about a particular student and how to best accommodate them with the course Instructor but do not discuss specific accommodations with other TAs, other students, or other University personnel. You should inform the course Instructor right away if a student communicates their registration with PMC and wishes to speak about accommodations.

HINT: Many PMC students write tests and examinations in an alternate setting. These are then sent to the Institute for pick-up and grading. Remember to check for these assignments when you are doing your grading.

Getting Support when YOU need it

You have support and resources for your role as a TA. The kinds of support vary depending on, or according to, your own concerns or needs. Your first line of support is the course Instructor. You should be able to go to them with any questions you have regarding the course – including the course content, challenges in the tutorials, grading, or personal issues that are impacting your TA work.

There is also TA training to assist you in developing skills and improving your teaching techniques. Teaching and Learning Services (TLS) runs these sessions. They have a TA Support website <https://carleton.ca/tls/teaching-assistants//> will connect you to information. They also offer a wide range of courses and resources.

You can also find a lot of information further information curated here:
<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/teaching-assistants/>

Key Contacts and Numbers

Campus Safety

www.carleton.ca/safety

Ext. 3612 or 4444 (emergencies)

203 Robertson Hall

[Crisis; working after-hours program; safe walk; foot patrol]

Equity and Inclusive Communities www.carleton.ca/equity Ext. 5622

3800 Technology and Training Centre

[Equity request; human rights conduct; sexual assault coordinator; Aboriginal Student Centre]

Centre for Indigenous Initiatives <https://carleton.ca/indigenous/>

Sexual Assault Support Services

<https://students.carleton.ca/services/sexual-assault-support-services/>

Health & Counselling Services www.carleton.ca/health Ext. 6674

2600 Technology and Training Centre

[Personal/health; stress coping; psychological issues; personal/emotional issues; medical issues; relationship problems; crisis; doctor's/medical notes]

Housing & Residence Life Services

www.carleton.ca/housing Ext. 5612

261 Stormont House

[Support for residence students; personal/health (residence counsellor)]

International Students Services Office

www.carleton.ca/isso Ext. 6600

128 University Centre

[Cultural transition; homesickness/isolation; adaptation and interaction; inter-cultural education programs; immigration advising/exchanges; UHIP]

Paul Menton Centre for Students

www.carleton.ca/pmc

Ext. 6608

501 University Centre

[Physical disabilities; learning disabilities; advising on supporting documentation; accommodations for in-class tests and exams]

1401 Dunton Tower

[Provides program specific advice including: course selection; course substitutions and equivalencies; access to courses that are full; prerequisites and preclusions; internships and placements; information on opportunities for graduate studies]

Centre for Student Academic Support <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
Email: csas@carleton.ca
Ext.: 3822

Registrar's Office www.carleton.ca/registrar Ext. 3500
300 Tory Building

[Provides information on, or support for, graduation requirements for undergraduate students; academic performance; degree audit; deferred final exams and assignments; petitions and appeals; registration support]

Student Affairs www.carleton.ca/studentaffairs Ext. 3136
430 Tory Building

[Provides information on student activities; alcohol awareness; academic integrity appeals; peer volunteering; crisis support; co-curricular record; students' rights and responsibilities]

Student Experience Office
www.carleton.ca/seo Ext. 7595

430 Tory Building

[Provides transition support; mentoring programs; leadership development; community service learning; CU Hosts]