



Carleton
University

Faculty of Public
and Global Affairs

TEACHING ASSISTANT HANDBOOK

2025-2026



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Welcome to the Faculty of Public and Global Affairs! We are very pleased to have you as part of our academic team. As a TA in FPGA, you are integral to the effective delivery of our courses. TAs help to provide a richer and more satisfying experience for our undergraduate students.

This handbook provides information and best practices for Teaching Assistants and answers some common questions or concerns that TAs have about their roles, responsibilities, and expectations. It is intended to support you in your assigned duties and foster a productive working relationship between you and your supervisor/course instructor.

This handbook also serves as a reference document for relevant academic regulations, university policies and the university's teaching resources and support services that will guide your work. It also outlines key provisions in the CUPE 4600 (Unit 1) Collective Agreement which govern the terms and conditions of TA employment at Carleton University.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Getting Started.....	3
What is a Priority Teaching Assistantship (PTA)?	3
The Collective Agreement	3
The Assignment Process.....	3
The TA Management System (TAMS)	4
Completing your Graduate TA Profile.....	4
Receiving an Assignment	5
Leave from Duties (LFD)	7
Completing the Assignment of Duties (AOD).....	8
Outside Priority Teaching assistants (OPTA)	8
Mandatory Compliance Training	9
Getting Paid	9
II. Pedagogical Training	10
TA Orientation	10
Voluntary Pedagogical Training	10
Teaching Certificates.....	11
TA Training Transcript	11
TA Central Hub.....	11
III. Your Responsibilities as a TA	12
Meeting with your Supervisor	12
Managing your Assigned Responsibilities	12
Academic Integrity	15
Managing your Relationship with Students	15
Handling Difficult Situations	16
Students in Distress	16
IV. Your Responsibilities as an Employee	18
The Employee – Supervisor Relationship	18
IV. Navigating the Online Environment	19
Brightspace	19
Online Meetings and Discussion Groups	19

I. GETTING STARTED

WHAT IS A PRIORITY TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP (PTA)?

In your Offer of Admission to your graduate program, you will have received a **Priority Teaching Assistantship (PTA) Award** as part of your funding package. A PTA Award is an offer of employment as a Teaching Assistant for the number of hours (normally, 65 or 130 per term) and number of terms specified in your funding package. Most PTA awards are for the Fall and Winter sessions only, and do not include Summer unless specified in your offer of admission. To be eligible to work as a TA, you must be a *registered, full-time student* at Carleton in each term you are employed as a TA.

TAs work under the direct supervision of a Course Instructor or other designated faculty member (hereafter referred to as the **TA supervisor**), and may be assigned various duties such as attending lectures, preparing for and conducting weekly tutorials, regular office hours, grading, proctoring tests and exams, and attending meetings.

If you did not receive a TA award with your admission package, you may apply as an **Outside Priority TA**. More information is provided in the [OPTA section](#) of this Handbook.

THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

As a Teaching Assistant, you are an employee of Carleton University and a member of the union [CUPE 4600 \(Unit 1\)](#). In most cases, you will be working under the direct supervision of a course instructor. You are encouraged to read over the [Collective Agreement](#) to better understand your rights, duties, and responsibilities. The protections given to you by this Agreement include a cap on working hours, protection around academic deadlines, and paid sick leave. The Agreement also outlines your [responsibilities as an employee](#) and the process to follow should conflicts arise with your supervisor.

THE ASSIGNMENT PROCESS

Each academic term, the Associate Dean, Academic (ADA) in the [Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Public and Global Affairs](#) (ODFPGA) generates a list of FPGA graduate students who hold a PTA award for that term. Your home department should verify with you that your name is on the list and that you are available and eligible to TA. TAs are allocated to each work department by the ADA based on the operational needs of that unit, which is determined by the courses that require TA support, course enrolments, and profiles of available TAs.

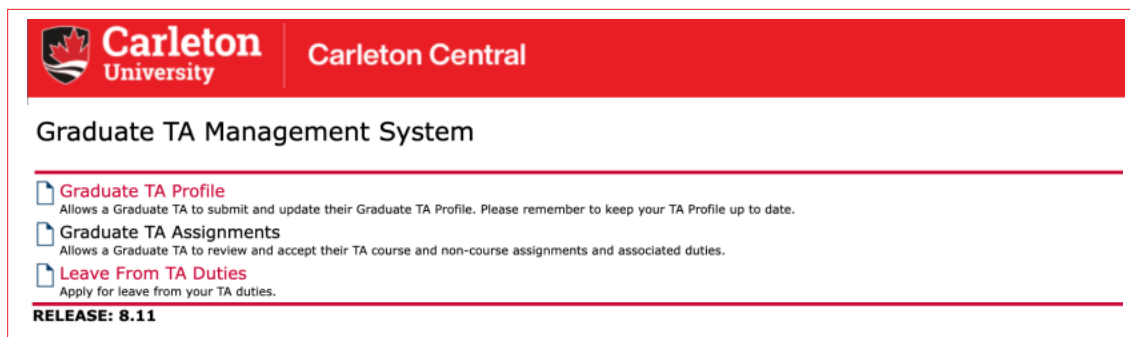
Note that your **home department** is where you were admitted as a graduate student, and your **work department** is where you are assigned to work as a TA. You may be assigned to a work department that is different from your home department.

Once the work department receives their allocation of TAs, the department's TA assigner (a faculty or staff member designated by the Chair/Director) assigns each TA to a specific course or position. After an initial assignment is made for you, you will receive a notification to review and accept it. If you accept the assignment, the TA supervisor (usually the course instructor) will complete an Assignment of Duties (AOD) form with the detailed breakdown of duties and hours which you and the supervisor will sign. These steps are detailed later in this section.

The process of allocating TAs to work departments begins about four weeks before the start of the term and ends around the second week of the term.

THE TA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (TAMS)

The **Graduate TA Management System** (TAMS) is accessed in [Carleton Central](#). This is where you will find information about and manage your TA assignments each term, including: completing and updating your TA profile; receiving and accepting assignments; reviewing and confirming your duties for each assignment; and submitting a **Leave from Duties** request when you are unavailable to work as a TA.



COMPLETING YOUR GRADUATE TA PROFILE

Before you can be assigned to a TA position, you must create your **Graduate TA Profile** in the TAMS. Your profile should be complete and updated *each term* to ensure you are offered assignments that are appropriate for your skills, academic background, and preferences.

The TA Profile asks for information about:

- Your academic background (previous degrees and courses you have taken)
- Your relevant work or other experiences
- Your availability and any non-course related scheduling conflicts
- Your preferences (and non-preferences) for assignments

Academic Background & Experience

Your academic background (especially undergraduate or graduate courses you have taken), and your previous TA experience are the most useful for making assignments that are a good fit for your skills.

If you have a previous degree from Carleton, your Carleton courses will automatically be included in your TA Profile. If you completed degree(s) elsewhere, include a list of your previous courses, especially those taken in third- and fourth year.

Please do not restrict your list of courses only to those relevant to your current graduate program. For example, if you are doing an MA in Political Science, you should not limit your prior course experience to Political Science

courses. There is a wide range of subjects for which TA support is needed within FPGA and in other Faculties. We especially need TAs to support the following subject areas:

- Criminology, Law and Legal Studies
- Economics
- Research Methods
- Languages other than English

Availability

Your availability and any non-course related schedule conflicts should be kept updated in your profile. Course assigners will have access to your class schedule. Priority TAs are normally expected to be available to work on campus during regular business hours. TAs are expected to be available through to the end of the final exam period (consult the [Academic Year](#) for the start and end dates of each term).

Class conflicts and other academic responsibilities, religious obligations, pregnancy, PMC documented disability, or documented medical issues *will* be accommodated.

You may also include days or times during which you have other commitments, and assigners will attempt to accommodate them where possible. Students who have an extremely limited availability (such as off-campus employment or other commitments) *may not* be accommodated. If you have other significant commitments, you should consider requesting a Leave from Duties.

Preferences

You are encouraged to include information about your assignment preferences and non-preferences in your profile. However, please note that your preferred department, course assignment or modality, or duties *cannot* be guaranteed.

Note that the courses listed in the preferences menu of the TA Profile are not necessarily those that will require TA support in any given term. Not all courses are offered each term, not all course sections require TA support, and needs will vary from term to term.

RECEIVING AN ASSIGNMENT

Although you were admitted to a particular FPGA graduate program of study, a *Priority TA Award does not guarantee a TA assignment in your home department*, and some FPGA Priority TAs may be assigned to courses in other Faculties.

Please note that you must register as a full-time student in the term in which you are offered a TA assignment. Failure to register will make you ineligible to work as a TA in that term.

There are several factors that influence the assignment a TA is offered, including:

- The TA's academic background and experience
- The TA's availability and potential conflicts with their own academic schedule
- The TA's unit and assignment preferences, as indicated in their online TA Profile

The TA allocation process is complex and time-consuming. You may receive your assignment anytime from several weeks *before* to several weeks *after* the start of the term. Assignments for each term will generally be completed by the last day of registration for the term.

Your home department will contact you about 4 weeks prior to the start of term to confirm your availability to TA in the coming term. It is important that you respond to this message promptly. If you are not going to be available, you should submit a Leave from Duties request in the TAMS (more [below](#)). Please note that you cannot work as a TA while you are on a co-op term.

Notification of Assignment

You will receive an email notification when a TA assignment is ready for you to review. You will be able to see the details of the assignment in the **Graduate TA Assignments** tab in the TAMS.

The TA Assignment will include information about the course title, instructor, schedule, and expected duties. You may be able to access more detailed information about the course from the [Undergraduate Calendar](#). You may also check the work department website or contact the department directly to request a copy of the course syllabus.

You will be assigned either 65 or 130 hours per term, depending on your Priority TA Award. Every effort will be made to allocate all your available hours to a single course. However, hours may be split between two different assignments if necessary. Typical TA duties may include:

- Grading papers, assignments, tests and exams
- Proctoring tests and exams
- Running tutorial or discussion groups
- Attending meetings with the TA supervisor
- Office hours, regular communication with students

Accepting your TA Assignment

As per the [CUPE 4600 \(Unit 1\) Collective Agreement](#) [Article 13.04 (f)], you must accept the “Assignment Details” within **six working days** from the date the Notification of Assignment is sent. Failure to respond or accept the assignment within this timeframe will result in the offer being cancelled, and you will be deemed to have forfeited your Priority TA term.

When reviewing your assignment offer, keep in mind that you are not expected to be an expert in the course subject or material associated with it. TAs are normally assigned to first- and second-year introductory courses. In most cases, TAs with an undergraduate degree in the social sciences will have sufficient knowledge and skills to support these courses, regardless of the subject. If you are offered an assignment that you aren’t sure about, you should contact the course instructor for more information about the course and their expectations.

If after speaking with the course instructor you feel that the assignment is not suitable, or if you have a scheduling conflict with the assignment, you must contact your *work department* as soon as possible to see if there is an alternative assignment. Early and clear communication with the assigning department is essential. Note that your home department is not responsible for your TA assignment and will not be able to assist you (unless your work department is the same as your home department).

If you are not satisfied with your assignment, Article 13.04 (h) of the [CUPE 4600 \(Unit 1\) Collective Agreement](#) stipulates that you must contact the work department within **5 working days** of notification of the assignment.

Once you decide to accept the offer, you must submit your acceptance in the TAMS. You should see the status 'Accepted' next to your assignment once this is done.

Declining an Assignment

If you receive a Notification of Assignment but are unavailable to TA, you must inform the work department immediately so the assignment can be filled by another TA. You should also consult the graduate student advisor in your home department to see if you are eligible to request a Leave from Duties (see [below](#)) to defer your TA award to a future term.

If you decide to **decline** an assignment and have not been granted a Leave from Duties, you will be deemed to have resigned your employment and forfeited your Priority TA term.

Failure to respond to or accept the assignment will result in the offer being cancelled, and you will be deemed to have forfeited your Priority TA term.

LEAVE FROM DUTIES (LFD)

The Priority TA Award ensures you are offered employment as a TA. If you are unavailable to TA in a specific term or terms, you should request permission for a **Leave from Duties (LFD)** for that term. If the LFD is approved, your Priority TA status can be extended for the number of terms you are off campus. If the LFD is not approved, or if you fail to request the LFD, you are deemed to have forfeited your employment for that term.

The CUPE 4600 (Unit 1) Collective Agreement [Article 22.14] states that LFD may be requested for the following reasons:

- a) Academic research, exchange, and co-op positions
- b) Certified medical leave
- c) Any other reasons where the Academic Supervisor and/or the Department Head provides reasons in writing as to how the leave would benefit the student academically
- d) Pregnancy and/or Parental leave, as per Article 22.08 (a) and (b)
- e) The employee has received employment as Contract Instructor at Carleton pursuant to Article 3.02
- f) Family Caregiver Leave per Article 22
- g) Domestic or Sexual Violence Leave per Article 4.08 and Article 22
- h) Gender Affirmation Leave per Article 22

It is your responsibility to confirm your TA availability with your home department and to submit a request for LFD if you are unavailable. Normally, this should be done by August 15 for the Fall term, December 15 for the Winter term, and April 15 for the Summer term.

Doctoral students who accept an offer of employment as a Contract Instructor cannot also work as a TA in the same term. If you wish to maintain your Priority TA eligibility for future terms, you must submit a LFD request for each term in which you are working as a CI. Failure to do so will result in your Priority TA term being forfeited.

For any concerns relating to your Priority TA Award, please contact your home department or [Graduate Services](#).

COMPLETING THE ASSIGNMENT OF DUTIES (AOD)

Once you have accepted your assignment, your work supervisor (usually the course instructor) will complete a detailed Assignment of Duties (AOD) form in the TAMS. The AOD form specifies the TA's duties and hours during the term. Once your supervisor has completed the AOD form, you will receive a notification to review the duties. You should meet with your supervisor to discuss the AOD and clarify duties and expectations and let your supervisor know if you have commitments or conflicts that may interfere with your assigned duties (such as periods where you know you will be away or unavailable). After you have agreed on the duties and the allocation of hours, you must sign off in Section F of the AOD form and add your comments, if any.

You will receive one AOD form for each separate assignment in each term. For example, you may receive more than one AOD form in a term if you are assigned to two different sections of a course (taught by the same instructor), or if your hours are divided between two different courses. **You must review and sign off on each AOD form.**

The Graduate TA Assignments page will show the total hours allocated for all your assignments in a given term, either 65 or 130, as per your Priority TA Award. You are also entitled to an additional 5 paid hours of pedagogical training each academic year in which you are employed as a TA (see this Handbook, [Part II](#)).

Once complete, **the AOD form is your TA employment contract** with your work supervisor. It will be the document of reference to clarify or address questions regarding duties and/or hours.

OUTSIDE PRIORITY TEACHING ASSISTANTS (OPTA)

If you did not receive a Priority Teaching Assistantship with your offer of admission, or you are an advanced undergraduate student, you may apply as an Outside Priority Teaching Assistant (OPTA). OPTAs are hired only after all available PTA have been assigned.

OPTA applications are completed in the TAMS for **each department** in which you would wish to be considered for work. Only departments to which you apply will have access to your application. (Please do not select 'FPGA' as work department, even though it's an option). Application(s) are due by August 15 for Fall-term positions, December 15 for Winter-term positions, and April 15 for Summer-term positions.

Restrictions and Exceptions

Students with PTA status: Students who have PTA status cannot apply as OPTAs. If you wish to work in a Summer term in which you do not hold a PTA, you may submit a request to move a future priority term to the Summer. The approval of the FPGA Dean is required and is contingent on TA needs in the Faculty. If you wish to do this, you must discuss it with your graduate program supervisor, who will reach out to the Dean's office to seek approval.

International student TAs: While Priority TAs may not work as OPTAs in the summer, an exception is made for international students. If there is TA need in the Faculty, and an international student with PTA status is qualified, the Faculty can approve a Summer term OPTA assignment for that student. International students should discuss this option with their graduate program supervisor prior to the Summer term.

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE TRAINING

All Carleton employees, including Teaching Assistants, are required to complete provincially mandated employee training (Compliance Training) which is tracked by Human Resources and compensated as per Article 23.03 of the Collective Agreement. Compliance training modules are listed [here](#). You can register for and access these modules through **Carleton Central** under the **Employee Services** tab. Select 'Learning and Professional Development' then 'Online Courses' for the relevant Brightspace training module.

GETTING PAID

All new employees must register with [Human Resources Payroll](#) and complete the **Online Employee Intake Form**. Pay is deposited directly to a Canadian bank account in Canadian funds. The bank account must be in the employee's name. Note that TA income is subject to deductions, such as income tax, the Canadian Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, union dues, and tuition deductions (if they have been set up). More information can be found on the [Human Resources Payroll](#) webpage.

Pay is deposited semi-monthly, in the middle and at the end of each month. Specific pay dates are listed [here](#). Note that the first pay of each term is not made until the end of the month. CUPE 4600 (Unit 1) provides access to a TA Advance, which can help bridge the gap between the beginning of your TA assignment and the first payroll deposit. More information and the application can be found on the [CUPE 4600 \(Unit 1\) benefits](#) information page.

If you initially accepted an assignment but are subsequently unable to work, you should inform your work department and Payroll as soon as possible.

	Human Resources	Payroll
Website	i.carleton.ca/hr	https://carleton.ca/hr-payroll/
Email	humanresources@carleton.ca	payroll@carleton.ca
Telephone	613-520-2600 ext. 3634	613-520-3628

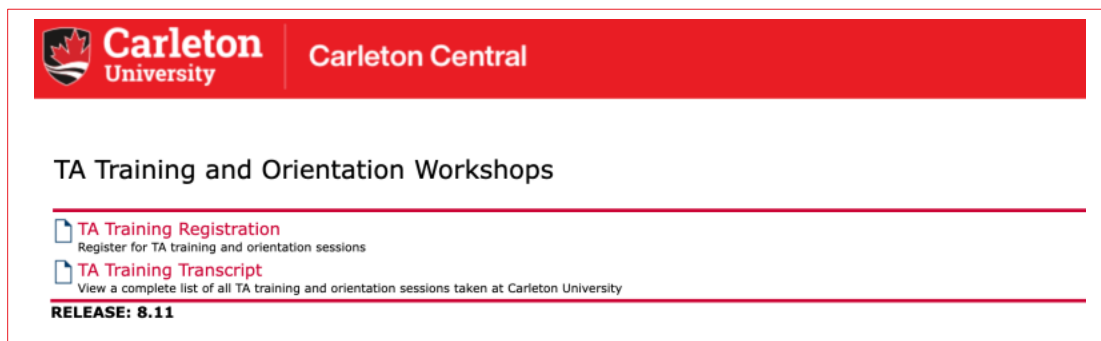
II. PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING

TA ORIENTATION

New TAs are required to attend **TA Orientation** sessions in September. TA Orientation hours are included in the 5 hours of paid pedagogical training each TA is entitled to each year, in addition to their assigned work hours (Collective Agreement Article 14.01). Detailed information about TA Orientation is provided in early September.

Orientation is voluntary for returning TAs. If your TA supervisor requires you to attend orientation, they must indicate this in writing and include it in your Assignment of Duties as part of your regular assigned hours.

TAs can register for training and workshops and track their training hours through the TAMS in Carleton Central.



VOLUNTARY PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING

Pedagogical training can help you increase your confidence and offers several related benefits. It's an opportunity to acquire and hone the skills required to perform your assigned duties, develop professional skills for academic and non-academic careers, and meet other TAs and graduate students.

Graduate TAs can complete up to five hours of paid pedagogical training each academic year that they are assigned a teaching assistantship. Training is offered in both the fall and winter terms, but it can only be completed *for pay* during the terms in which you are working as a TA. Fall-only graduate TAs need to complete their training hours before November 30 to receive full payment; and winter-only and full-year TAs need to do so before March 30. TAs are welcome to participate in training on a voluntary, unpaid basis beyond the 5 paid hours in any term.

Pedagogical training is provided by [Teaching and Learning Services \(TLS\)](#) through online and in-person workshops and teaching talks on a wide variety of topics. For information on topics, dates/times, and to access pedagogical training, log in Carleton Central, scroll to the TAMS and click 'TA Training'. Not all workshops are eligible for paid training. For additional training options, consult [the Graduate Professional Development event calendar](#).

Your home department or your work department may offer additional TA training opportunities. If these are eligible for paid pedagogical training, they will be listed on the TA Training page in the TAMS.

TEACHING CERTIFICATES

TLS offers two teaching certificates to recognize and encourage pedagogical training for graduate students.

The [Certificate in Teaching Assistant Skills \(CTAS\)](#) is a self-directed program comprised of your choice of 6-8 TLS-credited training sessions, a reflection paper, and an experiential teaching and learning project. Workshops attended as part of your paid pedagogical hours can be applied toward the Certificate. There are no deadlines for completing the certificate, but the average length to finish is two years. For more information or to enrol in the CTAS, email TAsupport@cunet.carleton.ca.

The [Preparing to Teach Certificate](#) is an advanced 10-week program for PhD candidates who intend to pursue a career in academia. It consists of weekly in-person classes and a high degree of interactive learning. Consult the [program webpage](#) for more information about the program, including how to apply. Please note that participation in the certificate is ineligible for paid pedagogical training.

TA TRAINING TRANSCRIPT

The **TA Training Transcript** is a record of the pedagogical and professional development you have completed during your time at Carleton. The Transcript can be viewed in the TAMS in Carleton Central. The Transcript includes the title and date of each workshop you have completed, with an indication of whether it is TLS-accredited and can count towards the CTAS. It will also track the total number of training hours you have accumulated to date. You can also see how many of your five paid pedagogical hours you have completed for the year.

The Transcript can be downloaded and used for job applications, attached to your CV, and included in your teaching dossier. You should also use it to update your TA profile, adding new skills that you have acquired through your training.

TA CENTRAL HUB

The **TA Central Hub**, hosted on Brightspace by TLS, offers a variety of TA resources including pre-recorded training videos, teaching resource materials, FAQs, and a Q&A Forum. You can also sign up for biweekly announcements of upcoming training sessions, deadlines, events, and more. Please contact TAsupport@cunet.carleton.ca to enrol as a first-time user.

III. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A TA

The AOD form identifies the main duties you are expected to undertake and specifies how your assigned hours should be allocated. The assigned duties include at least two meetings with your work supervisor (course instructor): one at the start of the term and one at mid-term. You and your supervisor share responsibility for ensuring that the assigned work can be completed within your available paid hours.

MEETING WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR

The **first meeting** between the TA and their work supervisor should be to discuss and reach agreement on the assigned duties and workload outlined in the AOD. This includes clarifying your responsibilities, your supervisor's expectations, and how your workload will be distributed over the term, including grading or other deadlines you will be expected to meet. Your work supervisor should explain what guidance they will provide you for completing your duties. You are responsible for informing your supervisor of any academic scheduling conflicts you may have during the term (such as your own courses or exams) and essential absences (such as medical appointments).

The **mid-term meeting** is an opportunity for you and your work supervisor to discuss your work progress, questions or concerns that may have arisen, and changes that might impact your completion of assigned duties (change of schedule, health issues, family emergency, etc.).

It is imperative that you maintain a regular, open line of communication with your supervisor. Many problems can be avoided with clear communication. The University of Waterloo has developed a tip sheet on some questions to consider when meeting with your supervisor: [Teaching Assistant Checklist: Questions to Ask \(Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo\)](#).

MANAGING YOUR ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

Office Hours

TAs are normally expected to hold regular office hours as part of their assigned duties. Clarify with your supervisor their expectations on how office hours should be held including how many, their frequency, location, and scheduling. You should also discuss whether your office hours will be in-person or virtual, and whether you have assigned departmental office space to meet with students. Consult the [TLS webpage on office hours](#) for guidance and best practices for office hours.

Tutorial Discussion Groups

Conducting tutorial discussion groups may be a significant part of your assigned duties. You should discuss your role with your supervisor and confirm the format of the groups, including which group(s) you are responsible for, their meeting schedule (e.g., whether the tutorials are weekly or informal), and the format (online, in-person, or both). Your supervisor should provide direction on the content and goals for tutorials, including the topics and material you are expected to cover, and the anticipated preparation time you will require (this should be included in your AOD).

TLS offers several [TA training workshops](#) to support you in managing your groups and foster a positive learning environment, including:

- TA Basics 101

- Leading and Managing Tutorials
- Navigating Difficult Discussions in the Classroom
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

The University of Waterloo offers an excellent tip sheet for engaging students in discussion: [Facilitating Effective Discussions \(Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo\)](#).

Class Lists and Attendance

The course instructor will provide you with a list of registered students in the course and in your assigned tutorial groups. The list should include each student's Carleton email, their major, and level of study. Some of this information may also be available in Brightspace – check with the course instructor. Note that enrolments may fluctuate in the first few weeks of the term but stabilize once registration closes.

The course instructor will clarify their policies for student attendance and participation in tutorials. It is the TA's responsibility to maintain an accurate and updated record with this information throughout the term.

Classrooms and Technology

All classes and tutorials should begin and end at the scheduled time to ensure sufficient transition time for students and for the next scheduled users of the space. Most classrooms at Carleton are equipped with basic technology, including a projection screen and/or monitor, a computer (with ability to play DVDs), a laptop connection point/hook-up, and audio reinforcement. For immediate assistance in your classroom, call the **TLS Help Desk at 613-520-3815**.

For more information about learning spaces at Carleton, the specific classroom to which you are assigned, or to arrange an orientation to your assigned classroom, please [contact TLS](#).

Tutorial Cancellation

If you are unable to attend your tutorial due to illness or personal emergency, you must contact your supervisor to make alternate arrangements for your group. If there is insufficient time to make alternate arrangements and the tutorial needs to be cancelled, you must contact your students to notify them as soon as possible.

If you have a planned absence, you should discuss this as far in advance as possible with your supervisor to make alternative arrangements to cover your tutorial and, as appropriate, reallocate your assigned hours to another task.

Grades and Grading

Grading will likely be a central focus of your TA responsibilities. You should work closely with your supervisor to clarify their expectations, and ensure you are following their grading guidelines and instructions. They may have rubrics or other established processes for grading to ensure consistency between TAs, as well as directions about the type of feedback you are expected to provide students.

TLS offers several [TA training workshops](#) to support you with grading, including 'Providing Feedback on Exams and Assignments'. The University of Guelph also offers some advice for TAs on [Grading and Effective Feedback](#), including a related recorded [online workshop](#) on this topic.

Tutorial Attendance and Participation Grades

In some courses, tutorial attendance and participation will be evaluated and included in a student's final grade. This should be clearly identified and explained in the course outline. TAs are normally responsible for tracking and assessing student attendance and participation in tutorials, so you should consult with your supervisor to determine how each component should be evaluated, including whether there is a rubric. It is important that TAs maintain clear and updated record of participation for each of their groups.

Grading Assignments

The course outline will list the evaluated components of the course, including assignments, their weights, and general expectations for each. The course instructor may also provide additional documentation and instructions for each assignment, including a grading rubric.

If grading rubrics are provided, make sure you understand how to use them and ask for clarifications as needed. If no rubrics are provided, meet with your supervisor to discuss their expectations and guidelines for your marking. Other strategies to assist with grading include:

- Ask your supervisor to read a few samples of assignments you have marked
- Ask other TAs in the same course to share some samples of graded assignments
- Grade a few assignments with other TAs in the course to establish a benchmark

Your supervisor is your primary resource and first contact for any grading related questions. Other more general resources may include:

- Other TAs, either in the same course or your colleagues who are TAs in other courses
- The department's TA Mentor, if one is available

A key component of your grading responsibilities is to keep an accurate record of the assignments you receive from students, the date/time they were submitted (to determine any late penalties), and the feedback and marks you give to each. This may take the form of a spreadsheet and/or entering the information in Brightspace. It is strongly advised that you keep a local backup of grades.

Grades and graded assignments should not be returned to students without clear direction and permission from the course instructor. All grades, including final grades, are the sole authority of the course instructor.

If they have not already included one in the syllabus, ask your supervisor what the **grading review policy** is for the course. If a student is unhappy with or asks for a review of their grade on an assignment, direct them to the course policy. Good practice for dealing with requests to review a grade may include instituting a 24-hour period before students can submit a request, and asking them to prepare specific questions about their grade before meeting with them.

Grading can be one of the most challenging and important responsibilities you have as a TA. If you are uncertain or nervous about marking assignments, do not hesitate to reach out to the instructor or some of the other resources suggested above and in the [Pedagogical Training section](#) of this Handbook.

Extensions and Accommodation Requests

The course syllabus should include course policies on late or missed assignments, requests for extensions, or other accommodation requests from students. Information and policies for addressing accommodation requests for religious obligations, family status, student activities, and short-term illness or other extenuating circumstances, should also be included in the course syllabus. Unless otherwise instructed by your supervisor, all such requests must be directed to the course instructor, and only the instructor has the authority to grant them.

Consult Carleton's [academic accommodations](#) page for more information.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All TAs and students should be familiar the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), and understand what constitutes a violation of this policy. Some examples of violations include:

- **Plagiarism:** submitting work written in whole or part by someone else; failing to acknowledge sources through proper citations
- **Test and Exam rules:** attempting to read another's paper; using unauthorized material during the test or exam
- **Others:** accessing confidential information, such as exams or test questions; disrupting classroom activities; unauthorized use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (e.g. ChatGPT)

The course syllabus should include a section on Academic Integrity and the course policies and procedures. If you suspect that there has been a breach of Academic Integrity, you are obligated to report this to the course instructor right away. The instructor is responsible for handling suspected cases. **TAs are NOT permitted to discuss or communicate their suspicions with students under any circumstances**, even after the case has been reported. You must direct any student inquiries to the course instructor or refer students to the [Academic Integrity information website](#).

MANAGING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS

As a TA you are in a position of **authority**, and it is important to maintain a professional relationship with your students. This means you should always conduct yourself professionally and impartially in your dealings with students, including in grading, to avoid perceptions of bias or favoritism. Students will look to you to model the behaviours that are expected in your classroom.

You are also in a position of **trust** and must maintain the confidentiality of your students. Do not discuss student matters with friends, family or acquaintances in person, by email, or on social media, even if your accounts are private. Limit your communication about student matters to your supervisor.

Your contact and interactions with students should be **respectful** and friendly, but *not personal*. This means you should refrain from discussing personal issues, offering personal advice, or engaging socially with your students. These can create misleading impressions and inappropriate expectations on both sides.

It is important to be approachable and willing to help your students when they ask. All electronic communication with your students must be done using *only* Brightspace or Carleton email accounts. Do not ask for or provide students with personal phone numbers, emails, or social media handles.

HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

The [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#) governs the non-academic behaviour of students, and [Academic Regulation 10.2](#) of the Undergraduate Calendar outlines offenses of conduct, enforcement and formal sanction procedures for students who engage in such conduct. If you encounter instances of difficult or disruptive student behaviour, you should notify your supervisor immediately. These may include discrimination, harassment, threatening, stalking, or unwelcome communication either in person or through electronic or other means.

Difficult situations can encompass a wide range, from difficult discussions to disruptive or challenging behaviours. You should document student concerns and your own observations and communicate all of this with your supervisor. For more serious cases, your supervisor may escalate the case to the [Student Affairs](#) office and/or the Associate Dean, Students.

If a situation arises in which you feel threatened, or you feel may become dangerous to you or others around you, contact [Campus Safety](#) immediately. For **emergencies call 613-520-4444** or use extension 4444 from any campus phone or call 911.

In your early meetings with your supervisor, it may be useful to clarify their expectations for how some potentially difficult situations should be handled and diffused, such as:

- What should you do when a student asks you to extend the deadline for an assignment?
- What is the procedure for handling accommodations for absences from tutorials?
- What should you do when a student asks for their grade to be changed?
- What should you do if a student makes an inappropriate comment during discussion or in their assignment?
- What should you do if a student is disruptive in tutorial?
- How should you respond to a student who seems to be in crisis?

STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

It is important to communicate with your supervisor if you have any concerns about a student's well-being. Carleton University has developed a helpful guide for recognizing and [supporting students in distress](#), and potential resources you may direct them to. Members of the Carleton community who are concerned about a student can refer to several resources on campus and/or [submit a Care Report](#).

If a student seems to be in crisis during a tutorial or office hours or if they disclose information or display behavior that could suggest that they may harm themselves or others, you should contact [Campus Safety](#) immediately. For **emergencies call 613-520-4444** or use extension 4444 from any campus phone or call 911.

If a student is experiencing personal difficulties (such as with personal or family concerns, physical or mental health issues), you can direct them to some of the following:

Academic Support and Services	Health and Wellness Supports	Other Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for Student Academic Support • MacOdrum Library Services • Academic Advising Centre • Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Resources • Health and Counselling Services • Health Promotion • Substance Use Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Student Services Office • Student Experience Office

IV. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN EMPLOYEE

As a TA, you are member of the union [CUPE 4600 \(Unit 1\)](#), and the [Collective Agreement](#) between Carleton University and CUPE 4600 (Unit 1) outlines your responsibilities and protections as an employee of Carleton. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the Collective Agreement, including the following provisions:

- Article 15.05: Employee Rights
- Article 15.06: Employee Responsibilities
- Article 21: Sick Leave
 - Article 21.02: Employees must inform their supervisor in writing if they need time off for illness
- Article 22: Leaves of Absence
 - Article 22.01 (b): Employees must give at least 10 days' notice for requests for religious accommodations
 - Article 22.01 (d): Employees presenting or discussing a paper at an academic conference may take a leave up to 5 days and must develop a plan for their duties will be covered during the leave.
 - Article 22.05 Compassionate Leave

THE EMPLOYEE – SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP

It is incumbent on the supervisor to assign appropriate duties and corresponding hours as part of the AOD and to discuss them with you at the beginning of the term. You are also responsible for clarifying any aspects of the duties and workload you may be unsure about. If you are unsure whether what your supervisor is asking you to do is consistent with the collective agreement, you may reach out to your union for advice. Regular communication with your supervisor throughout the term can help ensure any issues that arise are dealt with quickly.

From time to time, disagreements may arise between you and your supervisor. The first step is to meet with your supervisor, one-one, to discuss your concerns (see Article 10.03 of the Collective Agreement). In many cases, regular and timely communication will help to clarify issues and resolve misunderstandings or miscommunication that may have led to the dispute. It is important to document incidents or concerns and keep a record of your communications and emails.

If communication has broken down and the problem has not been resolved, you should contact the TA assigner or chair of your work department. Your home department is not responsible for your TA assignment and cannot intervene. If your work department is unable to resolve the problem, you should reach out to CUPE 4600 (Unit 1) for advice. The union may present a formal grievance on your behalf to the department chair. The Grievance Procedure is laid out in Article 10 of the Collective Agreement.

WORK DURING THE END OF YEAR UNIVERSITY CLOSURE PERIOD

Article 19.01 of the Collective Agreement states that employees are not required to work when the University is closed (on the days indicated in the [Academic Year Calendar](#)). With permission from the Dean's office, your supervisor may ask you, in writing, to work during the University Closure Period, which falls at the end of the Fall term. You may choose to accept the request, in writing, and complete your assigned duties during this period at premium pay. More detail about this process will be provided if such a request is made.

IV. NAVIGATING THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

BRIGHTSPACE

Brightspace is Carleton's learning management system where instructors, TAs and students can share course materials, hold online discussions, meet in live web conferencing sessions, share assignments, and more.

Your TA assignment may involve using Brightspace to access, grade, and return student work, record grades, moderate online discussion forums, and communicate with students. Your duties may also include posting announcements or uploading course materials. At your first meeting with your supervisor, discuss how they intend to use Brightspace and what your role and responsibilities will be in using the platform.

Brightspace Resources for TAs

You can log in at brightspace.carleton.ca using your MC1 credentials to begin exploring what is available to you. TLS has developed a [Brightspace TA Support website](#), where you can find documentation on how to navigate and use the system, as well as a [Getting Started in Brightspace for TAs video](#). TLS will also offer [consultations for TAs](#) looking for one-on-one assistance.

Technical support for Brightspace is available:

D2L Brightspace Technical Support Contact	Teaching and Learning Services Contact
Fill out the Email Support Request Form Call 1-877-325-7778	Visit the TLS support portal to complete a support request

ONLINE MEETINGS AND DISCUSSION GROUPS

Your responsibilities may include holding online meetings and discussions with your students. The course instructor will give you guidance on which online platform you should use to host these sessions, usually either [Zoom](#) or [MS Teams](#). Both platforms have nuances that may take a while to learn. TLS has a useful summary and comparison of these two [Web Conferencing](#) tools, including best practices and protocols and how to use them effectively in your teaching.

You should consider and discuss with the course instructor a code of conduct for students in your online sessions. For tips visit TLS's [Netiquette support resource](#), and Carleton's [Acceptable Use Policy for Information Technology](#). If appropriate, you may ask students to co-create a code of conduct with you.

Some great resources for online teaching and learning from TLS can be found here:

- [Online Teaching Strategies](#) (for teachers, TAs)
- [Engaging Students Online](#) (for teachers, TAs)
- [Netiquette for Students](#) (for learners)
- [Online Learning Resources](#) (for learners)