Administrative guidelines on employing graduate student teaching assistants

On this page: Updates | Appointment forms | Rates | Overtime and workload | Posting procedures | Selections (Priority Pool) | Appointments | Selection of applicants | Withdrawal, refusal or resignation | Post-appointment | Guidelines for POPS | Performance evaluation | Correspondence | Union membership

For forms relating to TAs, please visit HR's forms page.

Memorandum

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The TA collective agreement has been posted on the Human Resources web page. You will find it at a www.mcgill.ca/hr/policies/agreements/
We have also posted the workload form at www.mcgill.ca/hr/forms/.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of a few important provisions.

1. POSTINGS: The posting period for the Fall Term is from March 15th to April 14th and a copy of all the postings should be sent to the Union. If you did not post the positions during this period or have more positions to post, you may post them during the supplementary posting period (See number 6).

2. TENTATIVE LIST OF APPOINTMENTS: You have to complete and send your Tentative List of Appointments. This list must include the following information: the identification of the Hiring Unit, the name of Teaching Assistant, the indication that he/she is not a member of the Hiring Unit’s priority pool, the course title and number, the total hours of the appointment, the teaching Assistant’s degree and year. For the Ph.D. 5 students, an indication as to whether they began their program at the Ph.D. 1 or Ph.D. 2 level. You will find a template at www.mcgill.ca/hr/policies/tas/.

3. APPOINTEMENT PROCESS: After consulting with the Union Delegate on the Tentative List of Appointments, you may send the notification of appointment to the successful applicants. This notification (offer letter) must include the following: the identification of the Hiring Unit, the position’s title (if known), the classification, the course title, the course number, the appointment dates, the total number of hours and the salary. You must send two (2) copies to the applicants and all successful applicants should receive their notification of appointment as soon as possible. You will find a template of a notification letter at www.mcgill.ca/hr/policies/tas/.
4. **APPOINTMENTS THROUGH MINERVA:** It is important, when you are submitting the appointments through MINERVA that you correctly identify the Teaching Assistant. Only the Teaching Assistants that are graduate students can be coded with a position number that starts with STP. This is crucial to ensure that the Union Dues are being withheld from the TAs pay.

5. **MEMBERSHIP FORMS:** Once the TA has accepted the position, he/she must fill out and sign a Membership Form. This form is available via our web site, at www.mcgill.ca/hr/policies/tas/, section “Memberships”. Forms must be filled out within twenty (20) days following the beginning of the appointment date and must be sent to the Union.

6. **SUPPLEMENTARY POSTINGS:** You may use this period to post the positions that were not posted during the thirty (30) days posting period and copies of the postings must be sent to the Union.

7. **LIST OF APPOINTMENTS:** Finally, at the end of the process, you must prepare a list of appointment to be posted in your unit. **This list must be posted and sent to the Union by the 21st calendar day of each term.**

For all other administrative procedures concerning the employment of graduate students as TAs, collective agreements or question, please refer to our web site at www.mcgill.ca/hr/policies/tas/ or do not hesitate to contact Maud Boyer, Labour and Employee Relations Advisor at (514) 398-2297 or by email to maud.boyer@mcgill.ca.

**Procedures**

1. There is **one** class of Teaching Assistant. All TA position numbers start with the letters **STP**. **ONLY Graduate** students may hold an STP position.
2. All other classifications are identified by the following codes:
   - Graduate Student Assistant: **SGU**
   - Graduate Student Research Assistant: **SRU**
   - Post Doctoral Fellow: **SPU**
   - Undergraduate Student Course Assistant: **SUU**
   - Undergraduate Student Research Assistant: **SHU**

   Students appointed to these classifications are **excluded** from the bargaining unit.

3. If students are hired to correct mid and end-of-term exams and perform no duties related to teaching (i.e., no contact with students), they should be paid as usual, via Academic Casual Payroll Requisitions.
4. All new TAs will become members of the union and have union dues deducted.
5. Bank Deposit is compulsory for all TA's.
6. Payment has been and will be based on an hourly rate. If a department grants a global, yearly amount to TA's, this must be broken down into hourly rates and hours worked for record keeping purposes.
7. To facilitate the application of future increases and salary adjustments, all administrators are encouraged to keep TA appointment hours distinct from one term to the next and to not combine the hours of two terms into one appointment. The winter term begins January 1st and the increase in rates is applicable as of that date.

Summary of procedures from the Collective Agreement

Overtime and workload

It has been agreed that the additional hours spent by a TA in grading for a course where he/she is employed as a TA during that same term will be compensated at the TA rate.

For the duration of the collective agreement, disagreements on the hours of work and scheduling of duties will be settled by resorting to the following dispute settlement procedures:

1. Where an employee has reason to believe that she may be unable to perform the assigned duties within the hours specified at the beginning, the employee shall discuss the concerns with her supervisor as soon as possible.
2. If a disagreement exists, the employee may approach the Chair of the Hiring Unit. The Chair, or her delegate, shall meet with the supervisor and the employee who may be accompanied by her union representative and examine any materials relevant to the disagreement. The Chair shall render a decision within five (5) working days of being apprised of the dispute.
3. If a disagreement persists or if the Chair fails to render a decision, the employee or the Union may request that the Chair refer the case to an ad-hoc Union-Management Committee, formed of two representatives each of the Employer and the Union. The Committee shall establish its own internal rules of process. The Committee shall render a decision within ten (10) working days of being apprised of the dispute. The decision of the committee is binding on the parties and cannot be grieved. If the overtime hours are justified, the committee must award the payment, at their regular hourly rate, for all additional hours worked in excess of the total number of hours as set out in the offer of appointment. However, no such payment may be awarded where the additional hours resulted from the employee's choice of approach to her duties. The committee may also propose other solutions.
4. If the committee does not dispose of the disagreement, the employee or the Union may file a grievance at Step 2 of the grievance procedure.

This letter of agreement forms part of the collective agreement.
Posting procedures

Posting of Teaching Assistantships (first posting)

1. Vacancies for Teaching Assistant positions within each Hiring Unit will be posted on the Department's designated bulletin board.
2. Hiring Units shall post positions expected to be available during the following term, based on a projection of courses to be offered and on an estimate of the number of positions available. Such announcements shall be posted by:
   - March 1 for Summer courses
   - March 15 for Fall and Full Year courses
   - October 15 for Winter courses
3. Such announcements are considered tentative, pending final determination of course offerings and enrolments. Such announcements shall be posted for thirty (30) days.
4. The postings shall include: date of posting, identification of the Hiring Unit, title and number of course, estimate of the number of positions available in each course, total hours of work per term, effective dates of appointment, salary and classification, required qualifications, summary of required duties, application deadline and procedure, and the statement: "McGill University is Committed to Equity in Employment".
5. All applicants for posted position vacancies must apply in writing, using the application form provided, to the appropriate Hiring Unit by the close of the posting.
6. The application form will provide the applicant with the opportunity to indicate 3 course preferences, and to indicate whether they wish to be considered for other courses for which they meet the required qualifications.
7. The University is under no obligation to consider applications submitted after the application deadline.

Supplementary Posting

When a vacancy occurs in a course for which positions were not previously posted, such vacancy shall be posted. Such announcements shall remain posted as follows:

1. Before the start of the term, for five (5) working days.
2. After the start of the term, for two (2) working days.

A copy of all postings shall be sent to the Union.
Selection and appointment

Priority Pool

1. An Employee registered in a graduate degree program at the University, who has held at least one (1) Teaching Assistantship or portion thereof in a Hiring Unit is a member of that Hiring Unit's priority pool.

2. Employees will not remain in the Priority Pool beyond the following deadlines:
   - **Master's Degree Candidates**
     Two (2) years from initial registration in the degree program.
   - **Doctoral Degree Candidates**
     Four (4) years from initial registration in the degree program; however if admitted at the Ph.D. 2 level, in no case shall the total Priority Pool entitlement exceed five (5) years including years spent in the Priority Pool as a Master degree candidate.

   **Note:** We have raised the pool entitlement level to the PH.D. 5 level for students that enter the doctoral program at the PH.D. 2 level.

3. An employee who has an authorized leave of absence from her studies for parenting or maternity reasons in conformity may request the extension of her priority pool entitlement for a period not to exceed two (2) years. Also, an employee who has an authorized leave of absence for medical reasons may request the extension of her priority pool entitlement for a period not to exceed one (1) year. The employee must make her request for such an extension in writing to her Hiring Unit and, in the case of leave for medical reasons, accompany the request with a medical certificate. The University will not refuse such an extension without valid grounds.

4. The employer may grant upon request up to one (1) year deferment of an employee's priority pool entitlement in order for the employee to conduct field research.

5. Priority shall be granted for no more than one (1) appointment in each term.

6. A teaching assistant ceases to be an employee of the University and is automatically removed from the priority pool when she resigns, is terminated, unless she is reinstated or is no longer a graduate student.

Appointments

1. Appointments are offered respectively to:
   - **Category I:** applicants from outside the bargaining unit who shall be graduate students in the term of the appointment.
   - **Category II:** applicants from within the priority pool of the Hiring Unit.
   - **Category III:** applicants from within the bargaining unit who have exhausted their priority pool entitlement.

2. In each Hiring Unit, appointments will be made in accordance with the following procedure:
A number of appointments may be reserved by the employer for Category I appointees. The number shall not exceed the number of employees who have left the priority pool in the appropriate reference period, which is defined as follows:

- **For Fall term appointments**
  The reference period are the Winter and Summer terms. The number of appointments reserved for Category I appointees is equal to the sum of the number of employees who have lost or who will lose the right to priority pool entitlement in the Winter and Summer terms.

- **For Winter term appointments**
  The reference period is the Fall term. The number of appointments reserved for Category I is equal to the sum of the number of employees who have lost or who will lose the right to priority pool entitlement in the Fall term.

3. All remaining appointments are offered to Category II applicants.
4. After Category II appointments have been made, including supplementary postings in accordance with procedures, remaining appointments may be offered to Category I or Category III applicants.
5. In the event that it is not possible to offer employment to all qualified Priority Pool applicants in the Hiring Unit, appointments shall be granted in decreasing order of priority to:

   - Employees registered at the Ph.D. 4 level and registered at Ph.D. 5 level (as provided for in article 13.01.02),
   - Employees registered at the Ph.D. 3 level,
   - Employees registered at the Ph.D. 2 level,
   - Employees registered at the Master’s 2 level,
   - Employees registered at the Ph.D. 1 level,
   - Employees registered at the Master’s 1 level.

6. In the event of a tie, priority shall be given to the employee who has accumulated the greatest number of hours of appointment.
7. If a tie still persists, priority will be determined in accordance with Employment Equity Guidelines, as established by the Union-Management Committee. Until such time as the Employment Equity Guidelines are established, if a tie still persists, priority will be determined by random draw.

**Selection of applicants**

1. For the purpose of making appointments, the Employer must consider the applicant's academic qualifications, other general qualifications as posted, and formal written performance evaluations filed in accordance with Article 14, which are relevant to the position.
2. For the purpose of course assignment, the Employer shall consider the preferences of applicants. However, given the specific requirements of certain positions and, in order to appoint qualified employees to all courses, the Employer may appoint employees to positions other than those indicated in the preferences.

3. Within thirty (30) days of the application deadlines, the Hiring Unit shall provide the Departmental Union Delegate with a tentative list of appointments to be made for the coming term, which includes the following information:

- Identification of the Hiring Unit
- Name of Teaching Assistant
- Indication that she is/is not a member of the Hiring Unit's priority pool
- The course title and number
- Total hours of the appointment
- Teaching Assistant's degree and year
- For the Ph.D. 5 students, an indication as to whether they began their program at the Ph.D. 1 or Ph.D. 2 level

[Tentative list of appointments](TentativeListofAppointments.xls - MS Excel - 21 KB)

4. The Hiring Unit shall consult with the Departmental Union Delegate on the list prior to sending notifications of appointment, and provide clarifications on the selection where necessary.

**Notification of appointment**

1. Applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of their application at their internal McGill address within thirty-five (35) days from the application deadline. Successful applicants will receive two (2) copies of the letter of offer, which shall include the identification of the Hiring Unit and to the extent available at the time of offer, the position's title and classification, course title and number, appointment dates, total number of hours and salary.

2. Members of the bargaining unit to whom a position has been offered will accept in writing, by signing and returning one of the two copies of the letter of offer which was sent to the employee, within five (5) working days of receipt of the offer, unless prevented from doing so due to documented illness.

3. A position posted under following procedures, may be offered verbally and must be accepted within 24 hours of the offer. The offer and acceptance shall subsequently be confirmed in writing by both parties as described above.
Withdrawal of offer, refusal of assignment and resignation

The employer may withdraw a position offered to a candidate

1. When a position which has been offered to a candidate in accordance with the procedures is withdrawn, the employee shall be placed in a position vacancy of at least equivalent remuneration, if such position is available, subject to the employee meeting the required qualifications. If the position is not a Teaching Assistantship, the employee maintains all the rights and privileges of the Bargaining Unit.

2. If an employee refuses an alternate appointment offered to her, she will be deemed to have resigned from her position and will not be entitled to any compensation. Notwithstanding the preceding, this employee does not waive her priority pool entitlement for subsequent terms if all is done prior to the beginning of term.

3. When the position offered is withdrawn for insufficient enrolment or course cancellation and no alternate position is available, the employee shall receive 2/15 of the appointment's salary. When the position is withdrawn for any other reasons, the employee shall receive 2/5 of the appointment's salary.

4. Notification of all withdrawals must be provided immediately to the Union, in writing, by mail or by electronic mail at the address indicated under correspondence.

TA resignation

1. An employee resigning her Teaching Assistant position shall provide in writing to her immediate supervisor a minimum of thirty (30) calendar days notice of her intention to resign.

2. By the twenty first (21st) calendar day of each term, each Hiring Unit shall send the Union and post a list of all appointments made in the current term. The list shall include the course title and number, the teaching assistant's name, the total hours of the appointment and the teaching assistant's degree and year.

3. Departments are encouraged to provide orientation to Teaching Assistants by such means as departmental course meetings.

Post-appointment and sample letters of offer

Once a Teaching Assistant has been appointed to a course, it is important that:

1. The Course Supervisor and Graduate Student Teaching Assistant meet to discuss what amount of time will be spent on each of the different duties during the term.

2. They fill out a "Workload Form" which should be signed by both the Course Supervisor and the Teaching Assistant, and a copy placed in the student's employee file.

3. They meet periodically during the term to ensure the appropriate management of the Teaching Assistant's time, as well address any problems which arise.
Draft of the notification of acceptance for a Teaching Assistantship

Sample letter: notification of acceptance [.doc]

Draft letter of TA appointment to student

Letter of TA appointment to student [.doc]

Guidelines for submitting through POPS

POPS should be used when appointing graduate students to Teaching Assistantships (as well as for all other academic student appointments). Please make every effort to complete the forms on the system as accurately and completely as possible. Any inaccuracies may delay processing of the form and possibly delay payment.

For detailed information about POPS and step by step instructions on how to use specific Banner forms go to the Payroll web site.

**Important:** POPS is used for NEW HIRE, RE-HIRE, RE-APPOINTMENT & ADDITIONAL APPOINTMENTS.

To **maintain** a TA appointment, and/or **make changes** to information on an **existing appointment**, please submit a paper appointment form.

The departmental ORGN numbers are linked to the rates table. Entering an incorrect rate will generate an error code.

Please refer to the new rates tables, in order to identify the rates that apply to specific departments. For **System** problems, please contact ISR at local 5023.

**Terminology**

New Hire: The student has never had any other appointments.

Rehire: The student was previously employed.

Additional Appointment: The student has other active appointments (i.e., he already holds a graduate student assistantship). If the other appointment is in another department and you have no knowledge of it, don't worry, the records department will capture this information during data entry.

Maintain an Appointment: To make a change during an appointment without ending the appointment itself. Please indicate when the change is to occur by entering the effective date of change.

Person Number: This is the 9-digit Banner number.
If this is a first Post Doctoral appointment, a number will be assigned in Human Resources.

For all other first appointments, Student admissions will assign the numbers.

**Department:** Please enter your department name as well as the Administrative Unit Code.

**Appointment Information**

**Appointment from and to dates:** These are the start and end dates of the TAship.

**Undergraduate/Graduate Code:** Please check the appropriate box for graduate/undergraduate student. If appointing to a TAship, only **graduate** students are part of the bargaining unit and will have union dues deducted.

**Posn:** Only **graduate** students being appointed to a TAship will be appointed as STP (and have union dues deducted).

**Actual Hourly Rate/Actual Annual Amount:** Ensure that the correct **hourly rate** and **annual amount** are indicated. Ensure that \((\text{hourly rate}) \times (\text{hours per week}) \times (\text{number of weeks included in appointment start and end dates}) = \text{the actual annual salary amount}\) that is being paid to the student.

**Internal Correspondence Address**

This address will be generated by the Administrative Unit code. Please fill in this section if the address is not the departmental address.

For questions concerning Teaching Assistants, please contact **Maud Boyer** at local 2297.

For questions concerning POPS academic student appointments please contact Payroll at local 3751 or by Email.

### Performance evaluation of graduate student Teaching Assistants

An employee's ongoing performance is normally subject to a formal written evaluation once during any academic term of appointment. Student assessment may, but doesn't have to be part of the employee's performance evaluation.

The evaluation criteria shall be communicated to the employee, in writing, at the beginning of her employment term. This can be done by including a copy of the Performance Evaluation Form with other documents given to the graduate student upon hiring. A formal written evaluation must be discussed with the employee within 30 days of the performance evaluation.
The employee may add her comments to the evaluation.

Both the course supervisor and the employee must sign the form to indicate that a discussion took place.

The written evaluation shall become part of the employee's employment file.

**TOP OF PAGE**

**Correspondence**

All official correspondence between the parties shall be sent as follows, except as otherwise provided:

**To the University:**

*Associate Director of Human Resources*
McGill University
688 Sherbrooke Street West, suite 1520
Montreal, QC H3A 3R1

Or, as designated at a future date

**To the Union:**

*Association des étudiant-e-s diplômé-e-s employé-e-s de McGill/Association of Graduate students employed at McGill*
3479 Peel Street, 3rd floor
Montreal, QC H3A 1W7
Email: agsem@web.net

Or, as designated at a future date.

**TOP OF PAGE**

**Memberships**

**Union Membership and Dues**

Any employee who, according to the provision of the Agreement, holds a hiring contract upon the signing of the collective agreement and is not a member of the Union shall become a Union member. All new employees shall become members of the Union upon hiring. To do so, an employee shall sign the AGSEM membership form [.pdf] found in Appendix III.
The Union membership form shall be attached to the offer letter (employment contract) sent to Teaching Assistants.

The aforementioned offer letter (employment contract) shall include a statement specifying that employees must complete and sign the attached union membership form. The letter should also mention that the forms must be returned to the administrative officer who is responsible for gathering the forms and forwarding them to the Union at the address of correspondence.

The University shall send the aforementioned membership forms, once they have been filled out and signed, to the Union, within twenty (20) working days of the beginning of their appointment date. Normally this shall be done in a single mailing by the Hiring Unit. However, an employee may rescind her membership at any time by notifying the Union in writing following the signing of the collective agreement or her hiring contract. The University is not required to dismiss an employee because the Union has refused, suspended, or rescinded her union membership.

Next: Teaching assistants timeline

view sidebar content | back to top of page