



# Department of Political Science

**Guidelines for Teaching  
for  
Teaching Assistants  
2021-2022**

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## **Workload and Hours of Work**

A full teaching assistantship consists of 180 hours of work per term (an average of 12 hours per week). Work may begin prior to the academic term and may continue beyond the end of the academic term. Your responsibilities will typically include the following: attending class lectures, meeting with the course instructor, preparing for and conducting student conference sections, holding office hours, and grading written assignments, mid-terms and/or final exams. Although a full teaching assistantship works out to an average of 12 hours per week, it is typical that your work hours will be unevenly distributed throughout a term, with grading of papers and exams constituting especially time-intensive work periods. You should anticipate some increase in your workload with grading responsibilities which occur in two peak periods, at mid-term and during the final two-week examination period.

At the start of the course, Course Instructors and their T.A.s must together complete a workload form detailing the distribution of work for that particular course. A copy of that workload form is provided at the end of this handbook. This workload form is important in that it clarifies, in writing, the responsibilities of the T.A. It is part of the collective agreement between the University and the Association of Graduate Students Employed at McGill (AGSEM), and it aims at protecting T.A.s and minimizing any potential misunderstandings between the T.A. and the Course Instructor. Keeping that in mind, you will understand that it is equally important that *you keep track of your working hours* (see also 'Grading' section below).

As the term progresses, the Course Instructor may need to modify teaching procedures. This should be accompanied by a revised TA workload form. The Course Instructor should be proactive and call this meeting, but if they forget, you (or the head TA) should remind them to schedule the meeting.

Please note that the Workload form specifies that, 'The Course Supervisor and Teaching Assistant shall meet within 2 weeks of mid-term to review the objectives and make appropriate revisions as required.' The Course Instructor should be proactive and call this meeting, but if they forget, you (or the head TA) should remind them to schedule the meeting.

If you find that you are working more than the allotted hours for any grading assignments, or due to increased virtual interaction with students, inform your Course Instructor (or the head TA) immediately so that a solution can be devised promptly.

The workload for first-year, full-time T.A.s tends to be slightly higher than for experienced T.A.s: therefore, we recommend that you take only two graduate courses during your first semester as a T.A. In addition, all T.A.s are given a 2-3 week extension in the deadlines for submission of final graduate seminar papers. It is also customary to cancel conference sessions and T.A. office hours during the week of mid-term examinations. Conference sections are not usually scheduled during the examination period at the end of each term.

## **Teaching in Fall 2021**

As of August 6, 2021, the University policy instructs that there are two types of lectures for the Fall 2021: delivered in-person (zero-meter distancing with mandatory masks) and delivered remotely.

For both types of lectures, conferences may be delivered in-person or remotely, depending on the pedagogical requirements. However, if your conferences are scheduled to be delivered in person and if you have particular health concerns—for example, you are immunocompromised—you should raise these with the course instructor and notify the department's Associate Director of Graduate Studies.

Keep in mind that you may not inquire into any student's vaccination status. Also note that the university may change its teaching policies depending on the guidance and instructions from the province. Always check out the McGill information page for updates:  
: <https://www.mcgill.ca/coronavirus/return-campus-fall-2021>.

Once you have accepted a TAship, be proactive and contact the Course Instructor for the syllabus of the course. You should meet virtually or in person with the Course Instructor at the beginning of the term in order to discuss your tasks, to arrange for you to get the course reading materials, or any other materials you need to be a T.A. for the course. The Course Instructor will also need to enrol you in the course on MyCourses, so that you have access to the online teaching system.

When discussing your tasks for the Workload form, ensure that you understand what is involved for each task. If you don't know how to do something (for example, that requires using MyCourses, or other online platforms), make sure that you tell the Course Instructor in advance. You may need to agree to include time on the Workload form for training for certain tasks, including aspects of remote teaching with which you are not familiar.

If you notice that a student is falling behind on tasks or being unresponsive to emails from you about course assignments, discussions, or tasks, inform your Course Instructor immediately so that action can be taken to check up on the student.

It is a very good idea to keep your own separate notes when evaluating student assignments online.

In general, carrying out your T.A. duties such as holding office hours and grading papers or assignments online will present their unique challenges. As a general rule, if you are doing your T.A. duties, make sure that you give yourself the proper environment to focus on the task at hand. For example, if you are grading papers online, ensure that you do not have distractions on your computer open, or elsewhere, so that you can concentrate on grading. Divide up the work into manageable bits, such as 3 papers at a time, or 1 hour at a time, and give yourself frequent and scheduled breaks from the computer screen.

When communicating with students or the Course Instructor virtually, remember that there is a human being on the other end. If you are experiencing a conflict or disagreement over a task or course-related issue, suggest a virtual meeting to discuss, rather than try to resolve on email.

For some Course Instructors, this may be the first time that they will be teaching an entire course remotely, it would be helpful if you alert the Course Instructor (or the head TA) about problems you see arising in the course delivery, that they may not have anticipated.

### **Access to Software and Hardware**

All T.A.s have access to MyCourses, which in a remote teaching environment will be the main platform for communication with students, including for the submission of assignments. T.A.s also have full access to Microsoft Teams, which can be used to carry out conferences remotely. Access to Zoom licenses will be limited for T.A.s, as they will have restricted licenses that only allow for meetings of up to 40 minutes (there are other limitations in terms of features). If you are carrying out live conferences on Zoom, please keep these limitations in mind and plan for conferences accordingly. T.A.s should not acquire any special software for the purpose of T.A.ing. If other software is required to carry out T.A. functions, it should be provided by the course instructor.

T.A.s are expected to have access to a computer with internal and/or external webcam and internal and/or external microphone, as well as to a fairly stable internet connection. If you lack any of these elements, or if one or more of them becomes unavailable during the term, please communicate with the Course Instructor and AGPD immediately.

### **Special Training**

The use of certain platforms such as MyCourses, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. may require you to undertake some training to complete your tasks. Please communicate with the Course Instructor early on to ensure you can complete this training as early as possible. If you are required to undertake some training, that time should be included in the Workload form.

### **(Virtual) Attendance to Lectures**

Whether a T.A. should “attend” recorded or live lectures depends on the Course Instructor involved. Some Course Instructors will require T.A.s to watch recorded lectures or attend live ones, while others will not. If “attending” lectures is required, these hours are of course paid and are thus included in the T.A.’s workload form. If the T.A. is not sufficiently familiar with the course material, it is probably a good idea to watch all lectures. Your grading and conference tasks will be easier if you have watched the lectures.

### **Weekly Meetings**

Each Course Instructor usually spends at least one hour per week with his or her T.A.s (including email exchanges) for the purpose of setting guidelines, establishing the grading policy, and discussing the topics/material for conference sections as well as details about how the conferences should be run. These meetings also provide an opportunity for you to discuss with the Course Instructor any course-related questions, concerns or difficulties. To avoid problems, it is better to be proactive and raise with the Course Instructor any course-related questions, issues, and conflicts as soon as they arise. In a remote teaching environment these meetings become even more important, as interaction with the instructor becomes harder (there are no lectures and no possibility to stop by a Course Instructor’s office) and requires planning.

### **Conference Sections**

In regular semesters, the normal load for a full T.A. is three or four conference sections per week for 10-11 weeks of the 13-week term. In Fall 2021, conferences may take different formats and vary from course to course. In some courses, conferences may be moved to MyCourses Discussion Boards, in others there may be smaller conferences with fewer students but also shorter meetings,

and some courses may do away with conferences altogether. You should consult with the Course Instructor about conferences and seek guidance on the specific format of the conferences for the course you are TAing. In all cases, conference sections are not held during the first week or two of the term, usually not during the mid-term exam week, and not during the final exam period.

In courses that have them, conferences will be the T.A.'s most important responsibility, with the greatest impact on students' learning experience. In many cases, these conferences may be the only engagement opportunity for students to discuss issues related to the course with their peers. Thus, it is crucial that the teaching assistant conducts conferences professionally, keeping a regular schedule and opening (online) sessions on time, being fully prepared in terms of knowledge of the course material, and facilitating discussion in a constructive way that advances students' understanding and critical faculties. Please note that you must inform the Course Instructor if you must cancel a conference or if you ask someone else to run a conference in your absence.

In most cases, the Course Instructor has expectations about the content and purpose of the conferences, and the T.A. should only cover the material in conference that the Course Instructor has planned. At the same time, within the limits set by the Course Instructor, the T.A. enjoys autonomy and bears the primary responsibility for conducting the course conferences.

### **Preparation for Conference Sections**

Teaching assistants are expected to be familiar with the course readings and lecture material, and to be prepared to discuss this material with the students in each conference section. The Course Instructor should provide you with copies of the required readings (books and/or course packs). We are aware that your first few conference sections will be a source of anxiety induced by inexperience. It is helpful to remember that if you cannot answer a student query, you can promise to answer it at the next meeting. The more familiar you are with the course reading material, the easier your task will be. The Department tries to assign T.A.s to courses in which they have a familiarity with the course field and literature, but sometimes the gap between T.A.-ships available in a given sub-field and the undergraduate course enrolments may prevent realizing that ideal.

During your conference sections, you should endeavour to lead a discussion rather than give a lecture. Techniques for encouraging students to get involved are discussed at an orientation meeting for T.A.s held at the beginning of each academic year. We also strongly encourage you to attend other T.A. training sessions for leading conferences, dealing with sensitive or controversial topics, and facilitating respectful and inclusive discussion, that the Department will announce through POLIGRAD. Finally, for quick tips about how to run a successful conference please consult Appendix A at the end of this handbook.

If you bear in mind that your primary purpose is to help the Course Instructor in offering a course as effectively as possible to undergraduate students, you will find your task both easier and more satisfying.

### **T.A. Office Hours**

In the interest of providing assistance and clarification to undergraduate students when needed, T.A.s may be expected to hold (virtual) office hours for 1-2 hours per week. Course Instructors also schedule (virtual) hours for the same purpose.

Office hours are another important responsibility. Be on time and cancel only in advance and rarely. Please note that you must inform your Course Instructor if you need to cancel or change your office hours.

### **T.A. Effectiveness/Evaluation**

Like Course Instructors, T.A.s are evaluated through online student course evaluations at the end of the semester. The evaluations can be accessed in Minerva once all grades have been entered for the course. There is also a performance evaluation to be completed by the Course Instructor, in discussion with you.

### **Grading**

Most T.A.s will have take-home mid-term and final exams plus essays or term papers to grade. You may also be asked to assess participation, whether in live sessions or in discussion boards on MyCourses. If you feel that your workload is too heavy, you should raise the question with the instructor and then, if necessary, with the T.A. Coordinator (T.A.s are entitled to a review of their time sheet around the course add-drop date). Remember that your T.A. responsibilities will likely be distributed unevenly throughout the term, and that faculty and undergraduate students are also subject to the problems posed by periods of intense work combined with periods of relatively less pressure.

***Please note that in a remote teaching environment most exams will be take home exams. The time required to grade these take home exams will vary according to the format and details of the exam, including time allotted for completion, length, word limits, type of questions, etc.***

McGill's credit and grading system is explained in the undergraduate programme calendar, but you can refer to Appendix B at the end of this handbook for a summary. Within the framework of that system, the grading policy and standards for each course are set by Course Instructors. The Course Instructor will discuss each exam or assignment with you and provide written guidelines for grading. If you are uncertain about the Course Instructor's expectations for any grading assignment, you should seek clarification before you start grading.

The Course Instructor retains ultimate responsibility for assigning the grades in any given course and cannot delegate that to a T.A. Therefore, Course Instructors should monitor the grading, reserve the right to overrule a T.A. grading decision, and must submit the formal grade sheets required by the University. T.A.s will usually be involved in maintaining and updating a grade sheet; however final grades will be submitted to Minerva by the Course Instructor.

Grading is a serious responsibility. While it is unrealistic to return assignments immediately, it is reasonable and typically expected that T.A.s will grade and return assignments to students within **two weeks** of the submission deadline. This is only fair to the students who need feedback as they prepare for the next exam/paper. In Fall 2021, some assignments will be submitted electronically. T.A.s should be careful to keep the exams and papers organized and secure, and they should not share the content of these assessments with others. In addition to keeping track of exam and paper grades, T.A.s will also be asked to record conference participation grades and/or to moderate and assess discussion board participation. Consult with the Course Instructor in charge of the

course for specific guidelines and grading rubrics on what is expected of students in terms of participation. Please keep in mind that communication with students in this remote teaching environment comes with some added challenges. Always remember that there is a human being on the other end. If you are experiencing a conflict or disagreement, suggest a virtual meeting to discuss, rather than try to resolve over email.

All grades should be provided to the Course Instructor in an electronic format (Excel or similar program) on a continual basis throughout the term, after each assignment, and at the end of the term. You MUST finish your grading by the deadline given by the University and the Course Instructor. *If you find yourself working longer hours during the term than you had expected, notify the Course Instructor and try to reach an accommodation. Do not stop grading at the end of the term because you have gone over your hours.*

### **Salary Rates**

Rate of Pay as of September 1st, 2021: \$32.38 per hour. Salary for a full position of 180 hours: \$5828. An increase to the hourly rate is pending the signing of a new collective agreement, expected to happen during the 2021-2022 academic year.

### **Help for T.A.s**

The Associate Director of Graduate Studies (with responsibility for T.A.s) for 2021-22 is Professor Juan Wang. The ADGS will provide assistance whenever it is needed and will also conduct an orientation session for new teaching assistants at the beginning of each term. You will also be given valuable help and guidance by your fellow T.A.s and by the McGill Graduate Association of Political Science Students (MGAPSS).

McGill Teaching and Learning Services (<http://www.mcgill.ca/tls/>) provides regular workshops and on-line resources on teaching and learning in higher education. We urge you to take advantage of this opportunity, particularly if you are planning a career in university teaching.

Please consult Appendix C at the end of this handbook for more information on how T.A.s can deal with sensitive issues such as *undergraduate students in need of help, plagiarism and cheating, sexual harassment, as well as T.A.- student relationships (dating)*. These are serious situations with which some of you may be confronted while completing T.A.-related work, so please do not treat them lightly.

### **Final Word of Advice**

Being a teaching assistant is a serious responsibility. The quality of the undergraduate experience at McGill rests in great part on the performance of T.A.s. The Department seeks to provide all the necessary support for graduate students to serve well in this capacity, so that undergraduates get the learning experience they deserve. In addition, the Department aims to help graduate students develop their teaching skills in an exemplary fashion so that being a T.A. is a rewarding experience.



## Appendix A. Suggestions for Running a Successful Conference

- *Be professional*
  - Students take their cue from *your* behaviour
    - Open (live) sessions on time
    - Make an effort to learn their names (*take attendance*)
    - Show an interest in the material *and* in them (if you don't care, neither will they)
  
- *Facilitate discussion*
  - Prepare questions ahead of time (5-7 should be enough)
    - Ask open-ended questions that prompt discussion (avoid 'yes/no' – 'either/or' type of questions)
    - Allow a 'wait time' for their response (be prepared for stretches of silence)
    - Find something constructive in their answers (if you continually respond negatively, they'll stop participating)
    - Don't 'interrogate' them (avoid follow up questions which potentially embarrass the student)
    - Don't 'bluff' them (if you don't know something that's okay – follow up on it at the beginning of the next conference)
    - Don't over-manage the discussion (allow the discussion to go places you didn't anticipate – you can always steer it back on topic)
  
- *Your first conference*
  - Introduce yourself (be personable) and ask them to introduce themselves
  - Speak slowly and have a drink to sip on (to break the pace if you start going too fast)
  - Outline expectations (review the syllabus regarding conference marks/ participation, especially if there will eventually be presentations)
  - Solicit questions (but have your own as well)
    - As an icebreaker, ask a question for which there is no single correct answer
  - Check the time inconspicuously (remove your watch and place it in front of you)
  
- *Keep records of everything*
  - Keep a back-up record of all grades, attendance sheets, etc. – do not simply pass on the grades to the Course Instructor and think you're done (students can ask for grades to be reviewed up to a *year* later)

## Appendix B. Letter Grades at McGill

When a course is graded numerically, letter grades are assigned as follows for the purpose of calculations of grade point averages (only letter grades appear on the student's transcript):

Grade	Grade point	Percentages
A	4.0	85 - 100
A-	3.7	80 - 84
B+	3.3	75 - 79
B	3.0	70 - 74
B-	2.7	65 - 69
C+	2.3	60 - 64
C	2.0	55 - 59
D (Conditional Pass)	1.0	50 - 54
F (Fail)	0	0 - 49

*Incomplete* grades are as follows:

K: Extension  
KE: Further extension  
KF: Failed to meet the extended deadline  
J: Absent  
L: Deferred  
W: Withdrawn  
NA: Pending

(For more information on these, please go to <https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2020-2021/university-regulations-and-resources/undergraduate/gi-grading-and-grade-point-averages>.)

## **Appendix C. How to Find Help in Your Work as a T.A.**

As a teaching assistant you will probably encounter a few difficult situations each semester. Official policies, reporting structures, and support programs are in place within both the Department and the University to help you and your students manage these situations. A number of resources are listed below, and others can be found by consulting a member of MGAPSS, your course instructor, or the ADGS.

### **Responding to Undergraduate Students' Needs**

#### *1) Student Services*

<http://www.mcgill.ca/studentservices/>

Brown Building, Suite 4100  
514-398-8238

Student Services are available to part-time and full-time undergraduate and graduate students who have paid tuition fees for the current session. The services and workshops offered cover a wide range of issues, from academic and professional support and development to services specialized to address the needs of students of a variety of life circumstances. For a complete list of programs and services available to you and your students see their website.

#### *2) Counselling Services*

<http://www.mcgill.ca/counselling/>

Brown Building, Suite 4200  
514-398-3601

Counselling Services offer support to undergraduate and graduate students for a wide range of academic, life-skill, psychological and vocational issues. Information shared in counselling is strictly confidential, released only with the student's written permission or if required by law. Students who approach Counselling Services have access to immediate problem-solving, ongoing therapy and guided development. Other than a small cost-recovery fee for vocational testing, Counselling Services is free and accessible to any full- or part-time student who has paid current student fees. Counselling Services also offers a Crisis Drop-In from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday-Friday. The Counselling Services website also offers several options for After-Hours Emergencies.

#### *3) Student Aid and Scholarships*

<http://www.mcgill.ca/studentaid/>

Brown Building, Suite 3200  
514-398-6013

Student Aid offers a variety of support services and financial options for students. Services offered by Student Aid focus on locating sources of funding, managing money and emergency financial support.

#### 4) *Office for Students with Disabilities*

<http://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>

Redpath Library Building, Suite RS-56  
514-398-6009

Services provided by the Office for Students with Disabilities include learning supports, help with issues of accessibility (including classroom supports and access technologies to facilitate students work in lecture, with readings, etc.), and short- and long-term academic planning.

#### 5) *McGill Mental Health Services*

<http://www.mcgill.ca/mentalhealth/>

Brown Building, Suite 5500  
514-398-6019

The McGill Student Mental Health Service offers confidential psychological and psychiatric services for all McGill students who have paid their Student Services fees. The service strives to provide a secure, non-judgmental space for students of all orientations and backgrounds. Students suffering from problems with anxiety, depression, problems with sleep, attention, obsessions or concentration, relationship difficulties, eating disorders, severe winter blues etc., may make an appointment by phone or in person. Emergency services are also available on a drop-in basis; see their website for details.

### **Managing Conflicts and Other Sensitive Situations**

Conflicts are an unfortunate reality of the work of a teaching assistant. While most academic relationships are not conflictual, personalities, interests, and power and influence sometimes clash. In order to manage such situations respectfully and responsibly, and to protect the rights and interests of parties involved, it is important that T.A.s take a thoughtful approach to such issues. The following suggestions and resources should help you reflect on how best to manage these situations, but it is also strongly advised that you speak to a trusted peer should a conflict arise in your work as a T.A.

#### Some General Advice

- Keep track of course policy. If a student asks for clarification on a policy (late submissions, missed conferences, re-grading procedure, etc.) and you are unsure, tell the student you will get back to them and consult with the Course Instructor or Head T.A. If you state a policy to one conference or student, write it down and stick to it.
- Try to coordinate with co-T.A.s on issues of policy. If there is a disagreement among co-T.A.s on a particular issue, consult with the Head T.A. or Course Instructor.
- Documentation is important. Save correspondence related to your T.A.-ship, and keep a separate file for e-mails that relate to a specific situation such as a re-grade request, missed assignment, claim of harassment, etc. If you meet with a student, colleague, or supervisor, take note of the date, time, and location of the meeting, and of what was discussed, any conflicts that may have arisen, and how the situation was resolved.

- Report conflicts as soon as possible. If you encounter a conflict or inappropriate behaviour you should tell someone, whether the course instructor, a trusted Course Instructor in the department, or a peer or colleague. Some conflicts such as re-grade requests and plagiarism cases should be dealt with by the course instructor, not the T.A. If you are in conflict with your course instructor, you may want to consult with a trusted peer to decide how best to proceed. In the case of plagiarism, it is strictly the duty of the Course Instructor to deal with the matter, and you should not attempt to handle the matter yourself.
- The Department recommends that conflicts be resolved between the concerned parties whenever possible. In minor cases it is possible to address the other party/parties concerned. If this does not work, the following chain of appeal might help: T.A. → Head T.A. → Course Instructor → ADGS → Department Chair → Dean.
- If at any point in this process you feel the need for support of a representative/advocate, you may appeal to MGAPSS, AGSEM, the Office of the Ombudsperson, or the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Office. Be aware that lodging formal complaints may invoke a set of procedural and legal rules; you should not be deterred from using institutional rules to protect yourself and others, but you should be sure that you have the support of someone who understands these rules.

### Case-Specific Resources

#### 1) *Plagiarism and Cheating*

Teaching assistants should familiarize themselves with “Keeping it honest” (<http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/>), a suite of policies and resources on academic integrity.

If you encounter work that you suspect is plagiarised you should contact the course instructor and submit the work to them. According to Article 48 of the McGill Student Code of Conduct, course instructors do not have the authority to impose penalties for plagiarism or other violations of the Code. The course instructor has an obligation to report the case directly to the Faculty of Arts Disciplinary Officer (André Costopoulos). You may need to write a letter and/or provide other documentation in order to explain the incident and provide evidence.

At the beginning of each academic year, students receive a copy of *Doing Honest Work in College*. At the very least, you can expect your students to adhere to the guidelines set out in this text. You can also:

- provide students with a style guide;
- go through examples of paraphrasing, footnoting, etc.;
- remind students of what constitutes plagiarism;
- inform your students of the process and consequences of plagiarism.

The Library also provides extensive resources on citation and style, how to avoid plagiarism, and how to recognize it.

In addition to the above, the McGill Library offers these tutorials:  
<https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students/test>.

## 2) *Sexual Harassment*

The Department of Political Science supports McGill University's regulations concerning sexual harassment and expects its teaching assistants, Course Instructors, and students to comply with both the letter and the spirit of those regulations. Sexual harassment is defined in the University Regulations Concerning Complaints of Sexual Harassment as "a display, by word or deed, of sexual attentions toward another individual or group of individuals of a nature which may reasonably be considered to be vexatious or abusive."

Sexual harassment can take many forms, and can include comments or jokes of a sexual or suggestive nature, some forms of physical contact, requests for dates or other forms of inappropriate contact/attention, or any behaviour that persists after the target has expressed discomfort or a desire that the behaviour be ceased.

Instances of sexual harassment towards undergraduates, or that are witnessed by undergraduates, by teaching assistants seriously undermine the authority of the teaching assistant and fundamentally violate the obligations a T.A. has as an employee of the University and representative of the Department.

Various bodies at McGill are available to address harassment:

- SACOMSS (the Sexual Assault Centre of McGill Student Society) is a SSMU student service that offers information and support on sexual assault. SACOMSS runs a helpline and walk-in service. See <http://www.sacomss.org/> for more information.
- OSVRSE (the Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education): <https://www.mcgill.ca/osvrse/>
- The Office of the Ombudsperson is mandated to provide informal, confidential, neutral intervention in situations of conflict. The Office of the Ombudsperson offers supports for a variety of conflicts that arise in the university setting, and can be contacted for information, to clarify policy and procedure, to assist in both informal conflict resolution and official grievance processes, and more. More information on the Office of the Ombudsperson is available at <http://www.mcgill.ca/ombudsperson/>. The Ombudsperson can be reached at 514-398-7059 or at [ombudsperson@mcgill.ca](mailto:ombudsperson@mcgill.ca).
- Official claims of sexual harassment at McGill are addressed by the Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Discrimination Prohibited by Law ([https://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/policy\\_on\\_harassment\\_and\\_discrimination.pdf](https://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/policy_on_harassment_and_discrimination.pdf)) and should be reported to a Harassment Assessor. Detailed contact and procedural information is available at <http://www.mcgill.ca/harass/>.

## 3) *T.A. - Student Relationships and Dating*

Teaching assistants should also be aware of the problems and misunderstandings which may arise from having relationships with undergraduate students of a non-professional nature. These problems stem not only from a perception of bias in marking exams and essays, but also in assigning conference participation scores. Problems can also arise when the attentions of the teaching assistant are unwelcome (see above) or are no longer welcomed.

For that reason, the Department of Political Science prohibits teaching assistants from dating or having relationships of a non-professional manner (e.g., sexual) with students enrolled in an undergraduate course for which they have evaluation and supervisory responsibilities. It is the duty of the T.A. to inform the Department if such a personal relationship exists.

These relationships can take many forms, and include things such as attending social events together, meeting with students for non-course-related reasons, meeting with students in non-public places (e.g., your respective houses), sexual relations and dating. None of this is to say that you cannot play a mentoring role for undergraduates, but rather that you must, when it is your duty to evaluate a student, ensure that you conduct yourself in a professional manner, and that your disposition towards the student's performance is not biased because of a personal relationship. If such a non-professional relationship exists or arises, teaching assistants may then take one of four courses of action:

- 1) terminate the relationship;
- 2) decline a supervisory role;
- 3) request a re-assignment to another course or section;
- 4) affirm that the student involved will enrol in the course at a later date.

#### Other resources and University policies

The Department expects TAs to follow and be familiar with the University's [Guidelines on Intimate Relationships Between Teaching Staff and Students](#), the [Policy on Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited by Law](#), the [Policy Against Sexual Violence](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), the [Charter of Students' Rights](#), and the [Regulation on Conflict of Interest](#).