



Unit 1 – Teaching Assistants

2025–2026 Handbook

Welcome to TAing at York!

As a Teaching Assistant (TA) at York University, you are a member of CUPE 3903. This handbook provides information on the rights and protections you have as a union member.

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Teaching Assistant Roles and Responsibilities

The exact role you will be asked to perform depends on the job classification (see below). All TAs do have some responsibilities in common:

Follow the directives of your course director or supervisor

Teaching Assistants are not responsible for the content of the course. Syllabi, readings, lectures, exams, etc. are all the responsibility of the course director. While you may be asked to prepare some materials, e.g. a tutorial, the course director is ultimately responsible. Some course directors may give you leeway in how to shape your tutorials, while others may have specific instructions for you. As long as it doesn't conflict with your course director's instructions, you have the academic freedom to run your tutorial however you think is best. In all cases, your course director is the first person you should speak to if you have questions about the course or are encountering problems with your students.

Produce marking and grading within reasonable delays

If you are assigned marking or grading, your course director is responsible for informing you of the expected timelines for completing your work. While different departments have different standards, on average you should **not** be working more than 10 hours a week for a full TAship, and grading deadlines should take this into account. You also have the right to not engage in marking or grading five days before and three days after a dissertation or thesis defence, comprehensive exam, or major paper deadline in a graduate course, as long as it doesn't conflict with centralized administrative deadlines. If there is a conflict with centralized deadlines, you may be able to reschedule the defence/comprehensive/paper deadline. If you foresee any scheduling conflicts regarding grading deadlines, you are encouraged to discuss them with your CD as early in the term as possible. Get in touch with the union if you need any support negotiating scheduling marking/grading conflicts.

Keep track of your hours and discuss any possible overwork with your course director as soon as possible.

Your course director is responsible for meeting with you twice during your contract to go over your duties and complete a workload form. Your duties should correspond to the type of TAship you have been offered (see below). Once you have signed your workload form, your course director cannot demand that you take on other duties without your consent. If you have any concerns about your hours at any time (e.g. grading is taking longer than the time originally assigned), speak to your course director immediately. If resolving things informally with your course director is not successful, you can proceed to an overwork grievance.

The Different Kinds of Teaching Assistantships

There are different kinds of Teaching Assistantships, with different job descriptions and responsibilities. Your contract will indicate what kind of assignment type you are being offered.

On behalf of the Dean, I am pleased to offer you appointment(s) as Teaching Assistant as outlined below, in:

Hiring Unit: Department of Social Science
Faculty: Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies

1) Position Title: T1 (Tut Ldr)  * Number of Assignments / Hours: 2
Article 10.04 (1.000 Teaching Assistantship)

Course: SOSC 1350 - Gender and the Law
Calendar Listing

Below are the most common types of Teaching Assistantships.

T1 – Tutorial Leader

Tutorial leaders are usually responsible for preparing and delivering tutorials, grading assignments, holding office hours, and other tasks related to their assigned tutorial. Tutorial leaders are not primarily responsible for creating the content of the course; that responsibility rests with the course director.

A full (1.0) TAship usually runs two semesters (F/W), with either two one-hour tutorials or one two-hour tutorial each week. The remaining contract hours are typically dedicated to lecture attendance, office hours, prep work, and grading.

T2 – Lab Demonstrator

Lab demonstrators are responsible for demonstrating and facilitating experiments in a lab setting. Typically, a lab demonstrator works three lab hours per week. The remaining contract hours are typically dedicated to prep work, grading, and office hours.

T3 – Marker/Grader

Marker/graders are **only** responsible for grading. Marker/graders may be asked to meet with students specifically to consult on their graded work. Marker/graders cannot be asked to hold office hours to review lecture material, or any other tasks not directly related to grading.

Marker/graders are paid an hourly wage. You will see how many hours you are being offered on your contract.

1) Position Title: T3 (Mrk/Grd)
Article 10.04

* Number of Assignments / Hours: 74
(0.274 Teaching Assistantship)



T7 – Miscellaneous

A T7 is a position that doesn't fit into existing job classifications. Grad students may receive a T7 to meet their funding guarantee or as a workplace accommodation. It does, however, need to have a relationship to "teaching, demonstrating, tutoring or marking" to be in Unit 1; otherwise, you are a member of Unit 3. A common type of T7 is a TA who offers curriculum support. You cannot be asked to work more than 10 hours a week on average for a full T7.

T7 – Lab Facilitator (Lassonde School of Engineering only)

A classification that is specific to the Lassonde School of Engineering (specifically the department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science), the T7 (Lab Facilitator) is a newer classification for TAs who work in a lab setting but are **not responsible for demonstrations of any kind**. If you are asked to perform lab demonstrations, you should be a T2.

Arts Tutors – Studio Instructor/Visual Arts Tutor/Music Tutor/Coach (Fine Arts)

Members in the Arts may work as tutors in their specific field. A full Studio Instructor assignment in Visual Arts is responsible for two three-hour sessions per week, while in Dance the same title is composed of two two-hour sessions per week (both assignment types are categorized as Tutor 6). A full Music Tutor assignment is 100 hours, whereas a full Coach (Fine Arts) assignment is 270 hours. Other tasks of these positions can include grading, prep work, office hours, etc. depending on the nature of the course.

Writing Instructors

Writing Instructors work one-on-one with students to improve their writing, most commonly as part of the Writing Center. Writing Instructors are remunerated at the same rate as Course Directors, and as such do not receive Grant-in-Aid (GIA).

Class Sizes

Class size will depend on the structure of the course.

Class Type	Class Size
Regular tutorials (1hr/week per group)	25 students, up to a maximum of 30
Foundations tutorials (2hr/week for one group)	25 students, up to a maximum of 28
Tutorials that are primarily Q&A sessions or presentation of audio-visual materials	40 students, up to a maximum of 50
English as a Second Language (ESL) tutorials	Max. 15 students
Lab Demonstrators (Tutor 2)	Max. 30 students per Tutor 2 (more than one T2 may be assigned per lab)
Music/Dance/Fine Arts where the emphasis is on practical application	Max. 30 students

In the case of tutorials where there is a typical enrollment and a max enrollment, you must consent to the extra students, and the department needs to pay you 10 hours extra at the Marker/Grade rate for each block of three students.

While there is no typical class size specified in the collective agreement for Tutor 3s (Marker/Grader), the number of students you are assigned to grade must reasonably match the hours you are assigned. Keep close track of your hours and raise any concerns about overwork with your Course Director as soon as possible.

Pay and Funding

When you were offered admission to a York University graduate program, you received a letter guaranteeing a minimum amount of funding for the duration of your degree. This funding, and how it interacts with the work you do as a TA, can be very confusing. This section demystifies how much you can expect to be paid, when, and from what sources.

TA Wages

As a Teaching Assistant, you are paid wages **on the 25th of each month** in which you hold a contract. How much you receive will depend on the type and size of your contract. Wages as of September 2025 are listed in the table below.

Position Type	Wages (for a 1.0 contract/270 hours)
Tutorial Leader (Tutor 1) Studio Instructor (Tutor 6) Instructor (Faculty of Education)	\$14,272 (\$1784/month)
Lab Demonstrator (Tutor 2)	\$15,310 (\$1913.75/month)
Marker/Grader (Tutor 3) Individual Tutor (Tutor 4)	\$12,406.50 (\$1550.81/month or \$45.95/hour)
Visual Arts Tutor (Tutor 6)	\$17,846 (\$2230.75/month)
Miscellaneous (Tutor 7) Lab Facilitator (LSE only) (Tutor 7)	\$14,272 (\$1784/month)
Music Tutor	\$9229 (\$1153.63/month or \$92.29/hour)*
Coach (Fine Arts)	\$14,445 (\$1805.63.27/month or \$53.50/hour)
Writing Instructor	\$21,343 (\$2667.88/month)**

*For Music Tutors, a full 1.0 assignment is considered to be 100 hours

**Assuming a contract that is spread over 8 months

For smaller contracts, simply pro-rate the wage amount, e.g. a 0.5 Tutor 1 would receive \$7136.

You will also receive vacation pay in the amount of 4% of your wages, added to your monthly paycheque. If you have more than 5 years of service, your vacation pay will be 6%.

Your wages and vacation pay are your gross revenue. The amount you will receive will be lower once all deductions are accounted for.

1.0 in Fall/Winter and 0.5 in Summer, you will receive GIA over the first 8 months, but not on the Summer contract).

Graduate Financial Assistance

Graduate Financial Assistance is an amount negotiated over the years by CUPE 3903 in order to help offset the cost of tuition. It is **applied to your student account once per term** (before November 1st, March 1st, and July 1st) as long as you are enrolled full-time and have held a TA contract that year (regardless of whether you are currently on contract). The amount you receive depends on your year of study and your visa status.

	Year 1-2	Year 3+
Domestic Students	\$844/term	\$1057/term
International Students	\$1409/term	\$1680/term

York Fellowship

Another form of funding applied to your student account once per term is the York Fellowship. Do not let the name fool you – this is money guaranteed to you by the collective agreement as additional funding for priority pool members.

The fellowship is applied to your student account once per term and will be applied against your tuition if you have any amounts owing. The amount of your fellowship depends on your degree program, your visa status, and (for international PhD students) your year of study.

	Master's	PhD
Domestic Students	\$5,403 (\$1,801/term)	\$5,403 (\$1,801/term)
International Students	\$8,467 (2,822.33/term)	\$8,467 in years 1-2 (2,822.33/term) \$7,837 in years 3+ (\$2,612.33/term)

International Tuition Offset

Visa students who pay higher international tuition fees will receive the International Tuition Offset (ITO) to index their fees to the 2012 amount. This was a provision we enforced through the 2015 strike to protect international student members. The ITO is applied once per term to your student account and will be applied to your tuition if you have an amount owing.

International Master's Students	\$7,533 (\$2511/term)
International PhD Students	\$6,709 (\$2236.33/term)

Duration of Funding

Master's students receive funding for the duration specified in their offer letter. PhD students who are in the Priority Pool (i.e. who have held at least one TAsip during their PhD – see the Priority Pool section for more information) are guaranteed work and the associated funding for **6 years**. Internally transferring from your Master's into a PhD program does not affect the duration of your PhD funding.

However there are some reductions in funding in the 6th year: you will receive your wages, vacation pay, and GIA for Fall/Winter, as well as GFA and ITO (if applicable) all year, but not your fellowship amount.

If your degree progress has been impacted by illness, injury, disability, family status, or service on the union executive or bargaining team, you may be entitled to a funding extension. Extension requests are for a maximum of 12 months at one time, so if you are entitled to multiple extensions, you will need to reapply.

Members considering extensions are strongly recommended to contact Nadia Kanani, Staff Representative Equity (equity@cupe3903.org) before applying. You can also contact the union at any point in the process if you need support, including help appealing negative decisions.

How Scholarships Impact Funding and TA Allocations

If you receive an external scholarship of more than \$5000, that amount will be clawed back from your fellowship amount. So for example, a domestic PhD student with an OGS (\$15,000) would receive \$403 as their fellowship amount for the year (\$5403 minus \$5000).

Members with large scholarships may also be only offered a 0.5 TAship, depending on availability. This is not a requirement. If there is work available and it is offered to you, your department cannot deny you the opportunity simply because you hold a large scholarship.

Solving Problems

Rules and regulations can give you an idea of how things should go, but what do you do when things go wrong? The union is here to help you in any employment conflict or problem you may face. Below are a few common problems affecting Teaching Assistants and how we can help resolve them.

Workload and Overwork

As soon as possible and no later than the end of the first month of your contract, your course director must call a meeting to discuss your duties and sign a workload form. This form sets out an estimate of the time required to complete your duties. If something doesn't seem right, this meeting is also an opportunity to discuss it with your course director, e.g. if your workload form doesn't have any preparation time, or you've been assigned duties that don't match your job classification.

If everything looks fine at first, but you later realize that you are working more hours than you should, talk to your course director as soon as possible. Ideally, the two of you can find a solution, e.g. reducing your grading load or paying you for the extra hours.

If your course director is not receptive to your overwork issues, get in touch with the union. The next step is to schedule a meeting with the Chair of the department. If this does not result in an agreeable solution, we escalate to the Dean. We can help you at every step.

In most overwork cases where an informal solution is not found, you will be paid at the overwork rate (\$53.18/hr) for the extra hours that you have worked. This is why it is very important to **keep good track of your hours from the start of the semester**, or as soon as you realize you may have an overwork problem. The better your record-keeping, the more likely you will be paid what you are owed in full.

Harassment and Discrimination

Harassment is any behaviour that should be reasonably known to be unwelcome. It is usually repeated, but it can be an isolated incident if the behaviour is serious. Discrimination is differential treatment of an individual on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, or any other protected grounds. Harassment and discrimination can occur from your course director, other TAs, or students. Regardless of the perpetrator, the employer has a responsibility to guarantee you a workplace free of harassment and discrimination.

Harassment and discrimination are not only a violation of the collective agreement; they are a violation of the law. Don't accept that this is "how things are" or that you should "go along to get along". If something doesn't feel right, come talk to us. Even if you're not sure it amounts to legal harassment or discrimination, we can talk through your options, help think through next steps (including if you don't want to go through formal complaints or processes), or just hear you out – whatever level of support you need.

Your first point of contact is Nadia Kanani, CUPE 3903 Staff Representative Equity (equity@cupe3903.org). Any conversation you have with Nadia is strictly confidential, and does not obligate you to take any further steps.

Refusing Unsafe Work

All workers in Ontario have the right to refuse unsafe work. In order for your refusal to be legally protected, be sure to follow the correct steps:

1. Inform your supervisor or department Chair immediately and move to a safe location. If your supervisor agrees the situation is unsafe, do your best to inform others of the situation while it is being remedied.
2. If your supervisor does not agree, inform them that you are refusing unsafe work. Get in touch with the union immediately. This triggers an investigation done jointly by the supervisor and union representative.
3. If the investigation deems the situation unsafe, the employer must remedy the situation. If it is deemed safe and you disagree, tell your supervisor. They must then contact an investigator from the Ministry of Labour.
4. During all these steps, stay in a safe area. You may however be asked to fulfill your duties from a safe location (e.g. asked to move to a different classroom rather than cancelling class).

As long as you make your complaint in good faith, you cannot be disciplined for refusing to work in a situation you believe to be unsafe, even if the Ministry later deems the situation safe. Formal complaints must be made by individuals (i.e. you cannot refuse unsafe work in solidarity with a colleague's situation).

Grievance Process

Grievances are the legal vehicle through which unions make complaints when there is a violation of the collective agreement (your contract) or labour law. While a grievance can seem intimidating, union staff will help you every step along the way. Grievances are a standard process; you should not feel you are unduly “rocking the boat” or otherwise making trouble by filing a grievance if you believe your rights have been violated.

Grievances can be individual (affecting a single person), group (affecting several people in similar ways), policy (contesting how a policy is applied, with or without affected individuals), or union (where the union files the grievance on behalf of a group or individuals).

As of 2024, grievances follow different steps, each representing an escalation if the issue can't be resolved at the previous step.

Informal Resolution

Raise the issue with your direct supervisor/course director. They must meet with you within 7 days of when you raised the issue and give you a written answer within five calendar days. This step is informal and you can do it on your own.

Step 1

The union files the grievance with the department Chair. They must set a meeting to discuss the issue within 10 calendar days, and give a response in writing within 10 calendar days of the grievance meeting. The grievance must be initiated within 28 days of when you became aware of the issue; note that the informal resolution step does not pause the clock.

Step 2

Within 17 calendar days of the Step 1 response, if the issue is not resolved we file with the Dean or designate of the Faculty and Faculty Relations. They must convene a meeting to discuss the grievance within 14 calendar days, and must provide a response in writing within 21 days of the meeting.

Mediation

Where there is no resolution at any of the grievance steps, we may recommend that your case go to mediation. In mediation, a neutral third party listens to both sides and tries to find a compromise that both parties can live with.

Arbitration

Where mediation fails, or where it is not exercised, your case may go to arbitration if the union executive approves it. In arbitration, a neutral third party will hear legal arguments from the union's and the employer's lawyers and provide a ruling. There is no appeal or compromise in arbitration.

A Note on Timelines and Alternatives

Grievances, especially where the supervisor or department are not willing to find solutions, can take a lot of time. In addition to the built-in delays, the employer often creates additional delays.

Grievances aren't always the best option, given that they are time-consuming and individualizing. Other possibilities for collective action may exist to put pressure on the employer to change a behaviour or policy. Direct action and grievances can also be used in tandem. To discuss these alternatives, get in touch with your department steward or Lead Steward.

Applications and Regulations

Applying for TAships

There are two processes to apply to Teaching Assistantships: the blanket application, and the specific application. The blanket application is the most important one; however, you might find specific applications useful in particular circumstances.

Blanket Application

The blanket application is due by January 31st of each year, and announces your availability to teach any course for which you are qualified offered in the department for the following Summer and Fall/Winter terms. **You should always fill out a blanket application**, even if you have a specific course in mind or are intending to exercise your Right of First Refusal (see below).

Go to <https://cupejobs.uit.yorku.ca/> and select your Faculty. Click on the tab that says "blanket" and select every hiring unit to which you want to apply. Review on the right sidebar that all your hiring units are listed and click "Review and Submit Application". You will be brought to a Passport York login. For Unit 1 work, log in with your student Passport York credentials. If you use your employee credentials, you will be brought to the Unit 2 application.

Follow the instructions on the screen. It is recommended that you attach a recent CV. Be sure to specify courses you would prefer to be appointed to, even though it is a blanket application.

Specific Application

If you want to apply to a specific course, you can submit a specific application.

Go to <https://cupejobs.uit.yorku.ca/> and select your Faculty. Click on the tab that says "Postings" and select the academic term for which you want to apply. You will see a list of job postings in the Faculty for that term. Select the courses you want to apply to. Review on the right sidebar

that all your courses are listed and click “Review and Submit Application”. You will be brought to a Passport York login. For Unit 1 work, log in with your student Passport York credentials. If you use your employee credentials, you will be brought to the Unit 2 application.

If you have any questions about your application, feel free to contact your Lead Steward or a member of staff.

Applying to Ticketed Course Directorships

Ticketed course directorships (or “tickets”) refer to a limited number of course directorships that are available to full-time graduate students.

To apply for a ticket, fill out your blanket application as usual by January 31st. Check the box in the application saying you want to be considered for a ticketed course directorship. You will also have to provide the following:

1. A letter stating the courses you are qualified to teach in which terms, along with how teaching a course fits with your career aspirations.
2. A letter from your academic supervisor confirming that a ticket will not unduly impede your PhD progress at this stage.
3. References if your hiring unit requires them.

You may want to reach out to your hiring unit before submitting your application to inquire about whether they are planning to offer any tickets, and if so, whether they require references.

Priority Pool

Most PhD students are in the Priority Pool, which guarantees both work and funding for six years as well as other rights.

Any full-time PhD student who receives a Teaching Assistantship is considered to have entered the Priority Pool. You can enter the Priority Pool later in your PhD, but your privileges won't extend longer than if you'd entered in your first year. This is why it is important to get a TAship in your first year if at all possible. As a member of the priority pool, you get:

1. Guaranteed work (usually in Fall/Winter) in years 1 through 6 of your PhD
2. Additional funding in years 1 through 5 of your PhD. In most cases, this funding takes the form of the York Doctoral Fellowship.
3. The Right of First Refusal (see below).

Right of First Refusal

The Right of First Refusal entitles you to teach the same course you have taught before, assuming it is offered by the hiring unit.

You have the Right of First Refusal three times (so typically in years 2, 3, and 4 of your PhD). This means that, in those years, your first TA offer should be for the same TA you held in the previous year. If that exact position no longer exists, the hiring unit has to give you priority for other positions in the unit. Both accepting or declining the offer counts as exercising your Right of First Refusal. The only time it's not exercised is if the course you'd previously taught isn't offered that year.

Seniority for Unit 1 Members

Unit 1 (full-time graduate students) teaching assistantships are not assigned by seniority. However, if you transition into Unit 2 (contract faculty) once you graduate or go part-time, you will be able to count the seniority accrued through your Unit 1 positions.

A course directorship is a "Type 1" position for the purposes of seniority, while most TAs are "Type 2" positions. 1 Type 1 position is equivalent to 3 Type 2 positions. So 0.5 TA is 0.33 seniority points.

Tutor 3 (marker/grader) positions do not accrue seniority. Keep this in mind if you are hoping to transition into Unit 2 work in future, as other types of TAs may be more suited to your goals.

Workplace Accommodations

Did you know that if your work is impacted by illness, disability, or family status, you are entitled to workplace accommodations?

Example accommodations can include different work duties or schedules, classrooms closer to accessible transit, access to specialized services or equipment (e.g. ASL interpreters, anti-fatigue mats, etc.), remote work, or whatever accommodation is most appropriate in your particular situation. You don't need to know what accommodation would work for you to start a conversation; we will help you get what you need. Get in touch with Nadia Kanani, CUPE 3903 Staff Representative Equity, at equity@cupe3903.org.

You will need documentation from your doctor or other relevant practitioner. We can help you figure out how much information you need to disclose, and help you navigate the bureaucracy.

Benefits

Health Benefits & Application

As a member of CUPE 3903, you receive comprehensive health care coverage for you and your dependents (spouse or children) as part of your contract.

- Vision Care: \$400 every two years (Glasses, Contacts + Eye Exam)
- Dental Care: \$3000 every year (Oral exams, certain dental procedures)
- Prescription Drugs: 100% coverage of prescribed medication
- Paramedical Services (counselling, naturopaths, podiatrists, physiotherapists, registered massage therapists and chiropractors): \$2000 for any one expense; for a total of \$3000 every year.

Find out more, including how to enroll, at cupe3903.org/benefits/benefits-plan/.

Leaves

Several kinds of leaves are available to CUPE 3903 members. You may take a leave if you need time off for conferences, injuries or disabilities, jury duty, bereavement, care-giving, emergencies, sickness, transgender transition, and the birth or adoption of a child.

Some leaves are straightforward, while others may require that you meet certain thresholds or provide particular documentation. We recommend that if you wish to take or think you may be eligible for a leave, you contact a 3903 Staff member to assist you.

You can find out more at cupe3903.org/equity-rights/parental-leave/ (for parental leave) or cupe3903.org/equity-rights/about-leaves-of-absence/ (for all other leaves).

Funds You Can Access

Did you know that CUPE 3903 has several different funds that you can access in different circumstances? You may be eligible to get money for emergencies, health care expenses, childcare, conferences, and more!

Find out more about all the available funds at cupe3903.org/funds/other-funds/.

Who to contact

With 14 executive committee members, five staff members, and multiple committees, it can be hard to know who to contact for any given issue. While we provide some guidelines below, any member of staff or executive will be happy to direct you to the correct person if you are not sure.

I have a question about my collective agreement	Lead Steward Unit 1 Grievance Officer Either Staff Rep Staff Rep/Mobilization Coordinator Staff Rep Equity (specifically for equity-based CA provisions)
I want to talk about collective actions/organizing my department/becoming a steward	Lead Steward Unit 1 Your existing departmental steward
I'm considering a workplace accommodation	Staff Rep Equity
I'm experiencing harassment or discrimination	Staff Rep Equity
I want help accessing a leave of absence	Staff Rep Equity (for equity-based leaves) Staff Reps or Staff Rep/Mobilization Coordinator (for all other leaves, including parental leaves)
I have questions about my funding	Lead Steward Unit 1 Staff Rep/Mobilization Coordinator
I want to file a grievance	Either Staff Rep Staff Rep Equity (equity-based grievances)
I want to speak to someone in French (for any kind of advice and/or representation)	Staff Rep/Mobilization Coordinator
I'm wondering about the status of my application to a CUPE 3903 fund	Contact the fund committee directly

Staff

Name	Position	Email
Raj Virk	Staff Representative	staffrep1@cupe3903.org
Julian Arend	Staff Representative	staffrep2@cupe3903.org
Maija Duncan	Staff Representative/ Mobilization Coordinator	mobilization@cupe3903.org
Nadia Kanani	Staff Representative Equity	equity@cupe3903.org
Sharmeen Khan	Financial Officer	finance@cupe3903.org

Executive Committee

Position	Email
Chairperson	chairperson@cupe3903.org
Vice-President Unit 1	vpu1@cupe3903.org
Vice-President Unit 2	vpu2@cupe3903.org
Vice-President Unit 3	vpu3@cupe3903.org
Secretary Treasurer	treasurer@cupe3903.org
Recording Secretary	recsec@cupe3903.org
Grievance Officer	grievance@cupe3903.org
Lead Steward Unit 1	lsu1@cupe3903.org
Lead Steward Unit 2	lsu2@cupe3903.org
Lead Steward Unit 3	lsu3@cupe3903.org
Lead Steward Unit 4	lsu4@cupe3903.org
Lead Steward Unit 5	lsu5@cupe3903.org
Communications Officer	communications@cupe3903.org
Trans Feminist Action Caucus Co-Chair	tfac1@cupe3903.org
Trans Feminist Action Caucus Co-Chair	tfac2@cupe3903.org
BIPOC Caucus Chair	bipoc@cupe3903.org

FAQs

How Do I Find My Employee Number?

Once you are offered your first TAship, you will be assigned an employee number by payroll. This number will be important for a number of reasons: health benefits, access to paystubs and tax documents, interacting with the York bureaucracy, etc.

The easiest way to find your employee number is on your paystub, which you can find on HR Self Serve. Unfortunately, signing up for HR Self Serve requires you to know your employee number.

Here are some ways to find your employee number:

1. Ask your hiring unit. The department in which you TA will have your employee number in order to process your pay. So if you're getting paid, they have your employee number!
2. Look at your Sun Life card. Either check the "member ID" section of your benefits card or on sunlife.ca go to "coverage information" then "quick view" to see your member ID. Your Sunlife member ID is your employee number.
3. Ask the Treasurer. The union gets membership lists regularly, so feel free to reach out to the CUPE 3903 Treasurer (treasurer@cupe3903.org) for your employee number. Please note, however, that the lists we receive from the employer are often incomplete, so we may not have your information yet if you have only recently signed your contract.

When Am I Entitled to Union Representation?

You are entitled to union representation in any matter concerning your employment. This can take the form of copying the union on emails or having a union representative present at an in-person or online meeting. Union representatives can also send communications on your behalf if you prefer. When filing a grievance, you will always have union representation. If you want representation but aren't sure whether we can help, just ask! The answer is probably yes, and if no, we can often provide other support.

What Does it Mean to Have a Full TAship?

A full TAship (also called a 1.0) is usually 270 hours of work. Typically, you may receive a full TAship in the form of a 6 or 9 credit or full-year course, or two half TAships (0.5 or 135 hours) where each half is a 3 credit or one-term course. If you receive TA assignments in different proportions, as is especially common in STEM departments, these assignments are calculated as a proportion of the 270 hours. For example, a 0.25 TAship would mean 67.5 hours of work during the specified period. In sum, a full TAship could be one 270 hour assignment, two 135 hour assignments, or any combination of smaller assignments totalling 270 hours.

What If I Only Have Work in One Term?

Usually, a full TAship (1.0) is spread over two terms (Fall and Winter). Sometimes, however, you may receive your full TA entitlement in a single term (for example if you are planning to be away for fieldwork or are only expecting a single 0.5 assignment because of a large scholarship). In this situation, you will still be paid for the totality of hours worked, your full GIA, and you will receive GFA in the terms in which you are not working. Also, you will remain eligible for Sun Life benefits for eight (8) months after the end of the contract rather than the regular five (5) months as long as you are not in your sixth year. Please note that while your coverage continues, it is retroactive for the three months between the usual end of your coverage and the start of your new contract – hang on to your receipts, don't forget to re-enroll in benefits, and submit your receipts once you are re-enrolled.

Can I Get a TAship in the Summer?

There is a limited number of TA positions available in the Summer. If your priority pool entitlement was met in the Fall/Winter, you are not guaranteed summer work. International students get first priority for summer teaching assistantships. You can hold up to 1.5 total TAships in an academic year, but note that this extra 0.5 does not accrue GIA.

Can I Hold Multiple Positions at Once?

Yes. As long as your total workload is equal to or less than a one and a half (1.5) TAship, you can hold multiple Unit 1 positions at one time. Sometimes, you may receive contracts for multiple smaller TAships in different classes, like getting two marker/grader positions that are one quarter (0.25) TAship each. However, smaller contracts are more prone to overwork so keep good track of your hours.

Can I Hold a TAship in a Department Different from my Graduate Program?

Yes. You can apply to TAships in any department or hiring unit where you would be qualified to teach. When submitting your blanket application, you can submit to as many departments as you'd like.

How Do I Exercise My Right of First Refusal?

Your Right of First Refusal is exercised every time you either accept or decline the position you held in the previous year. You can use it three times. This means that as long as a) the same

position is being posted by the department and b) you haven't exhausted your Right of First Refusal by already using it three times, your first TA offer should be for the course you TA'd the year prior.

If you have not been offered a position you believe you have Right of First Refusal for, the first thing to do is to ask the department why. It is possible that the same course is being offered with fewer positions, or they simply made a mistake that can be quickly fixed! If the department refuses to recognize your Right of First Refusal, however, get in touch with your Lead Steward or a Staff Representative.

The Right of First Refusal does not apply to ticketed course directorships.

What If My Course Director Asks Me to Do Something Unreasonable?

While you have the responsibility to follow your Course Director's directives as they pertain to the course material and delivery, you cannot be asked to do things that are outside of your duties. You can always refuse if someone is:

- Asking you to work before your contract begins, or after it ends.
- Asking you to do something that is unrelated to your TA work, such as a personal chore.
- Asking you to fulfill the CD's regular duties, such as giving a lecture. (One guest lecture can be okay if you agree and if it counts towards your total hours).
- Asking you to do anything illegal or in violation of York's policies.

If your CD makes a request you think is unreasonable, you can contact the Lead Steward Unit 1 at lsu1@cupe3903.org and we can advise on next steps. If this request is part of a pattern of discrimination or harassment, or you are being pressured or threatened, you are encouraged to talk to the Staff Representative Equity at equity@cupe3903.org. If you're concerned about unsafe work specifically, follow the process outlined in the section of this handbook about refusing unsafe work.

What If I Am or Think I Might Be Working More Hours than My Contract?

When you start a TAship, the Course Director (CD) should provide you with a workload form that outlines your assigned duties and allots time for you to complete your work. The maximum number of hours for a half (0.5) TAship is 135, and the maximum for a full (1.0) TAship is 270. As soon as you think you're going to be overworked or run out of allotted hours, the first step is to contact your CD about it. If you can't resolve the problem with the CD, you may need to file an overwork grievance. Do not start working before the official start date of your contract or continue working after the official end date of your contract.

What Happens to My Funding If I Get a Large Scholarship?

In no case should getting a large scholarship reduce your funding below the level you were guaranteed in your admission offer. For more detail about how large scholarships affect funding, check out the relevant section under “Pay & Funding” in this handbook.

What If My Funding Guarantee Isn't Met?

When you accept to join York as a full-time graduate student, you are usually given a letter outlining your minimum guaranteed funding. The amount offered in the admission letter is an annual minimum; you can receive more, but never less, and it is indexed to the yearly salary increases (so you should get a bit more every year). If you're a CUPE 3903 member and you think that you're getting less money than you should be, get in touch with us by contacting either the Lead Steward Unit 1 at lsu1@cupe3903.org or our Staff Representative/Mobilization Coordinator at mobilization@cupe3903.org. If you provide us with your offer letter and your financial information (e.g., pay stubs, TA contract, and/or student account statement) we can take a look and help you figure out what's missing.

If I Complete My Degree Requirements or Withdraw from My Program Before the End of My Contract, Can I Complete My Contract?

Yes. Under the Unit 1 Collective Agreement, a member who loses their full-time status after their contract has started has the right to remain in the position for the duration of the original contract. For example, if you get a full-year contract for the Fall and Winter academic terms but you complete your degree requirements in the Fall term, you still have the right to stay in your position until the end of the Winter term.