

IS QUEEN'S BEHIND?

WORKING CONDITIONS FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS: QUEEN'S VS. UNIONIZED ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES

Working conditions for TAs and TFs at Queen's are falling behind those of our unionized peers. Without collective representation, we are unable to negotiate even basic job protections or benefits. TAFE is campaigning to certify as the union for Queen's TAs and TFs. Once certified, we will have the legal recognition to enter into collective bargaining.

In lacking the support of a union, we are the exception to the rule. Most workplaces in our sector are organized. Comparing our employment with that of TAs/TFs at unionized universities gives us a reasonable expectation of the gains to be made through collective bargaining.

The information on this chart comes from the collective agreements that graduate student employees have negotiated with their employers. A collective agreement is the outcome of bargaining, the formal contract between a union local and their employer in which wages, benefits, hours of work and other conditions are spelled out.

Remember, as post-secondary enrollment rises, our role is becoming increasingly important. Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows are essential for today's universities to stay competitive.

Our work is valuable.

Items	Queen's TAs	Ottawa TAs	Toronto TAs	McMaster TAs	UWO TAs
Job Security	No standard policy	Guaranteed employment as a TA/RA for 5 years of a Ph.D. program, 2 of a Master's program.	Guaranteed subsequent TAships equivalent to initial appointment, 4 years of a Ph.D. program, 2 years of a Master's.	Guaranteed employment as a TA/RA for 4 years of a Ph.D. program, 2 years of a Master's.	Guaranteed employment as a TA for 4 years of a Ph.D. program, 2 years of a Master's (without external funding).
Extended Health Benefits	No Employer-Funded Benefits	Supplementary benefits	\$500	\$100	\$200 - \$450
- Assistance with UHIP		\$500 per year	Yes	\$1000 per year	\$25,000 fund
- Dental		basic & optional coverage	\$500	\$250 per 24 months	included in EHB
- Vision		\$500	Yes	\$100	included in EHB
- Child Care			\$60,000 Assistance Fund		
Wages	\$36.40/hr	\$37.83/hr	\$38.76/hr	\$38.00/hr	\$32.50/hr (+ bonus)
- Real wage increase every year	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
- Protection of TA wage increase	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
- Additional lump sum payment	No				\$865.00 per term
TAship Allocation	At discretion of departments.	Standardized hiring criteria. Full-time graduate students in the associated department have priority.	Standardized hiring criteria.	Standardized hiring criteria, recognition of seniority.	Graduate students have priority in receiving TAships within their department.
Non-Discrimination & Harassment Policy	University Harassment/Discrimination Complaint Policy & Procedure. No representation provisions, no policy for non-discriminatory harassment.	Included in Collective Agreement, discrimination and harassment claims are grounds for formal grievance.	Included in Collective Agreement, discrimination and harassment claims are grounds for formal grievance. 4 union reps to sit on Employment Equity Committee.	Discrimination and harassment policy, discrimination and harassment claims are grounds for formal grievance.	Included in Collective Agreement, claims to be resolved by university's Human Rights Officer.
Grievance Procedure	Weak	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bargaining & Negotiating Rights	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
- Participation in policy making	1 Grad student member on TA consultative Committee	Full participation	Full participation	Full participation	Full participation
Maternity Leave	No Maternity Leave	17 Weeks	17 Weeks	17 Weeks	17 Weeks
- Salary compensation paid by the University		University pays lesser of: remaining contract or 95% of 62.5 hours.	University tops up EI to 95% of usual pay, or wages for first 8 weeks.	University tops up EI to 95% of usual pay, or 40% of regular pay.	University pays 100% of wages for first two weeks and 55% for remaining period.
Parental Leave	No parental leave	13 weeks	35-37 weeks, 1st month paid	35-37 weeks	37 weeks
Hours per Term (Full TAship)	130	140	140	130	140
- Overtime protection or provision	No	Not required to work beyond contracted hours.	Unpaid work grounds for grievance.	Unpaid work grounds for grievance.	Overtime paid at 1.25x hourly rate.
Job Description	Teaching Assignment Agreement, no mechanism for enforcement.	Included in Collective Agreement.	Included in Collective Agreement.	Included in Collective Agreement.	Included in Collective Agreement.
Health and Safety (OHS = Occupational Health & Safety)	Responsibility of supervisors to ensure safety of students.	University provides training and equipment. Union representation on the OHS Committee.	University provides training equipment. Union representation on health and safety committees.	University provides paid training. Union representation on health and safety committees.	Paid OHS Officer. University provides training and equipment. Union representation on the OHS Committee.

WHY CHOOSE TAFA:



As the SGPS Equity Commissioner, I am responsible for representing the voices of graduate students at Queen's from historically marginalized groups. As TAs, we face inequities in pay/hour ratios, availability of TAs to certain student groups, and lack of grievance procedures to address issues such as sexual or workplace harassment. I am often unable to work on drafting grievance procedures for TAs precisely because I have no legal bargaining authority as an SGPS representative. Having a TA Union would go a long way towards supporting the work that the SGPS is doing at Queen's.

- Usman Mushtaq, [Civil Engineering](#)



I have enjoyed being a TA at Queen's for two years and have been fortunate to be in a department which supports me in this role. However, I am concerned about how my job as a TA will be affected by proposed changes in the health sciences and feel that a union is the best option to protect my position. Please support a union for TAs so that they can continue to provide high quality learning experiences to undergraduates.

- L. Starr, [Microbiology & Immunology](#)



I'm both a graduate student and a parent, which can be a difficult balance. I'd like graduate students here to have the same kind of support for their families that TAs and TFs at unionized schools can provide: things like employer-funded health, dental, vision, and day care benefits. I'm concerned that instead, each group of incoming graduate student employees will get less and less support, until we do something about it.

- Tim McIntyre, [English](#)



Teaching Assistants and Fellows need a strong voice at Queen's. As budget cuts squeeze all faculties and departments TAs and TFs are vulnerable. These cuts will not only erode our working conditions but the the quality of education at Queen's. I support a TA/TF Union because it gives us a say in the decisions that effect our future. Now more than ever we need a seat at the table.

- Mark Rosner, [Philosophy](#)



Arriving at Queen's I was shocked to learn that TAs and TFs are not protected under a collective agreement. Coming from a unionized university I've witnessed the advantages: enhanced benefits and wages, a solid outline of duties, strong grievance procedures and so much more. As Co-President of the Graduate English Society I understand the strengths of student associations, but also their limitations when it comes to negotiating with the university as an employer. To protect both our work environment and the quality of education at Queen's we need the security of a binding collective agreement.

- MaryAnne Laurico, [English](#)

Show your support and contact us to sign a membership card! These cards show the Labour Board that we have your support. This is a prerequisite for holding the certification vote.

Have you already signed? That's great. Thanks so much for your support - now make sure to vote! We will contact supporters to let them know when that will be.

Want to get involved in the campaign? Contact us. All members are welcome to participate. You choose your own level of involvement.

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TAFA

Teaching Assistant and
Fellow Association



BENEFITS.

SECURITY.

RESPECT.