



English  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

# **A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

**2018-2019**

Revised July 2018

## HANDBOOK FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

This handbook is designed to answer some of the basic questions that graduate students may have about Teaching Assistantships in the Department of English.

The Department of English employs Teaching Assistants to lead tutorials and help with marking and course administration in courses taught on the St. George, Mississauga, and Scarborough campuses.

Where possible, students are assigned positions reflecting their qualifications and preferences. Primary appointments are made for the Fall/Winter Session (September-April), for Full (Y) courses and/or Half (F or S) courses. There are also a few positions available for the Summer Session (May – August).

Please address any questions about applications or teaching assistantships in general to Fabienne Michelet:

Professor Fabienne Michelet  
TA Co-ordinator  
Room 623, Department of English  
Jackman Humanities Building  
170 St. George Street  
416-978-0182  
[eng.ta@utoronto.ca](mailto:eng.ta@utoronto.ca)

Please address any questions about payroll and contracts to Benjamin Eldridge:

Benjamin Eldridge  
Department Manager  
Room 611, Department of English  
Jackman Humanities Building  
170 St. George Street  
416-978-3637  
[benjamin.eldridge@utoronto.ca](mailto:benjamin.eldridge@utoronto.ca)

The annual deadline for indicating course preferences for subsequent appointments is **May 1<sup>st</sup>** for Fall/Winter-session courses. There is a separate application round for Summer-session TAs, for which the deadline is at the **beginning of April**. A single application covers all 3 campuses for each session.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH POLICY STATEMENT:  
APPOINTMENT OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS COVERED BY THE CUPE  
[3902, Unit 1] COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT**

**I. APPOINTMENTS**

**A. Posting of Vacancies**

1. Fall/Winter-session TAships: anticipated course offerings for the upcoming Fall/Winter session are announced in March. Once the TAships for all entitled applicants have been determined, remaining positions to be filled will be announced in late June.
2. Summer-session TAships: positions to be filled are announced in mid-March.
3. Notices announcing positions to be filled will be posted outside rooms JHB 603 and JHB 719, on the Department of English website (under 'Employment') and on the Central HR & Equity Job postings website. They are also distributed on the Graduate English Listserv and Non-English TA list, with electronic links to the online TAship system where TAs can submit their profiles, course preferences, and applications.

**B. Application Procedures**

1. All incoming Ph.D. students in the Department of English will be mailed a "Request for Information" Form, to be returned by May 1<sup>st</sup>.
2. Doctoral Teaching Assistants seeking renewal for their five subsequent appointments must fill out a Course Preference form through the online TAship system (deadline: May 1<sup>st</sup>). An email will remind them to do so.
3. Teaching Assistants in the Creative Writing program entering their second year will be mailed a "Course Preference Form", to be returned by May 1<sup>st</sup>. Teaching Assistants in the Creative Writing program are eligible for a second appointment only.
4. All students seeking a Teaching Assistantship in English must provide accurate and complete information for each section on the application form.
5. For the Summer session, the due date for application forms is at the **beginning of April**. For the Fall/Winter session, the due date for TAs to confirm their intent to take up their next subsequent appointment and indicate any preferences is **May 1<sup>st</sup>**.

**C. Selection**

1. The planification of Teaching Assistantships is handled by a committee consisting of the Co-ordinator of Teaching Assistants, the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies (St. George), the Chair of the Department of English and Drama (University of Toronto Mississauga), the Chair of the Department of English (University of Toronto Scarborough), and the Departmental

Chair. The awarding of appointments is made by the Co-ordinator of Teaching Assistants, after consultation with the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies (St. George), the Chair of the Department of English and Drama (University of Toronto Mississauga), or the Chair of the Department of English (University of Toronto Scarborough).

2. Hiring criteria: Academic qualifications, demonstrable suitability for the position, the University's need to support excellent students in pursuing graduate studies with the hiring Department or a Graduate Centre or Institute, enrolment in a recognized graduate program of study in the hiring Department or a Graduate Centre or Institute, financial need, the need to acquire experience, previous experience, teaching ability and, for continuing students, previous satisfactory employment under the provisions of the Collective Agreement. The Department of English considers and implements all these criteria when making appointments. **According to the Collective Agreement, students who have lapsed are ineligible for a TAship appointment.**
3. TAship offers are made at least 3 weeks before the beginning of the Summer session and no later than August 7<sup>th</sup> for the Fall/Winter session. Once all positions have been filled, unsuccessful applicants are notified by e-mail.
4. All required meeting hours with the supervising professor (initial meeting, mid-point review, final meeting/evaluation, etc.) count toward the total allotment of hours in your contract.
5. Training: TAs in their first appointment are allotted 4 paid hours for training. **Attendance is mandatory.** For 2018-2019, these 4 hours will be spread across two training sessions, one in September (2½ h) and one in October (1½ h) (both will be held at two alternative times in the Jackman Humanities Building, 170 St George Street. Both are mandatory).

The September session will be held on

1) **Thursday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018**, from **4:00 pm to 6:30pm** in JHB 718

or

2) **Monday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018**, from **9:00am to 11:30am** in JHB 718

The October session will be held on

1) **Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018** from **4:00 to 5:30pm** in JHB 718

or

2) **Monday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018**, from **10:00am to 11:30am** in JHB 718

These training sessions will be conducted by Veronica Litt (PhD candidate). Please respond promptly to Professor Michelet's forthcoming e-mail to indicate which of these sessions you will be attending.

#### **D. Graduate Student Funding Policy**

1. Almost all PhD and MA Creative Writing students in the Department of English must work some hours as a TA as part of their funding package.

2. The number of hours varies according to other sources of funding, but is usually in the range of 170 – 190 hours. This number is subject to annual monitoring, and necessary changes are incorporated.

## II. REAPPOINTMENTS

- A. According to the current Collective Agreement, doctoral Teaching Assistantships are renewed for five subsequent appointments. Applicants who have served their entitled appointments will be considered for extra appointments only if the budget permits and undergraduate course enrolments warrant.
- B. Employees seeking renewal for each subsequent appointment must log onto the online TAship system and indicate their TAship intentions. Employees will be reminded to do so by email (in late March). Subsequent appointments are assigned by the TA Co-ordinator in consultation with the Chairs on the 3 campuses. Students applying for work must complete an online “Course Preference Form” in response to the Anticipated Course Offerings announced in March, with a May 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. On that form, applicants are invited to identify both general areas and specific courses in which they wish to work. Due consideration is given to the preferences of applicants as to the nature and location of their TAship appointments. TAs holding subsequent appointments are informed of what positions have been earmarked for them in late June/early July. Formal TA appointments are made in August and offers are finalised only when TAs have discussed the DDAH (Description of Duties and Allocation of Hours) form with their instructor(s).

### **NOTE: Section 16:06 (2) of the Collective Agreement:**

*Timing of the Subsequent Appointment(s):* Where an employee's first appointment occurs in a Fall/Winter academic session, the employee's subsequent appointments shall normally occur in consecutive Fall/Winter sessions immediately subsequent to the academic session in which the employee was employed in their initial appointment. Where an employee's first appointment is in a Summer academic session, the employee's subsequent appointments shall normally be in consecutive Summer academic sessions immediately subsequent to the academic session in which the employee was employed in their initial appointment. Where an employee's initial appointment is in the Summer academic session, the employee's remaining subsequent appointments may be transferred to the Fall/Winter academic session upon mutual agreement in writing.

Once during the course of an employee's employment in the bargaining unit, an employee shall have the right to defer a subsequent appointment. Upon written request by the employee, additional variation in the consecutive nature of the academic sessions in which an employee is appointed to subsequent appointments (i.e., delaying an appointment to a non-consecutive academic session) may be granted at the sole discretion of the employing Department.

## II. PAYROLL

1. After Teaching Assistants have received notice from the TA Co-ordinator of their placement, TAs working on the St. George campus will be contacted by Benjamin Eldridge, Department Manager (416-978-3637, room 611, 170 St. George Street, [benjamin.eldridge@utoronto.ca](mailto:benjamin.eldridge@utoronto.ca)) to fill in the required forms for payroll (a signed Payroll Bank Authorization Form for Direct Deposit, Income Tax forms, etc.); at University of Toronto Mississauga, by Merrylee Greenan, Assistant to the Chair (905-828-3727, Erindale Hall Room 308A, [edassist.utm@utoronto.ca](mailto:edassist.utm@utoronto.ca)); and at University of Toronto Scarborough, by Sean Ramrattan, Undergraduate Administrative Assistant (416-287-7125, Humanities Wing, Room HW426, [ramrattan@utsc.utoronto.ca](mailto:ramrattan@utsc.utoronto.ca)). Failure to complete and submit these forms will result in a delay in payment.

## III. CHANGES TO YOUR CONTRACT

- A. Teaching Assistants should promptly inform Professor Fabienne Michelet, TA Co-ordinator, Department of English, of any change in address, e-mail, or telephone number. If for any reason you decide to resign your assistantship, please inform the TA Co-ordinator immediately.
- B. You will receive your contract package from Benjamin Eldridge, Department Manager (St. George campus), from Merrylee Greenan, Assistant to the Chair (UTM), or from Sean Ramrattan, Undergraduate Administrative Assistant (UTSC). It is important that you discuss the proposed duties with the professor with whom you will be working and that you both agree about your duties and responsibilities when you complete the DDAH (Description of Duties and Allocation of Hours) form. If you find you are unable to agree with the supervising professor's proposals, please contact the TA Co-ordinator.

Similarly, should any difficulties arise during the academic session in your relationship with the supervising professor that cannot be resolved between you, contact the TA Co-ordinator to discuss the problem.

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### A. GRADING

1. If you are marking essays, ask your supervising professor for clear guidelines on grades and comments.
2. Pay close attention to basic prose style: grammar, syntax, diction, and paragraphing. Ask your supervising professor which handbook on style to recommend to students who need help.
3. Be specific in your suggestions for improvement. For instance, if you are criticizing a student's diction, suggest alternatives. Remember to focus on the work ("Your essay...") rather than on the student ("You...") in your comments.

4. Remind students that they should use a dictionary, a thesaurus, and a grammar-reference text regularly if they wish to broaden their knowledge of the language.
5. Raise questions about logical continuity within and between paragraphs. Many students need help with the development of argument.
6. Your closing comments are particularly important. Try to be positive: begin with something encouraging so that the effect of your comments is not completely negative. Be constructive in your criticism, especially when giving a D or a C. Closing comments should offer specific suggestions for improvement. Never disparage or ridicule a student's work.
7. Make an accurate alphabetical list of the students and their grades. Return the completed record of grades to the supervising professor when you have completed a grading assignment. **It is essential to adhere to the supervising instructor's timetable for the return of graded assignments.**
8. Teaching Assistants must be physically present on campus to retrieve and return all work to be graded. Delivery of marked assignments by postal services, FedEx, e-mail, or Fax will not be accepted.
9. Office hours should be spent helping the students who need assistance with their essays. If you find that a student needs more attention than you can give, send the student to one of the Writing Labs on the St. George, University of Toronto at Mississauga, and University of Toronto at Scarborough campuses. You cannot unilaterally alter the allotment of hours on the DDAH form.
10. If you are unsure of the appropriate grade for an assignment, consult your supervising professor.

## B. MARKS AND GRADES

Percentage	Grade	Value	Grade Definitions
90-100	A+	4.0	Excellent
85-89	A	4.0	
80-84	A-	3.7	
77-79	B+	3.3	Good
73-76	B	3.0	
70-72	B-	2.7	
67-69	C+	2.3	Adequate
63-66	C	2.0	
60-62	C-	1.7	
57-59	D+	1.3	Marginal
53-56	D	1.0	
50-52	D-	0.7	
0-49	F	0.0	Inadequate

Teaching Assistants are advised to consult the **Faculty of Arts and Science 2018-19 Calendar** under **Rules & Regulations / Course Marks** for helpful interpretations of grades. The *Calendar* may be accessed here: <https://fas.calendar.utoronto.ca> or the **Rules & Regulations** directly here: [http://www.artsandscience.utoronto.ca/ofr/calendar/Rules\\_&\\_Regulations.html#marks](http://www.artsandscience.utoronto.ca/ofr/calendar/Rules_&_Regulations.html#marks) .

## C. ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

Academic offences must be taken seriously. They are defined in the University's "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters " here, <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>.

The Code also describes the procedures for dealing with offences. The full text of this Code is available from the Office of the Dean and from the offices of College Registrars. Below are some notes on academic discipline.

1. Students are too frequently ill-informed about the nature and severity of academic offences. It is important to warn students early in the course that plagiarism and cheating are serious offences. Discuss the difference between plagiarism and using published sources legitimately to compose an essay, or between consulting someone for help and submitting someone else's work for credit.
2. If you suspect cheating, plagiarism, forgery, or impersonation, you should speak to the supervising professor immediately.
  - a) Write down all the facts while they are fresh in your mind.
  - b) Make copies (and keep originals, if possible) of any relevant material such as essays, answer sheets, etc.
  - c) The supervising professor will report the matter to the appropriate authority in the Department. The matter will then be forwarded to the Dean in charge of student discipline. Normally, the Dean will contact the student formally and conduct an interview with the student. You may be asked to be present.

NOTE: You are not permitted to settle a case or impose a sanction on your own, even where there is clear evidence or an admission of guilt from the student. The Code allows for sanctions only at the Decanal level, which helps to ensure consistency and fairness. It also allows the university to detect repeat offenders.

## D. START AND END OF CLASSES

Teaching Assistants' duties extend over the full academic session, including the examination period. **Please do not make travel plans that necessitate absence from the university during the full term of your employment contract.**

## E. DUPLICATING MATERIAL FOR CLASSES

If you need to duplicate material for use in your classes, preferably e-mail a digital (pdf, MSWord, or rtf) copy to Sangeeta Panjwani in the Department of English office: [sangeeta.panjwani@utoronto.ca](mailto:sangeeta.panjwani@utoronto.ca) or bring a clean hard-copy to Room 610, 170 St. George Street. **In both cases a 24-hour notice is required.**

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We trust that you will find your appointment as a Teaching Assistant in the Department of English both enjoyable and rewarding. Should you have any questions about the appointment, please do not hesitate to contact:

Professor Fabienne Michelet  
TA Co-ordinator  
Office: Room 623, 170 St. George Street  
Phone: 416-978-0182  
E-mail: [eng.ta@utoronto.ca](mailto:eng.ta@utoronto.ca)