

Introduction

Because McGill TAs are unionized, our work conditions are regulated by a [Collective Agreement](#), which is negotiated every few years between the union and the university. TAs fought hard and went on strike to win our most recent 2023-2027 Collective Agreement. This agreement covers everything from wages, to protections against harassment, to workload. This is an important document for all TAs, but it is also quite long and technical. The following is meant to summarize important elements of your rights as a TA under the Collective Agreement, with references to specific articles in the full Collective Agreement, which is [available on our website](#). If you have questions about the Collective Agreement not answered here you can always reach out to your [departmental delegate\(s\)](#) and/or [directly to AGSEM](#).

Hiring

Applying for a TAship

All McGill graduate students have the right to apply for and accept a TA position (Appendix IV and Article 12.05). Your academic supervisor can advise you on your education and progress, such as whether taking a job is in your best interests for your workload or pedagogical training. Your supervisor cannot prevent you from applying for or taking a TA job.

Keep an eye out for notifications from your department regarding TA positions for the upcoming semester. They will typically be communicated via email and must be posted publicly on the Workday platform.

TA positions should be posted by (12.01.01):

- For Fall courses: 3rd Monday of May
- For Winter courses: 3rd Monday of October
- For Summer courses: 2nd Monday of March

All postings will be up for at least 14 calendar days (12.01.01).

You will be notified of your application status no later than 35 days after the application deadline (13.04.01).

To apply for a TA position, complete the Workday application form provided by the department (Hiring Unit). Each Hiring Unit typically has only one application process per term. On the form, specify your preferred courses and qualifications. You have a right to use your chosen name in the application process.

You have the right to apply for and work TA positions in multiple departments. In fact, if you are qualified to work for multiple departments, this can increase your chances of getting a job. TA positions are offered by academic departments, not by course instructors.

What is the Priority Pool?

The Priority Pool is a way of guaranteeing some level of job security for TAs. Once you work your first TA position, you remain in the Priority Pool for a number of years. Departments must hire Priority Pool members before non- Priority Pool members (there is an exception which allows a small number of members to be hired first, mostly to allow departments to hire incoming students, 13.02.01). Master's students remain in the Priority Pool **two (2) years** after their initial registration in their program, while Doctoral students remain for **five (5) years** after their initial registration in their program (extensions can be granted for TAs who have traveled for field work or gone on parental or medical leave). This means someone who entered their PhD program as a PhD2 would remain in the Priority Pool as a PhD6. Ideally, everyone in the pool gets a position, but if there aren't enough available, positions are allocated based on one's position in the pool.

Priority goes, in order of decreasing priority (13.02.02):

- Fourth-year doctoral
- Third-year doctoral
- Second-year doctoral
- First-year doctoral
- Second-year master's
- First-year master's
- NEW: Fifth-year doctoral

Applicants in the Priority Pool are given priority to get a position, but not priority in choosing which course they want to TA for.

Accepting or refusing an offer

You must accept a TA offer via the Workday portal within 7 days of receiving an offer letter (13.04.02). There are exceptions to the 7 day rule due to documented illness. You have the right to reject a job offer or resign from a position you accepted without affecting your priority status for future TA employment so long as you resign before the start of the term (13.01.04.c).

If you are offered a position that is later withdrawn, you must be offered a vacant position of at least the same size. If no such position is available due to course cancellation or enrolment, you are entitled to an indemnity and an extension of your Priority Pool status (13.04.04.iii).

If you think a mistake was made in hiring or anything else was amiss with the hiring process, contact your [delegate\(s\)](#) and/or [TA Grievance Officer](#).

How many hours should be in your contract?

The maximum size of a TA position is 180 hours. Any contracts below 45 hours must be justified by the university to the union. If members are offered multiple contracts, or a single contract, exceeding 180 hours, this must be agreed to in a Letter of Agreement by the TA, the employer, and the Union (11.02.01.i). It is your responsibility to respect any conditions on a student visa or grant, if applicable.

Are hours in your department being cut?

The new Collective Agreement gives the Union the ability to investigate cases where departments are cutting TA hours, either in terms of the size of contracts, or the number of contracts (See 1.04 and Appendix VI). If hours in your departments are being cut, you can contact AGSEM's [Hours Committee](#), which is studying these cases.

Rates of pay

The 2024-2025 is **\$36.25** per hour including 6% vacation pay. It will increase to:

- \$37.34 in Fall 2025
- \$38.46 in Fall 2026

When a TA position is included in a graduate funding package (funding offer, yearly funding letter), it can not reduce any other monetary elements in the package. This means, in effect, you should see raises year after year and your original stipend amount will not be reduced (17.01). It is a violation of your rights for your stipend to be decreased in response to a TA wage increase. The same holds even if the TAship is *not* explicitly included in your funding package! You must see all of your TA wage increases.

Sign your membership form!

Sign your [AGSEM membership form](#) for full union membership. Since a TA position is a short-term contract, you should fill out a union membership form each time you accept a new position. Your department is required to send you a membership form alongside your offer letter. Many departments include a link within the offer letter itself.

On the job

Getting started: Fill out your Workload Form!

The [Workload Form](#) (Appendix II) is a tool that provides a structured approach to formally negotiate your workload, maintain a detailed record of your hours, and request additional hours. While the Workload Form can feel like just another piece of bureaucracy it is an incredibly valuable tool to prevent overwork, which is very common among TAs. **You must fill out a Workload Form with your course supervisor before the end of the add/drop period. You must also meet around midterms to revise the workload form. While this is frequently skipped, it is mandatory, and a perfect time to tell your Course Supervisor if you're worried about going over your hours (11.02.03).**

All tasks must be included on the Workload Form. This includes attending class, mandatory readings and preparation, all lab or conference hours, grading, office hours, mandatory training, and meetings with your course supervisor (including meetings to discuss the Workload Form). Both you and the course supervisor must agree on the breakdown of hours.

When you fill out your Workload Form, your instructor will specify your grading duties. In Table 2 of the Workload Form, you'll specify all of the assignments, tests, essays, etc. that you are responsible for assessing. You and your Course Supervisor will agree on how long you should spend on each assessment and turnaround times for your responsibilities. Don't feel pressured to accept an arrangement that you don't think is fair or reasonable. Nobody can grade 30 lab reports in an hour. 5 minutes is not enough time to grade an essay! Keep in mind that grading requires reading, re-reading, calculation, developing or understanding a rubric (or even solving a problem set), and writing feedback. You may always contact your department's administrators or [the union](#) for Workload Forms for past courses to see what the standard practice has been.

As you are paid by the hour and not by the task, all hours listed on the Workload Form are an estimate. It is up to you to keep track of your hours and revise the form with your course supervisor, as necessary. Use [this spreadsheet](#) to track your hours, or, use your favourite online tool. The most popular and free to use options are [Toggl](#) and [Clockify](#).

Can I request additional hours?

Yes! You may request more hours from your Course Supervisor at any point in the term if you need them to complete your tasks—even during your very first meeting. If you begin to reach the end of your hours at any point during the term and require additional hours to complete your work, you must inform your Course Supervisor. These conversations can be difficult or sensitive. If you want support in a meeting with your Course Supervisor you can request your [delegate\(s\)](#) and/or an [AGSEM officer](#) to attend with you, or, you can copy your [delegate\(s\)](#) and/or the [TA Grievance Officer](#) on emails to your supervisor.

If necessary, the instructor should request additional hours or redistribute work that cannot be completed within your contracted hours. On the Workload Form, there is a space for the course supervisor to request additional hours from the department. What happens next depends on whether the request is approved:

- **If additional hours are approved and you want to work them:** These hours must be paid at the TA rate. **If there is still more work to do for the course but you do not want to work any more:** you are under no obligation to work more than your original contract. The department must offer you these hours at the TA rate before they are offered to anyone else, but it's always your right to say no. Contact your delegate or grievance.1@agsem-aeedem.ca immediately if your department outsources your work without your permission.
- **If additional hours are NOT approved by the department:** you stop working because you cannot be asked or expected to work for free. If your department or course supervisor tries to force you to work for free, or if your TA labour is outsourced to a non-TA (such as a Grader, Tutor, Course Assistant, or otherwise), this is a violation of your rights. Contact your [delegate\(s\)](#) or [TA Grievance Officer](#) immediately.

Alternatively, if you work less hours than indicated in your contract, you don't have to pay back the difference (11.03). For example, if you have a 180 hour contract, you will be paid for 180 hours at the very minimum, even if you complete your duties in 175 hours.

Preventing TA overwork

TA overwork is pervasive across the university: in 2017, half of all TAs reported working an average of 13 hours over their contract, unpaid. That's \$470 in 2024-2025 wages. Filling out your Workload Form, tracking your hours, and requesting more hours when needed are crucial steps to prevent this. Read about AGSEM's [No More Free Hours](#) campaign to learn about other ways that we can collectively commit to not working for free and ensure every TA is paid for every hour they work—as is your legal right.

Getting trained and oriented

All mandatory training for your TA position (training required by your supervisor) must be paid. This means time spent on mandatory training should be included on your Workload Form (11.02.02).

Anti-sexual violence training: All employees of McGill must complete the employee version of “It Takes All of Us” anti-sexual violence training every three years. Your time spent on this training must also be paid at the highest hourly rate of any of the positions you currently hold on campus. This means, for example, if you are both a TA and invigilator, you must be paid at the TA rate for this training. One hour of training for this program should be included on your Workload Form in your first contract.

First-time TA Orientations: Departments provide orientation through activities like departmental meetings (13.06.01). Any time spent in these orientation or training meetings must be included on your Workload Form.

Teaching and Learning Services Training: The University provides pedagogical training to TAs. A minimum of 3 hours shall be allocated for that training. The first 3 hours of training will be paid at the regular hourly rate only for first time TAs upon completion. These are normally offered as centralized training sessions organized in September and in January.

Knowing your rights

Accommodations for Employees

Employees with disabilities can request accommodations for any part of the application process or during their appointment. (6.03).

Confidentiality: Employment files that contain information about an employee's disability and accommodations will be treated as personal and confidential information, ensuring privacy and respect for the employee's rights.

NEW: Accommodations for Students

It is the responsibility of Course Supervisors to communicate about relevant accommodations that have been granted to students in their class (11.05).

Health and Safety

You have the right to refuse work that poses a risk to your health, safety, or **physical** or **mental** well-being, as well as the health and safety of others. Exception: You cannot refuse work if your refusal would immediately endanger the life, health, safety, or physical or mental well-being of someone else (15.02.05).

To refuse unsafe work, you must inform your supervisor or a representative of McGill about your refusal and explain the reasons behind it. It is recommended to communicate your refusal via email, copying AGSEM's [TA Grievance Officer](#).

The Collective Agreement includes protections against harassment, discrimination, and sexual violence (Article 6). If you are facing any of these things on the job, reach out to your [delegate\(s\)](#) and/or the [TA Grievance Officer](#) and we can help you to advocate for your rights.

AGSEM is working to identify instances of misgendering and deadnaming while on the job. If you experience or witness misgendering or deadnaming, please reach out to trans.rights@agsem-aeedem.ca. Identifying these instances is important given McGill's upcoming reviews of their policies (see Appendix VII).

If things go wrong

While the Collective Agreement specifies your rights as a worker, there are times when these rights are violated. When these violations happen, you can begin a grievance process. The steps for this process are laid out in Article 8 of the Collective Agreement, and summarized in broad strokes here:

If you think your rights are being violated, reach out to your [delegate\(s\)](#) and/or the [TA Grievance Officer](#). We will never take any action on your behalf without your explicit consent. As a first step, the union will generally try to solve the problem informally (8.05). A union representative can reach out to a course supervisor or department and attempt to resolve the issue. They can also accompany you to any meetings. If such a process doesn't work, we can begin the formal grievance process (8.06). The grievance process begins at the level of the department (Hiring Unit), but if it can't be resolved there it moves up to Central Human Resources. If no agreement is reached it then can move on to arbitration by an arbitrator who works for the Ministry of Labour.

Wrapping up the term & after the term ends

Performance evaluations

TAs are entitled to receive a formal performance evaluation following the completion of one's position. You should receive a copy of this evaluation and have the opportunity to make comments on that evaluation (Article 14).

What other rights do I have?

Travel and other expenses

Travel necessary for one's job must, in many circumstances, be reimbursed by the university (15.03).

Leaves

The Collective Agreement guarantees TAs the right to take leaves of various kinds; Maternity (16.01), Paternity (16.02), Parental, (16.03), Absence for Birth or Adoption (16.04), Medical (16.05), Bereavement (16.07), and Academic Conferences (16.08).