

Understanding Your TA or TM Contract

TAs and TMs are paid in **base units (BU)**. Each BU represents \$1071 in salaried wages, or max. 40.9 hours of work. For more detailed instructions on how to interpret your TA/TM contract, visit: tssu.ca/workload/

Base Units Assigned	Max # of work hours	Base Pay	Scholarship Portion (Master's students)	Scholarship Portion (PhD students)	Contact hours/week (TAs only)	# of students (TMs only)
2.17	81.8	\$2,325	\$300	\$752	1	-
3.17	122.7	\$3,396	\$450	\$1,128	2	20 or fewer
3.42	132.9	\$3,663	\$488	\$1,222	2.25	21 - 25
3.67	143.2	\$3,931	\$525	\$1,316	2.5	26 - 30
3.92	153.4	\$4,199	\$563	\$1,410	2.75	31 - 35
4.17	163.6	\$4,467	\$600	\$1,504	3	36 - 40
4.42	173.8	\$4,734	\$638	\$1,598	3.25	41 - 45
4.67	184	\$5,002	\$675	\$1,692	3.5	46 - 50
4.92	194.3	\$5,270	\$713	\$1,786	3.75	51 - 55
5.17	204.5	\$5,538	\$750	\$1,880	4	56 - 60
6.17	245.4	\$6,478	\$900	\$2,256	5	-
7.17	286.3	\$7,679	\$1,050	\$2,632	6	-

Resources

Are you looking for support as a graduate student?
Contact the **Graduate Student Society (GSS)**:
sfugradsociety.ca

Are you looking for professional training and development related to teaching?
Contact the **Teaching + Learning Centre**:
sfu.ca/tlc.html

Are you looking for more work as a TA/TM?
TA/TM positions are posted here:
sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/job-postings.html

Have you or a student experienced emotional distress?
Contact **Health & Counselling Services**:
sfu.ca/students/health

Do you have questions or concerns about accommodating a student with disabilities?
Contact the **Centre for Students with Disabilities**:
students.sfu.ca/disabilityaccess.html

Do you have questions or concerns relating to sexual violence and misconduct?
Contact the **Sexual Violence Support & Prevention Office**:
sfu.ca/sexual-violence.html

Resources

Do you feel harassed or intimidated by a student, colleague, or supervisor, or are you in any other kind of danger?

Contact **Campus Security**:
sfu.ca/srs/security.html
Emergency contact 778-782-4500

Contact **Safety & Risk Services**:
sfu.ca/srs.html

Do you require audio/visual classroom equipment?
Contact **Audio/Visual Classroom Support**:
sfu.ca/itservices/technical/av_services.html

Does a student need help with academic writing?
Refer them to the **Student Learning Commons**:
lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc

Do you need to access your pay stub or tax form?
Log in to **myinfo** with your SFU ID:
myinfo.sfu.ca

Do you need to get in touch with your union?
Contact **Teaching Support Staff Union**:
tssu.ca or email tssu@tssu.ca

A Pocket Guide for TAs and TMs

Version: July 2020



Prepared by Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU)

Valid for the 2014-2019 Collective Agreement

You've been hired as a TA or TM: Getting Started

What are TAs and TMs?

Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Tutor Markers (TMs) are slightly different roles:

TAs assist students in-person during tutorials and/or laboratory instruction and/or mark assignments.

TMs assist and instruct students in online courses.

You and Your Course Supervisor

Duties: Before your TA or TM position begins, you should meet with your course instructor to discuss and agree upon your duties. Duties associated with TA and TM jobs vary between departments and courses. If in doubt, ask your course supervisor for clarification and do not assume anything. It may help to maintain regular contact with your course supervisor and let them know if you need additional support or guidance.

Protections against overwork: You and your course supervisor must complete a Time Use Guideline (TUG) form together in the first week of the semester. The TUG lists the total maximum hours assigned and is a guideline for how these hours are distributed among different types of work within your assignment. This distribution can change over the course of the semester, but if additional classroom contact is added, you should immediately contact the union.

The course supervisor must conduct a Workload Review (WLR) once the course has sufficiently advanced to assess the workload (e.g. after the first major marking assignment, mid-term, etc.). In the WLR, you and your course supervisor will evaluate how many hours you have worked. If it appears that you may exceed the allotted hours in your contract based on the estimations in the TUG, your course supervisor is required to either reduce your workload to prevent overwork or inform the department that you may exceed your contract and may require additional pay.

Be sure to track your hours! With the transition to remote work and intensified duties required of TAs and TMs, it is important to [Log Your Hours](#). There are many tools to keep track that you can find [here](#). It is illegal for anyone to intimidate you to work more than the hours in your contract. If this happens, contact the TSSU immediately.

Evaluation: You must be evaluated by your course supervisor at least once a semester. Evaluation criteria must be made available to you when the position starts.

TA Typical Duties

TAs often occupy more than one of the following roles as outlined below:

- **Tutorial TAs** may be required to attend lectures, read materials assigned to students, take attendance, evaluate student participation, lead discussions, review and clarify course concepts, administer tutorial assignments (e.g. presentations or quizzes), respond to student correspondence, mark student assignments, and/or hold office hours.
- **Laboratory TAs** attend and supervise students during laboratory sessions. Laboratory teaching assistants may be required to attend lectures, complete pre-lab activities, read reference materials, grade laboratory assignments, educate students about and enforce safety regulations, demonstrate laboratory techniques, respond to student correspondence, and/or hold office hours.
- **Marking TAs** are responsible for grading papers, assignments, and exams. Marking may be distributed throughout the term or may fall in clusters, depending on when assignments are due. Markers may be required to develop a marking rubric, provide written and/or oral feedback to students, hold office hours, communicate expectations for assignments, and/or respond to student correspondence.
- **Head TAs** typically perform any number of the above duties, as well as additional ones assigned by their instructor. Head TAs may be required to coordinate with and offer guidance to other TAs, create course materials, hold review sessions for all students, and/or hold office hours.
- **Writing Course TAs:** if your Course has a "W" attached to the end of it, then you perform work aligned with one of the above descriptions for a course that uses the writing intensive pedagogy. This means you will get an additional base unit of preparation beyond the normal formula and student writing will be a larger portion of your duties, than many other positions.

TM Basic Duties

TMs have similar duties across various distance education courses and departments. TMs may be required to respond to student correspondence, facilitate online discussions, evaluate student participation, grade exams and assignments, read reference materials, invigilate in-class exams, and/or hold online office hours.

Training Opportunities

You have several opportunities for professional development before and during your TA/TM job. At the beginning of both the spring and fall semesters a TA/TM Day event is held on the Burnaby campus. TA orientations are also held in Surrey. These free, one-day events include information sessions and workshops that offer tips and strategies to improve your teaching.

The Collective Agreement guarantees you up to six hours of paid professional development activities per contract held, and additional hours for software training. **These hours should be recorded under "other" on your TUG form.** While many TAs and TMs allocate them towards the aforementioned TA/TM Day, they can be used for any training initiative.

Rights and Benefits

TSSU member, you are guaranteed a number of rights, which you may exercise to ensure that you receive fair treatment and respect in your workplace. You are also entitled to a number of benefits, including those pertaining to safety, health, sick leave, and parental leave. These rights and benefits are laid out in our **Know Your Rights!** pamphlet, which can be found in the GSS lounge, or the TSSU offices and website.

NOTE: The information contained in this document is not exhaustive! View the full Collective Agreement at:

www.tssu.ca/collective-agreement/