

Best Practices and Tips for GTAs and Professors

The contract

Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) are full-time¹ graduate students who are hired to assist in supervised teaching-related duties. All GTAs at Western are members of PSAC Local 610, the TA, GSA, and Postdoctoral Associates' Union. At the beginning of the term, departments will request GTAs and professors to complete a Duties Specification Agreement (DSA) which will outline all contract duties, such as undertaking employer or course specific training, instructing, lecturing, preparing learning materials, grading, supervising, holding office hours, reading electronic communications and corresponding with students (as per article 17.03 of the [GTA Collective Agreement](#)).

Working hours

Based on course objectives and expectations, professors will decide how the hours should be allotted in the DSA. A full GTA position requires an average of 10 hours a week, normally for a maximum of 140 hours per term, while a half GTA position requires 5 hours a week and 70 hours per term (Article 17.01). Professors can agree with GTAs a different weekly average if needed, but in those cases, a GTA cannot be required to work more than twice the set weekly average, which for a full-GTA will be no more than 20 hours in any one week during the work period (Article 17.02).

Best practices

Professors	Graduate Teaching Assistants
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When completing your DSA, consider giving your TAs the opportunity to provide input on how many hours they need to complete tasks, especially if they have experience in that course.• Consider allocating sufficient time for grading intensive assignments and/or other time-consuming duties, or consider distributing them in different weeks so that GTAs can complete their work within the set weekly average.• Let your GTAs know if they will be expected to work fewer hours earlier in the term and devote more time to marking final exams or large assignments. As GTAs are graduate students themselves, helping them to plan—as best as possible—their own	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read your DSA carefully and take note of the tasks and hours allocated to each one of them.• Consider tracking your hours from the beginning of the term using the hour tracking resources (link here!).• Encourage professors to hold a mid-point review meeting and bring the hours you have tracked along with your DSA to help the professor revise or amend the current hours allocation. This may allow you and future TAs to have access to a better description of work duties for the course.• Need support?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <u>Accommodations</u>: GTAs who suffer from temporary or permanent medical conditions or disabilities may be

¹ The limitation of Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) to registered full-time graduate students does not restrict GTAs employment for those individuals who are unable to fulfill full-time graduate student hours by reason of disability (as per Article 2.01).

work with their TA schedule in mind allows them to manage their time most effectively.

- Although not mandatory, it is strongly recommended to meet with the GTAs at the beginning of the term to review the DSA and set expectations for the course.
- Encourage your GTAs to keep track of their hours and regularly check to confirm if the DSA matches the hours they have worked.
- Convene a mid-point review meeting with the GTAs closer to the middle of the term to make sure that the workload is evenly distributed.
- Share with your GTAs how they should respond to students in distress and encourage them to report those issues with you in a timely manner. Western has many resources for students in distress, such as the one [linked here](#).

Avoid:

- Waiting until the end of the term to check working hours with GTAs as this could lead to unexpected overtime requests.
- Scheduling large assignments too close together or too late at the end of the term may lead to GTAs exceeding their set weekly average, working beyond the hours listed in the DSA, or even working beyond the end date of their contract.
- Avoid major changes during the course of the term; rather, wait to do this between terms, or before future contracts. However, should it be necessary to redistribute hours between the current duties listed in the DSA, it is possible to do so if agreed with GTAs at any time during the course, as per article 17.05 (c).

entitled to workplace accommodations through Western's Transitional Accommodation Program (for more information see [GTA Collective Agreement](#) - Article 22.01).

- Temporary leaves of absence:

Personal emergencies, illnesses, bereavement, conference travel, and others may be reasons to request a temporary paid/unpaid leave (for more information see [GTA Collective Agreement](#) - Article 25).

- Departmental & Chief Stewards:

should you encounter any issues in your work as a GTA or want to request information on the Collective Agreement, reach out to your Chief Steward or departmental Steward representative. If you do not know the contact information of your Stewards, please contact

staffpsac610@gmail.com or email your Chief Steward listed on the PSAC610 website:

<https://www.psa610.ca/executive>

Avoid:

- Working overtime before sending a completed overtime request form (as per Article 17.07). ([link here!](#)).
- Performing duties that are not related to teaching or that are not listed in your current DSA.
- Tracking your hours at the end of the term.