

Report to Senate
Teaching Assistants Consultative Committee
January 29, 2009

BACKGROUND OF THE REPORT

In April 2003, SCAD approved the establishment of a Sub-Committee on Teaching Assistants (TAs) at Queen's University. The Senate policy on *Teaching Assistants at Queen's University* (the Policy) was approved by Senate at the May 25, 2005 meeting. The policy at Part X states that the Consultative Committee on TAs shall recommend, as needed, amendments to any section already contained in the document. The Consultative Committee reports to the Vice-Principal (Academic)

The Consultative Committee is recommending amendments to the Teaching Assistant Agreement Form (Appendix B) and to the Protocol for Resolving Disputes (Part V).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Teaching Assistant Agreement Form

The Teaching Assistant Agreement form (Appendix B of the Policy) is to be used by units to formalize workload details at the start of every TA assignment. As stated in the Policy, units have an obligation to set sufficiently detailed guidelines for expectations, standards of work, and reasonable turn-around time before any duties under the agreement are performed.

The Teaching Assistant Agreement form is distinct from the Student Employment Contract (Appendix A of the Policy), which is a Queen's Human Resources document that establishes the employment relationship between the University and the teaching assistant.

In recognition of diversity of practice among departments, the Teaching Assistant Agreement form may be revised to set out locally drafted facsimile workload agreements. However, it is mandatory that an agreement between the parties be established at the outset of the TA assignment, given that the document establishes the expectations of the supervisor and informs the TA of his or her responsibilities, average hours per week, and method of assessment. In addition, any dispute that might arise between the supervisor and the TA will be viewed in relation to this document. The form should be filed appropriately with the relevant department(s).

Amendment to Teaching Assistant Agreement Form
At the bottom of page two of the form:

Current	Proposed Amendments
This agreement was developed by the Alma Mater Society (AMS), Instructional Development Centre (IDC), School of Graduate Studies and Research (SGSR) and the Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS).	This agreement was developed by the Alma Mater Society (AMS), <u>the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)</u> , the School of Graduate Studies and Research (SGSR) and the Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS). <u>The TA Agreement form is required by units to formalize workload details at the start of every TA assignment. The form can be revised to set out locally drafted facsimile workload agreements. However, it is mandatory that the requisite information be recorded and filed with the relevant department(s).</u>

Protocol for Resolving Disputes

Part V of the Policy (Protocol) provides a sequence of steps to follow in an effort to resolve disputes that may arise between teaching assistants and course supervisors.

The Consultative Committee proposes that the wording of the current procedure be amended to make an explicit reference to the TA agreement document. It was agreed by the Committee that the TA Agreement's utility in overcoming any potential dispute should be emphasized by making explicit reference to it in the dispute resolution procedure. The Committee also recommends that the dispute resolution procedure incorporate an additional step prior to a formal hearing of the dispute. The University encourages the informal resolution of disputes, which may be achieved with the assistance of the Co-ordinator Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (CDRM). The Protocol will be amended to allow the parties to enter into discussions with the CDRM as chair or, if the parties agree, as mediator.

Amendment to the Protocol for Resolving Disputes
At Part V: Protocol, page 5:

Current	Proposed Amendments
Step One In the situation where a TA has an employment-related concern, the grievance is made either orally or in writing to the course supervisor, in the first instance.	Step One <u>The grievance is made either orally or in writing to the course supervisor. A TA may seek the assistance of a friend or advisor in the preparation and/or</u>

<p>When the student contacts the course supervisor with a grievance, he/she may seek the assistance or representation of a person of his or her choice. A course supervisor who is presented with a grievance, whether orally or in writing, should attempt to reach a resolution through informal discussions with the TA. If no resolution is reached, the course supervisor shall make a definite ruling on the matter in writing. The written decision shall be given no later than ten working days from the date when the course supervisor was first notified of the grievance by the TA, and shall include advice regarding the right to appeal to the next level.</p> <p>If the TA is not satisfied with this decision, he/she may proceed to Step 2 within ten working days from the date of the decision by the course supervisor.</p>	<p><u>presentation of the grievance to the supervisor.</u></p> <p><u>The Teaching Assistant Agreement Form identifies the various teaching activities expected of the TA and an estimate of the hours per term to be devoted to each activity. As such, it outlines the nature of the working relationship between the TA and the Supervisor and will be used as a reference document for the purpose of resolving grievances. Failing a resolution to the grievance through informal discussions between the TA and the course supervisor, the course supervisor will make a definitive ruling on the matter in writing. If not satisfied with the decision, the TA may submit;</u></p>
<p>Step Two</p> <p>An appeal from a decision of a course supervisor shall be brought in writing to the Head of the unit. The Head should make every effort to resolve the situation informally at this level. However, if no informal resolution can be reached, the Head shall render a written decision on the matter, including notification of the right to appeal the decision to the University Student Appeals Board (USAB), within 10 working days from the commencement of the appeal.</p> <p>If the TA is still not satisfied with the Head's decision, she/he may proceed to Step Three</p>	<p>Step Two</p> <p><u>An appeal in writing to the Head of the unit. After further efforts to resolve the situation informally, if a resolution to the grievance cannot be reached, the Head shall render a written decision including notification of the right to request that the parties meet to enter into discussions with the Co-ordinator, Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (CDRM) as chair or, if the parties agree, as mediator.</u></p> <p><u>After consultation with the parties, and upon agreement between them, the CDRM will schedule and convene a meeting. Those attending will include the TA and Head of the unit, and may include anyone else with direct involvement in the matter (such as, for example, the person whose actions or decisions are the subject matter of the grievance).</u></p>

	<p><u>The TA may be accompanied by a friend or advisor. The Head of the unit may be accompanied by another member of the Department.</u></p> <p><u>This meeting may be continued on a later date if time poses a barrier to its progress, or it may be adjourned to a later date if additional information or material would assist in resolving the matter. Normally the period for alternative dispute resolution will not exceed four weeks.</u></p> <p><u>The CDRM will prepare and obtain the parties' signatures on a <i>Meeting Memorandum</i> indicating either the terms of settlement of the grievance or that the meeting concluded without resolution. In the event that the meeting concluded without resolution, the Memorandum would include a statement informing the TA of;</u></p>
<p>Step Three</p> <p>A TA may, after exhausting other remedies and appeals under this Protocol, appeal to the University Student Appeal Board (USAB). The rules of procedure and time limits for filing such an appeal are set out in the Queen's University Senate Policy on Student Appeals, Rights and Discipline which can be found at: http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/policies/SARD_Policy.pdf.</p>	<p>Step Three</p> <p><u>The right to proceed with the matter to the University Student Appeal Board. The rules of procedure and time limits for filing such an appeal are set out in Senate policy on <i>Student Appeals, Rights and Discipline</i> beginning at section 25 (see http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/policies/SARD_Policy.pdf).</u></p>

RECOMMENDATION

Accordingly, the TA Consultative Committee recommends that amendments to the Senate policy on *Teaching Assistants at Queen's University*, specifically the Teaching Assistant Agreement Form (Appendix B) and the Protocol for Resolving Disputes (Part V), as set out above, be approved by the Senate.

Respectfully submitted,
Professor David Rappaport
Acting Chair, TA Consultative Committee
Associate Dean, SGSR

TA Consultative Committee Membership 2008-2009:

J. Deakin, Dean SGSR
A. Leger, Centre for Teaching and Learning
J. Lin, Vice-President Internal (Graduate), SGPS
M. Lombardi, Academic Affairs Commissioner, AMS
E. Power, Faculty Member-at-Large