Teaching Assistants & Course Instructors

TRAINING INFORMATION PACKAGE
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Dear Department Chairs and TA Coordinators,

This information package is to inform you of the services offered by the Teaching Assistants’ Training Program (TATP) in the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI), to all University of Toronto Teaching Assistants and Course Instructors in the CUPE 3902 Unit 1 bargaining unit. This package provides information that will help you plan the training for both your new Teaching Assistants and Course Instructors who will begin their first appointments in the 2016-17 academic year, and returning Teaching Assistants who may need additional training as per the requirements related to tutorial teaching. Please share the enclosed information with anyone in your department responsible for the hiring of CUPE 3902 Unit 1 positions and the administration of contracts.

Enclosed are the following documents pertaining to mandatory training for members of CUPE 3902 Unit 1:

- Information on training options for first-contract TAs and instructions on arranging for TATP support in TA training delivery.
- Information on tutorial training for first-contract and returning TAs that aligns with the categories of tutorials defined by the University.
- Information on training options for first-time Course Instructors in CUPE 3902 Unit 1.
- Details on the TATP Liaison Program, in which experienced TAs work with the TATP to help design the training session for first appointment TAs in their departments. TA Liaisons are not paid by the TATP, but will receive special recognition for their work. Departments may choose to pay their TA Liaisons.
- A resource tip sheet entitled “Working with TAs: Building Your Teaching Team” that provides guidance for instructors who may be working with TAs for the first time.

A number of resources will be available via the TATP website to support instructors and TAs in preparing for course and tutorial teaching and TA duties. Please visit the TATP Job Training page and the TATP Workshops page for the most up-to-date information.

Please also post and distribute the enclosed flyer about this year’s Tri-Campus TA Day, which will be held on Wednesday, August 31, 2016 at the Bahen Centre, on the St. George Campus (UTSG).

Sincerely,

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2016-17 TRAINING OPTIONS FOR FIRST CONTRACT TEACHING ASSISTANTS

As per the 2014-2017 collective agreement between CUPE 3902 Unit 1 and the University, all TAs beginning their first appointment at the University of Toronto must receive 3 hours of mandatory training. They shall be paid for participation in such training by their hiring department. As of September 1, 2014, first-contract TAs who are being asked to lead tutorials or labs/practicals are required to receive training that focuses on the particular kind(s) of tutorial teaching they have been assigned: discussion-based teaching, skill development, review sessions, and laboratory teaching or teaching in practicals. This tutorial-specific training can be included in the 3 hours of mandatory training. First-contract TAs may also receive training in how to scale their learning activities appropriately to suit the number of students in a given tutorial (as defined by the department and in line with the training “thresholds” referenced in the report of the Joint Working Group on Undergraduate Tutorials, p. 32).

*PLEASE NOTE: Due to logistical constraints, the TATP is only able to deliver training on-site in departments as follows: 2 hours of general training plus 1 hour of tutorial training. If a department wishes to arrange for on-site training that is longer than 3 hours, special arrangements will need to be made on a case-by-case basis, subject to the availability of TATP staff.

As a department/unit, you have several options for meeting the training needs of your new TAs.

IN-DEPARTMENT TRAINING

The TATP does not have to be involved in developing or delivering TA training in your department. At your invitation, however, the TATP can come to you! Or, we can simply consult with you to provide resources and ideas for training activities. Here are some options:

OPTION #1: Training developed and delivered by the hiring department. Development of all training materials and the training session itself is handled by the department; TATP staff are available to consult on the development of the training.

OPTION #2: Training developed and delivered in collaboration with TATP. TATP staff can work with your unit to design and deliver the 3-hour session or the TATP can deliver a portion of this training (e.g. 1 – 2 hours). We will consult with your unit to define training needs and the scope of the training session.

OPTION #3: Training developed and delivered entirely by TATP. Some departments prefer that TATP staff deliver the full 3-hour mandatory training session. This will be done in consultation with the unit to define training needs and the scope of the training session. To request an in-department training session, please use the TA Training Request Form on the TATP website. Please also consult the departmental training booking process information sheet, available on the Tutorial Training Information page.
CENTRAL TRAINING WORKSHOPS- UTSG

At the start of the Fall and Winter terms, TATP will offer **1-hour workshops** on each of the following topics: Labs/Practicals, Discussion-Based Tutorials, Review and Q&A Tutorials, Skills Development: Supporting Student Writing, Skills Development: Critical Reading & Reflection, Skills Development: Problem Set Tutorials, Skills Development: Critical Thinking, and Adapting Teaching Techniques. All of these workshops will be delivered on the St. George campus at the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI) on the 4th floor of Robarts Library. Students must register to attend. Registration information will be available on the TATP website at the end of August for the Fall term and in the first week of January for the Winter term.

These workshops are most useful for:
- New TAs who have more than one TA appointment in more than one category and require additional training beyond the 1 hour of tutorial training provided by TATP in the initial 3-hour training session.
- New TAs who have been assigned a tutorial with a larger number of students and require training in Adapting Teaching Techniques.

For a list of upcoming central tutorial training workshops offered by the TATP, please see the Tutorial Training Workshops web page.

TRAINING DAYS- UTSG, UTM, UTSC

Offered on each campus, these are full days or half days of job training that include:
- 2 hours of general pedagogical training for new Teaching Assistants – topics covered include important policies at U of T related to teaching, key instructional techniques, general classroom management strategies, effective feedback and effective grading, time management – both personal and in the classroom, communicating with students, effective student support, working with your Course Supervisor, etc.
- 1-hour concurrent sessions on the following topics:
  - Labs/Practicals
  - Discussion-Based Tutorials
  - Review and Q&A Tutorials
  - Skills Development Tutorials (not all Skills Development workshops will be available – which sessions get offered will depend on the needs of students who register)
  - Adapting Teaching Techniques (modifying teaching activities and approaches to suit the number of students in a given tutorial)
  - Grading (a more in-depth session for new TAs who have been appointed as grading-only TAs and therefore will not be leading tutorials)

Each Training Day will have a broad disciplinary focus – there will be a Training Day for TAs in the Sciences and Engineering, and a Training Day for TAs in the Humanities and Social Sciences. At UTM and UTSC, we may need to combine disciplines in one Training Day – should this occur, TATP staff from a range of disciplines will be assigned to facilitate. TATP Training Days are typically offered after the start of term to capture any students who are late hires or whose appointments change at the start of term. They are also intended for students who have missed all other opportunities to receive training. They will typically be offered in early October in the Fall and at the end of January in the Winter. Students must register for each session they need to attend. Information on TATP Training Days, including registration, will be posted on the TATP website at the end of August and
in the first week of January. On the UTSC campus, an additional Training Day will be offered at the start of the Spring/Summer term.

It is possible that a TATP Training Day might be offered at the start of any given term on the UTM or UTSC campus. Training Days on the St. George campus will always happen later in the term so as not to conflict with the Tri-Campus TA Day.

For details about upcoming TATP Training Days, please see the TATP Training Days web page.

**TATP WORKSHOP SERIES**

Should a TA miss all other opportunities to receive training, the TATP offers workshops on a range of teaching topics throughout the year on all three campuses that can count as training with a department’s prior approval. Visit the TATP Workshops page to view a list of upcoming workshops. Sessions that can count as tutorial training will be marked by the relevant tutorial training icon.

*** PLEASE NOTE ***

**MINIMUM NUMBER OF TAs FOR IN-DEPARTMENT TRAINING**

Departments with a group of fewer than 10 TAs who require training (be they new or returning TAs) should consider the following training options:
- TAs can register for the appropriate central training workshop at CTSI
- TAs can register for the appropriate session at one of the TATP Training Days

**REQUIRED NOTICE TO REQUEST IN-DEPARTMENT TRAINING**

If you are interested in engaging the TATP to assist with your training needs, please note that the bulk of training sessions in any given year occur in the first three weeks of the Fall term. As such, we will require a minimum of three weeks’ notice to make appropriate arrangements and accommodate your training request. Particularly for training in August, September, October and January, we will not be able to accommodate requests made without at least three weeks’ notice.
2016-17 TRAINING OPTIONS FOR RETURNING TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Returning TAs who have already received the 3 hours of initial mandatory training may require additional training because:

- they are teaching a tutorial in a different category from the one for which they were initially trained, or
- they are teaching a tutorial with a larger (or smaller) number of students and require training in Adapting Teaching Techniques (ATT).

Returning TAs can access this training in a range of ways.

**OPTION #1:** Returning TAs can register for the appropriate central training workshop offered at CTSI at the start of each term.

**OPTION #2:** Returning TAs can register for the appropriate concurrent session focusing on tutorial training or Adapting Teaching Techniques at one of the TATP Training Days.

**OPTION #3:** Returning TAs can register for a session in the TATP Workshop Series (offered throughout the Fall and Winter terms) that can count as tutorial training.

Departments can request a separate on-site training session for their returning TAs (to be delivered in the department), but this will be subject to the availability of TATP staff. The priority focus for TATP-facilitated in-department training is the incoming cohort of first-contract Teaching Assistants.

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- TAs can register for the appropriate central training workshop at CTSI
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TATP TUTORIAL TRAINING AT U of T

As recommended by the report of the Joint Working Group on Undergraduate Tutorials (March 2014) and as accepted by the Provost (see PDAD&C Memo #66), the University of Toronto has adopted a definition of “tutorial” and an accompanying categorization scheme to help guide the design of tutorials and the preparation of teaching assistants for tutorial teaching. Beginning in September 2014, the tutorials for a course must be assigned a category from this scheme, and instructors must indicate the training their TAs should receive to best realize the objectives of their tutorials. TAs must receive appropriate training that aligns with the tutorial categories and that matches the tutorial objectives as laid out by instructors. Below is information that outlines the training options and resources available to instructors and TAs through the Teaching Assistants’ Training Program and the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation to help support departments, instructors and TAs in meeting these requirements.

INFORMATION FOR INSTRUCTORS / DEPARTMENTS

STEP 1: Understand the Training Process

As of September 1, 2014, all TAs who are being asked to lead tutorials are required to receive training that focuses on the particular kind(s) of tutorial(s) they have been assigned: discussion-based teaching, skills-based teaching, review sessions, and laboratory teaching or teaching in practicals. Where relevant, they are also entitled to training in how to scale their learning activities for different sizes of tutorials (as defined by the department and in line with the training “thresholds” referenced in the report of the Joint Working Group on Undergraduate Tutorials, p. 32). The purpose of this categorization is to better describe the learning that takes place in tutorials at the University of Toronto, and to create direct links between TA training and the expectations of the kinds of learning activities for which TAs will be responsible.

The TATP had developed 1 hour of tutorials-focused training that aligns with these 4 categories into the mandatory training session for first-contract TAs that is normally delivered on-site in a department at the start of a term. This training will also provide strategies for adapting teaching techniques in a tutorial to suit the number of students. If a department chooses to provide additional tutorial training to its new and/or returning TAs, the TATP will offer additional workshops at the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation on the St. George campus and through Training Days on each campus at the start of the term to meet this need. Please see our TATP Workshops page and our Training Days page to view a list of upcoming workshops. Please see the TATP’s Tutorial Training Information page for additional information.

Below is information on identifying your tutorial category as well as information about the different ways that the TATP can support the training process. Instructors should contact the appropriate designate in their division/department to determine the process for categorizing tutorials and identifying TA training. In most cases, this will either be an Associate Chair Undergraduate or Graduate, or a faculty or staff member charged with overseeing TA contracts in the division/department.

STEP 2: Identify Your Tutorial Category

The term ‘tutorial’ at the University of Toronto is used to identify interactive and participatory sessions primarily led by TAs. During these interactive and participatory tutorial sessions, TAs are responsible for gauging student understanding and providing formative feedback, in line with assessment structures and guidelines set by the instructor. The four categories of tutorials as defined by the report of the Joint Working Group on Undergraduate Tutorials (p.5 and pp. 29 – 30) are:
NOTE: All TATP facilitated training in the four tutorial categories below will also offer strategies for scaling learning activities appropriately for the number of students in a given tutorial.

Discussion-Based Sessions
These sessions provide opportunities for additional, or more in-depth, discussion of course content and may involve small-group activities. TAs would lead these sessions and facilitate discussion and learning activities.

Skill Development Sessions
Activities in these sessions might include opportunities to practice various skills such as language acquisition, use of computer programs, problem sets, etc. TAs would help to facilitate the activities during these sessions and would provide formative feedback to students on progress.

Laboratories/Practicals
Laboratories are also sometimes identified as “Practicals” in the student information system (not as Tutorials), and they provide opportunities to run experiments or tests in a lab setting. Problem-solving/practice sets are common to engineering, math, and science tutorials and they provide opportunities for students and TAs to practice and review.

Review and Q&A
These sessions are typically offered several times during the year prior to major course deadlines and are normally optional. TAs respond to student questions, clarify course content, and provide information on course assignments. As relevant, these sessions also provide opportunities for review of key course content in preparation for exams, tests, or quizzes. This type of tutorial might also include film screenings where films discussed in a course may be screened in a separate session. In these sessions, TAs may be assigned to respond to questions from students.

If you are experiencing difficulty with classifying your tutorial, please consult with your department/unit Chair, Associate Chair, TA Coordinator or other designate in your department.
STEP 3: Select Appropriate Training

Once you have determined the appropriate category for your course tutorial, you next need to identify the appropriate training your TAs will require to lead your course tutorial.

All TATP training sessions are highly interactive and are intended to model techniques and approaches TAs can then use in their own tutorials. TATP offers tutorial training in the following categories:

DISCUSSION-BASED TUTORIALS

TATP training in this category will include...

- guiding principles for leading effective discussions in both classroom and lab settings
- how to prepare yourself to lead an engaging discussion
- how to create an environment conducive to effective discussion
- strategies to encourage students to come to tutorials prepared for meaningful discussion, and what to do when students do not arrive prepared
- techniques to initiate, facilitate and sustain effective discussion
- how to provide formative feedback to students during and following discussion
- how to effectively debrief a discussion

SKILL DEVELOPMENT TUTORIALS

A Skill Development tutorial involves a TA leading students through practice-based learning in order to hone a specific skill linked to the course learning objectives.

As a central training program, the TATP does not offer discipline-specific skills-based training. Rather, TATP training in this category focuses on four key areas essential to supporting undergraduate learning across a wide range of disciplines. TATP training sessions in this category are divided into four different sub-categories: Critical Reading and Reflection; Critical Thinking; Supporting Student Writing and Problem Sets. NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Although these sub-categories may reflect several of the skills that you would like students to learn through their tutorial experience, you should only select one of these skill development sessions if it is the primary activity in your course tutorial.

In each of these sub-categories, TATP training will include...

Critical Reading and Reflection
- an examination of the underlying barriers to successful reading in the undergraduate classroom
- how to motivate students to engage in critical reading
- how to support critical reading inside and outside the classroom
- an exploration of different methods for integrating reading strategies throughout a tutorial to promote deep learning
- strategies and activities to foster habits of critical reading and reflection in students

Critical Thinking
- how to articulate the importance of critical thinking to students – what is it and why do it?
- key characteristics of critical thinking
- strategies and activities for helping students practice critical thinking
- characteristics of effective questioning
- how to engage in critical reflection (and when is it useful to do so?)
Supporting Student Writing
• the benefits of using writing to deepen students’ comprehension of key course concepts
• how to use both in-class writing and assigned writing outside the classroom to expand students’ understanding
• how to use written feedback to develop writing skills in students
• short writing exercises that will promote the development of writing skills
• a review of tools to support student writing

Problem Sets (for TAs in math-based, science and engineering disciplines)
• how to plan an effective problem set tutorial
• strategies for highlighting the process of solving problems
• how to effectively model a problem for students
• how to engage students in the problem-solving process (incorporating small group work and active learning approaches to reinforce key concepts and problem-solving approaches)

REVIEW AND Q&A TUTORIALS

Although most tutorials involve some sort of review that supports the consolidation of core course concepts, Review/Q&A training sessions are directed specifically towards TAs assigned to Review tutorials as identified in the student information system. Typically, Review/Q&A tutorials are held periodically throughout the term and vary in length from one hour to several hours in one sitting. These Review/Q&A sessions are either mandatory or elective and can involve a set number of students or an unspecified number of students. This training is therefore not intended for TAs who happen to do some review as part of their normal discussion-based or lab-based tutorial teaching.

TATP training in this category will include…
• how to prepare to lead a review tutorial
• tools, resources and strategies for helping students prepare for assignments, tests and exams
• strategies to check for student understanding during the tutorial
• practical tips to offer students to help them develop effective course review and study skills
• activities to assist students in remembering and articulating course content, expressing key course concepts, and making connections between different components of course content

LABORATORIES/PRACTICALS

TATP training in this category will include…
• how to plan for a lab/practical tutorial
• how to deliver an effective pre-Lab talk
• how to effectively and efficiently demonstrate procedures and processes for students
• time management – strategies for keeping everyone on track
• how to effectively monitor student progress (including strategies for helping students make connections between an experimental process and theory or real-world application)
• how to provide formative feedback to students
ADAPTING TEACHING TECHNIQUES (ATT)

The Joint Working Group on Undergraduate Tutorials determined that additional support should be provided to TAs who are assigned a tutorial that is significantly larger or smaller than tutorials they have previously taught. While not representative of a tutorial category, ATT sessions are intended to help TAs identify strategies for scaling their teaching activities and approaches to suit the number of students in their assigned tutorial.

TATP training in this area will include…

- how to design a flexible lesson plan
- how to build community and rapport in a class regardless of class size
- how to scale learning activities to different class sizes
- in-class assessments and feedback strategies that work with different sizes of classes
- strategies for using educational technologies to facilitate interactions with students

STEP 4: Training Opportunities for TAs

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<tr>
<th>TAs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 31, 2016</td>
<td>• Tri-Campus TA Day on St. George campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early – mid September/early – mid January</td>
<td>• on-site training booked by departments</td>
<td>• TATP Training Days at UTM or UTSC (as applicable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid – late September/mid – late January</td>
<td>• on-site training booked by departments</td>
<td>• central tutorial training workshops offered at CTSI (1-hour sessions that can accommodate up to 50 students each; 2 sessions per category, including Adapting Teaching Techniques)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early October/late January</td>
<td>• TATP Training Days at UTSG, UTM, UTSC (2 hours of general training plus 1-hour concurrent sessions on a range of tutorial categories and Adapting Teaching Techniques)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2016/Winter 2017</td>
<td>• Regular TATP Workshop Series – range of sessions on a variety of teaching topics; sessions that can count as tutorial training will be indicated on the TATP website with one of the 4 tutorial icons</td>
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STEP 5: Support for Instructors

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<th>INSTRUCTORS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Summer 2016</td>
<td><strong>Online module</strong> for instructors: “Developing Tutorial Learning Outcomes”</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 10, 2016</td>
<td><strong>CTSI Summer School</strong> – day of practical workshops that will include focus on developing course and tutorial learning outcomes; additional focus on lesson design and assignment design, and planning tutorials that align with course outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2016/Winter 2017</td>
<td>Regular <strong>CTSI Workshop Series</strong> – sessions on a wide range of teaching topics, including “Working With Your Teaching Team”, lesson design, assignment design, active and collaborative learning</td>
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**Booking Departmental Training With TATP**

**STEP 01**

**PRE-WORK/PREPARATION**

Have a conversation in your department about the TAs you will hire for the coming semester, and the different kinds of work that you will assign to them. This will help determine the appropriate category of tutorial training your TAs will require.

**BOOKING LOGISTICS**

Please complete the departmental training request PDF form so we can best serve the needs of your department and your TAs. The TATP office will contact you within 2 business days to confirm receipt of the form.

Please book your training session no less than 3 weeks in advance. Please provide 2 possible dates.

**STEP 02**

**CONFIRMATION OF BOOKING/CLARIFICATION OF NEEDS**

All training requests are booked on a first-come, first-served basis and are confirmed only once the availability of TATP staff has been determined.* Once a TATP staff member has been assigned to deliver TA training in your department, this peer graduate student trainer will contact you to finalize the details of the session.

* If booking a September training workshop, your session will be confirmed after August 1. If booking a January workshop, your session will be confirmed in early January.

**STEP 03**

**TATP TRAINING CONTENT**

a) The TATP is staffed by experienced graduate student TAs and Course Instructors. They work with a suite of training materials that have been developed by TAs for TAs. TATP peer trainers are not subject matter experts and will not be able to train your TAs to teach specific disciplinary content. When possible, TATP staff will work with your department to incorporate real examples from your department (e.g. activity, assignment, grading rubric) into their training activities.

b) As stipulated in the collective agreement between the TA union and the University, a CUPE 3902 union steward must be allotted 25 minutes to speak at the end of any training session for first-contract TAs facilitated by the TATP. Once you have booked an on-site training session with us for your new TAs, the TATP will contact CUPE 3902 to invite a union representative to your department’s training session.
2016-17 TRAINING OPTIONS FOR FIRST-TIME CUPE 3902 COURSE INSTRUCTORS

As per the 2014-2017 collective agreement between CUPE 3902 and the University, Course Instructors who are members of Unit 1 and who will be teaching a course at the University for the first time are entitled to six hours of job training. Course Instructors shall be paid for their participation in such training at the SGS II rate by the hiring department in addition to their regular contract stipend. Departments have several options for making this training available to first-time Course Instructors.

OPTION #1: Training can be developed and delivered entirely by the hiring department.

- Development of all training materials and delivery of the training is handled by the hiring department.
- TATP & CTSI are available to consult on the content and method of delivery of such training.

OPTION #2: Training delivered partly by the department and partly through TATP.

- Departments can prepare an introductory 2-hour training session for their first time Course Instructors that is delivered in the department.
- Course Instructors can then subsequently attend 2 additional 2-hour workshops (offered regularly by TATP & CTSI) to complete the remaining 4 hours of paid training. These workshops will be designated on our website as approved for Course Instructor Training. Regular workshop offerings address a range of issues related to course development and delivery as well as the use of classroom educational technologies.

OPTION #3: Training offered entirely through the TATP.

- First time Course Instructors may attend the TATP offering “Course Instructor Training Camp” to receive all six hours of paid training in one day. The training camp is offered three times a year prior to the beginning of each term. Course Instructors are eligible to attend training as soon as they have a contract to teach from their hiring department, even prior to the beginning of the term in which they are teaching.
- First time Course Instructors may choose three 2-hour workshops from the approved offerings by CTSI or TATP. Past workshop offerings have included subjects such as: lesson design, assignment design, syllabus design, supporting students in distress, academic integrity, active & collaborative learning, and working with Portal.
- For registration, please visit the Course Instructor Training Page.

COURSE INSTRUCTOR TRAINING CAMP - FALL SESSION

Friday, August 19th, 2016
St. George campus, Robarts Library
Registration will open in early August.

Please inform your new Course Instructors of the option to attend.

ALSO NOTE: The TATP & CTSI will not develop or deliver customized in-department workshops for first time Unit 1 Course Instructors.
TATP LIAISON PROGRAM

This program seeks to link TATP staff—all experienced graduate student TAs and accomplished teachers—with senior TAs from individual departments whose sole responsibility will be to help make the mandatory training workshop for first-contract TAs as department-specific as possible. TATP Liaisons can also help guide the planning of tutorial-specific training for returning TAs.

Make the mandatory training session for your first-contract TAs and tutorial-specific training for all your TAs as meaningful as possible by involving a senior TA in developing content for the workshop! Provide an opportunity for valuable professional development to one of your senior TAs!

We ask that you promote the opportunity to work as a TATP Liaison to senior TAs in your department; any interested senior TA should contact the TATP via the email address below. The TA will be put in touch with the appropriate TATP training team. The training team will work with your TATP Liaison to plan a training activity or activities for your department’s workshop.

TATP staff will provide all necessary resources, materials and handouts for the training session, using the department-specific information from the TATP Liaison to design the training activities. In the past, some TATP Liaisons have attended the training workshop to help facilitate questions from TAs during the session. This is at the department’s discretion. TATP staff will deliver the full training session. A TATP Liaison’s chief role is to provide guidance and feedback to TATP staff when preparing department-specific content for the training workshop.

In recognition of their efforts, TATP Liaisons receive an official letter of appreciation from TATP that can be included in their graduate dossiers, and are publicly acknowledged on the TATP website.

PLEASE NOTE: this is a volunteer position. TATP is unable to compensate TATP Liaisons. Alternative compensation is at the discretion of the hiring department.

For more information or to recommend one of your department’s senior TAs, please contact:

services.ta@utoronto.ca
TRI CAMPUS TA DAY

31 AUGUST 2016
Bahen Centre
40 St. George Street
(College & St. George)

An all day event for new and returning teaching assistants at the University of Toronto.

Online registration opens AUGUST 8
http://tatp.utoronto.ca/events/tri-campus-ta-day/
WORKING WITH TAS:
Building Your Teaching Team

1. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES
   a. Review with your course TAs the Big Picture: what are the key learning objectives of the course?
   b. What are your goals and the student learning outcomes for any tutorials/labs associated with the course?
   c. What kinds of teaching approaches will your TAs be using in the tutorials/labs? What kinds of learning activities will they be expected to lead with students? (NOTE: this will help you decide what training your TAs should receive—see point 3.a.ii. below.)
   d. How do TAs fit into the course as a whole? How does their work help build towards course objectives?
   e. For which portion(s) of the course are TAs directly responsible?
   f. For what elements of student support or student skills development are TAs responsible? (i.e. writing skills? research skills? will TAs be responsible for providing accommodations for students with disabilities? how and in what ways? should they refer students who are in difficulty or crisis, and if so, how and where?)
   g. What are the students responsible for doing?
   h. What are your obligations towards the TAs?

2. EXPECTATIONS
   a. Your expectations regarding TAs: preparedness, content competence, overall professionalism (punctuality, etc.), conduct with other TAs in the team, conduct in class, conduct outside of class, quality of feedback given to students, availability/responsiveness.
   b. Your expectations for students: in-class conduct, how students should progress through the course (what are potential blocks that you might anticipate?), your definition of “student success”.
   c. What TAs should expect from students: let the TAs know what kinds of students they’ll be working with in this course.
   d. What the TAs can expect from you.

3. BOUNDARIES
   a. Discuss limitations of TA role.
   b. TAs cannot go “rogue” and change due dates or design tests or assignments on their own without consulting you (explain there are clear procedures for diverging from a syllabus and they must avoid doing so).
   c. TAs are not allowed to handle cases of suspected plagiarism, so let them know what the process is if they encounter it.
   d. Provide guidance on how to establish and maintain boundaries with students.
   e. Advise what they should do if encountering a student in crisis.
   f. Advise that they should inform you immediately if there is a possible conflict of interest between them and a student (e.g., personal relationship with someone in the course).
   g. Discuss their working relationship with you and the Course Coordinator (if applicable).
4. DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES – Points to Consider When Drawing Up the List of Duties for Your TAs

a. TRAINING
i. 3-hour employment training is mandatory for first-contract TAs at U of T; first-time Course Instructors are eligible to receive 6 hours of training.
ii. TAs who lead tutorials or labs must receive training that is directly relevant for the instructional focus of the tutorial. This means that you should identify which of the University’s 4 tutorial categories your TAs should be trained in: discussion teaching, skill development, review, lab/practical. You must also identify whether your TAs require training in scaling their learning activities to different sizes of tutorials.
iii. Course-specific information should be provided in a pre-course meeting (this meeting should be indicated in their contract, as should all course-specific meetings).
iv. Will there be any additional training required? (Depends on contract).
vi. Relevant, key departmental, divisional and institutional policies and procedures must be communicated to TAs – when the TAs receive this information either at the mandatory training session or the pre-course meeting, have them sign for receipt of any hard copy information.
vii. Consider getting a senior TA involved in training and pre-course meeting, if possible.

b. PREPARATION
i. Clarify what TAs are expected to already know.
ii. Prep time covers preparation of instructional materials, not learning of subject content.
iii. How much time should it take to prepare a typical lab/tutorial section/class?
iv. How much time should it take to prepare a quiz/test/essay question/exam?
v. Provide strategies for time management (both in terms of preparing a realistic amount of material for a set amount of time, and managing time while teaching within a section or lab).
vi. If possible, provide a sample lesson plan or a sample assignment to use as a model.


c. CONTACT – describe what counts as “contact time” with students
i. How and when are office hours to be conducted, if applicable? What should happen during office hours?
ii. Consider out-of-the-classroom contact (can TAs meet with students in cafes or in the library)?
iii. Virtual contact: how much email is too much email? How quickly do they have to respond? Can TAs grade assignments that are submitted via email attachments? Are TAs even expected to correspond with students via email? A specific time limit on e-mail use would be helpful.
iv. Will TAs be required to attend lectures? If so, this must be included in the DDAH (Description of Duties and Allocation of Hours form).
v. Emphasize the importance of confidentiality.
d. GRADING
   i. Provide explicit instructions and guidelines for evaluation of assignments.
   ii. If applicable, provide a rubric.
   iii. If possible, provide a sample graded assignment (either use an anonymized copy from a former student in the course, or invent your own with comments).
   iv. If possible, run a group grading session before TAs mark the 1st assignment or exam; get TAs to mark the assignment first individually and then come together to discuss the comments and grades given—TAs should explain and justify their feedback and marks.
   v. Reiterate policies and procedures around academic integrity.

e. OTHER DUTIES
   i. Exam invigilation/proctoring.
   ii. Designing the mid-term or final exam.
   iii. Assignment or test design.
   iv. Management of discussion or student questions on the Portal (Blackboard).
   v. Working as a “Head TA”.
   vi. Preparation of study guides or manuals for students.
   vii. Uploading information into the portal (e.g. grades) or management of course materials in the portal.
   viii. Photocopying.

COMMUNICATION
a. How will you stay in touch with your TAs?
   i. Mass emails?
   ii. Portal community set up for course TAs?
   iii. Online newsletter?
   iv. How often should you check in with them and they with you?
   v. How should TAs communicate with students? (What constitutes acceptable or unacceptable discourse?)
   vi. TAs should acknowledge all course information and official documents received—if possible, in writing.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE (Does your department have a specific email policy?)
   a. Recommend TAs adopt office email etiquette - assume that messages are public and could be read by anyone; all messages should have a professional tone; messages should be brief.
   b. TAs should acknowledge ALL emails from you and from their students; they don't need to answer every message, but a brief acknowledgement should be sent.
   c. Recommend to TAs that they:
      • be concise, polite;
      • avoid teaching complex or well-lectured material via email;
      • never argue via email;
      • never give out or discuss grades via email.
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT - Some Options

a. If at all possible, share your lesson plans, representative teaching materials, and best practices.
b. Encourage TAs to also share their materials. Perhaps build a course repository for TAs.
c. Provide a list of useful websites and resources, as well as a list of contacts.
d. Outline additional strategies for student support (accommodations, students in crisis, etc.).
e. For international TAs, provide a list of “gambits”, sentence fragments (teaching phrases) they can use in specific situations when speaking with students.
f. Also for international TAs, provide a list of vocabulary or terms useful for teaching in your discipline.
g. Perform in-class observations for your TAs and invite them to observe you teaching.
h. Organize informal gatherings (brown-bag or pizza lunches, coffee breaks) for TAs to vent frustrations and raise issues, concerns and questions.
i. Invite senior TAs to pair up with junior TAs (the “buddy” system).
j. Identify a mentor in the department for you (a senior colleague with experience managing TAs)!

Questions regarding the CUPE 3902 Unit 1 collective agreement should be directed to the Designated Authority in your department or to Labour Relations.
For all inquiries:

Email: services.ta@utoronto.ca

Call: 416-978-2242

Visit: CTSI, 130 St. George St., Robarts Library, 4th floor

Explore: tatp.utoronto.ca