Teaching Assistant Guide for Remote Teaching

Spring 2020

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As always, when you receive notice of having a TA position, your first step should be to reach out to your supervisor so you can discuss your assignment and allocation of hours. Some key questions you may want to ask at your first virtual meeting include:

1. What will my TA duties entail?
2. What technologies will I be expected to know how to use to conduct my duties?
3. Is there any training that you would like me to engage in in preparation for my work?
4. If I feel I need to engage in training in order to be equipped to conduct my duties (e.g., online training on TA Professionalism and Good Practices, Avenue to Learn, web conferencing technologies), will I be paid for that training? If so, what is the maximum number of hours of training for which I will be paid?
5. What are the expectations regarding my online availability?
6. Will any of my duties require that I be recorded? (If you feel uncommittable with being recorded and the answer is "yes", you should discuss this with your supervisor so the two of you can come up with an alternate option that will work for both of you.)
7. What is the best way for me to communicate with you?
8. How will my hours of work be distributed across my training and duties?

If your supervisor requests that you engage in training, that training should be accounted for in your hours of work. Although there will certainly be variation from one supervisor to the next, it is anticipated that for most supervisors, paid training on the whole (any training that they request you complete combined with any training you feel you need to complete) will not account for more than five paid contract hours.

Some commonly used technologies that are supported at McMaster include:

- MacVideo
- Echo360
- WebEx: Web Conferencing
- Zoom: Web Conferencing
- Microsoft Teams

A description of each of these technologies, as well as related resources, can be found on the [Supported Tools tab](#) of [MacPherson Institute's Instructional Continuity website](#). Recordings of staff-facilitated online workshops are available for many of these technologies via [The MacPherson Institute -Teaching Remotely Resources channel](#) on the [MacVideo website](#).

If you are unfamiliar with teaching and learning in an online environment, take some time to familiarize yourself with [MacPherson Institute's Teaching Remotely Guide](#). As an introduction to teaching remotely, the guide shares best practices, tips, and links to resources for teaching in

virtual or online classrooms (please see the Teaching Online tab of MacPherson Institute's Instructional Continuity website for definitions of these terms). If you have the opportunity to choose which educational technology you will use in your role as a TA, the guide includes a comprehensive overview of key features for each of the educational technologies noted above (see page 4). If you know that your supervisor is already using a particular technology to engage with students, if possible, try to use that same technology when you engage with students as well, for this will help to streamline students' learning experiences.

It is likely that you will need to know how to use Avenue to Learn, McMaster's Learning Management System. Avenue to Learn often serves as the course home where TAs and students will be able to find announcements from the course instructor, course content (e.g., the course syllabus, lesson materials), discussion forums, assignment submission folders (where you will access and provide feedback on students' assignments), the grade book, and much, much more. Great resources regarding how to use Avenue to Learn can be found on the Support tab on the Avenue to Learn login website. In mid May, there will also be a new online workshop entitled "An Introduction to Avenue to Learn" available via The MacPherson Institute -Teaching Remotely Resources channel on the MacVideo website.

Beyond technology, you may have many other teaching- and learning-related questions as you prepare for, and engage in, your work as a TA this Spring. Some key resources and supports that you should be aware of include:

- **McMaster Teaching Assistant Guide:** This guide covers the basics, from TA roles and responsibilities at McMaster to how to teach in an accessible and inclusive manner, plan a lesson, engage students in active learning, assess and provide feedback on student learning, and document your teaching effectiveness. One section that TAs tend to find particularly helpful is the section on common TA-related questions and challenges.
- **Online Teaching Assistant (TA) Professionalism and Good Practices Workshop:** On The MacPherson Institute -Teaching Remotely Resources channel on the MacVideo website, you will find a new online workshop on TA Professionalism and Good Practices. It provides an overview of what the TA role generally entails, as well as instruction on how to fulfill the role effectively.The link to the workshop is: https://www.macvideo.ca/media/TA+Professionalism+%26+Good+Practices+/1_8ajvt0ou/161082221
- **Drop-in Question and Answer Sessions with an Educational Developer:** These will be an opportunity for TAs to connect with an Educational Developer and ask any teaching- and learning-related questions they may have. Sessions will take place over the first two weeks of May. Register at: https://taqamay2020.eventbrite.ca.
- **Other Online Training:** As a TA, you are welcome to register for any upcoming online workshops noted on the Schedule tab on the MacPherson Institute Instructional Continuity website.
- **Forward with FLEXibility: A Teaching and Learning Resource on Accessibility and Inclusion:** Modules 1, 2, 3, and 5 are particularly relevant to TAs. They will teach you about the foundational principles of inclusive instruction/accessible education and how to apply those principles in your teaching/TA duties.

- **E-Learning Section of McMaster's Accessibility Hub:** Here, TAs will find accessibility support in developing accessible content for digital media, including Word, PowerPoint, Email, and some presentation techniques for recording presentations accessibly. Additionally, there is accessibility-related information for McMaster's supported tools, and a remote teaching and captioning guide.
- **University Library Support for Remote Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic:** This website provides an overview of how you can still access the Library's rich course content, robust technological tools, and expert assistance – though sometimes delivered in new ways.

If you plan to engage in any of the above training opportunities, it is recommended that you ask your supervisor in advance whether they will count towards your hours of work.

If you are interested in further enhancing your teaching come Fall, consider checking out MacPherson's annual Teaching & Learning Forum (an opportunity for you to complete more than 20 online teaching and learning workshops) or the five EDUCATN courses that comprise the Teaching and Learning Certificates of Completion Program. All courses are free, zero-unit, pass/fail, graduate-level courses that can be completed during your studies.

Finally, the CUPE 3906 Unit 1 website has a wealth of resources that will be of value to you in your role as a TA (e.g., the current collective agreement). As a member of CUPE, you are eligible to access to the Employee Family Assistance Program through Homewood Health. If you have questions that you would like to ask the Union, email staff@cupe3906.org.

** Please remember that if you require academic and/or workplace accommodations as you work to fulfill your TA duties, support is available to you.